



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2014

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2014

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Just before we get into the daily routine, the topic for late debate, as submitted by the honourable member for Cape Breton Centre, is:

Therefore be it resolved that while the Liberal Government has spent the last year preoccupied with their district health authority legislation they have forgotten about the many seniors in our province who are still waiting for long-term care beds.

That's the topic for late debate, coming to a set near you at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, and the operative clause provides:

“We, the undersigned, citizens of the Province of Nova Scotia, petition the provincial government to exercise the powers vested in it, to ensure that in the event the Waterville Airport is closed due to a possible Michelin expansion, that all avenues be explored to obtain complete and sufficient funding for the replacement of land, runways, and infrastructure.

Further, that in order to maintain continuity of operation of the said airport and of the businesses operating therefrom, and that the destruction of the runway not take place until such time as a replacement airport is constructed and operational prior to its closure.”

Mr. Speaker, there are 130 signatures on this petition. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Hants East.

MS. MARGARET MILLER: I also have a petition and the operative clause is:

“We, the undersigned electors, citizens, and residents of the Province of Nova Scotia request that the province of Nova Scotia repave, properly ditch, build up the shoulders and routinely maintain the Old Trunk 14, Upper Rawdon, NS.”

Mr. Speaker, there are 49 signatures on this petition and I have affixed my own. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of the Public Service Commission.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table the Public Service Commission’s new Diversity and Inclusion Strategy called *Raising the Bar: A strategy to build diversity and inclusion in the public service*.

MR. SPEAKER: The strategy is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of the Public Service Commission.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Nova Scotia is committed to making a difference in the lives of Nova Scotians through an engaged and diverse Public Service. Today, the Public Service Commission released a new strategy, entitled *Raising the Bar*, which will help build greater diversity and inclusion in our workplace. We are furthering our commitment to building a workforce that is inclusive, culturally competent and values diversity, and one that is representative, at all levels, of the population it serves. By strengthening our diversity we will have a more engaged, productive and accountable Public Service, and deliver programs and services in a way that meets the needs of all Nova Scotians.

We recognize the value, the innovative contributions of a diverse workforce. Having more women, immigrants, Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, African Nova Scotians, racially visible people and members of the LGBTI community at every level of the Public Service brings a range of diverse perspectives and spurs innovation and progress. A diverse Public Service also helps to position the province for success in the global economy. By promoting inclusion, our employees can bring all of themselves to the workplace and their unique experiences can help solve challenges for Nova Scotians. Nova Scotia's labour force is shrinking. We must empower a diverse population to participate to its full potential and we must attract more skilled workers to our province.

Mr. Speaker, this new strategy has four main goals. The first is to demonstrate and be accountable for our ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion. The second is to equitably represent the public we serve at all levels of the organization. Third is to ensure that our workplaces are respectful and free of discrimination and harassment. Our fourth goal is to ensure we have a culturally competent workforce that values diversity and inclusion.

Mr. Speaker, each of these goals will be achieved through specific strategic actions, which will be carried out over the next four years. Supporting diversity and inclusion in government workplaces is one way that we are living our organizational values of diversity and respect. This strategy also supports the work being done by the Public Service on the National Psychological Health & Safety in the Workplace Standard.

Organizations with diverse and inclusive workplaces are able to attract and retain a skilled, dedicated and dynamic workforce. The Public Service Commission has developed a strategy that reinforces government's commitment to strengthen our efforts in this area and become a leader in diversity and inclusion.

Mr. Speaker, we are raising the bar for diversity and inclusion in government workplaces. Thank you.

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

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I'd first like to thank the minister for providing us with an advance copy of his remarks today. We believe that creating a diverse work environment in both the public and private sectors is essential for a bright future here in Nova Scotia. We are pleased to see the government take this initiative, and by taking full advantage of the unique skill sets and culturally diverse backgrounds people bring to the workplace, we will better be able to achieve our goals of becoming a modern, welcoming place to live and work.

Although we applaud the government for this valuable initiative, there are a few concerns. We wonder why we did not see the benefits of such a program last year. During negotiations with the federal government over the labour market agreement, this government decided to drag their feet when funding the valuable organizations that promote diverse workplaces. It wasn't until months of uncertainty had passed that this government took any kind of initiative, but we are happy to see that they did.

The organizations that assist those with disabilities to find and secure employment are at the centre of a strategy like this. They have already been working with companies and agencies all across the province to help individuals maximize their skills and make incredible contributions to our society. In addition, this strategy is about strengthening cultural and ethnic diversity. It comes to mind that this strategy would be even more assisted by a firm immigration plan.

If the government is to lead by example, they would couple this initiative with a comprehensive plan for the entire province. While diversifying the Public Service is very important for Nova Scotians, our province is hemorrhaging jobs to the private sector. To truly have a diverse province, the government must make it attractive for immigrants and companies to do business here. We should expand skills training for Nova Scotians with disabilities and allow their families to stay here.

This is a good idea, but it's missing a few fundamental pieces to make successful sectors in all Nova Scotia. Mr. Speaker, we're glad to see that the government is taking this initiative to lead forward.

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

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to add my voice to thanking the minister for an advance copy. The issue of diversity in the workplace shouldn't be anything new to anybody in this House or in this province. This is two days in a row now that we've had these kinds of statements from ministers to show the kinder, gentler side after last week's little fiasco.

It's interesting, because earlier this year the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board talked about not replacing jobs within the public sector. That's kind of at odds with what this report says today, that they're going to diversify. One has to ask, where are these jobs coming from within the public sector? Where are we going to get these jobs? Are we

expanding the public sector? Is what the Finance and Treasury Board Minister said incorrect? They seem to be at odds with one another.

When our Party was in government, we started down the road with this, Mr. Speaker. We truly believe, as I think all Parties in this House believe, that a reliable, diverse population needs to be serviced by a diverse public sector, but we're wondering if these are just empty promises because of the position the government has taken. It has also mused about where it is going to go with the public sector, talking about restraints. We don't know what "restraint" means, so how are we going to get any new blood into the system?

While we congratulate this report coming forward, we're really at a loss to see how this will do anything to fulfill diversity in the workforce. While we remain hopeful, Mr. Speaker, we are very, very worried that this will just be another report that will gather dust and really mean nothing to the diversification of our workforce. I wish the government well, but it's another apparent flip-flop, and we don't know what direction they're going to take. Thank you.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 89

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

Whereas Myrtle Taylor of Barss Corner is an active supporter of agriculture in her area of the province, particularly growing and selling blueberries; and

Whereas during 2014 Mrs. Taylor managed two acres of blueberries and operated a U-pick for the public on her site; and

Whereas on October 22, 2014, Mrs. Taylor will celebrate her 99th birthday, a significant milestone for her personally and for her community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly wish Mrs. Taylor a very happy 99th birthday and continued success in her agricultural efforts in Barss Corner.

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 the Public Service Commission.

RESOLUTION NO. 90

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

Whereas government wants to ensure its workforce reflects the province's diverse population and delivers programs and services in a way that meets the needs of all Nova Scotians; and

Whereas government is strengthening its commitment to diversity and inclusion in the Public Service with the release of its first-ever Diversity Strategy - *Raising the Bar* on October 2, 2014; and

Whereas the strategy contains four goals and more than 30 strategic objectives which will help establish the Public Service as a leader in diversity and inclusion;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House support the new diversity and inclusion strategy and efforts to build a stronger, more diverse Public Service.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 18 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 3 of the Acts of 1987. The Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation (Nova Scotia) Act. (Hon. Andrew Younger)

Bill No. 19 - Entitled an Act to Provide Dental Health Care for All Nova Scotian Children. (Hon. David Wilson)

Bill No. 20 - Entitled an Act to Require the Government of Nova Scotia to Purchase Agricultural Products from Nova Scotia Producers. (Mr. John Lohr)

Bill No. 21 - Entitled an Act to Provide for Affordable Hearing Aids for Seniors. (Hon. David Wilson)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 91

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

Whereas Me to We is an innovative social enterprise that offers socially conscious and environmentally friendly products and life-changing experiences; and

Whereas Eric Arenburg, a student at West Hants Middle School, travelled to Nicaragua in July as part of Me to We initiative to help children receive an education; and

Whereas Eric has always been passionate about helping others and sponsored his first child when he was seven years old;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud Eric Arenburg for taking the initiative to make a difference in a community where children do not have the same opportunities which he has and wish him all the best.

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 Center.

RESOLUTION NO. 92

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

Whereas Trenton resident Mary Dunn celebrated her 102nd birthday on September 29, 2014; and

Whereas Aunt Mary was born in 1912, a year noted for the maiden and final voyage of the Titanic, the official opening of Fenway Park, and the introduction of electric starters in cars; and

Whereas Mary continues to enjoy life playing Kinsmen TV Bingo, receiving many visitors, and spending time with her family, including her great-grandchildren;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mary on her numerous contributions to her community, her friendly personality, and most importantly her longevity.

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 Interim Leader of the New Democratic Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 93

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

Whereas Mary-Colin Chisholm is a talented and well-respected actress, writer and director living in the north end of Halifax; and

Whereas Mary-Colin Chisholm has contributed greatly to the performing arts scene in Nova Scotia, through her innovative work on stage, screen and radio; and

Whereas Mary-Colin Chisholm received the Joan Orenstein Award for Outstanding Performance by an Actress for her role in *Cast No Shadow* at the 2014 Atlantic Film Festival;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Mary-Colin Chisholm on being chosen as the 2014 winner of the Joan Orenstein Award for Outstanding Performance by an Actress and express its appreciation for her contribution and commitment to Nova Scotia and its arts community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Inverness.

RESOLUTION NO. 94

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

Whereas Caleb Talbot is still in high school and his maturity and sense of community far outnumber his years; and

Whereas Caleb is very active in his community, looking to help the underprivileged and elderly, with little interest of recognition in return; and

Whereas it seems his work did not go unnoticed as Talbot was awarded the Lieutenant Governor's Respectful Citizenship Award recently for his selfless acts of generosity;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Caleb on being recognized and thank him, not only for his service to his community and its members, but also for the wonderful example he sets for his peers and future generations.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hants West.

RESOLUTION NO. 95

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 Valley Arts Award is presented each year at the Deep Roots Musical Festival to honour a person who lives or lived in the Valley area who has made a long-term contribution to the arts in the Annapolis Valley; and

Whereas Hants County native Darrin Harvey has been awarded the 11th annual arts award for giving freely of his time and Darrin is the lead singer and harmonica player for the No Name Blues Band and also the Blues Mobile - both bands are known for performing for charities; and

Whereas, although Darrin is the host for the K-Rock radio on Eastlink TV, he also gives freely of his time to new artists and offers a popular festival workshop for upcoming artists, plus hosting Deep Roots events throughout the year and the festival itself;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Darrin Harvey on his countless hours of volunteering and performing.

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. 96

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

Whereas on October 19, 2014, United Heritage Church Sydney will be established at a special service of worship; and

Whereas United Heritage Church is being formed from the union of First United Church, St. Andrew's United Church, Trinity United Church, and the United Baptist Church; and

Whereas this union is a unique ecumenical undertaking in which members of both the Baptist and the United traditions compose their new congregation of the United Church of Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the people of United Heritage Church on this inauguration of the congregation and extend every best wish to the people of United Heritage in their continuing life and work.

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. 97

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

Whereas Logan Sibley, a local of North Sydney and a member of the Cape Breton Highlanders, will be living a dream when he serves in the Ceremonial Guard of the Canadian Armed Forces in Ottawa; and

Whereas Logan underwent three weeks of intensive training and was fitted with a scarlet uniform and a tall black bearskin hat; and

Whereas Logan will take part in the 50-year tradition of the changing of the guard on Parliament Hill and many other ceremonial events in the capital district;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly salute Logan Sibley for his dedication and his commitment to this country.

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. 98

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

Whereas the Bowater lands were purchased by the former government for members of the public to have access for recreational and commercial use; and

Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources has maintained the steel gates while recreational users, hunters, and trappers are on the outside looking in; and

Whereas the high-flying Minister of Natural Resources has not addressed the wood fibre issue for home heating and wood suppliers who still need their supply for this winter coming;

Therefore be it resolved that the high-flying Minister of Natural Resources stop taking plane rides and address the issues of recreational and commercial use of Nova Scotia forests.

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

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

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 99

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

Whereas on September 25th, 14 months of work by Vincent Joyce of the Pictou County Military Museum came to fruition as South Korean Ambassador Donghwan Choi presented 35 Ambassador for Peace Medals to our veterans or their families; and

Whereas these veterans appreciated the medals and were humbled by Ambassador Choi's kind words as he spoke about how South Korea overcame adversity; and

Whereas South Korea has become a prosperous country that ranks 15th among the world's largest economies by GDP and in terms of average wage, and has Asia's highest income;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Mr. Joyce for making this wonderful event possible and congratulate our veterans for their service.

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. 100

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 Harley Clark, an 11-year-old student from Glen Margaret, Nova Scotia, decided to support the Canadian Cancer Society by growing and then giving his hair to create wigs and hairpieces for cancer patients; and

Whereas Harley was inspired to fundraise by the passing of Andrea Redmond, a well-loved community member and artist; and

Whereas on July 21, 2014, Harley donated his hair, as well as \$225 he raised, to the Neurofibromatosis Society of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia Legislature join me in applauding Harley Clark for his efforts to make a difference in the lives of those with cancer.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

RESOLUTION NO. 101

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

Whereas New Glasgow resident Nan MacKean celebrated her 103rd birthday on August 8, 2014; and

Whereas Nan was born in 1911, a year noted for the first transcontinental airplane flight between New York and Pasadena, the first Indianapolis 500 car race, and for Robert Borden becoming the eighth Prime Minister of Canada; and

Whereas Nan continues to be active, enjoying life and sharing the historical interest and pictures from her collection of scrapbooks;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Nan for her numerous contributions to her community, her wonderful disposition, and especially her longevity.

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. 102

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

Whereas the Truro Tree Committee is celebrating its 42nd Anniversary and is a poster child for the natural environment; and

Whereas this committee has two very popular tree-planting rebate programs; and

Whereas the Truro Tree Committee was established in order to address tree disease and help protect and preserve Truro's natural urban forest;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Truro Tree Committee for its 42 years of commitment to promoting awareness and preserving the Community of Truro's natural urban beauty.

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. 103

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

Whereas Sydney Mines resident Ryan Devoe is presently in Winnipeg as he cycles across Canada to raise money and awareness for poor water and sanitation conditions in developing countries; and

Whereas Ryan hopes to raise \$10,000 to help the 1,400 children who die each day from poor water and sanitation; and

Whereas a \$25 donation will supply one person access to clean water and sanitation for life;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ryan for a social conscience and commitment to a better world for all.

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 Interim Leader of the New Democratic Party on an introduction.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw the attention of the members to the west gallery where we are joined this afternoon by a member of our health care profession, a registered nurse, whose name is Diane Wilson.

I would ask Diane to stand and receive the welcome of the House. Thank you.
(Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

RESOLUTION NO. 104

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

Whereas Dan Munro, a local Pictou County artist, recently donated a beautiful painting of the Westville Cenotaph to the Pictou County Military Museum; and

Whereas tickets will be sold on the painting with all proceeds going toward the Westville Cenotaph Restoration Project; and

Whereas since Dan is the son of a World War I veteran, this cause is near and dear to his heart, as is the Town of Westville;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Dan Munro for his generous contribution to the restoration of the Westville Cenotaph.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: Question Period will begin at 2:36 p.m. and end at 3:36 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: WHEELER PANEL - RECOMMENDATIONS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. In late August, Dr. Wheeler's expert panel on hydraulic fracturing handed in their final report. It was the most extensive review of shale gas development in our province's history. As we now know, the government banned any hope of development after just three days of consideration. Several members of the Wheeler panel have already spoken out against this decision, including Mr. Ray Ritcey, Mr. Graham Gagnon, and Mr. Brad Hayes, but the government insists it is following the Wheeler recommendations.

My question to the Premier is, who is right - the Premier or the members of the Wheeler panel themselves?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, if the honourable member would actually read the report, what the report said was that there is more work to be done. There's more investment in understanding whether or not we actually have shale gas here in the province. I want to let him know that the Department of Energy is well on its way to continuing to map this province to ensure if we have that resource.

At the same time, we're out engaging communities. What we have said is that if we go down the road of hydraulic fracturing in this province, we believe there should be a conversation with Nova Scotians.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting the Premier is so interested in my reading materials. I can again assure him I have read the report, and in fact, you only need to read as far as Page 5 to know that the Premier is incorrect. Perhaps the Premier doesn't read beyond Page 5, but I do, and on Page 5 it says, "We are not proposing a moratorium or any other political device . . ." in order to stop development. I'll table that for those that don't go beyond Page 4.

These are the words of Dr. Wheeler. He is an expert in his field. He's been widely published in areas of water quality, health, and groundwater pollution control, and now has become a nation-wide expert on hydraulic fracturing. It would be awfully helpful if we could all, as Nova Scotians, hear from Dr. Wheeler himself, but it turns out there's a clause in his contract with the government, which I will table, that says: The contractor shall keep

private and confidential and not make public or divulge any information or material relative to the services he has rendered without first obtaining the written consent of the province. I have that here, and I will table it in a moment. Dr. Wheeler is prevented from actually speaking out, unlike the members of his panel, who have all said that the government is not following their direction.

I will ask the Premier, why is there a gag order on Dr. Wheeler, who is such an expert, who could actually tell us whether the government is following his report or not?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Dr. Wheeler and the entire committee for the tremendous work they have done on behalf of the people of this province. I want to thank the Minister of Energy for doing a tremendous job in ensuring that there's a balance.

I'm pleased to know that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party has read the report. Now maybe he should get someone to read it who can understand it and tell him what's actually in it.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I see we've elevated the debate to a pretty high level in the Chamber today. As we discussed, one of the most important new ways to create jobs in this province (Interruptions) We're now going to question whether people are reading reports or not. That's pretty sad.

My whole point is, we also appreciate the work that Dr. Wheeler has done, and would like him to be free to speak his mind on whether the Premier is right or whether Dr. Wheeler and his panel are right, that they are not following the report. If the Premier is so open to the advice of Dr. Wheeler, will he tell the House today whether the government has or will put in writing the freedom for Dr. Wheeler to tell Nova Scotians what he thinks?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Minister of Energy to respond.

HON. ANDREW YOUNGER: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, a couple of things, first of all, Dr. Wheeler can. That provision ended when he submitted the report. Dr. Wheeler knows that. We told him that at the time. Dr. Wheeler has confirmed that he understands that (Interruptions) He's confirmed with us. Mr. Speaker, I would also . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Energy has the floor.

MR. YOUNGER: I will quote from the report, ". . . a significant period of learning and dialogue is now required at both the provincial and community levels, and thus hydraulic fracturing for the purpose of unconventional gas and oil development should not proceed at the present time in Nova Scotia." - signed by all panelists.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition likes to selectively quote panelists. I will read one of the other panelists who said, “When you have a situation where the expert panel is telling you that community support should be in place, and there’s a lack of widespread community support, I’m not surprised that the minister introduced a moratorium . . . In some ways, that’s exactly what we suggested should happen, and I think this minister has made a decisive and bold decision respecting the democratic process . . . And that is something that’s laudable.” Mr. Speaker, I will table that as well.

