



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2016

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2016

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Mr. Gordon Wilson, Mr. Keith Irving

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Just before we begin the daily routine I'll present my Speaker's Ruling.

SPEAKER'S RULING:

Health and Wellness Min. had promised to provide certain pieces of information during Estimates deliberations, but has not yet done so. (Pt. of order by Hon. David Wilson [Hansard p.9596, May 18/16])

While this is a complaint, it does not involve a breach of the rules and accordingly does not constitute a point of order.

Yesterday the member for Sackville-Cobequid rose on a point of order. He advised that the Minister of Health and Wellness had promised to provide certain pieces of information during estimates deliberations, but had not yet done so. While this is a complaint, it does not involve a breach of the Rules and, accordingly, does not constitute a point of order.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS****STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS****GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

RESOLUTION NO. 4197

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

Whereas in May 1991 Nova Scotians first saw a broadcast of what was then referred to as TV Hansard and is now known as Legislative Television, bringing the inner workings of this Legislature into their living rooms; and

Whereas over its 25 years of operation Nova Scotians behind Legislative Television have facilitated a technological evolution from analog to digital and, now, high definition acquisition of the proceedings of the House of Assembly, and provide the best quality audiovisual services for press conferences done in and around the Legislature; and

Whereas these proud men and women have aided in the production of Hansard's daily record of the House of Assembly, all the while amassing a quarter century of aural and visual history of the governance of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly join Legislative Television in celebrating 25 years of exemplary service to this House and all the people of Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of putting a face to the men and women who have been behind Legislative Television. In your gallery today, and I would ask them to rise as I recognize them - hopefully they know the Rules of the Legislature by now and what is expected of them - audio-visual technicians, we have Roger Bowman, who has more than 25 years with Legislative TV. (Applause) Roger was very kind one day, after one of my speeches in the House, saying that he particularly enjoyed my reference to *crache en l'air tombe sur le nez*, which only a select amount of Nova Scotians would understand the meaning of that - but he did.

We have Paul Read as well, who has 25 years with Legislative TV; we have Valentine Nkengbeza who is here with us; we also have Reed Jones and Blake Ross who are with us as well; and the new Manager of Legislative Television, William Hirtle, is here with us as well. I would be remiss if I did not recognize - unfortunately he is not here - but a familiar face to all of us, Jim MacInnes who retired March 31st of this year after 25 years of service with Legislative TV. So he was one of our first as well and I want to wish Jim a very happy retirement after many years of service to our province. Administrative staff, we have Rhiannon Prime who is here as well. (Applause)

Now, many have asked if they are all in the gallery who is actually operating the cameras as we speak. We made a deal that they are just going to focus on me while they are here so there is no issue with anyone else being up there; but believe it or not, we have left a few behind there and currently doing their best to make us look good today in the audiovisual and IT staff currently in the control room. We have Matthew Hemeon, Mark Blenkhorn, and Don Power who are working there.

Mr. Speaker, needless to say, there have been many more staff over the course of 25 years who have been doing the broadcasting for this, and we want to thank them and wish them well at the same time. Merci.

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

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, joining us in the gallery today is Dr. Lynne Harrigan, Vice-President of Medicine and Integrated Health Services from the Nova Scotia Health Authority. Dr. Harrigan holds responsibility for physician recruitment across the province, which is an area of great interest to many members, and I would like for her and her assistant to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House today. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 4198

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

Whereas government is committed to helping all Nova Scotians get the training they need to succeed here in the province and to seeing that all groups are represented in our workforce; and

Whereas working with industry, the NSCC, our federal colleagues, labour representatives, and indigenous and community partners, we are creating apprenticeship opportunities for 20 Aboriginal youth; and

Whereas these youth will be mentored and coached by community and industry to gain on-the-job experience and learn new skills in the metal fabrication trade, thereby giving them the opportunity for successful careers at the Halifax Shipyard;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate the work under way by the private sector, post-secondary institutions, and community partners to ensure more young people are connected to opportunities and jobs here in Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 4199

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

Whereas this spring marks an important milestone for RRFB, for 20 years the organization has been helping Nova Scotians improve our environment, economy, and quality of life by championing recycling in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the organization is launching a new direction and a new name, Divert NS, with a new tag line, “Nothing Wasted”, to reinforce and celebrate the culture of recycling that Nova Scotians have built over the past 20 years; and

Whereas the support and partnership of industry, academia, not-for-profits, and municipal and provincial stakeholders has been crucial to creating a culture of recycling in our province;

Therefore be it resolved that we all recognize the launch of Divert NS, and congratulate Jeff MacCallum and all of the partners and wish the organization success for the next 20 years.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. GLAVINE: In the gallery today, in support of Inflammatory Bowel Disease Day, we have Marc LeLacheur; Amy Wilson from the Halifax chapter, of which she is secretary; Shannon Stevenson, a media communications volunteer; and David Harrison, Halifax-Dartmouth chapter. If they would rise and get the warm welcome of the House today. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 4200

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

Whereas inflammatory bowel disease, which is comprised of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, affects the colon and small intestine; and

Whereas those individuals affected by Inflammatory Bowel Disease may experience pain and chronic suffering that can impact their physical and emotional well-being; and

Whereas one in every 150 Canadians is living with Crohn's or colitis, a rate that ranks in the highest worldwide for this chronic illness that has no cure or known cause;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize World Inflammatory Bowel Disease Day, May 19th, and help raise awareness and support for those living with the disease.

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 Fairview-Clayton Park.

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: I beg leave for an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to gather the members' attention to the east gallery today, where we are joined by the Executive Director of Caregivers Nova Scotia, Mr. Angus Campbell. Angus is one of the most compassionate and caring people you will ever meet in your life, and I've had the privilege of working with him through Caregivers Nova Scotia, and also through his work with the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia.

Anybody who has ever been a caregiver to a loved one knows how difficult that journey can be and having somebody like Angus at the helm of Caregivers Nova Scotia really is a bonus to our province, and I'd like him to receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 4201

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

Whereas unpaid caregivers devote significant time and energy to support the well-being of family, friends, and neighbours; and

Whereas unpaid caregivers can experience any number of challenges and emotions while caring for their loved ones; and

Whereas Caregivers Nova Scotia reaches out across the province providing support and education for unpaid caregivers, and increasing awareness amongst Nova Scotians of the valuable contribution that caregivers make to the quality of life in society;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House recognize May as Caregivers Awareness Month and take time to thank those caregivers who are caring for their loved ones.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 4202

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

Whereas this spring a play entitled FallOUT was performed at 36 schools across Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to raise awareness about the harms of cyberbullying and to spark an important conversation among youth in Grades 6 to 9 about the negative and lasting impacts of cyberbullying; and

Whereas FallOUT was the result of a unique partnership between Eastern Front Theatre and the Willpower Theatre Association, the Mental Health Association, Bell Aliant's Let's Talk campaign, Stewart McKelvey, the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, and the Department of Justice; and

Whereas at the opening performance of FallOUT, which I attended with the MLA for Fairview-Clayton Park, the audience was clearly affected by the play and subsequent question period facilitated by actors Sarah English, Amanda LeBlanc, and Margaret Legere, and investigators from the Department of Justice CyberSCAN Unit;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate the production companies, funders and facilitators for bringing this play to our schools and for sharing this important message with our province's students.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic on an introduction.

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: If I could draw your attention to the east gallery, my good friend Neil King is here with us today. Neil, who had a very distinguished career as an officer in the Royal Canadian Navy, was one of the pillars for me during the October provincial election. Neil left Nova Scotia to go back to his native home of Newfoundland and Labrador, where he was most recently elected to their House of Assembly to represent the District of Bonavista. I ask that the House give Neil, who spent his entire adult life serving our country, a round of applause. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Immigration on an introduction.

HON. LENA DIAB: We have with us in the east gallery, Ms. Ulrike Bahr-Gedalia. I would ask you to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

WILSON, ERICA: TEACHING CAREER - SUCCESS WISH

HON. PAT DUNN: I rise in my place today to speak about a teacher who works tirelessly to create a challenging, nurturing environment for all students. Although Erica Wilson is a relatively new teacher, she possesses an innate ability to understand youth and has the right attitude toward students.

Teaching is a complex role; however, Erica is confident, accessible, enthusiastic, and caring. She is an individual possessing great listening skills, and students know they can approach her with personal problems or concerns. Erica creates a welcoming, learning environment for all students. She maintains professionalism in all areas with a willingness to give up her lunch hour to tutor students. She has definitely proven to be a professional on her quest to provide students with the highest quality of education.

I ask all members of this Legislature to join me in wishing Erica a great teaching career, one filled with dedication, commitment, and determination towards lifelong learning.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

BAHR-GEDALIA, ULRIKE - RBC TOP 25 CDN. IMMIGRANT AWARD (2015)

HON. LENA DIAB: It's my pleasure today to congratulate Ulrike Bahr-Gedalia for being named one of Canada's top immigrants. Ulrike was honoured with a 2015 RBC Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Award and the 2015 WXN Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100 Award.

Originally from Germany, Ulrike is now the president and CEO of Digital Nova Scotia. She has helped it grow and establish as a sustainable organization with many high-level projects and programs. Diversity has been gained under her leadership; 46 per cent of Digital Nova Scotia's new board of directors are women. She was also the recipient of numerous awards, including the national Women in Communications and Technology Award: Innovator Category, a Top 50 CEO Award for the Atlantic Region by Atlantic Business Magazine, and listed as one of the Top 40 Change-Makers by Canadian Living magazine.

I'm very proud to say that Ulrike is a constituent of Halifax Armdale. Thank you very much, Ulrike, for everything you do for Nova Scotia and Canada.

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

SYDNEY MINES FD - HUNTING/FISHING WEEKEND (3rd ANL.)

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: I rise today to recognize the Sydney Mines Fire Department and their third annual hunting and fishing outdoor weekend. Over 3,000 people attended and interacted with over 60 vendors at this year's event. This has become a major fundraiser for the department and has grown in size every year. The money raised goes to support the work of the fire department, which in turn helps our community.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all volunteer fire departments for their service and dedication to all Nova Scotian communities and the Sydney Mines Volunteer Fire Department for their dedication to our community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Yesterday I was struck by the comments made by the member for Clare-Digby. When discussing how to address income inequality in Nova Scotia, he made the comparison of the economy as a horse and how best to treat the horse to address income inequality. He stated, "... to nurture that horse, you simply need to give it good food. You need to nurture it, keep it healthy ..."

Imagine for a moment if, instead of talking about the economy, the member was talking about the people of Nova Scotia, who are barely ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind the honourable member for Dartmouth South that the member's statement is not a time for raising matters that are currently before the House or have been raised in debate.

The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

WESTBY, DR. DONALD - HAPPY RETIREMENT WISH

MR. GORDON WILSON: I don't think I'll react to that. I rise today to wish Dr. Westby a long and happy retirement after 38 years of practising medicine. Moving to Weymouth after practising a short time in Bonavista, the Westbys expected to stay a short time and then move on. Instead, Dr. Westby established a large family practice and the couple found a place to raise their family and put down roots.

Over the years, in addition to his practice, Dr. Westby was the Villa Acadienne doctor, was involved with the Diabetes Association, and helped establish the Weymouth Medical Clinic. Also, 11 years ago the Westbys started a Walkabond, a fundraiser for local charities.

At his retirement party, people thanked him for his dedication, his generosity, and his compassion, all delivered with a sense of humour. So as Dr. Westby starts his

retirement, I want to add my gratitude for the years he cared for the people of the area and for making Weymouth his home. Now is his time to relax and try to hone his curling and trombone-playing skills.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

WATTERS, SARA/VOLS.: PICTOU CO. WALK FOR ALS - SUCCESS WISH

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Pictou County Walk for ALS and, in particular, in support of Sara Watters and her amazing team of volunteers, which includes not only her family but also Courtney Roddick and a host of other people who come together to make this event happen.

June 4th marks the 5th Annual Walk. It's starting from the Westville Civic Centre, with registration at 9:30 a.m. and the walk beginning at 10:30 a.m.

Commonly called Lou Gehrig's disease, ALS is a rapidly progressive and fatal neuromuscular disease. Five years ago, Sara was moved by how terrible and devastating the results of this disease are, so she started the walk in Pictou County on her own in 2012. It's a great initiative by a young person. Money raised is used for patient care and continuing research looking for a way to slow the progression of - or better still, eradicate - the disease.

The walk gets bigger and better every year, and that doesn't just happen - it happens because people like Sara make it happen. So to Sara and all the organizers, volunteers, and walkers, I wish you a successful walk, and I will see you there.

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

STAND WITH WOMEN - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ENSURE

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, on May 10th the Premier said, ". . . we're going to stand beside our daughters to ensure that they recognize that they have the same equal opportunity and the same opportunities in this province as their brothers do."

Well, this is a great sentiment, but it ignores the facts. On average, women in Nova Scotia make \$15,000 less a year than men. In 2011, women working in Nova Scotia earned less than 70 cents for every dollar earned by men in the province. More than 60 per cent of employees earning minimum wage or less in Nova Scotia are women. Women on average fill only 32 per cent of senior management positions in Nova Scotia, and the average annual income for female judges in Nova Scotia is close to \$60,000 less than their male counterparts.

Yes, let's stand with women in Nova Scotia, but let's make sure that our daughters do have a good future and that the work is done so that opportunities really are there for them.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

SS ATLANTIC HERITAGE PARK SOC.: NEW BD. - SUCCESS WISH

MR. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the SS Atlantic Heritage Park Society of Terence Bay. Originally established in 1998 as a non-profit organization run by a board of local residents, the society's intentions were to preserve the resting place of 277 victims of the sinking of *SS Atlantic* in 1873.

Over the years, the society's successes have far surpassed their initial intentions. Near the mass burial site in Terence Bay there is now a boardwalk that wraps around the coastline, as well as a gazebo. The area around the old memorial to the victims has been landscaped and interpretive panels have been installed.

An interpretation centre was developed in 2002, containing a small museum of artifacts from *SS Atlantic*, interpretive panels, and a craft shop. At a special event held April 10th, the following outstanding volunteers were recognized for their selfless contributions to the organization: Connie Drew, Anne Bartlett, and Shirley and Jim Little, all of whom give generously of their time and talents. Special recognition was given to Pat Avery, who has served as secretary to the board for 30-plus years.

I would like the members of this House to join me in recognizing the significant positive impact of committed volunteers in our communities, and wish the new board of SS Atlantic much success as they move forward.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

COAST GUARD AUX. - SUPPORT/RESPECT

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, hours after lobster season opened on Saturday, the Sydney lobster boat *Temporary Home* went aground on Flint Island in heavy weather. The situation was described as dire but thanks to the efforts of the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the Marine Atlantic ferry *MV Highlanders*, Coast Guard cutters *Sir William Alexander*, *Cape Edensaw* and *Gegliget*, and air crews from the 413 Squadron in Greenwood, no one was injured.

Mr. Speaker, this was an amazing team effort that highlights the importance of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. The Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary is an organization dedicated to search and rescue and safe boating activities. Members of the auxiliary provide a permanent day and night search and rescue service to cover marine requirements and to

prevent the loss of life and injury. They are valuable members of the marine safety team who deserve our support and respect.

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

BAY OF FUNDY: TIDAL ENERGY - ENVIRON. MONITORING

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, the NDP caucus supports the push to develop tidal energy in the Bay of Fundy. However, we also recognize that the shellfish industry has been the economic engine in rural Nova Scotia for decades and we want to ensure that the industry is not unduly affected. Shellfish larvae spend the first three weeks of their life at the top of the water column and are influenced by the tides that flow in and out of the Bay of Fundy four times a day.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Environment to ensure that environmental monitoring includes a focus on larvae and not just fish and mammals. Also, if she has not done so, I ask her to reach out to those fishers concerned about the potential effects of tidal development on their industry, which has long supported the rural communities in Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RITCEY, CAPT. CECIL - RIVERPORT ODDFELLOWS (75 YR. PIN)

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize an extraordinary accomplishment of longevity and commitment. Captain Cecil Ritcey, formerly of Riverport and now residing in the Veterans Unit at Fishermen's Memorial Hospital in Lunenburg, was recently presented with a 75-year pin by the Riverport Oddfellows.

These days, for various reasons, that kind of long-term service or dedication is becoming more and more rare. It requires a lot of love for what you do and who you spend your time with - good health and a little bit of luck. Thankfully it seems that Captain Ritcey has been blessed with a little bit of each of those things.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of the House to join me in congratulating Captain Cecil Ritcey for his commitment and contributions to the Independent Order of Oddfellows of Riverport.

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

**HENDERSON, LISA ET AL: DON HENDERSON MEM. SPORTSPLEX
- EVENT ORGANIZERS THANK**

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, the Don Henderson Memorial Sportsplex is the hub of Brookfield. Early in April, the facility hosted both the Peter and Mary Agnes Julian Memorial Hockey Tournament and the 27th annual Great Community Curling Classic with competitors in four divisions.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to commend the individuals who worked tirelessly to make these events happen. Event organizer Lisa Henderson and Sportsplex president Josh McCallum kept the games running, provided a positive atmosphere, offered fundraising raffles and engaged a celebrity banquet guest - two-time World and Canadian junior curling champion Karlee Burgess of Hilden. Over the summer Al Fielding and Troy Sutherland will be working on repairs and improvements to the building.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize Lisa Henderson, Josh McCallum, Al Fielding and Troy Sutherland for their efforts in creating a safe and welcoming atmosphere in a facility that Brookfield residents are very proud of.

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

LOCAL XPRESS - KUDOS

HON. DAVID WILSON: The striking workers of *The Chronicle Herald* are to be commended. On strike since January 23rd and dealing with an employer who refuses to negotiate, these professional journalists chose to keep doing what they do best.

About a week after the strike began, the members of the Halifax Typographical Union started an online news and information website called *Local Xpress*. During its short life the *Xpress* has covered municipal and provincial politics, crime, courts and other news, as well as Nova Scotia's vibrant cultural scene and thriving sports communities.

They have now expanded and have become a full-service, online news site. The site continues to focus on local stories but they also provide national news, as well as entertainment and business news from around the world, not to mention the weather, obituaries and almost everything else we're used to seeing in the newspaper. Kudos to *Local Xpress*.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board on an introduction.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: If I could direct members' attention to the east gallery, I'd like to acknowledge Chloe Sampson who is a student finishing up her studies in the public relations program at Nova Scotia Community College.

She has been a member of the communications team in the Department of Finance and Treasury Board for the past 22 days or so, and her style was evident from very early on. She was so keen to start her work term with us that she came on Budget Day to learn the ropes, although she officially didn't start until the next week. While I cannot say that everything has changed since Chloe joined the team, I can say that during that time Chloe has been fearless in her pursuit to demonstrate existing, and learn new, skills from the other members of the communication team.

She has been a great addition, so I want to thank her, on the record, for her work and wish her all the best in what I'm sure will be a bright and successful future that will see her wildest dreams come true. Please stand and receive the warm welcome, Chloe. (Applause)

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

**BROOKS, ANDREW - THE VICTORIA STANDARD:
OWNER-PUBLISHER - WELCOME**

MS. PAM EYKING: I rise today to welcome Andrews Brooks, the new owner-publisher of *The Victoria Standard*, a biweekly newspaper that has served Victoria County since 1992, to the Village of Baddeck.

Andrew holds a new media degree from Ryerson University, an environmental studies degree from York University, and post-graduate studies in cultural anthropology from the City University of New York. He will be taking over the publication, which was founded by Jim Morrow 24 years ago. The paper carries a cross-section of local and community news, coupled with important stories of interest on health, entertainment, business, and all levels of government - all stories that have an impact on the lives of the county residents.

I want to welcome Andrew to the community. I think I can speak for all readers of *The Victoria Standard* when I say I look forward to reading the paper for years to come.

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

HON. KELLY REGAN: I'd like to direct the members' attention to the east gallery, where we're joined today by two constituents, Bev Fletcher and Jeff Fletcher. Their daughter Alexis died in December, after struggling with depression. They're joined today by Bev's parents, Ida and Brian Miller. The Millers are here from Manitoba. We first met after Alexis's death. We are among the families left behind when a loved one takes their own life. Full disclosure here - this weekend marks 25 years since my first husband committed suicide. I know there are other members in this House whose lives have been

touched by this issue as well, and I would ask the members to give our guests, who are now going to stand up, the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

BELIEVE IN HOPE: ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH - FUNDRAISING

HON. KELLY REGAN: I'd like to tell the House about Believe in Hope, an organization founded following the suicide last December of 17-year-old Alexis Fletcher of Bedford. In the wake of this tragedy, Alexis's friends and family came together with Amos Pewter to design jewellery, bracelets and necklaces, which they're selling to aid adolescent mental health at the IWK. Alexis was a talented artist, so it's entirely appropriate that the jewellery sports one of her floral designs. The reverse side shows a semi-colon, and there's a version with a semi-colon only as well. This punctuation point has become a symbol of hope because it symbolizes a person's determination not to end their story there but to continue on - it means their story does not end.

In recent months, Believe in Hope has raised thousands of dollars at events in several provinces. I'd like to thank the Fletcher family, their friends, and Amos Pewter for coming together in the face of tragedy to support adolescent mental health and the IWK.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

PETTET, BRETTE: TEAM CAN. CAMP - SUCCESS WISH

MR. JOHN LOHR: I take this opportunity to tell members about another bright active young woman in my constituency. Brette Pettet is a 17-year-old hockey player from Kentville. Brette is one of 50 young women who have been invited to a Team Canada camp this summer for the Canadian National Women's Under-18 prospect event that takes place in Hamilton later this month.

Brette says that this has been a dream of hers for as long she can remember. Candidates who are selected for this camp are also being considered for representation on Canadian teams that will participate in a three-game series this summer against the United States, the 2017 IIHF U-18 Women's World Championship, the 2017 Nation's Cup, and Canada's National Women's team.

Please join me to wish Brette every success in her upcoming camp and congratulations for her demonstration of good sportsmanship and pride she brings to her province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

PREM.: POVERTY - COMMENTS (11/15/06)

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, one of the best parts about this Legislature is that anything we say in the House is part of a permanent public record. While I was doing some research on this government's position on poverty, I was struck by statements made by the Premier in Opposition on November 15, 2006.

This is what the honourable Premier had to say about poverty almost one decade ago, and I quote, poverty "is the single biggest issue that I believe is facing us today, I really believe that." The Premier goes on to say about poverty "It is an underlying problem with the growth that we're not seeing . . . in rural Nova Scotia."

Mr. Speaker, I'm struck by these comments, because they sound just like comments coming from myself. It is a shame that the Premier has changed his tune so dramatically now that he's in power.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

BÉRUBÉ, SOPHIE: ACCOMPLISSEMENTS - MERCI!

MR. KEITH IRVING: Merci, Monsieur le Président. Sophie Bérubé de la Vallée Gaspereau, a publié récemment *Car la nuit est longue* son premier roman pour adulte. Auteure du recueil de poésie *La trombe sacrée* qui lui a valu le Prix France-Acadie en 2003, elle a aussi publié un roman jeunesse et deux contes pour enfants (dont *Le chef-d'œuvre de Lombric*, lauréat du Prix Lilla Stirling 2002).

Plus que cela Sophie coordonne *Publish it*, un projet d'alphabetisation familiale dans lequel parents et enfants écrivent ensemble des œuvres de non-fiction avec la *Valley Community Learning Association*. Véritable passionnée de l'écriture et des histoires, elle offre également des ateliers de création littéraire à la population à risque à *Open Arms*.

De l'Assemblée législative de la Nouvelle-Écosse, nous la félicitations pour ses accomplissements littéraires et la remercier pour son travail important dans la communauté. Merci Monsieur.

MR. SPEAKER : The honourable member for Kings North.

BROWN, DOUG - COMMUN. CONTRIBUTIONS

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to tell members about a gentleman who lives in Centreville in Kings North. Mr. Doug Brown is a retired Air Force Chief Warrant Officer who, after serving his country for over 35 years, continues his dedication through a relentless commitment to his community and the organizations he is involved with and his volunteer work.

Doug is an active member of the Centreville District Community Development Association and has taken on all the responsibilities for the janitorial service at the local community hall. His community mindedness is apparent as he has faithfully volunteered and attended all community breakfasts, fundraising events, and the annual Christmas tree lighting functions. Doug maintains the hall, also manages the property maintenance and the lawns. Doug is a man who is always there for anyone in the community.

I express my admiration for this man, acknowledge his contributions, and wish him continued success in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Beaver Bank.

ST. THOMAS BAPTIST CHURCH (N. PRESTON) - PRAYER VIGIL (05/20/16)

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place today to invite everyone to a prayer vigil tomorrow, Friday May 20th at the St. Thomas Baptist Church in North Preston from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

This is brought about in protest to a recent series of violent shootings and deaths. Contrary to what many may believe, these shootings and murders are not simply a black thing, but a societal reality with various tentacles being played out across this country.

No community should turn a blind eye to these senseless events, because they can happen at any time and anywhere. We need to applaud all communities across this great country who take on these purposeful actions to take back their communities. There will be those in attendance who will focus on helping others in order to find their purpose in each day.

Keep the peace. Stop the violence.

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

HON. KELLY REGAN: I would turn the members' attention to the east gallery once again, where we are joined today by Bill Outhit, who is the father of my EA, Sarah. He's going to stand now. He's also the grandson of Frank Outhit.

Some of you may remember that name, and if you check in the office where Mike Laffin and Peter Theriault exist, there's a photocopier there, and there's a portrait above that, and it shows Frank Outhit. He was Chief Clerk of the Senate back when we had a Senate here in this House. I must tell you that Mr. Outhit is an avid watcher of Legislative TV, and we're delighted to have him here with us today.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

**YOUTH UNDERWATER ROBOTICS COMP.:
C.P. ALLEN GR. 10 TEAM - CONGRATS.**

HON. KELLY REGAN: I'd like to tell you about the Youth Underwater Robotics Competition that took place last month in Dartmouth. About 70 students from six schools spent the better part of a year working to design and build their ROVs, or remotely operated vehicles, which had to work underwater. The robots had to complete a number of challenges that simulate real-life underwater tasks - things like measuring the thickness of ice caps, collecting materials off the ocean floor, or taking the temperature of the water.

The students also had to present their business and marketing plans to a panel of judges from the ocean tech sector. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to tell you that the Grade 10 team from Charles P. Allen High School in Bedford won the competition.

I'd like to congratulate Morgan Higginson, Liam Acres, Simon Qi, Saul Hughes, Logan Crooks, Matt Glencross, Fran Annan, Noah Mason, Will Paul, and Jeff Zhao. They'll be heading to NASA in Houston, Texas, at the end of June to compete at the international level, and we wish them all the best.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

ELLIS, AUSTIN - ARCHERY MEDALS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: I rise today to congratulate Austin Ellis, a 17-year-old Parrsboro youth with outstanding archery skills. Austin won the title of 2016 Indoor Target Provincial Champion. Austin won not only the gold medal in his own age category, but went on to shoot a 563 and win the overall championship, which was open to all participants from across the province. I'm told that Austin came home with a very large trophy. Austin shoots with the Fundy Shore Archers, under the guidance of Randy Elliott.

Congratulations to Austin on a job well done. I wish him continued success in all his endeavours.

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

HEALTH CARE CRISIS: UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE - PLAN

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Yesterday an emergency debate was held. For two hours members debated the growing health care crisis in Nova Scotia and the shortage of doctors.

The very last speaker, the member for Cumberland North, called the Opposition's comments "hard luck stories" - perhaps a poor choice of words. I'm not looking for sympathy; I'm looking for a plan to address the increase of ER closures at Roseway

Hospital. I'm looking for a plan to bring doctors to rural communities in Nova Scotia. What is needed is help to find a doctor for those who need access to a family doctor close to home.

This is not a hard luck story, Mr. Speaker, this story is called "universal health care."

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

OCEAN VIEW ELEM.: THE LION KING KIDS - PERFORMANCE

MS. JOYCE TREEN: I rise today to tell you about the most wonderful play I attended last evening. Ocean View Elementary in Eastern Passage performed the musical Disney's The Lion King KIDS, and it brought tears to my eyes.

