



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

MONDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
SPEAKER'S RULING:	
Staff blocking of access to the east gallery (Pt. of order by Hon. C. d'Entremont [Hansard, p.97, Sept. 30/14]) Not a point of order.....	396
PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS:	
TIR: Pereau Rd. - Improve, Mr. J. Lohr	396
TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS & OTHER PAPERS:	
AG: Civil Procedure Rules - Amendments (06/27/14), Hon. L. Diab	397
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS:	
LAE - Workplace Safety, Hon. K. Regan.....	397

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:

Res. 64, EECD - Educators: Dedication - Thank, Hon. K. Casey	400
Vote - Affirmative.....	401
Res. 65, Engage Nova Scotia: Work - Support, Hon. L. Diab	401
Vote - Affirmative.....	402
Res. 66, Fire Prevention Wk. (10/05 - 10/11/14) - Proclaim, Hon. M. Furey.....	402
Vote - Affirmative.....	402
Res. 67, Culture Days Weekend (09/26 - 09/28/14): Participants - Congrats., Hon. T. Ince.....	402
Vote - Affirmative.....	403
Res. 68, Pengrowth-N.S. Energy Scholarships: Recipients - Congrats., Hon. K. Casey.....	403
Vote - Affirmative.....	404

NOTICES OF MOTION:

Res. 69, Mental Health Awareness Wk (10/05 - 10/11/14): Mental Health Importance - Recognize, Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	404
Vote - Affirmative.....	405
Res. 70, Scanlan, Marie: Sackville-Cobequid Constituency Asst. (25 Yrs.) - Congrats., Hon. David Wilson	405
Vote - Affirmative.....	405
Res. 71, Windsor FD: Serv. - Commend, Mr. C. Porter	405
Vote - Affirmative.....	406
Res. 72, Col. Co. United Way - Serv. (60 Yrs.), Mr. L. Harrison	406
Vote - Affirmative.....	407
Res. 73, Fish. & Aquaculture Min.: Lobster Ind. - Meetings Schedule, Hon. S. Belliveau	407
Res. 74, Post, Pat: Windsor Day Care Ctr. - Serv. Congrats., Mr. C. Porter	408
Vote - Affirmative.....	408
Res. 75, Morris, Elder Rose: Cultural Awareness - Commitment, Hon. D. Peterson-Rafuse.....	408
Vote - Affirmative.....	409
Res. 76, Dudka, Tom: Pumpkin Growing Prowess - Congrats., Mr. T. Houston.....	409
Vote - Affirmative.....	410
Res. 77, Habitat for Humanity: Commitment - Recognize, Mr. J. Lohr	410
Vote - Affirmative.....	410
Res. 78, Gov't. N.S./Prem. - Health Care Workers: Promise - Breach Condemn, Ms. L. Zann.....	411

Res. 79, Carey, Chef Thomas - Taste of N.S. Chowder Cook-Off Award, Ms. K. MacFarlane	411
Vote - Affirmative.....	412
Res. 80, Inverary Manor: Vols. - Acknowledge/Congrats., Mr. A. MacMaster.....	412
Vote - Affirmative.....	412
Res. 81, Scrappy Sooners: Baseball Championship - Congrats., Mr. E. Orrell.....	413
Vote - Affirmative.....	413
Res. 82, Indian Sluice Bridge: Bridge Replacement Comm. - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	413
Vote - Affirmative.....	414
Res. 83, Francis, Brianna: North American Indigenous Games - Congrats., Mr. T. Houston.....	414
Vote - Affirmative.....	415
Res. 84, Valley Waste Resource Mgt. - Efficiency N.S. Award, Mr. J. Lohr	415
Vote - Affirmative.....	415
Res. 85, Corbin, Karen: CD Release - Congrats., Ms. K. MacFarlane	415
Vote - Affirmative.....	416
Res. 86, Chrissy Crowley: Cdn. Folk Music Award - Congrats., Mr. A. MacMaster.....	416
Vote - Affirmative.....	417
Res. 87, St. Joseph's Catholic Church (N. Sydney): Restoration Proj. - Congregation Congrats., Mr. E. Orrell	417
Vote - Affirmative.....	417
Res. 88, Leedham, Ryan: Skills Can. Comp. - Gold Medal, Mr. L. Harrison	418
Vote - Affirmative.....	418
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 5, Government Restructuring (2014) Act Hon. L. Kousoulis	419
Hon. J. Baillie	419
Hon. F. Corbett	420
Hon. L. Kousoulis.....	421
Vote - Affirmative.....	421
No. 9, Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act Hon. M. Furey.....	421
Mr. A. MacMaster.....	422
Hon. David Wilson	423
Hon. M. Furey.....	423
Vote - Affirmative.....	423

No. 10, Service Nova Scotia Statutory Officers Appointment Act	
Hon. M. Furey.....	424
Mr. A. MacMaster.....	425
Hon. David Wilson	425
Hon. M. Furey.....	426
Vote - Affirmative.....	426
No. 12, Correctional Services Act	
Hon. L. Diab	426
Mr. A. MacMaster.....	428
Hon. L. Diab	429
Vote - Affirmative.....	429
GOVERNMENT MOTIONS:	
ADDRESS IN REPLY:	
Mr. A. Rowe	430
Mr. J. Lohr	441
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Tue., Oct. 7 th at 2:00 p.m.....	458



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, MONDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2014

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

7:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we get into the daily routine I'll deliver the Speaker's Ruling regarding access to the gallery.

On Tuesday, September 30th, the honourable member for Argyle-Barrington rose on a point of order. He stated that on the previous evening there had been a large number of people he referred to as "Liberal staffers" in the east gallery, and that they had blocked off the gallery and a number of people had been sent away. Part of his complaint was that the situation did not afford the opportunity for the public to come here and listen to the proceedings of the House of Assembly.

SPEAKER'S RULING:

Staff blocking of access to the east gallery (Pt. of order by Hon. C. d'Entremont [Hansard, p.97, Sept. 30/14]) Not a point of order.

I have looked into the matter, and while it is true that there were a number of staff in the east gallery, it is not accurate to characterize this as “blocking off” the gallery. There was also ample room for visitors in the west gallery. The security staff have advised that not only were there no people turned away by them for the gallery, but also that passes available for the public were not all taken up, meaning there was still room for more people had the passes been requested.

While there were few seats available on one side of the building, there were many on the other side of the Chamber, and nobody’s ability to come here and listen to the proceedings of the House of Assembly was compromised.

Accordingly, I find there is no point of order.

We’ll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present 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, there are 73 signatures on this petition and I have affixed my name.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Attorney General.

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as the Attorney General, I hereby beg leave to table amendments to the Civil Procedure Rules. The revisions were made in accordance with the Judicature Act, by a majority of the Judges of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court on June 27, 2014.

MR. SPEAKER: The amendments are tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

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

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, this morning thousands of Nova Scotians woke up, got ready and went to work, and this evening they expect to get back in their cars, back on the bus or back on their bikes and make their way home safely to their families, where they will retire for the night. This is a reasonable expectation and, fortunately for many Nova Scotians, that's how it works.

The fact remains that is not how the story goes for all of us. While they are, so far, less frequent this year than in the past, workplace accidents and fatalities continue to happen. Each one is preventable, each one unnecessary. In their wake they leave a legacy of heartbreak for families and loved ones. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the day when every Nova Scotian has the confidence they will return home safely at the end of work every day.

Mr. Speaker, we realize there is much to do yet to get us there but I am encouraged by the progress that has been made, progress that has been largely driven by employers, workers and safety partners across the province. There once was a time, not too long ago, when many Nova Scotians didn't give workplace safety a second thought. We are seeing a shift. Now employers and workers are making safety their top priority, and it's not just those who are on the job. It's the mothers, fathers, husbands and wives who are seeing their loved ones off to work and greeting them at the end of each day. It's the customer shopping in their local grocery store and the pedestrian walking by a worksite.

Just today I received a call from a colleague concerned about safety on a worksite, and I directed them to call our 1-800-9LABOUR number to make a report. We see employers, workers and Nova Scotians engaged in discussions about workplace safety at a level we've not seen before, and they're not just participants in the discussions - they're steering the conversations.

A lot of positive changes we see in workplace safety have been brought about because employers, workers and families have asked for them. Change is born of need, and there is no one better to tell us what those needs are than those who work on job sites, in

retail stores and on our roads. It was these Nova Scotians who asked for changes to the way our administrative penalty system runs. Revamping the administrative penalty system was the first action that resulted from the Workplace Safety Strategy, and it represents over a year of consultation. We knew changes were needed to this system to focus the penalties on certain offences and to make the process more consistent and fair.

I want to assure Nova Scotians this is not about making the penalties more lenient. It's about levying fines for the right reasons, and educating workers and employers where possible. We will target high-risk and repeat offenders, and there will be zero tolerance for people who continue to break workplace safety rules.

We're committed to improving workplace safety and supporting families. As part of that work, we will be redirecting the money collected from fines to concrete projects that help achieve our goals. This is one request we've heard loud and clear: monies from fines should go to safety initiatives.

I am pleased to announce that the new administrative penalties system took effect on October 1st. We're also reaching out to employers, workers and families across the province to improve other safety regulations. Proposed regulations have been drafted to outline improved safety training in workplaces and enhanced hearing protection.

The regulations have been drafted with input from our safety partners, but before the changes are finalized, we want to hear from those who are most impacted. This work is part of an ongoing plan to consolidate and amend a number of stand-alone regulations into one document. This will provide a one-stop shop for employers and employees where they can access important, easy-to-understand information on requirements for workplace health and safety.

Phase I of the consolidation was completed in June of last year. This involved increased protections from falls on the job and improved safety for highway workers. We hope to complete the work to consolidate all regulations next year. Improving regulations is just one of many initiatives underway to improve workplace safety in the province. Government has also increased targeted inspections for high-risk industries in an effort to better protect workers. In fact, our inspectors conducted surprise inspections at 66 high-risk industries just a few weeks ago. These inspections resulted in more than 50 orders and 50 warnings, all of which will help to increase compliance and create safer workplaces. We've also hired additional safety inspectors, appointed a special prosecutor, and created a team of employees dedicated to education and outreach.

These and many other positive changes have come about because employers, workers and families asked for them, and because they are needed. Thanks to their involvement, change is happening - change that will mean a safer Nova Scotia for all. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, safety in the labour force is critical. I can only think back - I'd like to think a few short years ago; maybe it was a little longer than that - to a number of jobs I personally had where safety certainly wasn't one of the top priorities in the job. I can remember working for a couple of construction companies - in this particular case, on three-storey buildings without having any type of harness or anything to protect the employees working with me from falling, and often working along the edge of buildings and so on in what I thought were potentially dangerous situations. I can recall at the time speaking to the employer and asking for some safety devices. That fell on deaf ears at the time.

I can also remember one particular summer working in the woods for, at that time, Scott Paper - cutting wood, of course, and again, with very little or no preparation and just the bare minimum of gear presented to us, and not a lot of instruction to go about the job we were involved with.

I was involved in an accident in the Hawker Siddeley plant a number of years ago prior to my teaching career, where I was working on the track where 10 cars would move up once the groups finished their particular responsibilities on each car. The whistle would blow and they would move up.

This particular day, the group behind me forgot to block their car, and I was caught between the two cars. The knuckles where they joined missed me by a few inches, and a plank and some other debris came down from up above and caused some problems.

We continue to have workplace accidents. We have made some great positive changes; however, we must continue until we have no further accidents or fatalities in our workforce. Loved ones deserve to arrive home safely from their worksite. I'm sure that all Parties in this particular House wish to support any endeavour which is going to make our workforce safe. Having said that, I will take my place.

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

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the minister and her staff for giving me an advance copy. I appreciate it. I must have my big-boy pants on today.

The late Rosemary Brown said about the women's movement that until we've all made it, none of us have made it, and it's somewhat applicable in health and safety. Until there are no more workplace accidents, injuries, and deaths, then we haven't made it yet.

We have had an opportunity to make great strides in this province. Sadly enough, a lot of this coalesced around Westray - it really said to all Nova Scotians that our culture, when it comes to workplace, has to change, that whether you're a coalminer or work with steel, or if you work in the fishing industry, or if you work on the highways, first and

foremost, health and safety have to be a priority. Whether it's an injury of a magnitude of a direct accident, I would call that - such as the previous speaker talked about, like the shunting of boxcars, or one where we have an ongoing exposure to chemicals.

I'm also reminded of another one, that my colleague from Sackville-Cobequid brought a bill forward just this past week on PTSD. A workplace is ever-evolving when it comes to OH&S. There was a time when we were a heavily industrialized province, and those were the types of injuries we talked about - roof cave-ins in mines and so on. We're changing now to a different type of economy from time to time, and what happens is that the type of workplace injuries are not always visible to the naked eye. Many of them are mental, and we have to be ever-vigilant on that.

I want to again commend the minister and her staff, who I know realize the importance of health and safety within this province. No worker should die trying to make a living. Every worker deserves the dignity and the right, if there is an issue of health and safety in the workplace to bring that forward and not be penalized for it. I believe that the department is really a partner in that and, indeed, in my short time in that department I found that industry sees that way because they know, and as the minister spoke of the repeat offenders, their rates are going to go up when it comes to Workers' Compensation, and all these other issues. The reality is people will not want to work for them, and so on.