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

PREM. - N.S. YOUTH ISSUES: ACTION - DELAY EXPLAIN

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. We all know young people in Nova Scotia face many challenges. The Community Foundation of Nova Scotia has released a report today entitled *Vital Signs*. It paints a disturbing picture of Nova Scotia youth who have the highest rate of unemployment, suicidal thoughts, and anxiety disorders in the country. My question is, why has a year gone by without any action on these issues from this government?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I couldn’t disagree more with the comments by the Interim Leader of the New Democratic Party. This government, in our first budget, invested \$21 million to ensure that we enhance SchoolsPlus so that we ensure that they have professional help where young Nova Scotians are to deal with the many challenges that are facing young people across this province. There is absolutely no question - there is an alarming rate to which young people are feeling there are no options. That has been ongoing in this province for quite some time. I am pleased to say, while we don’t have all the answers when it comes to this particular issue, we are not ignoring it. We are investing financially in that, as well as ensuring that we have the professional support to help young people across this province.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier for his response. The SchoolsPlus program is an excellent program, one that was started by the previous administration, the Official Opposition, built on by the past administration, and it’s good to see that the current government continues to build on that program. (Applause)

The Conference Board of Canada also recently issued a report just last month. They provided some startling statistics on unemployment rates, debt levels, and the significant gap in income between the young workplace adults and the baby boomers. My question through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier is, what is his government doing to address the challenges that young, unemployed Nova Scotians face in a situation where there’s growing inequality in incomes in this province?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. In our first year in office we have increased the number of apprenticeship opportunities for young Nova Scotians, right here at home. We have announced research grants which provide

university students with their first opportunity of employment right here in this province, when before they used to have to go to central Canada for that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, we have eliminated the two-year experience requirement for entry into the Public Service. These are all positive signs for young Nova Scotians that there's a future right here at home.

MS. MACDONALD: Well I look forward to seeing the stats on the entry into the Public Service, Mr. Speaker - with a hiring freeze I doubt that we're going to see too many young people showing up in our Public Service.

Mr. Speaker, we don't need to look any further than the Ivany report to see Nova Scotia's shifting demographics and what that means for the province if we lose more young people.

Mr. Speaker, my final question to the Premier is, instead of picking fights with health care workers, why isn't the Premier more intent on addressing the issues that young people face in our province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I just provided the Interim Leader of the New Democratic Party with a number of initiatives that have been taken by this government. I would also tell her that we will be investing in a Graduate to Opportunities program, which actually is the government working with private sector employers to provide first-time opportunities right here at home. These are all positive signs.

I want to remind the Interim Leader of the Party that, quite frankly, a government that takes its responsibility seriously and ensures it can provide quality services to all Nova Scotians that are sustainable not only this year but well into the future, Mr. Speaker, speaks to every Nova Scotian and not just to certain segments of the population.

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

PREM. - COMMUNICATIONS N.S.: GOV'T. SERVICES - ACCESS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. One day after his government was sworn in, the Premier said about Communications Nova Scotia, "We will be moving back toward its original intention, which was allowing access to government and government services." And I will table that for the Premier's benefit.

Mr. Speaker, the facts behind the scenes show otherwise. In just 10 months in office the Liberals have spent \$283,481.80 on taxpayer-funded polling through Communications Nova Scotia. My question is, how is spending more than \$0.25 million on polling in just 10 months helping Nova Scotians access government services?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the minister responsible to respond to that.

HON. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. In fact, the spending by the government on polling is down and, as well, the spending on advertising is down \$600,000, so there have actually been quite a few changes. Staffing is also down, and as the honourable Leader would know, we have also introduced an Act which requires an accountability report by Communications Nova Scotia at the end of every fiscal year.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, having not polled or advertised with our tax dollars as much as the NDP is hardly something to be proud of when, in fact, they promised not to do it at all.

Among other things, the \$300,000 in research asked for the public's opinion on merging our health authorities, even though that was already a Liberal election promise. Mr. Speaker, you shouldn't have to do a poll to know whether you should keep your election promises or not, so I'll ask the Premier why did he waste taxpayers' money on a poll asking whether he should keep his election promises?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the fact that we are keeping every commitment that we've made to Nova Scotians in the election campaign. I can't, for the life of me, understand why the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is so afraid to ask Nova Scotians their opinions. Perhaps every once in a while he should spend less time talking in this place and more time listening to Nova Scotians.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you ever experienced déjà vu, but I am having that kind of feeling right now because in the face of the same questions just a few short years ago, what this Premier just said in defence of spending money on government-paid polls is exactly what former Premier Dexter said in response to the same question.

So maybe someday we'll get to a day when the Premier says the same things after the election as he was saying before the election - and I'll give you an example. In this House, just a short time ago, one of the Premier's members - the member for Dartmouth East, the now-Minister of Communications Nova Scotia - said that instead of putting a quarter-million dollars into health care, the NDP Premier decided he should tell Nova Scotians how wonderful the NDP is.

Well, Mr. Speaker, why didn't this Premier take his own minister's advice and put that quarter-million dollars into front-line health care instead of polling to ask Nova Scotians whether he should keep his promises or not?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, not only did the minister responsible put in an extra \$250,000, he did much better and put \$600,000 in.

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

HEALTH - LONG-TERM CARE WAIT TIMES: PREVENTION - ACTION

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Premier. The government is avoiding the real issues in health care. You know, rather than focusing on patient care, they've decided to rearrange the seats in the boardroom and at the negotiating table. Meanwhile, wait times for long-term care have increased by 30 per cent under this government. Health care workers can't move patients out of ERs because hospital beds are occupied by patients waiting to be admitted into a long-term care facility, but there aren't any beds available.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the Premier is, what is the Premier doing to prevent the growing wait times for long-term care that are happening under his watch?

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

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I thank you very much for the question. There may be a current district out of the nine where there has been, perhaps, a slight rise in the number. The total number in the province now requiring long-term care in nursing homes is down by 100.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we know that there are well over 1,000 people waiting for long-term care in the province. I'll give you another example of dysfunction in the system, one that's in the Premier's backyard. Everywhere in our province, long-term care facilities are having to close for many different reasons. Mountain Lea Lodge is a long-term care facility in Annapolis County, and over the last few months this health care facility has had serious staffing problems. In fact, they've lost more than 20 staff because of working conditions.

With many seniors waiting for long-term care beds, I want to ask the Premier, what steps has he taken to ensure that long-term care beds at Mountain Lea Lodge don't sit empty while there are wait-lists?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. First of all, let me express my great admiration and appreciation for the men and women who work at Mountain Lea Lodge, not only now but in the past and well into the future. They provide care to our family members, many of whom, quite frankly, I have the privilege of seeing on a regular basis, and some I'm related to.

I can tell you, there have been real challenges, there is no question. As the member would know, that facility is managed by an independent board. What we have done is we're allowing that process to take place. What we have done is asked the Department of Health and Wellness to go in, to work with both sides to ensure that the challenges that are being faced in that institution get resolved so that we can continue to provide those citizens

in our community who are aging with the possibility of having a bed placement right in their own home community.

MS. MACDONALD: It is indeed the case that this facility is one that provides excellent care, but with the kind of staff shortage that has been experienced, family members are very concerned about the level of care, and have in fact spoken out publicly about their concerns.

In January, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and Wellness struck a committee to report back on the long-term care strategy within 100 days, which would have been late April, and we are still waiting to hear back from this committee.

Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary is for the minister. I want to ask the minister when can we expect some action on long-term care wait times and when will we have a report from the committee that should have reported back numerous days ago?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to get the record straight on this. If the member opposite will go back and take a look at what we said, it is that within the first 100 days we would put into action a refresh of the Continuing Care Strategy. There was no report, we were only in office 100 days and I think the former Minister of Health and Wellness will recognize and realize what you do in 100 days, but we did put it in action.

This Spring we will be getting not only a report and a refresh of the Continuing Care Strategy, which will really be focused on care in the home, but there will also be a dementia strategy. We are well underway to fulfilling what we said in the first 100 days, which was to put those processes into action.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - DHA MERGER: SPRING FOCUS GROUPS - REASONS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Last week the Premier and the minister fast tracked through their DHA merger plans then patted themselves on the back for following through on only part of their campaign promise.

In the Spring of 2014, as part of the taxpayer-funded public opinion research exercise, the Liberals felt the need to gauge how Nova Scotians felt about the merger. That's why they spent a grand total of \$34,540 of taxpayers' dollars on 15 online focus groups on their DHA amalgamation plans. That's a lot of money to see what people think of something that you already promised anyway. I will table that information.

My question to the minister is, if the minister is so certain about his merger plan, why did he use taxpayer dollars for these costly focus groups? Was he getting cold feet

about the campaign promise or does he regularly waste taxpayers' dollars for no good reason?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. There is no question that this minister knows exactly what the plan is as we restructure health care in Nova Scotia. We will start to see in the next few months, in fact, those final details around the structure, what it will cost. In terms of going out and doing a survey, it wasn't about confirmation of what we were doing, it was simply to have their voice about the whole process of going through this, over the next number of months, how they could be engaged in this.

It's hard to go across Nova Scotia and get to every community, although I did get to 20 or 30 during the process of the tour.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, apparently the 15 focus groups weren't enough for the Premier and the minister. Also in the Spring of 2014, as part of another taxpayer-funded \$5,725 in opinion research, the Liberals decided to poll their merger plans, asking Nova Scotians what they knew about the Liberal health authority plans and what they felt the primary benefits and top negative impacts would be.

At a time when the Minister of Health and Wellness is preaching the need for savings in the health care system, how can he justify his government wasting taxpayer dollars on senseless opinion research while there are still patients waiting for service?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I think it's awfully important to gauge the opinion of Nova Scotians and to get a sense of how they feel about the amalgamation. This is a huge change here in our province and it's important that they know and understand what is going on and if they don't have all those answers, that's the job of the minister and my department to give them the direction that we are going.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that the Minister of Health and Wellness has an affinity for expensive, taxpayer-funded opinion research. Focus groups appear to be a particular favourite of the minister.

In June 2014 taxpayers were milked for about \$15,000 for a series of focus groups focused on employee engagement for the Health and Wellness Department - I think I tabled that one already, but I will give you another sheet there. The surveys that I have mentioned today add up to \$55,265 - how many front-line patients did that money serve directly?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I believe it's important to get the opinion and to hear from Nova Scotians on this issue and if we can help guide them into the new structure, I think it's a good investment for our government and for the people of Nova Scotia - and it will be money recaptured in time because we will get it right.

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

**PREM. - HEALTH CARE LEGISLATION:
HEALTH CARE WORKERS - REACTIONS**

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. In the Law Amendments Committee last week we heard from a variety of health care workers who said they were thinking of leaving both their profession and our province because of this government's approach to health care bargaining. We heard from RNs and LPNs who have been considering another career, not only because of Bill No. 1 but also because of Bill No. 37 and Bill No. 30 - and Bill No. 1 certainly gave them another reason to be concerned.

My question to the Premier is, why is this government so intent on picking fights with health care workers when these fights are causing health care workers to consider either a career change or a move to another province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I do not at all agree with the premise of that question.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I guess people were just making it up. Diane Wilson is an RN, she said Bill No. 37 caused her serious concern and made her question her career options; however, Bill No. 1 for Diane was, in her words "the final nail in the coffin." So my question to the Premier is, what does the Premier have to say to Diane Wilson and health care workers like her who expected this government to respect them and their hard-earned rights?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to thank Diane for her tremendous contribution to ensuring the health care system in this province has been there for Nova Scotians. I want to reassure her that any of the hard-earned rights that she has fought for and earned over a period of time will not be changing regardless, no matter how many times her union leadership or the NDP say it is. It's just not factual; it will not change. They've earned those rights and they will stay in place.

Like all Nova Scotians, we want to ensure the health care system is in communities across this province, just like every health care worker does. It's why we've been so encouraged by the health care workers who have supported the essential services legislation in reshaping our health care delivery model.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if Pinocchio is in the House or if I smell somebody's pants on fire . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I will remind the honourable member that the reference to Pinocchio and the government is unparliamentary. I'll ask you to retract that.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I retract the Pinocchio statement, but I do believe I smell burning pants . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We're going from bad to worse here. I'll ask the honourable Interim Leader of the New Democratic Party to retract that phrase as well.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I certainly retract that. I wish I hadn't smelled anything.

My final question to the Premier is, would he please explain to Diane, who has invested considerably in her education and her profession of choice, in nursing, why he's driving her out of the nursing profession in our province?

THE PREMIER: First of all I think the two phrases the Leader had to retract are, perhaps, potentially titles to her book when it gets launched. I want to say to Diane and all health care workers, it is in no way the intention of this government to drive any health care worker out of this province, as a matter of fact, every step that we have taken has been to ensure that the health care system that they so dearly love and appreciate and want to serve in, is sustainable in the long run, is there in communities across this province. The pieces of legislation that we have introduced have ensured that the collective bargaining process can happen at the same time we're providing services to Nova Scotians.

The last changes we made were to ensure that the collective bargaining process could happen without constantly keeping this province in negotiations.

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

TIR - TORQUIL MACLEAN FERRY: UNEXPECTED REPAIRS - DETAILS

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Thank you Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Last week the minister confirmed that Torquil MacLean ferry at Englishtown is in fact five weeks behind schedule and \$280,000 over the tender price of \$776,000.

That's a 36 per cent increase over the original budget. My question to the minister is, what unexpected repairs are causing the ferry to be 36 per cent over its original budget?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Torquil MacLean, every four years Transport Canada requires that we put our vessels in the dry dock to check them out to make sure everything is okay and to make sure they are operating safely, obviously. With the Torquil MacLean, actually the tender that was awarded for about \$775,000 went to Aecon Atlantic Industrial of Pictou, which is a tremendous company that the Premier and I visited a couple of years ago. It is a fantastic operation and I know that the

members for Pictou certainly support that company and the jobs that it brings to our province and to their region.

For this process, the way it works, there is a specific amount of jobs that are required for this tender and then there is leeway built in. When we take a vessel out of dry dock - these vessels operate 365 days a year, for the most part - and when we put them in dry dock, we do every single thing we possibly can to maintain their long-term safety and that they are ready, particularly for the winter. It is like an inspection. When we get it up on the hoist, we check every single moving part to make sure that it's safe for Nova Scotians.

This is what a responsible government does; this is what our department does. We have experts in the field that know that these vessels are safe before they go in the water. That is the commitment we made to Nova Scotians and we will make sure our ferries are safe. Thank you.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, we are not saying the government is not responsible, but the project is over \$1 million in repairs for a boat that is only six years old. That vessel only cost \$4 million to begin with. If that's not bad enough, according to a freedom of information request, and I will table it, there are over \$130,000 in repairs done on the ferry so far this year, including two cable changes. We all want to see the boat safe for passengers but the government must also be accountable to taxpayers. So, my question to the minister is what's causing these unexpected repairs and how can Nova Scotians be assured they won't be on the hook for hundreds of thousands of dollars more?

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the reality is, we can take the politics out of this and it's very simple. This is our busiest ferry in Nova Scotia. We have nine ferries, seven in current operation, two spares. The Torquil MacLean is our busiest vessel. It carries half a million passengers per year. When it's damaged, when it needs repair, we repair it. We don't set a timeline for communications reasons; we fix the vessel and when it's ready to go back in the water, it goes in the water. The reality is we have tough questions about ferries. We spend about \$9 million operating them; we only take in about a \$1 million per year in revenues, so the reality is, it's a big investment for Nova Scotians so we want to make sure they're safe and maintained.

With respect to the Englishtown crossing, there is some talk in the community about, do we need the ferry? Do we want the ferry? Or should we put a bridge there? When the member gets up for his final supplementary, I would like to know where he stands and the people he is talking to in the community - would they prefer the ferry service or would they like a bridge?

MR. ORRELL: That's not a question I've been asked but I will ask when I get requests from now on if that's the case. It is one of the busiest ferries in the province but it has also been taken out of service at the busiest time of year and replaced with a smaller ferry. My question to the minister is what is he doing to get projects like this under control and make sure that our taxpayers are protected from this in the future.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the reason why I pose that question to the member is that these are the questions that we are asked as a government every day. We've got to make good, strong, financial decisions on behalf of the province, but we also have to ensure that these vessels are safe - that's paramount, that's number one for this government and for the people of Nova Scotia.

For us, we allow our experts to give us advice when the equipment is damaged; when the machines need work, we tender them out. It's an added bonus when a fantastic Nova Scotia company gets that work, like Aecon, and we're going to fix those vessels. When we can get them back in service, they will be, but not until those vessels are safe. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ENVIRON. - SACKVILLE LANDFILL: REOPENING - APPROVALS

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Environment. Many residents in my community have legitimate concerns about the possibility the Sackville landfill will be reopened to allow significant increases to the amount of leachate that is processed onsite. The former landfill was shut down in 1996. At the time the community was told that it would never open again, by way of an HRM motion which said: "Council is not and will not consider any extension of the Highway 101 landfill including, but not limited to, extensions of time, size or expansions onto adjacent lands in the future."

I'd like to ask the minister, when can the minister tell the House that if HRM approves the process at the former landfill site, does it require the approval of the Department of Environment?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Thank you for the question. The key thing on this particular file - I understand the issues and the concerns being raised by people in that community; in fact a number of my colleagues on this side of the House raised that issue and the concerns of their residents and their constituents earlier as well.

I can tell the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, that as I explained to my colleagues, there has been no application to the province, to my department, the Department of Environment, for any changes to the industrial approval at this point in time.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I recognize there hasn't been any request. I believe he may have indicated that they do need approval. I know I went to the public meeting a couple of weeks ago and I asked the HRM staff that very same question. They did respond in indicating that the provincial government, the Department of Environment, would have to approve any changes if the municipality decided to go that route.

After those meetings I wrote an open letter to the minister, asking him to look into the issue and the minister called it premature for him to get involved at that point. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not premature for our communities, for the one that I represent, for the communities that his colleagues represent, so I'd like to ask the minister why won't the minister listen to the community by stopping the expansion of the leachate plant now?

MR. DELOREY: Thank you again for the question. I guess to clarify why I think it is premature is because as a regulatory body, the way the Nova Scotia Environment operates is that we operate on applications that come into our department and we get many, many applications that are on issues of concern to constituents and people across this province and we take them very seriously.

To start engaging and injecting ourselves into issues and possibilities, as the member indicated, he said when will you take a position on "if" this application or "if" the municipality makes a decision and wants to proceed?

Mr. Speaker, we are here as a government to operate and make decisions on facts and actual activities that are taking place in the Province of Nova Scotia, not on hypotheticals. I'm busy enough, as the members in Pictou would know, working on issues and concerns that are actually affecting people today, not to be spending my time on hypotheticals. Thank you.

MR. DAVID WILSON: What I heard from the minister was that it was a total waste of time to worry about comments and concerns from community members who live in my riding and who live in the riding of everybody who is represented by the landfill. That's sad to see from a minister, Mr. Speaker.

The municipality is serious about this - they have public meetings about this; they are talking about it now. I don't understand why the minister wouldn't say if we're totally against this and the premise of expansion to the landfill, why wouldn't he just put a stop to it now? The municipal government is wasting taxpayers' money by going through this process.

I think the minister owes it to his members and to the community - what is their stance on the expansion of this landfill? I think it's not premature, Mr. Speaker, and I hope the minister recognizes that.

I want to ask the minister, why hasn't the minister already put the community at ease by telling HRM that their landfill expansion is not something that they would entertain?

