



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

Published by Order of the Legislature by Hansard Reporting Services and printed by the Queen's Printer.

Available on INTERNET at <http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/>

Second Session

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2014

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2014

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

8:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We will now begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I hereby wish to table a petition, if I may read the important paragraph here:

“We, the undersigned residents and visitors of the Upper Clyde Road, in the Municipality of Shelburne, are asking for support from the Department of Transportation & Public Works to provide upgrades of 14 kilometers from Welshtown pavement to the bridge spanning the Upper Clyde River.”

Mr. Speaker, there are 274 names on this particular petition and I have affixed my signature.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition to the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal:

“WHEREAS we the citizens of Kings County, Nova Scotia, travel the roads of Kings County regularly; and

WHEREAS tourism is an essential part of both the County of Kings and the Province of Nova Scotia; and

WHEREAS Blomidon Park is an integral part of the tourism opportunity in Kings County, visited by local persons, other residents of this province and by people from away; and

WHEREAS Perea Road is the primary access to Blomidon Park and is in desperate physical condition;

We, the undersigned, request that immediate action be taken to improve the state of this route.”

Mr. Speaker, I have affixed my name to this petition; it has 316 signatures.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction, please?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. MACFARLANE: In the west gallery I would like to introduce the wonderful Matthew and Rhonda Frank, owners of Artsy Fartsy art studio in East Chezzetcook. I welcome them here. Later on we will hear a little bit more about their business, so if we could give them a nice, warm applause. (Applause)

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

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

Bill No. 1 - Health Authorities Act.

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

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

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to recognize Treaty Day, an important day in the life of Nova Scotia. It's an opportunity to sit back and reflect on the importance of the Treaty relationship; as well it's a chance to recognize the achievements and leadership of Mi'kmaq elders and youth.

Mr. Speaker, Treaty Day provides an opportunity for the Mi'kmaq and other Nova Scotians to come together and celebrate. Earlier today, at an awards ceremony in Halifax, people gathered to celebrate 10 award-winning Mi'kmaq elders and youth from across the province.

Treaty Day began in 1986 with the signing of a proclamation by then Grand Chief Donald Marshall, Sr. It marks the beginning of Mi'kmaq History Month in Nova Scotia.

We're proud of our strong, productive, and respectful working relationship with the Mi'kmaq. We remain committed to advancing this collaborative relationship through three key mechanisms: Consultation Terms of Reference; Made-in-Nova Scotia Negotiation Process; and the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to support and coordinate collaboration and partnership in education, employment and training, economic development and culture to foster long-term community well-being.

We support capacity building of Aboriginal organizations and communities in the province through key strategic investments across government departments, often in co-operation with our federal partners. This is focused on a number of areas including

Aboriginal women, urban Aboriginal people, natural resource management, cultural awareness, and legal support services.

Mr. Speaker, we're dedicated to Aboriginal women's empowerment, equity, and leadership. This will be the focus of the 4th National Aboriginal Women's Summit which Nova Scotia is proud to co-host this October at Membertou First Nation in Cape Breton.

The Summit will provide a forum for governments and community-based representatives to share expertise and knowledge, showcase innovative practices, and to identify opportunities for working collaboratively on a range of issues affecting Aboriginal women, their families, and communities.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Treaty Day is an opportunity for the Government of Nova Scotia to recognize the important contribution of the Mi'kmaq to the province's history, culture, and economy. Thank you.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin by thanking the Premier for an advance copy of his remarks on this important day.

It is a true honour to have the opportunity to recognize Treaty Day today and mark the beginning of Mi'kmaq History Month. The tradition of recognizing October 1st as Treaty Day began in 1986 by a proclamation of Grand Chief Donald Marshall, Sr. It is a time when all Nova Scotians can recognize the many important contributions made by the Mi'kmaq people - contributions that have helped to shape our province and to strengthen its cultural fabric.

Increasing awareness of Mi'kmaq heritage fosters understanding and enriches all Nova Scotians. Celebrating Treaty Day also enables the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia to be recognized in a manner appropriate to their ancient heritage. All of us can be proud of the strong and respectful relationship that has been forged since the 1752 Treaty of Friendship and Peace. It provides an unshakeable foundation to build upon that will strengthen our province and strengthen our Mi'kmaq communities.

It was only a short time ago, 1958, when the Right Honourable Prime Minister John Diefenbaker gave us our first Canadian Bill of Rights. Members may be interested to know that was when the vote was given to Aboriginal people across our country - only that short time ago. So today is an ideal time to reflect on the contributions the Mi'kmaq peoples have made to Nova Scotia's democracy. One need only consider our friend, the late Noel Knockwood, who served this House of Assembly as Sergeant-at-Arms, who comes to mind so quickly.

I would like to join in congratulating the elders and youth from Mi'kmaq communities who were honoured today with awards, specifically Bernie Francis, Libby Meuse, Arden Joseph Bernard, Jayden Nevin MacDonald, Helena Noelle Sack, Shannon Marie Googoo, Jacob Gale, Kylie Cabot, Jennifer Sylliboy, and Nathan Pay.

I know I speak for all members of the Progressive Conservative caucus and, I'm sure, for the entire House when I say we are looking forward to the National Aboriginal Women's Summit in October, and we congratulate all of those who are working so hard to make that conference a success. Thank you.

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

MR. GORDIE GOSSE: I am pleased to rise today to recognize Treaty Day in Nova Scotia, and I, too, would like to thank the Premier for an advance copy of his ministerial statement. I, too, attended the parade from St. Mary's Basilica to the Grand Parade for the flag-raising ceremony, along with my colleagues from Truro-Bible Hill-Salmon River, and also my colleague from Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank was there today. And if my history is correct, Mr. Speaker, when the first Treaty was signed in 1725, we celebrate October 1st as Treaty Day because that was the date mentioned in the official peace treaty of 1752.

I come from an area of our province with a rich Mi'kmaq history and a community, as do many of my colleagues here tonight. In fact the 1852 census - the first to include the Mi'kmaq - listed people living on the Kings Road Reserve in Sydney. Today Membertou has proved to be a thriving Mi'kmaq community with a flourishing conference centre and a flourishing community. And as mentioned in the Premier's remarks, since 1986, October 1st has marked the beginning of Mi'kmaq History Month in Nova Scotia. It's time to celebrate the history of our province, which begins with the experiences of Mi'kmaq people.

This month, we recognize the ongoing contributions Mi'kmaq people make to our province every day as entrepreneurs, educators, business and community leaders. It is also an opportunity to acknowledge the challenges we face and to remind our fellow Nova Scotians that we stand with not only the Mi'kmaq people, but with First Nations people across this country in their call for a national inquiry into the missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for allowing me a few moments to discuss the importance of Treaty Day and the contributions of Mi'kmaq people in our past, our present and our future. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: I'm honoured to rise in my place as Minister responsible for the Status of Women, to launch Women's History Month. Many of us know the names of Nellie McClung and Agnes Macphail, but how well do we know the stories of Granny Ross, Rita Joe, or Edith Archibald?

Our province's history is filled with stories of the hard work and determination of great women who have walked before us. Women like Rita Joe, whose daughters described her as "a humble woman . . . a gentle warrior . . . a genius." Her poetry has been celebrated across the country and the poet herself has received many honorary degrees and awards. Perhaps her greatest achievement is offering insight into her life and experiences as a Mi'kmaq woman.

Women like Viola Desmond, who, in 1946, stood up to justice and racism in a New Glasgow theatre. This was done at a great personal cost. Let us not forget that Ms. Desmond was also a successful businesswoman who trained many women through her beauty school. These women went on to become successful entrepreneurs. We cannot forget an important person in this story, Wanda Robson, who sought justice for her sister in gaining a free pardon to Ms. Desmond in 2010.

Women like Muriel Duckworth, who, in 1974 was the first woman in Halifax to run in a provincial or federal election. Her willingness to put her name forward encouraged Alexa McDonough to seek office a few years later. We know that Ms. McDonough had a long and successful career in the political sphere, provincially and federally and she, in turn, has encouraged and supported many women seeking office.

Mr. Speaker, Women's History Month is an opportunity to honour these incredible women and share their stories. I encourage all members to visit the Status of Women website and read the Nova Scotia Nine. As important as our past is, we cannot remain there. We need to recognize that there is much more work to be done before women in our province know equality. Half of the population in our province is female, Mr. Speaker, but we hold 27 per cent of the provincial seats and 26 per cent of the federal seats.

There are, however, significant firsts for our province stemming from the election last. The appointment of five women to Cabinet, including the province's first Deputy Premier and Attorney General are significant gains for women in our political landscape. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I know that many women in this House, including myself, have benefited from the Women's Campaign School program or the Votes for Women guide. The most recent Campaign School in 2014 showed 50 women how to navigate a campaign and run for elected office. I encourage the women elected in this House, past and present, to be a mentor and encourage more women to seek office. We need more women's voices on councils, boards, and the provincial and federal political level.

On another front, one Nova Scotian woman in 12 faces violence from an intimate partner. In my years of working in the non-profit sector, I saw far too many cases of the damage that violence inflicts on women and children. It's not acceptable and we must work to further address this serious issue. Our government, over the past year, has increased funding to transition houses, women's centres, and second stage housing for women and children leaving violence in the home. Work continues on strengthening these services.

Mr. Speaker, we also acknowledge that sexual violence is not acceptable and must be addressed but it cannot be done by any one group. To that end the government committed \$2,000,000 a year, over the next three years, for a multi-year strategy that focuses on the needs of victims and survivors, and the need for prevention. In April 2014, the public engagement phase began. Co-chairs have met with over 60 representatives from approximately 40 community groups, associations, and an online survey which had over 800 responses. I'm looking forward to seeing what we can all accomplish by working together.

Mr. Speaker, another area where there is more work to be done is women's employment. Women in Nova Scotia continue to experience lower rates of pay and less full-time employment than their male counterparts with the same background. Programs such as Educate to Work and GroundWorks help women who rely on Employment Support and Income Assistance to obtain the skills and education they need to enter the workforce.

The Techsploration and Women Innovating in Nova Scotia bursaries encourage women to enter fields such as science, technology and trades where they are very much under-represented. Employment in many of these fields offer good wages and benefits to support women and their families. We will continue to make investments in programs and services that increase women's equality in employment earnings and education.

Government also continues to work on the issues of violence against women so that all Nova Scotians can know what it's like to live in peace and security. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on these important issues today. I encourage all members of this House to visit the Status of Women website for fact sheets, program information and other resources, and please share them with the women in your life. Thank you Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from my colleagues.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for a copy of her remarks in advance. I am honoured to rise in my place as our caucus' Status of Women Critic to talk about the important contributions of women in our province and to celebrate Women's History Month. This month is dedicated to celebrating the long line of Nova Scotian women who have fought for full equality at home, in the workplace, and in public life. Like the minister said, I too believe we need more women's voices on councils, boards, and at the provincial and federal political levels.

The minister talked about many important women who have individually shaped our province's history. Women like Nellie McClung, Agnes Macphail, Rita Joe, Viola Desmond, Wanda Robson, Muriel Duckworth, and Alexa McDonough. But, we also need more strong women like Maxine Cochrane, who sadly passed away this past year. She was a proud Progressive Conservative and the first female Cabinet Minister in our province after being appointed Minister of Transportation by Premier John Buchanan in 1985. (Applause)

Like Premier Buchanan, it was a Progressive Conservative who appointed Canada's first female Cabinet Minister. Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker made Ellen Fairclough Secretary of State in 1957, and in 1958 she became the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and that year she served as Canada's first female Acting Prime Minister as well.

We must continue to honour all the incredible women and keep their stories and memories alive. The minister talked about the seventh Campaign School for Women, put on by the Status of Women in June, which I gladly participated in with many amazing women, including the honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. It was an honour to present with so many influential female leaders of our time. I am passionate about the next generation and giving them opportunities here in Nova Scotia like I was so blessed to have.

There is so much more work that needs to be done to reach equality for women in our province. We must continue to push ourselves and encourage other men and women to do better. As a former small business owner, as a mom, and now as an MLA, I know the challenges and pressures that many women in our province still face. We must continue to focus on rebuilding our economy to provide better opportunities for all.

As the minister pointed out, women in Nova Scotia continue to experience lower rates of pay and less full-time employment than their male counterparts with the same background. As a society, we must do better. We must teach our sons and daughters about equality, and we must encourage them to reach as high as their potential, no matter their gender.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to rise in my place to speak about Women's History Month. It certainly was an honour. (Applause)

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise today and say a few words about Women's History Month. I'd like to thank the minister for her remarks this evening. I know that she has a history, through her former role with Alice Housing, of supporting women in crisis, and I want to acknowledge that. (Applause)

I also want to thank the minister for bringing up a personal and professional friend and great mentor of mine, a former member of this House, the honourable Alexa McDonough - the first female leader of any recognized political Party in Canada, first as Leader of our provincial New Democrats and next as our federal Leader. Alexa was a trailblazer. She was a powerhouse, a woman of integrity and compassion, and luckily for us, she still is.

I had the privilege of watching Alexa years ago as she spoke in the House of Assembly. I believe she was standing right around there, and she was the only female member in the House and the only NDP at that time, with 51 men. It was International Women's Day, and she invited me to come and watch her. I was up there and the men that particular day chose to throw paper airplanes at each other while she stood to deliver her remarks about the ways she felt women needed to get out there to help change the world to make it a better place. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, it was an eye-opener for me, as a young woman, 24 years old, watching the display down below on International Women's Day.

It was that event and that encounter that planted a seed inside me. I decided at the time that we needed more women in government, in various levels of government, if we were really going to change the world to make it a better place, the type of place that people dream of, the type of place that people around the world are praying for. Mr. Speaker, I would really hope that lots of women - any women out there, any women listening - would take heed and please run for government of any level.

I also have to say that it's rather bittersweet to stand here today with the sounds of the women outside who are crying right now because they feel their rights are being taken away from them. I have to say that after the last few days of hearing women's stories and seeing their tears, my heart is broken, and to walk past these people who are now feeling that they have been abandoned and bereft by their leaders is truly hurtful for me personally and for all of us here in our NDP caucus.

I think that we all need role models like Alexa, and I hope that every woman in this House - no matter which side we sit on, no matter if this is our 30th Session in the Legislature or in politics or our first - recognizes that we are all role models for young women in our province and standing up for ourselves and for what we believe in is very, very important.

Saying no to bullying is an important step, both in our own personal lives and professionally. I concur with the minister that we need to encourage more women to take leadership roles in their community and that violence against women should be completely stamped out - zero-tolerance. Especially, that includes our First Nations sisters.

Many of us have already fought for the rights that we enjoy today and we must seize every opportunity to try and make a difference. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill No. 7 - Entitled an Act Respecting Licence Plates on the Vehicles of Veteran Volunteer Firefighters. (Mr. Chuck Porter)

Bill No. 8 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 292 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Motor Carrier Act. (Mr. Chuck Porter)

Bill No. 9 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 144 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act. (Hon. Mark Furey)

Bill No. 10 - Entitled an Act Respecting the Appointment of Statutory Officers at Service Nova Scotia. (Hon. Mark Furey)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 27

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

Whereas the Avon 4-H Club celebrates their 90th Anniversary in 2014, consisting of youths between the ages of 8 to 18, which is approximately 60 members; and

Whereas the 4-H motto is “Learn to do by doing,” with the 4-H standing for head, heart, hands, and help, and the main purpose of the 4-H program is to prepare the youths for their future as adult citizens; and

Whereas the Avon 4-H Club gathers at various achievement days each year, with bigger venues showcasing their life skills projects as well as livestock;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Avon 4-H for their hard work and celebrating their 90th 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 member for Halifax Needham.