So it's very important - very, very important - that we highlight our success, but realize the real success is when we don't have to talk about any numbers at all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 64

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

Whereas teachers are dedicated to quality educational opportunities for every child;
and

Whereas teachers play a vital role in guiding Nova Scotia's students, helping prepare them for their future as responsible members of our society; and

Whereas the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has declared October 5th World Teachers' Day, a day that celebrates the important, challenging, and rewarding work teachers do on a daily basis;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly offer our sincere thanks and appreciation to all of Nova Scotia's educators for their dedication to our students and our province.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 65

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

Whereas Thanksgiving is an important communal and family celebration in Nova Scotia that is an integral part of our culture; and

Whereas we want to ensure that those who have chosen to make Nova Scotia their home feel welcome and a part of our community, and that they stay here to raise their families; and

Whereas Share Thanksgiving is a national initiative coordinated here by Engage Nova Scotia, which matches host families with newcomers and new families interested in sharing Thanksgiving dinner;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly support the work of Engage Nova Scotia to make Nova Scotia a more vibrant and inclusive province.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 66

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

Whereas the Province of Nova Scotia is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all those living in and visiting; and

Whereas Nova Scotia's first responders are dedicated to reducing the occurrence of home fires and home fire injuries through prevention and protection education; and

Whereas the 2014 Fire Prevention Week theme, Working Smoke Alarms Save Lives: Test Yours Every Month!, effectively serves to remind us that we need working smoke alarms to give us time to get out safely;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly proclaim October 5 - 11, 2014, as Fire Prevention Week throughout the province - and I urge all Nova Scotians to test their smoke alarms at least every month and to support the many public safety activities and efforts of our province's fire and emergency services during Fire Prevention Week 2014.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 67

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

Whereas Culture Days is an annual celebration of arts and culture from coast to coast; and

Whereas Culture Days provide Nova Scotians unique opportunities to explore the inner workings of the world of artists and cultural organizations through free, hands-on, behind-the-scenes activities; and

Whereas the arts and culture sector makes a vital contribution to the economic and social development of Nova Scotia and contributes to the overall health of our province;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly congratulate the individuals and institutions that opened their doors to Nova Scotians on September 26th, 27th and 28th during the 5th Anniversary Culture Days weekend.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 68

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

Whereas this year marks the 10th Anniversary of the Pengrowth-Nova Scotia Energy Scholarship, which has seen Pengrowth Management Limited, Pengrowth Energy Corporation and the province invest \$3 million in the program; and

Whereas this year, eight \$10,000 and eight \$2,500 renewable scholarships were awarded to students taking energy-related studies at a university and/or the Nova Scotia Community College; and

Whereas this year's recipients were chosen for their academic standing, community involvement and interest in the Nova Scotia energy industry;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate these 16 exceptional students for receiving a Pengrowth-Nova Scotia Energy Scholarship.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 69

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

Whereas it is Mental Health Awareness Week in Nova Scotia from October 5th to October 11th; and

Whereas there are many community events associated with Mental Health Awareness Week to fight the stigma surrounding mental health issues; and

Whereas the Canadian Mental Health Association, Nova Scotia Division, is part of a nationwide charitable organization that promotes the mental health of all and supports the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental health;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the importance of mental health to overall health and recognize the courage of those dealing with mental health issues.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

RESOLUTION NO. 70

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

Whereas the constituency assistant is a vital asset to an elected official and provides valuable support to the Member of the Legislative Assembly and the constituency; and

Whereas Marie Scanlan is the constituency assistant for the current MLA for Sackville-Cobequid and previously worked for the former MLA, John Holm; and

Whereas on October 5, 2014, Marie retired after 25 years of serving the constituents of Sackville-Cobequid;

Therefore be it resolved that this Legislative Assembly congratulate Marie Scanlan on 25 years of service as the constituency assistant in Sackville-Cobequid and extend best wishes for her health and happiness as she retires on October 5, 2014.

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. (Applause)

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 71

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

Whereas serving the Town of Windsor since 1881 and the Municipality of the District of West Hants since 1951, the Windsor Fire Department has battled many blazes, including the Great Windsor Fire in 1897; and

Whereas the late Fred Fox, who joined the Windsor Fire Department at the age of 18, having served as fire chief with the department for 20 of those years until his passing in 2009, was honoured on Saturday, October 4, 2014 with the unveiling of a bronze memorial during a public presentation; and

Whereas the Windsor Fire Department, currently under the capable leadership of Fire Chief Scott Burgess, heads into Fire Prevention Week along with many departments across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that that all members of this House of Assembly commend the Windsor Fire Department on their many years of excellent service towards the protection and safety of the people of Hants West.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

RESOLUTION NO. 72

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

Whereas on September 17th, the United Way of Colchester County kicked off its 60th community-based workplace campaign; and

Whereas all proceeds raised are invested back into the local community with a focus on three areas: “From poverty to possibility,” “Healthy people, strong communities,” and “All that kids can be”; and

Whereas the United Way strives to be a community builder that engages individuals and organizations towards collective action;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the United Way of Colchester County for 60 years of service to our communities and wish them well on their diamond anniversary campaign.

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 Queens-Shelburne.

RESOLUTION NO. 73

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

Whereas imaginary friends are made often in childhood, sometimes in adolescence and rarely in adulthood; and

Whereas the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture keeps talking about a mystery group and the people who support a 5 cent lobster levy who he keeps speaking to on a daily basis; and

Whereas the same Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture has promised to meet and consult with the lobster industry, yet no one has been invited to a public forum in the past six months;

Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture table a schedule of meetings to consult the lobster industry on any proposed lobster levy and that all members of this House encourage the minister to stop talking to imaginary friends and start talking to the real stakeholders.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 74

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 Windsor Day Care Centre first opened its doors on February 2, 1976, in the basement of the United Church chapel, presently the Heritage Museum on King Street, with Pat Post being employed from the very start; and

Whereas Pat has seen many changes over the years, including being instrumental in bringing about a new Windsor Day Care Centre, which had its grand opening on February 2, 2013; and

Whereas on August 29, 2014, Pat retired after serving as director since June 1990, with almost 38 years dedicated to the Windsor Day Care Centre spanning several generations of children;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Pat Post on the many years of devotion that she has extended to children at the Windsor Day Care Centre and wish her all the best on her retirement.

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. 75

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 Rose (Knockwood) Morris is a member of the Acadia Band who lives at the Gold River Reserve; and

Whereas Rose is a well-respected and cherished Elder of the Mi'kmaq Nation; and

Whereas Rose overcame a difficult childhood to become an author, artist, and educator;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature join me in saluting Elder Rose Morris for her commitment to creating awareness and understanding of her culture.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 76

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

Whereas Mr. Tom Dudka of Linacy grew what judges called the most perfect pumpkin in the Maritimes at the Windsor-West Hants Pumpkin Festival; and

Whereas this 900-pound beauty earned him the Hilda Dill Award for its colour, shape and texture; and

Whereas this award winner is on display at the West Side Sobeys in New Glasgow this week so that everyone can see firsthand why this magnificent fruit took home the prize;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Tom Dudka for his pumpkin-growing prowess and the bragging rights that go with it and undertake to visit Pictou County this week to see the award winner firsthand.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 77

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

Whereas the United Nations has designated the first Monday of October of every year as World Habitat Day, and in Nova Scotia, Habitat for Humanity provides affordable home ownership opportunities for low-income working families; and

Whereas the purpose of World Habitat Day is to remind us to reflect on the basic right to adequate shelter and to remind us that we all have the power and responsibility to shape the future of our cities and towns; and

Whereas the Annapolis Valley chapter of Habitat for Humanity has just begun building a duplex for two families on Scott Drive in Kentville with land generously donated by the Town of Kentville and with support from the County of Kings;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Habitat for Humanity for their commitment to improve the lives of Nova Scotia citizens.

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. 78

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

Whereas on October 3, 2014, the Liberal Government rammed Bill No. 1 through this House of Assembly, taking away the hard-earned rights of 24,000 health care workers; and

Whereas Bill No. 1 is the fourth piece of legislation passed by this Liberal Government in their first year which turns back the clock on workers' rights; and

Whereas Bill No. 1 breaks the Premier's 2013 election promise to respect the hard-earned rights of health care workers;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly condemn this Liberal Government and Premier for breaking their promise to the health care workers of this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Pictou West.

RESOLUTION NO. 79

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

Whereas Chef Thomas Carey of Pictou won the Chowder Cook-Off award presented by Taste of Nova Scotia at the 2014 Saltscapes Expo at Exhibition Park in Halifax; and

Whereas Chef Thomas is the chef at the beautiful Pictou Lodge; and

Whereas Chef Thomas uses local produce whenever possible;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Chef Thomas on his award.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 80

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

Whereas the many volunteers at the Inverary Manor give much of their time in hopes of making the lives of residents more joyous and comfortable; and

Whereas the residents of Inverary Manor greatly appreciate and enjoy the company and aid these volunteers offer above and beyond the excellent service provided by the staff of the Manor; and

Whereas these volunteers were celebrated and thanked in a recent gathering recognizing the volunteer efforts at the Manor;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge and congratulate the volunteers of the Inverary Manor in Inverness who graciously offer their time to those in need.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

RESOLUTION NO. 81

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

Whereas the Sydney Sooners once again won the Nova Scotia Senior Baseball League Championship, making it a grand total of five league championships; and

Whereas in the eighth inning the Sydney Sooners came from behind with a bases loaded homerun by North Sydney native Josh Forrest; and

Whereas the Sooners were able to hang on during the last inning to win the game and the championship;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate these scrappy Sydney Sooners on their title and victory.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

RESOLUTION NO. 82

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

Whereas June 28, 2014 was an historic occasion for the residents of Sluice Point, Surettes Island, and Morris Island of Yarmouth County; and

Whereas with the assistance of many local dignitaries, in front of a very large crowd, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held at the Indian Sluice Bridge that connects Sluice Point and Surettes Island; and

Whereas the new bridge was constructed next to the existing structure that was built and opened in 1909 to connect the island to the mainland;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate and thank members of the bridge replacement committee for their tireless efforts and commitment to make this dream a reality, and wish them safe travels for many years.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 83

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

Whereas Brianna Francis of Pictou Landing was one of six local athletes to compete in the North American Indigenous Games held in Regina; and

Whereas Brianna competed in three events and brought home a silver medal for the under-19 4X100 metre relay race; and

Whereas the medal will always be a physical reminder of her performance, the experience of the games, and the lasting friendships that will forever be in her heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Brianna Francis on her win and wish her well in her future sporting endeavours.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

RESOLUTION NO. 84

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

Whereas on October 2nd, Efficiency Nova Scotia announced the winners of the 2014 Bright Business Awards, during its annual conference on energy efficiency; and

Whereas the awards recognize seven of Nova Scotia's best in class organizations and individuals for their achievements and leadership in the field of energy efficiency; and

Whereas Valley Waste Resource Management of Kentville received the award under the Innovation category for setting an example in the design and construction of their building, demonstrating innovation in promoting energy efficiency;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Valley Waste Resource Management on this well-deserved award.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Pictou West.

RESOLUTION NO. 85

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

Whereas Karen Corbin of New Glasgow, and formerly of Lyons Brook, has released her new CD, *Ready for the Storm*, in July 2014; and

Whereas the CD is comprised of some of Karen's favourite Celtic songs as well as an original track called "Hector and Betsey" about the *Hector* that landed in 1773 and the *Betsey* that landed in 1767 on the north shore of Pictou; and

Whereas Karen recorded *Ready for the Storm* at George Canyon's ranch in Alberta;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Karen Corbin on the release of her new CD.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 86

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

Whereas when Chrissy Crowley released her first recording in 2007 as a teenager, those who knew fiddle music recognized her talent; and

Whereas Chrissy has spent her years captivating audiences in North America, the U.K. and beyond; and

Whereas Ms. Crowley has recently been awarded the Instrumental Solo Artist of the Year award at the Canadian Folk Music Awards;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud Ms. Crowley for her success and encourage her to continue to make us proud.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

RESOLUTION NO. 87

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

Whereas St. Joseph's Catholic Church in North Sydney recently received a facelift with a new paint job paid for primarily from generous individual donations; and

Whereas Jeff Peach and John MacKinnon of Our Neighbourhood Painters spent months grinding the building down before priming and applying five coats of rubberized paint; and

Whereas the end result is amazing and, as the highest structure in North Sydney, St. Joseph's looks like it did 102 years ago;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate members of St. Joseph's congregation for successfully undertaking such a successful restoration project.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

RESOLUTION NO. 88

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

Whereas Ryan Leedham from Brookfield won gold in the Aircraft Maintenance category of the Skills Canada competition in Mississauga, and will move on to compete in the WorldSkills Canadian Trials for an opportunity to represent his country on WorldSkills Team Canada 2015, at the 43rd WorldSkills Competition in Brazil; and

Whereas Skills Canada is an organization that promotes skilled trades and technology career options to Canadian youth; and

Whereas each year more than 500 young people from all regions of Canada successfully complete demanding local and provincial competitions to represent their province in the annual Skills Canada National Competition by participating in over 40 skilled trade and technology contests;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ryan Leedham on his gold medal win, and wish him luck in his forthcoming WorldSkills Canadian Trials.

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**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 5.