MR. DELOREY: I'd like to first, before responding, Mr. Speaker, clarify that in no way, shape, or form did I suggest that listening to the concerns of the community members in the member's riding, or anywhere in the Province of Nova Scotia, is a waste of time. What I indicated was that it was premature for this department to be spending our time

staking out positions. What I think the people of Nova Scotia expect and appreciate of this government, and particularly in a regulatory body like Nova Scotia Environment, is that we take our time and we follow the rules, the policies, and the processes to make informed, educated decisions based upon information that comes forward.

The process is to receive an application, review that application, and make an informed decision at that point in time. I stand by the statements made that it is premature. Before an application even gets presented to us, it is very possible that the municipality of HRM will, in fact, make a decision and never actually forward an application for an amendment. So why would we want to spend government resources stepping into an initiative that hasn't even come forward to the department?

Mr. Speaker, I have to wonder why they want to spend our time on that, interfering politically in a process, on a regulatory body which is required to make informed, evidence-based decisions, not jump in before necessary with political interference. Thank you, sir.

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

MUN. AFFS. - GREAT VILLAGE FLOODING: MIN. VISIT - CONFIRM

MR. LARRY HARRISON: My question today is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Great Village has experienced a lot of flooding in the last couple of weeks, and there has been extensive damage to homes and to the gas station there, as well as to the fire department and new bridge development that has taken place. The damage is extensive, and I'm wondering if the minister has had a chance to go and see for himself the damage that was done to that community?

HON. MARK FUREY: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. No, I'll share with my colleague that I have not attended the community, but would be more than welcome to join him at a time that is convenient to him.

MR. HARRISON: So just to pick up on that, is the minister prepared, then, to engage with the people of Great Village to find out what can be done in the future to protect them from the flooding?

MR. FUREY: I should share with my colleague that my colleague on this side of the House, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, who is responsible for that riding, has spent extensive time visiting homeowners, engaging myself in discussions, and engaging the department in discussions in a response to the circumstances that that community has experienced.

MR. HARRISON: Just to follow up on that question, I know a lot of infrastructure is being introduced into the Colchester area because of the flooding there. Great Village

has not been put on the list yet. Do you think that that would be a community that should now be on the list for flooding?

MR. FUREY: Those circumstances of flooding in Great Village - the department has expended resources to the community. The Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal Department has been out to do assessments on damage to infrastructure. The EMO Department has been out and has done assessment on loss to homeowners, and we're in a process of completing that evaluation to determine what, if any, support the government can provide to this community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

TIR - NEW GLASGOW RAIL LINE: INSPECTION - MIN. PARTICIPATION

HON. PAT DUNN: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. In early July, we received information regarding the dilapidated condition of the rail line running through the downtown business core of New Glasgow. I recently attended a meeting with the Town Council of New Glasgow, along with a representative from the railway's company office in Montreal and two representatives of the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal's office.

At this meeting, the Deputy Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal said that on October 15th an inspection would be undertaken of the rail line in a drive-along truck. My question for the minister is, does the minister intend to participate in this inspection trip?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I thank the member for the question. This is a very important topic for our government. Obviously the tragedy of Lac-Mégantic changed a lot of things for a lot of people as it relates to rail. With the Hopewell line, to which the member refers, there are three levels of inspections: the company does one weekly; Transport Canada does one on the province's behalf a number of times per year, the most recent one being in August, which was found to be in compliance; and there is also an annual inspection that is done independently and paid for by the operator, the current operator Genesee & Wyoming.

For us this became an issue of public confidence, Mr. Speaker, given that tragedy, given some of the other derailments, certainly the one that has taken place on our lines, we wanted to do more. There were a number of issues and comments and complaints stemming from the Town of New Glasgow and the Town of Port Hawkesbury, so I thought it incumbent on our government to check into those. I didn't send two representatives, I sent my two top people with respect to rail: our rail expert, Steve Newson, and our deputy minister, Paul LaFleche. I have a lot of confidence in both individuals. Steve has been around a long time; he knows a lot about the rail system; he'll be a great member to have along with the ride on October 15th.

I wasn't scheduled to go on that meeting. To be perfectly frank, I wouldn't know what I was looking at. I'm not an expert in rail so I rely on the people around me who know these things. I'm going to take every indication from my staff, from the Town of New Glasgow, from that member, and if there is anything that we can do to improve safety, it will be a done deal.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, rail ties in large sections have decayed along the line in New Glasgow to the point that they can no longer anchor spikes. The damage is serious. Brackets that should be anchored with four spikes have fewer than four and the majority have as few as two or one. Most of the brackets are not even flush with the railbed. Many sections of railhead have extended lengths on the outer edge, which have splintered and in some cases simply broken off. Common sense would say that this would have to affect the integrity of the rail line.

My question to the minister is, will the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal insist that the personnel participating in the upcoming inspection on October 15th get out of the vehicle and actually walk sections of the track in order to recognize the decaying and unsafe rail line?

MR. MACLELLAN: What I've directed our staff to do is exactly what I mentioned in my first remark. We want to leave no stone unturned here, Mr. Speaker. If there is an issue, if the member has issues with respect to safety, with regulations, with compliance, I would like to know them. If there is a spike that isn't in a proper place, I would like to know that. If there is a railbed that has an issue, if there is a problem with a rail, if there is a problem with a railroad tie, I would like to know that.

What I'm dealing with now is three levels of compliance that I get reports on. Our experts tell us we're in compliance and that things are safe and as they should be. If there is any information out there that will help me make decisions and further strengthen and increase safety for the people of New Glasgow and for all Nova Scotians, then I am certainly willing to do that, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking for every piece of information I can find and make things better and safer for the people we represent.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I have been discussing this issue with the minister and his department has information and photos of this particular section of track in the downtown core of New Glasgow. It is remarkable the amount of attention this section of track has received in the downtown core of New Glasgow, since I brought it to the attention of several groups. Practically every day there are machines and employees on that section of track.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke with the recently retired president of Genesee & Wyoming Inc., owners of the Cape Breton & Central Nova Scotia Railway, in a phone call from a Montreal office. In the conversation he disagreed with me that cars carrying propane and butane actually travel through the downtown core of New Glasgow. The state of disrepair

of this rail line, according to someone with extensive experience in the field told me this section of track is the number-one ingredient for a disaster. All the red flags for a potential accident are present and the majority of the town's buildings, offices, and restaurants are only a few metres away.

My question to the minister is, will the minister assure the residents of New Glasgow that immediate attention and proper maintenance of this section of track will occur?

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, every piece of information that we can gather will be used. I know that the member has said many times that there is information out there, he just referenced it from a source that he didn't identify. If there is any information from a rail expert that we have that says that the rail is not only not in compliance but it's not safe for Nova Scotians, then I think it's incumbent on the member, that person who is the expert, and anyone who has information about the safety of the rail line. We have three levels of inspection, and according to Transport Canada, according to the guidelines set out by that department, it is in compliance.

Again, for me, when we heard information and complaints from the Town of New Glasgow, from the Town of Port Hawkesbury about concerns they had from Councillor Joe Janega, from Mayor Billy Joe MacLean, we checked those out. We're checking each and every facet of the complaints. We want to know what's happening on the ground, Mr. Speaker.

Again I will say to that member opposite, if there's an expert out there, if there's anyone who has information suggesting that that line is not safe, that the Hopewell line needs repairs, and it is there and it is present and it's in front of us, I really, truly request that they get that information to me directly. We will take immediate action. Thank you very much.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: ER WAIT-LISTS/NURSING HOME BEDS - CORRELATION

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Yesterday Dr. Chris Milburn, an emergency room doctor from Cape Breton, told reporters that the lack of nursing home beds was continuing to add to the long wait-lists in the emergency room. Dr. Milburn said it's a domino effect: the nursing home affects the hospital, and the hospital affects us.

He went on to say that the wait-times have grown by 20 per cent during weekdays and 30 per cent on the weekend. The increase has been measured over the last year.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, what immediate action will the minister take to ensure that seniors are taken care of and to relieve pressure on our emergency rooms?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, it was a good point raised by the doctor in Cape Breton. It does create that ripple effect. We know that there are certain areas of the province that do have a higher demand, at present, on our nursing homes. The big movement now is to provide home care for more Nova Scotians, and to that end, we have invested \$12 million in this year's budget, bringing it up a considerable amount over the past number of years.

However, the reality is that 34 Nova Scotians turn 65 every day. We have tremendous demands for nursing homes and home care.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, last week my colleague pointed out that the number of seniors on the wait-list for long-term care has reached 2,531 across the province. Of that number, more than 600 of those families are from Cape Breton. There are 70 hospital beds in Cape Breton alone that are being used by someone on the wait-list for long-term care. That is 70 families with a loved one sitting in a hospital bed, waiting for a nursing home.

My question to the minister is, will the minister finally reveal his plans for the next phase of the Continuing Care Strategy?

MR. GLAVINE: I thank the member for the question. We are just months away now from making that refresh of the Continuing Care Strategy known to Nova Scotians. We know that we will go further with providing home care to take pressure off the system.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm getting a family from the Westmount area whose loved one has been in hospital for over 26 weeks and wants to go home, but the home care is not available for them and the wait-list is too long.

The Chronicle Herald reported a year ago that the average wait-time for a long-term care bed is 396 days in Cape Breton. That figure gives little comfort to anyone in Cape Breton seeking care in hospital or a nursing home. We heard today that the government said they lowered the wait-list by over 100 in the past few months.

My question to the minister is, will he tell families when he will provide relief for those loved ones waiting for a nursing home?

MR. GLAVINE: I know this issue very, very well. In the Annapolis Valley we also have the same kind of demand on the system. As I started out earlier today in addressing one of the questions, there are a couple of pockets that do need much more support for nursing home availability. We will be looking at reducing the amount of time that people are in a nursing home by providing even more home care, so that those who are in the

greatest need for a nursing home, especially that number who are in beds in our hospitals in Cape Breton and around the province, can move a little quicker and smoother into the nursing home.

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

JUSTICE: CYBER-BULLYING - INTL. CASES

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Justice. Last week journalist Hilary Beaumont wrote a story in *The Coast* that chronicles years of alleged harassment and cyber-bullying suffered by two women in Halifax. Much of this harassment occurred or originated online - and I will table that. After pleading with police and being referred to the provincial CyberSCAN unit one woman was eventually told that her case was being closed because it was an international case and there just wasn't anything else the CyberSCAN unit could do.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, is the position of this government that all international cases such as this one simply be closed?

HON. LENA DIAB: Thank you to the member opposite. We noticed that article and our office takes these very seriously; in fact, we have been in contact with the director and I'm pleased to advise you that we've also contacted the police officers involved and, as the member opposite probably knows, the deputy of the police has been on the radio and issued various statements to that effect. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her response. *The Coast* story highlights issues about the lack of real knowledge and education by many law enforcement officials when it comes to cyber-harassment. The CyberSCAN unit has been up and running for about a year now and I have to say they've been doing a wonderful job helping many women and men who come to them for help, including me. But the CyberSCAN Unit has limits to what they can do and I'm really sorry that it took this type of media attention for the minister to review the process, because many questions have been coming forward from people to say there's just a limit to what the CyberSCAN unit can do.

My question, Mr. Speaker, through you is, what did the minister know about this particular case prior to it appearing in the media, and what steps did she take to actually address the situation?

MS. DIAB: Mr. Speaker, indeed it's a very important question and it's a question that has been raised by many, many people across Nova Scotia. I can tell the member opposite I had no information whatsoever about it prior to it appearing in *The Coast*. Thank you.

MS. ZANN: Mr. Speaker, again I thank the minister for her very honest answer because I understand that sometimes we don't hear everything that's going on and sometimes it does take the media to draw our attention to these very important issues.

I've done a lot of work myself, personally, helping young women in my riding deal with a porn site - there was an international porn site that highlighted underaged young women from our area and they were very frustrated because they couldn't get their pictures down off this site. We contacted police, we contacted RCMP, and I even contacted Minister Peter MacKay from the federal government but it seemed that nobody was able to do anything. Finally we were able to bring the site down through the work of many other individuals who are not with government. Roger Merrick, Director of Public Safety for the Nova Scotia CyberSCAN unit, has clearly stated that there is a real need for police to learn more about cyber-harassment and criminal action over the Internet.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you is, what actions will the minister take from now on to ensure that police across Nova Scotia receive adequate education about the CyberSCAN unit and training on cyber-harassment and cybercrimes?

MS. DIAB: Mr. Speaker, indeed it is a very, very important question. It's one I take very seriously as a mother of four and a grandmother of one now - and in fact, I have a teenager at home as well. It's very much an issue that we all need to work on, every single member in this House, every politician, media, education, our school system - everybody.

I can tell the member opposite that I've actually had discussions and I've been speaking with our own Minister of Community Services who is also the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, as well as the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. We are taking it very seriously. Not only that, I can tell you from the Justice perspective that we are having meetings with police officers, with RCMP. They are all onboard. They all view this as very serious and they are doing everything they can not only to educate their own police forces but also the public and everyone else.

Just from what I read in the papers about this issue and what the police department had issued, I was very, very pleased with those responses. In fact, they are very much available for anybody who has any issues on that and would very much love to take any and all concerns from every single person in this province because it is indeed an issue that we all have to look at. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers has expired. We'll now move on to Government Business.

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. 14.

Bill No. 14 - Gas Distribution Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 14, an Act to Amend Chapter 4 of the Acts of 1997, the Gas Distribution Act, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, the changes we are introducing to the Gas Distribution Act will clarify market regulations for the delivery of compressed natural gas, or CNG, in Nova Scotia. Clarifying market regulations for delivery helps CNG providers and also helps CNG customers and it will allow CNG opportunities to proceed with clarity.

The current situation with gas in the province is essentially like this: Heritage Gas holds franchise areas with the sole ability to deliver gas by pipeline in their franchise area; customers large and small can purchase their gas from any supplier. While currently our market is small enough that Heritage Gas is the provider for pretty well all customers, there is no requirement that people actually purchase their gas from Heritage Gas. CNG has remained a grey area and this has delayed some opportunities.

At one time Nova Scotians believed, of course, that Sempra would deliver piped gas to most of the province. Over time it became apparent to almost everyone that economically this would never occur, just as piped gas is not delivered to all people in most jurisdictions.

Sempra left the gas distribution franchise and the smaller, economically-based commitment was brought forth by Heritage Gas who was awarded franchise rights in certain parts of the province.

At the time, while CNG was not top of mind, the distribution rights applied to natural gas systems, thus the grey area I mentioned. Over the past years a report by Bill Lahey was commissioned to examine how CNG should be regulated. Our government continued this work and consulted with CNG providers, industry and Mr. Lahey, to ensure the recommendations were still appropriate.

I'll speak about the providers of CNG in just a moment but for now the customers' perspective of CNG bears mentioning. Many large customers, like manufacturers,

hospitals, universities and even small businesses or residents are interested in natural gas but are not close enough to the existing pipeline distribution system. It's very costly to run pipe. An extension of several kilometres requires the commitment of very large energy users.

Customers are interested in purchasing natural gas and providers are interested in offering it to more communities in the province. This is of particular interest because in Nova Scotia we are a net exporter of natural gas, producing more gas in this province than we actually use. The amendments of the Gas Distribution Act will provide a clear set of rules for compressed natural gas providers.

Mr. Speaker, trucking CNG is an attractive option because it makes it possible to deliver natural gas to areas not served by Heritage Gas' existing pipeline distribution system. Already near the airport we have a compression station and you can see CNG trucks being filled there on a regular basis.

In the trucking delivery scenario, trucks are able to deliver natural gas directly from a compressor station to a decanting station at a large customer's location. In this way large energy users like manufacturers, hospitals and universities located beyond the existing pipeline infrastructure, can realize the benefits of natural gas.

An alternate CNG scenario is a satellite system where trucks deliver natural gas to a large customer, such as a hospital, located away from an existing pipeline system. In one example of this scenario, if there's a large customer in the same community, a pipeline can be built between the two customers. This creates the potential for a satellite system which can provide natural gas to small businesses and residences close to the natural gas satellite system.

Small businesses and residents along the satellite pipeline then have the potential to access natural gas, when they were not able to do so before. In 2012, government of the day hired William Lahey to look at the market and regulatory conditions that would be necessary to actually have this industry move forward and to really start getting gas opportunities into underserved communities. I think it was an important initiative, and I think it's important now as well.

Mr. Lahey is an associate law professor at Dalhousie University, a former Deputy Minister of Environment and Labour, is experienced through energy-related issues in the province, and is chairman of Efficiency Nova Scotia's board of directors. Mr. Lahey consulted with Nova Scotians interested in getting into the business as well as some potential customers. He then put together recommendations that gave clarity to potential suppliers and customers of compressed natural gas - clarity on who could get into this business and under what conditions.

The amendments in this bill are the result of the report, entitled *Economic Regulation and the Distribution of Compressed Natural Gas in Nova Scotia*. As I noted earlier, our government worked with Mr. Lahey and industry to ensure that the recommendations contained in the legislation remain valid. This is critical, given that we now have some limited experience in delivering CNG by two companies, Irving and Heritage Gas.

The amendments provide for greater clarity and certainty for both the providers and customers. The amendments confirm what we already understood to be the situation, which is that the natural gas franchise holder has the exclusive right to deliver CNG in the franchise area. This is the current situation. However, there are exemptions to allow further competition that I will address shortly. As well, the legislation will allow a franchise holder, for example, to apply to the Utility and Review Board to have its existing CNG customers - customers inside and outside the franchise area - become part of the franchise holder's regulated economic activity.

To be very clear, because this has recently come up during the board hearings, we understand there is a cost difference between CNG and piped gas supply. Piped natural gas customers will not subsidize CNG customers. These activities will be kept separate. The amendments allow for franchise holders to make business decisions in that regard. To engage new CNG customers, either inside or outside the franchise area, franchise holders will apply to the Utility and Review Board. This ensures greater clarity for franchise holders in their operations and greater certainty for franchise holders in pursuing business opportunities. It also protects customers.

The legislation also recognizes that healthy competition can exist between CNG providers. There are two ways this can occur. Given the context of CNG delivery today, it means that CNG providers like Irving Energy can continue to compete with Heritage Gas for customers outside Heritage Gas' franchise area. However, the bill also provides for competition through other exemptions. For instance, if a large customer within the franchise area feels that the franchise holder is unable or not planning to deliver gas in a timely fashion and believes it can be better served by another provider, the amendments allow the customer to apply to the URB for an exemption. The URB would then determine if granting the exemption is in the public interest.

For example, there is no pipe system around the Peggy's Cove area. There are no current plans to deliver there. But this is within Heritage Gas' current franchise area, so should a CNG supplier other than Heritage wish to deliver there and set up a system for some of the businesses in that area or residents, they could work with the customer to apply for an exemption from the existing franchise system from the Utility and Review Board. This will allow for competition in underserved franchise areas in the same way that piped customers have the legal ability to choose their gas supply.

The amendments also expand the definition of the gas distribution system to bring other petroleum gases in line, like propane. It will bring pipe delivery of other fuels in line

with the principles of the Gas Distribution Act. For example, while there isn't any at the moment, if a propane supplier would like to build their own pipe delivery system, the supplier would be required to apply to the Utility and Review Board for a franchise. It does not impact the way current truck delivery of propane or other gases currently occur, it simply provides for a future opportunity.