The Grades 3 and 4 had been practising since January during their lunch breaks, after school, and on weekends. The performance was directed by Andrew Ardley and was supported by coordinators Shirley Cogswell, Andrea Anderson, Erin Mosher, and Robert Wilhelm. I must commend the entire staff and the PTO who were responsible for the amazing costumes, make-up, and set designs. Also, Cineplex generously donated the backdrop for the musical.

I ask all members of this House of Assembly to congratulate Ocean View Elementary on the great success of their musical.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HUMPHREYS, LANE & MYRNA: HEALTH & HAPPINESS - WISH

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place today to speak about two well-known and respected individuals. Lane and Myrna Humphreys reside in Trenton. Lane retired from Nova Scotia Power, and I had the pleasure of working with Myrna when she was a school secretary.

They continue to be active in their community even though they spent a lifetime supporting sport teams and community and church groups. They were positive role models for their children and youth in their community. We know that proper habits are the cornerstones of success, and they were known to practise patience and perseverance while seamlessly weaving values, fairness, and good choices. They were parents who were always there, supporting their children and friends, sacrificing just about everything.

It has been my honour to know Lane and Myrna, and I always appreciated their fairness, caring attitude, and integrity. I ask all members of this Legislature to wish this wonderful couple many good years of good health and happiness.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie.

GOSHEN 4-H CLUB - ANL. AWARDS NIGHT

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an important organization within our rural communities. 4-H has been around for over 100 years, celebrating its centennial celebration in 2013. There are close to 2,400 members, 900 leaders, and 100 clubs in Nova Scotia alone, and more than 80 countries worldwide have 4-H clubs.

4-H is an organization dedicated to young people. 4-H has been part of Nova Scotia communities since 1922, when the first 4-H club was organized in Heatherton, Antigonish County. The historical roots of the Canadian 4-H program are solidly grounded in rural Canada.

Earlier this year the Goshen 4-H club held their annual awards night to honour some of these young rural Canadians. I would like to commend the work done by these young men and women, congratulate them on their achievement, and thank them for their contributions.

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

HFX. SEED: BIRTHDAY (150th) - CELEBRATION (06/03 - 06/04/16)

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, next month Halifax Seed will celebrate its 150th birthday. Established in 1866, this fourth-generation family business has locations in Saint John, New Brunswick, and on Kane Street in the north end of Halifax. It employs about 60 people and they offer a wide variety of flower and vegetable seeds and gardening supplies. They provide seminars on seed starting and backyard composting that are inspiring a new generation to get their hands dirty.

Everyone is invited to the birthday party at the stores on June 3rd and June 4th. I'd like to congratulate Halifax Seed and wish them many more years of continued success.

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

MERCER, MICHAEL: SMU - GRADUATION

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my good friend and constituent Mr. Michael Mercer on his graduation from Saint Mary's University with a Master's in International Development Studies. This has been a long journey for Michael, with significant life changes along the way, including career changes, his wedding to Lisa

- one of the strongest, most wonderful and beautiful women I know - and the birth of their amazing baby girl, Ellie.

Through all of this Michael persevered, never allowing life's challenges and changes to stop him in his pursuits. Mr. Speaker, I may not have bought him a bottle of champagne, but I'm very proud.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

HFX. CITADEL-SABLE ISLAND MLA: SMU - GRADUATION

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a moment to recognize a colleague who is having a milestone today. The member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island is actually graduating from his MBA today at Saint Mary's University. The member came into the Legislature in 2013 and has continued to work on his academic studies as he goes through, so if you could recognize him for his accomplishment today.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

BRIDGEWATER FD BAND: DEDICATION/COMMITMENT - THANK

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, the Bridgewater Fire Department Band performed their annual Spring concert on May 1st at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Bridgewater. Under the direction of Wendell Eisener, those in attendance were treated to a variety of music with pieces performed by their brass quartet, solo performances by Emily Riding and Devin Oakes, as well as the woodwinds band, the brass band, and the South Shore Dixie Band.

The Bridgewater Fire Department Band are a proud group of men and women who have travelled internationally to perform and are wonderful ambassadors for the South Shore and the province. I always look forward to their performances. Thank you to all the members of the Bridgewater Fire Department band for your dedication and commitment to your community; you are true ambassadors for the Province of Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

DORYMAN PUB & GRILL - ANNIV. (50th)

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: For 50 years The Doryman Pub & Grill has been a mecca for music. Hundreds of thousands have come, many for the first time, to experience old Acadian or Scottish tunes, but also to hear classic rock or country music. The Doryman has always supported local musicians and musicians have always recognized The Doryman as one of the best places to play and interact with music lovers. Whether it was local talent night on Thursdays with Gerry Romard, an afternoon matinee with Donnie Leblanc, André

Leblanc, and Gelas Larade, or a Saturday night with The Phantoms, The Doryman provided the sound track for good times. It is a staple for any music fan living in or visiting Cape Breton Island.

Little did they know what they were starting when Milton Aucoin and Seaward Chiasson originally built it as The Surfside Tavern in 1966. The Doryman has been a place to enjoy friends and make new ones. It is the people who make The Doryman what it is. Let us wish Claude Bourgeois and staff of The Doryman the best in this 50th year of operation.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

FOOD BANKS: SERV. - THANK

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, here in Nova Scotia many members of our communities rely on the hard work and goodwill of food bank volunteers and donors, to keep food on their kitchen table. This vital community service relies on the goodwill of donations to provide for our most vulnerable, yet despite the great generosity of Nova Scotians, there are still challenges in providing fresh, nutritious food.

Many would agree, Mr. Speaker, that such food is key to providing a healthy diet and, as such, we must find ways to make it more available. I am proud to say that an idea first hatched by the honourable member for Kings West will soon help to address this issue. The Food Bank Tax Credit for Farmers will better enable farmers across our province to donate their surplus produce to Nova Scotian food banks, so they can provide a fresh, local, and nutritious source of food to those who need it most.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House to join me in thanking all of our food banks for the services they provide to our communities. Through partnership with government and our local farmers, we will strive to provide even more in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: It was my pleasure on Monday to visit the Dartmouth Adult Services Centre in my riding of Dartmouth North. I spent an educational and fun morning with Executive Director Cathy Deagle-Gammon, and clients Victoria Scattolon, Laura Glazier, and Claire Vickery. The visit was to announce increased investments that aimed at ensuring that Nova Scotians with disabilities have greater opportunities for community living and day programs.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind the honourable member that members' statements are not to be used for departmental briefings; that would fall under Government Notices of Motion. (Interruption) It references your department.

The honourable member for Pictou West.

DOCTOR - SHORTAGES (RURAL N.S.)

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I stand today to raise awareness of the shortage of doctors in rural Nova Scotia. My constituency office hears regularly from constituents who are without the services of a family doctor. They are rightfully concerned for their health.

This situation has reached a crisis in some areas of the province. I feel helpless to assist my constituents when all I can offer them is to call 411, go to the emergency room, or go to the one remaining walk-in clinic in Pictou County. The Health and Wellness Minister must develop a plan to deal with the shortage of doctors, to ensure that all rural Nova Scotians have a family doctor.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much for the thoughtful members' statements. We will get ourselves ready for Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers, which will start momentarily.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM. - DOCTORS: BUDGET - FUNDING LACK

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. In the next 10 years, 900 doctors are due to retire in Nova Scotia, and we need to replace every single one of them. Doctors Nova Scotia confirms that there is no new money in the Liberal Government's budget for doctor recruitment. Clearly, finding new doctors for Nova Scotians who need them is not a priority of this government.

I would like to ask the Premier, in the face of such obvious need, why did his government decide not to invest in more doctors in this year's budget?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Of course, we've continued to invest in health care in this budget, Mr. Speaker. We have 31 new doctors working this year - already begun to work - and 14 more on their way to work in this province.

The honourable member would know that when someone retires, we stop paying them. That means that envelope that we were paying them is still within the wage pattern that we have in the province, and we can offer it to new physicians to come to the province.

We're going to continue to work with our health care providers to make sure that we deliver health care services across the province.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly the Premier thinks doctor recruitment is free. Maybe doctor recruitment is meant to be aspirational, just like his promise of a doctor for every Nova Scotian turns out not to be a promise but just an aspiration. But 90,000 Nova Scotia families are without a doctor today. They heard their Premier promise, when he was looking for their votes, that every single one of them would have a family doctor. They deserve more than an aspiration. They need him to keep his promise.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday he said it's not a promise, it's an aspiration. I'd like to ask the Premier, why is he now backing away from his promise that there would actually be a doctor for every Nova Scotian?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. In his preamble leading up to it, he forgot to tell that there are approximately 900,000 Nova Scotians with family physicians.

We know there's more work to do. Of course we're going to move toward making sure that every Nova Scotian has access to health care and a family doctor across this province, and we're going to continue to do so. We're seeing great signs - the residency programs that have been put across this province; the retention rate is high in many of those communities that those residents work in. We know that there is still more work to do, and we're going to continue to work with our health care providers and our communities to make sure that we have the right health care team in place across Nova Scotia.

MR. BAILLIE: The Premier's election platform did not say "we're satisfied with the Nova Scotians who have a doctor now." Maybe they're satisfied, Mr. Speaker, but as long as 90,000 families go without, we're not satisfied.

We want him to keep his promise, which as I will quote directly was to "Ensure a doctor for every Nova Scotian." They even put money in their platform, the Liberals did: \$3 million to help recruit those doctors. But there is nothing in the Liberal budget for doctor recruitment. Nova Scotians need more than an aspiration right now. They're without a doctor. They need a real plan.

Will the Premier table a real plan for doctor recruitment to see that every Nova Scotian has a doctor, like he promised in this House, yes or no?

THE PREMIER: I want to correct the honourable member. It's not 90,000 families, it's 10 per cent of the population. He should know better than that, but the reality of it is (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, 31 doctors have been hired, 14 more are ready to go, and 80 per cent of the residents in Yarmouth are staying. We're seeing residents across our province who are staying in our communities. It's a long-term plan that has the ability to keep health care providers in our communities, and we're going to continue to work with the communities across this province. Not only are we going to solve this problem in the short-term, but we're going to solve a problem that was ignored by both of those governments when they were in power.

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

PREM. - BLOOMFIELD PROJ.: SUPPORT - WITHDRAWAL

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, today we have learned that this government has officially walked away from its flagship housing project. For two and a half years, the Premier has done nothing on this file. Since the Premier took office, we have heard nothing from this government regarding their concerns on Bloomfield.

Now, all of a sudden and seemingly out of the blue, the Premier is backing away from the commitment his government made. So I ask the Premier, why after more than two years of support for the Bloomfield project is the government walking away?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. She would know that it was her government that made that commitment to that project. They spent twice as much for that piece of land as any private sector person was able to pay for that.

As we began to look at the economics and the development, using the \$14 million number that was committed to by the former NDP Government, it became very obvious that affordable housing would be very difficult to be in that building, if we're going to make that work. What we said to the community, which is working with HRM and private sector developers to move it forward, is we'll be part of that solution. Bloomfield will move ahead. It will just not be owned by the Government of Nova Scotia.

MS. MANCINI: For years the Minister of Community Services has been touting the importance of the Bloomfield project. So let's recap that. October 2014, the minister says in this Chamber that Bloomfield is a demonstration of the housing strategy in action and posts it on her personal website that construction will begin in 2015. March 2015, a briefing note from the minister says Phase I of construction will be completed in Spring 2017. October 2015, a briefing note for the minister says Cabinet approval is coming Fall 2016. January 2016, the minister asserts the project is going ahead. I'll table that. Will the

Premier admit that his government has broken their promise on the Bloomfield development project?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The answer is no. That project is moving forward in the appropriate way. We have a very competitive private sector in HRM. They will compete to develop that project along with the community. We're going to invest in rent supplements. We're going to work to make sure there's affordable housing across the province. We're going to continue to do what we believe is in the best interests of taxpayers across this province and at the same time deliver much-needed services for those in need.

MS. MANCINI: Given that it has been the Minister of Community Services who has been incredibly outspoken in her support of Housing Nova Scotia developing the Bloomfield project, people across Nova Scotia are wondering why she has so dramatically changed her position. So I ask the minister the same question, will she admit that she has broken her promise to Nova Scotians on the Bloomfield development project?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: I absolutely believe in the Bloomfield project, and I look forward to being a part of it when it goes forward. Quite clearly the housing assessment that was released three months ago said that people within HRM, in fact, 25 per cent of people who are having problems with affordability and housing made under \$29,000 a year. Bloomfield was not going to help them. I'm getting back to basics. We are housing people. We're moving people off the housing list. If that Party believes that Bloomfield was the panacea for homelessness in HRM, no wonder the wait-list blew up under that government.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - DOCTORS: DEPT./HEALTH AUTH.
- UNRESPONSIVENESS**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. It turns out doctors can't even get their phone calls returned by the Department of Health and Wellness or the new Nova Scotia Health Authority. They tell us quite clearly that when they have a local problem that they need help with, there is no one to talk to. No one returns their calls. No one responds to their emails. Mr. Speaker, 90,000 people in this province don't have a family doctor. They need help. They at least expect the government to work together with the doctors that we have now, but they can't get their phone calls returned. I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness, why is his department and the Health Authority so unresponsive to the needs of doctors that they won't even return their calls?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I'm pleased to say that our department responds to hundreds of calls, hundreds of emails, hundreds of pieces of correspondence. Just yesterday I signed off on about 150 pieces of correspondence. We get back to people in as timely a

fashion as we can. I know those who are in my office and who answer the phones give as much information as they have available to everybody who makes a call to the department.

MR. BAILLIE: I hope that when the minister is signing off on those emails and calls he includes a plan to recruit new doctors to this province because 90,000 people are trying to tell the Minister of Health and Wellness that they don't have a family doctor and they want him and his government to keep their promise to find one for them. It is the doctors themselves who are telling us that they can't get answers to the everyday issues that they have in their own local areas. It's the doctors themselves who are telling us that when they call in to the Health Authority or the Department of Health and Wellness, their calls are not returned, their emails are not responded to. They are frustrated at the bureaucracy; that is why when they have a choice they are not always choosing Nova Scotia.

It doesn't cost anything just to treat the doctors with respect, Mr. Speaker. So, I would like to ask the minister, how can Nova Scotians take him seriously when he says he wants to keep doctors when they can't even get their phone calls returned?

MR. GLAVINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, he should put the accurate facts in front of Nova Scotians: 5.7 per cent of Nova Scotians, around 54,000, are without a family doctor and we are working each and every day, as Dr. Lynne Harrigan has pointed out. We are having a very, very successful year. The Opposition wants to constantly be negative, not recognizing that 41 new doctors have been recruited this year more throughout the remainder of this year; and, we will get those doctors into communities, into places where they are needed most.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - PATIENTS: RETURNED CALLS - WAIT TIMES

HON. DAVID WILSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Opposition is doing its job. When Nova Scotians are concerned, when physicians are concerned, they call upon the Opposition to try to shake the government senseless because they are senseless when they were dealing with (Interruption) - I know that; that's why I said it - dealing with the doctor shortage.

Doctors are being told to tell their patients that they can call a number when they are looking for a physician but also, in the key messages for those doctors, it states: please note that it may take a significant amount of time for your call to be returned, approximately three to six months at this time, and it does not guarantee a doctor. I will table that. Why are physicians in this province being given key messages to tell their patients it could take six months before they get a returned call when they are looking for a doctor?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, over the last week or so in particular, we have had a number of conversations about streamlining the processes with the Nova Scotia Health Authority so that timely information is provided. What is important to Nova Scotians is that they can look to success of recruitment. The residency programs are doing just what we had hoped would happen - that is, recruit. This year about 75 per cent of the residents are staying in the Sydney area, 75 per cent in the Annapolis Valley. Seven out of 10 are staying right here in Halifax to practise. Since we came into the House, two of the clinics mentioned here now have doctors going to those clinics.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the situation of the doctor shortage is going to continue on if the government doesn't change direction and doesn't ask the Nova Scotia Health Authority to change their policy on restricting licences in the Central Region. So, I would like to ask the Premier, since the Minister of Health and Wellness will not instruct the new Health Authority to change that policy, will at least the Premier stand up like he did with the Seniors' Pharmacare Program and instruct the minister to do the right thing and change the policy so that physicians can get licences in the Central Region to hopefully not see the shortage we are seeing over the last number of months?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to congratulate the Minister of Health and Wellness for the tremendous work he has been doing on a very complicated file. Not only this one, as you know, as the member would know, being the Minister of the Department of Health and Wellness and being the Minister of the Department of Health and Wellness is one of the most complicated files in government. He has done a tremendous job being able to bring our partners together.

We are going to continue to make sure that we have physicians across this province. I am looking forward to continuing to work with the Health Authority and physicians and health care providers across this province, to make sure we have the appropriate number in the appropriate place.

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

**PREM. - NEGOTIATION: GOV'T. PROCUREMENT POLICY
- NON-COMPLIANCE**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, In March 2015, a government procurement specialist said retaining an outside negotiator through an alternative procurement process was not recommended and I will table that. A FOIPOP obtained by our office showed that the Department of Health and Wellness was seeking to engage "a particular lawyer at McInnes Cooper." And I will table that. The government's - might as well stay there for a few minutes - the government's Sustainable Procurement Policy says that the Alternative Procurement Policy should not be used to avoid competition and should only be used in exceptional circumstances, and I will table that.

My question to the Premier is, did the Minister of Health and Wellness direct officials to go around the government procurement policy to hire Jack Graham specifically as the negotiator?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want the honourable member to fully understand that when we came into government we were left with a fiscal mess, quite frankly. We need to make sure that collective agreements across all sectors reflected this province's ability to pay, and I don't apologize for going out and looking for an expert to be able to deliver what is in the best interests of all Nova Scotians, treating our workers fairly and treating taxpayers fairly.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I'll go to the Minister of Health and Wellness on this one. Ten days after receiving professional advice that engaging an outside negotiator through an alternative procurement policy was not recommended and may be non-compliant, the Minister of Health and Wellness threw that advice away and signed a document to approve Mr. Graham through an alternative procurement process - I'll table that. Mr. Graham was not on the standing vendors list - I will table that - and eight days later Mr. Graham was on the government payroll to the tune of \$380 per hour.

The procurement policy says that alternative procurement should only be used in urgent, specialized, or exceptional circumstances. As far as we know, Mr. Speaker, there is no deal with doctors as of yet, so how long will these so-called exceptional circumstances persist and at what cost to the public?

THE PREMIER: If we had taken that advice, Mr. Speaker, like successive governments before us took, we'd have been beaten at the bargaining table everywhere and Nova Scotia taxpayers across this province would have been . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Premier has the floor.

THE PREMIER: If we had taken advice like previous governments, Mr. Speaker, we would have been defeated at the bargaining table. We would not have been able to invest in young people to keep them in this province, we would not have been able to invest in child care to keep in this province, and we would not be able to grow the economy across this province.

We reached out to professional help to help us deliver a contract that we can afford, and we'll continue to lead to make sure that we represent all Nova Scotians. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - C.B.: GERIATRICIANS - INQUIRIES

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, this question is being asked for two reasons. One, anything that has the word “geriatric” in it automatically comes to me. (Laughter) And the second reason is that this has to do with relationships.

Back in Cape Breton in March, there were two geriatricians who wanted to move to Cape Breton and practise there. They had other job offers, but Cape Breton seemed to be the place where they wanted to go. They spent a weekend in Sydney and after that, they tried to get into conversation with the administration. Word has it that they weren't treated very well and ended up just going away. Was the minister aware of such an incident and how it might have happened?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of specific recruitments, or around these two physicians that the honourable member has presented here. If there's reason with his inquiry to look further, I'm more than prepared to do that.

MR. HARRISON: We've spent a lot of time talking about doctors and the need for them in the province. I'd hate to think that anyone who wanted to be in this province in a particular place was driven away. It seems tragic, I guess.

This may not be solved but maybe in the future, if the health boards would be aware of how they approach people when they come to them, it might be very helpful.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the point he has made. One of the realities that several municipalities discovered in going about their own recruitment was that, in fact, they had commitments from a doctor to come to a particular community. Then, when they applied for a licence before the College of Physicians and Surgeons, they actually didn't meet the qualifications to practise in our province - and, in some cases, were not able to practise anywhere in Canada.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - ORPHAN CLINIC:
PERMANENT SOLUTION - DETAILS**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. I recently spoke to a doctor who had been working at the orphan clinic up until about a week ago. Doctors in the area were told that this was a temporary measure while the administration would find other family doctors. There were nine doctors working in that service when it started, and now there are only two. So really, the orphan clinic is only open 1.5 days a week.

My question to the minister is, if the orphan clinic is a temporary solution, what is the permanent solution to the lack of family doctors in Cape Breton, and when will that solution be implemented?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: The plan is to continue and build on the recruitment of the 10 doctors who will be going to Cape Breton this summer. Further recruitment will take place. We know that the development of the collaborative practices where we will then bring in the nurse practitioner or family practice nurse is going to extend the ability to look after a number of more patients. That's the one great strength of the collaborative practice: when somebody needs to see a nurse, they're in front of a nurse, but when they need to see their physician, they will be in front of a physician. That team relationship continues to build through that practice.

MR. MACLEOD: I don't know if the minister realizes that the strength that he keeps on talking about in this collaborative practice is also the weakness of it, because it's not in place. It is not there for the people who, today, need a doctor. It is not serving the people who are there. He talks proudly about the 10 doctors who are coming, but we just told him about 15 more doctors who are ready to leave - not even in his count yet, but ready to leave, and leaving people without a doctor.

In the orphan clinic, the doctors are paid a fee-for-service. When will the minister look at making sure that the doctors are being paid properly? Instead of a fee-for-service, the better solution is to have a session fee where they get paid by the hour, so they can take the time with the patients, remembering that these patients haven't seen a doctor in a number of years and have many different ailments. Will the minister make the orphan clinic an hourly fee rather than a fee-for-service?

MR. GLAVINE: To use the words of the member opposite, we certainly hope that it is a temporary clinic. I would tell the member opposite to stay tuned as there will be a further announcement shortly.

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

LAE: HFX. TYPOGRAPHICAL UNION/EMPLOYER - MEDIATION CONFIRM

HON. DAVID WILSON: My question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. The Halifax Typographical Union has been on strike since the end of January, and it's clear to everyone that the two sides need to come together to find a common ground. The union has made many major concessions and has indicated it would consider other concessions; the employer will simply not talk to them unless they give in completely without any discussion.

The union is seeking neutral mediation to help the two parties reach a resolution. The minister has told the House that a mediation officer has been appointed. I wonder,

could the minister confirm that mediation involving both the union and the employer has begun?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for his question. As I've indicated previously, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on anything like this. We do prefer that the two parties speak for themselves. I can confirm that there is an officer from Conciliation Services who has been in place for some time. The officer and the whole Conciliation Services division stand ready to assist. I've also asked that the Chief Industrial Relations Officer contact the parties in order to reiterate this and to determine if they may be of assistance.

I would ask the honourable member to join with me to strongly encourage both sides in this dispute to get together and come up with an agreement. Thank you.

MR. DAVID WILSON: The union has been quite clear that it's ready to use the mediation service to resolve the issue, but the employer is unwilling. Last week the Premier expressed hope that both sides would come together to resolve this issue, and yet he said he would continue to use *The Chronicle Herald* as a communication tool. We know today *Local Xpress* has expanded their service online, and that Tourism New Brunswick will be one of their ad suppliers, or use them as an ad avenue.

I'm wondering, would the Premier commit to the same support for *Local Xpress* and use *Local Xpress* as an advertising tool to get the Premier's message out to Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Certainly we will look at every avenue to get the message out to Nova Scotians. We'll look at that. I got the news today that they were going further, and I'm excited for that. It's great to see their optimism in the province, creating a new business venture for themselves, and certainly we'll try to support that.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - C.B. SPECIALISTS: DEPARTURES - DETAILS

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The minister talks about the new doctors who are on their way to Cape Breton. There have been a dramatic number of specialists who have left Cape Breton in the last three to six months. My question is, does the minister have any idea how many people, how many specialists, are leaving Cape Breton Island this summer?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I'm aware that there are a couple of areas where specialists, for a whole number of reasons, will not be practising at Cape Breton Regional, or in the

Sydney area. I don't have the exact number in front of me, but I do know that there are some that are leaving, and recruitment continues.

I think you heard from Dr. Lynne Harrigan today that there's nothing dramatically different from one month to another. Since the Health Authority started, they've done recruitment every single month, and with success every single month since they have made the dedicated provincial effort.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the minister there are no less than eight specialists leaving Cape Breton Island this year. Two of them are OB/GYNs who had a debacle with their insurance claims last year and can't seem to come to grips with that. One is a radiologist, one is a cardiologist, and one is an infection control specialist - people who we on Cape Breton Island can't do without.

My question is - Cape Breton has lost numerous specialists over the years, yet there seems to be no sense of urgency when specialists and sub-specialists leave. That means longer wait times for the patients in Cape Breton to see specialists who choose to stay. What is the minister's explanation as to why so many specialists are leaving Cape Breton Island?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. If we take a look at regional hospitals across the province, we have doctors who will spend part of their career in one hospital, in one province, or sometimes go back and do a second fellowship. This really is not dramatically different than what we have seen in our regional hospitals over a period of time, and if there is something significant that is taking place, I'm sure they'll bring that situation to my attention when I go to Cape Breton.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

NAT. RES.: HELICOPTERS RFP - DETAILS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to give my friend the Minister of Health and Wellness a rest here. My question is for the Minister of DNR.

On April 14th the government issued an RFP for four new helicopters for the Department of Natural Resources to replace the current aging fleet. That tender closed on May 17th. The tender notes that the new helicopters will be single-engine intermediate helicopters, and that the current fleet will be traded for a helicopter built in 2002, and one built in 2004. It's important that the size of these new helicopters are able to accommodate the unique needs of the DNR.

My question to the minister is, can the minister assure this House that there will be no loss of function from the existing fleet and that this deal will be the best one for Nova Scotia taxpayers?

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the excellent question. I'd like to say that particularly in view of the fire in Alberta that the utility of helicopters - there's 39 of them in the air out there now - is proven as to why we must maintain a modest fleet in Nova Scotia. We currently have five; we're reducing it to four. We have three different models currently which means additional costs for pilot training to keep our Transport Canada standards up - and helicopter parts are expensive and now we started to inventory three separate ones. So moving to one common unit, which has been thoroughly researched and is perfect for what we need in Nova Scotia, is the way to go, that makes that expenditure efficient for the taxpayers of Nova Scotia.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the Minister of Health and Wellness that the new LifeFlight helicopter will be leased, not bought outright by the province. There are companies that exist that offer similar services to Departments of Natural Resources elsewhere in Canada.

My question to the minister is, has the department ever examined the cost of leasing helicopters or spoken to any local companies about the possibility of a service agreement with a private operator for Natural Resources helicopter use?

MR. HINES: Yes, we have done that. As a matter of fact we actually have Vision Air, a local contractor, on a standby agreement in case we do need additional assistance. As an example, the Bell 212, which is the oldest unit in the fleet, has recently been sold to Saskatchewan and actually we're enjoying quite a significant capital gain on that because even though it is old the price has gone up and we have recaptured quite a bit of money on that particular sale.

We've looked at all the angles and, in terms of the control situation, the purchase is the best way to go.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - PHYSIATRIST: RETIREMENT - REPLACEMENT PLAN

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, we've heard a lot about doctors and shortages in this House in the last two weeks. Not having a family doctor is one thing, but now we're also hearing about specialists, in particular a physiatrist who is retiring in the Cape Breton Rehab Centre at Harbour View Hospital. Without a physiatrist it's going to be difficult to run a rehab centre.

What can the minister tell us about the plan to replace that doctor and maintain the valuable rehab service at Harbour View Hospital?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: This is one of those areas that has been identified and, you know, recruitment for specialists, as well as family doctors. We also identify nationally what our needs are. Unfortunately through the Canadian recruitment, the CaRMS program, we get about five or six specialists a year - only about five then or six - depending on how the 11 positions are divided up. We identify our needs through that process as well. What I can tell the member is that recruitment will go on.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, Cape Bretoners rely on Harbour View Hospital to complete their rehab and be close to their loved ones when they're doing so. This allows them to return to normal function and also return home. Without a physiatrist we can almost guarantee there would be no rehab.