Bill No. 5 - Government Restructuring (2014) Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Internal Services.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 5, the Government Restructuring (2014) Act be now read a second time.

I am pleased to rise in the House to introduce these housekeeping amendments that will formalize the new structure of government departments. After we came into office, we took a broad look at the workings of government overall. In March we put in place changes that will result in efficiencies for government and, more importantly, better services for Nova Scotians.

These changes include: Municipal Affairs becoming its own department, including the Emergency Management Office and the Office of the Fire Marshal; the establishment of Service Nova Scotia as an office; the combining of the Department of Finance and Treasury Board Office into a new department; and the formation of the Department of Internal Services, bringing together divisions and services from various departments.

Now changes need to be made to a variety of Acts to reflect this new structure and the new responsibilities carried by the various ministers. There is the required changing of the names throughout to reference the proper departments and ministers. These are housekeeping amendments. The good work at all of these departments has been well underway for the past several months. I look forward to the various departments' continued efforts to improve the services and programs we offer to Nova Scotians. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: I am pleased to rise and address Bill No. 5 this evening. The government, of course, has already made all of the changes that the minister just spoke about, and so in that sense, this bill truly is housekeeping. The house has already been kept, in a sense, and now the paperwork will follow. It's an odd way to go about it, but we recognize that what the minister said, that this is a housekeeping bill, is in fact correct even if the order is a little backward.

Mr. Speaker, one of the outstanding questions that remains when it comes to this housekeeping bill is, what will the ultimate price for these changes be? On the one hand, it's a pretty modest set of changes. A Party that has been out of office for all those years comes into office, changes a few titles, creates a new department, moves some people

around, but the bills have not come in so that Nova Scotians can see what new administration and what new government positions may or may not be created. Hopefully as this bill moves through all its various stages, that information will become clear. I sure hope that the government has not gone into this blindly not knowing what the bill will be to the taxpayers of Nova Scotia from splitting Service Nova Scotia into an office and a department, to creating the Department of Internal Services, and so on.

We already know their record at finding administrative savings. They asked the Public Service to find 1 per cent in their last budget. They fell miserably short of that target, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the cost of government goes up and up and up under the Liberal Government to date. Now we see in this housekeeping bill the latest attempt to shuffle some titles around and create the appearance of progress, when in fact, when it comes to administrative savings, they are going in the wrong direction.

I'm not just talking about the cost of a few business cards or letterhead and all of those things that always come about when a government comes in and changes a few department names, but how much in new bureaucracy, in new process, in new red tape, in new positions is this going to cost the taxpayers of Nova Scotia? That remains to be seen, but we'll hopefully find that out in the days ahead.

It does seem quite ironic from a government that likes to talk about others needing to show restraint, whether they're in our health care system or in our school system or in the departments of government, that for their responsibility at the top of the bureaucracy there has been so little restraint shown already. Individual ministers book last-minute flights that cost thousands of dollars. That sends the wrong message to those public servants who actually do want to try to find ways of delivering government more efficiently. That's one example. Now we have this housekeeping bill, with no price tag attached, that makes a few shuffling changes at the top of the system - no talk of restraint, just about creating new departments and new bureaucracy.

We certainly are going to take our opportunity in the Official Opposition to review the bill and what it means in the days ahead as we go through the committees and bring it back to this House and so on, and hold the government accountable for creating a real sense of savings and efficiency for the taxpayers of Nova Scotia, because whether this bill does that or not remains to be seen. With those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place.

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

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, we won't speak long on this bill. The reality is that it's a prerogative of government to change how it operates inasmuch as its departments and so on. I suppose I do, to a point, echo the words of the Leader of the Official Opposition about if there are savings here. I will give the government the benefit of the doubt for now to prove it. I hope that is what they will do, that there are efficiencies here, that we will see some savings to be realized. It hasn't happened yet, so that's good.

The reality is we saw a bill here last week that took away people's rights and the government thought that was fine. At the end of the day I don't know what this bill will accomplish, if it doesn't accomplish some sort of savings. I think they would have to be substantive savings in order to have this bill come before us.

Like the Leader of the Official Opposition, our Party would also like to see this bill move forward, go to the Law Amendments Committee, deal with it from there, and hopefully the people of Nova Scotia will be able to fully voice their opinion on this bill and will move forward. There may be some amendments. With that said, I'll take my place.

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

The honourable Minister of Internal Services.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, a couple of comments towards Bill No. 5. The Leader of the Official Opposition might want to look at the budget we tabled last Spring, as it laid out the plans of what this would cost government. If he had read those documents fully, he would have seen it. The Leader of the Official Opposition asked what this has cost government, and the answer is nothing. We are already well underway on our savings of \$40 million in procurement alone. As we have broken down the silos in government where education works on its own, health care on its own and government on its own, we're going to be having a lot more savings coming forward. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

MR. KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I would now like to close debate on Bill No. 5.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 5. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 9.

Bill No. 9 - Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I move this bill for second reading.

I'm pleased today to bring forward an amendment to an important piece of legislation, the Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act. The changes are intended to accomplish three things: allow those who are training to be licensed funeral directors to register with the Nova Scotia Board of Registration of Embalmers and Funeral Directors as apprentices; recognize and protect apprentice funeral directors under the Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act; and provide Nova Scotians with more protection, as this ensures that aspiring funeral directors are properly trained and regulated.

Before now our legislation has recognized apprentice embalmers under the Act but has not provided the same recognition for apprentice funeral directors. These changes will now allow apprentice funeral directors in Nova Scotia to also be protected by the Act. They will benefit from the amendment, as they will receive the same protection and authority as apprentice embalmers regarding complaints, investigations or the suspension or revocation of a licence.

The amendment to the Act will improve the quality of the funeral service industry, as it ensures well-trained funeral professionals for the future. It will also provide consumers with protection from potential errors, wrongdoing or bad practices. These changes are consistent with practices in seven other provinces. They also follow extensive consultation by Service Nova Scotia with the Nova Scotia Board of Registration of Embalmers and Funeral Directors, the Funeral Service Association of Nova Scotia, as well as consumers.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to comments by other members.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative caucus supports this change to strengthen the funeral industry in Nova Scotia and ensure Nova Scotians are treated with dignity when they are in need of the services of a funeral director.

Mr. Speaker, we understand this change has been requested by the Nova Scotia Board of Registration of Embalmers and Funeral Directors because we understand they want to ensure that people who are interested in becoming funeral directors are regulated and well trained, and that can only mean better services to families who are mourning.

Mr. Speaker, if I may take a minute, I'd like to thank Green's Funeral Home in Port Hawkesbury. My father passed away just recently and I think of John Greene, Mike Halfpenny and Catherine Cogswell who were with us every step of the way. There's a lot to do and there's a lot on a family's mind when they're going through the time of a loved one's passing. I want to thank them for their help.

I guess when you go through it, Mr. Speaker, you realize that these are special people who are well trained and need to be well trained for the sake of their industry and for the sake of the many families they are serving.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to seeing the bill advance through to Law Amendments Committee and with the eventual passing, I am sure, in this Legislature. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand and speak for just a brief moment on Bill No. 9. I think it's important to recognize the government in their efforts to move forward and try to ensure that we have services that Nova Scotians gain access to are moving and ensuring that they are competent, that they provide a good service for Nova Scotians. I think that is the essence of the changes proposed today and we do support that.

I know, as some of these bills go through, on the surface you don't know if there's anything behind the bills that might have a negative impact on individuals. We often hear of that after the fact. One of the things we'll continue to do is not block the government on this piece of legislation, allow it to get to Law Amendments Committee, but we want to make sure that people are supportive of this, that there aren't negative effects on this and that what we really want is better services for all Nova Scotians.

With that, we do support this going forward and we'll see what transpires at Law Amendments Committee, Mr. Speaker, through the process.

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues, the members for Inverness and Sackville-Beaver Bank for their comments and their support. I rise to close debate on Bill No. 9, amending the Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 9. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 10.

Bill No. 10 - Service Nova Scotia Statutory Officers Appointment Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 10, an Act Respecting the Appointment of Statutory Officers at Service Nova Scotia, be read a second time.

I am pleased today to bring forward amendments to various consumer protection Statutes. The pieces of legislation that will be affected by the change include: the Cemetery and Funeral Services Act; Collection Agencies Act; Consumer Protection Act; Consumer Reporting Act; Consumer Services Act; Direct Sellers' Registration Act; Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act; and the Mortgage Brokers' and Lenders' Registration Act.

Mr. Speaker, the process for appointing individuals to administer these various consumer protection Acts has become outdated and cumbersome. Historically these Acts were administered by one individual who operated with independence from Executive Council and the minister, in a stable and static policy environment. Even as government has evolved, the administrative duties of these Acts have remained the responsibility of the Director of Consumer Services, a public servant appointed by Governor in Council.

This process has resulted in limited flexibility in administering the legislation. Currently, when the director leaves or the position is vacant, no one has the authority to administer the legislation. There's no provision to appoint a separate registrar or deputy registrars. For example, under the Mortgage Brokers' and Lenders' Registration Act, if the director was absent, no one would have legislative authority to hold a hearing to determine whether a mortgage broker licence should be revoked.

Mr. Speaker, the current appointment process limits administration of the legislation so that it is not effective or responsive in today's world. The proposed amendment will streamline the process for appointing registrars and deputy registrars to administer these Acts. The changes will provide flexibility to appoint as many registrars as needed to administer the legislation and as many deputies as needed to ensure that the registrars' duties can be carried on without interruption in the event of absence. Administration of the Acts will no longer rely on one individual, allowing government to better serve businesses and consumers.

The legislative changes are not intended to create new offices or to change the powers and authorities of the registrar. In addition, we are ensuring the reporting requirement for the registrar is clearly explained. I'm pleased to bring forward these changes so Nova Scotia's consumer protection legislation is up to date and provides more flexibility in their administration. The changes also reflect current practice and legislation in most other provinces of Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to comments from other members.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I enjoy the minister's comments. They are providing a little more clarification. Certainly when we read these bills, and I'm not trained as a lawyer but certainly read them intently, sometimes it helps to hear the remarks of the ministers to help clarify what exactly the aim of the bill is.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that providing a business environment that protects consumers is an important role for government. It is also important for government - we talk about wanting to cut red tape - it is also important for government to be able to be responsive to the needs of Nova Scotia businesses and individuals who are providing services to other Nova Scotians to make sure that government is timely in responding to their needs, whether it's becoming licensed for something as one example.

As I understand, this not creating another layer of bureaucracy. This is not creating red tape. That being the case, we are supportive of it, because that is something we are watching for, that is something that we are hearing from small businesses in the province particularly, that they do not want to be seeing red tape. Given that we have the assurance of the minister here tonight in his remarks, that gives me greater confidence that this bill is certainly worth supporting.

As the minister had stated, the appointment process just felt outdated, and I can certainly understand if the person who is appointed is not available to make a ruling, that's going to create delays, and we can't have that. With the greater flexibility the government gets with the passage of this bill, it is going to lead, as I understand, to more timely service for those who are affected.

I look forward to any presentations which we may see at Law Amendments Committee, though I have a sense we won't be seeing too many, and we look forward to the bill proceeding through the House. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, our caucus will support this piece of legislation moving through second reading to get into Law Amendments Committee. I think by appointing statutory officers at Service Nova Scotia, it may help in some of the roadblocks that not only consumers but businesses have found themselves up against over the last number of years when trying to access services, especially if it's due to a vacancy at the department.

As we move forward, we want to ensure that the best interest of Nova Scotians is at the forefront of this piece of legislation. I know the minister and his department bring

forward a lot of changes to legislation, trying to update it, and I want to commend Service Nova Scotia and his department for being proactive. I think, in our term as government - but it continues under the current government's term - that they want to ensure that the legislation they oversee in their department reflects current trends or current issues that people are finding are going on in the province.

I appreciate the minister bringing this forward and we'll support this moving through the process. Thank you.

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Inverness and, if I may, apologize for misrepresenting my colleague's constituency - Sackville-Cobequid.

I rise to close debate on Bill No. 10, an Act Respecting the Appointment of Statutory Officers at Service Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 10. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 12.

Bill No. 12 - Correctional Services Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 12, amendments to the Correctional Services Act, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this evening to address a number of minor amendments to the Correctional Services Act. Clause 1 corrects a few definitions - first, we would like to replace all references of "assistant probation officer" with the term "probation officers" as the position of assistant probation officer no longer exists. This was the term used to refer to non-employees who completed work on a fee-for-service basis. The fee-for-service budget was eliminated in the 2011-12 fiscal year, so this amendment reflects current practices.

We also recommend adjusting the wording of several other sections of the Act to eliminate unnecessary words and accurately reflect current practices. These include adjusting wording of some sections to allow for the use of additional technologies for offenders visiting and communications, as well as transporting offenders.

We are proposing to update the definition of “committal order” to include regulation-making authority and ensure it is broad enough to cover orders issued by other criminal justice agencies. Local correctional facilities have always provided temporary detention on a fee-for-service basis when agencies like the Canada Border Service Agency or Correctional Services Canada required that an immigrant or a parolee be held in custody temporarily.

We’re also recommending changing all reference of “electronic monitoring” to “electronic supervision” and updating the definition. This proposed amendment will ensure the definition is more inclusive of the various technologies available, such as voice verification - this change will not result in any change to the current electronic supervision program.