The amendments are straightforward and specific and give the industry clarity and they will allow companies to make investments around CNG without worrying about grey areas that have existed. I want to be clear again that the players in this industry have been involved in this legislation. They have been involved, as the municipalities have been involved and stakeholders have been involved, to ensure that it meets the needs of those in it.

Heritage Gas is currently delivering compressed natural gas by truck to Shaw Brick and CKF Inc. and Heritage Gas has recently applied to build a satellite distribution system in the Antigonish area. Acadia University has chosen Irving Energy to provide its campus with trucked natural gas starting in this heating system and we understand more projects are under discussion and awaiting the clarity of this legislation.

In summary, through these amendments to the Gas Distribution Act, trucked compressed natural gas service providers will have more opportunities to provide natural gas to more businesses, institutions and potentially residences. The amendments will also provide the opportunity for more competition and monitored competition for energy sources. Thank you.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand and talk to Bill No. 14 for a few moments. As we know, natural gas is being recognized as a clean, affordable source of energy. Industries across the province see it as a means of reducing their energy costs and many institutions, like hospitals and universities, recognize it as a way to reduce those cost pressures.

Not unlike what the announcement of the Minister of Health and Wellness was not so long ago that the hospitals across the province would be converting to natural gas, many of those hospitals - which is quite interesting in this time of our lives - those hospitals which are health centres and promoters of health were burning, in most cases, Bunker C which is one of the dirtiest (Interruption) Some of them were burning coal but that was only in Cape Breton, right? It's good that we moved not only to a fuel that is a little bit cheaper but also much better for our environment.

We are looking forward for Yarmouth to come online, Cape Breton to come online and I'll talk about Antigonish in a couple of moments. Acadia has already done that switch and is already taking in at least one truck a day and they were saying that after it gets a little

bit colder they'll probably be taking in two truckloads a day, which is a concern of the member for Kings North. Asking about the pipeline issue, with all that trucking going on in our small communities, what will be the effect of that in the long term? Yet this is what we have in this particular case, there are no pipelines right across the province so we do need to come up with the other option, which is trucking, which is what is before us today.

With the ever-increasing electricity prices in the province under both the previous government and this one, of course companies are looking outside of that norm in order to fill their energy needs and that option is natural gas. The other challenge is the line itself really only travels across the province in a lateral that brings it here to Halifax, a little lateral that goes to Port Hawkesbury, the rest of the province doesn't have the opportunities as the communities along the corridor. Even if it were along that corridor, only Oxford at this point that has been able to take some pieces off of it and there has been some work through New Glasgow, I think, to supply some stuff to the Trenton area. It will be an interesting move to see how those communities accept natural gas distribution in their communities.

The rules and amendments to the Gas Distribution Act should in theory reduce the economic risks of establishing natural gas satellite systems across the province, or green filled systems across the province, because many of those communities never had access to gas so it means that companies like Heritage Gas have to come in and dig up all the streets, just like they have been doing here in Dartmouth and Halifax over a number of years now. As a result, this benefits those natural gas ratepayers in the province.

It should lead to other communities across this province being provided access to natural gas - in some cases that access could make the difference between an industrial project making economic sense and it being abandoned. This is why it is essential that the government do everything it can to enable the development of natural gas distribution networks across the province.

As I said earlier I'll be talking about Antigonish and in Antigonish's case Heritage Gas is proposing, has announced, that it is spending about \$9 million to install an underground pipeline network in Antigonish. This proposal will see compressed natural gas trucked into a distribution station and then released into the pipeline network. This will provide significant cost savings to residents and business owners in the area. The example of the high energy users in that area, of course, Saint Martha's and St. FX University, will be able to access that cheap energy.

Even to the point when I was asking about the Yarmouth situation, if you could travel down Vancouver Street and maybe up Main Street just to get it to Starrs Road where there are a number of fast-food joints. If you would be able to access their fryers and things, it would minimize their costs - it would probably cost a million dollars just to go pretty much a kilometre. It's a very expensive issue to build out a system in those communities, but hope some of them will be taking that on and providing this to their communities.

It's important, Mr. Speaker, as well, to have a stable supply of natural gas for the system. As I said, it sort of goes in one direction where we aren't taking it from offshore and it's shipping it down to New England, but at the same time we are able to grab some off of it, but responsibly developing our shale gas resources in Nova Scotia would provide our province with another supply of natural gas rather than relying solely on that offshore production or that shale gas from the United States, if they could in time reverse that pipeline to bring it back this way.

So I welcome the government's encouraging greater use of natural gas in the province; it would be more encouraging if it were to promise or promote the development of natural gas resources in this province as well. Mr. Speaker, of course this is a bill that we will be supporting as we go along, as we do support further natural gas development in this province. Thank you very much.

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

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I'll be fairly brief on this. First of all on the report itself, rather than the bill, I'd like to share my thank you with the minister to Mr. Lahey who did a great job and is well respected across this province, so I think it's a job well done.

I remember early on in the natural gas debate - it goes back almost to the mid-90s when there was a fear here that there would be natural gas everywhere in the province, everyone would be hooked up and you would see the demise of the coal mines. Well, we've seen the demise of the coal mines, but we didn't see any kind of large-scale presence of natural gas in underserved areas.

This is a step forward. I know that the areas as they're served and as they come on stream - it's whenever you have options, especially in the world of energy, it becomes extremely helpful not only to residents but more probably just as important to our commercial endeavours, Mr. Speaker, and the industrial. So while providing industrial and commercial, and hopefully, residential users, with more and more options around energy we will hope that we would drive other prices down.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to speak long. We support this bill going forward to the Law Amendments Committee, I think that it a step in the right direction. I echo my friend from the Official Opposition saying we wish we had further resources in this province to rely on. We have some offshore play going on, hopefully we'll see some routes develop very shortly - and with those few words I take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Environment.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I'd just like to indicate that this does affect and hit close to home for me and the residents in the Antigonish area. In fact, when I was on the

campaign trail, in one of the houses that I stopped in on St. Ninian Street in Antigonish, very close to the campus community, a resident actually brought to my attention the question of natural gas and the options for heating, and why that's not accessible in the Antigonish area. So there's definitely an interest with the residents in Antigonish.

I know that's not the principal point of this process, but, in fact, the way that this is progressing is about providing options, providing alternative fuel sources for the residents of Antigonish and area and other areas that this type of process may facilitate, and opening up those options.

On the platform that we implemented in the campaign, we talk about power sources. Heating is a big aspect of alternative power. Heating is a main interest for people in Nova Scotia. One of the ways that we were looking to address power was through providing options and opening up for competition. With respect to fuel sources, that's also what we're doing.

When you bring in options, you bring in choice, you bring in competition, you bring in choice for the consumers, for our constituents, and ideally through that process, we also bring lower costs for our constituents, which we recognize the need for in this province - rising costs of heating our facilities, whether they are institutions, larger institutions that ultimately are funded through the public purse.

We've had lots of discussion here in this Legislature about the need for government, at all levels, to be more fiscally prudent with tax dollars. So when choice and options and flexibility are being provided to those institutions, that's what this bill is opening the doors for. It will allow opportunity for lower costs for these institutions in heating, ultimately saving taxpayers at the end of the day, because we do have one taxpayer in this province.

Again, as this does hit close to home, it is of particular interest to the constituents in Antigonish. As I said, I've spoken to some of those constituents on doorsteps. I attended some public information sessions in the Antigonish area. I saw interested parties from Antigonish's Responsible Energy Action, a group that were at the information session. They were very interested in learning more about the proposals and the options available. They look at the energy from an environmental perspective, and asked what those options would be, and what that would mean for residents of Antigonish and surrounding areas.

So with that, I'd like to thank my colleague for bringing this forward. I know the people of Antigonish, for the most part, will be quite pleased to see this move forward, as well.

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

The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. ANDREW YOUNGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just very briefly, before I close debate, just to give a sense of the amount of gas - we peak at 500 million cubic feet coming from offshore. We only use about 300 million cubic feet, so at the moment we're already producing almost double what we use in the province. In fact, there are lots of places we would love to use that. As the Opposition Critic mentioned quite rightly, the Health and Wellness Minister has moved in the direction of having that expand to our hospitals in the province. Some of that will be through trucked opportunities, and we're very excited about that.

As well, we have the onshore coal bed methane project, which has been flaring the past week or two, and looks like it will come to, or may come to, commercial production. It's looking very promising. We're very excited about that.

At this point, this is a great opportunity to use more gas in our province, get it to areas that, quite frankly, don't look like they would have ever been served by a pipeline system. I'm one of those people who lives half a kilometre from a gas pipeline and may never see gas at my house, because of the way the pipeline system is. But this will, at least, get us to more people and bigger customers.

We are making changes, working with Heritage Gas and the franchise system, as well, to try to ensure that as many customers, and many people who are interested in this province, move in that direction.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would close debate on Bill No. 14.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 14. 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. 15.

Bill No. 15 - Builders' Lien Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. LENA DIAB: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 15 be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon and have an opportunity to address this House about the proposed amendments and explain why they are important. First, as a background, the Builders' Lien Act governs practices by owners, contractors and subcontractors for claims against the property by a business or a person who has supplied labour or material for work on it. The liens protect people from not being paid for their work or goods they provided on a project.

Before I talk about the amendments that we're proposing today, I would like to outline the changes that were already made in the Act in May 2013. There were initial changes that were made to the Builders' Lien Act that focused on a progressive release of holdbacks to subcontractors as the work is completed. Subcontractors can now apply to be paid the remaining amount they are owed out of the holdback, even though the project is not complete.

These changes also suggested that there will be a finishing holdback of 10 per cent of the value of the work remaining after substantial performance, rather than 2.5 per cent of the total contract price. At that time the House introduced the requirement of public notice of substantial completion of a project.

Mr. Speaker, we would like to present further amendments to those, by the amendments we are proposing today, before we proclaim the 2013 amendments, for a couple of reasons. Essentially we want to bring more clarity and consistency to the Act and address concerns that have been raised by several stakeholders, including the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Firstly, we recommend amending the Act to explicitly allow an owner, without jeopardy, to continue to make payments to a contractor up to 90 per cent, after receiving notice of a lien. This is conditional, provided the owner retains an amount sufficient to satisfy the lien and the applicable holdback.

The Act does not explicitly define this and Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal has indicated that there are conflicting views within the industry about the ability to continue making payments after receiving notice of a lien. If payments do not continue, this may result in financial hardship for other subcontractors on the worksite that have not filed liens. It can also bring about difficulties for subcontractors who are filing liens due to delay in payment. This amendment would provide clarity on what can be done in this situation.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we would like to clarify that interest must be paid, if an owner does not make a payment within 65 days of becoming permitted to make a payment following a subcontract that has been certified complete. The Act currently indicates that interest will accumulate if holdbacks are not paid out promptly following substantial completion of a contract.

Mr. Speaker, interest is an incentive for the payments to be made in a timely way. The proposed amendment would make the processes more internally consistent by extending the concept of interest to the progressive release of the holdback provisions that was introduced in the 2013 amendments.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, we propose allowing holdback to be released if a registration has been vacated. This would be used in a situation where holdback is otherwise eligible for release. The Act currently provides that a court may allow security for or payment into court for the amount of a lien claim and then vacate the registration of a lien. It also provides that holdbacks must be retained until all liens that may be claimed against the holdback have expired or have been satisfied or discharged.

The Act does not currently address the scenario where a lien has been vacated, and I can tell you, having practised law in this area, it costs a lot of money and a lot of time to make those applications to court. So this amendment will clarify the process that will be taken if a registration has been vacated.

Lastly, we propose amendments to further align the language introduced in the 2013 amendments with the language of the larger Act. The proposed amendments that I've outlined today will provide clarity and ensure consistency in the Act. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are good amendments. This bill means that contractors and subcontractors will receive pay for the work they've done in a timely manner, even if a lien is placed on the property. I see these changes as changes that will protect companies and jobs, because they ensure that players in the industry can stay strong and participation in one bad project won't result in harm to the company that's going to put that company in a position where it has to lay off its workers.

I believe Nova Scotians would be in full agreement with this, because anybody that I know, they believe in an honest day's pay for an honest day's work, and this legislation ensures that those in Nova Scotia's building trades get paid for the work they do. These are changes that, as we know, the building professionals have requested, and I also know that they are part of a report on the Builders' Lien Act completed by the Nova Scotia Law Reform Commission.

With that, we look forward to these amendments being passed here in the Legislature. Thank you.

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

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't speak long. I'd like to add my voice to what I would refer to, again, as positive amendments. The off times that people who were less than honest could hold out small businesspeople - by and large, this - the Builders' Lien Act - that's really the ones that we need to protect here, and are often given the most harm and are the least able to absorb that harm. If there's a way that we could do this, they could access monies owing incrementally - would help them, whether it's, as the previous speaker mentioned, to retain employees, or they have suppliers that they have to pay and so on.

These are good amendments. The minister talked about the changes that were made - 13 - that were good. You're always pleased, you know - this legislation has been here a long time, and you can always improve upon it. I think these are improvements, and I would hope that these would pass and that they would be dealt with as judiciously as possible and we could move forward. So with those few words, I take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

MR. KEITH IRVING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill. I am actually the first architect to ever sit in this House (Applause) so it seems appropriate to at least say a few words on a bill that so greatly affects the construction industry.

The Builders' Lien Act is a very, very important piece of legislation in the construction industry, and particularly, as some of my colleagues have just mentioned, in terms of the smaller contractors and smaller businesses that are part of the complex job of construction.

Basically, the Builders' Lien Act allows owners to withhold money until the building is substantially complete. "Substantially complete" means everything in the building is finished so it can be occupied. There may be a bit of landscaping or painting that needs to be done, but the building is safe to be occupied. So a substantial completion date is an important point in the construction, and that is when the holdbacks that are withheld during the course of construction can be released, 45 days after that completion.

Those funds are withheld to ensure that small contractors and suppliers get paid, so if a general contractor goes through the process and isn't paying his suppliers, turns the building over to the owner and that general contractor is in some trouble or cannot pay his subs, this is the protection to allow subcontractors and suppliers to go directly to the owner to receive payment.

It's important when we do legislation to really think about what we're doing here. This affects a very important industry and a lot of small businesses, so I want to commend both TIR for bringing forward some ideas to improve this legislation - really, this is an amendment to a series of amendments - and showing that even with the brilliance of 51 or 52 members a year ago in this Legislature, there's still room for improvement.

I commend the Minister of Justice and her staff for improving the bill. This will benefit contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, and the professions involved in the building industry - architects and engineers. Also, developers and even our primary deliverer of government projects, TIR - this will benefit them.

The last point I'd like to make is what's happening here should be recognized in terms of this government's continued willingness and commitment to improve legislation. Here we have a piece of legislation that is only a year old or less and we are improving it; rather than it sitting for 20 and 30 years, we have an opportunity to improve it and we are seizing that opportunity here today.

Again, I'd like to thank the minister and her staff for these improvements, and with that I'll take my place. Thank you.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise to close debate on Bill No. 15.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 15. 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. 16.

Bill No. 16 - Police Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise again this afternoon to move that Bill No. 16, amendments to the Police Act, be read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to tell you about these proposed amendments to the Police Act. The Police Act governs complaints against members of municipal police departments as well as the disciplinary process. We're proposing adding a new subsection to the Act; the Act gives the minister the authority to intervene in a municipal police investigation and remove the investigation from a municipality.

With that said, the Act is not clear as to which agency the minister can reassign an investigation to. The proposed amendments would clarify that the minister can reassign the investigation to an agency as defined in the Act to be the provincial police, RCMP, or to another police department within the province, or if necessary, outside the province.

Secondly, the Act only allows for the Governor in Council to enter into agreements with the Government of Canada for the use or employment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to perform the functions of the provincial police. There are other items that the Minister of Justice may wish to enter agreements with the Government of Canada related to policing and the administration of justice. An example of this may be the provision of DNA analysis.

Often these agreements are approved under Section 6 of the Public Service Act but it would be preferable to have specific legal authority in the Police Act. That's why we are recommending the Act be amended so that the minister, with the approval of Governor in Council, can enter into agreement with the Government of Canada for purposes related to policing and the administration of justice.

Mr. Speaker, it's also recommended that the Act be amended to allow two or more municipalities, policed by the RCMP, to seek the minister's approval for a joint Police Advisory Board, due to geographic location and common interest. Currently an order for two municipalities to have a Joint Police Advisory Board, an amalgamation agreement under the Act is required. This will allow for greater efficiency for policing oversight in the province. For example, the RCMP Digby detachment is divided into two police units, one for the Digby town and one for the Digby county. Both divisions report to the same detachment commander and work out of the same building. This amendment would allow for both of these units to create a Joint Advisory Board. This would be more efficient than having two separate boards.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we would like to add language to the Act that would exempt auxiliary police from liability. These are volunteers and that exemption would be similar to the protection that is already accorded under the Volunteer Protection Act. This would ensure the protection from liability for auxiliary police.

To recap for the House, Mr. Speaker, the amendments I've just outlined will clarify sections of the Act and remove any ambiguities, allow for Joint Police Advisory Boards, which is more efficient, and protect volunteer auxiliary police from liability. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, most of these matters that the minister has just spoken about are things that seem very reasonable. Certainly limiting liability for auxiliary officers makes a lot of sense, so that encourages those people to continue and perhaps new people to start serving in those roles, allowing municipalities to come together

to have Joint Police Advisory Boards, if they have common interests, is also something that makes a lot of sense.

I was of the understanding - although I will say, Mr. Speaker, I don't do a lot of bedtime reading with legislation on the night stand - but I was under the impression that there was some power, already, to remove a police investigation from one police force and have another force come in. For instance, there might be a perceived conflict of interest. That is a point that has caught my attention.

Also, as I understand, these changes would give the minister power to, I believe, replace provincial police forces with RCMP. Perhaps the minister can comment. I see she is shaking her head "no" there. Perhaps that is something we will hear more about as this bill continues in the House, if that is the case. I am not going to say anything further on it, Mr. Speaker, until perhaps we hear more at Law Amendments Committee or, as well, on third reading. Thank you.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the Law Amendments Committee process as well and to having those issues clarified for the member opposite, as well as everyone else. With that, I close debate on Bill No. 16.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 16. 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. 17.

Bill No. 17 - Police Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise again to move that Bill No. 17, amendments to the Police Act regarding the police complaints process be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to tell you about these amendments and explain to the House their significance, just a very few small amendments that primarily focus on wording changes, which will clarify the intent of the Act. There are five specific amendments that I would like to outline for the House.

Before I talk about the amendments I would first like to outline the role of the Complaints Commissioner and the Police Review Board. The Complaints Commissioner may attempt to resolve a complaint informally or investigate a complaint formally; the Complaints Commissioner is also responsible for providing all administrative support needed by the Review Board to carry out its responsibilities; and the Police Review Board hears and rules on public complaints and police officer appeals against disciplinary penalties or dismissals that are not satisfactorily resolved by the Complaints Commissioner.

So the amendments we are proposing today, Mr. Speaker - first, some areas of the Act should be amendments to clarify the complaints and discipline process for municipal police and the roles of the Complaints Commissioner and the Police Review Board. Currently the Act requires the Police Review Board to file an annual report with the Minister of Justice and allows the Review Board to publish various statistics. Since the Complaints Commissioner actually has access to the pertinent information, it makes more sense if he or she is able to file the report and has the ability to publish statistics. Therefore we are recommending that the Act be amended to change references from the Review Board to the Complaints Commissioner with the respect to the ability to file the annual report and publish statistics.