Can the minister assure the people of Cape Breton, the patients, the staff, and all those involved with the rehab at Harbour View Hospital, that they will recruit a physiatrist to keep this valuable position in place for the people of Cape Breton?

MR. GLAVINE: Rehab is obviously one of our very, very important functions in our health care system and, once again, it's an area where we have a team of specialists across the province that have a connected service, and I would see that recruitment for this position and rehab services will remain in place.

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

EECD - SCH. RACISM: ACTION - DETAILS

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately no community in this province is untouched by racism. This year a series of racially charged incidents occurred at the South Shore School involving the Confederate flag and a noose hung on a young, black, female teacher's door. In response the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development called this "an unfortunate situation and a teachable moment."

I have been hearing from a number of teachers who are upset and concerned about this issue. One of my constituents, Nolan Borden, is a black teacher of 35 years and he asks why are racist acts like these being put in the same classification as bullying, which limits what school boards can do? These are hate crimes, he says, and should be treated as such. My question for the minister is simply this: what action is her department taking to address this issue and also the systemic racism in the education system?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. It has been raised on the floor of this House before. It is a serious situation. We want to make sure that we do not have any activities in any of our schools that would suggest racism or discrimination.

The situation of the South Shore Regional School Board was investigated. The South Shore Board and the school in particular took every step possible to make sure that it was a teachable moment. They continued to do programs and activities in the school to make sure that all of our students are aware of and respectful of every other citizen.

MS. ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's response. Thankfully this kind of incident is not something that happens every day in Nova Scotia but I am hearing from many teachers about experiences of racism during their education training, in the schools from administration, and from some parents. According to Mr. Borden, when he called the Black Educators Association to ask them about this incident, he was told that they had not been notified about it and could not actually do anything about it since the young teacher herself had not contacted them personally.

My question for the minister is, how often does the minister meet with the Black Educators Association to discuss issues of racism affecting Nova Scotia's teachers and students?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, one of the divisions within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development deals specifically with African Nova Scotian educators - whether it is the black educators, whether it is CASE, whether it is the division there itself. They are constantly working with their communities, with the boards, with the department to make sure that the concerns in the communities are heard by the associations and acted upon. Again, it's to make sure that if there are issues that need to be addressed or if there is education that needs to be ongoing, that we are on top of that.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: DOCTORS - HOSP. PRIVILEGES

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Since last April, at least one doctor has been concerned with the gradual loss of services at Northside General Hospital. This doctor has had an elderly patient whose wife was driving from Whitney Pier to Northside every day to be with him. This doctor determined that he would be best served at the regional hospital to save her the driving time, but he was told that he no longer had hospital privileges, which are crucial for getting labs and X-rays. Apparently, the administration doesn't like precedence of a doctor choosing where a patient should be best managed. So, my question to the Minister of Health and Wellness, why are doctors losing hospital privileges for making for the best decisions for their patients?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite would know being a former Minister of Health, a number of our hospitals - especially our regional hospitals - have gone to the position of a hospitalist to look after those who are admitted. This may be a hospital where this doctor has not had privileges for some time and therefore would now come under the care of a hospitalist when they did enter a particular hospital.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, doctors are being pushed out of HRM but not necessarily out of rural areas with the restricting of billing numbers and/or hospital privileges. As of April 1st, if you do not have hospital privileges, you can't order X-rays, you can't order labs, and you are a sitting duck as a walk-in clinic or a family doctor.

One doctor has considered buying testing machines himself to do the labs and tests in-house. This is the Health Authority's way of getting what they want out of doctors and doctors are having trouble providing services to their patients. So, my question to the minister is, can the minister explain why the Nova Scotia Health Authority is restricting doctors' access to tests, labs, and X-rays for their patients?

MR. GLAVINE: What we know is important for Nova Scotians is that they have quality services right across the province. We know that credentialing in the past took place with each of the districts. We now know that there are also some doctors who didn't have credentialing privileges who are now in the process of getting those, and many will be grandfathered into the system. I will look into individual situations that are presented to me. What I can assure the member opposite is credentialing is about quality and quality service.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: PHYSICIAN RESOURCE PLAN
- LOCAL DIRECTORS REINSTATE**

MR. JOHN LOHR: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. It is my understanding that the Physician Resource Plan is being followed very closely but that there are flaws with it. When there was local leadership at various districts, they had authority and budgets to make decisions. We've heard that zone managers have no budget and no authority. Doctors have told us that the suffering they are seeing now is extraordinary and unnecessary, and we've learned today in this House that there are communication issues too. Will the minister reinstate some local directors to solve the issues at local levels and give doctors the tools they need to deliver medical care efficiently?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: At the zone level, there is a chief of medicine. I don't know all four of them by name, but for the member who just asked the question, if he has concerns, he would get in touch with Dr. Alenia Kysela to determine. I know some of the recruitment that she has done and some of the medical issues that she has addressed and she would be more than willing to have the member's perspective and concerns addressed.

MR. LOHR: I thank the minister for the answer to that question. One of the most important pieces of the health care system in this province is that it responds to local needs and the uniqueness of this province. We have many areas with a high density of elderly

patients while other areas have a larger population of pediatric needs. Furthermore, there is a high level of chronic disease across the province.

My question for the minister is, how can the minister ensure that the health care system is responsive to local communities if the health care workers themselves are feeling ignored?

MR. GLAVINE: The statement really is quite far from reality. One of the most required surgeries is hip and knee replacements. In the Valley area we have five communities with a population already 25 per cent over the age of 65. This year I'm pleased to say the team of five orthopedic surgeons at Valley Regional have responded with the investment that we have made and have reduced the wait time for a knee replacement and have added a considerable number of additional hip surgeries this year.

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

LAE: WADE/GOV'T. - MEETING UPDATE

MS. LENORE ZANN: My question this time is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. The Watershed Association Development Enterprises, better known as WADE, has been reeling from the government's recent decision to award a funding agreement to an agency located outside the Preston area, putting the future of WADE and the work it does in jeopardy. I understand that WADE recently met with a government representative on this issue, so can the minister please give us an update on this situation?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to be very clear with her that the allegations of racism are completely unfounded, number one, and that this has been an open and competitive process that has been about making sure that the absolute best services are available to the people of Preston. I want to be very clear that there will in fact be a location in Preston, and the staffing process is under way as we speak.

MS. ZANN: Yes, I wasn't talking about that; I was actually just asking for an update on the situation. WADE is concerned that by focusing on a province-wide transformation of the overall careers model, the government has ignored the uniqueness of the area served by this long-standing organization. The group wants a funding agreement awarded directly to WADE to allow it to continue its work within these communities where they've been helping African Nova Scotians find employment for more than 30 years. As a matter of fact, the employment division in my own riding is closing as well on June 30th.

I ask the minister, will she provide a funding agreement to WADE based on their unique situation?

MS. REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question and let her know that the YMCA was the successful agreement holder in that particular area. I want to assure her the services that will be provided to the residents of the Prestons will be of very high quality and I would expect nothing less for the people of Preston.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: MENTAL HEALTH SERV. (PICTOU CO.) - PLANS

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. There are thousands of people in Pictou County looking for a doctor. We had a doctor pass away, we have doctors aging, nearing the retirement age who can't take new patients. Against that backdrop, we have severely diminished mental health services in Pictou County as well.

I'd like to ask the minister, can he provide some guidance to the members of this House and the people of Pictou County as to what they can expect in terms of improved mental health services over the next couple of months?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I'm pleased to say that from a number of different sources, the people of Pictou are telling us that they certainly realize that they had what was classified as a short-term psychiatric board, but in no way met the standards of care required in a short-term psychiatric ward.

In fact it was a ward that was run by and determined who would enter by GPs. People who entered that ward in fact that would go to ENT services walked right through the psychiatric ward to get to their destination. There were many, many deficiencies about it. What I can tell the member today is that those who need mental health care in Pictou County have a better and a professional team to provide those services.

MR. HOUSTON: Well, minister, you could tell me that as many times as you want, it doesn't make it true. The people of Pictou County do not have improved mental health services. I would ask you to check your sources, it's not the case. We need improved mental health services in the county. I had a gentleman in my office, he was off on employment insurance; 15 weeks sick time. I asked him why were you off for sick time? He said depression and anxiety. His 15 weeks is up, he still can't see a psychiatrist for months. Now he has no more income. I wonder what you think his depression and anxiety level is right now. He hasn't been able to receive any help. You would stand in this House and have us believe that things are better? They are not better.

I would challenge the minister to come with me to the Pictou County Mental Health Family Support Group monthly meeting - you tell those people it's better because they know it's not. Will you come up and tell them?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind the honourable member not to refer to other members directly. Keep your comments directed to the Chair.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness has the floor.

MR. GLAVINE: What I would challenge the member to do is to sit down with Dr. Vienneau in fact who has a tremendous track record of service to that community, who has a great understanding of the needs of that community. I think if he were to take the time to explore with her what is in place now, what is planned for Pictou, I think they will both reach an agreement that the citizens of Pictou are in a much better place today.

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

ENVIRON.: BAY OF FUNDY TIDAL DEV. - ENVIRON. MONITORING

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment. The NDP caucus supports the push for the development of tidal energy from the Bay of Fundy. However, we also recognize that the shellfish industry has been the economic engine in rural Nova Scotia for decades and we want to be sure the industry is not unduly affected. Shellfish larvae spend the first three weeks of their life at the top of the water column and are influenced by the tides that flow in and out of the Bay of Fundy four times a day.

I ask the minister, will environment monitoring plans for tidal development in the Bay of Fundy include a focus on larvae at the top of the water column?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. It certainly is something that we are looking at, the tidal industry.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers has expired.

Just before we move on to Government Business, the honourable member for Cumberland North on an introduction.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I draw the members' attention to the east gallery, where we have young Ben MacLean with us today.

Ben is a dedicated political volunteer, president of the Pictou West Liberal Association, and a former municipal candidate for office. I'd ask all members to give him the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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. 187.

Bill No. 187 - House of Assembly Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 187, the House of Assembly Act, be now read a second time.

This bill is implementing the Nova Scotia House of Assembly Policy on the Prevention and Resolution of Harassment in the Workplace. This was based on an all-Party subcommittee of the Committee on Assembly Matters. The member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River represented the NDP caucus, the member for Argyle-Barrington - the Official Opposition House Leader - represented the Official Opposition, and the member for Timberlea-Prospect represented the government caucus.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this is an example of a policy that was put in place on a non-partisan basis, with the support of all political Parties, and as such, this bill will now put it into effect for all elected members and staff of the House of Assembly and those who work for us. With that, I would move second reading of Bill No. 187.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I won't be speaking long on this, just simply to say thank you to a number of people who worked very diligently on this harassment policy.

The House of Assembly Management Commission identified the issue that, quite honestly, we in the House of Assembly - we in our offices, our caucus offices, and our constituency offices - really had no policy when it came to harassment in the workplace - no regulations when it came to sexual harassment, even.

When we embarked upon this, there was a cross-Canada look at what kind of policies were available and how things were being dealt with across the system. We were able to basically steal from all those processes, to borrow from those processes, to be able to come up with a plan that works, I think, for at least a good first try of a harassment policy here in the House of Assembly for our MLA offices and such.

I want to thank our Assistant Clerk, Annette Boucher. She did the heavy lifting on this one when she did the cross-Canada comparisons, and did a magnanimous amount of writing on this. I don't know how many drafts were taken throughout this process, but it was a tremendous amount of work and time.

I want to thank our caucus offices, our chiefs of staff and those who ended up looking at this process, looking at the document as it was being brought forward, to make sure that we were covering everything that we would be able to cover, but also not having unattended circumstances or issues that would come along because of this policy.

We support this as a caucus and look forward to implementing it in our offices. Again, thank you to the Assistant Clerk and everybody who had the opportunity to play a part in this process.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill No. 187, the House of Assembly Act, and I want to thank the government for allowing us to form a committee to discuss the various issues. It was a wonderful opportunity for all three Parties to come together, and discuss this in a reasonable and educated, cordial manner.

I want to thank the member for Timberlea-Prospect and also the member for Argyle-Barrington and say that it was a delight, really, to work on this with them. I think that until we had started talking about this issue, obviously there was nothing in place for us as government people to look at to know how you deal with sexual harassment, assault, bullying - these kinds of issues. In fact, when I first heard that there was just the three of us, I wrote a little note to the Speaker of the House and asked, why weren't there more women on this team? I felt that being a woman, you tend to come up against a lot more issues than men do, unfortunately. But it was decided that no, this was the team; there weren't going to be any more women added to it.

So I was very, very pleased that Assistant Clerk Annette Boucher was there and was able to help us and to go through all of the reams of information coming at her from across the country. She was very, very helpful.

Towards the end of the whole experience, three women from our caucuses and staff came on board as well to help look through it and make sure that they agreed with things,

and several different ideas were presented that had not been presented before. I'd like to thank our research staffer, Emily Reid, who came. She took part in that particular talk. I really appreciated her being there. Unfortunately, she's no longer with us, but I wanted to do a shout-out for her and say how grateful we were for her contribution, and her contribution will live on in this bill.

As MLAs, we find ourselves oftentimes in a very strange gray area, which is as workers just out in the world, we are not considered self-employed, but we're also not really considered employed. We don't get employment insurance when we vacate these positions, and yet we can't claim any living expenses or allowable expenses as somebody who is self-employed. It's a very interesting and precarious area that many people really are unaware of. Most people would think, oh, you're in government, you're an MLA for six or seven years, or three years, or four years, or whatever, and then you go out and you would get employment insurance. Well, in fact, you don't. Once you're gone, you're gone. And who knows? Some of us may be gone as of the Fall, if there is an election in the Fall, or in the Spring. The revolving doors of this Legislature do continue to revolve. That's something I think we all need to keep in mind.

When it comes to harassment and bullying, I have to say that again, it's a very strange situation. In most workplace situations, it's difficult for people to come forward anyway with reports of sexual assault or harassment or bullying. They're afraid of losing their jobs. Even in education, people are afraid to speak out sometimes.

In the workforce in general, I find that women are timid to come forward. Oftentimes they're not necessarily trained as young women to recognize forward advances or things that are not the right way of behaving, not appropriate behaviour. Sometimes our walls are very thin, and our boundaries are not strong. I find that a lot of women don't really know when they're being bullied, and in fact, it's easy to intimidate them. So it's very important that unions have set up workplace bullying rules so that women and men can go and complain when they feel that they are being bullied or intimidated or harassed. But the problem is realizing that you are being bullied or harassed, or even sexually harassed.

As somebody who was in the regular workforce and in the entertainment industry - I've talked about it in this House before - I myself had a terrible time for many years being able to judge when somebody was being completely inappropriate and when, in fact, I just felt really uncomfortable. Later on I realized that when I feel uncomfortable with somebody's actions or their words, it's because I'm being bullied or intimidated or harassed in some way. I had to learn, over many, many years, that in fact I need to listen to that small, still voice inside of myself that says, I don't like this, I'm not comfortable with this, and I need to do something about this.

For those of us here in government, we did not have anything that we could do. We're not part of any union, unfortunately. So we're left out in limbo if in fact we're feeling bullied.

One of the things that I also brought up in our conversations is the fact that somebody can be bullied and intimidated within their own caucus and they are encouraged not to do anything about it because they don't want it to get out into the news. They don't want it to become a news item and in fact even bringing it to the Speaker of the House is a problem, because if the Speaker of the House is from a different Party than your own, then people are afraid and anxious that the word will go back from the Speaker to their own Party and it will become, again, a politicized item to use to beat you with.

These are the sorts of things we needed to consider, Mr. Speaker. In fact, these are the sort of things they had to consider in the House of Commons as well. There have been a number of issues that have come out between Parties but there are also things that happen within a Party. I think this gives us the tools we need in order to deal with these kinds of issues. That's why, for instance, I thought that it would be a good idea to bring in the Clerks, somebody who is impartial, who are not with a particular Party, and also to talk to the Ombudsman's Office because conflict of interest is a problem for politicians and sometimes you need to be able to go to somebody who will listen to you, will take your concern under advisement, and will act in an appropriate way.

The other thing is that within Parties, there are friendships that form and there are people who hang out together, who are close with each other, and if somebody has an issue that they want to bring forward, if one of the people you are complaining about is friends with another person within the Party who has some kind of power, your issues will not necessarily go anywhere.

Again, I think we've tried to address these issues in a reasonable, civilized, and sensitive way, and I'm very proud of the work we've done and proud of the contribution that I have made and that we have all made to Bill No. 187. With that, I thank the government for passing this bill and I'll take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 187. 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, in light of the co-operation that you just heard regarding this, I would ask for unanimous consent of the House to waive the Law

Amendments Committee process, to waive Committee of the Whole and to move immediately to third reading of Bill No. 187.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 187.

Bill No. 187 - House of Assembly Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 187, the House of Assembly Act, be now read a third time and do pass.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 187. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 171.

Bill No. 171 - Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 171, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Act, be now read a third time and do pass. The changes of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Act that I introduced last week will give the gallery greater flexibility in its day-to-

day operations and improve the efficiency of the gallery and the board operations, and government administration. This also brings the legislation in line with best public sector management practices.

Mr. Speaker, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia is well run, professionally managed and provides an important public service. It deserves the support of the legislation that allows it to do its work effectively and efficiently. Thank you. I welcome any other comments.

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

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I move that we close debate on Bill No. 171.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 171. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 177.

Bill No. 177 - Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to move third reading of Bill No. 177, and I look forward to the commentary from my colleagues.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand and speak to Bill No. 177. I want to let the minister know that after much time going back into my own community and speaking to other communities, my thoughts have changed a little bit with regard to this bill.

As Critic for Municipal Affairs, I have had the opportunity to reach out to many, and oddly enough, many reached out to me as well. Earlier on I thought perhaps this is a

baby step in the right direction, and somehow I still feel that it is, but I also indicated that I was not certain if I could fully support it. I believe that in the beginning I was aware that perhaps not all of the requests from HRM were going to be fulfilled. But as people had time to think about this, a lot of things emerged - a lot of concerns and some red flags. Some of the issues, especially outside of HRM, deeply concerned me.

One of the things that was most upsetting to hear is a lot of people outside of HRM felt like they were not consulted. There was little consultation outside of HRM, and this is a very important topic with many issues and ramifications that need to be properly thought out. I think in passing this, it could - well perhaps what we would witness are unintended consequences, which I know none of us want.

The interest of businesses needs to be the primary lens through this bill. You know, when we examine any bill - and this bill does not do enough, in my opinion, to support businesses. The following are quotes from the Municipality of East Hants, and I can table them:

“The negative impact on all business established outside of ‘commercial development districts’ and un-serviced business parks/districts will be immediate.

“Although the Towns Task Force recommended incentive programs for brownfield development, the addition of ‘commercial development districts’ to the legislation denies rural Nova Scotia municipalities the ability to be on a level playing field with towns and urban areas.”

That is the one area that is of great concern. Rural areas are not happy with these changes, and I am glad that we were able to have a few days. I see the minister shaking his head but I stand here telling the truth that I have heard from a number who are not happy. I am sure there are some perhaps out there who are happy. I even heard from a few in the urban areas, the metro area, who were not happy, especially of course on - I’m trying to think of the street. I’m sorry; it eludes me right now. But I have heard from a number in the urban area . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Quinpool.

MS. MACFARLANE: Quinpool, thank you. We’ve heard from a number of businesses there that were most concerned. Pushing a tax increase down the road doesn’t remove the fact that there will be higher taxes in the end. Having to pay the increase in taxes over a longer period of time creates a situation for businesses with narrow margins where they will eventually probably just die a slow death.

It reminds me a little bit of how banks encourage university students, when they first start out, to get Visas, and they make them believe that it's their money. It's not, but they freely go out, and they rack up these credit cards with these high interests, and then they're left not being able to pay for it. It kind of reminds me of that - we're basically enabling businesses to push down the road money that they would owe.

I know there are better ways to address the taxes in Nova Scotia. Lowering them would be an example of how to encourage businesses large and small. This would help them to prosper and to support services provided by government to them.

We see through this bill that this government is not in support of full consultation and inclusion of stakeholders. Again, that is the most upsetting part. I know the UNSM has not even consulted members. I know they were supportive, and so was the CFIB. I mentioned that in second reading, and I was really pleased when I first learned that they were supportive. But then when members of CFIB and the UNSM started reaching out to me, that's when I got concerned because I felt that they did not have any consultation or involvement. There was no engagement to include them in the conversation.

If this bill is passed and municipal units are forced to comply, it will create less commercial tax revenues from the commercial development districts and a resulting tax increase to residential and commercial taxpayers.

Rural areas are specifically worried about this bill. Representing a rural area, I'm listening to my constituents, especially since there was no consultation and vague details on implementing them. They simply feel left out.

We believe that the government needs a long-term plan to address commercial taxes and tax rates. This caucus has always firmly believed that. This is a short-term reaction that has many unforeseen implications in the future. We don't want to support something that we will end up having to try to fix later on.

It does not support fairness or regional support, and again, that is the most upsetting part about this. It creates a scenario where areas are working against one another when we truly should be trying to work together. Pitting jurisdictions against each other is not the way to spur on the economy. It will not create the framework for businesses to succeed, and it will certainly not create the help and support that businesses really want. We will not be supporting this bill due to the lack of consultation, the lack of support for fairness, and the lack of foresight.

To engage rural areas in this piece of legislation would have meant that we had to take more time. This bill perhaps wouldn't have been brought into the Spring session; we would have had to wait until the Fall. But to get it right and to meet all members of the UNSM as well as CFIB, I think it would have been worthy to wait out six months or so. There's a lot of concerns, a lot of disappointments.

I know that there is the MGA review. I know that there was supposed to be a draft ready for us to review in January/February, and we were unable to see that. I guess my hope is maybe everyone will have an opportunity to have deep consideration of this bill and perhaps somehow re-track, go back, and include it in the MGA because I think there are some pieces that are good to it. I guess that was the benefit of having time between second reading and now and having time to hear from members of both the UNSM and constituents and business owners.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the minister for his comments on second reading, for his forward thinking in trying to solve an issue that I think is greater than what this bill can accomplish. So I move that a motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word “that” and substitute the following therefore: Bill No. 177, the Municipal Government Act and the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day six months hence.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a few words on the amendment and how important it is. First of all, let me say thank you to the member for Pictou West, who has shown the wisdom to propose that the bill be hoisted for six months to allow for proper consultation to take place.

To people who follow the proceedings of Parliament or this House, who see hoist motions made from time to time, it might sound like a technical term, but it actually has a very practical application. This bill is a great example of when a hoist makes sense.

When a bill comes to this House that has not been properly vetted with stakeholders or consulted with those affected, when it is a proposed half measure and a half measure will not do, that is exactly the time to bring a motion to refer it back for six months, because that will allow those proper steps, which quite frankly should have been taken in the first place, to now happen.

There have been times when hoists have been brought to this House in exactly this circumstance, including by the Liberal Party. I'll give you an example: a few years ago, when the NDP was the government, they brought forward changes to the Pharmacy Act that would affect the operation of our pharmacies, fix generic drug prices, and eventually enable a greater scope of practice for our pharmacists. But much like this bill, the Pharmacy Bill that the NDP brought in only dealt with half of the issue. In their case it was that pharmacists would have a ratcheting-down in the price schedule for generics, and that would happen immediately in law, but the second step, which was the expanded scope of practice and the dispensing fees, would come later.

That caused great hardship to the pharmacists of the time. They were getting the bad part of the deal, if I could put it that way, but not the good part. In fact, the value of many pharmacies - which, after all, are private businesses - was greatly diminished on the spot. It was only in Law Amendments Committee, after the bill had passed second reading here in this House, that that became evident when we had a lineup of pharmacists and pharmacy owners here at Province House.

I raise that because it was the Liberal Party in Opposition, with our complete support, that proposed to hoist that bill for six months to allow for the negotiations to conclude with pharmacists around their expanded scope of practice and their dispensing fee schedule so that they got the whole picture all at once.

Now that didn't happen, but it was a great application. If it had been passed by the government of the day, it was a great application of the hoist as a very practical tool when these things happen, when these half measures come in.

The reason I raise that is that we are here today in a very similar situation, with a bill that affects our municipalities and the businesses that pay commercial taxes within those municipalities. A number of business districts, whether it's the north end Halifax business district or the Quinpool Road business district or the Spring Garden Road association - all three here in the City of Halifax - have all been asking for comprehensive tax relief in the downtown urban core, particularly in those three areas, for some time now.

No wonder they're asking for that, Mr. Speaker, because they see the special tax deals that the Walmarts and the Costcos got, these giant corporations of the world, to come to the suburbs, to places like Bayers Lake, who pay sometimes one-thirtieth of the taxes of a downtown business on a square foot basis, and they see the immense amount of our municipal services that these big companies consume, compared to, say, a small retail store locally owned, on Spring Garden Road, and they, quite rightly I think, say that's not fair.

So, Mr. Speaker, they're all asking for fairness, for a solution so that the taxes that the Walmarts and the Costcos pay bear some resemblance to their ability to pay and to the services that they consume, and that the same can happen in our businesses that are locally owned, and are downtown.

Mr. Speaker, this bill does not address that problem. It allows their taxes to go up and up. It may defer them, or smooth them out, but their taxes are still going up. The government itself has said it's just step one and step two will come later. Well, I think that those businesses deserve to see the whole plan just the same as the pharmacists did a few years ago. That's why it is so wise of the member for Pictou West to make this amendment that the bill be hoisted for six months to allow for a proper examination on the entire plan.

Mr. Speaker, on the area of consultation, the government has brought a bill to this House, enabling legislation really for our municipalities, but has not actually consulted

with all the municipalities of the province. Now, they have said in earlier debate that the UNSM has been consulted, and I have no doubt that's correct, but what about the municipal units themselves? Were they involved in consultations on the bill?

Mr. Speaker, I've not heard an answer to that question, it kind of is hanging out there, but I hopefully will hear that later on, because this affects them very directly. Not just from a revenue-generating point of view from the municipality's point of view, but also from a fairness point of view between one municipality and a neighbouring municipality. We're actually very concerned that municipalities weren't directly consulted, because now at this late stage in debate in this House, we have municipalities coming forward to say that they weren't. They're writing to us, I'm sure they're writing to many members of this House saying that they weren't consulted, and they have serious concerns about the ramifications of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Municipality of East Hants has actually laid out in very clear terms the concerns that they have. Number one on their list is that they weren't consulted. Well, the motion before us allows for that consultation to take place before the bill is brought back for third reading, I think that's very appropriate. Maybe the minister will start with East Hants, because they actually listed in a very detailed way the concerns they have with how this bill will be practically applied.

Mr. Speaker, when we got to Law Amendments Committee on this bill, we started to hear from the varied business districts that I was talking about earlier here in the city. The North End district and the Spring Garden district, and the Quinpool district, all basically saying this is not what we asked for, this does not solve our problem. It may kick our problem down the road, but it doesn't solve it, and there has been too much kicking problems down the road already, to just add another problem to the list of problems that have been deferred to another day. Of course, they wonder well, what's the second shoe to drop that will happen at a later date?

You know, Mr. Speaker, in fairness, they literally should be able to see both shoes in the pair before they're asked to pass judgment on whatever the government plan is for commercial property taxes.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that what we are talking about here is the total amount of commercial tax that is placed on the backs of our small and large businesses, whether it bears any relation to their ability to pay, and whether that amount of tax causes them to make decisions about whether to locate their business in a downtown area or in the suburbs or in a rural area. Maybe the decisions that our taxes force them to make aren't decisions that are best for their customers or for the business itself. Surely, surely we've reached a point now, with all the economic hardship we see around us, where we want the government to make clear rules that businesses can make decisions by and rely on, and make decisions that are in the best interests of growing their business, hiring people, and

serving their customers. But when a half measure comes in with more to follow, they can't do that. It holds us back.

That's just in the city, where we have this incredible disparity between the taxes on downtown businesses and the taxes that large corporations in the suburbs pay. Then you look across the province, you look across the province at our rural municipalities and what they're starting to speak up and tell us about is the effect of this bill.