Next, we are recommending adjusting wording so that it’s clear that any money resulting from the investment of funds held in trust is for the benefit of offenders generally and not for individual offenders. We are also recommending adjusting the wording in the Act to enable correspondence produced, recorded or stored by graphic, electronic, mechanical or other means to be included in the intent of correspondence, rather than the narrow definition of printed correspondence - this will allow us to keep up with evolving technologies.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, we recommend adjusting the Act so that victims who request information are advised only of permanent transfers to other correctional facilities or the penitentiary. This change would eliminate the need for Correctional Services to advise victims when the transfers are temporary, such as for a court proceeding or a medical appointment. The existing language predates the current Act and is over 25 years old. When originally put in place, offenders were not routinely transferred between facilities for court appearances, medical appointments or the like.

The Department of Justice is committed to ensuring public safety in Nova Scotia by providing the most appropriate programs and services and, Mr. Speaker, the amendments we are proposing to the Correctional Services Act will allow us to make the changes necessary to stay up to date with current technologies and best practices.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear comments from my colleagues. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her introduction, or for her comments on this bill. As technology advances, it only makes sense to use it. Our caucus favours changes that keep Nova Scotia communities and those working also in the criminal justice system safer. I look forward to learning in more detail how these changes will ensure that safety is improved for everyone.

As I understand, Mr. Speaker, this bill clears the way for video conferencing that will diminish the risks inherent in moving offenders and also diminish the opportunity for transport of contraband. I think back - it's probably a couple of years ago now - but I remember looking at the paper one morning and seeing a photo that somebody had taken on their phone of a gentleman who was perched on the back of a sheriff's van after having escaped, gotten out of the window of the van. He proceeded to jump off the rear bumper of the van and was loose for a period of time. Thankfully, he was captured and returned into custody. But it certainly does happen. I know improvements were made to that van after that, and vans like that, to ensure that there were bars to prevent that from happening again. So we can never be too careful, and using something like video conferencing, which may be cheaper and may also reduce the risk inherent in transporting these people around, is a good thing, I think.

I note that this bill updates references of "electronic monitoring" to "electronic supervision". I guess that's to broaden the definition so that it doesn't just refer to ankle bracelets. I have to say, when I first saw the legislation brought forward, I thought, well, this must have something to do with ankle bracelets.

I know everyone in this Legislature knows that we have called for greater use of this technology. I think of recently, a story that was in the news about a gentleman who was seen walking near a school, near children, and he had been required to stay away from children because of past offences against them. I spoke with a couple of young mothers. I just asked them their opinion. What do you think? Should somebody like this have an electronic bracelet attached to them so that the authorities know every step they take? And the clear and concise answer back to me was yes. Obviously, they don't want their children coming into contact with somebody like that. If that person has been found guilty and charged, or even if they are facing charges, to me, the safety of Nova Scotians is paramount and it takes precedence over that person who has been charged.

I know we can even expand that into areas where there are people with mental illness. I know some people say, well, we don't want to be putting bracelets on people who may be on a day leave from a hospital like the Nova Scotia Hospital. But that bracelet may in fact give them some freedom in that there's a greater trust that those people can be out on the street with the knowledge that the authorities do know where they are.

I think of Raymond Taavel and what happened to him as a very real example of what can happen when people who are on leave from a facility, maybe in situations for their own safety especially, as we saw in that case - a gentleman on the street, I think it was well past 2:00 a.m., and we know what happened, Mr. Speaker.

I don't want to talk too much about that because it's a very sad event, but I am speaking about it because I think the point needs to be made and it's important for members to hear how we feel about that and how other Nova Scotians feel about that. I would like a little more clarification - and perhaps the minister, in time, can provide that as this bill advances through the House - on the updates of references to "electronic monitoring" to "electronic supervision".

She has mentioned voice verification. I sense this may be some way to verify where an offender may be, who may be in some type of custody where they are allowed to be, maybe, under house arrest or something like that. I see the minister nodding her head.

Finally, I wonder if government has consulted with victims' groups before changing the notification process for routine transfers. I know there is a balance here between the practicality of allowing people who are working in Corrections to transport people for court proceedings and medical appointments, but if knowing where a person is who has harmed a family member gives that family peace of mind, I should hope that they have been consulted with. Perhaps the minister can expand upon that at a future point in time.

Mr. Speaker, generally we like this bill, and for that reason we look forward to its passing forward into Law Amendments. Thank you.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. LENA DIAB: I move to close debate on Bill No. 12.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 12. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that the adjourned debate on Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be now resumed.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MR. ALLAN ROWE: It has been almost a week and a half, I think, since . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Good to see you.

MR. ROWE: It's good to see you as well. It's good to see all members back in the House.

A week and a half - I'm not sure if there is actually a record or anything for length of adjournment of Address in Reply, but I've got to be in the running for that, I figure. A week and a half.

Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back. It has been a busy week here in the House, and it's good to have this opportunity to once again rise and discuss some of the issues of importance to my riding of Dartmouth South and to all the people of Nova Scotia as well.

When last I was speaking in these Chambers, I was discussing some of the things that have happened with regard to Dartmouth South that have been extremely important for myself and for our constituents there. I highlighted some things, particularly, with regard to health issues. I made specific reference, for example, to the monies that we have put forward as a government for the renovation work and the redesign work of the Dartmouth General Hospital, for the third- and fourth-floor renovations in particular, and the design work for the fifth floor and the new operating theatres there as well.

I also made reference, for example, to our efforts to improve physician and doctor recruitment in our province by setting up the new Physician Recruitment and Retention Action Team, so that we can ensure that everyone in our province has access to a family physician and access to appropriate health care.

When we last paused, Mr. Speaker, I was talking about seniors. I had made reference in particular to some of the things that our government has done over the past 10 or 11 months - for example, giving \$9 million for renovations to homes for seniors throughout our province. In particular, for my riding of Dartmouth South, close to \$5 million was announced earlier this year for work on Alderney Manor, a seniors' facility in our riding that is in dire need of some improvements to its parking garage, to its lobbies, and specifically to the units where our constituents are housed. It was a great pleasure to see that money going toward those sorts of things.

One of the other things I wanted to discuss when we were talking seniors and issues that affect seniors was the move by this government to recognize the rights of grandparents, to take steps to recognize those rights. (Applause)

We have moved amendments to the Act that specifically deal with the Maintenance and Custody Act. They essentially allow grandparents to proceed directly to the hearing of the application for access on the merits, giving grandparents the chance to stay and have opportunities to visit with their grandchildren, when perhaps the sons and daughters that are involved are having problems in their relations. Grandparents shouldn't be forced out of those relationships specifically because of the problems that the adults are facing. We think that's a tremendous thing to do.

One of the things that I campaigned on when I was leading up to our election, a year ago this month, was the need for advocacy for our seniors. One of the things that I said I would do then was put in place a seniors' advocate in our constituency office, and that was one of the very first things that we did in our constituency office.

I would like to take a brief moment to publicly thank Ms. Ellie Lethbridge who is our seniors' advocate in the Dartmouth South riding office. Ellie comes into the office once a week, at least. She spends an entire afternoon, sometimes an entire day, dealing specifically with seniors' issues. We have made it clear, we sent out in our newsletters, we make it available at every opportunity that we have to the seniors in our riding - and there are a great many seniors in our riding of Dartmouth South - the importance of maneuvering through the system.

A lot of the seniors who come to us say, I can't find my way through the system. I'm not familiar with the online things and the Internet, or I'm not familiar with all the forms that have to be filled out. We recognized that right away so Ellie works, as I've said, she's in the office once a week, but I know she works each and every day for many of the seniors who come into our office regularly. So I did want to take just a brief moment to thank her publicly for that and all the work that she does.

There are lot of other things that I want to talk about - and I'm just going to go through some of them briefly and some of the other aspects that our government has done over the course of the past 10 or 11 months or so that affect my riding and affect all of the constituents of Nova Scotia, particularly now with regard to education.

This government immediately recognized the importance of education, early education, the education of our young people, our Primary through Grade 9, our high school system, and immediately said to the people of Nova Scotia: we understand the importance of early education; we understand the need to invest in early education because investing in our children is an investment in our future.

Our Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development wasted little or no time in announcing \$18.6 million reinvested into our education system - \$18.6 million. Among the things that we are looking after, of younger classes, are capping class sizes from Primary through Grade 2 as well. We reintroduced the Reading Recovery program for Grade 1 students. We have also taken action to support the needs of high-need students

throughout our province. These are all actions that our government immediately recognized were critical for the future of our province, for the future of our children.

Our minister was also quick to realize the need for a complete school curriculum. I don't have to remind any of the members of this House that it has been 25 years since the school curriculum in this province was reviewed. Our minister recognized that, our government recognized that, and that review has been initiated. To date, I understand there are some 18,000 submissions from Nova Scotians to that review process. This is a process whereby we have asked Nova Scotians what we need to do as government. What should we do to improve our education system and our school curriculum? Nova Scotians are responding, because they understand the value - as we understand and our minister understands - the value of an early education.

As a result of a survey by nearly 6,000 students, parents, teachers as well, in the Spring our minister asked that school boards and schools change the format for report cards for parents. Again, I don't need to remind any of the members of this House, but parents and teachers were telling us they were not getting the feedback - parents in particular - weren't getting the feedback from teachers that they require, to understand where the problems might be with their children and with their students.

The minister immediately said, I need to see a change in the way this is done. Now there are direct relationships with students, direct pointing of what it is students need to improve on, so the teachers know what they have to do with those students and, more importantly, parents need to know as well. Once again, these are things that our government has recognized and our government has acted on, immediately, to ensure the future for all of the students and the people of our province.

It's not just younger students. We have looked at education right from Primary through to secondary education and then post-secondary education as well. We looked to the Spring when the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education announced the graduate scholarships program - that's \$3.7 million annually to support graduates in research and innovation in our province. This past Fall, 120 of those scholarships were awarded, each of them between \$10,000 and \$15,000. That is keeping young people who are graduating from our post-secondary institutions in this province so that they can raise their families, start their businesses and stay in Nova Scotia.

In the riding of Dartmouth South there is an institution that is certainly extremely near and dear to my heart and that's the NSCC, Nova Scotia Community College, Waterfront Campus. If you haven't had a chance, Mr. Speaker - I know you have - but anyone who hasn't had a chance, I'd invite them down to that campus. It is a phenomenal campus that does phenomenal work with its students. It is considered one of the greenest campuses - I believe certainly east of Montreal, if not within all of Canada as well.

The work that is done there for students who are trying to get into trades and other businesses and so on is absolutely fantastic. I had a good tour with a couple of my

colleagues a couple of weeks ago, for example, of the aviation facilities at the NSCC. What you would see there would absolutely blow your mind.

It's amazing, the work that is being done and the potential for the future that can put Nova Scotia on the map. The potential for people to graduate from the NSCC, not just perhaps to get a trade or a career, but perhaps to go into research and develop projects or develop equipment that may be used throughout the world. So that's putting Nova Scotia on the map.

One of the things that we also got to do at the Nova Scotia Community College earlier this year was when the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Immigration actually came to the campus to announce a new program whereby international students now have access to citizenship. We did that through the Provincial Nominee Program. The idea is to keep international students who are coming to Nova Scotia, and in the past who have been leaving for whatever reason, to keep those students here - because once again, Mr. Speaker, this government realizes that we need to keep our young people here. We need to educate them here, keep them here so they can raise their families, and that, in turn, grows our economy and moves things forward. I'd like to thank the Minister of Justice for coming and making that announcement, and the Minister of Immigration as well.

Our Minister of Labour and Advanced Education also announced, of course, amendments to our Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act. Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, this was an imperative move. It was something we had to do and we had to move quickly. Too many of our students were leaving and going away. Too many of our trades students were leaving and they were doing their apprenticeships outside of this province and not getting credit for that when they returned.

This government recognized that was absolutely absurd. That was not encouraging those students to return home; that was encouraging those students to stay elsewhere. This government recognized we need to get those young people back. To do that, we have to make amendments, and we wasted little to no time once again in taking that action, taking that action decisively.

Finally, with education, Mr. Speaker, we removed the interest from student loans and we made that retroactive to 2007. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I think it's very clear that this government has a commitment to health care. It has a commitment to seniors. It has a commitment to education. It has the commitment to the future of this province.

One of the things I wanted to sort of point out as I went through this discourse of some of the things that we've done as a government was to make it very clear that this member has the opportunity, at any time, to speak to any member of this Executive Council. Any time I have an issue in my riding that comes to me as the member for

Dartmouth South, I go to a specific minister and I discuss that issue with them, and we try to find a solution and we try to move it forward as quickly as we can.

There is no separation within our caucus. Clearly, Executive Council has to make the decisions of government. That's what Executive Council does. But I also want to make it clear to anyone who is listening that this entire caucus is unified and works together as a team for the benefit of all Nova Scotians, each and every day. (Applause)

Let me just point out a couple of them, for example, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about an issue in our riding. It's a new school that we're looking at, for example - Southdale-North Woodside School and Prince Arthur Junior High School. Both of these schools are in desperate need of replacement. One of the very first things I've done is spoken to our Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. I've had many, many discussions over and over, and I'm so pleased to announce that we are moving forward with that on a daily basis and that very soon we will have a resolution to that.

