



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2014

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HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2014

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

12:00 NOON

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Just before we begin the daily routine, the topic for late debate, as submitted by the honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's, is:

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature acknowledge that the Tancook ferry represents a vital link for families living on Tancook Island and that an appropriate vessel needs to be in service as soon as possible.

For the sake of clarity, Question Period is at 1:00 p.m.

We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 858

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

Whereas Canada has one of the highest rates of Crohn's and colitis worldwide, with one in every 150 suffering from the debilitating disease and over 10,000 new diagnoses every year; and

Whereas Crohn's and Colitis Canada are leaders in inflammatory bowel disease research and care that is dedicated to finding cures and improving the lives of children and adults affected by these chronic diseases; and

Whereas November is Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Month in Nova Scotia, which aims to bring awareness and raise money for research to find a cure for these diseases;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize November as Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Month and do what they can to support this cause.

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, permission to make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, today we have at least two people from the Canadian Diabetes Association here in the east gallery: Kerry Tench, senior manager of corporate alliances, and Lara Abramson, manager of Camps and Youth programs - if they could stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 859

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

Whereas diabetes is a serious condition affecting more than 100,000 Nova Scotians; and

Whereas the Canadian Diabetes Association is leading the fight against diabetes by helping people with it live healthy lives while working to find a cure; and

Whereas November is known as Diabetes Awareness Month, and this year's campaign focuses on prevention and early detection of pre-diabetes and type 2 diabetes, and people are being encouraged to take the CANRISK test at dontberisky.ca;

Therefore be it resolved that the month of November 2014 be recognized as Diabetes Awareness Month in the Province 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.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

FIREWOOD SHORTAGE

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I have come to regard November as a colder, earlier darkness as one prepares for the depth of winter. The Spring and summer are quite a hectic time for Nova Scotians in their lives, but then it comes to autumn

and to winter. One hopes those Nova Scotians who use firewood to heat their homes have a good supply.

I'm sad to report that the Minister of Natural Resources and his department have had over a year to address the shortage of firewood and access to Crown lands. Now even a former Liberal Cabinet Minister, Don Downe, who was also a Natural Resources Minister, is saying that this firewood shortage is "an acute issue."

To be continued, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

POLITICAL DEBATE

MS. MARGARET MILLER: Today I would like to say a few words about the fine art of political debate. Debate in this House is a privilege offered to members to bring their thoughts, questions, and concerns to other members of this House and, ultimately, to the public. I enjoy and appreciate a good debate on any topic and have seen members from both sides of the House speak for an hour on a particular subject and keep all members of this House engaged. I have also seen members stand with simple thought on a topic and little more substance than repetitive rant.

I would ask all our members of this House to please consider that our words become part of the record of this esteemed House and ask them to choose their discourse wisely. Thank you.

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

FIREWOOD SHORTAGE

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, last week the former Liberal Minister of Natural Resources spoke in regard to the firewood shortage across Nova Scotia. Don Downe said "an acute issue." In May of this year the NDP caucus, this member requested an emergency meeting of the Resources Committee to deal with this firewood shortage, only to be blocked by the majority Liberal members.

I personally have sent letters, emails, have made members' statements, and asked questions in the House of Assembly pertaining to access to Crown land for Nova Scotians for their wood supply. Mr. Speaker, it appears no one in Natural Resources or the minister is listening, I hope it is not a cold winter. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

SM. BUS. - CREDIT CARD FEES

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Running a small business for so many years, I personally identified with what small businesses were being required to pay in credit card charges. The federal government took a major step last week when it was announced Visa and MasterCard submitted separate and individual voluntary proposals to reduce credit card fees to an average effective rate of 1.5 per cent for the next five years. In total, the two commitments represent a reduction in credit card fees of approximately 10 per cent beginning in April 2015.

The purpose of these reductions is to reduce the cost of credit card acceptance for merchants in order to keep prices low for their consumers. This is great news for small business and all retail merchants, and I commend Finance Minister Oliver for this incentive. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, if I could be granted your permission to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. GLAVINE: In the east gallery today, here for the reading of the Crohn's and colitis resolution is a volunteer with Crohn's and Colitis Canada, Halifax Chapter, Shannon Stevenson. She, herself, has Crohn's disease, and if she could rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

SEXUAL ASSAULT & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - PROTECTION

MR. ALLAN ROWE: Mr. Speaker, we are working to establish laws and regulations that better protect and respect the rights of victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. We are working hard to remove barriers and build supports for victims of violence. In the last campaign we committed \$2 million to a sexual violence strategy for Nova Scotia. We continue to work through the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act, to ensure that workplaces right across this province are safe from violence. We are working hard to create an environment where Nova Scotia victims of violence feel they can step forward and feel confident their voice will be heard. It is clear we need to strike a fair balance that respects the rights of everyone involved in these very serious matters.

I am proud to be a member of a government that is strengthening protections for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MACCULLOCH, THERESA - WREATH PRODUCTION

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the attention of the House to an example of hard work and entrepreneurship in rural Nova Scotia. Theresa MacCulloch works six days a week at the Antigonish County landfill but still uses her spare time to produce Christmas wreaths for sale. The Christmas wreaths industry is big business in rural Nova Scotia - hundreds of thousands of wreaths will be shipped across North America in the coming months providing some valued employment in rural Nova Scotia.

Theresa plans to make 500 wreaths this year, 200 of which are going to Colorado, while the other 300 will be made for sale locally. Theresa is working around the clock because she wants to ensure that she has the necessary funds to buy Christmas gifts for the 23 members of her immediate family. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TIR - TRAFFIC CALMING SIGNS

MR. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about a program designed to slow traffic and encourage motorists to be more aware of their speed when driving through our communities.

After receiving numerous calls of concern from residents in my riding of Timberlea-Prospect about speeding and understanding that we do not have the resources to police all our roads 24/7, I recently implemented a well-received signage program, in collaboration with Minister Kelly Regan's constituency office and Halifax Councillor Tim Outhit. Constituents can call or stop by my office to pick up lawn signs that say, "Please Slow Down, We Love Our Children". These signs are placed on private property and serve as an additional reminder to motorists to abide by the speed limit and be watchful for our children and pets.

Mr. Speaker, my office has had calls requesting these lawn signs from other ridings in Nova Scotia and I would encourage all other members of this House of Assembly to participate in the program. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

HUNTING SEASON - SAFETY TIPS

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, we are now in the midst of our annual hunting season here in Nova Scotia. This recreation activity is an important part of our culture and serves as a great opportunity to experience the beautiful outdoors. Hunting in

Nova Scotia is something that I would encourage fathers and mothers to take part in as a great family tradition. I am sure many of us here who have been hunters in the past can remember being taught by their parents.

The most important part of our annual hunting season is safety. The province has worked hard to educate new hunters, enforce hunting regulations and educate everyone on safe practices. I would suggest these four tips for safe hunting this season: practice gun safety; be sure of your target; wear hunter orange and do not hunt alone. Hunting is a valuable outdoor activity that hopefully will grow in the future for our children to experience.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

SCH. SPORTS - IMPORTANCE

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of the importance of sports in our schools. The sports programs in schools allow students to participate in healthy activity and learn many skills, such as teamwork and sportsmanship that cannot be learned from a book.

I am pleased to bring attention to two school sports teams in Halifax Atlantic that have had some outstanding performances in their sports: the J.L. Ilesley High School hockey team won the Mae Kibyuk Memorial Green and Gold tournament in North Sydney this year, also the Herring Cove Junior High School boys volleyball team won gold at this weekend's tournament at Sackville Kingfisher Junior High boys invitational.

I ask the members to join me in congratulating the J.L. Ilesley hockey team and the Herring Cove Junior High volleyball team on their recent accomplishments. Also, I would like to thank all the teachers, students, parents and volunteers who make it possible for our schools to offer successful sports programs.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

KEDDY, ALLAN/BAYERS, GREG - PARAMEDIC EXEMPLARY SERVICE MEDALS

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia's emergency health service system and its paramedics are known around the world as leaders in quality patient care and innovation. Oftentimes these hardworking men and women don't get the same recognition as firefighters and police officers for the service they provide but are just as valuable.