Secondly, the Act allows for the Complaints Commissioner to decline to proceed with an investigation when a claim is frivolous or vexatious. It's suggested, Mr. Speaker, that the words "without merit or an abuse of process" be added to the Act to ensure that those types of complaints do not proceed to the Review Board for investigation.

Thirdly, a potential conflict between sections of the Act has been identified. Mr. Speaker, one clause is mandatory and requires the Complaints Commissioner to investigate all complaints when attempting to resolve them, while another gives the commissioner the discretion to decide whether to investigate a complaint when attempting to resolve the matter. Not all cases will require a full investigation in order to resolve, therefore we're recommending a wording change to ensure that the Complaints Commissioner can decide whether an investigation is needed to resolve the matter.

The fourth change, Mr. Speaker, deals with the power of the Review Board to decide questions of law. Currently the Act does not explicitly state that the Review Board has this authority. The Act does, however, outline what the Review Board may do during a hearing. Among other things the board may make findings of fact but there is no express power for the board to decide questions of law. It's not explicitly clear in the legislation whether question of law and charter issues may be considered, therefore an amendment to

the Act specifically stating that the review board my decide questions of law would clear up any uncertainty in this regard.

If it's determined to grant the Review Board the explicit authority to determine questions of law, then it is recommended that the Act be further amended to require the chairman of the Review Board, or, in the instance of two co-chairmen, at least one co-chairman to hold a bachelor's degree in law or a degree that the Governor in Council determines to be equivalent. The Act does not require any member on the Review Board to be legally trained at the moment, Mr. Speaker. This will ensure that the Review Board has the legal expertise it needs to help make these decisions.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, there is an inconsistency between the Act and the police with regard to the process to initiate a review. The regulations correctly state that the filing of a notice of a review is made to the Complaints Commissioner. The Act incorrectly states that it's filed with the Review Board, so we need to change the Act to ensure it is correct, the filing of a notice of review must be made to the Complaints Commissioner. The Police Complaints Commissioner agrees that these amendments are an important step in her office's efforts to maximize efficiency and they are important in keeping Nova Scotia in step with the changing landscape of civilian oversight.

The proposed amendments that I have outlined today, Mr. Speaker, will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the police complaints and discipline process. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, when an organization deals with matters of fact and law that affect the lives of Nova Scotians, someone who is trained in the law is an absolute requirement, and we agree with the provision of the chairman of this commission be a lawyer. Where the commissioner cannot satisfactory resolve a complaint or when it has been determined that a complaint is frivolous and it does not merit review by the board, we understand that these changes in the legislation will enshrine the practice into law where the Commissioner can refuse to continue reviewing that particular complaint. In practical terms, what that means is that more time is going to be spent on the complaints that are legitimate and need to be addressed, and resolving them, and I think that's important. The Commission has a history of conducting itself professionally and I believe these changes will continue to ensure that it does so in the future.

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

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Thank you, just a few short words on this. Whenever there is a complaint against a peace officer, it automatically becomes a very public issue and people are very quick to take a side, probably more so than in any other dispute, whether a bank robber is accused, or whatever. When one of our peace officers is charged,

or when a complaint is laid, it really puts in motion a very interesting set of circumstances, because, probably like no other, that person's work is set aside, whether they are innocent or guilty, for a period of time. I would hope, through this legislation, that this would make this process more expeditious, so that neither party - and particularly the aggrieved party, if it is the peace officer - is left in limbo for an elongated period of time.

This is so disruptive on the people who serve this province every day in that capacity. Now, are there people who have crossed that line? Obviously, that's why we have this system. It will be interesting to watch the system, as it unfolds, the rule of thumb around whether a complaint is specious or whichever - let's hope that it's given a full airing and then it's moved on with. We wouldn't want that these rulings be fast, but yet not be thorough. So that's the balance that we are giving to this group.

I really appreciate the minister bringing this forward. It's a step in the right direction in bringing a legal eye to this procedure. It is, I believe, well thought-out. We look forward to this bill going forward, going to the Law Amendments Committee and on to becoming enacted over third reading. With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I take my place.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. LENA DIAB: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to close debate on Bill No. 17.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 17. 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 the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be now resumed.

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

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: If someone had told me two years ago that being a teacher would help prepare me for a career in provincial politics, I wouldn't have had a clue as to what they were talking about. How can an educator of children - teenagers, in my case - function and be influential in a very grown-up world? During my undergraduate degree I had the privilege of working as a legislative messenger here at Province House so I knew that there were some similarities when it came to the hectic and sometimes odd procedures of the Chamber, but at the time I didn't realize fully how much they mirrored the goings-on in some classrooms. I never thought that my classroom-management skills in particular would ever come in handy on the floor of the House.

For example, the first time I rose in my place in the House of Assembly and in front of my colleagues was to give a resolution. I remember that as I started to speak I noticed that the members appeared to be ignoring me. Being very much used to addressing a group of people who didn't want to listen, I did what only came naturally to me, I paused and continued in my teacher voice.

A "teacher voice," Madam Speaker, is an elevated and slightly aggressive tone that a teacher takes in the delivery of their lessons so that students understand that the information they are hearing is important and that they probably should take note. The result was the same as it was in my classroom: acknowledgement and then silence for at least a few seconds, allowing me to finish my resolution and take my seat.

A more serious comparison became clear during my first few months in office, though. It was at this time that I made the correlation between a career in teaching and counselling and my new career as an MLA. I am certain that working as a guidance counsellor helped prepare me for the amount of advocacy needed to handle constituent work - helping people navigate through the complex web that is government, helping them receive the help and advice they required, and being a champion for them when needed. Being an MLA didn't make me more important, but it certainly made me accountable to a much larger group of people.

As I've explained in the House before, the riding of Fairview-Clayton Park is brand new. The areas that make up this riding - Fairview, Clayton Park proper, Mount Royale, and the Bayers Westwood area - are all extremely unique, and much of my time this past year has been trying to connect to and with the amazing people who live in each. It was very important to me that I reached out to each part of the riding and made myself as accessible as possible. I started out small. Not everyone knew me, so I needed to make sure that I met with as many groups and individuals as possible so that the community understood that I was here to serve them to my fullest capacity.

Shortly after the swearing-in ceremony, I held my first stakeholders meeting with the community groups at Fairview Junior High School, bringing together school officials, community advocates, special interest groups, and members of the business community to open up dialogue, not just with my office but with each other.

I attended and continue to attend numerous events in the riding and the surrounding neighbourhood of Clayton Park West, and I started the search for a constituency assistant. I hired an amazing constituency assistant - Lisa Courtney, who has been an unbelievable source of friendship and support in the past year. Lisa is smart and kind and passionate about helping others. It's hard for me to relinquish responsibility when it comes to the people I represent and the issues I care so strongly about. That's a little bit of an understatement, actually. But Lisa is very much an extension of me, and I trust her with all that I hold dear. I'm very lucky indeed.

Another of my first points of contact, Madam Speaker, was to my local Legion. My riding has a very active Legion in its midst, the Fairview Legion, and its members, of which I am one, are some of the greatest people you could hope to meet. They are a dedicated bunch, and I feel privileged to be able to call them friends. They are strong and committed advocates to our community and are always there to help.

Getting to understand my new role in the riding meant continuing to build relationships with the municipal councillors - relationships that were there and started prior to the election. My riding is made up of three districts - Districts 9, 10, and 12 - so I have the good fortune of working with Councillors Linda Mosher, Russell Walker, and Reg Rankin. It took some time before I was able to address one councillor by their first name, however, seeing as Mr. Walker had been my industrial arts teacher in junior high and I had grown up with one of his children. It would take a bit of prodding to break that formality of childhood and be able to address him as Russell. I've managed to do it, though.

Yes, Madam Speaker, I have three very dedicated councillors who have always been receptive to maintaining a good relationship with me, and who, in my dealings with them, put our community first.

My background in working with children made the schools that service my riding a good jumping-off point for the first few months of my term. I met regularly with principals from all grade levels and enjoyed numerous school presentations, ceremonies, and festivals throughout the school year. It was also a great pleasure to reconnect with a number of administrators and teachers who I had previously worked with in the Halifax Regional School Board.

Madam Speaker, this first year has been a very rewarding experience for me. It has not only been a time to actively represent my riding but also to follow through on the commitments made by our government - commitments we take very seriously.

The cost of power in the province is an issue on the minds of all Nova Scotians. Our government is responding to this concern, and on January 1, 2015, Nova Scotians' power bills will go down as the efficiency tax will be taken off their Nova Scotia Power bill. The high costs associated with power bills was an issue I heard at many doors across the riding.

Coming from a teaching background, the conversations I had at the door and continued to have after the election almost always came around to our education system. Personal stories, as well as general concerns and opinions, were voiced very freely with always the same general consensus: we need to put our students first and we need to do better. Our government responded by reinvesting \$18.6 million into the education system this year.

We have listened to parents and teachers and have capped classroom sizes for children in Primary to Grade 2, and we also reintroduced the Reading Recovery program for Grade 1 students - a program that was extremely important to the teachers and families that I have had the fortune of working with over the years.

In February 2014 the provincial government launched the province's first education review in 25 years. We gave the people of Nova Scotia a say as to what they see need to be priorities in our education system, and I look forward to hearing from our review panel later this month and working with the minister to see that these recommendations are acted on.

Giving supports to our education system is just a part of a complex puzzle that is putting our province back together. Job creation and keeping our young people here or bringing them back home is also on the minds of Nova Scotians. We have responded in a number of ways, starting with our announcement of new graduate scholarships for innovation and research - scholarships that will help keep students here and provide opportunity for bringing them back to the province. Keeping that in mind, we have committed to modernizing apprenticeships so that more apprentices complete their training in less time, making it easier for apprentices to have out-of-province experience recognized.

My work as a counsellor opened my eyes up to a lot of horrors that are faced each and every day by the young people of this province - more often than not, young women - horrors that are not limited to the young and don't stop once you turn 16.

I'm so proud of this government's commitment to the development of a sexual violence strategy. The honourable member for Dartmouth North, the Minister of Community Services, understands how serious an issue this is and if I may quote directly from her, "Sexual violence is one of the most traumatic and pervasive of all human rights violations. It refers to any sexual activity, or attempt to obtain sexual acts, without consent. This includes unwanted comments, touching and gestures. It includes sexual assault and rape. It can impact anyone, and is often used to exert power and control over others. Sexual violence occurs all over the world, including here at home."

Madam Speaker, our time to become leaders in championing the prevention and eradication of sexual violence is now. The devastating impact that sexual violence has on the health and safety of Nova Scotians is the catalyst for Nova Scotia's first strategy on

sexual violence. With a budget of \$6 million over three years, the sexual violence strategy will direct both immediate and long-term action in the form of improved supports for victims and prevention efforts.

In his reply, my colleague, the member for Halifax Atlantic, so eloquently spoke on our investment in transition houses, women's centres, and second-stage housing organizations to the amount of \$500,000 committed per year across the province. There are not enough words to express how much help these investments will bring to the most vulnerable in our communities. There are not enough words to express how meaningful this decision by the department will be in so many lives.

Another great initiative put forward by the Department of Community Services is the creation of a new federal-provincial housing agreement. This agreement means, quite simply, more seniors, families, and persons with disabilities in the province will be able to find an affordable place to call home. The \$102 million, five-year investment announced on August 5th, cost shared 50/50 by the Governments of Nova Scotia and Canada, is an extension to the Investment in Affordable Housing agreement.

As many of us understand all too well, we are not only MLAs to our neighbours, but MLAs to our families as well - family members, who at times hold us the most accountable of all. I come from a family of entrepreneurs and small-business owners. I'm happy to say that our government has increased our focus on small business and has expanded the Credit Union Small Business Loan Guarantee Program.

I'm also excited to find out the reports of our comprehensive tax review, as the members of my family are, and we'll work with the minister and see that these recommendations are implemented. We have changed the way our government does economic development. Nova Scotia is now more open and transparent than any other province in Canada about economic development deals. We have established the Nova Scotia Wine Development Board, which will highlight opportunities, identify barriers, and provide advice on government legislation, regulation, and policy development to help grow this already-booming industry.

This board includes representatives from the wine, grape-growing, and restaurant food sectors, along with key government representatives. Last year \$16.7 million worth of Nova Scotia wine was sold. We may not make wine - at least not in large quantities - in Fairview-Clayton Park, but we are happy to support this local industry.

Immigration is a top priority for this government. We are welcoming skilled immigrants to Nova Scotia and are opening the doors to our province to more immigrants through a new Regional Labour Market Demand program. In August I had the privilege of taking part in the announcement of the Premier's Advisory Council on Immigration. Co-chairs Mr. Wadih Fares and Dr. Colin Dodds will work with the minister to advise on immigration in the province. Dr. Dodds will focus on opportunities to attract and retain

international students, and Mr. Fares will work with the federal government and business across Canada to find ways to bring more people to our province.

My good friend and mentor, the honourable member for Clayton Park West, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, has advocated tirelessly for a February holiday for Nova Scotians. Starting in 2015, the third Monday in February will now be a statutory holiday.

If I could actually take a moment to discuss the honourable member a little bit further, when a person decides to put their name forward to run in politics - or try anything new, frankly - it can be very scary. However, it was not until I was elected as an MLA and doing the job every day that I realized just how scary this new life could be. I spent countless sleepless nights worrying that I wasn't doing enough, that I wasn't getting things done fast enough, but more importantly, existing in a world and a system that was more foreign to me than I could have ever realized. The honourable member has stood by me during this process, and has mentored me in a way that I am so grateful for.

In fact, many of my colleagues have helped guide me and have been eager to help in any way they can. As my colleague the member for Dartmouth South put more eloquently than I ever could, the members of this caucus are very much a family. Although there may be responsibilities that divide us, there is no divide in terms of accessibility, respect, or value within our caucus. In fact, I daresay it's easier to get someone from Cabinet to call me back or pick up the phone than it is to actually get one of my family members to do so. They never answer their phones - my family, that is.

I could go through each of the members and say a few words about each and every one, because each and every one has made this past year a joy for me.

AN HON. MEMBER: Oh, please do.

MS. ARAB: Don't worry, your time is coming. It's hard to mention some without leaving others, but perhaps I will save that for another reply. I would like to take this opportunity to single out one member in particular, however, and to specifically thank the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

In September 2005, the main terminal at Halifax International Airport was renamed in honour of Robert L. Stanfield, a former Premier of the province. As is normally the case with a name change, new signage was installed, and as I drove Highway No. 102 shortly after the change, I noticed the signage was incorrect. The "L" in Mr. Stanfield's name had no period next to it. For close to 10 years I would cringe every single time I would drive along that stretch of Highway No. 102, and any time conversations about the signs came up - I'm embarrassed to admit that they came up often, as I have a lot of punctuation nerds in my life - I would get more and more frustrated.

In March of this year, as I travelled to the airport and passed the sign, I commented on the lack of the period to a friend. Very quickly, she replied, well, you do know the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal now - and she was right, I did know the minister. Very quickly after parking the car I sent the minister a message explaining my frustration and imploring his help with the situation.

I will not repeat here the teasing I received on the other end of the phone, rightly deserved though it may be. I assured the minister that as silly as I knew it must sound, it really did upset me that the signage was not correct, and that I was not the only one who felt this way. Punctuation nerds, unite. I cannot express to you, Madam Speaker, the joy I felt driving to the airport just a short time later and seeing that the period had been put in its rightful place. I pulled my car over in front of the sign, I took a picture, and I sent it to the minister with my unending thanks. The minister had simply put in the request at the same time that the signs were due for regular maintenance. As I knew the request sounded silly, I know saying this must sound the same, but having those signs properly punctuated still brings me so much joy. The English teacher in me will be forever thankful.

All of our departments are doing great, Madam Speaker, work that speaks to all Nova Scotians. The Department of Agriculture has begun to draft regulations aimed at preventing distress and cruelty and to strengthen the protection of companion animals in Nova Scotia. Far too often we see instances of abuse and neglect toward animals. I'm happy to report that the department will be finalizing new regulations, the Standards of Care for Cats and Dogs, completing legislative improvements to provide government more flexibility as to how enforcement is conducted, and putting in place the ability to use summary offence tickets to assist in the enforcement of the Act and the regulations.

And this year, Madam Speaker, I was able to follow through on one of my own campaign promises. As I canvassed the Mount Royale subdivision, a common request from all individuals, young and old, was the need for a playground and green space for the subdivision. In June I had the privilege to announce a commitment of \$80,000 from the Department of Health and Wellness to assist the municipality in the creation of this park area. It is a wonderful feeling, Madam Speaker, to be able to come through for the people you represent, and follow through on a promise that you made.

Just before closing I would like to take a moment to speak about our accomplishments within the Department of Health and Wellness. As you may already know, mental health is extremely important to me. I'm so proud of our Minister of Health and Wellness and his dedication to this issue. In addition to the implementation of the Together We Can strategy, the Department of Health and Wellness has reached a number of milestones in regard to mental health promotion and supports. The Department has begun to implement the recommendations from the IWK external review, starting with the implementation of trauma-informed care at the IWK.

An advisory committee has been established for this work. The committee is composed of staff, managers, and physicians across pediatrics, women's health and MHA

programs at the IWK and Capital Health District Health Authority Mobile Crisis Unit. It includes partners from within Education and Early Childhood Development, the Department of Community Services, and several managers of children's services within the DHA. In addition to this, the new Intensive Child and Adolescent Treatment Service is now offering a trauma-treatment stream.

In September 2014, two \$100,000 grants were awarded to each of the following organizations: Canadian Mental Health Association, Halifax-Dartmouth branch; and Two Planks and a Passion Theatre, for community health, mental health, and addictions initiatives.

From April 29th to May 1st of this year the Department of Health and Wellness Mental Health, Children's Services, and Addiction Treatment branch co-hosted the first National Peer Support Conference in Halifax. These are all just the first steps in helping to eradicate stigmas and enhance supports for all people whose lives have been touched by mental illness and addiction.

Each and every one of the achievements I have touched on today directly impacts the lives of people living in Fairview-Clayton Park. In closing, I know that we, as a government, have more to accomplish, but I'm confident that we will do so, and I promise to continue to work hard and do my best for the people I am so privileged to represent. Thank you. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: It's an honour and a privilege for me to stand here today, Madam Speaker, to have my little say for the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. Now, first of all I would like to send my condolences out to all those who have lost loved ones this past year. I know for ourselves, a member of our own caucus lost his father. I have been through that myself a couple of years back, and I know what a difficult time it is, and I know coming back here, after something like that happens, is not easy. You have to move on, and the member has done very well, but I know what a great loss that is to family, especially to a great individual such as Mr. MacMaster who provided so much culture to our society and was such a well-known man in the area.

Also I will say it's an honour for me to serve the people of Northside-Westmount. As you know, Madam Speaker, this year we had a boundary review and I took on the large area of Westmount, Point Edward, Coxhealth, and part of Balls Creek. Taking on an area like that after campaigning just a couple of years earlier was a huge challenge for me. It was an area that was represented by another individual for 20 years, that gentleman had retired and for all intents and purposes did a great job over there.

It was difficult to walk in there - and some people didn't know that he had retired - to let them know that there was an election going on, that this was a new boundary, that we

were taking on a new area, an area that didn't have a lot of the same concerns as the area that I represented originally. They didn't do any banking there, they didn't do any recreation there, they all had moved towards the city side. So to convince those people that I could represent them and represent them well was a challenge.