The point of the matter is, sir, I can go to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and discuss this issue and discuss it openly to achieve a result that's going to benefit, certainly not me, but it's going to benefit the people of the riding of Dartmouth South. (Interruptions) All you've got to do is go and discuss. You've got to go and talk, I tell you. Absolutely.

Some of the other things that we've accomplished in Dartmouth South by discussing things with our Executive Council: we've got a new Dartmouth skate park. It received \$100,000 from the provincial recreation fund. (Applause) This \$100,000 will go towards the development and the assistance for young people to enjoy recreational activities, which in turn improve the health of our young people and in turn help to keep them off the streets and out of trouble. These are things that our government does on a regular basis.

We established the Atlantic Division Canoe Kayak Canada Centre of Excellence on Lake Banook, which I share with the member for Dartmouth North, the honourable Minister of Community Services, as well. This kayak centre is a tremendous centre. Many of my colleagues throughout the Legislature know of the graduates of the kayak centre and the canoe centre who have gone on to world recognition in the Olympic Games and International Games and so on. This is yet another thing that's happening in our riding of Dartmouth South.

One of the things that came to my attention, again, early on in my days when I became the MLA for Dartmouth South, was the issue of literacy and the importance of moving literacy forward in our community - not just in Dartmouth South but throughout the entire province of Nova Scotia. One of the very first things we did was hold a town hall on literacy. We invited various literacy-related groups, the Dartmouth Learning Centre, and other groups and experts to come in and sit at the town hall and have an open

discussion and a dialogue with the people of our riding to discuss what we needed to do to move forward - what they felt we needed to do to move forward.

That was a tremendous session - issues that I had been working on, that I will continue to work on with the Executive Council as we go forward to perhaps look at investigating the possibility of legislation for plain language - plain language where anyone at any time can pick up any document in this province and read it without any issues or any problems whatsoever.

It's absolutely absurd to think that anyone in this province is denied access or feels they are denied access to a service that this province presents because they can't read the forms or they can't understand the process that has to be followed. It's time for this government to take a lead - perhaps in Canada - and change the way things are done, to make language plain for each and every Nova Scotian in each and every process that's presented to them.

One of things with literacy is, while I was proud to actually raise the flag in front of our Legislature, in front of the statue of Joseph Howe, was to raise the flag on behalf of the Dartmouth Learning Network, and we did that on UNESCO International Literacy Day. I believe, if I'm not mistaken, that this was the first time the flag had been raised in honour of Literacy Day here at Province House. I consider that a great achievement for all Nova Scotians: the recognition of the importance of promoting literacy, improving literacy, and thereby improving the future lot of all of our province.

One of the things that I've also realized and come to understand over the course of the past few months is the importance of the relationship with our municipal government. I do want to take a moment to recognize, in particular, our member of council for Dartmouth South in the area of downtown Dartmouth that I specifically represent, and that's Councillor Gloria McCluskey, whose name is probably no stranger to most people in this House.

Councillor McCluskey and I have a tremendous relationship. We call each other regularly to discuss issues of importance to our riding that cross over between the municipality and the province. We've also discussed many issues with the deputy mayor, Darren Fisher, who also represents part of the constituency, and Councillor Bill Karsten as well. What I'm trying to specifically point out is how important it is for all members of this House to work with their municipal governments, to involve themselves in municipal aspects of what's happening, and to move things forward at each and every opportunity. That's something that has clearly happened with regard to our constituency office in Dartmouth South, and I'm quite certain with all the rest of my colleagues, certainly within government as well.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't recognize the mayor of the Halifax Regional Municipality, Mayor Mike Savage, and the fine work he continues to do on behalf of our

municipality and on behalf of Dartmouth as a whole and Dartmouth South in particular. I would want to recognize the tremendous relationship that we have established with him.

If I could have the indulgence of the House for just a couple of moments more and let me just talk about some of the things that our constituency office has done over the past 10 or 11 months. A lot of discussion happens in the House as to where most of the work is done. My colleague, the member for Halifax Atlantic, I know, in some of his remarks a couple of weeks ago or a week and a half ago, was talking about how a lot of the work isn't necessarily done within these chambers; it's in the constituency office. I share that opinion.

This job is not a four-day-a-week job or a five-day-a-week job, and I say that on behalf of each and every member that sits in this Legislature. This job, and I'm sure that I speak on behalf of everyone, is a 24/7 job. We were elected by the people whom we represent to represent them and do the job for them, and I certainly know that I do my best on every occasion to make myself available. I know for certain that all of my colleagues on this side of the House do, and I am quite certain that the members on the opposite side do exactly the same thing. I have heard nothing to suggest anything different.

The point is, we are all here doing the job for our respective constituents and our respective communities. Some of the things that we've done in Dartmouth South, just to highlight a few of the things that we've worked toward: the Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission. As the MLA for downtown Dartmouth, I have an honorary position to sit on that board. We meet at least once a month and have regular meetings to discuss moving our downtown Dartmouth forward.

We've seen a lot of progress over the past few years in terms of new businesses coming in - young businesses, young establishments, new restaurants - new types of businesses that are coming in, not conventional businesses or retail outlets, but new art galleries, photo galleries, and different things like that. We see the momentum moving forward and the Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission in particular, which is a group of individuals who are representative of all of the community who get together. We see that that momentum has to continue to move forward. So this is one of the things that our constituency office works very, very hard at: to continue moving that forward.

We've worked with the Penhorn trails association. Mr. Speaker, I know you and I were at an announcement several weeks ago regarding trails in part of your riding as well. This is an issue of importance to everyone in this House, to all Nova Scotians - to develop our trail system, to develop the opportunity for young people and families, young and old, to enjoy the outdoors, to enjoy opportunities by walking the trails, and connecting those trails wherever we can throughout the entire municipality.

The Oathill Lake Conservation Society - yet another group that I've met with regularly and worked with on a number of occasions to try to promote Oathill Lake and the quality of the water in Oathill Lake. So it has been a great pleasure to work with them.

The North Woodside Community Centre; the Dartmouth Community Health Board - last week, of course, health boards were a topic of considerable discussion in this Legislature. The members of the Dartmouth Community Health Board, like every health board throughout this province, work tirelessly for the community they represent - in my case, the community of Dartmouth South. I know that each and every person on that board is dedicated to promoting the health, the safety and the well-being of the people in our constituency, and I do want to publicly applaud them for all of their efforts and those of every other community health board throughout our province. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, there are many other things that we could go through that all of the members, I know, do on a regular basis for their respective communities. I do want to take a moment to recognize a young man that we hired over the course of the summer. We took an opportunity to hire a student in our constituency office, Neil McKenna. Neil, who is a political science student at Dalhousie University, did a fantastic job for us during the course of the summer. I felt it was an opportunity for him to learn how government works, to learn some of the processes and activities that take place in a constituency office. I'm hopeful and I'm quite certain that he did get a lot out of that and he gained a lot of experience that will help him as he goes forward with his education and goes forward in his career. He also helped out with our community barbecue, so I would like to just take a moment to publicly recognize Neil for the fine work he did.

Mr. Speaker, if I can list some of the things that I would like to talk about in our riding that I would like to recognize and pass along good wishes and continued endorsement of the work they're doing. There's a project that has come before myself and before city council, as well. It's called the Children's Memorial Dragonfly Park. This is a park that a group of concerned citizens have come together to design to provide an opportunity for people to come and recognize the loss of a child. Families that have experienced the loss of a child through sickness, through accident, for whatever reason, will have a chance to come and to rest in peace, to think about that child, to think about their family, and what may or may not have been.

It's a wonderful idea. It's going to be in Sullivan's Pond, which is right in the heart of our riding of Dartmouth South. A beautiful statue that we are now trying to raise money for - there's about \$30,000-odd still needed - that features a large dragonfly on the top. This is, as I say, a place of quiet, solitude and peace along the pond with the fountain in the background, where families who have lost children can come and reflect and think about the situation that they're in. So I think that's a tremendous project.

Mr. Speaker, this is a project where communities are coming together, where the citizens of our community come together on their own. They have an idea, they want to move things forward, and they come to government, whether it's municipal government or provincial government or federal government, for assistance in moving that forward, And that's what I believe our role is here each and every day, 24/7 - to facilitate projects just like

the Dragon Fly Memorial Park, where people need the assistance of government to move it forward.

We want to thank the Halifax Sierra Club for their work in planting trees along Russell Lake in particular and in the Dartmouth Common as well. A tremendous club, of course, that recognizes the value of our natural resources and replanting and planting of trees, and they've done tremendous work in that project particularly along Russell Lake, and over the past couple of years have had annual tree plantings where members of the community all come together, Scout leaders and Scout troops, Girl Guide troops, young people and old people gather together in the park, brave the winds up in the open Russell Lake Park and plant hundreds and hundreds of trees for future generations to enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, there is a young group of people in my riding of Dartmouth South who have worked very hard to bring a very novel idea to Dartmouth South - it's the Dartmouth Carousel and I would like to recognize that group. This, as I say, is a young group of people who have thought what a great attraction, something to bring tourists to the other side of the harbour - too many of our tourists come to Halifax and think there are only things to do on the Halifax side. We have clearly recognized, and my work with the Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission and with everyone I speak to throughout downtown Dartmouth recognizes, the need to bring tourists as well as residents of Halifax to the Dartmouth side of the harbour. I think this is a fantastic idea. (Applause)

Absolutely, thank you, my colleagues from Dartmouth agree.

The Dartmouth Carousel is a marvellous idea that I think has wheels, has legs - I'm sure what would be the best - legs, wheels, it goes around in circles, whatever it is. It is a good idea, Mr. Speaker, but again most importantly it's in the ingenuity of the people of the riding, it's the ingenuity and the sincere desire of the people of the riding of Dartmouth South, like any other riding in this province, in any other community in this province, to better their community and simply to ask their representative, I being the provincial representative in this case, to do what we can to facilitate that at each and every opportunity. (Applause)

There is a group of young professionals in Dartmouth South, the Dartmouth South Young Professionals Group, who now meet regularly, and I helped to get that meeting going and I sat in on their first meeting and I realized very quickly there is no need for me to be here. These people are far above my pay grade - they know exactly where they want to take downtown Dartmouth, they have a vision for downtown Dartmouth, they are the future of our community, they are the future of our province and all they are asking us to do as government is to help them move that forward. They want us to listen to them, Mr. Speaker, they want us to listen and take action when and where we can to help them move forward with their dreams and their ideals to better our province, to raise their families, to stay in this province, and thereby grow our economy and thereby improve Nova Scotia at each and every opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't mention someone not necessarily in our riding but someone whom I've very familiar with and that, of course, is the disappearance of Catie Miller. I think it's very important that all members in this House remember this family. I do know several members of this family quite well and this is a very troubling time for the Miller family in particular, and I think that perhaps it behooves us all to remember. I'll speak about this when I close in a few moments but it behooves us all to remember just how quickly things can change in people's lives and how quickly loved ones can disappear or can leave, and it's important to remember the priorities and I think it's important for all of us in this House to remember and to join with the Miller family in particular, and to continue to pray and hope for a safe return of Catie Miller to her family.

Mr. Speaker, I have highlighted some of the things that we have done in Dartmouth South and some of the things that we continue to do and some of the things that have come to my attention over the course of the past several months since I became the MLA for Dartmouth South. I do want to take a moment because my honourable friend across earlier this evening was referencing our constituency assistants, my colleague from Sackville-Cobequid, and I think that was a tremendous recognition, and I do want to speak, I'm sure on behalf of each and every member in this House, of the outstanding work of the constituency assistants throughout our province (Applause)

Our constituency assistant, Sarah Douglas, is an amazing individual.

AN HON. MEMBER: The second best CA.

MR. ROWE: I would argue with that, my honourable friend. I am sure they are all tremendous, but I have to say, this is someone whom I have to come to trust and to work with each and every day. I put my trust in Sarah each and every day. I hope she puts her trust in me. Together we work as a team; together we work for our constituency and we are trying to better downtown Dartmouth on each and every occasion. That is our sole purpose, when each and every day we go into that constituency office, so I do want to thank Sarah, in particular, for the hard work and the amazing work that she does for myself, but more importantly, for all of the people of Dartmouth South.

Mr. Speaker, I have talked about just some of the things that our government has done over the past 11 months. I've talked about some of the things that we have done in our constituency office. I've talked about some of the things that I've tried to achieve. There's lots more coming up in this session; we have lots more work ahead of us.

It is important to remember why I started this in the first place, why I decided to become the MLA for Dartmouth South. Like most of my colleagues, I trust, it was because I recognized a need, or perhaps a void. In our case, the member for Dartmouth South was retiring and I felt there was a need there and a void. We needed representation. We needed people to work, and continue to work, and to advocate on behalf of the people of Dartmouth South. That is something I accepted as the job and that is the job I have taken on

and it is the job I, and our constituency office, have done over the past 10 or 11 months and I can assure each and every member of this House, and certainly each and every member of Dartmouth South, I intend to continue doing for the rest of this term and for the rest of my term here in government.

It is interesting; over the past week or so I have had a lot of people telling me, you are not going to be elected again. I hope you enjoy this one because this is it. That's fair enough. I thank the honourable minister for his applause. I didn't get into this to get re-elected; I got into this to represent the people of Dartmouth South. If it's a threat that I'm not going to be re-elected, you've wasted your time; it's not a threat to me. A threat to me is to stop doing what it is I have and want to do for the people of Dartmouth South, and that's to represent them at each and every opportunity, to advocate any chance and every opportunity I have with each and every member of the Executive Council.