Two of these professionals, Allan Keddy of Blockhouse and Greg Bayers of Dayspring, who are residents of the Lunenburg constituency, were recently honoured with

exemplary service medals for their hard work when Nova Scotians are in need. They truly are everyday heroes and each and every paramedic should be applauded for dedicating their lives to saving those of others. I thank you for what you do.

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

LIBERAL GOV'T. - ECON. DEV. PROGS.

MS. JOYCE TREEN: Mr. Speaker, we all know how hard Nova Scotians work and I am happy to have the opportunity to represent them here in the Legislature. On this side of the House we are working hard on behalf of all Nova Scotians. Our government has delivered on many of its commitments made in the last election and we are exploring new opportunities to continue this process.

Under our government Nova Scotians' economic development programs are the most open and transparent in Canada. The Credit Union Small Business Loan Program has been doubled and we have established a fair approach that truly promotes job opportunities and skill development. Our best possible investment is in Nova Scotians and we will continue to find new and innovative ways to support hard-working Nova Scotians at home, at school and in the workplace. Thank you.

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

MINING ROCKS! VIDEO CONTEST

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia Mining Week has once again kicked off in conjunction with Geology Matters, the province's biggest annual conference organized by the Department of Natural Resources. The Mining Association of Nova Scotia is encouraging students to enter the Mining ROCKS! Video Contest as a means of both educating youth and offering a monetary award for the winning video.

Nova Scotia's mining and quarrying industry is a key creator of jobs and prosperity for Nova Scotians. It provides 5,500 jobs, mostly in rural areas, and contributes \$420 million in the province's economy each year. We are proud to participate in projects that emphasize the importance of the mining sector and ways to include youth in this industry. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

N.S. MUSIC WK. (17TH ANL.)

MR. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, this past weekend was one to celebrate and highlight the talents of Nova Scotia musicians. Truro hosted the 17th Annual Nova Scotia Music Week Awards where musicians and industry professionals were recognized for their

hard work and achievements. Sponsored by several local businesses such as Jost Vineyards, Sea Shell Designs and the Old Triangle, awards were distributed to artist venues, producers and festivals in honour of their cultural contributions to our province.

Mr. Speaker, delegates from all over the world attended this event to scout talent and offer the opportunity for international exposure to our artists. Historically this component of Music Week N.S. has led to new travel and employment experiences. Our government is proud to support our artists and cultural sector and will continue to help provide these types of opportunities.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, if I could make an additional introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. GLAVINE: Yes, we have three hard-working members of the Department of Health and Wellness in the east gallery today. In fact they even came on their lunch hour, which I do applaud. We have Steve Gallant and Dawn Stegen - if they would just rise and receive the welcome of the House. (Applause)

They came along today to support their colleague because I'd really like to introduce Rick Gilbert to the Legislature. He spent over 40 years in the recreation world, helping children and youth live healthier and happier. Through all his hard work, planning and researching, Rick has left lasting impacts on the lives of all Nova Scotians and has been awarded with the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association Award of Merit. I can do only two motions but I'll have to do one on another day. So if Rick would rise, he's a very humble man but we need to give him the real loud applause for his great work. (Applause).

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE STRATEGY

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, our government has committed \$2 million to a sexual violence strategy in the province. We continue to work through the Ministry of Community Services to ensure that all Nova Scotians are safe from violence. Sexual violence is a serious health, social and public safety issue in Nova Scotia. We aim to find ways to encourage victims to come forward on their own terms.

In April 2014, work began to develop Nova Scotia's first provincial Sexual Violence Strategy. This initiative acts as our efforts to put a stop to sexual abuse and harassment of all forms. Part of this strategy is offering support to women through

organizations such as the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre and recognizing the individual needs and rights of victims.

I am proud to be part of the government that respects and understands these needs and is taking the appropriate actions to show our support, as promised. Thank you.

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

N.S. CONSTITUENCIES/FED. RIDINGS

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring to the attention of all members of this House a matter that I find important and is a pet peeve of my own. The Elections Act defines our areas as electoral districts. Tradition has been that in Nova Scotia we represent constituencies. Ridings is the title used in the federal system.

I would remind all members that they represent constituencies and not ridings. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

YOUTH SMOKING - LEGISLATION

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard to protect the health of Nova Scotians. I am proud to stand with a government focused on protecting youth from exposure to cigarettes and e-cigarettes. From day one, our approach has been solely focused on the health and safety of Nova Scotians, especially young people. We have to ensure that no person under the age of 19 years will be able to purchase a pack of cigarettes or an e-cigarette in Nova Scotia.

While we continue to shift to a smoke-free culture in Nova Scotia, we need to take the time to listen to Nova Scotians. We heard a lot from Nova Scotians on this matter, and some have said that we were moving too quickly without proper consultation. We will continue to work hard on behalf of all Nova Scotians and bring forward the strongest legislation in the country.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

MATTATALL, JOHN - COL. CO. SPORT HALL OF FAME INDUCTION

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, John Mattatall of Tatamagouche, who is a constituent of mine in Colchester North, began figure skating at the age of 9, left home to pursue a career in pairs skating at the age of 16, and became a member of the Mariposa School of Skating in Barrie, Ontario, and with a partner there won many prestigious awards. Together they earned a medal in pairs at the Nationals in 2004 and placed 10th in

the world juniors in the Netherlands. From 2007 to 2011, John competed in pairs at Nationals and placed 4th in the BMO Canadian Figure Skating Pairs in the senior division. Together they captured many titles throughout the course of their participation and their competition.

John has retired from competitive skating. He did that in 2011, and returned home to further his education. He has expressed his gratitude for the help and support he received when he was starting his career by giving back to his home area, providing support and help to local coaches. John was recently honoured by being inducted into the Colchester Sport Hall of Fame.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

EHS EXEMPLARY SERV. MEDALS (2014) - RECIPIENTS

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, the Emergency Health Services Exemplary Service Medal was created in 1994 to recognize paramedics who perform their duties in an exemplary manner through good conduct, efficiency, and number of years in service. This year the province honoured 15 paramedics for their work to protect the health and safety of Nova Scotians. The paramedics were awarded the Exemplary Service Medal for Emergency Health Services. The medal recipients are Greg Bayers from Dayspring, Lunenburg County; John Campbell of Parrsboro; Carlis Coulter of Tatamagouche; James Currie, Shelburne; Gerald Dunlop, Baddeck; Allan Keddy, Blockhouse; Brian MacDonald, Margaree Centre; Travis MacNeil, Little Bras d'Or; Lorna Mastin, Middleton; Carla Middleburg, Baie Verte; Bill Muirhead, Stellarton; Mike Newman, Nappan; Gordon Parker, Truro; Brian Thibideau of Saulnierville; and Dale Traer of Waverley.

On behalf of all members of the Legislature, I'd like to congratulate these people on their awards.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

LIB. GOV'T.: PROSPEROUS N.S. - INNOVATIVE PLANS

MR. ALLAN ROWE: Mr. Speaker, after one year in office, our government is making sure Nova Scotians have the services they need in their communities and closer to home. We are unifying our district health authorities and rebuilding confidence in our health care system by delivering better access to patient services. We have increased affordable housing investments and are making additional investments in the senior citizens' assistance program. We have introduced changes that will allow vacationing Nova Scotians to stay out of province for a longer period of time without losing their health coverage.

Improvements are needed, and we know there is much more work to do. It is vital that we strike a balance to ensure we move forward on innovative new plans to build a stronger, more prosperous Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS - SAFE ENVIRONMENT

MS. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, eliminating time restrictions for sexual assault victims to report and take action against the perpetrators is a deserved right. We cannot assume what we perceive as appropriate timeliness for victims to come forward after incidents of battery or assault. The 2009 general society survey found that 88 per cent of sexual assaults in Canada went unreported.

With this in mind, it is clear that a more supportive infrastructure is needed. Our goal is to ensure maximum support and opportunity for victims of sexual assault to move on with their lives. I'm proud to be part of a government that is creating an environment in our province where everyone can feel safe at work, at home, and in seeking the support they need throughout difficult times.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

BERLIN WALL - ANNIV. (25TH)

MR. JOACHIM STROINK: Mr. Speaker, from 1961 until 1989, the Berlin Wall stood as a barrier between family and neighbours, cutting a nation in half and separating world nations on two sides of the Cold War. It remains to this day as one of the starkest symbols of the Cold War.