We've been mandated to have our offices accessible through legislation and, Madam Speaker, some people in that area just couldn't get to my office. It's a challenge for them - they don't drive, they may be older, so what I promised the people in Northside-Westmount, in the Westmount area, was if they couldn't come to me then I would go to them. Some people were very happy to hear that. I know a couple of times I did go to visit someone who might have been confined to home or had no transportation and the fact that I would come to them made them very happy. Sometimes you can't do everything that they want you to do, but because you can come to them and listen to their concerns and give them an answer - they were quite happy about that.

Madam Speaker, I can't do this job alone, I have an assistant in my office, a gentleman by the name of Ian MacDonald - and we've heard a lot about our assistants here, the member for Sackville-Cobequid read a resolution about our CAs - and I want to stand here today and thank him from the bottom of my heart for what he does for me and the constituents in my constituency. (Applause)

Madam Speaker, when I'm here in Halifax or when I'm out meeting with somebody else and someone calls my office he's the front-line man. If he doesn't deal with that person in a manner that's acceptable, everybody in this House wears that, everybody in this Legislature, because all it takes is one of us to do something wrong and we're all painted with that brush. I've got to say this gentleman has been a real saviour to me, as a new MLA. He had some experience in the office and he's taught me a lot, a lot of different rules, a lot of different regulations, a lot of ways to deal with certain types of people, and the gentleman has a lot of knowledge about the system, so he's been helpful to me and I can't thank him enough. I wanted to do that publicly because I know that everybody in here feels the same about their CA.

Madam Speaker, I have a great association, my president is new this year - he's not a new president he's been there before but he's come back. His executive, they're working real hard to make sure that the people in our constituency have the proper representation, to make sure that I have the proper support. We've had numerous volunteers both on our campaign and now that we've been working, they've come out to help raise money, they've come out to raise awareness of what's going on in the community, they've come out to do things in the community - and that shows when a bunch of people from an association show up to help out, they're standing behind me and the people in our association to help that out.

Madam Speaker, my family - my wife Jane, my son Bryden, and my daughter Bhreagh - have been huge supporters of mine. My wife who is home when I'm here, who deals with all the day-to-day operations if there is anything that goes wrong in the house,

and she's been there for me, and my family has been there for me, and my daughter Bhreagh has taken a real liking to politics. She has had quite an interest in it her whole life, but now that I'm involved it seems like some days I think she should be sitting in the chair I'm sitting in instead of me because . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear, hear. (Applause) (Laughter)

MR. ORRELL: She seems to worry about the things in our constituency as much as I do, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate that because there are days when she comes to me to tell me what she's hearing and what's going on and then we can address those situations.

My son has been there on the campaign trail; he just turned 19. It's not very often that you get kids of that age taking a liking to politics. They have done what they can do help my association and me, as such.

Again, Madam Speaker, my mom who lives down the street from me, I joked with her and said that all I have to do now is dangle the keys out my window and rattle them and she is out waiting for me, anytime I go anywhere. She has become a person who will go to a lot of functions that I go to, if someone else can't go. She has just been a great support for me and I have to say that without her, I probably wouldn't be in the situation I am in right now. Sometimes I wonder if people like my family a lot more than they like me, so they elected me because of that.

I'm hoping that's not the case, Madam Speaker, but (Interruption) I thank the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal for that.

Madam Speaker, it has been three years that I have been in office now - two elections - and I have heard many concerns over those three years that I've been here, many, many concerns, such as the jobs in my area or the lack of; education, over the last couple of years we have had some challenges in the education system. Some of those challenges seem like they're getting better, but we're still losing people in the education system, which means we lose funding and we lose all the way around.

Madam Speaker, health care right now is a big part of my constituency. My emergency room has been closed all summer and continues to be closed. There is talk about taking people from the lab in my area and moving them over to the regional hospital. We don't have a challenge in our lab, but because the regional hospital does and they don't have the staff, they are going to end up taking our staff, which means my hospital or the hospital on the north side could suffer from that.

Madam Speaker, I don't think that's fair. They don't seem to think it is fair. As a matter of fact they are having a big meeting tomorrow night that I just got a phone call on that I'm going to have to miss, which disappoints me greatly because I worked in that system. I know what these people are capable of. I know what kind of a job they do and

they are second to none. They put their heart and soul into it; they get called out at all hours of the night. I just can't say enough about the people in all the health care systems, but especially in the two hospitals that I worked in. Their concerns are there and I've brought those concerns to the management of the hospital and I do bring the concerns to the Minister of Health and Wellness and the minister has been very helpful with that.

Madam Speaker, roads are a big thing in my area. A lot of them are municipal, some of them are provincial. I have two great area supervisors with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal who have been very helpful to me. They will listen to my concerns. When I go to them with a problem, they are more than willing to come with me or take me out to area, show what is going on and propose some sort of solution to the problem.

The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal should be very thankful that he has these people working under his reign. It makes life easier on them; it makes life easier on us. The people in the area are very happy when they get a pothole filled, or at least someone hears their concerns and attempts to do something about it.

Madam Speaker, we've also heard a lot about, and I have a lot of problems with, community housing in my area. There are wait-lists for community housing. People who are in community housing have concerns about some of the conditions they are in. Last year we met with some of the people here in Halifax; they were complaining about some of the conditions in some of the houses.

Madam Speaker, they are being addressed but we have to make sure these get addressed because the people who need the system, it's there for them, and we like to make sure that we keep that, so we hope that the funding and different conditions come up that we will be able to keep that.

Madam Speaker, through the last four to five months in my area, I was approached by some people in my community who were concerned about the state of our area, the garbage that is out on the roads, the lack of community worry about what's going on there. The three areas that these people approached me on were: one was Westmount, one was North Sydney, one was Sydney Mines. The lady in Westmount called me and asked me if I could get involved in helping with the community cleanup so we did. It took us a little bit of time; we had a couple of meetings about it.

We ended up on a Saturday morning - a very nice summer Saturday morning, the temperature was good - with 12 to 13 people there and we cleaned up the whole part of the Sydport Highway that, in my opinion, was a mess. She was concerned about that because it was coming to Canada Day and Petersfield Park in the Point Edward area is one of the most beautiful parks in the province and they have a huge celebration there on Canada Day.

This lady, who was only a young lady who had young children, was concerned about what people were going to think when they came into that area, to see the conditions

and the garbage that is on the side of the road. So with her and her son and myself and my children, and we even had people come out from the Coast Guard College and some concerned citizens, we took a Saturday morning and we picked up almost 100 bags of garbage. The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal came along and picked that garbage up for us the next day so it wasn't left hanging around.

The pride that these people show in these communities is just amazing. We did the same thing in North Sydney; one of the ladies that worked in the bank across the street from my office was concerned. Their property was being targeted by garbage and vandalism and graffiti so we had a couple of days where we had garbage cleanup, we did two towns at the same time. We had schools pitch in, every school on the Northside sent out, either around their grounds or some of the streets that were close to their grounds and they picked up garbage for a whole morning.

The look of the town after they were done, the small-business people, the students and the citizens that come out to do that, I can't thank them enough for taking pride in their community. We hear a lot about young people and the problems they have, we don't hear enough about the young people that come out to do stuff like this. I wanted to do that and I wanted to give them kudos for this because 95 per cent of the people out there are doing good things. When they do good things they should be applauded for that, but what we hear on the news or what the other people are doing, that's not reflective of the children in our society, I don't think.

We had the solid waste people come pick up the garbage the next day, we had all kinds of help and everybody I approached or asked to help out, did. We had everything donated - garbage bags, we had a little barbeque in the community that a couple of the local grocery stores donated to, just to thank the people in the area, the businesses sent their people and I can't say enough about the pride they've shown in our community and I really appreciate that happened.

We're hoping next year we can expand it into a couple of other communities and maybe have a little competition so we can have a cleanest community day or whatever they want to call it and hope that it'll show a bit of pride and maybe the children that are coming up through will realize that if they're going to be out picking it up, maybe they shouldn't throw it out there. It's a treat to go and work alongside people in my community to do that, that's what we were elected to do, we were elected to help out people in communities to make sure their community thrives and that's what we're trying to do and by doing stuff like this, it shows the community is interested in that as well.

We hear a lot about jobs and Cape Breton has really taken a beating over the last couple of years. Statistics Canada shows that 3,900 jobs were lost in Cape Breton over the last year, over 10,000 in Nova Scotia. That has a huge impact on the families in my area. I could tell a story about my neighbour, a gentleman who moved away when he was young, joined the Navy, moved to Ontario, met a young lady there who was from Nova Scotia,

they lived there for a couple of years. He was finished in the Navy, he had a job in a factory in Ontario and he thought about raising a family.

So they decided to move back home because the conditions of raising a family there are what we think are the best in the country. We have a great area, we don't have lineups of traffic, if anybody has to take anybody to a hockey game after work they don't have lineups, they don't have traffic jams. This gentleman has to leave because he can't get a good paying steady job in Cape Breton. So he travels out West. When he goes, he goes for three or four months at a time and he may be home for a month. His wife is left at home to do everything with the children, who, by the way, are young children, they play hockey, they take piano lessons. Any repairs that have to be done to the house, she has to do them and it's a great strain on their family, almost to the point where they decided they were probably going to leave Nova Scotia and move the family out to Fort McMurray where he was working. She took a leave of absence, she took her vacation time and went out to Fort McMurray and looked around and found a house and realized that she couldn't do it.

She came home, cancelled her leave and they're still there today, he travels back and forth. It says a lot for our community and it says a lot for the family but the poor gentleman doesn't get to see the hockey games, the basketball games or the piano lessons or the school concerts. That's a big draw on their family so we're hoping that over the next three years, the mandate of this government, that they will do more to create jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia and especially in the area where I live in Cape Breton. We can't afford to have our people leaving. In order to do that, we have to make sure that the conditions for businesses are right, so that they will come and set up in our area and/or they will stay in our area. We have to make sure we can have the lowest taxes, instead of the highest, which we have. We want to make sure that our power rates remain low or stay low or get back to being low.

Our business taxes are high. We hear it from our small businesses every day. These are the people, in my opinion, who drive our economy. We've had some big business come to our area - we've had Magna, and we've had Cape Breton Castings and wallpaper plants - but they don't seem to stay. They don't have the pride in our community that our citizens do, so once they come in and conditions get tough, they pack up and leave. Our people are left to stay, so they pack up and leave to go to work, but they're travelling back and forth, and it's a huge hardship on our families. From what I can see in our Speech from the Throne, there was no real plan to increase the jobs and to grow our economy.

We've got a lot of potential in Cape Breton right now. We've got the Donkin coal mine. That is ready to develop, and I've heard from the government and I've heard from the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, who is a resident of Cape Breton in Glace Bay, that that's going to move forward. I congratulate them on that. We need to get it moving forward soon.

We have the Port of Sydney that was dredged a couple of years back for something like \$30 million, that both levels of government put into. We need to develop that further,

but we need some conditions in place before we can do that. There's talk right now, Madam Speaker, about the railroad, and if we lose that railroad we lose all chances of developing that port in Sydney or any future industrial development in Cape Breton.

We heard a little bit about New Glasgow today, and the honourable member for Pictou was saying that it's possible that they could have some problems there as well. We don't want to see that happen. We've had talks with the steel company Severstal about putting a steel plant in Whitney Pier, which is the member for Sydney-Whitney Pier's constituency. That could add another 700 jobs to the area, but we need that railroad in order to do that.

Madam Speaker, we think we have the potential for natural gas development in Cape Breton. We've had coal mines over the years. We're hearing that the fracking issue right now is going to come up in the next week or two. Dr. Wheeler, who is the president of CBU, did a study, and in his study, my understanding is he says we can go at it, but we have to go slow. We have to make sure we do it well.

During the provincial New Brunswick election we heard the Saskatchewan Premier saying how great fracking has been to their province, that they put their people back to work, they brought people back home, their economy is thriving, their energy is on track, they're producing their own.

This summer in Philadelphia I attended the Robert Thompson Eastern Leadership Academy, and was speaking with a gentleman there from Pittsburgh, where they used to do a lot of coal mining. Now they're doing a lot of fracking as well as the coal mining, and he said that fracking has saved their state. The member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville was at that conference with me. I understand it has been a little bit of contention with one of the members over there that we went on that conference. I think it's one of the best conferences a member in this House could go on, and I think if you ask the member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville, he would say the same thing.

I was fortunate enough to be able to drive down there. It seems to be that one of the members in here had had a problem with me driving there and said my expenses were high, and he was tweeting some stuff out there, but I'd recommend that he take that course. I think that everybody in this Legislature who takes that course comes back with a little more to offer and little more about themselves. They learn a lot about themselves, and they learn a lot about the people who are there. I would recommend that.

In having discussions with that gentleman from Pittsburgh, he has been saying that they've been doing fracking for a number of years and they've been doing it safely. So it's a great thing, in my opinion, that we look at developing it, but developing it slowly, developing it in a way that it's not going to harm our environment. It could be our way out of our energy crisis. We're going to develop jobs, and if we can get to that stage in our province where we can bring our people back home, it's only going to be good for our

province. We could put money back into the economy. We could support the small businesses that are here supporting us now.

Madam Speaker, it must be tough on a small business that in a community like mine, where the baseball teams and your hockey teams and your soccer teams, they're looking for financial aid, they're looking for volunteers, and when these people leave our province and they are not here to do that, it puts a big hole in our community.

I invite the Premier to come to Cape Breton and speak with the officials in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality to see what we can do to try to increase our economy and to grow our economy. (Interruption) That's up to him. We'll take him and his assistant, we just don't need seven or eight people to come with him. I know that might be a soft spot for the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, but that's not what the intent was, Madam Speaker. The intent was to say we want the ministers, we want them to come to Cape Breton. We don't need a whole entourage to tell us that we need to call, that we just need to study.

Madam Speaker, I invite any minister to come to Cape Breton and we'll have a chat with them. If they're going to come and try to help us grow our economy, we're all for it.

Madam Speaker, education has been a big concern in my constituency, it has been a big concern in the province. I have been around to the schools in my constituency in the last month or so, meeting with the principals. It seems that the education system is on track to be one of the finest again. There are concerns still about some of the class sizes in the older grades. If we don't keep our citizens here, it's going to be a real challenge for us in the future to make sure our education system stays the quality that it is.

Madam Speaker, I have a daughter of my own who has graduated from university this year. A lot of people have come to me about the Graduate Retention Rebate that was cut in the last budget. My understanding is that it was \$50 million in that program that was designed to give a tax rebate to students who graduated to stay here in the province. My daughter and some people I met with from the university, especially at CBU, were disappointed that this was taken out but more disappointed in the fact that there was nothing there to replace it. They thought it was a great idea at first but when there was nothing to replace it, they were pretty disappointed.

They came out with they were going to eliminate the provincial portion of the student loans, which works out to be about \$800 in the life of their student loan. Madam Speaker, what about the kids who didn't get a student loan, the kids who can't get a student loan? They're going to graduate with nothing, so they eliminated the Graduate Retention Rebate and they didn't replace it with anything.

The student union groups that I talked to would love to see something up front, so a child or children or a young adult could go to school and get something off their tuition up front, which would allow them the freedom to go. Some people just need that little extra

boost, they have a summer job or they have been working part time but they just can't afford it without something to go with it.

You know with that, Madam Speaker, we start to lose some of our youngest and brightest to other areas of the country. Once they go they usually don't come back, unfortunately. With no ties and with no real reason to be here, other than some family members, a kid who can find a job outside the province, who is making as good as or more money than they can make here, at that age with no ties, there are no family ties as far as their own family - they leave. Because of that, we don't get them back.

I'm hoping that the government will realize that we need to do something to replace that \$50 million. We've heard it said and people have been saying it here that that's probably one of the biggest taxes on our province since I've been here, for sure, but in a number of years they've done it on the students, Madam Speaker, and they're not happy about it. But they're not happy about the cut inasmuch as it not being replaced. We hope that over the next little while we'll see something to replace that.

Madam Speaker, we just went through a real contentious bill, Bill No. 1 that merged the DHAs. We campaigned on that as well. We would like to have had three: a rural, Halifax, and the IWK. That bill didn't have to be as contentious as it was, if it had been divided into two, because the labour portion of that bill caused a lot of grief to a lot of people in the province. We saw it out here, we saw the people in the streets. First they thought they had an agreement with bargaining associations and that was rejected. The union people were sent away to come up with a solution to the merger. They thought they had it and then that was rejected, so they came up with another area and that was rejected.

Madam Speaker, the bill passed, we know that passed. We supported it because of the DHA mergers. We put in a couple of amendments, and if it was as big a deal as they said it was, they would have respected those amendments and we could have dealt with the labour issue later. Give them time to get it right.

We'll see how that pans out over the next little while. Again I talked earlier about ER closures in my area with the threat of hospital closures, with budgets and some of the senior staff of the ER in my area have left and gone to the regional hospital where they know it will not close. But because of that we don't have any senior staff down at the emergency rooms at the Northside General. They have been closed and the closure has been extended now until they can get some training.

We have lots of opportunities for young nurses but without the senior staff to guide them, they just don't come. Over the last couple of years all the nurses from CBU have been offered positions in the Cape Breton District Health Authority and they're very appreciative of that. I think they should have the choice to stay, if that's what they'd like to do we should have that option for them. But if we're going to start closing departments because of lack of or because of budget restraints, it's no good to us - none at all. Some of

our seniors now will have to go to the emergency room in Sydney, and with not being able to drive or not having any family, it's an ambulance drive or an expensive cab ride and that's not fair to our seniors and it's not fair to the residents on the Northside.

We are hearing the same thing in Glace Bay. We hear some of the same things in New Waterford. It's a way of life. We come to expect it sometimes but not to the extent that we've had this year. They must have saved a ton of money just to keep it closed for the summer like they did and now with that extended closure let's use some of that money to keep it open and reopen them.

Accessibility to health, accessibility to home care, I spoke about it this afternoon. I had a gentleman in my constituency who came to my office very concerned that his wife, who was an ill lady, has been in hospital 26 weeks. Over the last number of weeks and months she has been stabilized, been able to go home, but there's no availability to health care to serve her. The gentleman was pretty upset that the one he loved, the one he has been married to for many, many years was in hospital and not home with him.

That's an awful thing when a gentleman has to get up in the morning and go in and sit with his wife in the hospital all day in an uncomfortable chair, not in his own living room, not where they both could be comfortable, and live out the years that way, when all he needs is a little bit of home care to be able to help him out to keep her there.

We're hoping that a home care strategy will be developed; we're hoping that some of the money that's going to be saved by the DHA mergers will go into home care, will help people like the gentleman in my constituency who I fear, because of the time he spends on the road, he's going to wear down and he's going to get sick and end up in the same situation, and then we are going to have two people in two beds in the hospital where we shouldn't have any at all.

Roads seem to be a big thing in our province. Like I say, I'm fortunate to have good people who work in the department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. The area supervisors there are very good to us. They have a lot of time to listen; they have a lot of time to explain and they will even meet with some of the people having some of the concerns. I will say it's great that we do that. We heard a little bit in the Speech from the Throne that they're going to continue developing the roadway in Hants East. These infrastructure upgrades create great jobs. They allow our private business to come in, put their people to work, keeping them from having to leave the province.