I went down the list and I can look down the front line of this table. I'm not going to call myself a backbencher; I'm a member of this caucus. I can look down this entire front line and I can assure you that each and every time I have an issue, I can go to any one of them and talk to them, face to face. They may disagree. They may tell me - not going to be easy to do. Maybe it's not going to happen at all, but I can talk to them. They will listen to me and they will do whatever they can, each and every time, to see that - it's not for me they're trying to do it; they're trying to do it for the people of Dartmouth South, in my case. I know they've done it with each and every other member who is sitting alongside of me, and would do it for anyone else, for all Nova Scotians, because that is what this government was elected to do.

I began a week and a half ago discussing and explaining my wife's health. I'm going to close by looping back to that. My wife's health, and her condition right now, is very serious and it has caused her and me to take a look at a lot of things. It puts a lot of things in priority; it puts a lot of things in order. It makes you think again what's important in life, what's important in what we are trying to achieve. We looked at our commitments to each other and the vows, quite frankly, that we took many, many years ago, the vows to love one another through sickness and health, through thick and thin, through the good times and the bad times. It was a commitment I made to her and she made to me, and I intend to honour that commitment until the very end.

The commitments we make as members of this Legislature should be no different, Mr. Speaker, it's a commitment to the people we represent. We can disagree, we can try and find the right solution, we can argue about the best way to get there, but ultimately our responsibility is to work as a unified Legislature to assist all of the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the illness my wife is facing and that I passed a couple of years ago and have looked at it, it reminds you as well of your mortality. It reminds you to think about the fact that I may not be here four years from now, I may not be here tomorrow. I need to do what I think is right, right now - what I think is right for my family, what I think is right for me and, in this Legislature, what I think is right for Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I just want to say that I know and I tell you and I tell every member of this House, this entire caucus is doing exactly the same thing and I'm proud to be a member of this caucus. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. I would like to thank my colleague for Dartmouth South for his comments and let him know that our thoughts and prayers are with him and his wife as they go through this health journey, this struggle, and recognize that that sort of thing is never far from any family in Nova Scotia, any citizen, so I certainly recognize that.

I am certainly honoured to be here and speak on behalf of the residents, the citizens of Kings North who have placed their trust in me to be here. It is my second chance to rise in the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. That first time I really felt I had been remiss in not talking a little bit more about my family. I became a grandfather five weeks ago so I'm doing my part for the Ivany commission - my sons are.

My wife and I have four sons; we have four generations on the farm - my father and mother are still very active on the farm. I don't know if I could adequately express my gratitude to my father for all that he has done for me in my farming career. He sold me the farm in 1987, when I was just a young guy, 27 years of age. It is very rare for a farmer to give up the reins to his son that young. The story of that really goes back to a tragedy - I had a brother killed in a car accident in 1983 who probably would have been the farmer, it would not have been me. Partly because of that, my Dad probably was willing to do that.

I started out very green; I had been a basketball player and I knew basketball, but I didn't know a lot about farming, even though I had a degree from the University of Guelph. But he showed his trust in me. I remember about four or five years after that somebody said to me, does your father trust you at farming? I said, well I don't know if he trusts me. They said, does he take vacations in the summer? I said, well yes, right now he's in the Florida Panhandle - it was the middle of the summer. They go, oh well, he trusts you if he's down there.

Every year of our farming life he has built machines for me. In fact this summer, at age 83, it's the first time that he doesn't have grease on his hands because he has had stomach ailments and hasn't been able to work this summer - but it's the first time since 1987 that he hasn't been actively involved in our farm. Words could not adequately express my appreciation for how much my Dad has done for me on the farm, in our lives together.

I know most of you probably have not had that privilege of being able to work that closely with a parent in a business. We haven't always agreed, there have been times we have had serious disagreements, and one thing I learned was that when we disagreed things

usually didn't progress well if it was a project or whatever we were doing - so the importance of agreeing.

It's interesting now, my wife and I have four sons - the two oldest sons are actively involved in the farm and, suddenly, to my surprise, the shoe is on the other foot and I'm the Dad working with young sons. I suddenly have a new appreciation for what my father dealt with working with me. But it is a privilege and I don't know how - I know many farmers would like to know how that happened. I have no idea how that happened but we are just delighted to be in that situation, but it isn't always easy.

Some of you know that our business is called Farmer John's Herbs and we grow summer savoury. We sell summer savoury throughout the Maritimes. That business slowly grew. I could go through quite a list of vegetable farmers. I have been a vegetable farmer all my life - for 27 years - and worked with my hands all that time, been out in the cold and the wet. One thing I said about trying to become elected was that it would be a privilege to be dressed up in clean clothes and work in an environment that was warm and dry. No sooner had I said that, I found myself on the election trail in North Kentville and South Kentville in the rain, going door to door. But anyway, it is mostly an opportunity to wear clean clothes and be warm and be indoors and all that. You may think that you take that for granted, but that is a privilege to me, to be able to work this way, from the rough clothes that we did wear.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention my wife, Heather, and her involvement. She has been an inspiration to me. She has been a retailer. She had the Jelly Cupboard, a well-known business in New Minas for many years. She rebranded that business. It became Anatolia, and had she not sold that business last year, I would have never run because our family was just simply too busy. Having sold that business, and me having become elected, she has taken over running our business, Farmer John's Herbs.

Those two people, my father - and my mother, too - have been very, very good to me, extremely good. As I said, words cannot express my appreciation for my mum and dad and my wife and their role in even having me here.

As most of you know, we are a Dutch family. My mum and dad came to Canada in 1958 as immigrants. They didn't speak a word of English. They had no money. I always believed the Government of Canada paid their way here but I found later that, in fact, the Government of Holland had paid their way on that ship to get them here, so the Government of Holland paid to get rid of them. I don't know what message there is in that.

In all those years since 1958 - we bought the farm in 1960 - we're still on that farm. We've grown many different crops, all vegetable crops on that farm. This year we had 50 acres of summer savoury, 35 acres of winter wheat, four acres of garlic, two and a half acres of pumpkins - some of you have seen a few of those pumpkins around here - one acre of squash and we rented out some land to a neighbour, more or less because he wanted that

land, not because we couldn't have grown a crop on it. That neighbour was Bruce Rand - so to help out a neighbour.

One thing I'll say about the farming community is that the farming community operates on word of mouth. If you say you're going to do something, there are no contracts or very few documents. We operate on - if you say something is going to happen and you are going to do something, you do it. Your word is as good as a contract in the farming community.

I'm very proud of my neighbours; we've worked together. I was with Kings Produce Limited for many years, a group of eight vegetable farmers who worked together to market our products. We ended up in a situation where that company fell apart, for various reasons. We all ended up still friends after that and we all still help each other out, of those eight farmers. I think that's a remarkable accomplishment.

I'm very proud of Kings North in the Annapolis Valley. I have been involved all my life in farm organizations and I've had the privilege of being in most of the agricultural regions of this country. One thing you might not realize about the Annapolis Valley or Kings County is it probably has the most diverse agricultural economy of any region in Canada, in that we would have, just driving down the road, a winery, a pig farm, a chicken farm, a summer savoury farm, a broccoli farm, a cattle farm, just in that order, right straight down the road, a blueberry farm.

That type of thing doesn't really exist in a lot of other places. Most counties in Canada that have agriculture have one type of agriculture that predominates, but not in the Annapolis Valley. Many, many crops are being harvested right now. One of the things being harvested is pumpkins and I just want to mention - my colleague to my right said, you should mention pumpkin people. This weekend the pumpkin people have started in Kentville. It's the 14th year of the Pumpkin People Festival and I would encourage you to visit the Annapolis Valley.

There is a tremendous effort going on to promote tourism to the Annapolis Valley and I know many of you would have seen the commercials on television that have been done by the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce and it's an experience. We have a lot of new wineries in the Annapolis Valley and there are just a lot of opportunities to buy great food, to experience something a little different than right down here in the city; it's really a little bit of a different world.

One thing about being a farmer, I heard somebody say this statistic, not too long ago, that the world will eat more food between now and 2050 - in other words, in the next 35 years - than was eaten from right now back to the beginning of time. Whether that statistic is true or not, because it's based on a lot of assumptions, but I guess mathematically, all things being equal, it is true. We face, in our world to come, a tremendous challenge to meet the demands of this world to have enough food to eat.

While it might be academic, some of you might remember a couple of years ago when bread prices went up by about 50 cents to a dollar and you may remember that there was a - I remember hearing a gentleman from Moncton who did the pita breads, talking about how it was impacting his business. He was interviewed. So the bread companies felt it, but in the store you would have seen your bread from \$1.99 to \$2.69 - no problem, hardly noticeable.

It is said that that was the cause of the Arab Spring that turned the Arab world upside down. The very poor people in the world saw their basic food cost double or quadruple and that triggered that revolution. The idea that this world has a great challenge ahead that we as farmers have to meet to feed everybody, it's not just academic; it has a huge impact on the political stability of our world - and yes, we need more farmers.

I noticed when preparing for this, I read the Liberal platform from the election and there were two promises in that election platform. One was to re-establish land drainage programs that will reintroduce thousands of hectares of lowland back into production. That was one in your campaign, in the Liberal Party campaign brochure. I would like to say, as a farmer, that is a very admirable goal and I hope that that will be true, although I will point out that lowland is kind of a misnomer. Highlands, uplands, need land drainage just as much as lowland. Whether it's low or high, it still needs to be drained, strangely enough. We find in the Valley that the land - you might think the hills should be dry, but that's not the case. Usually they are clay and they need drainage just much as the low pieces.

The other promise was to work with stakeholders to create a strategic plan that will increase the number of new farmers entering the industry. I look forward to that campaign promise being fulfilled.

As a farmer in the Annapolis Valley, one thing that I watch is the tides and I see the tides going in and out every day. I remember as a young farmer when I was irrigating - we have a five-acre pond - and we would run an 80-horsepower tractor and have a pipe putting out the six-inch main line pumping water through at 100 pounds pressure. You can imagine how much water we were pumping out with that type of system. We would pump water for eight hours and see that pond go down by an inch. I could go down to the Bay of Fundy and watch that water, in a few minutes, go down by way more than that inch and I would think how much power there is in this Bay of Fundy.

It got me watching the tides and one thing that we have seen is the tides getting higher. Going back to my Dutch heritage, I would like to just talk about the need that we have to upgrade our dike system, the hundreds and hundreds of miles of dikes in Nova Scotia that protect many communities, many of your communities, all of the communities in the Minas Basin - Wolfville, Windsor, Amherst, Truro are vulnerable to storm surge.

The last time that it happened, none of us remember, because that was the Saxby Gale. That was in 1869, I believe, or in the 1860s. It did enormous damage up across the American Seaboard.

I believe that we are living on borrowed time on that if we don't do something to improve the dikes. The freeboard, the amount of extra space we have on a high tide - on some of those dikes is barely - it's just inches, really. It's just very close. They're all built to a 1940s standard. There are regular repairs and there is work being done, but in my opinion, it is barely adequate.

Again, I go back to my Dutch heritage. My family lived through the 1953 storm surge that killed some 1,500 people in South Holland. The Dutch have responded to that by building huge dikes - in fact, as big as they can be; engineering-wise, they can't make them any bigger.

But ours are at the bare minimum. All it would take is a hurricane tracking up through New Brunswick, because those things run counter-clockwise, pushing water up the bay and coinciding with the tide going in, and we would have a storm surge that would flood all of our communities in the Minas Basin. Heaven forbid that that ever happens, but it is something that needs to be done.

One of the things that I have been speaking with some of the ministers about is the fact that - I'll give you an example. One of the things that could be done is Highway No. 101 is going to have a new intersection put in called Granite Drive. It will be right between Exit 11 and Exit 12. If you've ever been in New Minas, you'll know how badly New Minas needs to have a little bit more traffic flow.

Apparently, because of where that new intersection is going to be built, there are going to be 600,000 tons of fill that have to be removed from the site. That's 30,000 truckloads. Now that is an enormous amount of fill. What is going to be done with that? I understand the engineers are trying to minimize that number. Hopefully that number will be lower, but I would like to see that used on the dikes right in the local area there, so it's one of the things I have been talking to the minister about.

Another thing that I would like to see - and I realize, in saying this, that there are environmental consequences - but in our area we have the Pereau River, the Habitant River, the Canard River. All of them are just little streams and they have a dike at the headwater sealing them off so there is no tidal river there.

The Cornwallis River is the last river there that has not yet had that done, so we have a tidal river running up through Port Williams and Kentville and up into Meadowview and the communities there. What that means is that there is an enormous amount of dike that has to be protected.

But worse than that, there are bridges. The Gladys Porter Bridge - named after a lady to my left here - in Port Williams, is very, very close to being compromised in terms of a real high tide running right into the bridge, right into the bottom of the bridge.

There is a lot that needs to be done there. I would like to suggest - and I think my colleague, the member for Kings South would understand what I'm saying - that there needs to be a dike from Port Williams to Wolfville shutting that right off. I realize that there are implications with the Department of Environment with fish spawns, but I believe that's what needs to be done, to seal that dike off. I know that there have been other politicians in the past who have advocated that. Apparently our former warden, Gerry Buchan, advocated for that solution. That is something that I believe needs to be done.