RESOLUTION NO. 28

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

Whereas Geoff D'Eon is a talented writer, director, and producer who has worked on a number of successful documentaries, specials, and comedy programs; and

Whereas Geoff D'Eon received the Best Atlantic Documentary Award for his work on *Bounty: Into the Hurricane* at the 2014 Atlantic Film Festival;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Geoff D'Eon on being chosen as the 2014 winner of the Best Atlantic Documentary Award and express its appreciation for his contribution and commitment to Halifax and its media arts 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 member for Chester-St. Margaret's.

RESOLUTION NO. 29

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

Whereas on September 1, 2014, Mrs. Helen V. O'Neill of McGraths Cove, Nova Scotia, celebrated her 90th birthday; and

Whereas birthdays are an occasion for family and friends to gather together and celebrate the life of an individual; and

Whereas to reach the age of 90 and continue to be so active while sharing all the memories gathered over a lifetime with loved ones is a wonderful reason to celebrate;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Mrs. Helen O'Neill on reaching this important milestone and wish her continued good health and many more birthdays to celebrate.

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. 30

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

Whereas Active Start is a program started by Special Olympics Nova Scotia in conjunction with the Cobequid Special Olympics; and

Whereas Active Start began in Truro in 2011 for children between the ages of 2 to 6 with intellectual disabilities; and

Whereas a group of dedicated volunteers and two therapists have helped these special children focus on developing motor skills and social skills and becoming team players, all through the use of sports;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Active Start program for its continued dedication with these special children.

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: Question Period will begin at 8:40 p.m. and will conclude at 10:10 p.m.

The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - RURAL N.S./C.B.: MIN. - TRUSTWORTHINESS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and Wellness has broken a key commitment to rural Nova Scotia and Cape Breton. In February, when asked about his plan to merge district health authorities, the Minister of Health and Wellness told Nova Scotians, "This will not be a Halifax-based board." I'll table the document that says that. But just last month, media reported that the new operational board will be in the Halifax area. I'll table that as well.

How can rural Nova Scotians and Cape Bretoners trust the Minister of Health and Wellness to ensure that their needs are met when he has already broken such an important promise?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. In terms of a Halifax-based board, we obviously have to be somewhere physically, but the board will be made up of representatives from across Nova Scotia. Thank you.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: I think the minister even mused that it would probably be based in Truro. It's funny how things change over time.

Rural Nova Scotians are highly concerned about the Liberal Government's incompetent handling of the health authority merger. More to the point, they're very concerned about the fact that Nova Scotians living in Cape Breton and rural parts of the

province will not have a say in health care delivery. Thanks to the Premier and his Minister of Health and Wellness, it now appears that important health care decisions impacting rural Nova Scotians can now be made by bureaucrats right here in Halifax.

What will it take for the Minister of Health and Wellness to understand that health care needs in Cape Breton and in the rest of Nova Scotia are different from those here in Halifax and that when he takes the steps to ensure the residents outside of the Capital Region that their health needs will not be ignored?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite and all Nova Scotians need to know and realize is that while you may physically have an office, this board is going to be meeting throughout the province. It's going to be a highly-integrated structure, as we will see in just a couple of weeks' time. What we have done in this bill, if the former Minister of Health had looked really closely, he would see that community health boards will have the most prominent place of any community health boards in Canada. Thank you.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: All I saw in that bill, Mr. Speaker, is lack of detail, with no information telling Nova Scotians where the decisions are going to be made. As a matter of fact, when we asked the questions of what the organizational chart was going to look like, it was going to be, well, that's to come sometime later on. So how can we stand in this House and consider a bill when we really don't know the important information of how rural health care is going to be delivered in the Province of Nova Scotia?

My question is, when will the minister tell the Premier to abandon heavy-handed tactics and work with the Opposition to ensure that rural Nova Scotians' views are adequately represented in the health care system?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, there's one guarantee about this piece of legislation and the new merger. It's that all parts of the province will be represented. In fact, the old nine districts will have a representative for continuity on the governance board. We will have zone-based areas that will be integrated. The community health boards will have a direct link of feedback to the provincial board. I can guarantee the former minister that rural Nova Scotia will benefit from this merger.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - HEALTH SYSTEM: REORGANIZATION
- RUSH EXPLAIN**

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Premier. The government is making the most significant restructuring of our health care system that we've seen in 14 years. Quite possibly, not one family in Nova Scotia, from Yarmouth to Cape Breton, won't be affected by this restructuring at some point in the future. Yet this Premier and this government have provided no plan and they are in a rush

to move ahead at lightning speed with very little attention or accountability to what is implicated for our health care system. So my question to the Premier is, why is the Premier in such a rush to avoid scrutiny of his plan to reorganize our health care system?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, in the last election campaign this Party ran on breaking down the walls inside the health care system in this province and we are delivering on that commitment now.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, if I was a suspicious person, I might think that the Premier's unprecedented attack on health care workers was a diversion to keep people's attention away from the fact that the government, in fact, has much in store for a restructured health care system. So I'd like to ask the Premier again, why has the Premier created an unnecessary crisis in labour relations in our province to avoid the proper scrutiny of health board amalgamation that is going to occur?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we ran on a platform of tearing down the walls, of amalgamating district health authorities, and the honourable member knows that the former Finance Minister actually told her government they should be moving forward to streamlining the health care system in this province, which she ignored.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the government has dismissed the volunteer district health authority boards from communities from Cape Breton to Yarmouth. They have replaced the management of our health care system with a one-person board, who is accountable to no one but the Minister of Health and Wellness, and there is not a community representative to be found in the restructuring that is going on around the health care system, yet we see this plan raced through this Assembly.

So my question to the Premier is, why does he think it is okay to avoid community voices while they come up with a plan of what a new health care system will be like for Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the honourable member that the Minister of Health and Wellness has been travelling this province, doing a fantastic job on behalf of the people in this province, talking to health care workers, community leaders, people who sat on district health authorities, and we are now moving forward with the commitment that we made to Nova Scotians to tear down the walls inside of our health care system.

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

PREM.: HEALTH AUTHORITY - MERGER

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: My question is to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, not only do we face a changing story about where this new health authority will be located, and

changing stories about what's in store for health care workers, we continue to face a changing story from the government about how much this change will save, if anything.

The Liberal platform that the Premier just referred to promised Nova Scotians \$13 million in savings from all of these changes. Last week the Health and Wellness Minister said it's actually only \$5 million, and then yesterday it changed again to be a million-ish which, by the way, is one (Interruptions) It's hard to keep track of all the changes, but that's one-two thousandths of the entire district health authority budget.

All of those savings, whatever they may be, he attributes solely to the change of the CEO and VP level. I mean there is no change from any of the other plans for our health authorities. Mr. Speaker, how can Nova Scotians believe the government is going to make this merger work when they don't even know for themselves what they are doing?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I completely disagree with the premise of the question.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, if that answer was meant to assure Nova Scotians they have a clue what they are doing, it failed, because it just proves the point that they are making it up as they go along.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier tells Nova Scotians there will be savings from all of these changes that will go back to health, but he tells health care workers not to worry, there'll be no changes for them, that their benefits and their salaries and their pensions will all stay the same.

Both those statements can't be true at the same time. So I ask the Premier, how much does he plan to save from these changes, or is this just another expensive Liberal shell game?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, not only will we save millions of dollars, we will cause efficiencies to allow Nova Scotians to have access to health care. Let me assure every health care worker in this province that benefits that they've earned will not change.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier will have to forgive health care workers if they don't take that to the bank, because last Spring, he told them that he was preserving their right to strike, and yet at the same time, he tells Nova Scotians that he has stopped strikes in health care.

Both of those statements also can't be true at the same time. So I'd like to ask the Premier, why can't he give Nova Scotians and health care workers the same story?

THE PREMIER: Coming from that member, Mr. Speaker, that is laughable, quite frankly. The man flip-flops more times than I don't know what. The fact of the matter is

that we brought in essential service legislation that ensures that health care will be provided in communities across this province at the same time as protecting health care workers' right to strike. Read the bill. I don't know how he can find that difficult to understand.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

PREM.: FRACKING - RESEARCH

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, that is pretty rich coming from the Leader of the Liberal Party - a lecture on how to stay consistent. Here is a way to be consistent. I read his letter that he put in print to the nurses of Nova Scotia before the last election. I saw the ads he ran assuring nurses that nothing would change before the last election. Here is how to be consistent: say the same thing after the election as you were saying before the election. That's how you earn the respect of the people of Nova Scotia.

Now changing gears, Mr. Speaker, I do want to ask the Premier a question about fracking. The Throne Speech assured Nova Scotians that the government was going to encourage onshore gas exploration by creating an onshore energy atlas, and yet the Liberals are banning the actual development of shale gas resources in our province. That's why Barbara Pike, the CEO of the Maritimes Energy Association, said that does not send a good message to anyone who is looking to invest in Nova Scotia.

My question is, how does the government expect anyone to ever actually do research or testing in our province when they've banned the actual development of the resource?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, Shell will announce a billion-dollar investment. BP is announcing a billion-dollar investment off our shore. We'll see rigs go off the coast of our province, drilling for oil. All of that is being driven by an investment that was made by the MacDonald Government that ensured that we mapped the ocean floor to understand the geology that was there, ensuring that we knew where companies could drill.

The same thing is happening onshore, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're going to continue to do. If the resource is here, we'll then have a full and open conversation about how we treat it.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, of course the difference is there's no ban on offshore drilling, testing, exploration or development; there is now going to be a ban on onshore drilling. Quite frankly, Nova Scotians deserve offshore jobs and onshore jobs, not just one instead of the other.

The government has banned high-volume fracking, but they don't even know what the definition of high-volume fracking is. Well, we just had a group of experts travel the

province, consult with Nova Scotians and produce a very helpful report on how we can go slow - but go - on shale gas development.

I'd like to ask the Premier, will he consult with his own hydraulic fracturing review panel, led by Dr. Wheeler, to get their expert advice on high-volume fracking?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're doing exactly what the committee said, which was continue to do research to understand where the possibilities actually are for shale gas on land. No one actually knows if we even have shale gas. So to go down the road of dividing communities over a commodity that we may not even have makes absolutely no sense. What the committee said was understand and ensure that we went around and did more research and development, and at the same time continue to have a conversation with communities. The bill that's before this House does just that.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the government is doing the opposite of what the Wheeler commission recommended. They said specifically that they did not support an ongoing moratorium or any other political development that stopped the exploration or development of shale gas. The government spent over \$100,000 on this report, and then they ignored it.

Ray Ritcey, a member of the Wheeler panel, wrote, "Good regulations in Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick have guided the safe drilling of hundreds of thousands of wells." But rather than work to develop those safe regulations here, the Premier has seen fit to ban the opportunity altogether.

So I'll ask the Premier, why has his government decided to ignore their own experts and simply ban one of the few new ways to create jobs in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we actually listened to the panel. We've invested and continue to invest in research and development to understand the geology of Nova Scotia, to ensure if we actually do have that resource, and where that may be one of the possibilities. At the same time, we're continuing to look at new technologies of drilling and how you extract that resource if it is actually there. This bill provides to have a conversation with Nova Scotians, if that's the way we head.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - BARGAINING ASSOC.: MEMBERS - STATUS

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Since last Friday the Minister of Health and Wellness has made four contradictory public statements about the union's offer to keep their members with a formed bargaining association.

Last Thursday he said he had rejected the offer and the government would select which unions health care workers would belong to. On Friday the story changed, with the minister telling media that an arbitrator, not the government, would decide which union workers would belong to. On Monday, it came to a surprise when the minister announced that perhaps he would be open to the unions forming bargaining associations, negating the need for an arbitrator. Then today, a new twist: the minister's telling reporters that an arbitrator would decide the union fate, but perhaps that fate could be a bargaining association that the unions are asking for.

If you had a hard time following that, Mr. Speaker, you're not alone. These contradictions have led to a great deal of confusion and upheaval in our health care sector, so I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness, can he please tell this House, once and for all, on the record, if the possibility of a union keeping their members while forming a bargaining association is still on the table?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sackville-Cobequid for the question. What we need to be taking a look at here is that after the bill passes through the House, a mediator is going to be open to whatever options are brought forward, and that certainly remains to be seen. I do want to correct the member opposite - it will be a mediator, not an arbitrator.

MR. DAVID WILSON: That's crystal clear now. I'm glad he clarified, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the heads of the health care unions waited patiently at Province House, hoping to meet with the Minister of Health and Wellness. Specifically, the union leaders wanted to ask the minister why he told the media he was open to accepting something similar to the bargaining association model that they proposed, when previously, in a private meeting, he had clearly rejected that offer.

I would like to ask the minister, since the Minister of Health and Wellness was not available to explain his discrepancy to the union leaders yesterday, can he at least tell this House how that discrepancy occurred in the first place?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what I wanted to convey to the member opposite and all the House is that what I said is simply a possibility for unions to bring to the mediator when that process takes place.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, this summer, Nova Scotia's health care unions worked together and developed the plan to allow them to keep their members while still achieving the Liberal Government's objective to have four bargaining units in the health care sector. My question for the Minister of Health is this, why is it so crucial to the Liberal Government that an arbitrator or a mediator, and not the health care workers themselves, determine union membership?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I think if we take a look at where we go to work in Nova Scotia, as I did some 30-odd years ago, I had no choice in what union would represent me.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: HEALTH CARE SYSTEM REORGANIZATION
- CONSULTATION**

HON. DAVID WILSON: Cold comfort, Mr. Speaker, to those health care workers here in Nova Scotia. My question - a new question - is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The Minister of Health and Wellness has said the Liberals have consulted extensively with a wide range of Nova Scotians on the reorganization in the health care system. On June 3, 2014, the minister released a report on some very vague statement about what they heard. I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness, can he tell Nova Scotians who he consulted with, when he consulted with them and how he consulted them?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I guess I could give a very long answer here, because I spent a great deal of January, February, March, into April having an opportunity to meet with many front-line health care workers, community health boards, and we had open meetings where citizens could come in and express their views on any concern they had about the merger.

There was one overwhelming theme that came through all of the consultations and that was change is necessary in our health care system, we have way too many barriers that currently impede efficiencies within the health care system. This bill directs how the health care delivery system will be for the future, starting April 1, 2015.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, they're anticipating my next question. I appreciate it. Through the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, we obtained a copy of a bill for \$8,594 for the minister's travel team. Other than the odd press release announcing a meeting with the now-defunct health boards, the minister didn't hold any open or public meetings for citizens to provide feedback on their scheme. We did, however, receive information that it cost taxpayers \$36,000 to do polling and focus groups. It's a bit of a stretch to say that the Liberals have done extensive consultation when all they've done is some polling and focus groups.