This year, November 9th, marks the 25th Anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. After almost three decades of separation the world witnessed the concrete barrier between East and West Germany torn down by chisel and sledgehammer. Twenty-five years later we look back at the fall of the Berlin Wall, which signalled the end of the unique and devastating time in the postwar history, and we are happy to celebrate efforts to reunify Germany and rebuild trust and co-operation between nations.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

DENIM HOMES (NEW MINAS)

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring to your attention today a New Minas business that is particularly deserving of our interest and acclaim. They are an innovative and outstanding home construction business that is receiving extensive recognition for their work, both regionally and nationally. As an R-2000 builder they

designed and built the Efficiency Nova Scotia demonstration home, have built the QEII Fall lottery home for 2012 and 2013, and the Nova Scotia Community College Pilikan House Super-Efficient Student Laboratory for the Energy Sustainability Engineering Technology Program.

Denim Homes, owned by Caleb Howden, is a team-orientated, creative and environmentally socially minded business that is 100 per cent made in the Annapolis Valley. They are proud of their roots and are committed not only to building stellar homes but to building a better Annapolis Valley. It's businesses like Denim Homes and many others in the Annapolis Valley and throughout our province that are so integral to building a strong and vibrant Nova Scotia. Thank you.

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

DENNY: CHIEF LEROY - RE-ELECTION

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the members of this House to recognize the re-election of Chief Leroy Denny of Eskasoni. Chief Leroy received his third mandate with 53 per cent of the vote. Eskasoni is the largest First Nation community in our province, and Chief Leroy and his council work hard to improve the quality of life for its residents.

I ask that all members of this House join me in wishing Chief Leroy and his council continued success. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

DIGBY FERRY - *MV BLUE STAR ITHAKI*

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, a few days ago the federal government announced the purchase of a ferry to replace the existing *Princess of Acadia* for the route between Saint John, New Brunswick, and Digby, Nova Scotia. The *MV Princess of Acadia* started sailing across the Bay of Fundy in 1971 and has been a dependable and valuable transportation link for our communities for over four decades. The *MV Blue Star Ithaki* is 124 metres long, 19 metres wide, and has a cruising speed of 20 knots. The new replacement ferry was built in 2000 by Daewoo Industries and has at least 20 years of useful life remaining. This service is very important for the economy and tourism of the region.

Ferry service with the new *MV Blue Star Ithaki* is expected to begin sometime in 2015, and I would like to invite all of you to experience the wonderful Bay of Fundy from her decks.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

N.S. TURKEY MARKETING BD. - FOOD SAFETY

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative Opposition is insistent on politicizing the issue of food safety. They have attacked the Minister of Agriculture and the Nova Scotia Turkey Marketing Board, accusing them of acting against small business.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge the Progressive Conservative Opposition to put some meat on the bones of these accusations by answering two questions: which food processors in the province will they pick as the winners who will not be required to comply with food safety laws, and which food processors will they choose as the losers who will have to bear the responsibility and expense of ensuring that their product is safe; and, secondly, which of the current food safety laws would the Progressive Conservatives choose to not enforce and how will they then propose protecting Nova Scotians from food-borne disease?

Nova Scotians deserve answers, not attacks when it comes to important issues like food safety.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

LIB. GOV'T. - EDUC. SYSTEM

MR. BILL HORNE: Our government is working hard on behalf of Nova Scotians to build a stronger, safer, and more prosperous future. Building a bright future for young Nova Scotians means building a strong educational system.

In the past year the Liberal Government has been delivering results for our students of all ages. We have undertaken Nova Scotia's first educational curriculum review in 25 years. We have listened to educators and parents to restore investments in our schools after years of cuts. We have eliminated interest on the provincial portion of student loans. We are ensuring that new scholarships put money into the hands of graduate students doing research to help our province grow and succeed, and we are modernizing our apprenticeship program.

Mr. Speaker, there remains more to do. We will continue to explore, do opportunities and make further improvements to ensure that young Nova Scotians are given the key to success. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

ANNA. VALLEY APPLE HARVEST

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, as the Annapolis Valley apple harvest is now nearly complete, I wish this House to join me in congratulating the many growers on the

completion of their harvest season. It was a difficult year, with considerable damage caused by post-tropical storm Arthur in the middle of the growing season. The storm triggered a very serious fire blight infection, which will have far-reaching and unknown effects on future crops. Apple farmers have faced this and all their adversities head-on. Please join me in wishing them good prices and a good pack-out of their crop now in storage. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

SEMAINE NATIONALE DE L'IMMIGRATION FRANCOPHONE - MARQUER

HON. LENA DIAB: Merci beaucoup, M. le Président. C'est avec plaisir aujourd'hui que je raconte la belle expérience que j'ai célébrée avec l'Immigration Francophone Nouvelle-Écosse le samedi 8 novembre 2014. Immigration Francophone Nouvelle-Écosse m'a invitée à prendre part au mini-colloque organisé en collaboration avec la Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada. Cette semaine-là, ils ont célébré la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone, dont le thème était « Une diversité qui nous unit ».

Le thème de la semaine démontre bien comment l'immigration francophone enrichit la Nouvelle-Écosse. Les immigrants font de la Nouvelle-Écosse un endroit dynamique et plein de vitalité. Nous avons besoin des immigrants pour contribuer à la croissance de notre économie, et nous avons besoin des immigrants pour enrichir davantage notre culture et notre société. Merci beaucoup.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I would ask that the honourable member provide a written copy in English for the purposes of Hansard.

Barring further Statements by Members, with the unanimous consent of the House, we will recess until 1:00 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

We will now recess until 1:00 p.m.

[12:38 p.m. The House recessed.]

[12:59 p.m. The House reconvened.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

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

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

PREM.: FLAVOURED TOBACCO BAN - FLIP-FLOP EXPLAIN

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. A week ago I thought we all agreed on the need to protect teenage Nova Scotians from flavoured tobacco products. After all, our young Nova Scotians are being targeted by kiddie tobacco flavours such as honey berry, peach, and cherry vanilla.

Then the government gutted its own bill, Mr. Speaker, removing any ban on these products. The Minister of Health and Wellness has been unable to explain this outrageous flip-flop. I'll ask the Premier if he can explain why his government flip-flopped on such an important thing as banning flavoured tobacco.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me congratulate the Minister of Health and Wellness for putting before this House the most progressive piece of legislation on e-cigarettes in the entire country. (Applause)

We are going to ensure that that piece of legislation passes this session so that small business operators can adapt, recognizing that there will be no advertising permitted. That product needs to be hidden away from the sight of any customer, and on top of that, the Minister of Health and Wellness has committed to listening to Nova Scotians, to going out and doing consultation.

Mr. Speaker, we will bring in legislation that will deal with flavoured tobacco, and it will be implemented by May 31st.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, let me correct the Premier. It was progressive tobacco legislation until the minister removed the most important parts of the bill, which are to protect young Nova Scotians from flavoured tobacco.

The Minister of Health and Wellness himself admits it is a flawed bill. How it got all the way to the floor of this House under his watch, with such flaws in it, is beyond us. While the government reconsiders its position and takes its time, 3,600 teenage Nova Scotians will take up smoking using flavoured tobacco. Surely that is enough information for us to act now in this House, to protect them from these awful products.

Will the Premier agree to put the ban on flavoured tobacco back into the bill before this session ends?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, once again, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is misleading this House. He knows full well that the stats he is bringing forward are not accurate.

What we know for certain is that the Minister of Health and Wellness has tabled in this House the most progressive piece of legislation on e-cigarettes in this country. We know full well that this government listened to Nova Scotians in the Law Amendments Committee. We will make sure that when we bring in legislation around flavoured tobacco, no young Nova Scotians will have access.

Unlike previous governments, this government will listen to Nova Scotians and ensure that legislation will prevent any tobacco company from finding a way around it.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, clearly the government is not listening to the Canadian Cancer Society. They are the ones that did the study that said 3,600 teenage Nova Scotians will take up smoking in the next year while they study their navel on something as important as this, and they will be smoking flavoured tobacco, including flavours like blue raspberry, pina colada, and cotton candy.