Another example is when you drive through Windsor, if you drive through the construction that was done in Windsor to put in a railway bridge or a passage for the railway, they essentially created half of the dike already. They need to rebuild that whole area up. So those are things that I think, as a farmer, need to be addressed. Heaven forbid we have a Hurricane Katrina situation, but it could happen.

One of the things that I would like to talk about is two very innovative farms in our Annapolis Valley who were recently at the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce Innovation Accelerator Awards. The award-winning family was one called Hillcreek Family Farm. Theo Hogeterp and his wife Rosalie, they won a \$31,000 award from the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce to pursue a project in which they would press pumpkinseed oil. Apparently into Canada each year, there are millions and millions of dollars of pumpkinseed oil imported and very, very little or no production of this oil in Canada. The highest quality oil in the world comes from Austria and the Hogeterps are getting into that business.

Other innovative farmers in our area that I would like to highlight are Bruce and Andrew Rand of Randsland Farms - who, I mentioned earlier, I rent land to - neighbours and former business partners of mine in Kings Produce Ltd. and they were one of the competitors in this Innovation Accelerator Award and they have gotten into the business of growing greens for the southern U.S. market. And this year they have 40 acres of greens - not anything we eat, it's all for the export market. Forty-eight 18-wheeler truckloads of greens going down into the southern U.S. at about \$500,000 in sales off of 40 acres - it was really very, very impressive.

I would like to just say briefly, not only are farmers innovative entrepreneurs, I know that our Lebanese community is too. It was my privilege not too long ago to attend the 7th Annual Cedar & Maple Gala. While we were there, just as the evening was starting, Norman Nahas, President of the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce, had a moment to speak. Unfortunately for Mr. Nahas, he spoke just as the salad was served and there weren't really a whole lot of people listening as that all happened, but his words were very compelling and I was taken by them. As he spoke, more and more people were listening, and I would just like to read something he said.

He said: Earlier this year the Ivany report was released to our government and public. This report painted a picture of a future for Nova Scotia that is less prosperous and offers less opportunity than in the past. The report accurately characterized our province as

being on the precipice of economic disaster. The good news is that Mr. Ivany and his colleagues also suggested that it's not too late. This bleak and underwhelming future is not yet carved in stone. They issue an urgent call for action, highlighting the need for fundamental change now, before the decline becomes irreversible. The issues identified are not unfamiliar for those of us in this room and across the province - our taxes are too high; our regulations are too cumbersome; opportunities for our skilled people are rare; and our population is aging. The current trends are unsustainable and must be changed. We live in a beautiful province that is a wonderful place to raise a family, yet many of this province's most talented young people are forced to leave to seek opportunities for prosperity.

Then he said some more things, but I'll go on to a further comment: The entrepreneur is the engine of economic growth and we as the citizens of this province must push our leaders to fuel this engine. We must lower taxes, reduce government spending to make it easier to do business here, as it is currently an uphill battle to invest in Nova Scotia. We must make these changes if we want to provide opportunities for young Nova Scotians and new immigrants to live and work here.

That was part of Mr. Norman Nahas' comments and I was very taken by them. It seems that the Ivany report has resonated with the public of Nova Scotia. Even though it has been some time since the report was released, it still seems to be on everybody's mind. I think that is partly because it was what I would call "a king has no clothes" moment. If you remember that childhood fairy tale of the boy who said the king had no clothes. He told everybody what they already knew and that is the point - everybody had a sense that this was happening, and Mr. Ivany pointed out what we already knew, that we were in serious trouble.

I would like to, in this Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, challenge this government to act on this Ivany report. This has been a real dismal year for our new government with 9,000 jobs lost and a huge increase in our debt. As a farmer, I remember back when interest rates were pretty high and the servicing of that debt right now, I believe, could cause us problems in the future. Already it's more than the expenditure of some departments and we are living in a time of low interest rates right now. It won't go on forever and when interest rates do go up it will become increasingly difficult for us to service that debt.

From the most recent Speech from the Throne - "My government will focus on supporting the economy by creating the winning conditions for business, developing our workforce, supporting rural communities, promoting entrepreneurship, driving innovation, and growing tourism."

There was really very little context to that. What does that mean? That was your Throne Speech to the government. I would say, focus on "creating the winning conditions for business." One of the things that I would like to suggest, to create a winning condition for business, is to look at electricity rates. We've had two increases since this government

came into power. We have the highest rates in Canada. As a farmer, I know that lower electricity rates would equal winning conditions for businesses. It's a very serious, very large part of farm overhead.

One of the things that I will say is that my constituents have very high praise for Efficiency Nova Scotia, and it has worked to lower farmer rates. The only complaint I hear about Efficiency Nova Scotia is that they'll do nothing for you if you have an oil furnace, which is one of their policies. But that is the only complaint I hear about Efficiency Nova Scotia.

I would like to suggest that electricity rates going forward are a very serious issue for this province. One of the campaign promises I noticed in the campaign material was that this government said that we will break Nova Scotia Power's monopoly and put Nova Scotia first - that slogan right out of the campaign platform. I was very disappointed that this Throne Speech had nothing in it about breaking Nova Scotia Power's monopoly and putting Nova Scotia first.

Now, I realize that the signature piece of the last sitting of the House, Bill No. 1, was the deregulation of the supply of electricity, and I guess maybe I hoped that there would have been something on that deregulation of the supply of electricity. I would like to quote a section from Hansard, back on Bill No. 1 from the Minister of Energy. It says:

Mr. Speaker, on Friday I introduced our government's first piece of legislation, the Electricity Reform (2013) Act. Our government brought this bill forward because we are committed to improving Nova Scotia's electricity system for the benefit of ratepayers. We are also committed to an electricity market that is rapidly adaptable to changing world conditions, and with this bill we are delivering on our promise to open and improve the electricity market while creating new local investment opportunities for renewable electricity providers.

This legislation will permit greater competition and choice for electricity ratepayers. Independent evidence presented at the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board noted that this type of competition should put downward pressure on rates.

That was from Hansard, from the Minister of Energy, back in the first sitting of this Legislature of this new government.

My question is, where is that? What happened to that? Where are we going to see downward pressure on rates from this piece of legislation? I know that the Minister of Energy is a very quick study. He turned around the Wheeler report in just three or four days, but we've been waiting a year for this one now - nearly a year. I would like to know when our electricity rates are going to go down from the opening of the competition in the

electricity market. I can tell the minister that the business people in the Annapolis Valley are looking forward to those lower rates.

As a farmer, I can tell you that I would like to comment on the COMFIT rates. I know that if I were to sell electricity to you at 50 cents a kilowatt, and you sell it back to someone else at 15 cents a kilowatt, that doesn't make any economic sense. It isn't going to happen. I would suggest that COMFIT means "Community Fast Track to Higher Electricity Rates."

We've had two power rate increases, and I can't figure out how we can ask Nova Scotia Power to buy electricity from renewable sources for 49 cents a kilowatt, or for 13.5 cents, or 65 cents, or 14 cents, or 17.5 cents, and sell it back to the public at 14 or 15 cents when they have line costs and overhead and have to make allowance for bad expenses and all the sorts of things that a business has to do. How on earth we can expect them to do that and have lower interest rates is beyond me.

It's what I would call - the people who are benefiting from COMFIT - if the energy is renewable it should be free energy, and if it's that expensive, then either somebody's making too much money on it or the engineering is too complicated. And if the engineering is too complicated, I would suggest that maybe it's not green energy, actually. So it doesn't make sense to me that we can be in that situation. (Applause)

I know that going back to the last government, we had very aggressive goals on renewable energies and I would suggest that we need to really seriously consider, if we want to have electricity rates go that high, if we can afford that. As I said, if it's a renewable source of energy, it should come in at a cost that is affordable to us, if the source is free. If it doesn't, then I think we really need to seriously think about it.

Another issue with electricity - and it has been a very serious issue in Kings North - is the lack of security of supply of energy. That refers back to hurricane or post-tropical storm Arthur that did a huge amount of damage in Kings North and we had people go without power for a week. I can tell you that our constituents are a resourceful, independent lot and they are willing to deal with most anything, but when they are told that the power is going to be on tomorrow, and the power doesn't come on for five or six days after that, and they were banking on tomorrow and left all their fridges and freezers full of all the deer meat, or their home-grown turkey, or chicken, or pig, or whatever, and it all goes bad - I know of a number of people in that situation - they are very upset because they happened to believe Nova Scotia Power when they called and asked, when is the power coming back on, except when they called and Nova Scotia Power said your power is on and they said well no, it isn't on. That actually happened to a considerable number of my constituents.

The issue is the reliability of the power. It's a very big issue for businesses in Kings County, I can tell you. If you are a chicken farmer and you don't have reliability of power, when the power goes out you are running generators. You can go about 15 minutes without

electricity before it starts to cost you thousands and thousands of dollars as those birds, in the middle of the summer, will die from lack of ventilation.

We have a huge problem with tree trimming in Kings County. I would suggest that both the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and Nova Scotia Power are actually not keeping up with the rate the trees are growing. The trees are growing faster than they are being trimmed back, right now, as we speak. I can tell you that, as a farmer, I can give you my farmer analysis of why that is. That is because about 20, 25 years ago we stopped the roadside spray program - and maybe for good reasons - but there was really nothing put in place to replace the effect of that program. It's one thing to cancel that program, which had the effect of keeping the brush back in rural Nova Scotia, but if you don't put anything in place to replace it, you are just kicking the can down the road, so to speak. Down the road is right now because now we have trees well and truly just getting up about 20, 25 years old, just getting up into the power lines and filling in the ditches on the roadside and shading over the roads. Those trees are beginning to cause serious problems and they need to be trimmed.

Now maybe Kings County is sort of ground zero for problems with that because we have a lot of roads and we have very, very good growing conditions and very good climate, much better than in other areas of the province and the trees are really getting up into our power lines. One of the things I can tell you, having teenage sons, is that at a certain point they take a big jump. Well a teenage tree would be a 20, 25-year-old tree; it's growing fast. We are going to have a huge problem in the next four or five years, which the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and Nova Scotia Power are going to have to address, because we're going to have a lot of power outages from these trees.

The other big issue with the lack of brush and tree-trimming on the sides of the roads is that the ditches fill up with trees. That might sound like, oh well, the ditches fill up with trees but there's a safety hazard. If you happen to go off the road, you might well get killed or the fire department will have to get a chainsaw to get you out and that has happened in Kings North.

The main problem with that is the drainage no longer works properly on the side of the road. That might sound like okay, the drainage isn't there, but the roadbed, if it has water underneath that roadbed, it breaks up. We have had some problem with potholes this summer in Kings North, partly because of this lack of proper ditching, and it is ruining our roads. If the roadbed is wet underneath, the trucks or the traffic will wreck that road. So proper ditching is extremely important to the integrity of the road.

We've had spontaneous protests in Kings North this summer that have been in the news. The truck drivers are all upset, the 18-wheeler drivers. What is happening is the trees are getting so big they are growing over the top of the road and the 18-wheelers are having their GPS units knocked off, at great cost; they are having their mirrors busted off. The tarps on the dump trucks are all being ripped off and torn off, and those guys are tired of it. Those trucks are effectively keeping the upper part of the road trimmed clean by beating

back the trees, but the trees are starting to gain on them, so they're getting pretty upset with that. Those are pretty big issues in Kings North.

I know that the Minister of Energy has - I'm kind of disappointed that he's not here right now, but I know that the Minister of Energy - I'm not allowed to say that. I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I realize.

There is an energy review going on right now, and I noticed that the closest it gets to Kings County is Middleton or Halifax. I can tell you that in the Annapolis Valley, Middleton might as well be the other side of the world with Kings County. It's very focused on itself, as many areas are, and I believe we need to have that electricity system review take place in Kings County as well. I would ask the minister - I would question why that happened, and I would ask the minister to do that.

Another serious issue we have in Kings County is the firewood shortage. It seems hard to believe that we have a firewood shortage, but it is going to be, I would suggest, an issue in this House in the coming weeks and months. I was talking to one gentleman last weekend about this firewood shortage, and he said to me, John, I remember when we had a firewood shortage about 15 years ago, and the Minister of Natural Resources released more wood to deal with that. I don't remember that, but I would call on the Minister of Natural Resources to release more wood. There are many, many people in Nova Scotia who rely on firewood. They tend not to be the wealthiest citizens, so they are some of our poorer citizens. They are relying on firewood. They can't get firewood. Firewood has gone from about \$200 a cord to \$300 a cord right now, and I would call on this government to do something about that.

I was disappointed that I didn't hear anything in the Throne Speech about the firewood shortage. I believe that the firewood shortage goes back to some pretty poor decisions made by the previous government, in that we are burning wood to create electricity, and I question that. I understand that's about 40 per cent efficient, but if you burn the firewood in your furnace, it's about 80 per cent efficient. So we're talking about efficiency - we're wasting wood by converting it into electricity. We should be letting the people of Nova Scotia burn firewood as they have done for hundreds of years, and get the maximum use out of that firewood.

Another thing I would like to make a comment on is the Maritime Lobster Report. I would like to echo my disappointment, with my colleague from Argyle-Barrington, on the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture's handling of the Maritime Lobster Report, and my colleagues here in the other Opposition Party.