I would like to ask the minister, would the minister tell this House whether or not he believes that focus groups and polling are considered meaningful consultation?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sackville-Cobequid for the question. One of the great feedbacks that you get today when you start a process of merging the health boards is that you get submissions from many, many Nova Scotians. I

get a tremendous number of emails that are both questioning, offering suggestions - from a tremendous number of people who have worked in the health care system for many years on the fact that we not only need change; we need to make the system more efficient.

Can you imagine - and I was surprised that the Health and Wellness Ministers from the previous government hadn't at least had a consistent way of reporting adverse medical incidents when we had six different ways across Nova Scotia. This will not happen in the future.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, we know what will happen in the future is that they'll continue to block the access of Nova Scotians to tell this government what they think about pieces of legislation, like we saw in Law Amendments Committee today.

Mr. Speaker, we are facing some of the most extensive changes to our health care system in over 15 years, and the Liberals shut down the only way the public can share their views, as I mentioned earlier, in Law Amendments Committee. On top of it all, we have no information, because the Liberals refuse to tell Nova Scotians any details about their amalgamation scheme.

When will the minister commit to public and broad consultation that will give Nova Scotians a say on the Liberal health scheme?

MR. GLAVINE: The one thing that I had embedded, if you wish, from Nova Scotians as I went across the province is that we need change and we need to do it through the merger, through the consolidation, and the time for doing consultation is over. What I'm very, very, very, very proud of is in terms of putting together the team of people who will guide and direct the merger, and all of the information gathered to date has been done by Nova Scotians, and we have a Nova Scotia product that we'll be proud of from one end of the province to the other.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MUN. AFFS.: ARTSY FARTSY ART - BUS. SHUTDOWN

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Rhonda Frank of East Chezzetcook, who I introduced earlier, ran a home-based business teaching children art classes. Her business is called Artsy Fartsy, but in June, government's red tape shut Rhonda's business down despite the fact that there is another approved business on her lane. The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal refused to approve the lane for Rhonda's business.

My question is, why is Upanover Lane approved for one business, but prohibits a neighbouring business?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question from my colleague. I'm not familiar with the specific circumstances that my colleague has referred to, but I'd be more than happy to explore the circumstances that she has shared and follow through within the department.

MS. MACFARLANE: With all due respect to the minister, I find it a little uneasy to not believe that he doesn't know about this. It has been in the media. I will continue on with my questions, if you do want to pass them on to maybe another minister who may want to answer the questions.

In the last year, 9,000 jobs disappeared in Nova Scotia. Sadly, Rhonda's was one of them. In the recent Speech from the Throne the government failed to provide a jobs strategy, and when it comes to Rhonda's business the strategy seems to be due to reduced jobs in the province.

My question is, at a time when Nova Scotians are desperate to provide for their families and are moving to other provinces, why is this government smothering the business people's spirit and killing businesses in East Chezzetcook?

MR. FUREY: I'm surprised and disappointed at the same time in the comments of my colleague, in that we've worked extensively through my colleague's constituency office to provide extensive support on a number of issues in her riding, and we'll continue to do that. As I indicated earlier, I'm not privy to the specifics that my colleague has shared. I'm more than willing to continue to work with her to find solutions and understand the issues that she has referenced.

MS. MACFARLANE: I thank the minister, and it's true. His statement is very true. He has worked very hard with me to do a lot in my constituency and I thank him for that. (Applause)

And I thank him for being willing to meet, perhaps later on in the lobby, with Rhonda and her husband, Matthew, with regard to this situation, so thank you.

Rhonda Frank wants to offer a needed service to her community. She wants to play by the rules, and she wants her business to be treated the same way her neighbour's business has been treated. The question is will the minister do the right thing and loosen the government red tape and let Rhonda reopen her business? Thank you.

MR. FUREY: I'd be more than pleased to meet with my colleague and the individual she has referenced, following discussions this evening.

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

PREM. - DHA SCHEME: HEALTH CARE WORKERS - IMPACT

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

Over the past few days there have been many letters and phone calls to our MLA offices, coming in primarily from front-line health care workers who are very concerned about the government's DHA scheme, and some of these workers are openly talking about leaving Nova Scotia. We all know this is a poorly planned scheme filled with unknown consequences, and it's no wonder. Feeling under attack, many health care workers are wondering what's in store for them in terms of their future.

So I want to ask the Premier, how will driving health care workers out of the province improve our health care system?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. What's happening in this province is that we're actually hiring more health-care workers. And, again, I want to tell every health care worker across this province the benefits they've earned will remain.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, after Bill No. 37 and the poisoned relations that this government developed with nurses who were overworked and understaffed, it's no wonder they were forced to hire more nurses in the Province of Nova Scotia.

In the Law Amendments Committee we heard from a nurse whose name is Robin, and she recently moved home to Nova Scotia to take up a full-time nursing job here in Halifax. She told members of the Law Amendments Committee that she's having second thoughts now about that decision and she may in fact leave the province again because this government insists on violating her rights as a health care worker.

So my question to the Premier is this, what does the Premier have to say to Robin that will make her change her mind and stay here at home in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: It wasn't Bill No. 37 that allowed this government to hire more nurses - and exactly what I would tell Robin, and every other nurse in this province, unlike the previous government who would not listen to their cry from the floors across this province, this government listened and provided more support so that they could deliver front-line services to patients in this province.

MS. MACDONALD: Well, I'm proud of the time that I served as Minister of Health and Wellness and this member served as Minister of Health and Wellness, and during that time we never . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please. The honourable Interim Leader of the New Democratic Party has the floor.

MS. MACDONALD: During the time of the NDP Government, there never was a demonstration by nurses and health care workers, over there in that Chamber, threatening to leave the Province of Nova Scotia, and he should be ashamed - ashamed.

My final question to the Premier - Robin is here in the gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I know she'd be very open to talking to the Premier, and so my question is this, will the Premier meet with her after Question Period tonight to discuss why she might have to leave Nova Scotia and find work as a nurse somewhere else?

THE PREMIER: I want to congratulate and welcome Robin to Nova Scotia, congratulate her on her employment - and the reason there were no demonstrations under the last administration was that when the Cabinet made a decision, they just went to the 7th floor, and it got changed.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington. (Interruption)

PREM.: CABINET COMPETENCY - CONCERNS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: I know. That's quite an answer. Some of it was true, I don't know. I don't know where I am today.

Nova Scotians are beginning to raise concerns about the competency of members of this Cabinet. The Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage has been stripped of responsibility regarding *Bluenose II*, the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education has revealed she wasn't even briefed on one of the most important pieces of labour legislation that this province has seen in years, and yesterday and today, the Minister of Health and Wellness went missing for hours on end.

My question to the Premier is, does the Premier share in concerns being expressed about the competency of his Cabinet? If not, why won't he just let them do their jobs?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely thrilled that when I travel this province, Nova Scotians congratulate me on the great quality of the Cabinet that we have appointed. Unlike former ministers who would sit in this House, our ministers are actually in their offices working on behalf of Nova Scotians.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: When the Minister of Community Services was fending off questions regarding her questionable appointments to the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Premier took the calls. When the Minister of Natural Resources was questioned in this place about a taxpayer-funded getaway with the member for Kings South, the Premier's right-hand man, the Government House Leader, jumped to his feet to

answer the questions. And when the hard questions started coming, once again it was the Government House Leader taking the heat because the Minister of Health and Wellness had to deal with “some matters relating to his department.” I will table that as well.

My question to the Premier is, why doesn't the Premier have enough confidence in the members of his own Cabinet to let them speak on their own issues?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm absolutely thrilled at the quality of the men and women who are in this Cabinet. They are a great reflection of Nova Scotians and I'm very proud of the work they're doing on behalf of all of Nova Scotia.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: If Nova Scotians can't hear from their ministers, they should at least be informed of what kind of work they're working on. Yesterday, the Government House Leader told us the Minister of Health and Wellness wasn't available to discuss his legislation, the biggest health bill to come before this House and before the province in years and years, if not decades, because he was busy dealing with departmental issues. It must have been something pretty important to the significance of Nova Scotians.

My question to the Premier is, will he inform the House of what matters the Minister of Health and Wellness has been dealing with that are so concerning to Nova Scotians that he avoided that topic of health reform all day long?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the minister was available to the media. But I do want to say that at the beginning of the question, he is criticizing the fact that we don't let them do anything, and now he's asking me to meddle in what they've been doing. So, Mr. Speaker, what does he want?

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

LAE - LBR. RELATIONS: MIN. - RESPONSIBILITY CONFIRM

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. In this House yesterday, the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education explained to us that she was not responsible for the most sweeping and controversial piece of labour legislation this province has seen in decades.

I've got a simple question to the minister then, through you, Mr. Speaker. If she is no longer in charge of labour relations for the province, then who is?

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. As the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, I respect the principles of collective bargaining. It's also my role to ensure that bargaining unfolds in a way that doesn't negatively affect the health and safety of Nova Scotians and is done in a way that is efficient and effective.

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for the non-answer. You'd think with that type of rhetoric coming from the Liberal benches that we've never had a union merger before. The fact is that the labour act already includes provisions that outline how union mergers can take place in Nova Scotia - under Section 31 of the Trade Union Act, the way the government can be sure the legislation will hold up to any Charter challenge.

I guess my question to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education is, on this vital piece of legislation, who in her department advised the Department of Health and Wellness that the minister can be the one who would pick arbitrators in labour disputes?

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and Wellness has been leading a reform and that's what this bill is about. I think I've made it clear by my past behavior that I don't shy away from controversial legislation, and it makes sense in this particular case to have the Minister of Health and Wellness be the lead on this file. Thank you.

MR. CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, whether she thinks or doesn't think that she shies away, the reality is that this is an unprecedented piece of legislation where you would provide for the appointment of mediators and arbitrators out of the Department of Health and Wellness, not where it usually sits with the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, through Section 31, where the board would choose such things. But apparently, this minister is quite happy to abdicate her role as minister to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

My question to the minister - the Minister of Health and Wellness wasn't able to talk to the union leaders yesterday. Why didn't she take it upon herself then to take the lead and talk to those union leaders about associated bargaining?

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I find it pretty rich. His government ran their labour negotiations out of One Government Place. It was the boys in short pants that were making the decisions, not their Cabinet and not their caucus. I'm not taking any lessons from him.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**COM. SERV.: RIVERVIEW ADULT RESIDENTIAL CTR. (PHASE 3)
- CANCELLATION**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question today is for the Minister of Community Services. The Liberal Government recently cancelled the third phase of the Riverview Adult Residential Centre renovation project after two phases were complete. The contractor has a signed contract, the workers are on the grounds and many of the materials were on-site, ready to begin construction of phase three. Despite that, the Minister of Community Services scrapped the project.

My question to the minister is, how much has it cost taxpayers for the government to pull the plug on phase three of the Riverview project at this late stage?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: I thank the honourable member for that question. Phase three, and in fact the first two phases, were implemented back in 2008 when the project started. Back in 2008, the Roadmap for Transforming the Nova Scotia Services to Persons with Disabilities Program didn't exist. It didn't exist in people's minds and it certainly didn't exist on paper. When the previous government, through my predecessor, sat down with the community and worked on that amazing document, which will eventually become legislation, we had to start looking at the different construction phases that were happening through the large institutionalized care facilities in Nova Scotia.

It does not make sense to build more institutionalized care when we're moving to a model that actually puts people into the community so that they have choice directed, they have the ability in line with the self-directed care that they would want, which is very much in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Cancelling it really didn't stop 32 beds. The actual construction of that phase three will still finish, but I have said repeatedly, under this minister, there will not be one more institutionalized bed built in the Province of Nova Scotia due to that road map, which we have adhered to every step of the way.

MR. HOUSTON: I thank the minister for her response; I won't say "answer". But I think what we're hearing is that the new government has a new plan. The sad part of that, Mr. Speaker, is when you have a project that is over half done, you finish it; you finish what you started. The problem is we all know in this House that when you break a contract, there is a penalty. When you order custom materials that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars that you now can't use because you are abandoning a project, at some point you pass the tipping point, you do what's right, you finish the project, you use the asset in a way that is effective for the taxpayers of Nova Scotia.

So I will ask the question again. I will ask the question. I don't know that the cost matters to the minister but I know it matters to Nova Scotians, so I will ask, we are paying cancellation fees, we have purchased useless equipment; how much does it cost the taxpayers of Nova Scotia to cancel the contract, abandon the project and throw away the equipment?

MS. BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, I have begged the member opposite to actually read the road map and to know that we are in a situation in this province where building more institutionalized care beds is truly unsustainable. Not only is it unsustainable for the Nova Scotia taxpayer, it is not the right thing to do. We are doing the right thing by not adding any more beds to this province. I invite the colleague across the floor to read the road map and to tell the families of people, who want their loved ones with intellectual and physical disabilities, how much it's worth. You tell them, you put a cost on it.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the issue at hand is you have a project that is over half finished, you finish it and then you have an asset for the Province of Nova Scotia. By walking away from this, you are walking away from money, you have no asset. If you finish the asset, you can change the use case all you want and I'll support you in that. But to not finish the asset and to walk away is a waste of taxpayers' money and every member in this House can sit here right now and think of two or three constituents who have been told no, we don't have the money from this department - I can think of Roots for Youth and Summer Street.

This is millions of dollars wasted. It may not matter to the minister, the road map has no money to implement it, but this minister has decided to pay over \$1 million to walk away from this. I think that's a shame for the people of Nova Scotia, it's the wrong thing to do, I wish she would reconsider.

MS. BERNARD: I absolutely won't reconsider to build a wing of an institutionalized care facility in Nova Scotia that's going to remain empty. You may want to govern that way, but we're not going to.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: DHA AMALGAMATION - BUDGET

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Earlier this Spring the NDP requested and received information from the Department of Health and Wellness that indicated the department had identified various district health authorities' amalgamation costing categories and I'll table that chart that we received.

When I asked the minister what his budget was, six months ago, for the district health authority amalgamation, he either didn't know at the time or didn't want to say. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm back again with the very same question. I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness, what is the budget for the district health authorities' amalgamation?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, it's an important question the member opposite asks. As the former minister knows from FOIPOP information, we have actually been able to do most of the work in-house, meaning in the Department of Health and Wellness for the transition team and for all of the costs associated with the merger to date, even with the first phase of SAP, which will bring together the accounting platform for the province - all of that is actually within the budget of the Health and Wellness Department to be able to execute this year, which, as the former minister knows, was part of shared services that they brought into play in 2012, and that process continues.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, we still didn't get a figure from him, or I haven't got a figure from him. I do have some concerns with his answer. He mentioned I should know some information because of FOIPOP information that we received. That's the concern we have. Nova Scotians want to know. The Premier stood up, prior to being the Premier, saying that they would be the most transparent government - I think he said in Canada, or ever - so that's where I am concerned. We had to ask for that information to be given to our caucus to try to find out how much this amalgamation is going to cost taxpayers, how much money is going to be diverted from front-line health care to go to the amalgamation.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question there is a cost associated with the district health authorities amalgamation. According to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board at her most recent budget update, there is also funding allocated for the amalgamation in this year's budget. So I'll ask the minister again, how much money is the government budgeting for the district health authorities amalgamation?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite needs to know is that within the health care operational budget this year, a small amount of that budget is going to work on the merger. Really, I believe what the member opposite is really asking or wants to know is that at a minimum, in the first year of operation, 2015-16, we will save a minimum of \$5 million.