That might be okay with the Liberal Government now, but it is not okay with us. They can study all they want, but my question to the Premier is, what more information could they possibly need than the 3,600 young Nova Scotians who are going to be provided with pina colada-flavoured tobacco in order to do the right thing and put that ban back in the bill?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the honourable member actually read the bill. It was May 31st when the bill was going to become law, when it came to flavoured tobacco.

What we brought into place is an issue to deal around e-cigarettes. Every small business owner who deals with that will want to know. There is no advertising, to ensure that that is hidden out of the sight of all their customers. We want to give them the opportunity to bring that in.

On the flip side, we want to make sure that when we're dealing with flavoured tobacco, there is no possibility for big tobacco to find a way around it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind all members of this House, remember when the federal Conservative Government tried to deal with big tobacco? They left a loophole. This Liberal Government of Nova Scotia will leave no loopholes. (Applause)

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

PREM.: FLAVOURED TOBACCO SALES - REASONS

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. First I would like to extend, again, our condolences to the Premier and his family on the loss of his brother.

Last week while the Premier was away, the government backed away from a significant tobacco control measure that would have taken flavoured tobacco out of the hands of our young people. I know Nova Scotians are asking, what is the logic of that climb down, that flip-flop? So my question to the Premier is this, why has his government decided to allow the continued sale of flavoured tobacco in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all let me say through you to the Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party how much I appreciate the kind words that she expressed - and members of this House expressed - towards me and my family over the last week. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I want to again tell you that we have before us the most progressive piece of legislation in the country when it comes to e-cigarettes. As well we will ensure that we meet the time line of May 31st, when it comes to flavoured tobacco. What I have been hearing from Nova Scotians is finally a government actually listened in Law Amendments and said we need to make sure there are actually no loopholes in this piece of legislation. We want to take sure that we keep flavoured tobacco out of the hands of young Nova Scotians on the time line that was committed, unlike what happened in other provinces.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Premier that there wasn't a single presenter at Law Amendments who spoke in favor of flavoured tobacco except for organized tobacco lobbyists or consultants - those are simply the facts. I ask the Premier if he could explain how the only people he seems to be listening to are tobacco lobbyists.

THE PREMIER: Again I want to thank the honourable member for her question. Mr. Speaker, I want to remind this House, we have before us a piece legislation that is the most progressive in the country when it comes to e-cigarettes, which is being held up by the two opposition parties. We are going to ensure that that piece of legislation passes; we will keep that product out of the way. We eliminate advertising when it comes to that, and at the same time this party is going to do what no other government has been able to do in the history, quite frankly, of this country: when we bring in flavoured-tobacco legislation, there will be no loophole, unlike there was at the national level. We will ensure that we protect our children at the time when it is committed in that piece of legislation.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Premier has his talking points about this being progressive legislation, but this is anything but progressive legislation when it comes to tobacco control. Last week the Minister of Health and

Wellness said that his views on flavoured tobacco had been clear. He supports banning it. Yet last week the minister was given his marching orders to do a flip-flop on this bill, so I want to ask the Premier if he could please explain his role in the government's dramatic shift and direction related to flavoured tobacco.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the honourable member that there were people before Law Amendments. That party has stood in this House complaining about the fact that this legislation wasn't tough enough on flavoured tobacco. We've actually listened. We are going to make sure that when we bring in legislation on flavoured tobacco, we are going to deal with that issue.

What is their problem, Mr. Speaker? They can't have it both ways. They can't stand up and criticize the piece of legislation, when we are prepared to amend it to ensure that we cover every possibility that will eliminate flavoured tobacco on behalf of Nova Scotians. Why are they complaining about it? Why don't they join the chorus of Nova Scotians and ensure that we eliminate any loophole that would be in that legislation?

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

JUSTICE: CORRECTIONS SYSTEM - SECURITY MEASURES

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: My question is to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, all Nova Scotians were relieved on the weekend to learn that a dangerous offender who had mistakenly been released was back in custody, thanks to the police. This is not the first time an offender has been let loose by accident; it has happened many times.

The last time it happened, the now Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism said, "this most recent incident does nothing to inspire confidence that the system has improved," and he called on the government to do - as I quote, "There are security protocols that need to be reconsidered at this point and one would think the government would undertake whatever measures are at its disposal."

I will ask the Premier, what security protocols has his government put in place to reassure Nova Scotians that the province's corrections system is working and keeping our community safe?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all let me express my great appreciation to law enforcement officers across this province. Time and time again, they respond to the needs of Nova Scotians.

One of the things that was loud and clear is that the Minister of Justice, the Attorney General of this province, expressed the frustration that she had and her department had. She made it very clear to all members of this House and all Nova Scotians that the Minister

of Justice will get to the bottom of what happened under this particular situation and we will respond in a way that ensures we protect Nova Scotians.

MR. BAILLIE: That's all very well and good, but the question was, what security protocols has the government put in place during his term in office, or even in the last few days, as the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism recommended and, in fact, insisted be done?

I know that the Minister of Justice is frustrated and all Nova Scotians are frustrated. They want to know what's been done and what's going to be done. Now we have an investigation. I'll ask the Premier, will he confirm to this House that the investigation is already underway and that the results will be made public so that Nova Scotians can have confidence in their corrections system?

THE PREMIER: I can assure the honourable member, all members of this House and all Nova Scotians that this government is already on the way to finding out what happened when it came to the release of that prisoner.

But I also want to tell all members of this House, unlike the Progressive Conservative Party, we're not going to have tough talk on crime - we're going to deliver tough action.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

JUSTICE - CENT. N.S. CORR. FACILITY: INMATE RELEASE - DETAILS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. On Friday morning, the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility mistakenly released a man charged with attempted murder and six other offences, as we just spoke about.

In the Spring of 2009, in the days following an accidental release from the same facility, the now Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism called on the Justice Minister of the day to resign. The member for Richmond went on to say, "To suggest to Nova Scotians they should continue to have confidence in this minister or even confidence in this government's ability to handle the justice system, I don't think anyone's going to buy it."

How does the minister feel about the comments of her Cabinet colleague today now that she is responsible for the same offence he once considered grounds for dismissal?

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate my appreciation and I want to thank the police for bringing back the offender quickly and without incident. I was very clear last week and I didn't mince my words that that was completely unacceptable. I

committed to all Nova Scotians that we would be transparent and we will find out what went wrong, and this we are doing.

MR. MACMASTER: It's been one full week since this dangerous individual was released. How much longer will Nova Scotians have to wait for the minister to tell them exactly what happened to lead to this dangerous individual's accidental release?

MS. DIAB: An internal investigation is underway. I expect that that would be wrapped up next week sometime.

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

FIN. - TAX REVIEW: RELEASE - TIME FRAME

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. In February of this year, this government announced it would be doing a comprehensive review of taxes, fees and regulations. The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board said, "Our goal is to have a tax and regulatory system that supports private sector growth and economic development." Last week, the minister told the media the tax review was at the printers.

My question to the minister is, if the report was at the printers last week, when can we expect the minister to table the tax review in this House?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. This is a very topical issue, certainly, for Nova Scotians. I also appreciate that many people are anxious to see the results of the tax review, as are all of us as well. I wanted to just answer the member opposite to let her know that it will take time for it to be prepared. It will be within the month; I've said so, it will be within the month that we will see the results of that and the report will be made available to everybody.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the timeline seems to be slipping a bit because I heard the minister also say that the middle of the month the minister would be making this review available. The minister is well aware that many Nova Scotians are looking forward to this review, so I want to ask the minister if she will commit to tabling the report during this session of our Legislature.

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, again I am pleased to rise on this question and to address it with the member opposite. As soon as I get that report, the members of this Legislature will also be getting that report. I can promise you that.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

JUSTICE: PRISONER RELEASE - OPERATIVE REQUIREMENTS

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. When a prisoner was accidentally released in February 2012, a report found it to be due to employees not handcuffing or keeping careful watch of the prisoner while he was being transported. At the time, the now-Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism told reporters that there are basic operative requirements to ensure the safety of Nova Scotians that are not being followed.