What happened to the Maritime Lobster Report? Why wasn't that worked at and just pushed through? I understand that it is the choice of the fishermen, the lobster fishers, if they want to vote yes or no. That's their prerogative, and I would suggest that they need to seriously consider it. Maybe this partnership with New Brunswick and P.E.I. isn't the

right vehicle. I don't know. That's up to the lobster fishermen, but I would suggest that the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture had an obligation to push through and get that vote done.

The unfortunate comments about the 5-cent area have muddied the water and created uncertainty with the lobster fishermen that I've talked to, and probably lessened the likelihood that they would support this Maritime Lobster Report and the plan to work with New Brunswick and P.E.I. I think it's very unfortunate that the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture made those comments and probably hurt the possibility of working with P.E.I. and New Brunswick, and lessened the likelihood that the lobster fishermen will support that initiative.

Whether that is the right initiative or not, I think there needed to be an effort made to sell it to the lobster fishermen and let them decide. I think if you talk to lobster fishermen, they express uncertainty about what it's all about. I think there needed to be a concerted effort made to do that.

I noticed in the Throne Speech - this is a reply to the Throne Speech, so I will quote right from the Throne Speech given a few days ago. "As one step toward supporting growth in our resource sectors, my government will establish an industry-led Nova Scotia Lobster Industry Advisory Committee involving harvesters, processors and buyers. This committee will provide advice and play a key role in advancing the aspirations of this important export." That is right from the Speech from the Throne recently given here.

That all sounds well and great on its own but when put into context of the fact that we had the Maritime Lobster Report and there was supposed to have been an effort on behalf - we had a commitment as a government to put an effort forward to see the Maritime Lobster Report at least be given a fair trial with the lobster fishers, this is a disappointing statement. It almost sounds like it is conceding defeat - the Maritime Lobster Report and that recommendation of working with New Brunswick and P.E.I. - it's almost conceding that it's dead in the water. I'm very disappointed to read that.

There were a number of things that were supposed to have happened in that Maritime Lobster Report. Within the first six months there were a number of things that were supposed to happen. As far as I know, none of those happened. If any of them did happen, I would appreciate being corrected. By August there was supposed to have been a vote that would have been a 50 per cent plus one vote by the fishers to vote for the lobster panel report recommendations - that didn't happen. Then there were a number of things that were supposed to happen after that, assuming a positive vote.

As I said there is no guarantee. In an ideal world the lobster fishers would have voted for it but I believed that Maritime Lobster Panel Report deserved a fair shake. The Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture was the point guard, to go to basketball analogy, to lead the charge - the quarterback. We were looking for that, expected that, and we are really disappointed that never materialized.

One of the things I would like to talk about is some Kings North issues. Cape Split this summer - again going back to Hurricane Arthur - Cape Split was very severely damaged by Hurricane Arthur, in an astounding way if you had the privilege of being there. The wind whipped the salt water so far up into the hill that the whole side of Cape Split looked like it was Fall, not summer, because all the trees had turned brown from salt water damage. Not only that, the trail had been very severely damaged and I would like to commend the Minister of DNR on his speedy effort to get that trail back open again.

There are two issues that I would like to address with regard to Cape Split, one is Highway No. 358 from Stewart Mountain Road to Scott's Bay, the only road access to Cape Split, is in deplorable condition. It's a route, a major road, it's the only road going to Scott's Bay and I have constituents there who have asked me again and again about that. I know it's in the five-year plan for 2016-17 and I look forward to seeing that.

The other issue with Cape Split is that a couple of years ago there were two toilets bought for Cape Split; they were \$25,000 each. The community was involved in the purchase in that it was asked to make a non-profit society - I'm not quite clear why they needed that and they're not quite clear in their own minds exactly why but it had something to do with these toilets. The community was very involved in the purchase and those two toilets sit idle, waiting to be installed. Early in the summer I had written the Minister of Natural Resources about those toilets and the reply was that installation and maintenance of these toilets requires resources that have yet to be assigned.

So two \$25,000 composting toilets, those toilets are for the end of the trail. It's about a two and a half hour hike in. I can tell you that the lack of those toilets is not preventing people from using the washroom at the end of the trail. It's probably fertilizing the tree growth at the end of the trail. As I said, it stands as a symbol of government incompetence that those toilets, after two years, remain in storage and have not been installed. I would call upon the minister to deal with it and get those toilets installed, restore faith in the government, in Cape Split.

I apologize for dumping on the minister about that. But again, I will mention the roads. There are still roads in Kings North that are waiting to have their potholes filled. Now we're running close to the time - we're in October, and it won't be long before the asphalt plant shuts down and we'll have lost that opportunity. I've had a number of constituents come to me and talk to me about these roads. Again, I would like to say that it is a big problem in Kings North.

One of the things I'd like to comment on is the fact that, for residents of Kings County, the twinning of the highway in the Windsor area is a very big concern. I know that there was - I believe there was a promise that there would be Jersey barriers installed. I see my colleague for Hants West is not here, but we are looking for those - oh, I did it again. Sorry, I forgot.

As a new MLA, on December 24th, Christmas Eve, I had the unfortunate experience of attending the funeral of a gentleman from Kings North who died on that section of highway a few days before - it was a real tragedy - on that section of Highway No. 101 in Windsor that has not yet been twinned.

I believe that while we wait for that thing to be twinned, we need Jersey barriers in that section. There's one corner that, in my opinion - and I'm not a road engineer - is not up to standards. It's a little bit too sharp, and that needs to be dealt with. I would like to call upon this government to fulfill that commitment and put Jersey barriers in that section.

Another thing I would like to address is that one of the things I noticed in the recent bill that amalgamates the district health authorities was that the foundations would remain in effect in each area. I would like to commend the minister on that. I know that in the Annapolis Valley we have a terrific health foundation, and there has been an enormous amount of fundraising done for a dialysis unit for the hospice. In fact, as I understand it, the fundraising is done on those. The 25 per cent that the community was asked to raise has been raised. We now await the Minister of Health and Wellness' announcement on when these things will be installed, so I would like to call on the minister to do that.

Another area of great concern for Kings North and for Kings County is natural gas. We now have, by my estimation, or will have soon, five customers for compressed natural gas in that sort of Kings County corridor. The CKF plant in Hantsport, Acadia University, the Pepsi potato chip plant - Hostess-Frito Lay, but it is Pepsi - the Valley Regional Hospital, and Michelin are five customers that will soon be using compressed natural gas.

To give you an idea of the consumption, Acadia University, in the middle of winter, will be having more than one truck a day of compressed natural gas delivered. I expect that will be true for Michelin, maybe even more so, and the plants and the possibly the hospital would not use as much as Acadia. It is putting a tremendous amount of truck traffic on the roads.

I'm all in favour of them using compressed natural gas. It's a great cost savings, it's a clean fuel, and I think it's environmentally very good, but I believe we've got enough volume there and that there are enough other customers that want it that we need to have a pipeline up into the Annapolis Valley for natural gas. So I would like to call upon this government to consider that.

One of the things we know is that we have the Dominion Atlantic Railway bed, and from Windsor on, it is really not being used for rail anymore. That railway bed tracks right down, virtually right by every one of those businesses I just mentioned, within a few hundred metres on either side of all of those - or immediately adjacent to, in the case of the Pepsi chip plant, in the case of Acadia University. I'm sure in the case of the CKF plant and Michelin, it's very close. I would like to call upon this government to put that in.

Another thing we'd like to see happening in conjunction even with natural gas on that railway bed is seeing that railway bed used for what is called active transportation. That is starting to happen now for cycling. Much like in Quebec - the Route Verte in Quebec, which *National Geographic* recognizes as one of the best, or the best bicycle trail in the world. I believe we have the opportunity in the Annapolis Valley to duplicate that, what they've done. The railway bed is relatively flat, it runs right straight down, right through the heart of all of the communities in the Annapolis Valley - most of them - and all the cafés and the food businesses would benefit from this duplication of what Quebec did with the Route Verte with this Dominion Atlantic Railway. I believe that is something that our Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism and our Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal need to consider.

Mr. Speaker, how long do I have?

MR. SPEAKER: Until 9:57 p.m. - 10 minutes.

MR. LOHR: Until 9:57? I have nine minutes - 11 minutes, okay.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things I would like to just talk about briefly is our fire departments in Kings North. We have four fire departments. Canning/Scots Bay, last year they did 137 calls. Port Williams Fire Department did 34 calls. Kentville Fire Department did 363 calls. Hall's Harbour did 16 calls. We are enormously well serviced in Kings County by volunteer fire departments. My speculation would be that you'd be hard-pressed to find anywhere else in the world that would be able to put as much equipment as quickly as they do on a fire. I would like to just give my commendation to our fire departments and say what an excellent job they do.

Also, I would like to just make a commendation for a gentleman named Murray Salsman, who was the Maritimer of the Week in August. When Murray's first wife passed away from cancer - his first wife Marg died - he decided that he would grow gladiolas and sell them to raise money for the people of the Annapolis Valley who need to get down into Halifax. It would be used for helping to pay for transportation, drugs - people who just find themselves in a tough spot who can't afford to get there. Murray in Grafton has done that. He is a constituent of mine. He was honoured by the Maritimer of the Week award, and I would like to give a shout-out to Murray for the community service that he has done in making our community a better place. (Applause)

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on the - you know, as a farmer, I've been a farmer all my life and I find myself now in the Legislature. I'd like to comment on the Rules of this House. We are in a House that has 300 or 400 years, maybe 500 years, of British parliamentary tradition. I believe that the Rules of the House are bigger than any one of us and that even though, for me, this is a very strange place - it's got sort of odd rules, I come in and it's very unfamiliar.

As we slowly learn the rules, I would like to say that I have a great deal of respect for the Rules of this House. I believe that we are privileged to be here as members and that we need to respect the Rules of the House. I think that our attitude towards this House and its rules will be reflected in the way the public thinks about it.

Even though it seems, for me, a very odd set of rules - I'm used to just working with my hands and getting things done but sometimes it feels like time is being chewed up in certain ways, maybe even in Address in Reply - I would like to suggest to you that there is a certain brilliance to it.

I have a sense that - not only in the beautiful room we're in, but in the rules that we have here, I have a very high regard for them. I believe that we need to be really cognizant of that when we tinker with them. We need to think about the fact that the Rules of this House will survive all of us. We'll be here and gone. Long after we're here and gone, whatever changes to the rules we make or whatever we do, they will survive us. They'll end up being in the large book that the Clerk uses to refer back to. I would like us to be cognizant of that.

I want to put my oar in for the fact that I think there's a brilliance to the system. It's democracy. I know that, in a sense, it traps the government to be in here and that we can talk to the government as the Opposition and hold them to account. I think there's a brilliance in that. It creates a government-in-waiting on this side, and we're sharpening the knives trying to wait to get over to that side, and I think there's a brilliance in that system. The system creates those things.

I would like to say that I think that we have to have respect for each other as legislators, even as we go through the process of opposing. I know I had one of my colleagues from the other side say, well, you shouldn't always oppose. I don't think we always oppose, but the system asks that of us in a way, and I think there's a certain brilliance in that.

We're here. It's a privilege to be here. This is what democracy is. This is one of the most historic Houses in the British parliamentary system for democracy. I would like to put my vote in for - I would like to do something anyway in these few moments, maybe not adequately, to stamp out a little bit of cynicism and to say that we have to appreciate the rules that we have and the system that we have.

Maybe that's a farmer's point of view. It's a strange world for me; I'm not cutting cabbage, I'm not working with my hands, I'm not cutting firewood, driving a tractor or doing all those things. It's a different world, but I would like to give my opinion that there's a certain brilliance to it, and I hope that we appreciate that brilliance of this House and its rules. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Just before we move on, I do want to take the honourable member's cue to segue into a note that I do want to share with everybody, that I am keeping score on the infractions here tonight on the House Rules with regard to the path of travel.

We have the score for the government side: two infractions of crossing between the Speaker and the members who have the floor. We have the score on the Opposition side also at two. The third Party, the NDP, has a goose egg, so they're the winners tonight.

I would remind all members to please pay close attention as members are speaking and have the respect for those and not cross in front of them. I thank you for your indulgence. With that, the hour of adjournment is drawing near.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, just prior to adjourning, the Chief Clerk of the House did remind me of something and I wanted to make members aware of it tonight just for scheduling purposes. On Friday, October 17th, the Speaker will be hosting the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meetings here in the province and will be using the Legislature as part of those meetings. The House will not sit on Friday, October 17th to allow for those meetings to take place.

It would be quite an expense to move the meetings off-site. The Legislature did sit a bit earlier this year than what we may have been doing the last number of years.

So just for members' own scheduling now, just to let you know, on Friday, October 17th, we will ask the Speaker to send out a formal notice to members just so that you and your offices can be aware of the fact that we won't be meeting on that specific day due to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for this evening. We will meet again on Tuesday, October 7th from the hours of 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Following the daily routine and Question Period, we will be calling Public Bills for Second Reading: Bill Nos. 14, 15, 16 and 17, as well as any other government business which may arise, and if time permits, Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, Tuesday, from the hours of 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, October 7th, between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

The House now stands adjourned until 2:00 p.m. tomorrow.

[The House rose at 9:54 p.m.]