MR. DAVID WILSON: This might be cynical, Mr. Speaker, but I do not believe him because history has dictated across this province, provincial governments that have done this - they haven't seen those savings. So with all due respect, I don't believe that is going to be true here in Nova Scotia.

I hope that the amount of money being spent by security over the last two days is included in the amalgamation of the district health authorities, dealing with Bill No. 1, because I haven't seen, in the 11 years that I've been here, the amount of security and additional personnel on the grounds of this Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to ask the minister, will the minister provide a detailed budget of all costs associated with the restructuring and put it online, not just for me, Mr. Speaker, but for all Nova Scotians, to see the true cost of what this amalgamation of the district health authorities is going to cost?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, that's a very fair question and I respect a former Minister of Health and Wellness. At the end of the fiscal year we will be able to identify how much was spent in 2014-15 fiscal year and we will, indeed, put that online.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

AGRIC.: SMALL PROCESSING FACILITIES - SHUTDOWNS

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Agriculture. Gordon Fraser has been processing turkeys successfully for 36 years without an issue, so people across Pictou County and beyond were shocked when Gordon's operation was abruptly shut down in early September. The difficulty with the shutdown of Gordon Fraser's turkey processing operation is that under a previous government in the 1990s, a senior government official gave him approval to keep processing meat and poultry on his premises because the government recognized the need for small processing in small communities. I'll table that document.

My question for the minister is, why are Gordon and other small processing facilities being targeted and shut down?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I'd like to clarify that that individual - and I won't comment on that particular case - hasn't been shut down. Turkey farmers of Nova Scotia, under the Act, have the authority to stop processing of turkeys on unlicensed facilities and that gentleman operates an unlicensed facility.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Warden of Antigonish County, Owen McCarron, along with Pictou Municipal Councillor Chester Dewar, are very concerned about the impact such closures are having on small, local feed stores and businesses. I'll table that document.

Rural small businesses are the engine of many rural Nova Scotian communities. Unnecessary government red tape prevents businesses from growing and creating jobs. Will the minister sit down with Nova Scotia's small turkey processors to reach a compromise that satisfies public safety concerns and allows processors to keep operating?

MR. COLWELL: Thank you very much, and indeed we have offered to work with the gentleman in question, and anyone else who is processing meat in the province to get them qualified under the provincial system or if, indeed, they want to go as far as the federal system we will work with them. There is no charge for that, but they have to approach us first - and that hasn't happened.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, the butchers like Gordon Fraser process a small number of turkeys each year. The way he does business is much different from processors who butcher thousands and thousands of birds each year. Will the minister admit the regulations that govern large meat processing facilities may not be appropriate for smaller operations like Gordon Fraser?

MR. COLWELL: Unfortunately the size of the facility has nothing to do with health and safety. There are serious concerns about cross-contamination from bacteria - we've seen very serious health risks posed by improper testing and proving that you have a

safe operating facility to produce products, especially meat products in a province. There is a real danger of cross-contamination when you have processing of beef, lamb, and poultry in the same facility. It's serious, it could be a potentially serious health risk and indeed the individuals who are doing this without the proper certification by the province or the federal government are probably under a very serious possibility of a lawsuit if indeed somebody gets ill or dies.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou-East.

NAT. RES. - JIGGY JAVA: MELMERBY BEACH - APPLICATION

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Mr. Minister, your department put a damper on entrepreneurship at Melmerby Beach this summer. It denied Jacinthe Bennett and her business, Jiggy Java, the opportunity to become a mobile food vendor. Jacinthe sent her application to the department in January and she waited six months - six months - before she received a 59-page document that she was to fill out. Mr. Speaker, all she wanted to do was sell apples, bananas and few other snacks like Gatorade at Melmerby Beach. Talk about red tape.

My question to the minister is, why the six-month delay, and why a 59-page document to consider opening Jiggy Java?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, just to clarify, there wasn't a six-month delay in the response to this application. This particular person in question sent in a proposal months in advance before a request for proposals was initiated. As the member would know, we have to have a fair, accountable, transparent process when it comes to tenders in this province and that process was open for two weeks, we received responses. This particular applicant did not meet the criteria as outlined by the department; however our staff did indicate they would sit down with her and go over that process and better prepare her for the next round of RFPs.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I think the minister would know that it was her proposal, that she took the initiative, she came up with the idea, she took the initiative to send a proposal to the department. That proposal was met with nothing for three months before the minister got involved, at my request, and which was ultimately followed up by an RFP two months later. So, the six months was the result of her taking a step and she was shut down.

Mr. Speaker, more than 17,000 Nova Scotians left our province in the past year. Why does the government want to make it so difficult for individuals wanting to make a living to stay in Nova Scotia? We have Jacinthe, we have Rhonda sitting in the gallery tonight. How can a person who simply wanted to sell healthy snack food, submitted a proposal, took the initiative, how can that person be asked to fill out a 59-page document to

then be told that she doesn't meet the criteria? That's just silly, and I want to know what the minister thinks about that.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, in fact our department sent out a request for proposals for food vendors in various parks during that time, it wasn't at this particular request. There were other vendors who did provide successful bids through that process, and that speaks to me that the process does work. We do have successful applicants. In this particular case the applicant did not meet the criteria as outlined by the department, however, the department has indicated to her they would sit down with her - this might have happened already - to go over that process and to better prepare the applicant for the next round of RFPs that are initiated.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I do thank the minister for that answer and I hope the minister can understand the point I'm trying to make about government bureaucracy and red tape. Surely this is not a situation that the minister would want to see happen again in his department so I do appreciate that he is standing up defending his department's actions, but what I think we'd rather see as Nova Scotians is to know this isn't going to happen again. I would ask the minister, has he taken any action to change the procedures in his department to make sure that something like this doesn't happen again, where somebody submits the proposal to them and it sits unresponded to for three months?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, just to clarify, the RFP process was open for two weeks. We received bids throughout those two weeks and we responded in a very timely manner after. It was not three months as the member has indicated.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: EIBI PROG. - WAIT LIST

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Over the years governments have made investments in Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention programs, more commonly known as EIBI. I also know that the Minister of Health and Wellness is very familiar with this program and some of the ongoing challenges of parents including wait times for assessments. I've written the minister, and I thank him for his responses each time, but I also want to ask a couple of follow up questions this evening.

The minister stated in a recent response that for children who are starting school in September 2014 there are no children who will age out before receiving EIBI. Having said that, there are families who have decided to delay school entry in order to ensure their children receive treatment. My question to the minister is, can the minister tell us how many families are waiting to access this program and how many have made the decision to delay their child starting school this Fall?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to say to the member opposite, the member for Hants West, that he has brought this issue to my attention as he advocated for a family, in particular, who had a child whose parents wanted them to be in school this September and they hadn't received EIBI. One of the realities that is facing us in the province, where we now have 1 in 64 children who are diagnosed somewhere on the autism spectrum who require EIBI before going to school, we are now in the area of about 150 children who are waiting to receive EIBI. Some are in that final year now before they would go to school. Every attempt is going to be made to have those children receive EIBI.

A number of developments, along with the rise in children being diagnosed, is the fact that we probably need more therapists in the province. We also had an occasion last year where I think about four therapists went out on pregnancy leave all at the same time, which really put us behind. We are now gathering a group of the experts from across the province to outline a stronger plan for the future.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer. Given the number of families and children affected by this wait time issue, does the minister have any data that would indicate what kind of positive or negative effects these delays have on those children who are kept back a year?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, that is a very good question. We know that we are only providing EIBI and we're actually very strong and very much better off than many provinces across the country in terms of delivering this. That's a question that really asks, have any longitudinal studies been done to determine if a child with autism is out of school for a year in order to get the program? That's a great question.

We are going to have a small group to take a look at and to see if, in fact, it is deleterious to the advance of the child in school, and we'll be gathering information around that. We have just put in place about 11 people who will outline, now, how the program should be delivered in the future. One of the real challenges that we are getting is that now a diagnosis of autism is actually taking place between one and two years of age. Again, another great advance, because early work with a therapist, also training parents who can pick up the program, I believe is, again, some of the work now that we need to incorporate in our future planning.

MR. PORTER: I know, and I believe many of the parents understand, the issue of money and resources, and unfortunately that always seems to be the case on many fronts. So I would ask the minister, and I know the minister understands as well, he spent a long time in this House as critic and certainly now as minister with some of the challenges that exist.

Mr. Speaker, my final question through you to the minister is, will there be any additional resources in the coming budget to assist these families in the ongoing challenges in the EIBI program?

MR. GLAVINE: Thank you very much to the member for Hants West. This is exactly what this high-calibre, committed to improving autism support programs in the province will be taking a look at. There are also some new developments in terms of providing assistance prior to going to school, and there are some aspects of the Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention therapy that can be provided at a lower cost, and also have very effective results. We are now into that period where we study this, and hopefully a recommendation before budget could be made in the coming year.

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

PREM. - HEALTH CARE SYSTEM: WORKERS' RIGHTS - EROSION

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. For the past 18.5 hours or so, we have had quite a number of presenters at our Law Amendments Committee. One of the presenters was Alexis Allen, a well-respected teacher and former president of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. She told the Law Amendments Committee that when Stephen Harper had come to government, he essentially said that he hoped that in a few years people wouldn't be able to recognize Canada. She said that she was very worried that in a few years, she would not be able to recognize Nova Scotia. So my question to the Premier is, why is the Premier so determined to erode the hard-won rights of people working in the health care system in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: I want to assure the honourable member that the hard-earned rights and benefits of workers across this province will not be affected under this bill. And one of the reasons why Alexis Allen may not be able to recognize Nova Scotia is this government is reinvesting in education while she sat silently while that government cut from it.

MS. MACDONALD: One of the last presenters at Law Amendments Committee was a staff worker from one of the health care unions, a person who has been representing laundry workers, cafeteria and maintenance workers. These, as we know, are the lowest paid worker in our health care system, and the system can't run effectively without the work they do. These workers are very concerned that this Liberal Government is coming after them next, with the privatization of the work they do.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is, will you reassure these workers that you're not coming after them next?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation actually provides workers in this province with more opportunity. Health care workers who are represented in one

health institution on one side of the street can't cross the street to work in another because they are represented by a different union. It absolutely makes no sense.

This is about giving people more opportunity. It's ensuring that the system will be there. Workers with rights that they've earned will be protected. This is about ensuring the future of the health care system in Nova Scotia.

MS. MACDONALD: It's just not true that workers can't move across the street to work in a different health care facility. We literally had hundreds of people in the Red Room who did just that and told us their stories about all the different settings they had worked in and had been members of different unions in, Mr. Speaker. So I don't know. The Premier doesn't understand how the health care system in the province works, obviously.

I have someone who the Premier could meet with, and she could help him understand the system a little better. In one of my previous questions the Premier would not say whether he would meet with Robin, the nurse who came back to Nova Scotia who is here tonight in the gallery.

I want to simply ask the Premier, will he or won't he meet with Robin one on one - one nurse, one conversation, Mr. Speaker?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Robin on coming to Nova Scotia. I want to congratulate her on the great work she does on behalf of the people of Nova Scotia. There's one thing on which I'm absolutely certain: one of the questions that was asked of her when she wanted a job in Nova Scotia, she wasn't asked what union she wanted to belong to. She was put in a union.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

LAE: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT - GOV'T. PROGS.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. The Ivany report highlighted the need to combat youth unemployment by working to ensure that by 2024 Nova Scotia's youth unemployment rate will be at or better than the national rate. Nationally, the youth unemployment has dropped in the last year; however, in Nova Scotia it has increased to 18.6 percent. That represents 13,600 young Nova Scotians. I'll table that. In the last year the national unemployment rate among youth has declined, while in Nova Scotia it has increased. This does not send a good message to our young people about a future in Nova Scotia.

My question to the minister is, why is the government sitting on its hands while more and more youth in this province are struggling to find work?

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would actually disagree with the premise of the honourable member's question. In fact, we're doing a number of things to help young people. For example, this past summer the ERDT added 250 summer jobs in rural areas to help Nova Scotian students pay for their studies.

We've doubled the money that has gone into the START program in the apprenticeship stream. The Minister of ERDT is about to announce the Graduate to Opportunities program. We have an expansion of co-op opportunities. We are enhancing the apprenticeship program; it is now being led by industry, so they've become full partners in this particular process, so that we'll have more apprentices hired.

Mr. Speaker, what we know is that only 25 per cent of businesses were actually participating in the apprenticeship program, and the reason they weren't getting involved is because they didn't feel they have a voice. We've given them that, and I'll be happy to give the member more examples in my next answer, because I don't want to speak for too long. Thank you.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the youth unemployment rate in New Brunswick sits well below that of Nova Scotia. While New Brunswick had managed to improve their youth unemployment, Nova Scotia has continued to decline under the watch of this government. At 18.6 per cent, Nova Scotia's youth unemployment rate is not only the highest in Atlantic Canada, it is the highest in the country.

My question through you to the minister is, will the government admit that its inability to produce a plan to attract business and youth has resulted in more and more young Nova Scotians leaving our province to find work?

MS. REGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you don't mind, I'll just continue my list. I would like to commend the Minister of the Public Service Commission; he has actually moved to remove the three-year experience requirement that previously existed for young people coming into the Public Service Commission. (Applause) It's a simple thing, but it actually means a lot.

I would also like to point out that we have instituted a graduate scholarship program and that puts between \$10,000 and \$15,000 into the hands of bright young Nova Scotians who are staying here to study and do research in important areas that are going to make a difference and actually spin off into companies here in Nova Scotia.

And then I'll continue with my next answer.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, thousands have moved away for work and may not be able to return anytime soon. When a panel of experts advised that developing a new shale gas industry could create up to 1,400 direct jobs, along with spinoff employment, this government said no after just three days, and I'll table that.

As our young people slowly give up on dreams of living and working here at home, the government states Nova Scotia is closed for business. Mr. Speaker, my question through you is, will the government commit to reversing job-killing policies like high taxes, stifling debt and a lack of business incentives to finally reverse this trend?

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to speak a bit right now about our sandbox project. We have four sandbox projects underway right now. They are done by the universities, in conjunction in some cases with NSCC. It's a collaborative effort among the universities. They're working with entrepreneurs and other smart people to get them together so that you have bright young people who have ideas, be they in IT or in other priority areas like the oil and gas industry, to work with entrepreneurs who have experience, to come with jobs for our young people for the future. I realize that we're all impatient - we'd like to have the jobs here overnight - but we are on our way. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

NAT. RES. - MINING: IMPROVEMENT - GOV'T. INTENTIONS

MR. JOHN LOHR: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. On his recent expensive trip to - pardon me, Mr. Speaker, that was yesterday's question. (Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, the mining industry in Nova Scotia operates under oppressive mineral exploration fees. John Wightman, the executive director of the Nova Scotia Prospectors Association, in an April 11th news release said, "The harm being caused to the industry by the fee increase is completely disproportional to the small amount of revenue being generated for the government." I will table that.