It's easy to use Cumberland County as an example of where there are towns within a rural municipality. There are some pretty big differences in the commercial tax rate between the old Town of Springhill, the current Town of Oxford, the Town of Parrsboro, or even the Town of Amherst compared to the county. That actually should be addressed so that the whole county can flourish without having people make decisions on where they're going to locate their business because of the widely varying tax rates. This bill doesn't address that.

It does say, for those who are in a high tax area, we'll let your taxes continue to go up; we'll just push it a little further into the future. Well that's not good enough, Mr. Speaker. We need to actually find ways to get the cost of government down. We need to find ways to get the commercial tax rates down so that our small businesses are freed up to grow, to invest their earnings in their own business, to hire more people.

After all, the best investment that we can make in this province is in a homegrown small business, to allow it to grow into a bigger business. Nova Scotians have been pretty clear, rightly so, that they're tired of handing out big cheques to foreign companies that come in for a few years and then they go. What's the right answer for that? It is to actually get taxes down across the board for small businesses that can then flourish, that every dollar they earn actually gets retained in the business to help it grow, that it can be used to hire a second person and then a third person and then a fourth person so that they can create employment in their community.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, we of course want that small business to make a profit and we want them to spend that profit in their own community. That's the great economic benefit of getting taxes down for small businesses.

Rather than bring a bill into this House which gets taxes down in some way, it actually allows them to keep going up and spread out the increase. No wonder the small business representatives that are out there have come to this House to express concerns about what this bill does.

Mr. Speaker, maybe the government didn't think of this, I don't know, but by creating these business districts that can have a special ability to smooth out their tax increases, they may think that gives autonomy to each of our municipalities, but East Hants is the first one to say that's not what would happen. Even if a municipality does not want

to go down the road of just smoothing out ever-higher taxes, if their neighbour takes that step it creates tax competition between two neighbouring Nova Scotia municipalities, and it forces them all into the same boat. This is a great example of a race to the bottom - no one wins it - a race to the bottom of who can create the most business district associations and smooth out their taxes.

Surely it's time to look at a way, across the province, working in partnership with municipalities, of finding ways to get the cost of government down and to get the tax rate down so that businesses can grow. Then we're not picking winners and losers. The creative ability of Nova Scotia's entrepreneurs will decide where a business should be located, what product it should sell, who it should hire to get the greatest economic bang.

This bill actually takes the problem of favouritism and it makes it worse, because now the government is actually enabling the ability to pick winners and losers. If you're in this district, you can get a special deal to smooth out your tax increases but if you're in another district over here, you can't.

Mr. Speaker, that creates great distortions in the economy across the province. It means that decisions that are not optimal for job creation will get made because of the taxes, and Nova Scotians will lose out. They will lose out on jobs; they will lose out on opportunity; they will lose out on profits that could be spent in their own communities. The bill does not address that.

I strongly believe that this motion before us to hoist the bill six months hence to allow for a proper consultation, a proper examination, and to reveal whatever Part II is so that we can have the whole package to see is the right thing to do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I just have to say, while we're talking about consultations and whether they happen before bills come in or not, that we've been down this road before. Today it is Nova Scotia's small businesses, the commercial businesses in our downtown core that are feeling un-consulted and it is our municipalities, the direct municipal units, like East Hants, that are feeling like they weren't consulted. That is coming up now that we're here so late in the bill.

Mr. Speaker, it was just a few months ago, on Pharmacare, that the Minister of Health and Wellness said that everything was fine with the Pharmacare increases because he consulted with seniors. Now they did have a meeting with the Group of IX, which is the representative group of seniors, but they didn't give them the whole picture. They only told them that Pharmacare costs were going to go up around 5 per cent and certainly the Group of IX walked away thinking that meant the premiums might go up around 5 per cent. They were completely blindsided when they went up 100 per cent and 200 per cent for many seniors.

Mr. Speaker, this is the difference between pretend consultation and real consultation. Real consultation means telling people the whole story, not just a half measure - that was Pharmacare.

The same thing happened with the film business. The government said it consulted with Screen Nova Scotia but it turns out they were shocked, the entire industry was shocked; they were blindsided when the government eliminated the underpinnings of the film industry here in Nova Scotia. That was 3,200 jobs. They had a pretend consultation, not a real consultation.

It's kind of amazing - the government would actually save itself a lot of headaches, if they would just trust Nova Scotians with the straight goods, if they would just trust them with the entire picture. Now today we have exactly this situation where we have business districts and rural municipalities saying they're not doing what we asked.

Now I know that there are some business districts that are saying this is a step in the right direction and I encourage the minister to bring those comments forward when he speaks on this because that's fair ball. But I've got to be clear from what they're telling us, this is not the package deal that they were hoping for. A vague promise that they'll address their other concerns at a later date is not going to do. After all, seniors have been told that; they're still waiting for their consultation. The film industry was told that; they're still waiting for any change that gives them a hope of succeeding in the future, and on and on it goes.

Mr. Speaker, we are well over two years now into the government's mandate. The time for half measures is long past. The time for bringing bills here that it only turns out later weren't properly vetted by the stakeholders is long past. There's no way in its current form that we can support a bill that goes down the same road, making the same mistakes as the government has made on so many other bills. The right thing to do is to take six months and give the government time to go and do the job it should have done in the first place, which is to properly talk to the people affected. For that reason, I completely support the hoist motion from the member for Pictou West, and I encourage other members to do the same thing.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: I'm glad to see some enthusiasm over there for a change. I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill No. 177, to the amendments, and also the hoist motion. We also agree with this hoist motion because we too feel that more work needs to be done on this bill. We have concerns, actually, about the bill.

The Municipal Government Act is currently undergoing a review, which is expected to be completed in the Spring of 2017, and the Department of Municipal Affairs

is in the process of negotiating a collaborative agreement with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities. We'd like to know why the government is making a number of small amendments to the Act before these other processes are actually complete. We feel it's another example of government taking action without adequate and meaningful engagement with the stakeholders.

These amendments will result in municipalities actually competing with each other for commercial development. We feel government is actually picking winners and losers because this creates two classes of commercial ownership, some with preferential property tax rates.

In fact, I have to point out, if the truth be known, this bill has the potential to benefit two Liberal MLAs who own land and businesses in one of the likely target areas, which is Quinpool Road. Much of the potential tax advantage could leave the province, using this example of Quinpool Road. In that business area, 70 per cent of those businesses are national or international companies, so for every dollar of tax advantage, only 30 cents will stay in the local economy - 30 cents in the local economy. That's not very good. That's not good for business.

If there are decreases in the taxes paid by the commercial sector of property taxpayers, then that increases the tax burden on the owners of residential properties. Property taxes are already inequitable. They're based on capital assets, not income, which is the person's ability to pay. This bill allows municipalities to reduce tax for some businesses and not others, which increases the inequity.

There are more pressing issues, especially, for instance, affordable housing. If the province wants to do something about the range of municipal powers, shouldn't it be focusing on that first? We've already heard today about the Bloomfield project and how they're not going to be going ahead with that as a public works project. I have to say that there are so many people who are looking for affordable housing, not just in Halifax but right across the province.

This bill doesn't actually address the need that's identified, and may actually do more harm than good. That's why our Party, the NDP, has introduced our own bills dealing with the issues that we feel this bill does not address.

It's why we feel that, for instance, where the province has put money into a project to secure affordable housing, then the affordable housing must be provided for at least 15 years. This deals with situations where the province secures the affordable housing through a mortgage, and then the owner goes to the municipality to obtain a development agreement to allow a large building on a site proclaiming that there will be affordable housing, but HRM takes the view that it cannot require affordable housing, so it does not include the obligation for it in the development agreement. Then the owner can build the building, pay off its mortgage with the province, and the result is no affordable housing but, in effect, an

apartment building. Mr. Speaker, we feel that this is a much more pressing issue than the bill proposed here.

Also we feel that our second bill actually would plug the gap of a municipality not being able to negotiate for affordable housing as part of a development agreement. I have to say that I tend to think that it can do this under existing legislation, but this bill, our bill would make the power greater. It would make it clear, and it also offers a mechanism for enforcing the affordable housing obligation, through requiring income data to be provided.

Mr. Speaker, we feel that we have a bold vision for our capital city, for a better Halifax, and isn't that what we all want? I'd also like to draw the members' attention once more to two significant issues that have happened in Halifax recently, that a lot of concerned citizens are contacting us about, and they've generated considerable outcry among the City of Halifax's residents. Now, at first glance these two issues seem unconnected: one involves a large heritage residence on Young Avenue in Halifax's South End that has just been demolished; the other is a cluster of modest but sturdy homes in a vibrant North End neighbourhood. Now, all of these residences are within a hair's breadth of demolition, and as I said, the one in the South End, unfortunately, is already gone. Underlying both of these issues is the city's apparent inability to control the issue of demolition permits and to effectively protect streetscapes, and heritage spaces, and to ensure also, affordable housing.

Now, these problems are exacerbated by flaws within the HRM Charter, and deficiencies with the application of the current heritage legislation. So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, a bold vision at the provincial level would actually help Halifax become the city that residents want and deserve, and as Critic of Communities, Culture and Heritage, I say we need to preserve our heritage, Mr. Speaker. People don't come to Halifax to see skyscrapers and modern apartment buildings; they come to see our history. They come to see one of the oldest provinces in Canada and see the way life used to be. Look at Montreal, look at what they're doing in Montreal, what they've done there with the old city and then the new city - Quebec City, same thing; Vancouver, same thing; Toronto, Cabbagetown; all of these different areas that are unique, and should remain unique because that's what makes them different from everywhere else in Canada, or in fact, in the world.

This bill that is before the House needs more consultation. It needs to go back and it needs to be put off until a further time, which is why I believe this hoist motion is a good one. The stated intention of the amendments to Bill No. 177 are to provide municipalities with a tool to encourage economic development growth by allowing them to create by-laws to phase in increases in commercial property tax based on assessments. The amendments also allow for "cancellation, reduction or refund of taxes paid as a result of the phasing-in;" of the increase.

The commercial property assessment process will remain unchanged. The amendments relate to letting municipalities set their own formula for phasing in increased

property taxes over a period of time, up to 10 years. The stated intention is to encourage businesses to invest in their properties, resulting in higher assessed values, which then would not have an immediate impact on their property taxes, due to the phased-in approach, and would encourage densification. They say it applies to areas with existing water and wastewater services. It applies to brown fields, which had previously been used for industrial purposes or some commercial uses, and such land may have been contaminated, Mr. Speaker, and also with hazardous waste, or pollution, or is feared to be such.

They say that the intention is also to have zones designated and linked to planning strategies and that this bill was brought about in part by a request from HRM to be able to implement a system of rolling averages for commercial property tax. It said that the minister will review these by-laws, developed by municipalities, and he or she has the ability to approve or disapprove on the basis of conflict with the law and provincial interest.

However, as I've mentioned before, the provincial interest - now this is at issue - one of the grounds for the minister to refuse to approve a proposed bylaw is really not clearly defined, Mr. Speaker. It's anticipated that these amendments will result in municipalities seriously competing with each other, as I mentioned, for commercial development. So although the intention is to have these bylaws linked to planning strategies and applied to zones, the amendments actually state that bylaws can apply to a district defined as one or more "eligible properties," which means preferential commercial property tax could be incorporated into the very site-specific development agreements.

Again, this begs to ask the question, is this government choosing winners and losers, even though they say they don't want to do that? In fact, this allows them to do so. The current wording of amendments does not clearly require the development districts being established as part of a municipal planning strategy, so a suggested change would be changing 71C to read, it "must establish, in accordance with a municipal planning strategy, one or more commercial development districts," and if this change is not made, then it may be possible for municipalities to designate development districts through bylaws only, which is a much less formal process.

The Municipal Government Act is currently undergoing this review, as I said, and it is expected to be completed in Spring 2017, so why the rush? I agree with my colleague here with the Progressive Conservatives. Why the rush? Why is the government making a number of these small amendments to the Act before this review is completed, as I've mentioned before?

If there are decreases in the taxes paid by the commercial sector of property taxpayers, then that increases the tax burden on the owners of residential properties. So government - again, picking winners and losers - creates two classes of commercial ownership, some with preferential property tax rates.

As I said before, Mr. Speaker, there are many more pressing issues, especially with affordable housing. If the province wants to do something about the range of municipal powers, why not focus on affordable housing? With that, I'll take my seat, and I believe one of our colleagues from the other Party is about to speak. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

MR. KEITH IRVING: I'm pleased to stand today to speak to this bill. I bring to this Legislature some history with this issue. It's really spurred on by the comments that we're in a rush. If we're in a rush, then this explains why Nova Scotia changes so slowly.

This issue began in 2010 when towns, in reaction to their deep economic problems, asked UNSM to strike a Towns Task Force to look at the issues of fiscal sustainability of towns and the inequalities and unfairness between towns and rural municipalities. The idea that we are creating competition through this bill is not correct. Competition exists right now, and in terms of unfair advantage, right now rural municipalities have an unfair advantage to towns. Any of us who represent towns and rural municipalities would see this and understand that our downtown cores are being rotted out as the tax system allows development to push away from the centre - something that's completely unsustainable.

The Towns Task Force struck in 2010 included representatives by towns, HRM, and regional municipalities. The regional municipalities that sat on the Towns Task Force included Keith Hunter, the Warden of the County of Cumberland, and Sandra Statton from the District of Lunenburg. It was important when that task force was formed that we had regional representation so that these issues were vetted and reviewed by regional municipalities. Eighteen months, perhaps two years of work, two years of consultation with municipalities, was undertaken by the Towns Task Force, and in September 2012 the town's task force brought forward their recommendations to the UNSM.

I was present at that meeting. There were 250, perhaps, maybe more, municipal representatives who voted on the task force report in September 2012, that's three and a half years ago the consultation took place. The recommendations came forward and the members of UNSM supported those recommendations in a vote.

Goal 6 of that report was to provide new tools and incentives to increase economic growth in downtowns. That's what this bill is about. There's an unfair system right now, in which rural municipalities do not pay for roads - towns have the economic pressure of maintaining those roads. It is completely fiscally unsustainable. The result is the downtowns are rotting out as we get more and more abandoned buildings in small towns throughout Nova Scotia as rural municipalities capitalize on the abilities of having big box on the periphery, where there's cheaper land and lower taxes. What do we do? We then leave vacant land in our downtown cores, that have municipal water and sewer systems sitting there, paid for by the taxpayers, and we expand out and build more infrastructure - completely unsustainable and not a good use of taxpayers' money.

So one of the ideas - and it has been used throughout North America to assist urban centres to redevelop their downtown cores make effective use of the existing water and sewer and transportation infrastructure - is to find some incentives to get developers and business owners to redevelop those downtown cores. So rather than someone saying, I'm moving out of the downtown core because I can go down the road and find cheap land, and cheaper taxes, and put my building, my business out on the peripheries. That may benefit that one owner there, but it increases the cost to all the owners as we spread and decentralize our municipalities, and just expand, expand, expand the municipal water and sewer systems, and the roads, and the transportation networks.

So the purpose of this bill is to find an incentive to allow people to redevelop their properties in the downtown core, by allowing them to invest in their building, redevelop it, and it's important to note in the legislation under Clause 1, Section 71C(2)(a) is this is about the increased assessed value, and that's what happens if someone has a million dollar building that's reached the end of its life and puts a million dollar investment into that building in the downtown core, their taxes go up. Their taxes go up significantly on that reinvestment. So this is a tool to allow that building owner to invest in the downtown core, using taxpayers' money more wisely, instead of building new infrastructure, and allows them 10 years to absorb the increased taxes that would result from that investment in the downtown core.

So this clearly is something that reinforces sustainability - and I would hope that my colleagues from the New Democratic Party would recognize the importance of sustainability with respect to our municipal infrastructure, the wise use of that infrastructure, not to mention, if - and this is to my colleague's concerns about affordable housing - we do not want affordable housing put out on the periphery of downtowns, we want those in the downtown core. We want those developments, we want those buildings redeveloped in the downtown core where people can live close to transportation systems, close to services, close to stores, and a vital downtown.

So this bill supports both large urban cities and smaller towns in redeveloping the cores where people want to live, where we want to situate affordable housing and where we already have millions if not billions of dollars invested in infrastructure.

So to the hoist motion, we have spent six years discussing this at the municipal level - six years and there may be one or two municipal councillors, maybe recently elected, I don't know who wrote that letter, but to stop progress in this province because after six years we have a few folks not fully understanding the impact, the history, the consultation that has taken place, no wonder Nova Scotia stands still. This is a small step for progress to help this province move forward in a sustainable way and I see no reason to support this motion. All this bill does is enable municipalities, who can re-consult individually in their own municipalities, on whether to move forward with this tool, so we are only providing a tool for municipalities to move forward.

There's nothing written in stone here, municipalities can consult with their business communities, their chambers and their citizens to decide whether this one tool can help them move forward in the revitalization of their downtown cores and the long-term sustainability for every taxpayer in a municipality. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak to the motion urging the government to send this back to the municipalities for consultations. We just heard from the member for Kings South that it's a small step, it's just an enabling step and the issue I have with that is that oftentimes history is an indication of future performance, we have seen with this government, many times they'll introduce a bill or make a statement to much fanfare and then when you start to really assess and understand what it is they are saying, there's much more going on.

Many times there's more going on than even the government realizes and we'll talk a little bit about that today. This is one where clearly there are municipal people who believe there's more than meets the eye. They want to have their say on this and I certainly support them in that. During the course of this session, and I'm going to try to use my best skills to talk this afternoon about why I support them because it has been an interesting session in the respect that at one point I had a member opposite say I couldn't shine his shoes and then just the other night the member for Yarmouth referred to me as the great orator from Pictou East. I will certainly do everything I can today to live up to that title he has given me because I know that the minister, when he makes those types of comments, he makes them thoughtfully so he certainly would have (Interruption) Yes, that would be a term of endearment whereas the other one might not have been.

The only thing I am slightly concerned about when I hear the member make those statements is I look at his record as the minister of this portfolio and the minister before him and I'm afraid he's going to make a few amendments to it because we do know that the minister puts forward a number of bills to do kind of small steps, as the member would say, and when you look at them in aggregate, there's more happening there.

So to have that compliment bestowed upon me I will certainly try to live up to that this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It is true that a necessary part of speaking is listening and I know that the members in the Chamber here might often feel that I do too much speaking but I can guarantee them that that's because I do a lot of listening when I'm away from this Chamber. I think that is the key to what we're talking about here. When we bring legislation forward, are we listening to the voices of the people, to the concerns of the people? At this moment in time, on this bill, there are certainly a lot of people sticking their hand up in the air saying, we weren't listened to; there was no discussion with us. Their concerns on the face of it certainly have validity to me.

There will no doubt be all kinds of very practical limitations to implementing what this bill tries to do. We have seen that time and time again with government bills and policies and stuff that they brought forward that when you start to really try and understand what they are trying to do and will it work often times, too often, it doesn't work.

Obviously, the Seniors' Pharmacare Program is a recent example where a statement to much fanfare and isn't this wonderful, isn't this great what we are doing, and then when you start to ask a couple of questions and peel it back - not so great, not so effective. That is one case where the Premier did say well, you know what? You are right: I should have listened and we should have done better. That is what happens so often. Who knows if that is the case here with the implementation of this bill, what will happen, but I think there are enough question marks that more time is necessary.

The member talked about making a million-dollar investment in a building downtown and having some mechanism to bleed in the new assessment value of that, but I don't know that it has been thought through. What happens if that building sold in year two? Do you pay the differed taxes for that period? All these types of things, there will be very practical implications to this. I am worried that what it was meant to be, a sexy headline. It was meant to be a headline that grabs the attention of municipal people and say - oh, well, we are looking at this but when you dig down, it just doesn't work. It just doesn't work. So, I think there is a lot of validity in the request to send this back and look at it.

It is interesting. We know the history of the number of different bills and amendments that have come forward with the charter, and probably a steady stream will come with the MGA. We know that there will probably be a bunch more. If I looked at the UNSM main policy issues for them, the main policy issues for them, I do not know how far down the list you would have to go, Mr. Speaker, but it is certainly not in their top nine issues.

Their top issue was the cap; that is the number one thing they wanted to talk about. This isn't about the cap. Their second one was economic development. Maybe, arguably this might kind of help that but I am going to talk a bit later about why they think it will not. The fiscal review - well I will speak to the minister in a minute about why it won't. In the fullness of time, he will hear the issues people have. LED streetlights - I'm going through the things that are important to them: the Municipal Alcohol Project; Municipal Awareness Week, that is in their top nine; the Town's Task Force that my colleague referenced; women in local governments; the municipal auditor general. These are the things that are on their top list. This bill is not about that, so that is curious as to what the motives might be behind what we are seeing happen here.

I think what has happened in this case is the government is falling into the same pattern, every time it assumes it knows the answers, they will do it and then the municipalities will be happy, will be just so happy that the government came in and saved

the day. But the problem is that they do not make people happy because they are not that effective in getting to where they need to be.

In fact, that is why on this side of the House we have recognized the limitations of the government's ego to see good ideas. We actually started bringing bills, instead of bringing forward solutions. We know they don't have the maturity to accept those solutions, so instead we've started to say, let's introduce bills that call for consultations. We did that this week. We had a bill come before here that just called for consultations - speak to young people, talk about the things that matter to young people, and solutions will bubble up. Of course, we know what happened when that suggestion was made - a senior staffer called it garbage. We'll probably come back and try another approach to deal with this government and those types of things.

We've had numerous bills where we called for consultations on issues around Lyme disease, youth issues. No need to consult, have all the answers, we're going to put the legislation through, has been what we've come up against. We even had a bill that asked the government to define what it was that they legislated two years ago.

I'm looking at this bill through the lens of that history. That history suggests that this bill needs to be pulled on the horns a little bit, and let's talk to the municipalities. Maybe the member for Kings South is right, and maybe this is okay, and maybe it takes a couple more months to get everyone on board. Why not, instead of jamming something through? This bill came into the Legislature two weeks ago, and here we are today on third reading.

Against that backdrop, let's talk about what is really happening here. I know my colleague opposite said that this is a bill that will reinforce sustainability. I will reference - it's been tabled already - the letter that was circulated to a number of municipalities. It came from the warden of the Municipality of East Hants. I will reference some of the concerns that were raised by that municipality. They're fair questions and they're good concerns.

The number one thing that they've said is that there is an MGA review happening. We all know that that is happening. That's something that should be respected. It was certainly announced with much fanfare in the Fall, when the minister announced that the department was working with the UNSM and the Association of Municipal Administrators to carry out a review and what that review was going to look at. If you think about saying that and extending this branch and the impression that this review is serious and necessary, and then here we are a few months later circumventing that process and introducing a piece of legislation.

Well, if the review was serious, and the review was important, why wouldn't these types of amendments and these types of suggestions have been bubbling out of the review? Why are we short-circuiting the review process and coming up with legislation here? I

think the answer probably lies in the history of, we'll just put more bills in. We'll just do a bunch more bills - one line at a time we'll do the Charter, and one line at a time we'll do the MGA.

Meanwhile in the background, the review will be happening, and the people it impacts will be trying to deal with it. I've talked to municipalities that have staff working on the MGA review process and they're not aware of this bill coming through. They have staff dedicated to the MGA review. They're taking the MGA review, but the government is not because the government is fulfilling its own agenda, I guess.

We know with this government, when they rush things on their own agenda, one or two things generally happen. The first thing that usually happens is a senior Party supporter gets a pretty good consulting gig out of it, often untendered. The second thing that happens is there's a number of unintended consequences to what was happening

I think there are unintended consequences to this bill here that need to be addressed, but the Municipal Government Act review is needed and is important, and it will be. The MGA is an important piece of legislation, but it does need to be updated. I think it should be updated in the context of what comes out of the review from the actual people who are being consulted and are part of that review. If I look at the guiding principles for the ongoing MGA review just announced in the Fall, at the time it was announced the guiding principles were stipulated. What is going to guide this review?

The government said at the time that the goal of the review was a revised MGA that would be relevant to current and future needs of municipalities. Well, that's a real good goal, and here we're hearing from municipalities that say this is not meeting our future needs. This is hampering us a little bit and then in terms of the other goals, that it would provide municipalities with the tools to support stable and predictable long-term funding. Well, that's nice, sure that's a nice objective, that's a good soundbite - and then it goes on with the principles.

The point I'm trying to make is if you go through the effort to establish a review and have a nice airy-fairy press conference, and you create a pretty document with all kinds of guiding principles, then you should abide by them. It should be what you're actually planning to do, and yet, just a few short months later, we have a piece of legislation that doesn't come out of that process at all. So, the minister has indicated that he believes it does, and maybe we'll hear how a bit later on today, but the MGA review documentation says that at the end of the day for the review, recommendations for change will be fair, they will be evidence-based, they will be realistic and they will be based on solid policy research, and rationale. Okay, that sounds good.

That's a good way. That's a good background to have before you make a recommendation. The recommendations would have input from appropriate and adequate consultations, and I think that's what we're here talking about today. We're saying that that

hasn't happened just yet, or at least it hasn't happened to the extent that the municipalities are confident it has, and those are the constituents that this minister should be trying to satisfy, those people who are satisfied that they've been consulted and they've had their input, that there's a reasonable chance that this will meet the principles of helping them, and helping them grow their areas.

So, here we have an MGA review, ongoing, and we have a piece of legislation that hits the floor of the Legislature on May 5th, I guess May 5th was exactly two weeks ago today, but by May 17th we have a municipality, and I will reference the letter from the East Hants Municipality, hitting kind of the panic button and saying wow, this piece of legislation is before the Legislature and it could receive third reading within two days - and here we are. They were right. That prediction was right, and we are at third reading of this bill.

At that time, just two days ago, they prepared a very thoughtful letter and circulated it to their colleagues in municipal government, and their concerns deserve some debate on the floor of this Legislature, because to do otherwise would not be fair to their concerns, which they have obviously taken the time to articulate in a very well-written letter. For this Legislature to sit on their hands and not pay attention to that just wouldn't be right by me and I won't allow it to happen. So that is the genesis behind the motion for the hoist and it deserves some due consideration. Hopefully maybe the minister - I will relay their concerns and hopefully maybe the minister will speak to them, perhaps even their MLA, the member for Hants East may speak to some of their concerns today to try and alleviate their concerns on the floor of this Legislature.

In writing their letter they referred to the review, obviously, the MGA review that's happening. They talked about their understanding from having staff dedicated to this review, that that working group that's doing the review was going to take a broad approach to developing a tool kit for municipalities and that that approach would ultimately end up giving municipalities more flexibility in how they manage their municipality and that there would be clear policy recommendations around several tools and incentives, and we talked about some of those recommendations. They had a reason to believe that would be the case because they had probably read the government's glossy brochures on what they were going to do in the review and the principles that would guide them and how the recommendation would come and they probably read that and are participating in a process and they probably believed it.

Here they were on May 17th, urging municipalities to contact their MLAs because they think it has fallen off the rails here. I think when you stand back and try to understand the importance of them writing a letter like this and how probably difficult it would be for them to write this letter, I'm sure not wanting to kind of ruffle any feathers, you know that they are troubled by this and you know that they are taking this seriously and we should too, because they believe, they are concerned, and I've heard this from other municipalities,

that what this bill does is it actually pits municipalities against each other and divides a group that should be united.

Some of their concerns, and maybe some of them can be alleviated here a bit on the floor but maybe they can't. I worry that they can't be addressed and probably they shouldn't be fully addressed by a bunch of MLAs standing around debating this bill. They should probably be addressed with the municipalities themselves, would be the best way to do that, and that is why we're calling for more time and a six-month hoist. We'll bring it back in six months and we'll talk about it.

Probably I'm sure we would be bringing it back at that time with some amendments. If they were properly consulted with, they would have some amendments that they would want, I would believe that to be the case.

One of the main things that kind of was pointed to me, that troubles me, is how this could, and it is enabling legislation for sure, but as soon as one municipality enacts this and starts to do this, it ultimately means that the other neighbouring municipalities have to follow suit. If they want to maintain their competitive situation with their neighbours, they will have to follow suit. That could create an environment where we have a bunch of municipalities circling the drain together and chasing down the rabbit hole on this.