Mr. Speaker, we share the concerns of the minister that he had back in 2012 so today we ask the simple question: Were basic operative requirements followed by the department last week?

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I will again inform the members of the House that an internal investigation is underway. Once the report is complete, which I expect to be at some point next week, we will release it and provide a complete explanation of what led to this incident. Thank you.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, releasing dangerous criminals is obviously unacceptable. It puts all Nova Scotians at serious risk. An official at the Department of Justice told reporters that we will be looking at policies and procedures and we will be looking at staff conduct. He went to say that appropriate corrective action will be taken.

My question today for the minister is, will the minister tell the members of this House and all Nova Scotians what form that corrective action might take?

MS. DIAB: Mr. Speaker, we in the Justice Department are always looking at our procedures. We are always looking at our actions and we are always training and working with our correctional services officers, with the unions, with our health and occupational safety. This is being done all the time, every time.

Of course, as I said last week and will say again today, many of you can rise and ask me the same question over and over again, of course this is not to be taken lightly. This is very serious and this is why I will not make any presumptions today about what went wrong but we will get the answers. Thank you.

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

ENERGY: NSP - UNPAID FUEL COSTS

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. The Consumer Advocate wants a plan in place, starting in 2015, to eliminate the \$96 million in unpaid fuel costs ratepayers are currently on the hook for. According to the Consumer Advocate, if we don't deal with this debt now, it will end up costing consumers

an additional \$7 million in the future. Instead of listening to the concerns of consumers, the Minister of Energy is backing Nova Scotia Power's desire to defer the payment of fuel costs into 2016.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, my question is, what information has Nova Scotia Power provided to him to prove that their approach is the best approach for ratepayers?

HON. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. I find it intriguing that suddenly the NDP likes what the Consumer Advocate has to say when they disagreed with almost everything he said when they were in government.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Consumer Advocate that the fuel deferral has to come down but as I've said repeatedly in this House, in fact there are ways to do it without going into the pockets of ratepayers, for example, the \$33 million that ratepayers overpaid last year, which could be returned to them and bring the deferral down, without going to ratepayers.

MR. CORBETT: Well, you know Mr. Speaker, it's fun how much he loves Nova Scotia Power now that's he's over there. As we heard from the Minister of Energy in Question Period on November 4th, he isn't worried about the close to \$100 million in unpaid fuel costs because he states, ". . . the deferred amounts of fuel can continue to decrease without going back to ratepayers . . ."

My question to the Minister of Energy, through you Mr. Speaker, if the minister is wrong and a \$100 million fuel cost doesn't magically vanish into thin air, what is he prepared to do to guarantee ratepayers aren't forced to hand over \$7 million to NSP?

MR. YOUNGER: First of all, if the member was paying attention, he would know that the consumer advocate is not even suggesting the whole amount would come down in year one. Second of all, it is no longer \$100 million; it has already come down to \$86.7 million, so we've already actually dropped by \$13 million.

Again, instead of keeping \$33 million in the pockets of Nova Scotia Power like these two Parties want to do, we think that should be returned to ratepayers to reduce the fuel deferral without raising their bills.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

JUSTICE - PRISONS (N.S.): FED. PROCEDURES - ADOPT

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. We have two federal prisons in Nova Scotia. We consistently hear of problems at

the provincial intuition in Burnside; meanwhile, there are minimal issues at the other two prisons.

It is obvious there are significant problems at Burnside that must be addressed. Has the government considered adopting federal procedures to ensure our prisons and our communities are kept safe?

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, we've talked and talked quite a bit about our correctional facilities and in particular the one in Burnside. Look, correctional services are well-equipped and perform a very difficult job, managing offenders who act violently at times. We do our best to ensure that we react appropriately to all these incidents, as I said.

One other things is, we are building a jail which is soon to open in the next few months and that will definitely relieve a lot of the pressure off of our Burnside facility. That is something that is ongoing and we hope in a few months that will help us. Thank you.

MR. MACMASTER: One of the federal institutions, Springhill, has a capacity of 550 offenders. According to the department's website, the Burnside prison has a capacity of half that number. I can appreciate the danger that these people work in - who are working in these institutions - but to me, it comes down to the management of them. That is where the key is for making things safer.

My question is, why is the management of the federal system so much more competent at ensuring community safety than the provincial system?

MS. DIAB: My colleague on the other side talks about federal versus provincial procedures, protocols and so on. What I will do is if he has any specific notes or any specific information that he wishes to raise with me, to please do that and I will certainly have my staff look at it. Thank you.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - HOME CARE SYSTEM: CHANGES - DETAILS

HON. DAVID WILSON: Last week, the Minister of Health and Wellness was questioned about home care wait-lists and he said, "We're moving to what will be a competitive model . . ." I'll table that from Hansard. When asked if he was considering moving from the not-for-profit health care model of delivery to a for-profit model, the Minister of Health and Wellness said, ". . . we know that probably in the home support area there can be some change, in fact, that will improve the system." I've tabled that with the other document.

I'd like to ask the minister, what changes will the Minister of Health and Wellness be making to the home care system?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I thank the honourable member for the question. We know that this is the area, in terms of our policy, where we want to improve upon, expand care for our seniors in the home as opposed to building more nursing homes. In order to do that, we put an additional \$30 million into the budget this year, but in some cases, we are not getting the best deal because contracts have simply been handed to providers.

In terms of making it competitive, the one thing we can assure Nova Scotians is that governments and public monies to provide home care will be the strongest part of the future.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, when the government passed Bill No. 30 last Spring, it denied home care workers a 50 cent increase in their hourly wage. Now we hear from the minister potentially hinting changes that may include moving to a for-profit model.

So my question is very simple, to the minister: Can the minister commit to maintaining not-for-profit home support services in our province?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we currently have a mix in the province of private and public care to our seniors in the home. We, as a government, are committed to public dollars and most likely additional dollars to make sure that home care, in accordance with our update of the Continuing Care Strategy, remains not just strong, but we see gradual improvement. The current problem is that we have a tremendous discrepancy in the cost of delivery from one county to another and we simply have to get maximum home care for every dollar that we invest.

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

ENERGY - ONSHORE SHALE GAS DEV.: BAN - RECONSIDER

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Energy. In a briefing note prepared for the minister and obtained by our office via FOIPOP, the minister was advised that production of the Sable Offshore Energy project continues to decline. It's uncertain how much natural gas even Deep Panuke will be able to produce.

Additionally, the same briefing document warns the minister that demand for natural gas continues to increase in Nova Scotia and is expected to exceed supply produced offshore for the next year or so. Moreover, the minister is advised that Nova Scotia will need to import natural gas from other jurisdictions like New Brunswick and western Canada.

In light of this, will the minister reconsider his support for the Premier's irresponsible decision to ban the development of onshore shale gas development?

HON. ANDREW YOUNGER: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know we would not be in this situation with hydraulic fracturing at the moment if that particular member did not sit in a Cabinet in 2007, and allow hydraulic fracturing in this province without the regulations in place, without a way to deal with the waste water. So here we are, seven years later, still trying to deal with waste water, because we tried it the Tory way. Now we are doing it the responsible way. (Applause)

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, at least our caucus and our Cabinet was open for jobs in the economy of Nova Scotia, unlike what these guys are doing trying to ban something that is a good way for good jobs in Nova Scotia.

In the same briefing note, Mr. Speaker, the minister was advised that the number of companies have stated their interest in exporting liquefied natural gas from Nova Scotia. However, the minister was advised that a large-scale LNG export project requires significant volumes of natural gas, which are two big programs that might be coming to Nova Scotia. In fact, the document stated that gas supply remains the biggest challenge for these projects.

With this in mind, can the minister explain why he is supporting the Premier's ban on shale gas development, a new way of creating jobs, increasing Nova Scotia's natural gas supply, and unleashing the economic potential of our province?

MR. YOUNGER: The honourable member will forget the fact that the three wells that they approved and left a mess for Nova Scotians - and not only that, with a net cost to Nova Scotia that we are still trying to deal with at the moment seven years later - in fact came up dry.