The global mining survey of mining executives released in March clearly showed Nova Scotia to be one of the least attractive jurisdictions in this country. The executives blamed provincial government policies for that reason, and I'll also table that information, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the minister is, what are the government's intentions to improve mining in Nova Scotia and to improve the outlook for global mining executives?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that for the first time in a generation in this province, our government is actually reviewing our Mineral Resources Act, all of the regulations surrounding the mining sector, including royalties, fees - everything that impacts that sector - and we're going to do it to ensure that there is regulatory certainty here in Nova Scotia so we can be a competitive jurisdiction and attract those great companies to our shores.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. In 2013, a government-commissioned study of Nova Scotia's mining and quarrying industry found that the industry lost 800 jobs and \$80 million in annual economic activity in the past five years. The Ivany Commission report highlights the need to provide a modern, responsive legislative framework to support and promote sustainable mineral resource management. I understand the minister says he's going to be working on that.

Will the minister tell us whether they will remove the excise fuel tax?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I think our Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has already made that commitment to the industry that we will be moving forward with that campaign commitment.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, in 2013, fee hikes cost prospectors 53 per cent more here in Nova Scotia than in New Brunswick and an incredible 621 per cent more than in Newfoundland. I have that in a table - actually, that's in table one, which I already gave the Page.

The executive director of the Mining Association of Nova Scotia said many prospectors are simply giving up their claims because they cannot afford them. Will this government commit to reducing these fees?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, what we have done is actually modernize the fee-staking claims process. Before, we had a paper-based process whereby prospectors would have to come to Halifax and submit those claims. We are now bringing our department into the 21st Century with a state-of-the-art modern system that is going to improve our ability to serve those prospectors in this province. I'm happy to say that we're doing it while keeping all of those fees associated with getting claims and maintaining claims competitive with all surrounding jurisdictions.

MR. SPEAKER: Going into the home stretch.

The honourable member for Pictou West.

ERDT: JOB LOSSES REASONS

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Thank goodness. Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. This government is approaching their one-year mark, one year after they promised to put Nova Scotians first. Unfortunately, thousands of Nova Scotians are left wondering when they can expect delivery on this promise.

The latest Statistics Canada figures indicate that Nova Scotia has 9,000 fewer jobs within this past year. I will table that document. My question is, why do Nova Scotians continue to see job losses rather than job growth?

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, we were elected on a platform to take the decision making around investments on behalf of Nova Scotians through Economic and Rural Development and Tourism out of the Cabinet Room and back into the hands of private industry at arm's-length of government to make those investment decisions on our behalf. NSBI has been making very strategic investments through its payroll rebate system, which will provide some very exciting opportunities both for Nova Scotia companies to grow as well as new companies who will be moving into our province to create jobs right here.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, the Nova Scotia Department of Finance and Treasury Board has indicated that only one region of Nova Scotia has grown since this Liberal Government came to power, and I've tabled that document. The Ivany Commission told Nova Scotians that it is now or never to turn around our economy. The Liberal Government's inability to create jobs and produce a comprehensive jobs strategy highlights its incompetence. While thousands and thousands of Nova Scotians lose their jobs, why has the government sat idly by and done nothing?

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. But Nova Scotians have clearly sent a message that they expect private industry to be able to lead economic growth in this province and that the days of the Cabinet deciding which companies would be the winners and losers were going to come to an end. That has happened under us.

One area of the province which has faced some economic challenges that we've been addressing has been Pictou County. The message that we're getting from business leaders and others in Pictou County is that the biggest hindrance to economic development in that area is none other than the members for Pictou West and Pictou East.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I should take the high road on this, but I don't know how the minister knows that when he has been to Pictou a couple of times and hasn't even stopped into the tourist bureau there.

In 2014 the year-to-date figures include that Nova Scotia had the highest job loss in the Maritime Provinces, and I've tabled that. The province's fiscal situation worsened under their watch, while the Liberals remained committed to job-killing policies such as high taxes and banning an entire industry. The Liberal Government has wasted its first year in power, and the economy and citizens are paying the price.

Having failed to create jobs, will the government produce a comprehensive, immediate job-creation plan for Nova Scotia before one more job is lost?

MR. SAMSON: We heard about the challenges facing Pictou County. We went down, four ministers, to meet with the community, meet with municipal leaders. We decided that rather than have someone from Halifax or elsewhere go down and tell Pictou County what was good for economic growth in their area - we instead asked Sean Murray from Advocate Printing and Publishing to lead a group and to find out what would be the best solutions for Pictou County, with a made-in-Pictou solution.

Mr. Speaker, what he has found, and one of the challenges that he is hearing from business leaders, is that while they all have great ideas, they are reluctant to come forward because they know the minute they come forward with any ideas for Pictou County, they will have scorn heaped on them by the members for Pictou West and Pictou East.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

SNSMR: ACCESS N.S. WINDSOR - OPERATING HOURS

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I'll take the opportunity to ask a question. I appreciate the opportunity. My question through you is to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

The minister would know that in the Town of Windsor, an area that I represent, we have an Access Nova Scotia that has been open for some time now. It's open two half-days a week - four hours Tuesdays and Thursdays. We have a considerable number of people who have come to my office over the years, and I've asked the last number of governments - I think probably including our own at the time when I came here - to assess or reassess that location for potentially expanding the hours there.

I would ask the minister, is there any data that supports . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Hants West has the floor.

MR. PORTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. I would ask the honourable minister, is there data that would be available to support, one way or the other, it staying as is, or the potential for another half day or a day as it currently exists?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. We are presently in the process of a facility strategy where we're assessing client use of facilities across the province. I don't have the data specific to the Windsor Access facility with me, but I would be more than willing to provide that information to my colleague at an appropriate time that is convenient for him.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the answer. I've been told that the data is somewhere. It was calculated at some point back a while ago; it was gathered. I'm not sure

where it is - I haven't FOIPOPed, but I think I have written in the past. Probably, had I thought about it, I would have brought that information with me this evening with regard to letters that I have written, to indicate that this has been an ongoing issue.

Many, many people - not just one or two, but many people over the years have come into my office to ask about this and the potential for it being extended. We have to drive, unfortunately, into Sackville or Halifax or Coldbrook - they've got a lovely new location in Coldbrook. I was there. I took my daughter there a few months ago to get her licence. We had to go to Coldbrook because of the day, and of course when you pass the test, they want to run right down these days and get their licence. So albeit a lovely location, there were very few people there. I was quite surprised, and thought, here we are again - the two or three of the people who were there were actually from my constituency.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to have the question asked, and I know we're running out of time. I would thank the minister if he could provide some information to myself that I could share with others, and look at this.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Time allotted for Oral Questions put by Members to Ministers has expired.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please revert to the order of business, Government Notices of Motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 46

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

Whereas on October 1st communities across Canada will join together to recognize National Seniors Day; and

Whereas seniors in Nova Scotia are present in all aspects of our lives; they are our parents, our grandparents, our teachers, our volunteers, our mentors, our neighbours, and our co-workers; and

Whereas National Seniors Day focuses on celebrating and recognizing the contributions made by seniors to better their communities, families, and workplaces;

Therefore be it resolved, as Minister of Seniors, I hereby proclaim October 1st as National Seniors Day and urge Nova Scotians to recognize the crucial role played by older citizens in our community.

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

MR. SPEAKER: We are asking the House to pass the resolution to proclaim.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, with the unanimous consent of the House, could you please revert to the order of business, Introduction of Bills.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 11 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 10 of the Acts of 1994-95. The Workers' Compensation Act. (Hon. David Wilson)

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Just minus those couple of minutes off the first time and we'll just keep on going from there.

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 Official Opposition.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 3.

Bill No. 3 - Red Tape Reduction Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise to address this bill, An Act to Reduce the Regulatory Burden in Nova Scotia. I believe it is an important bill as all my life having run small businesses, a number of different small businesses, I think it's one that I'm qualified to address from experience. There is an avalanche of paperwork, which is a constant in the way of any small business owner, anyone hoping to start a small business. That avalanche of paperwork is in fact a combination of municipal, provincial, and federal various types of paperwork that have to be done - forms and so on. In fact, I heard a while ago that someone said to start a new business there were something like 40 or 50 new forms that had to be filled out in certain cases, in certain types of businesses.

That's time that could be better spent on all kinds of other things. The regulatory burden that that places on our business in Nova Scotia is killing jobs. Consistently, Canadian Federation of Independent Business members in Nova Scotia place government regulations and red tape among their major cost constraints, and today in Question Period we heard about a requirement for someone to fill out a 59-page form. Red tape means unnecessary or redundant regulations that impact business requirements, that create extra cost.

During the election, I visited one constituent who told me of a case where she was running a daycare, and they were inspected. They had plates that had a Disney motif on them in their daycare, and the inspector demanded that the plates be replaced since they did not meet the regulations; you could not have a commercial motif in your daycare. She actually had to replace about \$200 worth of plates right there on the spot.

Now, this happened in the previous government, but it is an unbelievable example of government red tape. To think that someone could be an inspector, attracting whatever type of salary that that inspector would be getting, and go to a daycare, which is not a highly profitable business, usually - it just isn't. There are very high costs in a daycare, and to have to be asked to replace plates is just mind-boggling.

I have many more examples like that. Recently I had a constituent come into my office. He has a sandpit - a 25-acre lot, and he has a 3.99-hectare sandpit on that, which is about 10 acres, and he wants to use the rest of the lot for a sandpit. In order to go to the next level he has to meet a number of environmental processes. In order to do that - I said to this gentleman, I said, are you doing that yourself? He said, no, I can't possibly do that, I have a consultant helping me go through that process. In other words, the process to go and get the environmental review done, to have his sandpit go up to the next level, was so difficult that

he needed to have a consultant. This is a clever fellow who runs a successful business in a whole different sector. There are two examples right there of the type of red tape which sometimes defies understanding.

In my own family life, I've had a brother-in-law who, at a very young age of 24, started a very successful restaurant in Kentville called Peppercorns. Some of you may remember that if you were in Kentville; this was about 10 years ago. Because of the red tape requirements - which, to be quite frank, at 24, he was a very excellent restaurateur, but managing the paperwork was a daunting challenge. Because of the challenges of managing that paperwork for his restaurant, basically, that restaurant went broke. He lost control of the paperwork side, which was very unfortunate. He was very talented with food and maybe not as talented with paperwork.

In fact, it would bring up a point that in many cases with small businesses, the skills needed in a small business are vast. When you run your own small business - I can say that as a farmer, I'm my own welder, I'm my own plumber, I'm my own electrician, I'm my own tractor mechanic, I'm my own human resource manager, I'm my own paperwork manager, and the daunting challenges to run a small business with a few people in it.

This is where this comes in. Sometimes the person who is running that business might have skills with preparing food or being a mechanic or whatever, but it's rare to find a person who has the skills in all of these areas to do this. So this bill, the Red Tape Reduction Act, is an important bill for business. We know that in our province over 90 per cent of our small businesses have less than 50 employees - in other words, very small, they are small businesses. That's the kind of business I've run all my life; in fact a farm is a small business.

In my farming life we've had to deal with many, many types of regulations. I will say that I don't believe that all of the regulations and rules and all the red tape - if you call it red tape that's a negative word, but in some cases these things are good, as we see increased safety to meet the requirements for occupational health and safety. In food safety I believe these requirements, which in our own farm and in the farms around the province, we've had to meet those. But it is a daunting challenge.

Again, as I would say, the cost of doing that is significant to small businesses. Recently I had a farmer friend, Greg Gerrits of Elmridge Farm - a well-known vendor here in the Halifax Farmers' Market, one of the most successful vendors - complained about the red tape he had to deal with and he estimated it was costing him about \$25,000 a year to deal with all that red tape. My estimation of what he was saying is that he was telling me the truth; there was no exaggeration in that. That's a small family farm, so the government needs to be aware of that.

One of the issues is that we have multiple departments having multiple types of regulations and rules. I believe there needs to be oversight in the whole thing - we cannot

have one department asking for one set of information and another department asking for very similar sets of information. Or maybe we know that government has that information already and we've often dealt with that when we fill in - and this is a federal example but me, as a farmer, when I fill out my federal income tax, I have to give fairly detailed information about what crops we grew. Then, later on, we'll get a call from Statistics Canada wanting to know what crops we grew.

In my mind - and I realize there are reasons why in some cases in the federal government one department doesn't speak to another department, that's the way it seems. So I have to go through this process with Statistics Canada of explaining everything that I know Revenue Canada already knows. Revenue Canada, in fact, has way more information than Statistics Canada will get.

This type of thing drives us crazy. As farmers, we don't see the distinction between one department and another department in government; we think the government has that information.

It also is a problem with municipal regulations and provincial regulations. There are so many different municipal regulations that small businesses have to deal with. I realize that this provincial government, I think, has some burden of responsibility to try to clean that up a little bit, too, so that there are not so many different forms and applications one has to fill out.

In our business life my wife was a very successful retailer. She has a business that you may have heard of, the Jelly Cupboard in New Minas - she had that for many years and we sold that business last March; we also had a business in the mall called the Tin Candle, and we successfully sold that business, too; we had a scrapbooking shop which was successfully sold, too, and carried on; and we had a café which was less successful, I will say. We never did sell that one, that one just closed up.

We've run a number of different businesses and I can tell you that very often it's into the wee hours of the morning that you are dealing with the paperwork, and a lot of this is government-triggered paperwork. It's not all bad paperwork, but some of it is very onerous.

What is happening, I believe, in our society is we're living in the age of information and everybody wants more information. As a farmer, I now have to track when we harvest our crops - we put a lot number on every day's production. We'll have six different lot numbers maybe generated in a day and then if you buy some of my summer savory, because my farm is Farmer John's Herbs, later on we can give you that information right to the detail - we can look at the lot number on a package in Sobeys and know what lot number that came from.

So tracking all that information is sort of part of the realities of modern farming. We live in the age of information; everybody wants information. We're going to soon be at the time - and we're nearly there - where you'll be able to go into your grocery store, use your phone to scan one of those square codes and know exactly where that product came from, that type of information.

One of the bright hopes is that as we become more - and this is starting to come to the farm where the farmer is going to have the ability to track those lot numbers on his phone, an iPhone app. We live in the age of information and the government wants information, and it is just a lot.

One department doesn't realize that when they add their request in for information, it is just being added on to all these other requests for information, so this bill to reduce the regulatory burden is asking that the government, the Executive Council, develop ways of changing the regulatory structure in the province to reduce the regulatory burden, to work with the department so that the government can reduce the regulatory burden in the province and request the departments to prepare any reports required by the minister for the purpose of this bill.

This is asking departments to review, every five years, their own request for information. And I would say that what we need here is to have consolidation of some of these regulatory requirements so that we are not constantly being asked to fill out different sets of paperwork. As I said, from my point of view, dealing with the federal government, in my opinion the federal government already had every single bit of information they could possibly want on me in Revenue Canada's forms, yet they would be calling me up asking for crop harvest figures. And this goes on, on a regular basis. We're talking about fairly in-depth phone calls two or three times a year, and they are very persistent. It's easy to put them off and say, "No, I can't do it right now," but they don't forget. They keep coming back at you until they have a time to do that with you.