That is not well thought out to begin with because it even can pit not only neighbouring municipalities against each other, but if you think of a situation where you have multiple business parks within the same municipal area and if you had one of them that did have urban services and one of them that did not have urban services or did not have sewer and water, both of those business parks could easily be within the same municipal boundaries, well now you are pitting both of those against each other.

Is that really the intent of this legislation, to force municipal government with the challenge of pitting this area against that area? Perhaps it is. Maybe that is the intent. I heard about our downtown cores in rural areas rotting out, and maybe that's the intent, to pit different areas against each other.

But if it's not, then that alone is a good reason to go back and rethink this legislation and talk to the people who are seeing these problems first-hand. They're on the ground, and they see them first-hand. I can think of many areas of the province where there are those types of situations of business parks - maybe a private business park and a municipal business park. This is a piece of legislation that just on the face of it would start to create that type of competition within the boundaries. Maybe that's what the government wants. I don't know if it is or not, but it's certainly something that would happen.

I did hear some chatter about this coming out of the Towns Task Force that the member referenced; I think it was in 2012. I wasn't involved in politics or municipal affairs or anything at that stage; I don't have that background. But I would believe that this

problem is not new. I don't think it's an issue that just started right away. But that doesn't mean that we should rush a solution. This feels a little rushed to me. Just to say that there was a task force that looked at this five years ago - a lot of things have changed since then, and a lot of the municipal people would be new as well. For some reason, it didn't pass then. There's reason enough to say, let's pull back here, and let's consult on this one for a bit more, just on that basis alone.

When you hear municipal officials saying that this bill lacks coordination of important tax policy at the provincial level and does not deliver on the Towns Task Force or fiscal review reports, that's an issue. That's an issue. Maybe it's an opinion, and maybe it's an opinion that's wrong, but it's a strong statement. It's a strong statement for a municipality to make, that this does not deliver on the Towns Task Force that was referenced and that it does not deliver on the fiscal review process that was put out in the reports.

When you think about that against this coming through this Legislature in two weeks - and this letter is dated May 17th, just two days ago - clearly not everyone was aware that this was happening. When they became aware, they probably - I don't want to use the word "panicked," but they certainly reacted, because they understand that this could have implications for them.

How does that happen? It only happens when there's a lack of consultation in the process. This one deserves more consultation.

I think the motion to hoist the bill for six months is a good one. It's a good one for the following reasons, and probably a bunch more that I'm not even aware of. One reason for sure is that you have municipalities that are concerned - and not just the ones that penned the letter. Certainly the ones that penned the letter brought some attention to this issue. Since then, other municipalities have said, wow, we either (a) didn't think of that or (b) didn't realize that or (c) just didn't know. Good on them.

I thank the municipality of East Hants for bringing these concerns forward, and I hope that the government members today have the courage to acknowledge their concerns, respect their concerns, and send this bill for six months consultation, and bring it back when they have done their homework, because so far it has not been fully done. The minister will have his opportunity to stand in his place and say that these people are wrong, and he can do that in whatever fashion he wants to - he can even say that I'm wrong if he wants - but I would hope that he would acknowledge the concerns are real. I would also be interested to hear from the member from East Hants on this. It's her area and they've raised serious concerns and they deserve to be respected.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I will urge the members opposite to pay close attention and to think carefully on this issue before they ram it through. Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, it wasn't my intention to stand and speak to this this evening, but I'm taking the opportunity here. It revolves around a Tweet the minister put off a few minutes ago. I can go and print it out later, I just don't have printing capabilities with my phone - if you want to - and I'm sure he will reference it in his closing when he does get his opportunity to do that. The gist of the Tweet was basically that he couldn't believe that the Tories were speaking against tax relief. That's kind of the gist of what he was saying there.

What I wanted to counter the minister on is that this is not tax relief; this is tax deferral, because at the end of the day they still can go up. It just allows you the opportunity to cap it and pay it over a longer period of time. There is no tax loss here; it is simply tax deferral. (Interruption) The minister can correct it when he has the opportunity to stand. That's the one issue, the Twitter thing that I wanted to bring up, and I hope he does have the opportunity to explain that as he goes along.

What I find interesting in this bill, because I remember when first reading came along, and we supported it going through second reading, off to Law Amendments where there were a number of presentations on this specific issue, which we found to be interesting because we didn't see it as too bad a bill. It did take on a number of issues that we have been hearing about, or concerned about, especially our rural constituencies.

What I found interesting though, and is really encapsulated very well in the letter from East Hants, it has to do with the way this process, or at least the consultation went down. It's interesting to note that through the UNSM there is a committee, and I'm just trying to find where that letter is, within the letter here, and I know it's probably been tabled a couple of times:

“The Economic and Business Development MGA Review working group is taking a holistic approach to developing a toolkit of products that will give municipal units more flexibility while ensuring we are not all ‘racing to the bottom’. There will be clear policy recommendations around several [economic and business development] toolkit items including. . . tax structures, tax deferral programs, property transactions with business, sector and density development, etc.

So, there's actually a group within the UNSM that has been tasked with dealing with these particular issues; now that is underlined in Bill No. 177. What we find from the letter from Warden Jim Smith is that that committee was not tasked in dealing with this specific issue - it was dealt with in another manner. It leads us to wonder whether there was a fulsome discussion around this, or was it more, there was an ask. It was a bit confusing, and therefore the department tried to do its best and come up with what it could.

I don't think that's the way we would believe that a fulsome consultation would go, that there would be more process. So quite honestly, I don't think holding this up until the next session of the House would be a terrible idea, nor would going back to do some further consultations to make sure that we have all the information on the table.

We, as Opposition, can only go with the information that's provided to us. Of course, we thank East Hants for putting together, I thought, a very concise letter on their concerns on this. We can go with what the minister says and what the technical briefing provides to us, as well as the rest of the media briefings that the ministers will do when it comes to producing these bills in here. But again, there's always that fulsome amount of time that more information becomes available that makes us question the validity of the information that was provided to us. I think this is what's happening here. I think there's more information that is out there, more information that would be required for us to make a positive vote on this particular bill.

I don't believe I want to vote no on every bill that is brought forward by government, but if there's ever a question in the information that's being provided to us, then that makes me a little anxious, and therefore makes me want to vote no, because I feel there's something missing or something that's being held from us.

Mr. Speaker, I think this motion to push it off, to look at it at another time, to allow the department to go back and consult with its partners, is reasonable. I think it's reasonable to say that there's more consultation that should happen to make sure that it is fair not only to every town in Nova Scotia or every city in Nova Scotia, but make sure that our rural constituencies are not adversely affected by this. This is tax deferral. It is not tax savings.

Of course, being the most highly-taxed province in all of Canada, we would like to see a real effort at bringing down taxes in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, those are my comments on it. Like I said, I was not going to speak on this one, but I did want to make sure that I did say a few words, that it's not necessarily the full content of what's in the bill or what the bill is destined to do, but that there was maybe a step missed in this process that I know the minister would want to go back and try to fix, or at least try to understand where something went wrong. So with those quick words, I thank the House to be able to say a few words.

MR. SPEAKER: Barring any more speakers, the motion is on the amendment.

There has been a call for a recorded vote.

We'll ring the bells until 5:00 p.m.

[4:33 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips satisfied?

We will proceed with the recorded vote on the amendment on Bill No. 177. Just a reminder for all members - when your name is called please stand up tall, state with a simple Yea or Nay your vote, and please remain silent for the duration of the vote.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[5:44 p.m.]

YEAS

Mr. MacLeod
Mr. Dunn
Mr. Baillie
Mr. d'Entremont
Mr. David Wilson
Ms. Mancini
Ms. Zann
Mr. Belliveau
Mr. Orrell
Ms. MacFarlane
Mr. Houston
Mr. MacMaster
Mr. Harrison
Mr. Lohr

NAYS

Mr. Churchill
Ms. Bernard
Ms. Regan
Mr. Samson
Ms. Whalen
Mr. Glavine
Mr. Delorey
Ms. Casey
Mr. MacLellan
Mr. Horne
Ms. Miller
Mr. Hines
Ms. Diab
Mr. Ince
Mr. Furey
Mr. Farrell
Ms. Arab
Mr. Maguire
Mr. Porter
Mr. Jessome
Ms. Lohnes-Croft
Mr. Irving
Mr. Gough
Ms. Treen
Mr. Wilton
Mr. Rankin
Mr. Gordon Wilson
Mr. Mombourquette

THE CLERK: For, 14. Against, 28.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion for the amendment is defeated.

We will now return to the debate on the original motion for Bill No. 177.

The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to say a few words to this bill, one that when we first saw the bill we had indicated that we would support, but now have, based on some of the information coming back to us, some reservations.

I would like to maybe make a comment on the comments of the member for Kings South that this in fact is correct comes out of the 2012 Towns Task Force. I notice that this is 2016 now, so, we have waited four years for this bill to come forward. And this government has been empowered since October 2013, so we have waited almost in fact three years for the Liberal Government, or two and a half years for the current government to bring forward a bill on this. While we were waiting two and a half years, nothing happened, and we had the bill about two weeks in our hands and, all of a sudden, it has to go through.

Our motion which we did not pass was that we take some time to have this bill get out into the community, because clearly while the UNSM wanted some action on this issue no one in the UNSM presumably saw this bill before it came forward to this House. So where is the time to have the consultation on the actual details of the bill? As we know in life, details do matter. Some of the issues with the bill are - as my colleagues have mentioned a number of issues with this bill, so where is the problem in taking a little bit more time to deal with it?

It takes only a cursory look at the UNSM website to realize this is not the number one issue before the UNSM. The number one issue by far and away is the cap, so if there are taxation issues that need to be dealt with, it's the cap issues. Certainly we realize there is an issue at this point that the UNSM does want to address and we'll certainly respect that. We respect the fact that our towns have great issues in this and I hope that we do not convey that we do not want to see issues that the towns bring forward addressed because I believe we certainly do want to see them addressed. We certainly recognize there are these issues within the towns. However, we do see that we've already had some pushback from rural areas.

There are issues with the bill, Mr. Speaker, and I wanted to speak to the fact that we do believe that our motion to reconvene, to look at it at a later date was serious, that we do believe that there does need to be input from different members of the UNSM and from different areas on the bill and that we believe the bill can be improved.

I know my colleagues raised a number of issues with this bill so I wanted to just take a moment to address those. We know that rural areas are concerned about this. I'm not sure that I agree with my colleague from Kings South that rural areas have all the advantages. I'm not sure that the rural areas of our province would agree with that statement and certainly I don't believe that would necessarily be the case.

The fact that this sat around for four years waiting to be addressed is a concern and it wasn't addressed. In any case it's always good to see the government act on something that has been waiting there, waiting to be done. However, this bill has only been before this House, in my understanding, for less than two weeks, so where was the consultation in the actual details of the bill? Why does it have to be done so quickly, right now, that it goes forward in a two-week span this bill is out?

I certainly know there are concerns about the details of the bill. With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the commentary from the members opposite, although I do find the positions somewhat curious, particularly from the Progressive Conservative Party. I do understand the NDP opposition to this because the NDP approach to economic development has been in this province to try and purchase big sector jobs by cutting public sector cheques and as we've seen, that has not worked.

This is a very different philosophy and approach to economic development and community development than we've previously seen with the NDP who gave Irving \$300 million in taxpayer money, who gave hundreds of millions of dollars to large paper mills and who would have continued to do that had the election not changed the government. I do understand why the NDP, a Party that has never been supportive of a small business - who is currently trying to push forward a large, mandatory, unsustainable minimum wage, which will negatively affect small business - would oppose such a bill that is designed to support small businesses in our downtowns. That makes sense to me because this bill does not fit within the philosophy or economic development strategy of the NDP.

What I do not understand however, Mr. Speaker, is how the Progressive Conservative Party, a Party that has said in the past that tax relief for small businesses was important, who has criticized this government in terms of not doing enough for tax relief - how that Party can then oppose a bill designed to do just that. This is actually in response to requests that were made from the small business community, which I will reference momentarily. It actually fits in line with many things that that Party has said.

I will provide some quotes to the Legislature. “If you add up property tax, income tax, sales tax, corporate tax we are the highest in the country for total tax, we are number one or near number one in every category. Nova Scotia is an expensive place to live and earn a salary.” That’s the Leader of the Official Opposition.

“With the economy so sluggish, Nova Scotian families can rightly ask why the government wants to reach deeper into their pockets, rather than give them some needed tax relief.” That’s the Leader of the Official Opposition.

The member for Pictou East has said, “Small businesses in this province need a government that understands that high taxes hurt job creation. . . High taxes do not help small businesses grow.”

It’s curious that once again we have a Party that takes one position until government actually does something that falls in line with that. Then they oppose it, and they pretend it’s based on economic rationale or policy principle, which it’s not.

The member for Pictou East, who I have rightfully called the great orator from Pictou East - I know that’s a title that that member would really enjoy (Interruptions)

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

MR. CHURCHILL: I think he is a great speaker. I’m starting to see why, because we’ve had the same speech on repeat, day in and day out. No matter what issue we’re talking about in the House, it’s the same exact speech. If any of us were to practise the same speech on every single topic, we would be pretty good at speech-giving as well. So I do want to commend the member on taking his time to practise and honing those skills in this House. Well done. (Interruptions)

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

MR. CHURCHILL: Again, what we have not seen that member do is take a position on municipal amalgamation. That member, along with his Leader, have opposed bills that were brought forward in this House that had been pushed by our municipal units and the official body that represents them, the UNSM. They are opposing what municipalities actually want, so they referenced one letter of opposition to this, the East Hants letter. They’ve referenced one letter. They have not referenced or tabled another letter or anything being presented from other municipal units.

I will say that this does come directly from consultation. The only argument that’s been presented by the Official Opposition, by the Progressive Conservative Party, against this bill is that proper consultation has not happened.

None of those members, when they stood - none of them - have provided any analysis about this actual bill. They haven't said how or why they think it's not going to help small business. They have not said why they believe municipalities shouldn't have asked for this. There has been no analysis provided of this. In fact, none of them even explained what this bill is actually doing appropriately or accurately. The only argument that has been presented is that consultation has not happened. I take great exception to that because there has been significant consultation that has happened within the UNSM and with the business community, and I do have the documents right here, Mr. Speaker.

The members of the Opposition are currently apologizing, but I would save those apologies not for the minister but for the small business community and the municipal governments that those members choose to oppose in this House.

This is a quote from the CFIB: "The inability of municipalities to address localized property tax burdens because of upward pressures from increased property assessments is problematic for many Nova Scotian businesses in many municipalities. CFIB and our members support municipal commercial property tax reform." That's from the CFIB. They've highlighted these drastic increases in assessment as one of their key problems.

The Towns Task Force directed us to, "Provide new tools and incentives to increase economic growth in downtowns." Specifically, they asked the province to move forward to provide financial tools and other incentives to encourage redevelopment in certain areas. That is from the Towns Task Force officially. This is an official position of the UNSM.

I will table all these. The chambers of commerce have supported this as well. We have a letter from UNSM president Mayor Cecil Clark that says, "The Towns Task Force had recommended this tool be applied to downtowns, main streets, and brownfield sites. . . The UNSM Board recognizes the value of the tool and would be willing to work with the province to ensure it is appropriately applied and to monitor its impact."

The consultative work has actually been done - I'll table all these comments - and we are now moving forward with this. We don't need to take another six months to look at this. The UNSM is a democratic organization, so yes, there is not always 100 per cent approval amongst the membership. In this case, we have had one dissenting voice presented from East Hants, and I do think the concerns they brought forward are legitimate concerns, but there are protections in this bill against their primary concern, which is a race-to-the-bottom scenario.

This is going to be reviewed after four years. It's a low risk. This will provide needed tax relief for small businesses in downtowns, in brownfield sites that municipalities redevelop, because it phases in the increase to assessments. Right now, if there's a development in downtown Yarmouth, for example, that will shoot assessments up for everybody in that particular area, that they will have to pay for right away, that impacts small businesses.

This will allow a municipality, if they so choose - this is just enabling legislation - to phase in that cost for the entire zone over the course of 10 years, and those businesses can save up to 50 per cent of what that increase would have been. That is a reasonable approach to this.

I find it odd that the Tories will say, on the one hand, this bill doesn't do enough, but oh my God, it's doing too much and we need to take another six months to look at it. I find it odd that the Progressive Conservatives would oppose a bill designed to provide tax relief for small business.

We do not need to wait any longer. This is a good move by our government. It's supported by the small business community. It's supported by our municipalities. They are our chief partners in moving forward these sorts of pieces of legislation, and we are very proud to continue to do this on their behalf.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I move to close third reading on Bill No. 177. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 177.

There has been a call for a recorded vote.

We will ring the bells for one hour. The House will recess until 6:17 p.m.

[5:17 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips satisfied?

Before we proceed with the recorded vote on Bill No. 177, I'd like to remind all members that when your name is called please stand tall in your place, state a simple Yea or Nay, and remain silent for the duration of the recorded vote.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[6:17 p.m.]

YEAS

Mr. Churchill
Ms. Bernard
Ms. Regan
Mr. Samson

NAYS

Mr. Dunn
Mr. Baillie
Mr. d'Entremont
Mr. David Wilson

Mr. McNeil	Ms. Mancini
Ms. Whalen	Ms. Zann
Mr. Delorey	Mr. Belliveau
Ms. Casey	Mr. Orrell
Mr. MacLellan	Mr. MacMaster
Mr. Colwell	Mr. Harrison
Mr. Horne	Mr. Lohr
Ms. Miller	
Mr. Hines	
Ms. Diab	
Mr. Ince	
Mr. Furey	
Mr. Farrell	
Ms. Arab	
Mr. Maguire	
Mr. Porter	
Mr. Jessome	
Ms. Lohnes-Croft	
Ms. Eyking	
Mr. Irving	
Mr. Gough	
Ms. Treen	
Mr. Wilton	
Mr. Rankin	
Mr. Gordon Wilson	
Mr. Mombourquette	

THE CLERK: Those in favour of the motion 30, those against 11.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

Ordered that the bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 174.

Bill No. 174 - Financial Measures (2016) Act

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 174 - the Financial Measures (2016) Act - be now read a third time and do pass.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from my colleagues in the Legislature on this bill through third reading. Thank you.

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

HON CHIRSTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand this evening and talk to the Financial Measures (2016) Bill.

The Financial Measures Act, for those who are joining us today, is the enacting document to the budget. I know the minister has come up and spoken to this issue a couple of times, saying, well you know, you're talking about two different things here. You can't just talk about anything, you should talk about what is actually within the document. I think the minister in some ways is right, and some ways I think he's wrong. The Financial Measures Act is a document that takes all of the budget information, all of the information that we had within estimates, all of those priorities and business plans that the government has, and actually puts them into law.

Mr. Speaker, this is the bill that gives the authority to government to spend - what is it - \$10 billion, or somewhere very close to it. So \$10 billion of taxpayers' dollars, whether from our own sources here in the Province of Nova Scotia, or from the transfer payments that we receive from the federal government. Quite honestly, it is from the same taxpayer; there's only really one taxpayer in the Province of Nova Scotia. There is a municipal payer, there's a provincial payer, and a federal payer, but guess what? They are all the same person. I know for myself that I pay to all three levels of government for the services that I enjoy in this province. As much as I'd like to pay less tax, we continue to pay more tax here in Nova Scotia.

It's always good to be number one on issues, it's always good to be number one in a race. But to be number one in the most taxed province in Canada is not the number one issue that I want to be in. I don't want to be the most taxed individual, or individuals in Canada. Mr. Speaker, at least I'd like to be the average, in this case. We don't aspire to be average, we aspire to be first, but to be first in most taxed province in Canada, I think is one that we've gone backwards on, over the last number of years.

Mr. Speaker, a \$10 billion budget is one that is very difficult to understand, very difficult to understand. I remember when I came here 16 years ago working for the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Neil LeBlanc, and I remember sitting in the briefings at Finance, looking at the numbers. I find it funny because if you read the documents, there are never a billion in zeros, there are always millions. There are always a few numbers short of the actual impact that we are paying, or what the actual budgets from each line department are going to be.

I remember way back then calling my wife, I think it was in 1998, so my relatively new wife because we were married for probably four years at that point, and saying to her

- and, actually, I will be married 21 years tomorrow (Applause) She is a saint. Thank you very much, the member for Northside-Westmount. (Interruption) Well, let me throw that in my wife of 21 years who is a wonderful graduate of St. Francis Xavier University, and let me add she is way smarter than I am.

But I digress, that is not the budget that I am talking about tonight. The point is at that time, back in 1998-99, I remember calling her - saying oh, my God, we are here talking about billions of dollars. They are billions, Anne, they are billions. And I remember that so much because Neil at the time made fun of me because he heard me making that call to my wife, to really understand the impact.

At that time the total budget, in 1999 I think, was somewhere probably closer to \$7 million or \$8 million - sorry, Mr. Speaker, billion dollars. I still have trouble grasping the actual size of what our provincial budget is because it is a lot of money. Now, as we go along over those years, we had the opportunity to see what investments were going to be in each one of the line departments that I have had the opportunity to be either a minister or affiliated with at the time.

You know, when I was Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and I thought, the \$20 million or so at the time, because there were two departments flipped in together, that was a tremendous amount of money; that was a tremendous amount of money because we actually had to spend off - it was a little under \$20 million at the time - but off to the Agricultural College at the time. And, of course, there were a number of programs under Agriculture and of course a number of programs under Fisheries at the time.

It's pretty hard to put your head around it, but you are starting to understand what numbers are, what kind of expenses each department is going to be putting forward, and what the impact is going to be to the population, you know, to the taxpayer. What benefit are they getting for the dollars that you are expending on their behalf?

Now, we take the big jump - and the Minister of Health and Wellness I know can understand this, and I know the member for Sackville-Cobequid understands this as well. When you are head of the Department of Health and Wellness and you end up having to sign off - each one of these ministers signs off on their particular budgets, on the amount that we see here in the Budget Address. I am just trying to find the actual list. I am thinking it is not in this piece of document, but anyway whether it is the Minister of Business who is going to be signing off on - I forget what his number is exactly but he is going to be signing off on millions of dollars of taxpayers' dollars in order to provide the services that his department allows.

I just want to find that right document because I know there is a page here that gives me every single department in a line, but it is not there. Each one of those departments ends up spending that kind of money, but what I wanted to (Interruption) There you go, those are the numbers I want. Department of Business, that is under "B," which is \$137.4 million.

All of a sudden, your brain starts to go, oh, my God, that seems like a lot of money. It is; it is a lot of money. But if you start underlining what programs are there, whether it is under the Jobs Fund or NSBI, or the baseline programs and FTEs that we are paying for, you know, it adds up to a fair amount of money.

Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage - \$81 million; it is \$81 million, almost \$82 million, that the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage is going to be spending this year. And I say, glibly, that he will be spending, but he is responsible for that budget. He signs off for it, and then the department pays those dollars to the programs that it offers, and of course pays for the FTEs, the full-time equivalents, in that department.

It is sobering when you think that each one of us in this House of Assembly, whether they're on the government side or not, and especially for the ministers, the ministers who I know are professors and ex-RMCP officers, you name it - they had modest jobs. They got paid okay money. But when you add it to what they're now responsible for, it's amazing what kind of dollars each one of these members is responsible for.

I liken back to when I became the Minister of Health at the time. I think I signed off on \$3.4 billion - me, \$3.4 billion. The Minister of Health and Wellness today is signing off on \$4.1 billion. The Minister of Health and Wellness, who I have sat in this House with since 2003 - the Minister of Health and Wellness, who is a retired schoolteacher, which is a very valued position in this House - is now the CEO of a \$4.1-billion corporation. It's staggering, quite honestly, when you think about it - quite staggering. Those are big numbers.

If we go down the list of those items, the Department of Agriculture, at this point, I think is \$60 million. As I said, CCH is \$81 million. Community Services, to provide services to those people who are marginalized in our province, to try to provide an extra step up that ladder to those Nova Scotians who so much need our help, \$930 million. It's a tremendous (Interruption) Well, \$929-point-whatever. So if you do the rounding, you actually get a few extra million dollars in there. How can we possibly think that these numbers are worthy of our consideration?

Education, in the good hands of the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, is \$1.3 billion to provide education to our students. I'm lucky that I have two children who are in the education system. I'm lucky that I have a wife who is in the education system, so of course I thank the minister for her investment in it. But it's a tremendous issue that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has to provide, to make sure that we provide the best possible education that we can to our students. To make sure that our teachers, administrators, teachers' aides, janitors, bus drivers, and the like have the right amount of funding to provide the services that they require to provide that education to our students - \$1.3 billion for that.

As we go down the list, Environment, \$37 million; Energy, \$30 million - I'll get to debt servicing in a little bit - Fisheries and Aquaculture, which is sort of the poor cousin of all of them in some cases, \$12 million; Internal Services, which is now responsible for many of the internal services that government offers - the computer systems, and I think the tendering process are still there - they run on \$185 million.

Department of Justice, which you would think is a big department, it really isn't compared to some of those large ones. Even with trying to cap off the judges that actually is in this bill, the whole department is only worth \$330 million. Now only, I say that glibly because it's still a large department but compared to some of those other ones, it's quite small.

Labour and Advanced Education, which does provide some good services but also includes things like the workers' compensation system and those kinds of things, comes in at about \$364 million. Our Assistance to Universities - universities - Nova Scotia is probably the most university-friendly province in Canada, with I forget how many levels of higher education we have, 11 universities and colleges, it's a lot so they do \$364 million Assistance to Universities, I said that 380 was the number.

Municipal Affairs, we think that's a small department, quite honestly, but that one actually has a budget of \$184 million because of the programming that it has and what it shares with the municipalities themselves.

Natural Resources, which is up to purchasing a number of new helicopters, is responsible for fires, is responsible for our parks, is actually quite small; it's \$76 million. Aboriginal Affairs, working with our Aboriginal groups across the province, is worth \$3.4 million. Communications Nova Scotia that provides that service to Nova Scotia to our departments and of course to advertising the programs that are important to Nova Scotians, is actually worth \$6.4 million. Elections Nova Scotia is \$4.6 million. They could be a little less but since we don't have fixed-election dates, it might be a little more.

Executive Council, which of course provides work to Cabinet, to the Cabinet Members who are here, they of course are worth \$7 million. Those are mostly FTEs, Mr. Speaker, they are analysts who basically are tasked and second guessing each department. If you provide a report and recommendation or an R and R to Cabinet, there are a number of individuals who are responsible for looking over that information to make sure that you are as good as you possibly could be, that the information is as sound as it possibly could be before Cabinet received that information to make a decision. That's what Executive Council did.

Also hidden in Executive Council, I believe, Mr. Speaker, a number of political appointments as well that provide some consultation to the Premier and to the Premier's Office and to the political apparatus of government. Office Information Privacy Commissioner, which is only \$603,000 and government contributions to benefit plans

comes in at about \$8.8 million. Human Rights is \$2 million, Intergovernmental Affairs is \$3.8 million, Legislative Services is a whopping \$23 million. The Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children Restorative Inquiry, which of course we support the government in its endeavours, is worth \$2.5 million; the Police Complaints Commissioner is \$390,000; the Nova Scotia Security Commission is \$2.5million or \$2.6 million; Utility and Review Board, which we commented on, on a number of occasions here in the House of Assembly when we talk about energy costs, when we talk about issues of Muskrat Falls and pipelines and natural gas and busing, they are actually given almost \$2 million.

The Office of Immigration, which the minister quite often stands in the House of Assembly to talk about the good work that her department is doing and that she is doing, comes in at \$8.4 million. Ombudsman at \$1.7 million; the Public Prosecution Service, which works quite robustly with the Department of Justice, \$23 million; the Public Service Commission, which works to make sure that our civil servants have the benefits that they require to do their job, \$19 million; Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness, coming in at about \$1.7 million.

Service Nova Scotia is a great department. It provides those things that we need here in Nova Scotia. It is probably the largest connection that Nova Scotians have, beyond the health system, to the government - \$80 million. I'm sure I'm going to get back to Service Nova Scotia, because I think it's a great department.

Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal - what more can I say about that department? What more can I say? It is underfunded by a whole bunch of dollars. It's \$460 million. I don't know why we're not paying \$1 billion for this stuff. From the requests that come to my constituency office, and I'm sure that come to everybody's constituency office, \$1 billion wouldn't be enough. But \$460 million is what we spend on that department.