So I will table for the House the press release from Bear Head last week noting that not only have they addressed the supply issue after having meetings with political leaders - including the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, the Premier, and myself here in Halifax - but the fact that they've identified 15 SPLs as well as sources outside. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, they need sources that begin in 2018, which you could allow hydraulic fracturing in this province today without the regulations, without the way to deal with waste water, and it still wouldn't solve the problem for those projects.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

AGRIC.: TURKEY FARMERS (N.S.) - PURCHASE AGREEMENT

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Rural Nova Scotians who wanted to raise a small number of turkeys were forced last Spring to sign a purchase guarantor agreement with the Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia. And I will table that agreement.

This agreement stipulates that the poults purchased for home consumption were not for resale to any business or individual. It also quotes Regulation 9.1, which says that no producer shall market turkeys in Nova Scotia or elsewhere without a valid marketing licence issued by the Turkey Board. What it doesn't say is that the same regulations exempt any producer who markets less than 25 turkeys in any control period in Regulation 10. I will table that.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is, is the minister aware of this overreaching waiver that hurts rural Nova Scotia and small producers who want to grow a small number of turkeys and sell them?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, the idea of that regulation is for people who want to have them for their own consumption. There are allotments available through the Turkey Marketing Board for people who want to grow and market turkeys.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, the document that I just tabled states that anyone who markets less than 25 - so the regulations state that anyone who wants to grow and market turkeys, less than the number of 25 - so 24 or less - is allowed to, in Regulation 10.

My question for the minister is, will the minister demand this coming Spring that the Turkey Marketing Board stop using this waiver, which does not agree with their own - with the Act?

MR. COLWELL: I thank the member for the question. This is a very important issue, one that we've been discussing here at length in this Legislature. Indeed, there is a quota available for anyone who wants to produce turkeys in the province. They have to approach the marketing board, and I believe it costs \$150 for this licence. Once they get the licence, they can do whatever they want with the turkeys. The Turkey Marketing Board will give them expertise for that as well.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - HOME CARE: WAIT-LIST - GROWTH EXPLAIN

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'll table two charts from the Department of Health and Wellness on home care wait-lists, one from April and one from October. The news is not good.

In the last six months we've seen the number of people on the home care wait-list in the Annapolis Valley increase by 53. In Lunenburg County it was up by 56. The grand total of people on the home care wait-list province-wide is now 760 people, up from 422 just a short six months ago.

I'd like to ask the minister, why has the Minister of Health and Wellness allowed the home care wait-list to grow so quickly over the last six months?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we all know, and Nova Scotians know, that it is an enormous challenge now as we move from more in nursing homes to keeping people in their homes. That is the statement we've heard loud and clear, that people want to be there.

We are actually in some areas - we don't have all the qualified people to deliver home care. We're now looking at making sure that additional classes can come forward with CNAs, LPNs. We need to make sure we have the right number of providers.

The member opposite is correct that we have two or three areas that are currently under enormous pressure.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, it's not just the 760 people on the wait-list that are affected. It's their families and their caregivers who are supporting them at this time. Many of them are waiting in hospitals. They are waiting and their families are worried. It is the job of the Minister of Health and Wellness to address the concerns of families and patients and react.

I'd like to ask the minister what steps the minister has taken to address the specific concerns of the 760 people and their families on the wait-list for home care services.

MR. GLAVINE: One of the areas that we have started to address is to look at prioritizing. Of course we have people in hospital who do need to get home and make sure they have home care, whether it's VON nursing or whether it's a home support provider who will help them make that next step.

One of the areas that we have not given enough effort to is seeing who has that higher need to be able to stay in their home. This will become part of that future assessment of those who do need home care.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

FIN.: TAX REVIEW - DELAY EXPLAIN

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Members of this House were expecting the tax review by October 31st. Last week the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board informed the House the tax review was expected by mid-November. Today we have learned that the tax review can be expected before the end of November. It seems the longer the House sits, the further the delay of the tax report gets pushed out. My question for the minister is, why is the minister blaming the printer for these delays?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, it is similar to the earlier question and I've answered the House already. When I get that report, so will you.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if maybe the minister could ask the printer to go to extended hours to try to get it done a little quicker. But if nothing else, I assume that the minister has asked for a date from the printers that this will be done, a specific date. My question is what date was the minister informed that the tax review will be delivered to her - what date?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure all members that as soon as the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board receives that report, it will be delivered to all members of this House and all Nova Scotians.

I don't know why the honourable member is in a hurry to get out of here, I'm prepared to stay here until Christmas. There is one thing for certain, the more that member stands up, the more Nova Scotians realize they made the right decision last October.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

NAT. RES.: CAPE SPLIT/BLOMIDON PROV. PARK REVIEW - DETAILS

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. On July 31st Cape Split reopened after being closed for several weeks due to the impact of post-tropical storm Arthur. At the reopening the minister mentioned that reviews are being conducted on both Cape Split and Blomidon Provincial Park. My question for the minister is, can the minister please inform the House what this review consists of and whether the results will be made public?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, there is an ongoing review across government departments when it comes to all programs and services that we deliver. Our parks are part of that review. Through that review so far, what I can inform the member is that Cape Split Park has been listed as one of our signature parks in the province and will be treated as such moving forward.

MR. LOHR: I would like to thank the minister for that answer. I do commend him on the fact that Cape Split is a signature park in the province; I really do feel that way too. It's an awesome spot. Meanwhile, two toilets purchased by the department for use at the end of the trail remain in storage. They have been there for almost two years. Can the minister inform this House what plan there is for these toilets to be installed?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, of course there were two outhouses purchased by the previous government. That government clearly didn't do the analysis to see how they would be installed at the facility. There is a path which takes three hours to hike, that creates an operational challenge when it comes to servicing outhouses at the other end of

the park. I don't think we are going to be able to do that. The member opposite actually referred to this issue being an example of Liberal incompetence. I would say if the height of Liberal incompetence is two outhouses that the NDP bought, I think we're doing pretty good.

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

ENVIRON.: THIRD PARTY REPTS. - PILOT PROG.

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Environment. Earlier this month, I attempted to bring a constituent's concerns about pesticide runoff to officials within the Department of Environment. I was told that as a result of an ongoing pilot program, third-party reports, now including those from MLAs, would not be investigated.

My question through you to the minister is, can the minister please explain this pilot program that reportedly started three months ago and which areas of the province it affects?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, what I can advise the member opposite through you is that she hasn't brought her concern forward to me. I'd be happy to hear what her concern is there with that particular situation and I'd be happy to look into it for her.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I would think that the minister would know what's going on in his department. None of my colleagues were made aware of this pilot program either. It seems counterintuitive that an elected official, whose purpose is to bring constituency issues and concerns to government, is unable to do so.

My question through you to the minister is, can the minister please explain why his new policy, one that MLAs were not made aware of, no longer permits MLAs to bring concerns to officials in the Department of Environment and no longer allows for anonymous tips from the public?

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, again I thank the member for the question. I guess there are a couple of responses that address that concern. One of them is an issue or concern that has been raised by members of the Opposition Parties throughout this session regarding FOIPOP legislation. It seems the only area of concern that the members opposite in the Opposition Parties have about FOIPOP applications is the freedom of information.

What the members opposite forget about is that the second part of that legislation refers to protection of personal information. I suggest that the member opposite can certainly bring issues of concern forward to the department, but with respect to providing information relating to those that may be of assistance, we may have some challenges there respecting the protection of personal information that may be of concern there.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

COM. SERV. - RIVERVIEW ADULT RES. CTR.: PHASE 3 - USAGE

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Services. On October 1st during Question Period, the Minister of Community Services said about Phase III of the Riverview Adult Residential Centre, “Cancelling it really didn’t stop 32 beds. The actual construction of that phase three will still finish, but I have said repeatedly, under this minister, there will not be one more institutionalized bed built in the Province of Nova Scotia . . .”

My question today is, if the 32 beds didn’t stop but there won’t be one more bed built and the construction of Phase III will finish, what will the space created by the construction of Phase III be used for?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Thank you for the question. That space will actually be used for recreational facilities. We’ve also talked to the people at Riverview that perhaps we can turn it into small options, because I’ve made it clear there will be no more institutional beds being built in the Province of Nova Scotia. We have asked all service providers to be flexible in how they’re going to be designing any ongoing construction or expansion for any of those facilities.