So I believe this bill is something that is sorely needed in our province. The goal of cutting red tape, I believe, was mentioned in the Liberal platform, but there was no mention of cutting red tape, or a jobs plan, in the Speech from the Throne. This was something that we saw was lacking in the Speech from the Throne a few days ago. We believe that Nova Scotia once was a leader in business and the government used to be interested in helping job creators get out from under the mountain of paper work and get on with the job of growing their business. We don't see that happening right now. We think the government needs to take a look at how it is operating.

So as I said, this bill will require a thorough review of the regulations every five years, require the minister to report to the House on progress being made to reduce red tape. I think it strikes the right balance. As I said in my example of the day care, some of this stuff is just unbelievable, like asking a daycare to get rid of their Disney-motif plates

because it is a commercial motif. Does that make any sense? As I said, I believe there needs to be an effort made to consolidate the requirements of different departments.

How long do I have to go? I have a minute and a half.

I actually think this needs to be done municipally, provincially and federally. I realize that is beyond the scope of this House to do that independently, but I do think that that needs to be done. There are pretty onerous requirements on the municipal level and, obviously, as I've said, on the federal level, too. It's coming from every direction and when one department adds in something, what they don't appreciate is the fact that at some point, you reach the tipping point and you're forcing small businesses out . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Your time has expired.

The honourable Interim Leader of the New Democratic Party.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: I am pleased to have an opportunity to rise in my place and speak to Bill No. 3, an Act to Reduce the Regulatory Burden in Nova Scotia, or what more colloquially is known as the Red Tape Reduction Act.

Our caucus would support this bill. This is a sensible bill. We all know that there are certainly many times we meet people in the small and medium business community in particular and they talk about the burden the multiple layers of regulatory requirement places on them, especially if they're a small enterprise, and it can add a great deal of cost into their functioning as a business. It may, at times, interfere with their ability to expand and hire new people, to engage in export activity, which is something we all know that we need to be doing more of here in Nova Scotia.

Over the years, there have been several different initiatives under different governments to reduce the regulatory burden. I know that when the NDP was in government, there was a lot of work being done, particularly in the Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations area, to look at having a portal of some kind where businesses could have a single entry point into various government departments to meet the vast array of requirements that they might have to meet over a number of different departments.

Certainly, there were a number of different departments that were involved in looking at how to reduce red tape and make it more possible for business to function in an effective way, especially in today's world. We live in a world today where we really need business to be agile to take advantage of opportunities that come their way. Too much regulation or duplication of regulation, what we sometimes think about as bureaucratic runaround, having to go to multiple departments, multiple levels of government for permits and approvals - surely there must be some way to simplify these processes so that our businesses can function in a much more effective and agile way.

I'm not going to belabour the point that this is something that is necessary. It's something that we certainly have supported in the past, something that needs to be done in the future.

It's one of the things I have to say I'm surprised that the current government hasn't been busy on. We haven't heard anything about their activity with respect to this particular issue. They're a Party that really focused a lot on their connection to the small business community in particular. They have many, many small business owners and operators in their caucus - in fact, they're perhaps characterized more by the voice of small business in some way than any other government that I can remember. So I think the expectation is that this would be a government that would be friendly to the small business community and that they would, in fact, be taking these kinds of initiatives.

The bill provides for a regular review. I think we've all met with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and this is always top of mind for them. In the last number of years that I've been in the process of meeting with them, they certainly have expressed concern that we haven't stayed on top of this issue in the way that we should.

I would encourage the government to consider supporting this bill. We certainly would be in favour and support of this bill. We have no difficulty with that. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Thank you Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to speak in opposition to this bill. I'd like to spend the time allotted this evening - I believe I have 15 minutes - outlining all of the government's efforts to streamline the regulatory structure of the province and to make things easier for businesses in general, and small businesses in particular, but unfortunately, with that little bit of time, I wouldn't even be able to touch on all of those efforts that are being made. (Interruption)

I do want to begin by using a couple of clichés as examples to illustrate some of my points. One thing I'd certainly say, Madam Speaker, in this case, is that red tape is definitely in the eye of the beholder. We have many successful businesses in this province of all sizes that exist, and in fact prosper, within our existing regulatory framework. Those businesses are not held back by what my colleague from Pictou East calls red tape. They certainly are capable of navigating their way through the system and do so quite successfully with the co-operation of civil servants across the province.

I find from my own personal experience, and particularly from some of the examples that we have heard from the honourable member from the Official Opposition who spoke on this tonight, that many of the examples of red tape that we hear of are in fact quite vague and anecdotal.

Another cliché, if you will, that would describe, I think, the situation in this province is one person's red tape is another person's protection against dangers that exist in our society to things like health and the environment, or in fact economic harm that may result in the absence of that regulation. It's just a simple fact, Madam Speaker, that regulation is a necessary part of our society and that we are all better off because of regulation and can prosper in a fair and well managed regulatory environment.

I'll spend a minute talking about the bill and due to its size it probably won't take much more than a minute or so. To me it's a weak attempt to upstage the real action that is being taken by this government to actually streamline the work that is being done by the hard-working civil servants in this province who administer our regulatory and other government agencies.

You don't have to go too far down the page to find the first major flaw in the bill and it's in the second clause. I couldn't find much wrong with the first clause but in the second clause of the bill we introduce the concept of the minister being the person who is responsible for the conduct of the regulatory review, if you will, that is set out in here.

We have an Executive Council here, the Ministers of the Crown who are each charged with the work of a particular department and I know from my experience of working with each of them that they have plenty to do. I think to take a task of this magnitude and try to put it all off on one minister, we're setting up for failure. I guess if that is where this matter went and if is the way that the Act was administered, I would delegate the member for Pictou East to deliver the message to the lucky winner of the Regulatory Red Tape Review Minister that they would have those duties in addition to their current duties that they are already performing.

What I will do is I will outline some of the efforts that have been undertaken over the last 11 months by our government - 11 months plus - to work on the issue of regulatory difficulties and regulatory red tape, if you would like to call it that. I think the one that's a good example to hold out, as I say I can't go into all of them though because there are thousands of regulations in Nova Scotia, but the Department of Finance and Treasury Board, in particular, with the help of other members, has undertaken a regulatory and tax review. Hundreds of Nova Scotians and businesses throughout the province have been consulted about this review and about how to improve the systems that they work in. We have gone to the people who actually are affected by those types of regulations, and what we've heard are many concrete examples from businesses and Nova Scotians about what regulations aren't working and, in fact, that many regulations in the province are being well administered and are working just fine.

Because of these efforts, Nova Scotia's small businesses are gaining confidence and they are gaining the confidence of agencies such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Their business barometer shows that Nova Scotia has had its third

successive monthly gain in September, and on their scale we've reached the level of 63.5. It's the highest level that we've had in a year and a half.

The principles of this discussion are worthy and I think there is something that members of all political stripes should support - our government is acting to tackle red tape in a coordinated and sustainable manner.

Some other examples - and I'll just go down a quick list. The government has already acted to reduce the regulatory burden on business by removing automatic access to first contract arbitration by streamlining the administrative penalty system for occupational health and safety; microbrewers can now sell products made onsite, within their premises; we've scrapped proposed regulations on the scrap metal sector; we've modernized the apprenticeship system, including allowing more apprentices to train under one journeyman; international graduates from a Canadian college or university with a job offer from a Nova Scotia employer can now apply for permanent residency through the Nominee Program skilled worker stream; and we have also taken steps, and this happened quite quickly after our election, to make U-Vint and U-Brew operations legal.

To summarize, Madam Speaker, every department, under the direction of all of this government's Executive Council members, is engaged in reducing the regulatory burden on Nova Scotians. Fortunately for Nova Scotians, this government has not confined our efforts to reduce red tape to a one-person inquisition with statutory direction that was put together in such a quick and brief manner as the bill which has been proposed by the honourable member across the floor.

I would end by saying, Madam Speaker, that we have undertaken a fairly comprehensive look at all the regulations throughout the province. We've done that without the pressure of a bill or a Statute to mandate that. I think it's working very well and I look forward to, at some point, either myself or one of the ministers of the Crown reporting back to the House on the progress of that.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Madam Speaker, I am so pleased to rise tonight and talk about this bill. I really enjoyed the comments of the member opposite where on the one hand he finishes off by saying he is looking forward to a report given to this House on their efforts to reduce red tape and, on the other hand, he is saying there is no red tape to reduce. This bill does call for just that, some accountability, a report to the House on the efforts to reduce red tape.

Now I hear tonight there are lots of efforts to reduce red tape. I am pleased to hear that, but I think we should admit that there are lots of issues of red tape in this province - and I'll go through just a few of them - where small business owners have been frustrated. I think it is helpful when you have been in the shoes of small business, when you have

owned a small business you have an appreciation for the types of red tape that you have to deal with. Perhaps if you have never been in that situation it might be easy to say well there is none. It would be disingenuous, but it is certainly easy.

I know we started off with the government's comments saying that there is no red tape. I am very pleased that the member finished with his comments acknowledging that there are issues where we can do better. As a government, we should always try to do better. What this bill does is it brings accountability to the efforts to do better, and that's all.

I do remember, in fairness, the member expressed some interest the day I presented the bill and I showed him a copy, and he said, it's awful light. Well, I knew at that time that the reduction of red tape was lost on a member who obviously wanted multiple pages on a bill to talk about the reduction of red tape.

Small businesses are the economic engine of many communities in Nova Scotia. Small business owners are the people that are willing to take the risk and work hard. They are the driving force behind economic growth, and they are the entrepreneurs who create jobs. They create jobs one at a time, two at a time, because that's the way the economy works. I'm sure that every member in this House can think of a couple of great small businesses in their constituencies. I hope they can. I hope they visited those small businesses. I hope they've talked to the owners of those small businesses and said, what can the government do to make your job of creating jobs and building your company easier?

I don't know that they have, but I would encourage them to try to do that. Get out and talk to the businesspeople, because if you think there's no red tape in the province, you're wrong. There is lots of red tape in this province. There are lots of ways the government can do better. Right now, I'm just thinking about small businesses in my constituency. I'm thinking of businesses like MacGregors machine shop, Hawboldt's machine shop, WearWell Garments - I could go on, and I hope at this time members are thinking of small businesses in their constituency in their mind.

I know that everyone in this House appreciates small businesses, but governments sometimes have a funny way of showing it. The regulatory burden that government places on businesses kills jobs, and it exists. All across Nova Scotia we have smart people, smart businesspeople. We have some of the brightest business minds in the country operating out of Nova Scotia, particularly in Pictou County - I think of families like the Sobeyes. Mind my tongue here. The Government House Leader referred to Sean Murray, and Advocate Printing and Publishing is a wonderful Nova Scotia business. But you have to be in the shoes of business to understand business. If you've never been in the shoes of business, you can't possibly understand it. I think the member gave a perfect illustration of that tonight.

We have smart people that we should be encouraging. We must support small business and we must encourage entrepreneurship, and right now the system is not set up to support small business or to encourage entrepreneurship.

I want to share the story of Jacinthe Bennett. The Minister of Natural Resources is familiar, and the House heard a little bit about her story tonight. Jacinthe Bennett wanted to operate a mobile canteen at Pictou County's Melmerby Beach. The Merb, as it's affectionately known in Pictou County, is one of the province's top beaches, yet if you go to spend the day at Melmerby Beach, you can't even buy a bottle of water. There are absolutely no concessions at Melmerby Beach. That's a shame. I think I read that Melmerby Beach is one of the top five beaches in Atlantic Canada. Madam Speaker, if you decide to go to Melmerby Beach, please take a lunch, because you can't buy a single thing there. That's a shame.

It didn't have to be that way. Jacinthe Bennett saw an opportunity, and she originally wrote to the Department of Natural Resources on January 28th to request permission to operate a mobile canteen. Three months later, she heard nothing. Nothing in February, nothing from the department in March, and nothing in April. Not a peep. Now, the real disgrace is that when dealing with the government, people have come to accept lengthy delays, and somebody might think that dealing with the government - three months huh, that's nothing. That's what we've come to expect from dealing with the government. But three months is a long time and considering that the busy summer season was quickly approaching, it was a really wrong time. It truly was now or never.

Now over the years, the Merb has seen many different variations of food services and the absence is felt. Residents of the area that I spoke to are supportive of a return of food services to the Merb, and Jacinthe, who is an area resident, has developed an excellent reputation over her 12 years that she has been serving Pictou County residents under her Jiggy Java banner.

Let's think about this. She has been providing food services in Pictou County for 12 years. She wanted to set up a mobile canteen - she wanted to expand her business. She couldn't do it. Not only is food service a convenience at the Merb, but it's really an expectation of some families. So this could have been a win-win. Jacinthe had an established clientele and she could fill the void in a family day excursion.

Am I good on the time right through? Can I go all the way?

MADAM SPEAKER: Your time is good until 11 o'clock.

MR. HOUSTON: Madam Speaker, we're asking entrepreneurs to step up to the plate, so we must support those who do.

Madam Speaker, permission to make an introduction?

MADAM SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. HOUSTON: I see seated in the gallery up there today, my father has just joined us. (Applause) He is known to some members of this House as the Commissionaire at the Johnson Building and I will say, Madam Speaker, he is a very good Commissionaire. I went in there after hours the other night to say hi, and he wanted to know where my pass was. So happy to see you up there tonight, Dad, thank you very much for coming over.

We're asking entrepreneurs to step up to the plate, so we must support those who do. Now Jacinthe heard from the department, and I do thank the minister for looking into the situation, but when she ultimately heard from the department, it was May. First, they informed her they had to write an RFP, and then it had to go to tender and they would award this tender for a beach canteen in July. Now mind you, she started correspondence in January. Madam Speaker, I'm not sure if you are familiar with the beach season in Nova Scotia, but when you're starting to talk about July and August, you are coming towards the end.

Now Madam Speaker, I can assure you that Jacinthe's efforts and challenges are not a reflection on her MLA. I happen to believe she has a very good MLA, despite the comments of the diminutive Government House Leader. I don't think it's a reflection on the minister either, to be honest, but it is a reflection of a broken system. So for anyone to stand up in this House and say this system is not broken, it can't be improved - it's silly.

Madam Speaker, I'm focused on keeping bright, talented Nova Scotians working here in our province, but red tape and roadblocks are killing them; they're driving them away. I asked the member to table his comments from the CFIB for this reason, because consistently, the CFIB placed government regulation and red tape among their major cost constraints to Nova Scotia companies. Red tape means unnecessary or redundant regulations that impact business, including requirements that create extra costs, more paperwork, more filing procedures.

Today during Question Period, we also heard about Rhonda Frank. Rhonda was in the Legislature today because her art studio in Porters Lake was shut down because the driveway does not meet government's stopping sight distance requirement. Rhonda's business was shut down because it doesn't meet the government's stopping sight distance requirement.

What does that mean? Like, you walk into a business and you say, excuse me, business owner, you don't meet the stopping sight distance requirements, you're out of business. Then you get in your car and presumably you drive off to your next stop, driving right past another business on the same street, because why? Was it not on your list that day of businesses to stop into? These are issues that businesspeople in the province are facing. Rhonda's business, Artsy Fartsy, had been booming and she was suddenly shut down for, basically, no permit for a sign.