Restructuring, I could spend a whole hour talking about restructuring costs, but I will not. We spend \$187 million on adjusting the government apparatus to the current state. What that means really - the example I use is that we used have the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. That changed and is now Business Nova Scotia. In that restructuring, there are of course contracts that have to be honoured, people who have to be paid, office space that has to be leased differently or in some cases double the office space, new business cards, new letterheads, those kind of things. That's covered under that \$187 million.

There are tax credits of \$137 million, and pension valuation adjustment of \$66 million. Capital purchase requirements - we'll talk about that one; that's a great one to talk about - of \$583 million. The sinking fund instalments and serial requirements are about \$58 million.

So that's the list of expenses that this government has in the fiscal year 2016-17. Those are very, very substantial numbers for what I would qualify from a number of

Cabinet Ministers and government members who are just like me - normal Nova Scotians, normal Nova Scotians who had very humble jobs, who were voted in by their constituents and selected by the Premier to be Cabinet Ministers. It's remarkable to think that that's the kind of interest or level that we provide to our Cabinet Ministers and to our government to spend somewhere close to \$10 billion. I think that's the total - sorry, there's no total here - of what this is going to be.

I tell you that these two bills - the whole process on estimates, the bill that's before us today, the Financial Measures (2016) Bill - are so intertwined that they are a package deal. I come from a time where I had a chance to participate in two - not one but two - minority governments. When we were working on our budgets and providing them to this House of Assembly, either one of those votes could topple the government. They are budget documents, and a government will topple on a question of confidence. These are confidence in the government, what it's presenting today.

We're not going to fall in the same situation that I was able to have in 2006, which I got a chance to repeat in 2009, which is, when we were talking about these budget documents, the confidence of the House was not there, and the government fell on two of those occasions. But for three budgets prior to that, on each of those occasions, we did have the confidence of the House because there were things that I think the Opposition and the government at the time felt that we had to address within those budgets.

So first of all out of those two, those different department lines, department headings, agencies, and groups - you know, where do I start on what the investments are? Quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, in this one we as an Opposition can't continually say that this is a good investment or this is a bad investment, because we don't know what the total amount of those investments - we know what the total amount is, but we don't know what the actual investments are.

If I say to the Minister of - let's say the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Let me just find it here, Municipal Affairs, out of that \$184 million that the member for Yarmouth is going to be spending, where is all that money going? You know, that's a lot of money, \$184 million; out of the minister's total budget, he's spending \$184 million here. What are those projects? What are those issues? What are those going to be? I think even the minister at this point would probably say, well, there's a lot of projects that need to be funded, a lot of municipalities that have some equalization and those kinds of things, but specifically, what does it mean to the minister, who is the member for Yarmouth, or what do I need as the member for Argyle-Barrington?

I really couldn't tell you exactly what that whole \$184 million is going to be used for. I hope it does find its way to the Municipality of Argyle, I hope it finds its way to the Municipality of Barrington, or even the Town of Clark's Harbour, but I know at some point there will be some kind of funding that will be available to my constituents out of that number.

I think the one that we as constituency MLAs hear the most about - and I think it probably is a toss-up between two specific departments - really revolve around the Department of Health and Wellness and/or the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. That's a rural issue and I know I'm looking at the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, and in his particular case he is a city MLA so he may not have the transportation issues that we have, but in some cases we as rural constituencies run into a lot of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal issues.

So let's talk about that for a few moments, and I thank the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal for all the work that it does in my constituency. I thank it for the review that it's doing on the safety of Highway No. 103, more specifically - of course, I'd ask for more paving, but let's be honest, let's talk about the things that are actually safety issues, as that should be at the top of anybody's list in this particular case. But in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal - and I just want to see its total number, let me find the right number here, if you allow me for a few moments, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, I'll continue on, I don't want to hold it up too long. But the amount that it is, you know, I can quickly spend in my own constituency \$10 million - I don't know, more than that? - just on the things that I know about that need to be addressed in my constituency. The two of them that require the most in my mind are bridge infrastructure - thank you, its \$460 million - and more specifically the overpass infrastructure, the intersection infrastructure on Highway No. 103.

We have 2,400 bridges in Nova Scotia, and that includes intersections and overpasses and water bridges and all that stuff. But in my constituency, I think there is one intersection that wins the most, and I know the member for Yarmouth would probably agree with me here. That is Exit 32. Exit 32, Nakile/Argyle Head, is by far the worst boondoggle I have ever seen in my career.

What happened to that intersection? If I go back to the original construction of Highway No. 103, when it was built back in the 1970s - I remember it getting built, but barely - there wasn't enough money to go around. It was started by the Gerald Regan Liberals at the time, but there wasn't enough money to really complete it the way they wanted it.

What they did was build the roadbed, pave it, and get people on it, but not build the intersections to a standard that is important to a 100-Series Highway. We have a lot of flat intersections, level crossings. We know that on level crossings, the safety level goes down because sightlines, distances, and those kinds of things are impacted because you have traffic that is turning directly off the highway without deceleration lanes or acceleration lanes and the like.

What happened, especially along Highway No. 103 in my constituency, especially the Argyle side, is there are a lot of flat intersections. The two that are bad, of course, are Exit 32 and Exit 31. Exit 32 is a flat intersection that accesses the community of Argyle Head and the long-term care facility of Nakile.

Back in 2006, I would say - so we were in government at the time - the engineers came up with a plan. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you, if the engineers have a plan in your constituency, please second-guess it.

At the time they came up with this deceleration lane in the westbound lane of Nakile to be able to allow the buses and other vehicles to get off the highway and turn into Argyle Head. Halfway through that construction, the engineers all of a sudden realized that there was another exit across the highway that accessed the long-term care facility. So after they had done all that realignment, they realized that they can't cross the road directly to access the long-term care facility, which I think at the time had 40 beds and now has 60 beds. Before, you were able to cross over because everything was sort of lined up, but now it's not. There was an expense for that deceleration lane, and then they had to add another intersection just 200 metres or 100 metres up the road, with no deceleration or acceleration lane, for those people who were turning into Nakile Home for Special Care.

I know that is one of the top five, if not the top three, most dangerous intersections on Highway No. 103, if not the highway system in Nova Scotia right now, because the cars cannot get out of the way when they're turning either left or right.

I hope that within the budget of \$460 million there is some appreciation for those kinds of pieces. I don't know what an overpass is worth these days, but I'm guessing it's probably a \$6-million item in this particular case, because the engineers didn't do their full due diligence. They realized there's actually a river in the way. What's going to have to happen in my estimation is that on the westbound lane, there will be an acceleration/deceleration lane, but on the eastbound lane, I don't know where that's going to come in. That might be further up the road where they're able to do the exit and entrance. It sort of alienates or orphans the turnoff for the long-term care facility. In order to access that long-term care facility, it will probably mean the addition of a bridge. I don't know if it will be a Bailey bridge or whatever we want to call them today, but it will require a significant amount of infrastructure to make that intersection safe.

I know I've had the commitment of the minister that it is high on the radar, that the department is looking at it closely, that there should be some kind of decision made on it in the near future. I can only implore the minister that that happen.

I move up the road a little bit, I come to the Pubnico intersection, which is Exit 32, which again is a flat intersection and for those individuals, those people in this House who know Pubnico, it is probably my largest community. It has a flat intersection; it has Dennis Point wharf, which is probably the highest grossing port in all of Nova Scotia, the lobster,

the groundfish, the herring that come out of that wharf, and Dennis Point Café, which is a great restaurant, I ask you to try - I would say everything in there is pretty good.

What I am saying is that intersection is a flat intersection, where I did lose my friend Robert d'Eon, Robert Chez-nous, which is his nickname, he was coming across that intersection one night and was taken out because it's flat, it was foggy, it wasn't good weather and Robert, unfortunately, didn't make it across.

Why there's not an overpass there is beyond me completely, why there's no intersection there. I hope that within the budget of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal that there are at least a few dollars to start planning for that one.

Since I have Highway No. 103 in my mind right now, as I travel all the way to Halifax to represent my constituents here in the House of Assembly, I have to talk about Shelburne. The Shelburne intersection is one that is actually very dangerous. I know the member for Queens-Shelburne will probably speak to the same issue here. I don't think there is a time that I come across that intersection that someone doesn't pull out in front of me - not once. I have to say I always slow down there because I know someone is going to (Interruption) - in front of me, either way, lots of cars, lots of trucks.

Those are the kinds of investments that I hope, in the review the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal is doing, that they are going to find that these number of intersections are slated, or at least are going to be looked at, for upgrade, but that's a strain on that particular budget because they are big ticket items. There's nothing cheap in what I talked about just now. I would say they are \$6 million an intersection, I just talked about three of them, on just that little stretch within 100 kilometres of each other.

I know the department is looking at twinned highways. I know they're looking at toll highways, but the issue of toll highways doesn't really reach as far as Shelburne and Argyle-Barrington and Yarmouth but we do have tremendous issues that need to be taken. I hope the member for Clare-Digby will have the opportunity to talk about his by-pass, which is through Weymouth, which is going to be a tremendous addition to those communities, to finally by-pass a piece of highway that should have been by-passed 50 years ago. (Interruptions)

I remember - well some of that 50 years ago you guys were government, too, within those 50 years so you can tag us all on this one, Mr. Speaker. I remember the last time I drove through there (Interruptions) There's going to be a fight in the background but I'm hoping nothing is going to happen. The last time I drove through there, I drove across through the 100-Series section, past that intersection in Weymouth where it turns to a secondary road all of a sudden - I know that Cape Bretoners know exactly what I'm talking about because their highway does the same thing. It's pretty good to a certain point and then it sort of goes to hell after that. But in this particular case, on that night, I remember seeing a little bit of something coming up and some brake lights and I slowed down. It was

a little icy that night, the snow had fallen - it must have been in June; quite honestly, it was in April - but it was snowing a little bit and I remember seeing a lady sitting off the side of the road who was sitting with their dog who had just gotten hit on that road.

The point I'm saying is that it is a rural road, and it is dangerous for those residents who live along there. It is dangerous for them, their children, and their pets. You know, they deserve - and we can talk about crack volumes all we want but it is a dangerous piece of road that needs our look, our consideration.

I know it frustrates me, and I know it probably frustrates the member for Clare-Digby and the member for Yarmouth, when we talk about all this twinning across the province, when we know we do not have completed roads to our communities. The road is not complete; 100-Series Highway is not complete. The Port Mouton-Port Joli bypass at this point I think is coming in at somewhere close to \$60 million for two measly pieces of highway. I mean I do not know what the total distance is - it is somewhere less than 20 kilometres of bypass - costs the government \$60 million. I do not know what the bypass in Weymouth is going to be, but it is going to be a substantial amount of money, and I hope the member is effective in making sure that he gets those dollars for his community.

Listen, Mr. Speaker, even if the government changes at some point, I can assure the member that it should be Conservative - that will get done as well because it is high time that it does get done, far too long that it gets done.

Mr. Speaker, now I want to talk to the Department of Health and Wellness. How much time do I have anyway? The Department of Health and Wellness, my goodness, where do we start on this department? It is the largest department of government, and should we do nothing with that department - and I remember sitting and having these briefings - if we do nothing to try to curb the amount of its growth and I know I will probably get some comments back from the minister, one of the ministers anyway, on this one; but if we do not curb it, and this was even back in our time that should nothing be done to curb the growth in that department that it will be the only department of government by 2020.

Now, I know some of those numbers have changed. The previous government did their best to maintain a line on spending within that department, and I know that this government is doing its best to hold its line on spending within that department as well, but it is still \$4 billion and anything that can go wrong or any slippage at all that would happen in that department could be catastrophic for any government. I mean God forbid that we have something like avian flu or any of the other flus that tend to come along or any medical emergency that might happen to us because that budget that they have provided us to the Department of Health and Wellness is extremely tight, extremely tight. Should something happen, I think they will be in a heap of trouble. I hope because of the nature of the department that it is that they do hold the line. I hope they hold the line because that means nobody has gone without or nobody has died.

I remember many of the discussions that we had on the spending of the Department of Health and Wellness, and they always revolve around life and death. There was not a discussion that happened that did not say, Mr. Minister, people will die if you make that kind of decision. What kind of debate can you have when someone stands in front of you and says well no, Mr. Minister, people are going to die. But that really is the nature of the Department of Health and Wellness. If you cut back on mental health services and people do not get the service they need, people die. If you cut back on addiction services and people do not get the service that they need to be better, people die. If people don't get the heart valve replacements, or the heart programs, or heart services that they require, they die. What kind of debate can you have when you have those things put in front of you?

Over the last number of weeks, we as an Opposition have put forward to the government that we have a doctor problem in Nova Scotia - we do not have enough doctors, and those doctors, because of their low numbers, are getting burnt out and they're moving away. There are thousands of Nova Scotians who don't have a doctor - and guess the repercussions of that, Mr. Speaker. People will die, and we find that unacceptable here in the Opposition. I know the members opposite find that unacceptable as well, and I know the government is trying its best because they have to hold the line, but I know they're having tremendous trouble in trying to justify the number of doctors in this province.

I told the member, or at least the Minister of Health and Wellness to take his briefing note, the briefing note in his binder that says we have the highest patient-to-doctor ratio in the country, take that document and put it through the shredder, please, Mr. Minister, because it's not true. There is a huge gap in what that document says. Mr. Speaker, I know it, because I remember standing over there and saying the same darn thing. There's nothing that has changed in that briefing note since my time, so you can blame me, you can blame the previous government - nothing has changed.

Does that make it better or worse? I don't know, Mr. Speaker, but there's a difference. We accepted there was a problem and I know we tried really hard, it was very difficult. I know the previous government - God forbid that I defend the previous NDP Government, but here I am - they tried their best to bridge those gaps, but we didn't say that we could give a doctor to every Nova Scotian.

That is the point that we stand on, and have been standing on for the last two weeks, talking about doctor shortages across this province. Mr. Speaker, the challenge of doctor shortages is extremely complicated, and I'm not diminishing that fact when I stand and ask questions, nor do any one of my members from my caucus say it, nor do the NDP. We understand that it's a very complicated situation and all we ask is that we're not delivered lip service; that we're not provided speaking notes from a binder; that we don't have members stand up and try to defend the position of the government; and that they actually stand and say, listen, we know there's a problem.

The best thing that the Minister of Health and Wellness could have said, that probably would have slowed down or stopped the attacks that we've been putting on him, is if he would have said, no listen, we know this is a problem, we know that this is complicated, and we're not going to solve the problem tomorrow. Instead he said there is no problem, we have the highest patient to doctor (Interruptions) He said we have the highest patient to . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington has the floor.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Oh, wow. Wow! I know I'm telling the truth when everybody speaks up. When everybody speaks up, I know I've hit the chord and I'm in the right ballpark. Lord help us that we're in the right place. We're in the right place.

When the minister stands up and reads that briefing note that I know is in his binder - and this goes to all of you as well, because I think every one of those ministers has some of the very same briefing notes that we had - and you don't acknowledge the problem, and you talk about how great you are, and how great the numbers are, we don't believe you. We know better, because we're hearing from each and every one of our constituents that there is a problem in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I hear from my colleagues from Cape Breton on the challenges that they have, that they have people coming to them every day to say they don't have a doctor.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: I've got three of them right here.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: The member for Northside-Westmount says he's got three of them sitting on his desk right now. How can we stand and say everything's okay? We can't stand here and say everything's okay.

I don't think any one of the jobs of the MLAs who are here who are not a part of Cabinet can stand and say everything's fine. They hear from constituents just like I do. They know that there are challenges. It's okay to say that. It's okay to acknowledge there's a problem.

When a minister stands here and says, Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite, or at least I understand the challenge that he's providing to me today, I'm going to listen to that minister. I'm going to know that minister is trying his best or her best to provide service.

When the Minister of Community Services stands here and says that we're trying to provide housing to our less fortunate, that we're trying to find a way to re-imagine or redo income assistance, I believe her. But if she stands and says everything's fine, I'm not

going to believe her because I know it's not. With her budget, there's not enough there to provide the services that are required.

If I may take a moment, I'll talk about that for a moment. We need to start treating those people - the people that we are entrusted here in this House of Assembly to take care of, those who are less fortunate - we need to start treating them differently. Those who are on a disability pension or are getting income assistance for different reasons need to be treated differently. I think any step forward on re-imagining that system is a good one. I hope that the minister is successful in her endeavours on that one.

Back to health for a minute. Health is a difficult thing because the health issues tend to be very local in one respect and tend to be provincial in another. I remember, whether I was in government or out, the tremendous questions and comments that we would receive about people without doctors; it was almost never-ending.

I've got to say in southwestern Nova Scotia right now, things are going okay. Things are actually going okay. Yes, there are still people who say that they don't have a doctor, but I think that average has changed. But that's only fleeting. That's only for a short period of time until something happens, no different than what's happening in Cape Breton right now, where you have a number of older doctors, who for one reason or another are retiring or find that they want to move on in their careers and do something different, then we're in a heap of trouble again.

We've been lucky; we've had Dr. Gillis in Yarmouth, a tremendous individual - actually married into the family of the member for Yarmouth. Dr. Gillis actually used to work as a communications director for a Premier that I used to work for. I used to work in the Rodney MacDonald Government. After he worked in government, he decided he wanted to be a doctor. He went off and became a doctor, married a girl from Yarmouth, and is practising in Yarmouth. It's awesome. Dr. Moses, another young Nova Scotian, has found the way to Yarmouth. But like I said, we're only on the edge of that. We just have to have one doctor or two doctors retire, and we're right back in the same situation we were in, or in the same situation that Cape Breton is in today.

Doctors Nova Scotia says right now there are about 900 doctors who are ready to retire. We know, from what the minister has been talking to us about or at least what we've been underlining or finding out, it's not as easy as it used to be where a medical student could take over the practice or the business of another doctor, because there's this medical responsibility that, well, we don't want you practicing there, we're going to want you to practice there, and if you can practice there it's okay, but we're not going to give you - you're not going to be able to order tests; you're not going to be able to order X-rays and those kinds of things, which of course, the privileges are important to the doctor depending on where they are.

Yes, primary care. I remember talking about this one ad nauseam when I was a minister and I know the last Minister of Health can as well. Sure, we want to see these family practices, these practices and communities that are providing services to all Nova Scotians. They can include a doctor, a nurse practitioner, a family practice nurse, a chiropractor, and a physiotherapist, and you name it, Mr. Speaker. They can all be a part of that team, to provide health services to Nova Scotians, but the reality is, that's not how medicine is necessarily practiced. That is how we are going to have to come to terms that until we get that vision of what we want the health system to do, there's an in-between point that what we have can turn into what we want.

We can't say that during that transition period thousands of Nova Scotians are without a doctor. I know we had a little bit of a discussion today about the numbers - 10 per cent of Nova Scotians do not have a doctor, 10 per cent. There are 900,000 people, right - 900,000 people is our population today, maybe a little less, maybe a little more. That means 90,000 people - 90,000 people, Mr. Speaker - are without a doctor. That is unacceptable and that is a long ways from what the promise from this government to have a doctor for every Nova Scotian. There's a long way to go. If you say 90,000 what is that? Approximately 1,000 patients per doctor; we need a couple hundred doctors in order to close that gap. It's really hard to do when we're depending on our education system, our medical schools to provide the number of doctors that we need, when we have so many who are retiring.

Mr. Speaker, as I'm getting close to the end of my dissertation, I hope that somebody is ready to take this up because it's an extremely important issue (Interruption) - I'll wait. I think many of these things are important to many of us in this House, because we represent a very wide cross section of Nova Scotia. We represent everyone from Yarmouth to Cape North, and everywhere in between: urban, rural, French, English, Catholic, Baptist, you name it. We're all covered here in the House of Assembly, and I think what we really need to try to do is represent those that sent us here.

The budget that we see here before us today, in my estimation, is extremely tight, regardless of the department you're looking at. I know that we as a caucus have called for balanced budgets and surpluses, and we see a surplus in this one, but I guess what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is that the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is going to have to prove to us that the government can maintain that surplus. I hope he can, I hope he can. I hope the minister, the good professor from St. F.X., can pull it off. But if he doesn't it's because of the bad management of the other ministers.

So, Mr. Speaker, seeing that I don't agree with a lot of stuff I see here, I move that the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following therefore: "Bill No. 174, the Financial Measures (2016) Act, be not now read a third time but be referred back to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills for the purpose of adding a provision providing for the public disclosure within 30 days of the

amount paid and terms of payment of management fees under an agreement by the Province to a person other than a party to the agreement.”

I so move, Mr. Speaker. I can table that.

MR. SPEAKER: There's a motion on the floor.

The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: It's my pleasure to rise on the motion. The disclosure of the management fees for the Yarmouth ferry deal is something we've been asking for over and over again. We've heard from this government that they are the most open and transparent government. Now, I can't recall, was it ever (Applause)

I'm hearing lots of applause. It's too bad the applause couldn't be shared by all of us to say, yes, they've released the fees and the information on the management fees. However, that is not the case, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we have this motion and why I'm speaking to it now.

I guess the question has to be asked, is this information really proprietary? This is a 10-year contract. To me, this is basically a done deal; this company is now in for 10 years. I'm also kind of left wondering, were there other companies out there falling over themselves to sign a deal like this? We don't know, because when we look at what's gone on, we see that the City of Portland has not been very supportive, in my mind.

I don't say that necessarily to criticize them, but to me it speaks volumes about their interest in this ferry service. I was trying to imagine if you are in Portland, what does this mean? I can't help but feel that they probably - and I'm speaking here, Mr. Speaker, without great knowledge of their tourism industry, but I have a sense that there's probably a lot of people who go up from New York and Boston into the State of Maine to perhaps try to enjoy an experience that might be similar to what one would get in Nova Scotia. Very different markets, but some similarities - you have the Atlantic coastline, you have seafood, those kinds of things. I wonder if perhaps Portland sees the ferry, in a way, as competition for their own tourism industry. I don't know.

What I do know is that they don't seem to have taken an enormous amount of interest in the future of this ferry service. We see that in the actions they've taken. They've not been part of providing a subsidy to run the ferry. Looking at the schedule for the ferry, even allowing the ferry to come in to dock, there's a number of days throughout this upcoming tourism season where they don't want it there at certain times. So it doesn't seem to be a priority, and that's cause for concern.

Mr. Speaker, there are no trucks permitted on this ferry, and we can only take from that that Portland wants other activity on its waterfront. They don't want trucks rolling

through with Nova Scotian product, whether it's lobster or what have you. That's a concern for us, because there are a lot of businesses that would like to have that option to be able to export down into the U.S. by way of Yarmouth through to Portland. So that option is not going to be available to them. I know we brought up, and it was kind of amusing to me, but the idea of the lines being painted - I think it's the ramp on the Portland side. You know, it's a small thing, but it was kind of amusing but also quite amazing that Portland didn't seem to be interested in even painting the lines on the ramp.

So we look at those things, Mr. Speaker, and if we look at the past, this ferry service used to cost in the order of about \$3 million per year in terms of a subsidy. Well now it's well above that and in two years, I believe it's \$32 million, and there was a prepay from last year's budget to help pay part of that into this year. So that's a significant amount of money, and a subsidy is there because the boat and the operation is short of passengers. There were some years in the past where no subsidy was required to run that service because there were enough passengers. The economics allowed that it didn't need to be subsidized.

So have times changed, Mr. Speaker? I don't know, but these are why we in the Opposition feel it's important to be transparent with this information, and an obvious question is, what is the cost-benefit analysis? Those are questions we should be asking about every time there's a dollar spent in government, we should be asking about cost-benefit analyses.

So if the goal is to bring visitors to southwestern Nova Scotia, is the ferry the best way to do that right now? I've heard people talk about subsidizing air traffic. Maybe air traffic subsidized from Halifax to Yarmouth might bring more people to the southwestern part of our province. Maybe those people travelling by that means would also be bringing more disposable income with them to spend on their trip. So these are important questions - questions that perhaps aren't easy to ask or to answer, but they're questions that deserve to be asked.

Mr. Speaker, whose money are we spending? This isn't just the money of one side of this Legislature. This money belongs to Nova Scotia taxpayers, and they demand transparency. I think about the importance of transparency, and when we don't have that, it just leads to more questions and it leads to a lack of trust. I think of another fund that we've had in this province, a very notorious fund, and we talk about being open and transparent.

There was recently an event at Dalhousie University at the new Allan J. MacEachen Institute for Public Policy and Governance, and it was disappointing for me, as someone from Inverness, to see that Mr. MacEachen's name was becoming associated with a donation made from a fund that, quite frankly - it was even in the Supreme Court - those funds were obtained illegally and supported the Liberal Party for a good number of years.

Instead of those funds being given back in a transparent fashion to the taxpayer, where they were taken from, those funds were used to fund election campaigns for years.

Mr. Speaker, if we're talking about transparency and talking about good ethical decisions, we see what is supposed to be a good-news event at Dalhousie University - and I am surprised that the university accepted the donation with the reality of where that money came from.

So a little more on that. Since 1957 there was a practice in place where if you wanted to do business with the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation you had to pay a fee, and instead of that money flowing into the coffers of the province, it went into the coffers of the Liberal Party. It was a fixed amount, per case of alcohol. Also, if you were doing work for the government and you were getting paid for that work, you had to pass back an amount of 3 to 5 per cent of the money you were receiving back to the Liberal Party as well. That happened for a long time; they say particularly between 1970 and 1978, during the Regan Government.

In a 1987 Supreme Court of Canada decision, three gentlemen - Simpson, MacFadden, and Barrow - were found guilty. When you get a decision by the Supreme Court of Canada, I think that speaks volumes about what was going on, people found guilty. This was not a small amount of money; it was \$3.8 million in two accounts: there was about \$2.8 million in one account and \$1 million in another account.

This money belonged to taxpayers, but it was siphoned off for political purposes, and when you don't address something, it just keeps coming back over and over again. Even as recently as I think last week when an event was at Dalhousie University, people were asking, the media was asking questions: you've started this institute - what is behind it? Behind it was a \$2.25 million donation. Masked in this goodwill and this positive development, we have funds that were ill-gotten and passed along, perhaps only to promote the red brand in this province.

We didn't see people being brought from other political Parties; we saw a couple of former Liberal members, including a former Liberal Prime Minister, brought in. All that kind of marketing, it is still going on in another way. It will continue to be a stain on the Liberal Party until it is dealt with, and now it has taken on this whole other life at Dalhousie University; now it is becoming their problem.

This is what happens when people are not transparent. We saw this money going into election campaigns. Is that fair? I don't think it is. It was a lot easier for the Liberal Party to run campaigns with that money. George Hawkins, a Liberal himself, was even quoted as saying, "... the Liberal Party ... has been living ... from the proceeds of crime." Those are very strong words. They are not my words. I am quoting somebody else, but those are very strong words.

In the case now, this money is being used at Dalhousie University to establish a public policy and governance institute. It sounds so lofty. It sounds so positive. It sounds so honourable. Yet, the funds behind it are not. I know it is a very sombre topic. Who likes talking about this kind of thing? At the end of the day (Interruption) Somebody says I like talking about it, well I actually don't even really like talking about it because I know it bothers people, but sometimes we have to talk about things in this Legislature that we're not comfortable with to shine light on things and maybe to make things better or to change things - maybe to make people think.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, transparency leads to the truth and it leads to a clear understanding of the facts, and facts are needed for good decisions. That is all that we are asking for. I think that's reasonable. I don't know if there are other members who are going to get up and speak on this, if they are prepared at this point, but if they are I think I will let them weigh in on this. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to say a few words about the motion to recommit if I may and I think that I will be - I appreciate hearing the comments from my colleague, the member for Inverness, although I think that maybe I will drill down a little more specifically into some of the matters of this current budget and FMA (2016).

It was my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to attend the announcement today with the Minister of Agriculture that put in motion the changes to the tax credit for farmers who donate to food banks, and that is one aspect of the bill I would like to applaud. It was a pleasure for me to be there and hear some of my neighbours' and colleagues' names of farmers who do donate to the food bank, and certainly one of the staunchest supporters of the food bank in the province was, in fact, just a kilometre from home, a former business partner of mine, Richard Melvin, of VitaBite Farms who was on the board of Feed Nova Scotia for many years. It was a pleasure to hear his name referenced.