The infrastructure on some of our roads in Cape Breton is in bad shape. We would like to see those roads repaired. I'm told with the Building Canada Fund and the province comes together that as of next year we will have some money. We heard that last year, we heard that the year before. We're hoping. The people in Cape Breton are ready. They're shovel-ready to do the work; we just need the funding and the approval. They have their money in and we're going to try to make sure that we can press both levels of government

to make sure that they get their money and so we can our people back to work and we can get the infrastructure upgraded for our people.

Madam Speaker, the big thing we've heard of in the last couple of months is the railroad in Cape Breton and the railroad on the mainland of Nova Scotia. The railroad in Cape Breton has had a \$2 million subsidy over the last number of years, and my impression was it was to try to increase the traffic on the railway. We have some great opportunities on the horizon, as we mentioned before, with the Donkin coal mine, with the Sydney Port, the potential of Severstal coming in with a steel plant. There's some development being talked about on the Northside that's private.

But it's hard for us to promote that as an industrial area without a railroad. I know that there are four businesses, especially in my constituency, that have over 300 employees that rely on that railroad to bring in their raw materials, so they can produce what they produce, and then ship it off and be competitive in a world market. Those 300 jobs are there now and I've been told by each of those employers that the potential of those jobs disappearing is real. It's not a potential that they'll disappear - they will disappear if the railroad is gone.

I'm told the cost of one railcar is the cost of four transfer trailer trucks on the road shipping that same boxcar of raw materials. Madam Speaker, that's a huge amount of money and cost to a business. It's a huge amount of money to try to stay competitive if you've got to bring those raw materials in by truck. It puts more dangerous goods on the road. We've heard about dangerous goods travelling through the backs of towns and in through towns. Think about putting four trucks on the road compared to that one railcar that goes through that area - that's four times the potential for an accident. That's four times the potential of a disaster in any area that that train runs through.

The cost alone of a transfer truck on the road - I read somewhere that the wear and tear of one transfer truck on the road is equivalent to that of about 5,000 cars. That's a lot of wear, 5,000. That's a lot of wear and tear on the roads, Madam Speaker. It's a lot of savings on the roads, if we can keep those trucks off it. So the money that they're going to save, by not keeping our railroad alive and active, will be spent on infrastructure upgrades to our highways. The potential of dangerous goods being transferred over our highways that way puts a lot more communities in jeopardy than the railway that runs through some of the communities - because the railway does run through a lot of the back area and the wooded area in our country.

So we want to make sure that we make good use of our finances. We want to make sure that when we put money into something, that it's successful. We want to make sure that it's sustainable, and we want to make sure that we get the best use out of this as possible. Like I say, the environmental concerns that we're dealing with, with putting more trucks on the road, the pollution, the environmental effects of more fuel being burned, the wear and tear on the roads, the wear and tear on the other infrastructure is huge.

We're hearing a lot of environmental concerns about the pulp mill in Pictou County, Northern Pulp. We've heard a lot of environmental concerns about places like Boat Harbour. We were fortunate to have the Sydney tar ponds area cleaned up. Nova Scotia Lands and the company that did that remediation did a fabulous job. If you drive through there now, you see a football field, you see a soccer field, you see a concert park, you see a green area, you see dog parks, and you see walking tracks. You wouldn't believe that it was one of the worst industrial sites in Canada at one time.

I think we can do the same thing in Pictou County. We can hopefully correct the problems with the pulp mill there so that the environmental concerns are answered, that the people and the citizens and the business of Northern Pulp can operate together. We're hearing stories about businesses shutting down because they can't keep people coming because of the smell of what spews out of there. We're hearing it will be corrected in 2015.

I'm hoping that it can be done sooner than that. We have another tourist season. We have a tourist season just gone by that we heard developed all kinds of problems for tourist operators because of that. We don't want to ruin another, or lose another, tourist season.

Madam Speaker, I just heard someone mention the Yarmouth ferry - just give me time, I'm getting there. We see the effect that the loss of the Yarmouth ferry had on not just southwestern Nova Scotia but all of Nova Scotia. (Applause) Hold on, don't start yet. The Liberal Government brought that ferry back this year, and congratulations to them for doing that. They put aside \$21 million for the next seven years, but that money's gone. Seven years' worth of money gone in three months - what happens next year? If we can put that money into a vital transportation link in Yarmouth, which I applaud because we need that link, hopefully we can find some money to keep the railroad in Cape Breton going until at least we can get enough people on that line or develop what we have the potential to develop.

If we can't develop it, then by all means, we can't keep putting money into something like that. But if we can develop . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Did you take the ferry on your trip?

MR. ORRELL: I took the ferry back from my trip to Philadelphia, yes, I did.

If we can put the money into that, I'm hoping we can find the money to maintain our rail line in Cape Breton, at least until whether the potential on the horizon develops or not.

I have good reason to believe that the government will develop Donkin, and if they do, we could ship that coal all over the world. We can use it in our own coal-fired generating plants which we know we're going to need over the next 30 years. We may not need as much, but we can mine our coal here, we could put our own Cape Breton people to

work, we could hopefully get good, clean dry coal and not run the cost of Nova Scotia Power up, which gets passed on to consumers.

I don't know about anyone else in this Legislature, but I know my power rates are high, and I know my neighbour's power rates are high and they'd love to see some alternative to lower their power rates. Hopefully, we could find that money or we could convince the railway company, Genesee and Wyoming, to stay on for a little while longer and hopefully we can develop our potential and our natural resources that are there and allow the Genesee and Wyoming group to be self-sufficient at a later date. But give us that opportunity, we've given southwestern Nova Scotia new life, and hopefully over the next couple of years we'll see that full potential.

I will say I did take that ferry across from Portland when I came back from Philadelphia and I will say it was a nice, enjoyable trip. It's a great cut-down on transportation costs for anybody who has to go to southwestern Nova Scotia. It puts people in that community and if anyone has spent any time in that area - I played a lot of ball down in the Valley, in Yarmouth and some of the little shops and areas along the way were suffering greatly and I hope this will put them back on the map and it will put money back in those businesses which will re-employ people who will stay there, who will keep our economy going.

I hope we'll be given the same opportunity with the railway and I know the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal has put a working group together - and I applaud him for that - I just hope we can get this done, that the URB won't allow Genesee and Wyoming to abandon that line before we get the opportunity to develop what we have there.

I read in the Speech from the Throne about support for our military. Without our military support, without our vets we wouldn't be here in this great building today. It's an honour for me to represent the people that are here - we are one of the only provinces in the country that has a Veterans Affairs Standing Committee and they talked about support for our veterans and I hope that will hold true. We had some problems with the veterans' offices closing and a few other things that were going on, the member for Sydney-Victoria proposed that we put an ombudsman in place for a short period of time to help in that transition.

That didn't happen. We were long getting the Veterans Affairs meetings going, we travelled to Sydney where one of the cuts was going to be, we didn't get any results from that so I hope that in the future we will do as much as we can to make sure that we support them as best we can, both during their stay in the military and after their stay in the military.

Over the last six months or so, I have had some good dealings with the Minister of Community Services. I've had some people in my office who receive benefits from

Community Services and were willing to take some education courses. We've had some challenges with where they take those courses.

Madam Speaker, the layout at Cape Breton, North Sydney, is about 40 minutes from the community college. There are a few career colleges in the area that provide the same as the community college. The minister has stepped to the plate, allowed some of these people to take their course in their community, saving the system a fortune and hopefully giving people their dignity back where they can come back into the workforce, where they can become productive members of society. They want to do that, so we're hoping that's going to carry forward.

We had some challenges, Madam Speaker, with communication back to the local offices, with the planning of it and the implementation of it, but I know the Minister of Community Services will follow through with that and make sure that happens, so that we can educate our people and give them what they deserve and make sure that we can save the system some money in the long run. I do commend the minister for that.

We've heard a little bit about our health care system, our wait-lists in the ERs, our wait-lists for home care. The little bit I did hear was about a wait-list about the early intervention program for people with autism. I had one family in my office that thought they were going to have to withhold their child from school this year because they didn't get into the program. There were more people assessed who were turning five. This child was below the number that they could see in the run of a year, which is unfortunate. I've heard the minister say that they are looking into that, that they'll maybe add some new people into the system so that we can alleviate that. I hope that happens sooner than later. I hope this comes to fruition so that all children in our society will be able to achieve the goals that they are capable of achieving.

Madam Speaker, I am going to close with the hopes that what has come out of this Speech from the Throne comes to fruition, that the Liberal Government will hold true on their commitments, that we can make sure that our province moves forward, that we can bring some of our people back home. We can make this province great again, and I'm hoping that by doing that we can put Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, back on the map. We're going to be there every step of the way to make sure that happens, and we'll help wherever we can, and we'll hold their feet to the fire when we think it's not happening.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the time.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

MS. PAM EYKING: Madam Speaker, before I begin my response to the Speech from the Throne, I want to wish you a happy anniversary, you and Robert - 42 years. (Applause) I hope you get home tonight and have some time together with Robert to celebrate your anniversary.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to be here once again representing the people of Victoria-The Lakes and to be in the company of my fellow MLAs here in the House. Since the last sitting of the Legislature, Victoria-The Lakes has welcomed tens of thousands of visitors from all over the world. Volunteers have hosted numerous community-based events, businesses have come through one of the busiest seasons of the year, and students have a year of education behind them, and they've returned to the classroom.

Being the MLA for this geographically-vast riding means that I have spent many hours on the road, trying to connect with as many of my constituents as I can, listening to their concerns, their successes, and their hopes for Nova Scotia. I have heard over and over again that our residents expect our government to work smart and to work hard as they lay the groundwork for future prosperity. Residents demand accountability, transparency, and ethical decision making by politicians and bureaucrats who represent the will of Nova Scotians.

We are no strangers to hard times in Victoria-The Lakes, but we are also resilient, resourceful, and determined. After having spent this year working with my colleagues here in Province House, I feel confident that we are moving in the right direction. This session, I know we will be having difficult but necessary debate as we identify and work toward measures that will make Nova Scotia an even better, stronger province.

Victoria-The Lakes is home, of course, to the world's famous Cabot Trail, considered one of the world's most scenic destination areas. Our rural riding is supported by our roads, the Cabot Trail being a major artery in that system of roads, and Victoria-The Lakes needs to have safe, well-maintained roads to travel on. Although road construction and maintenance play a critical role in road safety, our drivers have a responsibility for road safety as well. Distracted driving is impaired driving and the distracted driver legislation that this government will proclaim will levy stiff penalties on those who choose to endanger others by talking or texting on their cellphones while driving. I am proud that our government will have some of the strictest distracted driving legislation in the country. We deserve no less.

When you drive around my riding, you will see why Alexander Graham Bell, perhaps our most famous resident, once said, "I have travelled around the globe. I have seen the Canadian and American Rockies, the Andes, the Alps and the Highlands of Scotland, but for simple beauty, Cape Breton outrivals them all." Those words ring true for all who visit and live in our riding.

With the thousand-plus rooms available across this riding, hotels, restaurants, shops, and industries are open for business. The communities here are teeming with community spirit, co-operation, and potential. Residents of Victoria-The Lakes are proud of the local resources, products, artisans, and culture, and are capitalizing on the opportunities that come along with living there.

Victoria County has the highest number of business establishments per capita, as indicated by the Statistics Canada 2012 Canadian Business Partner Survey, something I'm very proud of, Madam Speaker. Those businesses need a reduction of red tape and bureaucratic hoops to jump through. Nova Scotia needs to be a region that supports entrepreneurs rather than stagnating them with paperwork. When those roadblocks are removed and entrepreneurs are seeing the potential in this region and are working towards harnessing it with innovative ideas across all sectors, then we will see success.

Not only is the government removing road blocks, we are creating building blocks, importantly for my constituents who demand accountability from government and government agencies. Nova Scotia is now more open and transparent than any other province in Canada about economic development deals. This is critical as the municipalities in Cape Breton have joined one of the regional entrepreneurial networks created by the Nova Scotia Government last year to replace regional development agencies that no longer have federal funding.

The provincial guarantee on term loans through credit unions has increased to 90 per cent from 75 per cent. In addition to that, the amount of money available through the Credit Union Small Business Loan Guarantee Program will double to \$50 million from \$25 million. This is good news for entrepreneurs who can now access funds to create new employment or expand their businesses with lower overhead costs. The provincial credit union program also provides opportunities where they don't exist with traditional lenders for people in industry such as forestry.

With the 2014 woodlot owner of the year, the Rowters in Boularderie East is an example of how the forestry industry can be sustained and thrive here. This is very good news for us.

The Liberal Government has also increased the maximum loan guarantee for social enterprises to \$500,000 from \$150,000. This is good news for many of our local businesses who seek, specifically, to support the needs of the welfare in their communities.

Community markets, where local sustainable products are available for residents and visitors alike, thrive in Victoria-The Lakes. Local seafood is a certain highlight. Events such as the Englishtown Mussel Festival and the Bay St. Lawrence Crab Fest are examples of the communities coming together to showcase their delicious local product, while giving back and celebrating with their community members. In addition to the opportunities supported by residents buying local our government seeks to expand markets for produce and harvesters here. The lobster advisory committee will build conversations around new opportunities for the lobster fishery in our region.

Simultaneously, the goal of doubling agriculture exports over the next 10 years will provide opportunities for growth in the export sector for producers in Victoria-The Lakes. Regional co-operation will create new opportunities for businesses here and will grow our markets.

A sense of place is important for the people living in Victoria-The Lakes and it is reflected in many components of our culture and acknowledged in how we do business here. Artisans craft beautiful, unique items: leather works, pottery, glassworks, textiles, and more often those pieces are representative of the connectedness to the land and the culture.

Music celebrating the region is enjoyed around the kitchen tables, at nightly ceilidhs, at musical productions, and festivals like the Celtic Colours that are teeming with Cape Breton talent. Writers captivate readers, often by paying tribute to the relationship that we have with the place that we live and are showcased at events such as the Cabot Trail Writers Festival.

Our First Nations communities play a large role in reminding us of the cultural, social, and ethical responsibility that we have to the land and sea, and seek to ensure that we maintain high standards of environmental sustainability. The Bras d'Or Lake watershed is designated as an UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Reserve - a designation for areas in the world which are deemed by the United Nations to demonstrate a balanced relationship between humans and the biosphere.

In Victoria-The Lakes we recognize that part of our allure and our potential lies in the pristine landscape that we need to preserve. In an era of green initiatives we have vast potential here - as we see with the tidal energy research that is happening in the Barra Strait, for example, and people are committed to sustainable development.

This government's commitment to driving the economy in a direction that is sustainable and environmentally sound and safe is evident in the moratorium on hydraulic fracturing. It's representative of the mindset of the people living here. Undoubtedly, the opportunities for entrepreneurship, the potential for our natural resources, coupled with the community support and the deep sense of cultural pride make Victoria-The Lakes an ideal place to welcome newcomers to the region, to not only visit but to stay.

Our economy is strengthened when we collectively stand up to Ottawa and offer solutions to immigration policy concerns, with programs such as the Provincial Nominee Program which includes an entrepreneur stream for those people who choose to come here and open businesses. From Ingonish to Bras d'Or we have seen the opportunities in our riding that are created with entrepreneurial ventures and when they're supported. I'm certain Victoria-The Lakes will be enhanced by the efforts of the Premier's Immigration Advisory Council, both for the people who have made this place their home and for those who have lived there their whole lives. There has not been a door that I've knocked on that would not welcome a newcomer in this community, offer them a cup of tea, a handshake, and whose life would not be enriched from the co-operation and friendship as a result.

The people of Victoria-The Lakes care deeply about the health of its people. They contribute generously to the hospital foundations and participate in community health

initiatives. Businesses take an initiative in protecting the health of our community by removing soft drinks and energy drinks from the store shelves. Here in Victoria-The Lakes people are proactive in supporting health promotion programs and services and seek to remain physically active, maintaining good physical and mental health. We celebrate our good health in the great outdoors when we hike the Highlands during the annual festival, promoting healthy, active living.

When we are sick or when we are in need of access to the health care system, we want efficient and effective health care in our communities. We shouldn't have to drive for hours to receive a service that should be available in our communities. We don't want to be treated as second-class citizens simply because we choose to live our lives outside of an urban core.

We need more rural physicians. Too many of my constituents are without family doctors, and we will be looking to the Physician Recruitment and Retention Action Team to recruit doctors to our riding.

The province moves toward a single health board. There is no doubt that the level of commitment that our front-line health care workers here have for their patients is continuity of the care that comes with the rural mindset. It will be a shining example in the province.

The Minister of Health and Wellness has visited Victoria-The Lakes, and he has seen for himself the front-line health care workers who are making a difference here. He is listening to the concerns of the constituents, and he had an opportunity to visit the Highland Manor in Neils Harbour with me. He recognizes the need that our senior citizens have, both in continuing care facilities and at home.

Victoria County has the second-oldest population in the province. As the residents, agencies, stakeholders, and all levels of government engage in conversation around how to create communities that support people as they age, Victoria-The Lakes will no doubt become a place people seek to remain and even move toward as they age. One issue that I continually hear about from my constituents is that as they age, people want to be able to stay in their homes safely and happily. Our government is responding to the housing needs of seniors through the senior citizens agency program - \$4.15 million for repairs to seniors' homes, allowing people to live in their homes longer.

The residents of Victoria-The Lakes have been leading in the region for creating an age-friendly community in Baddeck, hosted by the Age-Friendly Communities conference, the first of its kind, here in September. Community groups are capitalizing on funding available through age-friendly grants and are developing programs targeted at an aging population. As we age, we all hope to see the success of those who come after us, and we want to see our children and grandchildren prosper here.

For my rural riding, the expansion of the SchoolsPlus program will help with access to mental health services. The investments that this government is making in education, especially in math and literacy and in entrepreneurial and trades programs, will help our children to be prepared to meet their potential in the real world as they stay here in our communities. My rural communities are demanding that the rural schools, such as Middle River and Boularderie, are promoted as community hubs, and that the education that our children receive in their rural school is enhanced by their rurality rather than limited by it.

The new NSCC campus in Wagmatcook is an example of how the rural setting is responding to the needs of the business community by providing training to students that the workforce requires, meaning those graduates will find employment when they graduate.

We need to combat out-migration of our youth. The provincial government has committed to modernizing apprenticeship so that the apprentices complete their training in less time, and are making it easier for apprentices to have out-of-province experience recognized. The Graduate to Opportunities program will help new graduates find work here in our own backyards.

In Victoria-The Lakes we hope these initiatives will help our young, who so often feel that they have no choice but to leave the province, and they can choose to stay home. Victoria-The Lakes is my home, and I am proud to represent them here in the Legislature. We are community-focused, driven, and committed to our people.

The direction that the government is taking is reflecting those values, and we look forward to moving toward greater prosperity in 2015 and beyond. I know we face hard work in the months ahead, but I and the people of Victoria-The Lakes are up for the challenge. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: That concludes the government's business for today. Tomorrow being Opposition Day the House will sit on October 8th from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.; following the daily routine we'll go into Opposition Day business and I believe the member for Queens-Shelburne is going to give us the business for tomorrow.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: On behalf of our House Leader we will be calling Bill No. 11 and Resolution No. 51.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

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

We have now reached the moment of interruption. The Adjournment debate was submitted by the member for Cape Breton Centre and its reads:

“Therefore be it resolved that while the Liberal Government has spent the entire last year preoccupied with their district health authority legislation they have forgotten about the many seniors in our province who are still waiting for long-term care beds.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - DHA LEGISLATION: PREOCCUPATION - RESULTS

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Our topic this evening is very current and very critical for us to talk about amongst the three Parties in Nova Scotia and there is no argument, I believe, from anyone that we do have the oldest population in all of Canada here in our province. With this aging demographic comes increased pressure in our health care system in that we are seeing it now as we are in crisis. While in government I have to say that the NDP recognized that there was this aging tsunami coming and that's why we were involved, intensely, in initiating a strategy for continuing care.