Imagine for one second, shutting down a business because they didn't have a permit, the inspector (Interruption) I appreciate the question from the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, and maybe he might get involved in this, because it is silly. He might take it, he takes stuff on, he solves problems.

But apparently, the street where you enter in and out of the business, there's not enough stopping distance sightline to have her signs, so she just needs a permit for a sign. But you know what? If you just need a permit for a sign, go try and get that. I challenge you. We have lots of people through the system that have a thousand ways to tell you no and what we need is a few more people that will help you find a way to say yes.

That's really what this bill is all about. It's about encouraging business owners and helping them, helping grow business. Stop finding ways to shut them down and red tape and file this - let's find ways to grow businesses.

It is ironic. I was thinking, I just talked about Rhonda and Jacinthe, two businesses that were blown out of business by red tape, and it's the same day we talked about Women's History Month. Two women entrepreneurs shut down by red tape, which sadly the member opposite thinks there is no red tape. It's crazy. There's a significant amount of red tape and we need to find ways to get around it.

We talked a little bit about Gordon Fraser. This is the gentleman who has been in business for 36 years servicing his neighbours and his friends - 36 years. Two inspectors showed up at his property and shut him down - I might add, gleefully shut him down on the spot. Do you know what Gordon did after they shut him down? He sat around his house for two days embarrassed, terrified, because he didn't know what the reaction of the community would be when they heard that this happened to him. That's the way that business owners are treated.

Thankfully, he came forward, the community rallied around him, because you know what, Madam Speaker? If Gordon was producing a dangerous product or an unsafe product in 36 years, somebody might have gotten sick, and you know what would have happened? The community would have shut him down because they wouldn't go to him. They're crying to go to him, but red tape is shutting him down.

I'd like to see the government members acknowledge the problem and try to work on a solution. Government has a role to play in growing the economy and it extends past just lowering taxes. We used to be a leader in this province in red tape reduction; over successive governments, we've fallen off that. We've lost that priority. By introducing this bill, I'm just trying to stimulate some discussion. I'm just trying to get the members to say, you know what? He's on the wrong side, but he's onto something, there might be something we can work on here.

Hopefully the member, after he took his seat, rethought his notes he was asked to read and realizes that there is an issue to solve, and I look forward to hearing more. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Acting House Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 4.

Bill No. 4 - Tax-free Zone for Small Business Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Thanks to my colleague for introducing it, and it brings me great honour and pleasure to stand here in my place to debate and justify the need and value in amending Chapter 217 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Income Tax Act.

Nova Scotia businesses pay among the highest taxes in Canada, and I know you all know that; in fact we have the highest corporate income tax paid on \$400,000 and we have the lowest small business threshold of \$350,000. That doesn't help businesses - certainly it doesn't help them get ahead and it doesn't give them any incentives. It doesn't make it easier either for small businesses to grow or hire any extra people; in fact it puts us at competitive disadvantages and it makes it harder for businesses to succeed - and I know that personally being in business, small business, my whole life.

For the last 20 years I've owned and operated a number of small businesses and, most recently, after 15 years this past month, I've closed out my business. It's due to, earlier as my colleague, the member for Pictou East elaborated on, much of the red tape. The last number of years we've seen the tourism industry decline, we look at the high taxes that we're paying, the high electric power bills that we're paying, and it was time for me to really have a serious discussion with myself and my employees. And I am a small business. Over the years I started out with myself and one other lady, grew to about four or five people, and then the last number of years it was myself and two other ladies - and it's sad to let go of those people who need those jobs.

Once again it's very difficult for small businesses to operate here in Nova Scotia. In fact, two years ago I noticed there were a lot of businesses closing in the Pictou/Pictou County area, and I counted within one month 34 businesses had closed. High power rates, high taxes have taken their toll. Many businesses are struggling just to keep their heads above water - and it shouldn't be that hard and difficult to operate a business here in Nova Scotia.

Small-business owners are the driving force behind economic growth. We know small businesses are the backbone of this province. We know that Nova Scotia has a great entrepreneurial potential, there are so many talented, passionate, and desired people living here in Nova Scotia who want to set up a business but find that every time they go to start they hit that proverbial brick wall.

By taking on a risk and working hard Nova Scotia's small business owners create good jobs one or two at a time, just like I did. This bill, the Tax-free Zone for Small Business Act, takes some of the pressure off small-business owners, it gives some relief, it allows them to share how wonderful it is doing business in Nova Scotia. The price of doing business, the way I look at it, is we have to give them some incentive. Over the years we've seen all Parties hand out corporate bailouts, giving colossal sums of money to keep businesses going, but we've done very little for the small and medium size businesses of Nova Scotia.

This bill amendment, it will knock down one of the barriers that keep businesses from growing and thriving because right now people are finding it very, very hard to maintain their businesses. The bill will make Nova Scotia a tax-free zone for small business and will take the rate to zero over four years so that small businesses can pay workers instead of sending more money to the government and seeing more and more of our number one resource - people - go out West.

That means businesses will pay no tax in four years. We estimate that this measure will put tens of millions of dollars into the hands of small-business owners. When 9,000 jobs disappeared in the last year in our province, reducing the small-business tax to zero is a concrete measure that will help create jobs and restore hope.

One of the greatest pieces of this legislation is that we will raise the business threshold from 350 to 500. That will bring Nova Scotia in line with the vast majority of Canadian provinces. I know that the Province of Manitoba has a zero-tax rate; their threshold is 425, but the rest of the provinces in Canada are 500,000, and it's time that Nova Scotia gets on line with them.

One of the Ivany commission goals is to generate 4,200 new businesses. We need to fast-track this. The work of the One Nova Scotia Coalition needs to be fast-tracked. We need to take bold steps. Once again, it's just the price of doing business. I didn't see anything in the Liberal Throne Speech that would make this happen. It seemed to be silent on how we are to create jobs in this province, and I'm deeply concerned about what the plan is in place to create jobs - or shall I say, the absence of a job plan in Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, the bill would get us closer to the Ivany goals. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business surveys its members every single month. One of the top cost restraints Nova Scotia businesses identify, every single month, is tax and regulatory costs. That was true in September when 61 per cent of respondents said taxes

and red tape were a major cost restraint. That isn't just a number. It takes a toll on businesses. Only 34 per cent of Nova Scotia business owners say their businesses are in good shape - not something that we should be very proud of, and it's actually among the lowest proportion of any other province.

It is time for the government to act. How many jobs have to disappear before we all take action? How many families have to wave goodbye to loved ones who found work in other provinces? I know many of my friends who are packing up their kids and leaving. Every month it seems like I know someone else and what I'm finding more and more is that I'm not just losing friends with children, I'm finding that there are grandparents now deciding that they're going to go with their kids and head out West because they know that they're not going to be returning.

So, once again, we're losing all demographics. Tonight I urge the government to support this bill and provide much-needed tax relief for small businesses and restore hope and faith among our province's valued job creators. I know that we can work together.

Just last week - I believe it was Friday - I believe the Interim Leader of the New Democratic Party, the honourable member for Halifax Needham, witnessed - even as an MLA for the Opposition, she learned, in her political system, that we can change people's lives for the better.

Madam Speaker, the member praised the Progressive Conservative Party for being big enough to support the enactment of the Private Members' Bill called the Protection for Persons in Care Act. This type of team work gives me hope and encouragement to believe that the current Liberal Government will work in the same manner.

I spoke to a few members from the opposite side here, who have been business owners and small-business owners, and I also know that the member for Halifax Chebucto has a number of businesses. I just want to say that I was thinking about how one of his businesses closed on Barrington Street, and although I just recently went to another business of his and spent over \$500 or \$600 for my daughter to go to Africa, and so I know that he appreciates my support.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Time has lapsed.

The honourable Interim Leader of the New Democratic Party.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's very kind of you to remind me that I have a bit of time . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: It will be for 10 minutes this evening.

MS. MACDONALD: That's right. I'm not going to take much time on this bill. I've had an opportunity to look at what is being proposed. To be honest, I don't know enough about the whole concept of tax-free zones. However, let me say this. In principle, the NDP caucus appreciates and agrees with the objective to gradually, over a period of time, reduce the tax burden on small businesses in Nova Scotia. In fact, when we were in government, our government reduced the small business tax rate for the first time that it had been reduced in something like 18 or 19 years. We continued to do that on an annual basis by a certain per cent, like 0.5 per cent, I believe.

Again, we recognize that we've been in a difficult economic environment and that many small, medium and in fact larger businesses have been challenged by this environment. One of the things that people don't necessarily always understand is that even large corporations get to have the first so many hundred thousands of dollars treated by these particular exemptions and reductions. So it isn't only the small business community, the small business owner that benefits from this, but it is the case that medium and larger companies and corporations do as well.

It's also the case that in our province, there are quite a number of companies that are, in fact, specialists in Nova Scotia who have incorporated. They particularly have done this because they get to take advantage of these kinds of tax exemptions.

This is a complicated area, as I learned when I was in the Finance Department, and I'm very much looking forward to the results of the taxation review that we will have fairly soon to see how, in fact, this whole area will be treated.

So again I would say, Madam Speaker, that in principle and in fact in practice, this is the kind of initiative that we recognize and we can support. Whether or not all of the specifics of this bill are the kinds of things that need to be done, I can't say, but I look forward to seeing what the government will bring forward in their tax review.

I guess we would reserve our final judgment on this particular bill until we had better analysis and better information, but I congratulate my colleague in the Official Opposition for having brought this legislation forward. It's something that we should certainly be debating and considering. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Madam Speaker, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to stand and talk today on this bill. I did have a chance, I will admit, this afternoon to read it and read it quickly. It was interesting. I guess a bit confusing, too, if my first question was - and I tried to get my colleagues to help me on the name, the tax free zone. I guess if anything it gave me an opportunity to talk about my riding a little bit. We have a zombie free zone there. If anybody saw the movie World War Z - Freeport, Nova

Scotia, for those who don't realize it. I'm not sure if this tax free zone represents a certain area or not, but it's an interesting name.

I started off on a light note, but seriously, I definitely can say that I don't believe our Party will support this. I didn't want to surprise anybody at the very end, I thought I'd get that out there right quick. This goes fundamentally against what we stand for, for a lot of different reasons. First off, any time you cut taxes and try to balance the budget at the same time, you are heading for disaster. We have been saying that from the day we got elected. I don't know why the member on the other side of the House thinks that cutting taxes and trying to balance the budget at the same time is good fiscal responsibility for the province.

We also believe that every Nova Scotian needs to take part in moving the province back to sustainability. When we say that, we want to set the framework. We feel it's important that businesses take that role, not government. The private sector leads the economic growth in this province and the government has a role to set the conditions that happens in. One Nova Scotia outlined that, we're not the ones that are supposed to be driving economic development, the private sector is to do that. Although I can commend the member on the other side of the House for the work they've done to identify something for small business, I think this falls short.

We have been improving and continue to improve the way Nova Scotia does economic development. The private sector clearly understands that government is no longer going to pick one Nova Scotian employer over another. The small business people in this province also understand that we're not going to be subsidizing large businesses in this province and we are going to be focussing on small business. But, it is not going to be done in this manner.

This bill does nothing to help finances. It does nothing for sustainability and does nothing to fix the problem of competitiveness. I spoke to a fair amount of businesses. I'm not a businessman, I'll admit that, but certainly I have been involved in businesses. My son was a private business owner and one of the biggest challenges that I face in my community, a rural community, is what our small businesses have been put through for the last - I would almost have to say 10 years.

Out-migration is a bigger issue if you want to help small business. I have small businesses in my community right now that, thanks to what's happening with the federal government and their temporary foreign workers, they can't get enough people to work in their processing plants. That is a huge tragedy, that's one of the bigger ones.

So when we talk about small businesses and starting to bring together legislation for us to consider, I'm surprised that we went to the very bottom of the barrel and we missed on some of these other things. Right now that's our biggest challenge.

What this bill does, it simply says let's increase small business thresholds for provincial income tax to \$500,000 and reduce small business income tax right to zero over four years and we're going to fix every problem that they have. Well, again, we're going to put more tax burden on the taxpayers and at the same time provide the same amount of services so we're not going to cut services.

I also want to quickly note on a comment that the NDP had mentioned where they said that they did this great job of reducing the rate from three and one half to three. What they failed to mention is, while they did that, they moved the threshold from 400 to 350. Basically all they did was just shift the burden; it did nothing for small business. When you take credit for doing something, you should take credit for everything that you do.

I'd also like to note that Nova Scotia has the smallest or lowest small business tax rate east of Manitoba, so for some reason we need to reduce it more. I'll give the information on that. For small business income up to \$450,000, Ontario is 4.5 per cent; Quebec, 8.0 per cent; New Brunswick, 4.5 per cent; Prince Edward Island, 4.5 per cent; Newfoundland and Labrador, 4.5 per cent. I'll even throw the Northwest Territories in there, 4.0 per cent; Nova Scotia, 3 per cent. So why are we focusing on something that already seems to be leading Canada? It doesn't make sense.

There's a thing called Reaganomics. It happened when Mr. Reagan was in. (Interruptions) The American guy, okay? (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Clare-Digby has the floor.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. What they are suggesting was done during the Reagan years. What it did is it quadrupled the debt while he was in term. These are the kinds of things that I still can't understand.

Additionally, I'd like to point out that Nova Scotia has a new small business tax deduction. I don't know if they are aware of it; I haven't heard anybody talk about it. It does provide a tax holiday to small businesses for the first three years that they are in incorporation. Basically, I would table that, but unfortunately, I promised that I would give it back to the minister.

What this deduction does is it effectively eliminates Nova Scotia corporate income tax for the first three years of small businesses after they are incorporated. I don't know where they missed that one, but I would like to advocate for that for those who don't know that it's out there.

Also, I'd like to note that Nova Scotia's small businesses are gaining confidence. The CFIB Business Barometer shows that Nova Scotia has had its third successive monthly gain in September, reaching 63.5. It's the highest level in a year and a half.

The focus we need to do with small business is on helping them incorporate and providing them with expertise to expand. Our BRE programs that were stripped away during the last government when the RENs were taken away, or our RDAs - our Business Retention and Expansion programs were one of the strongest components that we had out there for small business in rural Nova Scotia. I would strongly encourage everybody to support those continuations of work.

The tax and regulatory review, I'd also like to touch on. Nobody really wanted to talk about that much, but they've met with 190 individuals and organizations. That review is an awesome place. I would encourage everybody on both sides of the floor here to participate in that and give the information to that group.

February 27, 2014 - I think we're all very proud that the minister announced the tax regulatory review with the excellent leadership of Laurel Broten, and we are going to be, hopefully . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Time has elapsed. I would ask that the honourable member please submit that information to the Clerk for tabling, or you could probably have copies made first and then submit it to the Clerk.

The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank both my colleagues for their comments this evening. I'd like to begin by thanking the NDP for being supportive of this measure that we're trying to provide for small business. Essentially, what we're talking about here is increasing the reward for Nova Scotians who take the risk to enter small business, because they are taking a risk to start or buy and operate a small business.

I believe it was a British politician, Madam Speaker, who once referred to the tax eaters. He talked about people in the economy whose occupations depend on government revenues. Those are very important positions; however, he was making the distinction that there are some people out there who are going to work, generating tax revenue for the government, that the governments can then use to pay everybody that works in government and for all the services we can appreciate from government, and the importance that those people play in the economy.