MR. HOUSTON: I thank the minister for that answer. In a July 10th newspaper article, the minister said that money that isn’t used on this facility will be put back into other care options for people in Pictou County. She said, “Those monies will be available to invest for persons with disabilities for that area.”

My question today for the minister is, can you tell this House how much, if any, money you will anticipate will be unused for the Riverview facility?

MS. BERNARD: Thank you for the question. I don’t have that figure right now. I know that in the process of stopping the construction and redesigning what happens, there were additional costs, but I have made a commitment that anything that is left over will go back into the Pictou County area in SPD transformation and I’ve made that quite clear.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

TIR - CROWDIS BRIDGE: COMMUN. INPUT - MEETING

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. The Crowdis Bridge, an important link for the people in the Margarees, is in the works to be replaced. At one time there was talk of having a meeting for the community, to have some input from the community.

Can the acting minister - I know this may be difficult on the fly here - if they can't explain if that's going to happen, could they find out if that meeting is going to happen, for the benefit of the community? Thank you.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'll take that question under advisement and deliver it to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and hopefully provide that member with a response in due time.

MR. MACMASTER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have another doozy that probably can't be answered today either. The other question I had is if the minister would be able to give an update to the House on what is happening with that bridge. Perhaps the honourable member can carry that question to the minister with the hopes of getting an answer as well.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, it would be my pleasure.

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

ENVIRON. - CLIMATE CHANGE: INDUSTRIES - PLANS

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Environment. Last week the United Nations Panel on Climate Change released their concluding assessment. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said, "Leaders must act. Time is not on our side."

The Ivany report also recognizes that primary industries will face ongoing pressure adapting to changes caused by climate change.

My question, Mr. Speaker, for the minister is this, what steps is the Minister of Environment taking to ensure Nova Scotia's primary industries are prepared to deal with climate change?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising an important question in the Legislature. Climate change is an issue that has been ongoing for some time and it is certainly gaining significant prominence both in Nova Scotia and across the world, in particular in the last month or so.

I can let the members of this House know that in September or October we had the national meeting of Ministers of Environment. At that meeting, for the first time in eight years, we entered into an agreement to maintain climate change as a standing agenda item in the years going forward with our meetings across the country. That was with the consent of both the federal party, as well as all provincial and territorial Ministers of Environment. We are certainly taking this issue very seriously.

MS. ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I do thank the minister for that response. I agree with him that this is a very important issue for all of us going forward.

Nova Scotia's Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act, or EGSPA, requires the province to develop a strategy by 2014 to advance the growth of the green economy and to implement the strategy accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, we are nearing the end of 2014 and my question for the minister is this, when can Nova Scotians expect to see a finalized Greener Economy Strategy, including a plan for implementation?

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, it pleases me greatly to be able to rise to talk to the Greener Economy Strategy for Nova Scotians. This is a project that we have been working on. Despite the 2014 timeline, that really only gave me only one year to work on it because there had been no work leading up to that point in time.

It would have been fantastic, Mr. Speaker, had there been more work done leading to my time in office but I assure the member opposite and all members of this Legislature that we will have that strategy out the door. I would also like to encourage people that I don't believe this strategy is something that is going to be a final product. I believe it's going to be a work in progress because we are looking forward. There are a lot of transformational initiatives that can come out of this work and I look forward to bringing it forward to this House and all Nova Scotians. Thank you.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - NORTHSIDE GEN. HOSP.:
MEETING (11/13/14) - STATUS**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Last week in this House I asked a question to the minister about a meeting that is going to take place on the Northside General Hospital after the House rises. Being that we are still here this week and this meeting was scheduled for tomorrow, I guess I'll ask the minister is that meeting still on, and what time and where?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, yes, things can change here in the House in terms of our future, but I have a deputy minister who can gather the facts and make sure that we get solutions for the Northside General Hospital.

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

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources on an introduction.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I have two dear friends with me in the House today, Joyce Nickerson and her daughter Susan Nickerson. Joyce is a constituent of mine, and Susan is her daughter, who is living here in Halifax. Joyce is also one of the longest-standing Progressive Conservative volunteers that we have in Yarmouth County, which of course we don't hold against her. I want to ensure the House provides both of our guests with a very warm welcome. (Applause)

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

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. ARAB: If I can draw the member's attention to the east gallery, where Steve Hiscock, my campaign manager, is sitting. Steve and I have been very good friends since we were kids, and I would ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce April Perrick, joining us today in the east gallery. She is the sister-in-law to my executive assistant, and she now resides in Halifax while taking a course in occupational therapy and physiotherapy at Eastern College. I would ask everyone to give her a warm welcome. (Applause)

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, of course, we welcome all our visitors here today.

Would you please call Private Members' Public Bills for Second Reading.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 20.

Bill No. 20 - Buy Nova Scotia First Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill No. 20, an Act to Require the Government of Nova Scotia to Purchase Agricultural Products from Nova Scotia Producers.

This would be a bill that would be very near and dear to my heart and that I can relate to. In this bill, local produce would be defined as food items grown, raised, caught, harvested, produced, or manufactured in the province, and they would ask that the government give preference to the purchase of local produce, in accordance with the regulations which would be set out.

The purchase of local products by the government is something that I believe - there are many reasons why this House should support this bill. I know that the idea of supporting local production and local food is not something that any one Party really owns the turf on; each Party has supported that in the past. I know that the support for Taste of Nova Scotia has gone on for more than 20 years. We recently enjoyed a reception with Taste of Nova Scotia, and my own farm business has been a member of Taste of Nova Scotia for a number of years.

I think that's a reason why all Parties in this House will support this bill. I know the government has just recently supported the release of a cookbook out of Select Nova Scotia, which again is supporting local food, and which I think is terrific. I look forward to seeing that cookbook and using it.

What is the impact of this bill? This bill will have some important impacts if implemented. It requires our government departments to purchase local food. The impact to a small company like my company in the formative years - even having one solid, good customer can make or break a company in terms of its success or failure. This bill would ask that the government departments purchase from these small producers.

In our province, the system of food distribution is really very sophisticated. It's run by multinational companies, and I don't mean that in a negative way at all. They're very efficient companies. My own business has dealt with - I don't know if I should mention the names of these companies in the House, but in my own business we've dealt with them for more than 20 years, and there's much I admire about them. They're extraordinarily efficient companies, and they are very responsive to public sentiment too.

I know the reason they are successful is because they do respond quickly to different demands, or public will, and the fact that we would pass a bill asking our government departments to purchase local would trigger these large multinationals to begin to procure local product. I think that would be extraordinarily positive if that happened, Mr. Speaker, so it would trickle down into the world economy.

One of the goals of course of the Ivany report is to increase agricultural production in the province and this bill would, I believe, be a small part of doing that. I know that the

amount of food purchased by our provincial government would be significant. I know there would be hospitals involved, prisons, and many different institutions and places which would be in the procurement of food. And if it was local, for instance, local beef being procured - I've said a number of times in this House that I believe that the beef industry in Nova Scotia, with grass fed beef, is probably some of the healthiest beef in the world. The opportunity there to revive that industry and see it get going - in fact it is starting to revive, but we're still at a crossroads. To have the government procure local meats for its prisons and hospitals and so on - I believe it would not only provide very safe, healthy food to those institutions, but would be a factor in revitalizing that industry.

That could be said, Mr. Speaker, for almost every single agricultural industry we have. Since I started farming about 26 or 27 years ago, at that time apparently the amount of production of food eaten in Nova Scotia that was produced locally was up in around 23 to 25 per cent. In that last 25 years we've seen that percentage actually decline to, I believe, somewhere between 10 and 15 per cent of the food consumed in the province is locally produced.

The reasons for that are many. One reason would be - and you will all know - the changing food habits in our province. We've all gotten very accustomed to being able to walk into the grocery store and get strawberries any time we want, whereas 25 years ago strawberries were available from the first of July to the third week of July, and that was it. Now, the global industry that supplies strawberries is supplying them all the time, so we've become much more accustomed to having fruits that just aren't available out-of-season here - although we can do a lot to extend that season over the course of the year. That has been a contributor.