This strategy, Madam Speaker, took a holistic approach to the combination of supports and services that are needed for our seniors to be able to stay at home longer. We know that most seniors want to do that, if they have that option presented to them, but there is a variety of barriers that restrict them from staying home, and so part of the long-term care planning has to be with respect to looking at what kind of programs and services, beyond having health supports, are needed to keep our seniors at home as long as possible, and that will reduce the pressure on our long-term bed needs. It won't be the absolute solution but it is really the starting point.

That's what we did. We looked at it seriously, put a strategy together, took information that was looked at from the previous Progressive Conservative Government, and finally we had a road map. Madam Speaker, the thing is now it's time to initiate that

road map. The Department of Health and Wellness staff put a lot of energy and time into identifying, throughout the province, where we needed to have rebuilt or renovated long-term care facilities. We do not need to be stalling the process and unfortunately it seems to be that that is happening with our Liberal Government at this time.

Even today in Question Period, the Minister of Health and Wellness made comments in terms of how important it is to support programs in order to keep seniors home longer and he said we will go further to take the pressure off of the system, so it is our hope that we will see that in the near future. We don't want those to be hollow words. It's very important that action be in place. As I said, there has been enough research; there has been enough strategizing with respect to that. It was two governments looking at that, putting it together, and now it's time to hit the go-forward button.

I noticed one thing that I was concerned with is the fact that in the Speech from the Throne there was really no mention of our senior population except for the dementia strategy, which I will commend the minister and the government for looking at that. That is an area that needs to have more input and more support, yet at the same time we really have to be looking at and being attentive to the fact that we can't ignore anymore that we do have an aging population and we're in crisis.

As was mentioned today in the House by one of my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party is that Dr. Chris Milburn has come out publicly - and it takes a lot for a doctor to come out publicly and express his or her concerns. Dr. Chris Milburn has done that in saying that the Sydney nursing home shortage leads to long emergency waits. So there's a Catch-22 and if we don't do something about it and we just keep talking about it, we'll continue to go around in circles. I'm going to table this.

While in government, we also took upon ourselves to increase the number of beds by 1,100 because we knew that it was not just about the words, it wasn't just about the strategy, that we had to put those words into action. We got out the hammers and the nails and we started that and we did increase the number of beds by 1,100. I remember that the minister, in Opposition as Health Critic, brought that forward many times to the House, that it was time for action to increase the beds. So we expect the minister to do that now himself where he is in a position of power to make that happen.

As we know, last year roughly around this time, during the election period, the Liberal Party said they would keep those capital commitments that were made by the NDP. Many of those were with respect to long-term care beds and nursing homes that needed to be renovated or rebuilt. As I said, Department of Health and Wellness staff took a great deal of time to analyze which ones needed to either be rebuilt or renovated, so there's no need for the present government to do that and to stall with that. The answer is there, we know the commitment was made and, as the MLA for Chester-St. Margaret's, in fact, I do have one of those senior citizens homes that was a part of the announcement and they were on the second phase of being rebuilt.

I'm wondering if that phase is going to take place or not? It's not moving along very quickly. The commitment from the Liberal Party at the time throughout the entire community was that they were going to follow the commitment of the NDP. One of the important parts of that going forward with the second phase was a discussion with the community on where the home should be rebuilt - would it be on the same property or would there be another property that it needed to be rebuilt?

So that's why it's important that discussions and that community consultation process should be taking place now. I know the minister did go out and meet with staff at the home, but the issue is that there was no real strategy, and time frames and planning, to have those discussions. You just can't show up there tomorrow and start building, there has to be that community consultation process. Shoreham Village has the most wonderful committed staff, health care workers, and volunteers, and they only can provide so much in terms of love and care, but they cannot provide the structure and what needs to be done in order to make changes in that home.

When Shoreham Village was originally built, it was built to have one person per room and now there are two people. For the longest time, almost from the time the doors opened, two people had to share a room.

There are many other issues they have faced over the years, from water issues to mould issues. It's really a shame to think that we would allow our seniors to live in those conditions. Along with the senior health care unit, there are also apartments. Some of them are subsidized by the Department of Community Services and they are in a real crisis right now because those apartments are in horrible shape. Any one of us who would make a trip there and have a look at those apartments would probably not allow our parents to live there and they would be condemned.

What I'm saying this evening, Madam Speaker, to encapsulate my words, is it's time to go forward, get the hammers and nails out, get the work done, do the consultation with what those changes would be at Shoreham Village; start that process and do that for all the other long-term care units that we made a commitment to expand in our province. We have to stop the stalling and we have to start the work. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

MS. PAM EYKING: Madam Speaker, the growing need for care is on the minds of more and more Nova Scotians, as our population ages. I know myself, in our community we have the second highest senior population per capita in the province.

I had an opportunity to travel around the riding this summer with the Minister of Health and Wellness. We visited the two nursing homes in my riding: Alderwood in Baddeck and Highland Manor. The minister saw first-hand the need in the riding, in our health care. He is listening and he is aware.

That being said, Madam Speaker, seniors want options and support that will allow them to live comfortably and independently in their homes and in their communities, for as long as possible. A few weeks ago I had an opportunity to attend the Age Friendly Community Conference. It was the first of its kind in the province and it was funded through the province, in Baddeck. Just hearing the strength about that initiative, the province is going to move forward with the project and I encourage communities across the province to take advantage of it. It's a very positive initiative and it will help contribute to seniors being able to stay in their homes and in their communities longer.

Madam Speaker, seniors are an important part of our society. They have a lot to offer and we want to help them age in their communities. That is why the government supports a number of home and community care services, including self-managed care programs, the Supportive Care Program, the Home First funding program and the Instrumental Activities of Daily Living program.

Madam Speaker, we also fund equipment to allow seniors to stay in their homes longer, equipment such as home oxygen, personal alert assistance and medication dispenser technology.

Madam Speaker, my mother is palliative and we have been going through the steps over the past months and weeks. She was hospitalized a few months ago and she just fought to be home so we have her home, palliative. We have a great team coming in, taking care of all her needs. I can't speak highly enough for the level of service and support that we are getting; it allows her to stay in her home through this process.

Seniors' needs are changing and I'm proud to say that we are working to help meet those needs. While we are pleased to see the increased focus on home and community-based services, it is helping to address the long-term care wait-list. We know there is more work ahead and that work is continuing. The Department of Health and Wellness continues to work with health authorities and services to address wait-lists.

Madam Speaker, let me assure you that addressing the long-term care wait lists is a priority for this government. The Department of Health and Wellness continues to work in partnership with health authorities and service providers to improve efficiency across the system. In fact, two new service providers were contracted earlier this year in the Capital Health District, helping to significantly reduce their home support wait-lists.

Caring for our older citizens is a responsibility this government takes very seriously. We must ensure that those who need help get it, and that those best able to provide help have the resources that they need to provide it. We have maintained a focus on our most vulnerable through investment that will make a difference. Investments like the \$1.5 million in the Senior Citizens Assistance Program that will help an additional 300 seniors annually to stay in their homes; increased funding for home support services by \$30 million by 2014-15, bringing up the total budget for home support services to \$131 million;

development of the provincial dementia strategy - an overall budget of \$800 million for continuing care.

The province has the oldest population per capita in Canada. The most recent figures released by Statistics Canada show that 17.7 per cent of Nova Scotians are aged 65 or over. Each month, another 1,000 of our friends, neighbours, and family members turn 65. One of the realities of our aging population is that more Nova Scotians are living with dementia. In fact, we expect to have doubled the number of seniors living with dementia by the year 2018.

Madam Speaker, the province is currently in the process of developing a dementia strategy. Our dementia strategy will aim to improve timely access to services, provide support for caregivers, and ensure people affected by dementia can remain independent for as long as possible. We are currently consulting with people living with dementia, their families, and their caregivers across the province, as well as health care providers. Our government has also committed to a review and re-focus of the Continuing Care Strategy. Those two commitments are priorities of the department, and demonstrate our commitment to seniors and people who need continuing care.

Earlier this year, Minister Glavine met with a group of experts for a round table on continuing care. This group included leading Nova Scotia researchers, academics, clinicians, and advocates who work with seniors and people with a variety of disabilities and conditions. He sought their advice and input into what parts of - and how we should evaluate the Continuing Care Strategy and develop the dementia strategy.

Their advice was invaluable, and we are acting on it. We are listening to the needs of Nova Scotians. Nova Scotians tell us that they want to be supported, to remain in their homes and communities, and we are doing just that. We have put in place a Continuing Care Client Advisory Council which will provide the Minister of Health and Wellness with advice and recommendations for future continuing care services and programs.

In fact, Minister Glavine met with this council today, and stated that they . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. Order. I'd just like to remind the honourable member not to mention the names of the people in the House. It should just be "the minister."

MS. EYKING: Sorry. In fact, the Minister of Health and Wellness met with the council today and stated that they are a dedicated group of clients and caregivers whose experience and advice will benefit us all.

You see, building beds is only part of the solution. We know from talking to seniors and their families that people want to stay at home as long as possible to receive their care. We also know that in some cases people just need a little additional support to get home from the hospital, to enable them to stay there. We need to find the right balance for

additional beds and investments in home care. We also have an opportunity to be innovative with the delivery of health care, especially for our seniors.

So as you can see, Madam Speaker, the government is very clearly and deliberately focused on improving access to care, and reducing long-term care wait times for seniors. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise tonight and speak a little bit about health care. Obviously I'd be remiss if I rose and talked about health care without mentioning my colleague, the member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg and how much he is in our thoughts these days.

With all due respect, Madam Speaker, I'd like to say Alfie, I know you're watching, come back soon.

Thinking of health care, one of the things we talked about last week was that governments when they're making health care decisions they should really only ask two questions: does it produce health, or does it save money? Any time you are considering the wait times for long-term care beds, we all know that the shortage of long-term care beds is harmful to health - it's also very expensive. The shortage of long-term care beds is a real issue and it is an issue that we need to address. There are over 2,500 people on the list waiting for long-term care beds at the moment - I think 2,531 is the number. That is all families who are impacted.

That's a big number, Madam Speaker, and we have to ask ourselves, how did they get there? How did these people get on those lists? I know sometimes we hear the minister kind of trying to brush the number off a little bit and maybe saying that many of these people aren't really in need of long-term care or they shouldn't be on the list. Well that's just not true, the only way you can get on the waiting list is if the Department of Health and Wellness has performed an assessment and places you on the list. Those are real people, real families who are in need of a long-term care facility.

We think about what is happening to them if they are on a list for a long-term care bed in a facility and they can't get one. Well, Madam Speaker, many of those people are at home with their families struggling to take care of them, but a great number of them are also in our hospital system taking up hospital beds. I think I have a number that there are 270 people who are on the waiting list for long-term care beds who are in the hospitals taking up beds.

That is very expensive to the province. It can cost \$1,000 a day to keep somebody in a hospital bed. These are people who are waiting for access to a long-term care facility. So 270 families, 270 people, \$1,000 a day - you don't have to be a chartered accountant,

Madam Speaker, to realize that that's real money. When I think of what we went through in this House last week with the discussions over the merger of the health authorities and all the stuff that that entails, and the vanishing savings numbers that we heard from that process where at one point during the campaign there would be \$13 million in savings and then the number was \$5 million and then, of course, towards the end we had the number that got a lot of attention, and rightfully so, which was possibly \$1 million-ish.

AN HON. MEMBER: The other way around.

MR. HOUSTON: Well I don't think it was the other way around, as the minister would have you believe. We all know, and I think the record is pretty clear on that, that the savings were \$5 million in the end, \$1 million-ish at one point, \$5 million. So let's go with the \$5 million and just for the benefit of the doubt, well if that's the savings that you can get from the process of merging the health authorities, on the other hand you have 270 people at \$1,000 a day, they are taking up hospital beds - I think it's 18 days' worth of savings for those two things to match out.

For anyone to say that it's not a real issue, that's pretty disingenuous. It's a real issue and it's something that is choking the hospital system. I've talked to family physicians who tell me that they can no longer admit patients who come to their office; they can't do a direct admission to the hospital anymore. They used to be able to, but they can't now. So if somebody comes to their doctor's office, we actually have doctors now who are saying to these people, you are really sick, you had better get out of my office and go sit in the emergency room and wait for somebody to see you, and that's what is happening. Why is this happening? Because you can't admit people from the office anymore because the beds at the hospital are being taken up by people who would be better suited in long-term care facilities.

Yes, as the member for Victoria-The Lakes has pointed out, sure people would love to stay in their homes longer, who wouldn't? But it is not for everyone and there are some people who have been assessed as needing long-term care beds and those are the people we have to help. We have to get them to where they need to be.

Let's talk about what is being done to do that. We did hear a little bit of talk about some steps the government is supporting to help people who want to stay in their homes. I think every member in this House has constituents, people who would love to stay in their homes as well, and are probably physically fit enough to stay in their house, to a certain extent, but just not financially able, and many of those people are getting left behind as well. Those whose health is deteriorating have to rely on family members to come in and give them the support because the home care network is not mature enough, I guess, to provide them the support they need.

Yes, people want to stay in the homes, and for those people that we can help do that, certainly as a province we need to do that and that's not happening effectively right now either. Now we have the people who have been assessed - that says even if you want to stay

in your home, you are just not physically fit enough to do that. We need to get you into a facility and there is no place for them.

If they end up in a hospital bed, guess what that means? Every morning their family physician has to come and do rounds and see this person in the hospital. That's time and money, Madam Speaker. That is a very real cost because when that doctor is doing rounds on those people, he is not in his office seeing patients. You can understand the ripple effect that this has.

There is a very real human cost to this whole thing. I have a couple of constituents who I have been trying to help out recently. They are both 96 years old and they have been married for 73 years - 42 years is a long time to be married; that's a great accomplishment. What about 73 years? So they are 96 years old, married for 73 years.

They are not living together, Madam Speaker, because the wife took sick just before Christmas and went into the hospital. She had been failing at home and went to the hospital. They had to admit her to the hospital because she wasn't fit enough to send her home. They finally found a bed for her. It is two hours from the town they live in so now the husband has no means to get down and see her. Now he is at the point where he is failing a little bit but he's physically fit enough to stay at home. He wants to stay in his home but he's heartbroken. He has never been apart from the love of his life that he has been married to for 73 years. They have been apart now for six months and he wants to get into somewhere to be close to her and there is no room in that facility for him - there are no beds.

It is very expensive to the province to have these people on the waiting list, kind of in limbo, especially the ones who are staying in the hospital beds. There is a tremendous human cost that we need to get our heads around and see what we can do about that, Madam Speaker.

I heard the member opposite talk about a thousand Nova Scotians turn 65 every month. This is a problem that is going to get bigger. We do have an aging population; nobody disputes that. I'm really curious to hear from the minister, over the coming days and weeks, as to what is this plan. What is the plan for us to deal with this? It is not an easy question and I know it's not easy to govern but it's not supposed to be easy to govern. It is supposed to require difficult decisions and I hope we see this government start to make some of them. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The time for late debate has expired. We stand adjourned until 2:00 p.m. tomorrow.

[The House rose at 6:20 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 105**

By: Mr. Allan MacMaster (Inverness)

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

Whereas Fire Prevention Week is recognized across Canada to reduce the risk of fire; and

Whereas in more than half of fatal house fires, investigators find there are no working smoke alarms; and

Whereas during Fire Prevention Week, October 5th to 11th, Nova Scotians are encouraged to learn how they can reduce the risk of fire and are reminded to check their smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors to ensure they have fresh batteries and are working correctly;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize October 5th to 11th as Fire Prevention Week.

RESOLUTION NO. 106

By: Mr. Allan MacMaster (Inverness)

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

Whereas Gillian Boucher offers a groundbreaking and innovative take on Celtic music in her new album, *Attuned*; and

Whereas Boucher, although long since removed from her early days growing up in Broad Cove, Inverness County, will never forget her roots and will forever have them shine through in her music, as they did in her debut album, *Elemental*; and

Whereas Boucher's new album is earning rave reviews from all those who listen to its emotional melodies;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ms. Gillian Boucher on the success of her new album, as well as on her innovative style.

RESOLUTION NO. 107

By: Ms. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas Meg Maxner, 11 years old, of Scotsburn, has been nominated to attend the Scottish Dance Teachers Alliance North American Scholarship Program, which is an invitation-only event; and

Whereas the James L. MacKenzie and Elspeth Stathern Scholarships were held October 3rd to 5th in St. Catherines, Ontario; and

Whereas Meg was chosen after receiving honours in Grade 1 during the 2013 exam tour and nominated by an examiner from Scotland;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Meg on her achievements in Scottish dance, and wish her well in future competitions.

RESOLUTION NO. 108

By: Ms. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas 11-year-old Nicole Robinson, of Scotsburn, has been nominated to attend the Scottish Dance Teachers Alliance North American Scholarship Program, which is an invitation-only event; and

Whereas the James L. MacKenzie and Elspeth Stathern Scholarships were held October 3rd to 5th in St. Catherines, Ontario; and

Whereas Nicole was chosen after receiving honours in Grade 1 during the 2013 exam tour and nominated by an examiner from Scotland;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Nicole on her achievements in Scottish dance, and wish her well in future competitions.

RESOLUTION NO. 109

By: Hon. Christopher D'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the Shad Valley programs build on an academic foundation of mathematics, science, engineering, and entrepreneurship to develop intellectual excellence in students; and

Whereas Andrew Ross of Shelburne County has been selected from more than 1,200 applicants across Canada to pursue his potential and participate in the award-winning science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) program this July; and

Whereas the life-changing experience will take Ross on a four-week journey designed to push his intellectual, creative, and leadership skills to the next level;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Andrew Ross on being selected to participate in the SHAD Valley program and wish him continued success in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 110

By: Hon. Christopher D'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the 2014 Education Awards were presented to recognize the exemplary efforts of Nova Scotia's teachers; and

Whereas Andrea Mood-Nickerson was the honoured representative for Shelburne County, being recognized for encouraging students to be active in the community; and

Whereas Ms. Mood-Nickerson, a teacher at Forest Ridge Academy, is involved in a variety of activities and committees and has worked tirelessly to enhance the quality of living for our youth both in the school and the community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Andrea Mood-Nickerson on receiving a 2014 Education Award, thank her for her leadership and vision throughout her career, and wish her continued success in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 111

By: Hon. Jamie Baillie (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas Nova Scotian Muslims marked Eid al-Adha, or the Feast of the Sacrifice, an important Muslim holiday that concludes the pilgrimage to Mecca; and

Whereas this solemn holiday lasts three days and recognizes Abraham's unwavering faith; and

Whereas the sharing of meat among the poor and neighbours is a tradition of this holiday that reminds all of us of the importance of showing generosity to those in need;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize Nova Scotia's Muslim community on the occasion of Eid al-Adha and reaffirm our commitment to fostering our province's diversity.