Madam Speaker, that activity in the private sector is feeding things like health and the Health and Wellness budget. Right now, that's consuming about 45 per cent of the budget, a significant expenditure of government. Education and Early Childhood Development - the province roughly contributes \$10,000 per child, for every student who attends school in the province. Community Services I know is the number-three item in the budget, looking after people who may need a hand. These are all important things. I also

think about interest on the debt, because unfortunately in Nova Scotia, that's the number-four item in the budget.

If I think a little bit about what my colleague in the government has just stated, about cutting taxes will hurt the government's ability to balance the budget - to some degree, possibly. There will be less tax revenue. But, Madam Speaker, we also must consider that a lot of that money may be reinvested back into the economy, which can create growth in the economy, and Lord knows I think everybody in this House would agree we need more growth in our economy.

When we talk about balancing the budget and the debt, this government has been very passive about that. They've added about half a billion dollars to the debt, and I believe they're planning to add another full billion to the debt. When we think about the last six years - and I often think about this because we think about Sydney Steel. For many years, Sydney Steel provided employment for people in the province, but it also created a lot of debt. I know if you go back and look at the numbers, it was once, at one point, was responsible for 25 per cent of the debt in the province. That was an operation that lasted for, I'm going to say, roughly 30 years. Maybe 27, 37. (Interruption) Waiting for the answer there from a colleague. It was over 30 years. But in just six years, Madam Speaker, the previous NDP Government and the current government have added 25 per cent to our debt again. So we've gone up from \$12 billion, where it had flatlined for about a year, and it's now \$15 billion.

It's not easy in government. I know, having worked years ago for a PC Government, and I know the NDP have just been there, and now I know the Liberals who are there now - we can all agree it's not easy to govern. There are a lot of pressures. We see pressures right around the Legislature here tonight. But the point is, I think that we have to remember the people that are in small business because they are the ones who are taking the risk and they are the ones who are providing tax revenue, and they are not asking for much back. We think about three per cent being the tax right now - well, three per cent on \$500,000 is \$15,000, and we all know for small businesses having an extra \$15,000 over the course of the year would be meaningful in terms of their cash flow.

Two points. One, I think whoever is in government - and right now it happens to be the Liberals that are in government - have to do something about getting the province back in line, balancing budgets, and also stimulating the economy. It's no easy task. But we believe - and that's why we put forward this legislation - that giving a little more reward to people who take the risk to generate activity in our economy is worthwhile. We believe that. We also agree with the government that the private sector must play a lead role in driving the economy.

Madam Speaker, we often hear it said that small businesses are the backbone of the economy. I guess what I like to think about is, why would someone want to be in business in this province right now? Well, thank God there are some who do want to. I spoke with a

gentleman who is a very established entrepreneur and he told me years ago that there was a lot more activity in the private sector and people went to the private sector. But he said things have changed; people now are going for government jobs, because they are some of the best jobs out there. I think we see that. It's good to have good government jobs, but it's disappointing that the private sector is no longer as vibrant. We all play a role in trying to turn that around.

I think about the area I'm in; it's a rural area. One of the possibilities for people to stay in a rural area, one of the very real possibilities that give them the power to stay in a rural area, is actually to start a business, because there are not a lot of other opportunities around. I think of the importance of having cell phone connectivity. That's something that I'm working on right now. Also, Internet connectivity in rural areas is key, because a lot of these businesses, any of them, they are being started by people who are going to want those things in a rural area. It's important for government to be supportive of that.

I'm trying to think of the amount of time that I have remaining. I have eight minutes remaining, okay.

In no way do taxes help a small business expand. What we want to do is put a little more money, a little more cash flow in the pockets of small business.

We see businesses facing the difficulty of high power rates as well. I know the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses identify that as one of their top two issues their members are facing. We've certainly not seen any turnaround in that. Maybe with this new government we will see that, but we've seen significant increases in power rates in the last number of years.

I know in my area - well, it's not a small business but for the paper mill, the number-one cost for them is power rates. I believe they are still the largest consumer of power in the province. When you have an industry that important to one area, which I will give credit to the previous government for supporting, when you have a business that is that important in a rural area, that dependent on power rates, we need a government that is focused on energy policy and making sure that there is affordable power for them in the future, because no government would want to be in that position again.

I can think of when the mill almost went down, it was announced that it was closing. I was feeling pretty hopeless as a representative of the area at that time. I was feeling like there was a loss of hope, a great loss of hope, knowing how many people depend on that mill - and not just people who work there, but the small businesses that we are talking about tonight. A very challenging time for them. The consumer expenditure really dried up. That hurt small businesses' cash flow in the Strait area. I can tell you that.

I think of my own area, when I think of the good jobs that are there. There are nursing jobs, teaching jobs, there are dairy farms. There's fishing; lobster and crab fishing

primarily, but there are other fishing industries. There's forestry, largely with the paper mill, but it's nowhere near what it used to be. Certainly given the advances in technology, there are many fewer people working out in the actual woods in the forestry sector. And there is some retail. But Madam Speaker, we need a lot more.

There are some positives. I was watching Cabot Links; their new course, Cabot Cliffs, could be named one of the top 10 courses in the world next year - I believe it's in North America or the world. I just saw that this afternoon. There's great excitement for that new course. Those things are making a difference.

But we need to develop a greater culture of entrepreneurship in the province. I know many young people in my area are growing up in families where their parents are nurses or teachers or dairy farmers or fishermen. Certainly farmers and fishermen are entrepreneurs in many ways, but we don't have a lot of young people growing up in homes where people actually own, say, a retail business or a small manufacturing business. Given that that is the case, they are not getting the kind of exposure that young people would perhaps, in other areas of the country where there's more entrepreneurial activity because there's a healthier economy for it to exist in. We do have to find a way to give exposure to young people, to give them exposure to entrepreneurship.

The other thing I think we need is what we're talking about here, and that is lower taxes to attract people, to give them the reward to want to take the risk. Otherwise, Madam Speaker, it is much easier for them to take a more conventional job in this province. As I said, the gentleman I spoke with, he indicated that years ago there were many more opportunities for people and they weren't thinking about going after a government job. Today, and I'm sure the ministers know this because they are hiring people in their departments, oftentimes when there is a competition for a job in this province, we're seeing upwards of 80 to 100 people applying for one job.

I think it's clear, Madam Speaker, we need more opportunities for people in the private sector and we need to be doing things, taking real initiatives in this Legislature to create reward for people who enter the private sector and who become entrepreneurs.

Madam Speaker, this bill is a step in the right direction and at a time like this it is prudent that the government consider options like this to strengthen our economy. I urge the government, and all members of this House, to show their support for small businesses, to ease their tax burden, and vote in favour of this bill.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, that concludes Opposition Business for today, so I will let the Government House Leader give us an idea on what our work will be for Thursday.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, that concludes the business for today, a productive Opposition Day. We will sit again on Thursday, October 2nd, at 12:01 a.m, at which time we will go through the daily routine and Question Period, and then the House will resolve itself into Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 1 and, if time permits, possibly some other government business as well.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now rise, to meet again at 12:01 a.m. on Thursday, October 2nd.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Thursday, October 2nd, at 12:01 a.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 12:01 a.m.

[The House rose at 11:39 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 31**

By: Hon. Jamie Baillie (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas Treaty Day on October 1st commemorates the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed by the Mi'kmaq and the Crown; and

Whereas Treaty Day marks the beginning of the Mi'kmaq History Month in Nova Scotia, promoting awareness of the rich culture, heritage and contributions of the Mi'kmaq people; and

Whereas highlights of Treaty Day include flag raising ceremonies, the Treaty Day Award Ceremony and the Mi'kmaq Gathering Feast;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the importance of Mi'kmaq History Month and thank those who took the time to organize Treaty Day events celebrating Nova Scotia's Mi'kmaq community.

RESOLUTION NO. 32

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas Avon View High School's athletes were recognized in June 2014 at a banquet held in their honour; and

Whereas Avon View had 26 sports teams in the school year for anything from soccer, basketball, hockey, rugby, and wrestling, each sports team presented awards to their top contributors and every athlete was recognized for their participation; and

Whereas Haley Guild received the Female Athlete in the Mirror award and the Individual Contributing the Most award in basketball;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Haley Guild on a well-deserved recognition.

RESOLUTION NO. 33

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas Avon View High School's athletes were recognized in June 2014 at a banquet held in their honour; and

Whereas Avon View had 26 sports teams in the school year for anything from soccer, basketball, hockey, rugby, and wrestling, each sports team presented awards to their top contributors and every athlete was recognized for their participation; and

Whereas Colleen Lothian received the Contribution to Sport award and the Individual Contributing the Most award for skiing;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Colleen Lothian on a well-deserved recognition.

RESOLUTION NO. 34

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas Avon View High School's athletes were recognized in June 2014 at a banquet held in their honour; and

Whereas Avon View had 26 sports teams in the school year for anything from soccer, basketball, hockey, rugby, and wrestling, each sports team presented awards to their top contributors and every athlete was recognized for their participation; and

Whereas Sam Lake received the Female Athlete of the Year award, the Soccer Heart Leadership award, as well as the girl's hockey MVP honours;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sam Lake on a well-deserved recognition.

RESOLUTION NO. 35

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas Avon View High School's athletes were recognized in June 2014 at a banquet held in their honour; and

Whereas Avon View had 26 sports teams in the school year for anything from soccer, basketball, hockey, rugby, and wrestling, each sports team presented awards to their top contributors and every athlete was recognized for their participation; and

Whereas Mark O'Reilly received the Male Athlete of the Year award, the rugby award for the top rookie, as well as receiving the Coaches Awards for basketball and soccer;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mark O'Reilly on a well-deserved recognition.

RESOLUTION NO. 36

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas Avon View High School's athletes were recognized in June 2014 at a banquet held in their honour; and

Whereas Avon View had 26 sports teams in the school year for anything from soccer, basketball, hockey, rugby, and wrestling, each sports team presented awards to their top contributors and every athlete was recognized for their participation; and

Whereas Matt Brison was presented the Male Athlete in the Mirror award, the Coaches Award for hockey, also receiving an award for the Individual Contributing the Most to football and rugby;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Matt Brison on a well-deserved recognition.

RESOLUTION NO. 37

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas Avon View High School's athletes were recognized in June 2014 at a banquet held in their honour; and

Whereas Avon View had 26 sports teams in the school year for anything from soccer, basketball, hockey, rugby, and wrestling, each sports team presented awards to their top contributors and every athlete was recognized for their participation; and

Whereas Brett Wallace received the Contribution to Sport award and the Individual Contributing the Most award for skiing;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Brett Wallace on a well-deserved recognition.

RESOLUTION NO. 38

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the Windsor Bluefins were making a splash this summer with seven members of the team finishing within the top five individual competitions when the club hosted their annual meet in July; and

Whereas the Bluefins, a team with fewer than 50 swimmers, placed fourth out of the 16 teams competing and have continued to hold the top small team spot; and

Whereas one of the seven swimmers, Robert Williamson, age 12, finished in second place in the 50-metre freestyle and breast stroke as well as claimed third in the 200-metre freestyle;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate team swimmer Robert Williamson for performing swimmingly for the Windsor Bluefins.

RESOLUTION NO. 39

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the Windsor Bluefins were making a splash this summer with seven members of the team finishing within the top five individual competitions when the club hosted their annual meet in July; and

Whereas the Bluefins, a team with fewer than 50 swimmers, placed fourth out of the 16 teams competing and have continued to hold the top small team spot; and

Whereas one of the seven swimmers, Jacob Beaulieu, age 17, finished in second place in the 50 metre backstroke and third in both 50-metre and 200-metre freestyle races;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate team swimmer Jacob Beaulieu for performing swimmingly for the Windsor Bluefins.

RESOLUTION NO. 40

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the Windsor Bluefins were making a splash this summer with seven members of the team finishing within the top five individual competitions when the club hosted their annual meet in July; and

Whereas the Bluefins, a team with fewer than 50 swimmers, placed fourth out of the 16 teams competing and have continued to hold the top small team spot; and

Whereas one of the seven swimmers, Freya Ferguson, age 15, placed first in the 200 metre freestyle and second in the 100-metre breaststroke and third in the 50 backstroke;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate team swimmer Freya Ferguson for performing swimmingly for the Windsor Bluefins.

RESOLUTION NO. 41

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the Windsor Bluefins were making a splash this summer with seven members of the team finishing within the top five individual competitions when the club hosted their annual meet in July; and

Whereas the Bluefins, a team with fewer than 50 swimmers, placed fourth out of the 16 teams competing and have continued to hold the top small team spot; and

Whereas one of the seven swimmers, Meredith Chambers, age 14, won her 100 metre and finished fourth in the 50 metre freestyle and claimed fifth in the 200-metre freestyle;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate team swimmer Meredith Chambers for performing swimmingly for the Windsor Bluefins.

RESOLUTION NO. 42

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the Windsor Bluefins were making a splash this summer with seven members of the team finishing within the top five individual competitions when the club hosted their annual meet in July; and

Whereas the Bluefins, a team with fewer than 50 swimmers, placed fourth out of the 16 teams competing and have continued to hold the top small team spot; and

Whereas one of the seven swimmers, Amy Lord, age 16, won her 100 metre breaststroke and finished second in the 50-metre freestyle and finished fifth in the 100 metre butterfly;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate team swimmer Amy Lord for performing swimmingly for the Windsor Bluefins.

RESOLUTION NO. 43

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the Windsor Bluefins were making a splash this summer with seven members of the team finishing within the top five individual competitions when the club hosted their annual meet in July; and

Whereas the Bluefins, a team with fewer than 50 swimmers, placed fourth out of the 16 teams competing and have continued to hold the top small team spot; and

Whereas one of the seven swimmers, Natasha Williamson, age 17, finished third in the 50-metre freestyle fifth in the 100-metre breaststroke;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate team swimmer Natasha Williamson for performing swimmingly for the Windsor Bluefins.

RESOLUTION NO. 44

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the Windsor Bluefins were making a splash this summer with seven members of the team finishing within the top five individual competitions when the club hosted their annual meet in July; and

Whereas the Bluefins, a team with fewer than 50 swimmers, placed fourth out of the 16 teams competing and have continued to hold the top small team spot; and

Whereas one of the seven swimmers, Briana Sexton, age 11, placed fifth in the 200-metre freestyle;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate team swimmer Briana Sexton for performing swimmingly for the Windsor Bluefins.

RESOLUTION NO. 45

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas cricket, a popular English pastime is making a comeback in Nova Scotia with Hants County being the latest area to show interest in the sport; and

Whereas Mick Murray, the organizer of the new Hants County cricket club and Dillion Tonkin, treasurer of the Annapolis County cricket club, organized the first official cricket match at the Irishman's Road Recreation Site where they foresee many great things for next season; and

Whereas both genders of all ages can play cricket from beginner up, the social aspect is also an important role with hopes to entice much more interest in this up and coming sport that has made its return;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly would like to share in the sentiment that we genuinely hope for cricket to grow in Hants County and to the rest of Nova Scotia.