It was a pleasure to see product in the room - at least the containers - product from Sawler Gardens in the constituency of the Minister of Health and Wellness, one of the brightest lights in our vegetable growing, one of the premiere vegetable-growing farms in the province, the father Ron Sawler and brothers Mark and Peter and Roger farm together. I saw their onions there in the room and saw a bin of apples with FVM on it, which I know, which probably most of the people didn't know in the room but that means Frank Van Meekeren. Frank has passed away now but that's Van Meekeren Farms and it's a pleasure to see their name in that room and to know that this will make a difference in encouraging more farms to donate to the food bank.

I think that's a very positive thing in this budget and I want to give credit, again, to my fellow colleague, the member for Inverness, for a year or two ago bringing the food bank bill to this House in 2011 and to see the government pick that bill up and put it into

effect. I would be remiss in not mentioning the member for Kings West who brought a similar bill or exactly the same bill, the Minister of Health and Wellness. (Interruption) Or I should say Kings West - I was incorrect in the reference? I appreciate the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board admitting he's wrong and I hope that in the rest of my presentation here this evening he will admit he's wrong on several other points too. I appreciate that spirit of - anyway, I am pleased that the member for Kings West, the then member for Kings West, now Minister of Health and Wellness, also brought in that same food tax credit for farmers bill.

It's a pleasure to know that through two Opposition members' bills a government has acted in a positive way for people who need food in this province and it will make a difference. When these connections get made and the links get made, then the flow of product will increase over time, I'm sure. We could talk at length on this, but there's always times in the farm world, especially in fruits and vegetables, when there's product that's maybe misshapen or just not the size that they wanted at that moment or whatever. It's hard to know sometimes why things don't get picked up, but there are always things that get left over and don't get taken.

It's a pleasure to be able to speak positively about that bill and see that going into motion.

We have a budget that shows a \$17 million surplus. To put that into perspective, if I were to tell you to tell me how you're going to spend \$1,000, and I want \$1.70 left over - that's the ratio, by my calculation. Maybe I'm wrong, but that's my quick math. If I told you to spend \$1,000 and write it all down, what you're going to do, and I want a surplus of \$1.70, you can appreciate what a fine balancing act that really would be, to be able to tell me how you're going to spend \$1,000 and have just \$1.70 left over. That is the ratio on an approximately \$10 billion budget, to have a \$17 million surplus. It is a challenging endeavour to put a budget together.

I know that we have said on this side of the House that some of the assumptions in the budget cause us to wonder, and I will get down to that later on in my presentation here, I think. This is what we're dealing with.

One of the great concerns to me, and the reason why I do believe this budget - why I do agree with the motion to recommit - is because of some things that we learned during estimates about the budget. There are three things in particular, and I want to talk about those three issues.

Health and wellness issues - we all know that the Department of Health and Wellness represents over 40 per cent of this budget, over \$4 billion. It's our single largest line item in the budget. I don't think there's anybody in the province who wouldn't say that health and wellness is the single most important issue in our province, and access to health care when you need it.

I don't know, I'm not an expert on health care, but I have heard people say that we do have world-class health care here if you have an accident. If you have an acute situation, if you have an emergency, the reality is that the health care is world-class. If you have a chronic condition - sometimes you might be on a waiting list for a hip or knee replacement, and there has been a lot of talk about that - then maybe it's not world-class anymore.

We've been talking in this House about the shortage of doctors. Even in Kings County, where we have a fairly good complement of doctors and we have excellent doctors, I'm told we have approximately 10,000 people who do not have a family doctor.

This is something that I know was in the government's platform, that there was going to be a doctor for every Nova Scotian. One of the things that I don't see in this budget is that issue being addressed. It's a very great concern to me, especially where it was in the government's platform. I trust that things aren't put in an election platform - when the then-Opposition Party was crafting its election platform - simply because they sound good. I trust that there are actual concrete plans to make that happen.

I may be wrong, but from what we can see it looks like the situation is actually going in the other direction. We're in a retrograde; it's in declining numbers. Certainly this is what I hear from Cape Breton.

In the Valley we seem to be holding our own, yet we still have a significant number of people who don't have a family doctor. Apparently even Dr. Lynne Harrigan doesn't have a family doctor. There's a number of people - so there can be a lot of circumstances which bump you out of having a family doctor.

One of the major issues we have in the Annapolis Valley is hospital infrastructure and we are awaiting the announcement of a hospice, I hope. We've been awaiting it for three years, at least. We've had the funding. The community had an agreement with the then district health authority, the Valley District Health Authority, and an MOU signed on how this was going to be - what was going to happen, how this hospice was going to be built, how it was going to be operated and run. They had the fundraising done, and it was simply a matter of the government announcing that they were ready to put in their share and this hospice would be built. There was great joy when the member for Kings West became the Minister of Health and Wellness, and there was a belief that this would happen pretty quickly, because the minister was well aware of the circumstances and had been quite involved, over the years, in that endeavour.

It was quite a shock to the community as we were told a number of times the announcement would be very soon, and very soon has stretched into three years and we still haven't seen that announcement. It's been very disappointing to our community in the Annapolis Valley. Not only that, but there was in December 2013 something which I've tabled in this House before: a press release by the Minister of Health and Wellness, saying that there was going to be dialysis in five communities, one of them being the Valley

Regional Hospital in Kentville. Yet, we do not have dialysis in Kentville. I asked the minister about this question recently in the Legislature, and I didn't really get a firm answer. I was able to table at that point - I don't remember if I tabled it or not - the actual capital plan for this year for the provincial government, showing a dialysis building in Kentville in Valley Regional Hospital.

On the one hand, the Minister of Health and Wellness is not clear on whether it's really happening or not, and on the other hand the government capital plan put out by TIR shows that it is happening. It really makes me question the level of organization here in the government when one department is saying it's happening, but the department that's ultimately responsible is not really being clear on it. Meanwhile, we're into the year already and we have nothing concrete - no design released, no contracts issued, or anything. It really makes me question what's really happening with the Department of Health and Wellness.

I asked the minister this question in the Legislature and I do have a copy from Hansard of his answer. We were looking at the hospital infrastructure budget - last year's estimate and last year's actual - and according to these numbers there's a \$26.88 million difference spread between last year's budgeted and last year's actual, the year we have just finished. I find it interesting that this is presented - as an aside, this is the estimate and the forecast in the book - the forecast, because it takes time and in any business you need to go a couple of months after the close, or the year end, to really know what you really have spent, because some bills come in late. The forecast is what really could be read as the actual.

I was asking this minister this question, why was there \$26.88 million left unspent out of the budget last year? That would have presumably, if spent built the dialysis unit in the Valley; it would have presumably been enough to do both that and hospice. I know I'm speaking for my community, but I know that all of our communities have similar needs in hospital infrastructure, any community that has a hospital. I know that Roseway has huge needs. I know that there are other needs, every single hospital, there's no lack of - there's almost an unlimited need for equipment in the hospitals.

So, I asked the minister this question and I will read his answer. This is the Honourable Leo Glavine and I'll table it if the, well it says here, it doesn't say Minister of Health, it says...

MR. SPEAKER: Order. I remind the member not to use the proper name, even when referring to a document. Thank you.

The honourable member for Kings North has the floor.

MR. LOHR: My apologies, Mr. Speaker, this is Hansard and it does give the proper name in Hansard, so it slipped my mind.

The answer of the Minister of Health and Wellness to this question of why \$26.88 million was left unspent was this: "Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address that question. I've learned, like all Health Ministers, that projects are delayed for a whole number of reasons. We have situations ready to spend several millions of dollars. There are some legal issues that will get in the way and then practice changes with the input of clinicians and we go back to redesign. That's what happened in a number of cases." I know I said I would table that.

What the minister essentially said to me was that his staff couldn't get the job done. I don't know if the minister intended to throw his staff under the bus in that answer, but if you think about it, that's what he did. At the beginning of the year we had a pretty precise amount estimated of \$42,347,000. That's a pretty precise number, so somebody must have put that number together, and because of the inability to deal with the issues surrounding spending that money, that money wasn't spent.

When I think about that answer, I think the minister basically told us that his staff was not competent enough to get that job done. I would question that answer. I think the true answer - and I would challenge the Minister of Health and Wellness to give us the true answer - is that staff was directed not to spend that money. I have to believe, and my base assumption is, that the staff of the Department of Health and Wellness are professional enough and capable enough that if they were told to spend the money, they will spend the money. They can hire the contractors and put out the requests for proposals and get all the things done that are necessary to get done. That money would be spent if the Minister of Health and Wellness directed them to spend it.

I think right now I will challenge the Minister of Health and Wellness to clarify that point. Was it his staff who made that decision or was it him? Was it his staff's inability to do the work or was it the minister's statement to not spend the money? I challenge the Minister of Health and Wellness to answer that question.

I am very pleased to speak to the recommittal of this budget simply because of these numbers. These numbers show a \$26.88-million gap in what was estimated and what was forecast.

To get into the category of "you can't make this stuff up," I would like to point out that just by chance this morning I picked up last year's Estimates Book and thought, I wonder what the numbers said for last year's Estimates Book. In every category that I glanced at quickly, the numbers were reported correctly, but - again, in the category of "you can't make this stuff up" - last year's hospital infrastructure budget showed this past year to be \$53,347,000 and this year's Estimates Book carries that same number over, with a \$11-million drop.

To me, that casts doubt about these documents. Surely the government is able to carry forward an estimate, last year's estimate of what would be spent this past year, and

this year's reporting of that same exact number - \$11-million difference - which means that my outrage that \$26.88 million was not spent is actually misplaced, because the true number is \$37.88 million unspent in this line item. Why the government would change a carry-forward number is beyond my comprehension.

I think I have mentioned that this is not something that would be accepted in what is called Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. You can't take a carry-forward number like that and alter it to make it look like it's a smaller number. In fact, the amount of money estimated to be spent in hospital infrastructure for last year was \$53.347 million - \$53 million. And what was spent was \$15 million, giving us a gap of \$37.888 million.

I cannot fathom that this would happen by accident. I cannot fathom in my mind that the staff of the Department of Health and Wellness are not professional enough or that the staff of the Department of Finance and Treasury Board are not professional enough to see that the carry-forward numbers go forward correctly.

This is a very simple matter. I really think that it calls into question the document that we are looking at. This is not proper accounting. This is not representing the numbers correctly, and it is shocking to me. I simply could not believe it this morning when I picked up the two documents. I know that you all have last year's Estimates Book, and you all have this year's Estimates Book. You can just go take a look and check it, if you don't believe me. I am telling you, this is the case.

How does that happen? How does the government decide to misrepresent this year's hospital infrastructure budget and make it look less than it was, cutting \$11 million out of it? To be fair, when we look at that total for that category, the departmental total for that category remains the same. They shifted it from one category to another, from last year to this year.

Sometime when this document was being printed, there was a decision made at some point, when this current budget was being printed, somebody made the decision that they didn't want that number to be quite so high, and they shifted the number to another category. Maybe the other reason they shifted the number to the other category was that that actual category was overspent, so that was the decision made. Rather than show one category as even more underspent than it was and another category overspent, they shifted the numbers around.

But for me, looking at hospital, what's important to me is there's a lot of big demands in hospital infrastructure. I think it's unconscionable that a carry-forward number would not be represented correctly. I'm shocked that the government would do that with documents.

As I said, it starts to make you wonder what else is misrepresented in this document. If there's one thing, as big a thing like that - we're talking about \$11 million shifted on a

line. I probably will have to say going forward that this type of thing is really for me a massive disappointment, to find this type of issue in these documents.

I do plan to say a few words about the Auditor General's Report from 2012-13 about accountability. This speaks directly to it. There are things that the Department of Finance and Treasury Board hasn't done around financial accountability. There has been three years to do it, and this is the type of thing that, in my opinion, shows up in this type of situation where we have a misrepresentation of the facts right in the Department of Health and Wellness budget.

Again, I cannot begin to stress how disappointed I am to actually find that and how shocked I was this morning. As I said, it goes into the category of "you cannot make this stuff up." I call upon the government to take a look at the quality of the material it's putting out here. These are significant documents for our province. As I said, I am shocked that I actually found this. I hesitate to table your own documents, but it's right there. Every member in this House has both documents.

I think that I could drill back down through the Auditor General's Report from 2012-13 quite easily and show you where this type of financial slip of the pen should be eliminated by better procedures. As I said, it's just not something that I expected to see at all in these documents. I mentioned in the past, and I think it bears repeating, there are several other areas where these documents again would not in my opinion - and I'm not an accountant, so I would welcome to hear corrections from any chartered accountant in the room - but there are several other areas where these documents do not (Interruption) I think that was the member for Inverness.

There are several other areas in these documents where in my opinion it cannot be adhering to Generally Accepted Accounting principles. One area that I would like to address is the way in which prepaid expenses are dealt with. We've seen in the document, and I could take you to the page where the sum of the money that will be spent on the Yarmouth ferry this year was considered a prepaid expense and booked in March 31, 2016, just a few weeks ago. It was a bill that was incurred on March 24th, I believe, and it was booked by March 31st. There was some \$13 million that was booked as a prepaid expense.

If any of you have ever run a business, you know that is actually fair to do; you can choose to book prepaid expenses, no problem. That is certainly something that would fall in the category of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. However, when you make an election to choose to represent something that way, you can't choose later on in your financial statements to show another paid expense in the other way. You have to choose; your documents have to be consistent. You can't flip back and forth on elections like that in your financial documents. You have to make your choice.

The other area that the government chose to represent a prepaid expense in the other way was with the Film Tax Credit. The government has made a commitment through its

new fund for television - and I can't remember the name of the fund, I could look it up here. The new version of the Film Tax Credit - the TV and film incentive fund I believe it is called - has \$3.5 million committed last year. But when you go into these budget documents and look at the actual numbers in the document, it shows zero for last year. When we questioned the Minister of Business on this, he said, well that has not been paid out yet so we are going to show it when it is actually paid out, in this year. And they budgeted \$10 million again for that film and video industry incentive fund, they budgeted \$10 million this year. What it has the effect of doing is actually meaning that there is really only something less than \$7 million in that film incentive fund for this year.

So not only is the film industry being - the Film Tax Credit was cut when there was an election platform promise, by the government, that it would not be cut, when there was a bill passed that it would be retained as was for five years. I believe that was in November 2014. In April 2015 all of that was forgotten and the Film Tax Credit was changed to this new incentive fund that we have, which has now suffered the indignity of being chopped off at the knees and only being 70 per cent of what it was.

The uptake on that fund is of great concern to me. I know that I was under the belief - and I believe I heard the minister say at one point - that if the new incentive fund did not work that the minister would look at it. It is quite clear now, and I believe I heard that early on in discussion about the changes to the Film Tax Credit. I'm pretty sure I heard the minister say that and now we are a year in, and obviously this new fund is not being picked up by the industry because it is not that workable.

The characteristic of the previous Film Tax Credit that made it workable was not the amount inasmuch as it was the certainty of it. What I understand about a film production is the great struggle for a film production is to get funding. A film producer will go - and if you think about it when you're a farmer and you want to go to the bank, you can say well I have property here, you can have a lien on my home - which they always want, all your personal property - you can have a lien on this piece of property or that piece of property, but no, that one has Farm Loan Board on it already, you can't have it. So, usually, in many businesses you will have hard assets.

In the film industry, you really do not have a lot of hard assets. You might have an expensive camera, and you have a script and hopes and dreams. So how do you get funding from the bank? Well, one way they got funding from the bank was they were able to say, I have this agreement with the provincial government and if I spend X number of dollars on labour I will get this much money back. The bank makes them sign a paper that says, I swear that I will give that money to the bank. So they assign that Film Tax Credit income to the bank. Well, if you don't really know how much the Film Tax Credit income will be, then it is not bankable. If it depends on how many people apply, if there is a cap on the program, you don't really know if you can or not, and the bank is not happy with that.

That is what is meant by bankable, and that is one of the reasons why this incentive fund is not working, at a time when we see the film industry just taking off across the nation because of the low Canadian dollar relative to the American dollar, and we've become in certain provinces the Hollywood of the North, at the same time we see Nova Scotia falling behind in that, and thank heavens we still see a few productions in Nova Scotia, but nowhere near what it was.

As I was saying, I don't believe that the way these numbers are presented in this document would indicate that the film industry incentive fund, Film and Television Production Incentive Fund, has been further reduced by the fact that this is not a fresh start this year, but last year's numbers are incorporated in, and to be fair to the minister he has said that if the fund did reach its upper limit, he would look at it again, but on the other hand that is not bankable either - you can't really take that to the bank either, which really diminishes the numbers.

So I don't believe that these numbers can be - and what I understand about accounting, which I will admit is fairly limited, I don't think you can make an election on how you present numbers like this, and choose to do it one way in one part of the document and in another way in another part of the document. It certainly, for me, would cast into doubt the document.

Another issue that came up with the Minister of Business was when I asked what I thought was a very simple, straightforward question, and that was to tell me about the increase in senior administration, and the numbers were approximately \$2.5 million last year, going to \$3.5 million or a little bit more this year. I was expecting the minister to say simply there was going to be some more staff expenses, and some FTEs, full-time equivalents, and in fact what the minister said was there was a \$1.1 million amortization fee included in that.

Well, my goodness, there's a head scratcher - where does an amortization fee show up in senior management? It turns out that that amortization fee represented two months of amortization, February and March 2017, for the Halifax Trade and Convention Centre, and for whatever reason they were choosing to show it in senior management, but that would be approximately a monthly \$550,000 fee every month going forward, for virtually forever, presumably.

So my question is, next year if that was a \$7-and-some million fee, would you show it in senior management? I highly doubt that, and in fact if you looked at that document just a few lines down there was a place where it says Crown Corporations, and the Halifax Trade and Convention Centre of course is a Crown Corporation and if you flip the book to that, you see amortization and depreciation already there too. So why on earth would it be listed in that category? The cynical answer is simply to pad that number and because amortization, as you may realize, is a non-cash outlay. If I have amortization, or depreciation in the farm sense, we have a piece of equipment that we bought for \$20,000,

but we know that once it leaves the dealer's lot and rides on my lot it's only worth \$15,000 - well, where did that \$5,000 go?

That's depreciation and we all experience depreciation all the time with most assets - almost every asset that we own depreciates except real estate, and that's why real estate is always preferred. But this is not something that would be, again in my opinion, especially when this is related to a Crown Corporation, that there would be any justification for putting this in senior management. I don't believe that follows Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

I would challenge the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board to address that point with me and explain where I'm wrong - and in fact, I don't mind having the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board explaining where I'm wrong on any of these numbers if he so chooses. I'd welcome hearing that, but to me these types of things which are just minor, but significant - and actually I shouldn't say "minor", I think the two I just outlined are relatively minor, I hope; the numbers are essentially correct but just misrepresented.

The Department of Health and Wellness one, which I drilled down into first about hospital infrastructure, I really have to scratch my head on that, I think that's a serious misrepresentation of the numbers in the document. I have to scratch my head about that and wonder, what does that tell me about this document, because I literally didn't really look at hardly any other place in these documents? It calls into question the accounting practices of the government, and as I said earlier, I think that some of those issues have already been red-flagged, so to speak, by the Auditor General in 2012-13. I would have hoped that this government would have had an opportunity to turn a fresh page and to clear itself up from some of these issues and address the issues that the Auditor General had raised.

It is things like this that make me wonder, make me really convinced that the Auditor General is absolutely right and there is an issue here. There is a significant number of items in the Auditor General's Report relating to finance, relating to the Department of Business that make me wonder why these things weren't addressed and had they been addressed, would we be looking at a different document here and would some of these issues have been caught and cleaned up?

I think of one issue with this document is the actual estimates of provincial income tax revenue. We see in the document a projected \$108-and-some million increase in personal tax revenue by Nova Scotians. If you look at the - and I don't have the numbers right in front of me but I'll go from memory - if you look at the actual numbers and you think about the fact that there are nearly 500,000 working people in the province, and you take that number and you divide it into the amount of personal income tax paid, that equals about \$5,000 in income tax paid by each person. If you take that \$108 million and divide it into \$5,000 in personal income tax paid by each person, this is an average, between the full- and part-time workers, you immediately come up with 22,000 more people employed

in the province, I believe, in order to reach this \$108 million increase in personal income tax.

This was pointed out to the minister and I know I heard the minister say, where did this estimate number come from and I heard the minister say Ottawa, and I would challenge the minister to present that number to us. Again, as I said, this goes right to some of the things in the Auditor General's Report where the Auditor General wanted better accounting or better controls of estimates by the department. This is an estimated number which has a huge impact on the budget, if it's even out by no more than about 15 per cent; in other words, even if we were to achieve a \$95 million increase in personal income tax revenue this year, we wouldn't even have a balanced budget; we would have lost our balanced budget.

This is a number which causes me - I really question that number, and more so because we know that a significant number of people in the province actually work for government and we know one of the main stances of this government we've seen is holding the line on wage increases with the unions. A large number of people who work in the province work for the provincial government, and it's the policy of the provincial government to hold the line on wages of this government. Presumably they're not planning to suddenly reverse that policy so those people probably won't see a significant increase in their wages and it's unlikely the remainder of the working people in the province will see a significant increase - maybe there will be costs of inflation, inflationary pressure on it, but really we're living in a time of fairly low inflation.

We've seen the consumer price index is holding steady pretty well, mainly due to the lower cost of fuel. We know that the price of oil has an impact on almost every part of our lives. Everything that we buy, pretty near, comes into this province or is manufactured in this province, using oil and gas as either the basis of the production of it or the basis of the transportation of it. So oil and gas represent a huge factor. We know that there aren't those.

We're living in a time - and knock on wood, let's hope that doesn't change - of very low inflation, and we benefit from that. Yet we're projecting a massive increase in personal income tax revenue. That doesn't quite add up.

Are we looking at a budget that is projecting a huge increase in jobs? Mr. Speaker, in the past, in this House, I'm sure - I wasn't here to hear that - we have had budgets that projected significant increases in jobs. I know that one would have been in the NDP era when they signed a deal with the Irving shipyard to build all of the military vessels that are going to be built. That would have been a time when you could have said okay, we've just signed a deal and we're projecting this many new jobs.

In fact, by my recollection, it really got the previous government in trouble because the time lag between when the shipyard would actually begin that construction and the

amount of time that was needed to prepare the shipyard to do the work meant that there was no increase in jobs initially for a couple of years, and there was a public outcry about that. We gave out this money and we haven't seen a lot of difference. Now we see that start to happen, that there are starting to be some jobs from that. We hope that the federal government will maintain that commitment to build all those ships, but that remains to be seen. There's some reason to believe that might not happen, but I trust that it will happen.

I'm saying that would have been a time when there was a budget that had a pretty big job increase in it. I don't see that in this budget, that there's big job increases. We're living in a time when inflation is relatively low, and this is not really a job creation budget.

I know that I've heard the minister say repeatedly that we have the most confidence of small businesses of any province in Canada. I don't doubt that statistic, but I will point out that we're living in a time when small businesses - if you think about a small business in Alberta right now, they're pretty shell-shocked. The dependence of the West on the oil and gas industry has really rippled through the whole small business sector in those provinces.

We never were up and we never were down; we're holding steady. So the optimism is things are going to stay about the same. If that makes us the most optimistic, I'm not sure that that indicates that we're going to have massive increases in the private sector in job development. It just means that as we all know, we never really went up, and we didn't go down either; we kind of stayed the same. That's to our comfort when some of the other parts of the country have had some big shocks, but on the other hand, we never were that far up either.

I hope I live to see the day that the economy of this province really takes off. I hope I live to see that and that we do see those kinds of increases in personal income tax revenue that the minister is projecting. I would be delighted if he was incorrect and we doubled it.

Meanwhile, as I said in the beginning, if I gave you \$1,000 to spend, I would want you to calculate that out and come back to me with a surplus of \$1.70; that's the kind of fine balance we're on. If I told you, oh, by the way, this \$1,000 that you've got to spend - I didn't figure out the ratio of that, but it would be like saying a certain amount of that is based on my guess that you're going to make more money this year - I think that you would go, uh, really?

What I'm saying is that the rosy estimate in the budget causes me to question the assumptions here, and question whether we really do have a surplus. Time goes quickly. We'll see soon enough. Maybe this time next year we'll know whether we really did have a budget surplus or not. But given the fact that I've already pointed out some serious issues with the way numbers are reported in this document, this one is, in my opinion another serious issue.

Another issue for me in this budget, which would make me question it, is the amount of money that has been committed in the budget to the Yarmouth ferry. I know that my colleagues have said quite a bit about that, and I think I can fairly say that everybody in this House wants that ferry to work. The main concern with the ferry, ultimately, is that it is unsustainable, Mr. Speaker. It may or may not be unsustainable; that remains to be seen. The fear is that we cannot afford it.

It is a little bit like buying that really nice car you wanted, but you are not sure if you can make the payments. There are all kinds of reasons why you need the car but if you can't make the payments, it is a pretty tough position to be in. That is the question that I think a lot of people have in the province. Can we afford the ferry? Another question they have is, were we really in that weak of a position bargaining that we ended up paying for everything and having blackout dates and not having trucks on the ferry? I know that virtually every other ferry that operates in the province, other than I believe the Halifax-Dartmouth ferry - I may be corrected on this - every single other ferry carries 18-wheeler traffic. Probably there are one or two that don't down on the South Shore possibly.

The truck traffic is a serious issue; the blackout dates is a serious issue. All of these things all told have people really wondering about the ultimate viability of the ferry. What we wanted was a ferry deal that would give us a long-term, sustainable ferry.

Another issue for me is the timing of all of this. It was quite clear last Fall that if we were going to change ships we needed to do it pretty quickly, and I believe the minister knew that too. I can tell you from personal experience, when you make changes it often takes a lot longer than you think to make the changes. This is what we have seen where it was my impression and my recollection that we were told that if a new ferry operator was to bid on doing the service, they would have to have a boat. I believe I heard that last Fall that that was one of the conditions. It seems like that condition was not adhered to either because when Bay Ferries was given the contract, there was no boat. We ended up with a U.S. boat that has a requirement that all U.S. citizens work on that boat and some other issues with it.

One of the knocks on *Nova Star* was, do we have the right ship there? There was a feeling that the ship was too expensive, partly because it was so large. Now we have a ship that is a U.S. naval vessel, I believe, and all the work has to be done on it at a U.S. port. All the supplies are coming from a U.S. port, all the workers are coming from a U.S. port, but as far as I understand it, we are paying every bill.

I hope that a year or two from now we will be able to say in this House yes, it was worth it. I will not even mind hearing the Minister of Municipal Affairs tell me that we were all wrong. I hope that I hear that, and I say that with all sincerity. I hope that it does work out but there are many questions and these questions cause the people of our province to be nervous about it.

Fundamentally, the main question is, can we afford it? To be able to afford that stuff, and as we all know in this House, there is an enormous number of pressures on our budget. We have pressures coming, and every one of you, I know, in your constituencies - well at least outside of HRM - almost every day we deal with a call from somebody who is not happy with a road. We have a constant stream of calls about various issues. In Kings North, I can tell you that I have people calling in to the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal because a farmer may have inadvertently filled the ditch in with soil; that is one of the issues that we face. The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal has got to go re-ditch certain places every year; that is one issue that maybe you don't have.

One of the issues we have in Kings North on our roads is that because of the richness of the soil, and the agricultural economy that happens, we have a tremendous growth of brush on the side of our roads and it grows very rapidly and we have trees growing into our power lines and very serious issues. There are many challenges which face our province and because our roads were built in many cases on clay - the soil ranges from sand to clay - and in many other places in the province, I know there's more rock but in our area there isn't a lot of rock. Because of that, our roads fall into disrepair and given the freeze and thaw cycle that happens, there's a lot of potholes. There are huge issues out there.

I know that the government has to make very difficult choices, I understand that. I know there's nothing easy about this and I think that almost any Nova Scotian would argue in favour of health care first and education and community services, all of the big three in the budget.

I believe the number four line item in the budget is servicing the debt. So clearly we can't afford to let that number creep up any higher, I believe it is some \$800 million that is spent on servicing the debt, more than double the amount that we spend on the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

So we have some enormous challenges. We don't want to minimize those challenges and we recognize that creating a budget is an enormously difficult task for government. We recognize that and it is a balancing of the many different demands and that's quite clear. However, as I mentioned, I think there are some serious issues in the budget, this part of the FMA (2016), and I believe that if the Auditor General's recommendations been adopted, these issues may have been addressed.

As I said, I'm very disappointed in some of the things that were not addressed in the Auditor General's Report. I mentioned it before and I'll mention it again - the Department of Business had one of the lowest rates of completion of Auditor General recommendations. I know that the department did not agree with the Auditor General on some of them and the Auditor General, to be frank, didn't agree with the department so there was a disagreement there.

Some of those recommendations relate to some pretty big line items in our budget relating back to the NDP-era Jobs Fund and the control of that fund. I know that if you look at the budget this year you'll see that the actual spent this year, the estimated and the actual was off by some \$7 million or \$8 million, I believe. So in a line item which you think you would have a fairly reasonable idea of what you're going to expend - a commitment by a previous government to approximately 100 different companies in the province - in fact there was about, just guessing, a 20 per cent variance in that line item. That speaks to some of the issues that the Auditor General raised about the way in which the department organizes itself and manages its affairs and the accountability and control within the department.

In fact when I look at the Auditor General's recommendations, most of those things would be something that anyone in business would recognize as typical things like an ISO 9001 accreditation program where a business would document and attempt to ensure that its processes were documented and were controlled in a way that was verifiable. So you may well be sweeping the floor but if you didn't check it off in the box, maybe the floor doesn't get swept, maybe nobody notices and maybe that's a hazard so you have an ISO. That's a very simple version of that. You have an ISO 9001 program which attempts to verify all of the processes in the business so that we can be assured that those things can happen.

This Auditor General's Report relating to the Auditor General's recommendations in 2012-13, has some pretty large gaps in it of things that weren't done and a lot of this relates to financial accountability and I'm not saying that the government was - well I will say it, I am saying I believe the government was negligent in not dealing with these things. and I can tell you that we haven't had to deal with ISO 9001 or 9000 on our farm, but we have had to deal with various programs to assure quality, to assure food safety, and a lot of them involve documentation of what you do. I see that in this document the Auditor General wanted documentation of processes and procedures and that's the way I read it, maybe I'm wrong. Some of this stuff is painful to do at the time that you do it, but I can tell you that when you go through those processes, in my experience, your operation, your business or your government, I would say, is always better run and it's worth doing these things even if it is not in your inclination to do it.

I know that a farmer always likes to be out on the field working, not working on paperwork. Maybe the government is dealing with the urgent rather than the important. This is one of the dilemmas in our lives that there's always something that's urgent that will take the place of something that's important. I would suggest that these Auditor General recommendations from 2012-13, which are yet undone in 2016, fall into the category of important but not urgent.

I would like to suggest that had some of that work been done, possibly there would not have been this significant error in the carry forward number in hospital infrastructure

that I mentioned, where last year's document and this year's document don't agree on a number that should have simply been carried forward.

In my quick, cursory glance of the document I didn't see any other number anywhere that failed to carry forward. So I say that I would like to suggest that there are some shocking and some glaring issues in this budget and I know the FMA relates to that, that we should have some of these things dealt with and addressed. I would like to hear the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board address some of the points that I raise at some moment at some future time, as we say, and on a future day, possibly, that the minister gets to address this. I would like to hear these things get addressed.

I've raised a number of concerns with this. I believe that the recommitment of the FMA is the right thing to do and I think at this point I will take my seat. I could recapitulate everything I've said for another three minutes but I'm probably ready to sit down.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it's great to get up; I know how excited everybody is on the other side. Just because it has been a while since we actually talked specifically to the motion that's before us, let me just remind the House that the motion is that the Financial Measures (2016) Bill be not now read a third time but referred back to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

I just want to be clear, Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of adding a provision providing for the public disclosure within 30 days of the amount paid and terms of payment of management fees under an agreement by the province to a person other than a party to the government. Now that is a mouthful, to say the least, but I just want to be clear that the example that is before us that this amendment would capture is the very bad deal that the government signed with Bay Ferries.

What this provision does is require, in law, that when the government signs a deal with a private company and then the government seeks to keep secret any management fees or profits that that private company will make as a result of the contract, that that be prohibited in law, Mr. Speaker. It's a common sense amendment. It would prevent this government or a future government from signing such a bad deal. It would prevent a private company from profiting in secret from the taxpayers' subsidy of that company.

Mr. Speaker, it's kind of hard to imagine that any government would sign an agreement where that could happen but we actually have that case just before us, so this is an attempt to fix that.

Even today, we've had another example of what a bad deal this Yarmouth ferry deal is. It seems like every day there is some new revelation of something that the government has signed off on that is offensive to taxpayers that they are expected to pay

for, without knowing even the basics of what the company is going to make as a profit or even other information. Today the new revelation is that the company that's going to operate the Yarmouth ferry is not compelled, through agreement with the government or in any other way, to report to the people of Nova Scotia on how the ferry is doing on the traffic counts.

Even Nova Star, the previous company, which ran for two years and cost over \$40 million - even Nova Star gave us monthly updates on how their sales were going, on how many people rode the ferry, how many tickets they sold. Unbelievably, this government, in the new deal that they signed with the new operator, are not requiring that they tell us on a monthly basis how it's going.

Mr. Speaker, just picture this: the taxpayers are expected to pay the losses without limit to infinity every year for that boat. The operator gets a guaranteed profit in the form of a management fee, which the government agrees to keep secret. And, even though we're paying all the bills, the taxpayers of Nova Scotia are not allowed to know, on a monthly basis, how the business is going. That is unbelievable.

You can call this amendment the Taxpayer Protection Act. You can call it the Force the Government to Sign Good deals Act. You can call it whatever you want (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order. I'm having trouble hearing the speaker. Please, the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, because I really don't want you to miss any of this. I appreciate how interested you are.

What this is really about is forcing transparency. It is about respecting the taxpayer who is being told by the government to pay all the bills. It's about monitoring our progress with the Yarmouth ferry and knowing, on a month-to-month basis, whether it is hitting its objectives or not.

After all, over 10 years, a conservative estimate is that that ferry will cost the taxpayers of Nova Scotia \$100 million. That's a conservative estimate. It could easily be a lot more because that's based on the projections that were provided of 60,000 passengers.

You know what? We all hope that they make it, and we hope they do better. But Mr. Speaker, that's more than the *Nova Star* ferry, for each of the two years beforehand, ever achieved. If they do hit 60,000, then it's \$100 million over 10 years. If it falls short, those losses will get a lot worse.

Wouldn't it only be fair to tell taxpayers how much they're on the hook for on a month-by-month basis? How could a government come to this House and be against sharing the progress reports of the Yarmouth ferry with the people of Nova Scotia? Yet

that's where we find ourselves today. The government is opposed to sharing, on a month-to-month basis, the passenger counts for the Yarmouth ferry in the upcoming season. We're only a few weeks away from when the first voyage is supposed to happen, and yet as of now, the company is not required to provide progress reports to the taxpayers of Nova Scotia, and the government didn't negotiate that into their deal.

I hope, I truly hope that the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and the Premier, and anyone else who was involved in negotiating this deal, will make it clear that they expect transparent, monthly reporting, from day one on, on how we're doing. When they put \$100 million of taxpayer money at risk, it's only reasonable to report progress on a monthly basis.

Hopefully that will happen, but in the meantime, this motion to recommit the Financial Measures (2016) Bill back to committee and have it come forward with a provision that forces these things is the way to go. I mean, we didn't just start talking about this bad Yarmouth ferry deal today. It has been one thing after another after another. There are actually two agreements, if you look into it. One is the deal that the Premier and the minister signed with Bay Ferries, and then the other is the agreement that, with the government's blessing, Bay Ferries signed with the City of Portland.

Now, the deal that the Premier and minister signed off on - at the last minute, by the way, at the end of March, just before the fiscal year changed - where anyone wanting to operate the ferry will need to get it ready, provide the upgrades, and market it - the deal that they signed with their backs up against the wall is the \$100-million deal. It's a 10-year agreement. It projects losses of around \$10 million a year if the ferry hits its 60,000-passenger target. It provides a long list of expenses that are allowable to be charged to the taxpayer, which includes some unusual items, to say the least, like tax advice to the private company. I mean, the irony is not lost on Nova Scotians that this company is getting \$100 million of taxpayers' money, and then is also going to be paid by the taxpayer to seek advice on how to lower its tax bill here in the Province of Nova Scotia. That's going to be pretty hard to take for Nova Scotians who are looking into the details here.

It provides that everything on the boat, from Wi-Fi to you-name-it, is charged to the taxpayers of the province, Mr. Speaker. It provides that every dollar of losses, without limit, will be paid for by the taxpayers of Nova Scotia. It provides that even when the boat is not sailing, which is eight months of the year, that if it's tied up somewhere south in the United States or further south for the winter, we pay for all the winter storage.

The taxpayers of Nova Scotia need to know that they're not just paying for this new Yarmouth ferry when it's running; they're paying for it all year long. This was one of the great flaws of the previous ferry deal with Nova Star, and the topic of winter work became quite contested at the time. Yet nothing has been learned, because here we are again, paying for the boat for 12 months of the year, even though it's going to operate and carry passengers back and forth for four months of the year. No wonder the losses are so high.

When we calculated all this as \$100 million of taxpayer subsidy over 10 years, the government said, no, that's not the number. We said, well, that's what we have calculated as a conservative estimate, but if you disagree, tell us what your 10-year loss projections are that taxpayers are going to be expected to cover. We're still asking that question, because there has been no answer, Mr. Speaker.

The agreement between Bay Ferries and the Premier and the Government of Nova Scotia is very clear. It's a 10-year agreement. One would like to think that the Premier would not agree to a 10-year deal without looking at what it's likely to cost over that 10-year period, yet we're told, no, they didn't do any projections beyond the first two years. No reasonable person would run their household or their business that way - sign a 10-year deal and not know - or not even try to know - what the cost might be over the entire 10 years.

We have looked at it and looked at the first two years, where the operating losses are about \$10 million a year, and concluded, well, if everything stays the same, obviously over 10 years, that's \$100 million. But it turns out we were not conservative enough, because buried in the fine print is the interesting piece of information that, while the government is advancing almost \$10 million to Bay Ferries to upgrade the new boat - by the way, "upgrade it" by providing jobs and work for that upgrade in the United States - they will get a \$4.5-million credit against the first two years' lease on the boat.

Well, you might think that's good news, Mr. Speaker, but that means that those losses of \$10 million include that credit; it's actually more like \$14 million or \$15 million. Suddenly we have a much bigger risk of loss for the entire 10 years of the contract.

Mr. Speaker, we've continued to rely on the \$100 million number, even though there is pretty compelling evidence now that the losses will be greater than that because the government had not disclosed that the \$10 million in each of the first two years was actually low and that it jumps to \$15 million in year three and year four and beyond. Again, that is all assuming that they hit their target passenger count of 60,000.

I do want to dwell on that target passenger count for a moment, Mr. Speaker, because again the government will not release to Nova Scotians how the boat is doing in terms of the number of passengers on a month-to-month basis; they won't. Now the minister has said that maybe once a year they'll tell us. Well this is an issue of accountability, accountability to the taxpayers who are being told to pay the bill, and accountability is not just once a year, accountability, true accountability, is all year long and it is not right to let a whole year go by when there is this much taxpayer money on the line and not update the people of Nova Scotia on how the ferry is doing.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the government takes a second look at their position on not telling people what the passenger counts are on a month-to-month basis because they deserve to know. We have this motion before us that specifically addresses the

management fees. I can tell you it is a big issue across this province that the government signed a deal that outlays this much money and that they are keeping secret what the private management fee is to the private company that is operating the ferry.

I can tell you right now, as a matter of principle, and hopefully someday as a matter of law, the government should not be allowed to underwrite the losses of a private company and allow that company to earn a guaranteed management fee or profit in secret; that should not be allowed. That's why we have the motion before us. That is, I think, a common sense item that just about every Nova Scotian out there would agree with.

After all, we talk about taxpayers as if this is some theoretical group of people. Taxpayers are those men and women in this province who get up every day and go to work and work hard. They punch a time clock. They make the products that we sell around the world. They provide the services that provide to each other and sell around the world, and at the end of their every two weeks or whatever frequency they're paid, they get their paycheque and the biggest deduction from it is, of course, their income tax.

Mr. Speaker, they worked hard for that money. It is taken right off their cheque and it's sent to the government. When you think about it, they deserve a lot of respect for that. It is one of the fundamental principles of our modern society. When they turn on the TV at night and they see what's going on with their government, they are either going to get a good feeling that their tax dollars that they earned throughout that week or two weeks are going to their local school, are paying for the police to keep our neighbourhoods safe, keeping our hospitals running, recruiting a few doctors to their community so that everyone has access to medical services, it's paving a few roads - that's what they deserve to see.

If the government says, you know, we are going to sign a deal that is going to cost \$100 million over 10 years, and you are just going to have to trust us, it is a good deal - well, they deserve to see all of the details and, one of the details in particular they deserve to see is, if it is a private company they are handing that money over to, how much that private company is earning guaranteed.

The minister can answer why it is not in his contract. The only person here that has negotiated a contract like this is the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, Mr. Speaker. He is the only one, and he can answer for why he is keeping it from the taxpayers. He can answer. No one else has signed a \$100 million contract - only that minister has signed a \$100 million contract.

The members talk about ferries, three or four ferries ago, from the 1990s and the 2000s. Eight years in a row, there was a ferry that did not require a subsidy at all. Now, this one - every year for 10 years, \$100 million.

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

MR. BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By the way, the excuse that the government uses is well we are keeping it secret for competitive reasons as if there were four or five other companies running that route. It is not a competitive route; that's why they have to underwrite the losses to the tune of \$100 million.

This is a unique situation. You know, some ferries operate with a subsidy, some operate without a subsidy. How can you possibly call it a competitive route where it takes \$100 million to subsidize the operation?

Imagine this, because I mean we are on the management fee and the government will not even tell us on a monthly basis how many passengers are on the boat and whether it is working or not. There are other private companies that the government works with, one of them of course is Medavie Blue Cross, which actually runs the Seniors' Pharmacare Program. Imagine if the government transferred all that money, and it is about \$160 million per year that goes to Medavie Blue Cross to pay for the Seniors' Pharmacare Program. Imagine they did that, but then they did not require Medavie Blue Cross to tell us how many seniors they were helping.

Imagine if they did that. That would be inconceivable that Medavie would not have to tell us what they are doing with all that taxpayers' money. Yet, that is exactly what is allowed to happen with the Yarmouth ferry.

EHS, the ambulance company - it's a private company, it runs the ambulance service of the province. They get a lot of money every year to do that, but imagine if they were not required to tell us how many patients they transferred, they took to the hospital or transferred between hospitals or how many seniors they took from one place to another. No one would allow that. No reasonable person would think that is okay. Yet, this government with the Yarmouth ferry deal has absolutely agreed, you do not have to tell us how many passengers you are carrying on a monthly basis.

Well, it is inconceivable. Why would that be okay in this case but not okay in those other cases? It should be just common sense, a matter of law, a matter of good negotiating. When you get that much money, tell us how you are doing on a monthly basis. But that is just today's story; that is just the latest thing and that is the agreement between the Province of Nova Scotia and Bay Ferries.

We have not even talked yet about the agreement that the government has given its blessing to between Bay Ferries and the City of Portland. Now, we know . . .

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

MR. BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I am just getting warmed up so I appreciate the chance to have a little breather.

Now, we look at the agreement between Bay Ferries and the City of Portland, Maine, which this government has given their blessing to. That agreement did not come from the government, they did not share that agreement; that agreement came from the website of the City of Portland, Maine. That is where we see the details of what else the taxpayers of Nova Scotia have been asked to pay for. Just as we were finished examining the \$100 million deal that the government signed with Bay Ferries, now we have to look and see what else we're on the hook for between Bay Ferries and the City of Portland Maine, Mr. Speaker.

That's where it turns out that the taxpayers of Nova Scotia are paying for terminal upgrades on the waterfront of the City of Portland, Maine. Not Sydney, not Halifax, not the Town of Pictou, or any other port city in the province, many of whom would love to have their waterfronts upgraded. They're not getting money for that. That taxpayer who you were talking about earlier, who goes to work and every two weeks gets a paycheque with a big chunk of it taken off to go to the government, now turns on the TV and the news to find out his or her tax dollars are going to go to upgrade a ferry terminal in Portland, Maine.

Mr. Speaker, no wonder they are so upset at what has happened. Not one job is going to be created here in Nova Scotia, either renovating the boat or upgrading the terminal. Portland gets a beautiful new addition to their downtown and no one in Nova Scotia does. You've just got to picture the Town Council meeting in Portland when they were told that we need to get this boat running and we'll do whatever it takes. I mean, they must have all gotten together and tried to dream up how much can we put on this list of things that the Government of Nova Scotia is willing to pay for? What can we possibly dream up to add to the list? I mean, we're getting a new terminal upgrade. We're going to have this boat come to our side, to the United States' side, day after day for four months, and we don't have to pay a cent for it. There will be Nova Scotia tourists going that way, to Portland, and arrive on their doorstep to spend money there for free, courtesy of the Government of Nova Scotia.

They must have been thinking, what else can we throw in, after all this largesse has been thrown at us by the Government of Nova Scotia, and you know, Mr. Speaker, they got so far down the list of hopes and wants and dreams that the City of Portland even thought to say, you know what? Let's throw in the painting of lines on the travel lanes; let's see if they'll go for that. I mean, what's left? When you're down to the paint, when you're down to the paint on the travel lanes, you've got to be at the end of the list. Off the government goes and signs off on that.

So now, not only are we paying every last dollar of losses for the boat, not only are we paying for that management fee, not only are we paying for the tax advice, and the Wi-Fi, and all the rest, not only are we paying to upgrade the terminal in Portland, Maine, we the taxpayers of Nova Scotia who drive across our roads every day and see the state of our roads and see the state of the travel lanes on our roads - we're going to pay to paint the

yellow lines on the travel lanes in downtown Portland. Now, Mr. Speaker, by that point I know that there had been enough is enough, being cried out by all the taxpayers of Nova Scotia.

With that, I will yield for a moment at your request, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Environment on an introduction.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I have an unexpected visitor in the House this evening, so I'd like to draw everybody's attention to the east gallery, where my good friend Jennie Bignell is here to grace us with her presence, and her friend Janice Duncansen. Would the members of the House please give them a warm welcome? (Applause)

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

MR. BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, what was I talking about? Oh yes, I think it was the Yarmouth Ferry deal. (Interruption) I can do with that again. Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I heard a request to talk about doctors, and you know, it's actually kind of related, because we've spent a lot of time in this House talking about the need for more doctors, particularly in rural areas. (Interruption) How many doctors are going to be on the Yarmouth ferry? That's actually a good question. How many doctors are in Cape Breton, compared to the need? How many doctors are in Pictou County, compared to the need?

We've been talking about doctors here every day for the last two weeks, including the emergency debate yesterday, because this is an area where people would welcome an investment by the government in bringing more family doctors to the province; in keeping the young doctors who are trained here in place here when they graduate, by not sending them away; by actually holding the government to account for keeping the promise that they made in the last election to ensure that there would be a family doctor for every Nova Scotian.

Now imagine what a fraction of that \$100 million would do for doctor recruitment in Cape Breton or in Cumberland County or even in Halifax, where now there is a doctor problem, because the government has restricted the ability of new doctors to join clinics. They actually took a problem that was here but manageable in the city and made it worse. They spent the entire months of February and March negotiating a very bad Yarmouth ferry deal while the issue of family doctors and the lack of them was bubbling up all around them.

We've pretty much used every tool we can in Opposition in this Legislature to bring to the government's attention that they're missing a very big issue. Day after day, the Premier and the Minister of Health and Wellness and others would deny that there's a

problem, and we were compelled to use all the tools we have at our disposal to bring to their attention the crisis in the lack of family doctors.

Now, had the government done a competent job and negotiated a good deal that was affordable to taxpayers, they'd have some money today for recruitment of family doctors. But with \$100 million or more on the line, Mr. Speaker, that's not there anymore. That is one of the ways that these two issues are related.

When you look at our health care system - the health care system that we're all so proud of, that is universal and accessible and affordable - and then you think of Seniors' Pharmacare as being part of that system - and Seniors' Pharmacare is actually part of health care that is contracted out to a private company. The premiums seniors pay, the copays that seniors pay, and the \$110 million that the government itself pays to run the Seniors' Pharmacare Program - you'd have to be confident that there's a pretty strong, open, transparent, accountable contract in place with that private company, Medavie Blue Cross, to make sure that the taxpayers of Nova Scotia and the seniors themselves who rely on the program can see where their money is going. Yet that same principle has not been applied to the Yarmouth ferry contract.

Would Nova Scotians accept a modest contribution to getting the ferry up and running again? Probably they would. Does that mean that they want the government to write a blank cheque, a bottomless pit of losses to cover without cap? No, and I actually think Nova Scotians have been very clear about that in the way that they have been reacting to the Yarmouth ferry deal and how bad it is. As the details come out, they get more and more concerned about what the government has put them on the hook for.

Now they look at the rest of the Financial Measures (2016) Bill with a skeptical eye. As an example, the government has tried to convince people - I think without success - that they somehow have a \$17 million surplus. Well, Nova Scotians are very skeptical about that, and for good reason. First of all, the big headline the government wanted on Budget Day was that they had created fiscal room for the new VG Hospital by taking \$110 million that had been transferred to Nova Scotia from two other governments in order to help pay for the convention centre, and then deciding it's not for the convention centre anymore, it's for a new VG Hospital.

Nova Scotians didn't buy that. They didn't buy it because it didn't make sense. It didn't pass the test of common sense, that money that was going to help us pay for the convention centre was no longer going to help us pay for the convention centre, but magically it's going to help pay for the VG, and somehow we're better off. Well, we're not better off, Mr. Speaker.

Then for anyone who was still scratching their heads over that one, the news came out that when they said they were creating fiscal room, well, they weren't, because the debt of the province is actually going up this year. There's no new fiscal room at all; in fact,

there's less fiscal room because the debt is going up. That blew a big hole in the government's financial credibility right there. I know a lot of Nova Scotians are not happy that the government tried to tell them that this was something good when they absolutely knew it was not.

The remaining \$17 million, Nova Scotians look at that and say, well, where is that coming from? The government tells them there's going to be a massive increase in tax revenues even though our workforce is not growing and people's wages are not going up, so there is no new money to tax. That defies common sense. It is a plug in the budget to make it look better than it really is.

Then they looked at the Health and Wellness budget and saw that it was flat - something that defies common sense in a province with an aging population, with growing health needs every year, in a very expensive area for government to cover. Now they know the reason: that is not actually going to happen. When we get to the end of the year, they will see that.

I do want to touch on VLT revenue for a moment, because of the fact that it is skyrocketing this year by way more than the claimed surplus, by almost \$27 million, in a province that has a cap on the number of VLT machines, in an industry that most people are not happy to have the government rely on or be prevalent in the province, in a year after the government eliminated the one program that actually is designed to protect problem gamblers, which was My-Play. To see that spike in VLT revenue and see a government relying on that to create the appearance of a surplus bothers a lot of people. It certainly bothers me. It bothers us on this side that that is one of the ways the government is trying to make the books look better.

There is another private sector entity that the government actually does work with, and I do want to speak about them for a few minutes because they're pretty near and dear to me. That is the credit unions of the province. In this session of the Legislature, we had the occasional debate about the Credit Union Small Business Financing Program, which is a 12-year-old program that is an agreement between the government and a group of private businesses, the member-owned credit unions of the province. It is a very successful program. It has created thousands of jobs.

You know what's neat about it, Mr. Speaker? There is no cash transfer or outlay from the government to the credit unions - not at all. This is the government recognizing that they can use an existing network of banks, of credit unions, to underwrite - using their own capital, by the way - a lot of loans to small businesses, that most small towns across the province have a credit union, and that those credit unions have the expertise to take a look at small businesses and make good decisions on small business lending.

In fact, that's exactly what has happened. Although the government provides a guarantee for most of those loans, it doesn't have to put its own capital at risk when those

credit unions are lending out. The experience has been that the number of bad loans is below the average for all small business lending from all banks across the country. These are small credit unions embedded in their communities that know a good idea for that community when they see it and put their own money on the line when they do.

Now imagine if the government had this agreement with credit unions but didn't require them to report on how they were doing: how many loans they are writing, how many jobs do they think they are creating, how many applications do they take, how many have they turned down? All of that is required to be reported to the government in exchange for the guarantee it provides and rightly so, and we're talking about a fraction of the money the government has put at risk with the Yarmouth ferry deal and yet they're not required to tell us how many passengers ride the boat every month. It's inconceivable.

The point I'm making is that there are a lot of private operators out there in a lot of other businesses that the government does partner with and I support them and they are required to report on how they're doing, except this one, the Yarmouth ferry, and that shouldn't be the case.

By the way, while I'm on credit unions, what did they get in exchange for 12 years of great work with proven results? They got a Minister of Business who says they are now under review. It doesn't mean they are doing anything wrong, they're just under review.

Well, the Film Tax Credit was under review; the Seniors' Pharmacare Program was under review. You'll have to forgive the credit unions and everybody else for getting a little worried when they find out they're under review, given the calamitous record of the government in all those other areas.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I bring up the Credit Union Small Business Financing Program to make the connection to good agreements with private companies, compared to very bad deals with private companies, but also just to take one last moment to encourage the Minister of Business and the government to recognize that program for the success it is because after all, it is the program that the government has that's aimed at small business.

We all talk about the importance of small business in this House but really the one program that supports small business is the Credit Union Small Business Financing Program. What they need is a very strong, clear statement from the government that that program is going to be protected and it is going to be in place for the distant future to continue the good work that it's doing. When that happens, that most recent calamity of the government will be put to rest.

Hopefully the government will agree to pass this measure that we have before us to put the gigantic calamity of the Yarmouth ferry deal to rest, hopefully the consultations with seniors of the Seniors' Pharmacare Program, after four months of waiting, will get under way so that that catastrophe of the government can be put to rest. Hopefully the

Premier will someday read the PWC report that showed the government actually makes money in the film industry and the government can reverse course and get back to supporting those 3,000 jobs so that that disaster can be put to rest and then someday the entire contract for the Yarmouth ferry, including the management fee, will become public so that Nova Scotians can decide for themselves about that issue.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I will now, I know with great disappointment to the members opposite, take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for recommittal.

There has been a call for a recorded vote at 10:00 p.m.

The bells will now ring until 10:00 p.m. The House is recessed until then.

[9:15 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips satisfied?

We will now proceed with the recorded vote for the motion for recommittal. I would ask that all members remain silent while the Clerk conducts the recorded vote. Please come to a complete standing position and signify your vote by either Yea or Nay.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[10:00 p.m.]

YEAS

Mr. MacLeod
Mr. Dunn
Mr. Baillie
Mr. d'Entremont
Mr. David Wilson
Ms. Mancini
Ms. Zann
Mr. Belliveau
Mr. Orrell
Ms. MacFarlane
Mr. MacMaster
Mr. Harrison
Mr. Lohr

NAYS

Mr. Churchill
Ms. Bernard
Ms. Regan
Mr. Samson
Ms. Whalen
Mr. Glavine
Mr. Delorey
Ms. Casey
Mr. MacLellan
Mr. Colwell
Mr. Horne
Mr. Stroink
Ms. Miller

Mr. Hines
Ms. Diab
Mr. Ince
Mr. Furey
Mr. Farrell
Ms. Arab
Mr. Maguire
Mr. Porter
Mr. Jessome
Ms. Lohnes-Croft
Ms. Eyking
Mr. Gough
Ms. Treen
Mr. Wilton
Mr. Rankin
Mr. Gordon Wilson
Mr. Mombourquette

THE CLERK: For, 13. Against, 30.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is defeated.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That concludes the government's business for today. The House will meet again tomorrow, Friday, May 20th, from the hours of 9:00 a.m. until 11:59 p.m. Following the daily routine, we will continue third reading of Bill No. 174.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again on Friday, May 20th, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 11:59 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m.

[The House rose at 10:04 p.m.]