So we have a long way to go in improving our local food production even to bring it up to where it was 25 years ago, and the reasons to do that are very compelling. There's all sorts of aspects around food security which are, I believe, things that we need to think about as a province. It has been mentioned in this House that if it were ever to be the case that the road from Amherst to Sackville, across the Tantramar Marsh, was cut off, we would see the difference in our grocery stores within three days. We would run out of food within about two weeks, reportedly. I don't know if that's true or not, but there's no reason to doubt that it's somewhat accurate.

To produce local food would mean we would somewhat insulate ourselves from those effects. I believe there is a sentiment in the public that that needs to be done, that we need to be more proactive in supporting our agricultural product.

One of the things that I will say about the large grocery stores - and I've had a long history of working with them and I admire them very much - I admire their efficiency and they have been very supportive of local. I don't really have anything negative to say about the large grocery stores, but what they do is they are very efficient at sourcing food from all

over the world, so you see that it's no problem to have food from South America or Chile in our grocery stores.

But one of the things that is the result of that is as the system becomes more efficient, in some ways it becomes more brittle, and disruptions somewhere else in the globe could impact our own food supply here. And that is a very compelling reason why we should be supporting local production here, so if it were ever the case that we needed that local production, it would be here.

Some of those local crops that we could grow - you know I've mentioned cabbage in the House many times, and cabbage is a storage crop that we can store all winter and grow. There's turnips - and I remember a number of years ago, we did a program with Horticulture Nova Scotia - at that time it was called the Vegetable and Potato Producers Association, and I was on the board of directors. We had a "back to your roots" program where we were encouraging people to go back to their "roots" and it's mostly these root crops which are the crops that we can store all winter.

In some cases, we need to think about that in local production, even as the opportunity and through modern techniques way more crops can be produced. We need the public to sort of be supporting those back-to-your-roots types of crops. One way we can support that type of thing is if our government institutions are actually buying into supporting local production.

I've touched on a number of reasons why I think this bill - and I realize that this is not something that is our Party's territory at all, supporting. I realize the government has done a number of initiatives to support local production. I believe this bill, Bill No. 20, if the government would support it, would have a far-reaching impact, an impact on specific farms, the farms that were able to access it.

The impact of having one good customer sometimes for a small farm can be really profound - to have one customer you know you can rely on to buy a certain amount of product each week of the year. If you can rely on that you know you are going to get paid, because in this world of the food business, sometimes getting payment is not all that easy.

To have a government customer would be a tremendous advantage. The government has a lot of buying clout. It may or may not - it may not even cost the government any more. In some cases it might be slightly more expensive, but maybe in many cases it isn't even that.

But in the long run, having local production would benefit the local economy because that money would go back into - for instance, say in Kings North a hospital or a prison is buying local product. It would go back into Kings North. That local farmer would be spending the money in his grocery store, paying for his kids to get dental work done, all of the things that you do that would cycle the money back into our Nova Scotia economy -

versus the prison or the hospital buying Argentinian boxed beef, which is actually a product that is out there. I don't know if any of you have ever seen it, but it comes in a nice square cardboard box. The Argentinians do produce awesome beef, I will say that. But that is sort of what you are competing against, things like that coming out of those parts of the world.

The thing is that we as a government can make a decision to say yes, we are going to see our own local producers have this advantage that when we are doing procurement, we're going to give preference to them. Not to say that all the rules of production, and I can tell you that most of the farmers in the province are on the GAP Program - Good Agricultural Production Program - and all the food safety things that are there. We can have that local product in our government business, government institutions. It would be a tremendous advantage to that local producer, as I've mentioned.

I believe that our public is ready for that, too, because there is a sense out there that food security issues are real and that the world in which we live isn't as certain as it was, and even though these large companies are very, very efficient at bringing us inexpensive food, there is a sense that yes, we should have a more secure local supply of food. This is one bill which I believe would really benefit many different businesses in the province. It might take a little bit of time for them to sort of tune in and get ramped up to it. There might need to be a little bit of handholding in the process of connecting up the buyers and the people who are growing these products.

I would like to speak in favour of this bill and ask the government to consider it. It does ask some things of our government institutions which would require a little bit of sorting out how that would all happen. I believe that this is a bill that whether it actually gets supported right here in this session, the concept is the right concept. The government should be looking at it. We need to be doing all we can in this Legislature to support local production and this is one concrete thing we can do. It would make a huge difference in the life of a certain number of producers who are able to tie into this. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted has ended.

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

MR. JOACHIM STROINK: I want to thank my colleague, the member for Kings North. I guess I would have to say that I'm probably one of the biggest supporters of I Love Local HFX in this House. My business is based on this and a lot of my friends own businesses so it gives me great privilege to speak to this. Government is ensuring that Nova Scotia businesses and the Nova Scotia agriculture sector can continue to grow, be competitive, and receive fair treatment in our other jurisdictions. The member for Kings North spoke very clearly about the agricultural industry. The Select Nova Scotia program and the Buy Local program in agriculture is one aspect but there is the other side of the small businesses.

We know that trade promotes quality goods and services and competitive prices. Local vendors must be encouraged to do business in their other markets to ensure that they can compete globally and grow their business. To ensure Nova Scotia businesses, agriculture or otherwise, receive fair treatment in other jurisdictions, we have to conduct public tendering under the rules of several trade agreements. Trade agreement obligations restrict the use of Buy Local preference for the purchase of above a certain threshold.

I guess I want to touch on that, too, because in my business as a retailer I have bid in Ontario and Quebec and I have won contracts from government agencies in those provinces. This kind of a program would exclude me, possibly, from being able to bid - and I have also lost to Ontario and Quebec companies here in Nova Scotia. I guess a good business owner wouldn't just base his business on one provincial or government contract; they would look at other options to do business. I have a fear that Bill No. 20 would preclude them from being able to do other business outside of the province.

We are also working closely with the procurement services to apply by local preferences and in Nova Scotia right now we do 80 per cent of our buying from local companies. An Atlantic Canadian preference for purchases of the threshold of the agreement of internal trade or Canadian preferences up to the threshold of international agreements and certain types of goods and services that are exempt from the agreement - these are some examples of how we're dealing with this.

Using the Buy Local preference where possible and ensuring to adhere to our trade agreements is really the best of both worlds. It makes sure that Nova Scotia businesses are supported and have the ability to grow by selling their products and services to other markets. As you know, Madam Speaker, the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy confirms, as we have long known to be true, that our current path is not sustainable; we need to renew and transform ourselves.

The commission said that the private sector must generate significantly more exports to achieve lasting economic turnaround. It challenged Nova Scotia's private sector to reach two key trade goals: to increase the value of export by 50 per cent and to increase the number of Nova Scotia firms participating in export trade by 50 per cent. One thing is clear to us: the government alone cannot create this kind of economic transformation needed. The private sector must lead economic growth and job creation. Government must create the environment to support that, to build that foundation.

We know that Nova Scotia companies doing business in foreign markets are essential for economic growth and our standard of living. The government's role is to get out of the way and provide targeted support and incentives to help businesses grow and take off on the global economy.

Madam Speaker, we are working to encourage and support entrepreneurs, to increase the number of business start-ups and to grow exports. The private sector is the

force that will drive our economy forward by looking for opportunities for growth, finding the next innovative idea, and selling our products and services around the world. That's what will turn our economy around. The Nova Scotia Government is ready to partner in this challenge. We will work with businesses to help set up conditions for success, at the same time we know that business is what creates jobs, reinvests in our communities, and keeps our young people here. We all have an important role to play. We can turn our economy around if we are prepared to act together.

We need everyone pulling in the same direction, Madam Speaker. If we do it right all of this hard work will pay off in the form of stronger communities and a growing economy. It's not going to be easy but we can do it. Please note that today we just released the Select Nova Scotia cookbook, which promotes buying local. The cookbook features 21 recipes by nine Nova Scotian chefs. It demonstrates how easy it is to buy local, including tips on how and where to find local products. The cookbook is a part of a marketing plan and expansion of Select Nova Scotia to encourage more Nova Scotians to buy local. The goal is to add value for local producers, manufacturers, and retailers by helping to create conditions to drive their success.

The cookbook promotes buying and cooking with local foods and will be available Thursday at the Select Nova Scotia Food Truck Rally, part of the Devour! The Food Film Festival in Wolfville. It will also be available at farmers' markets and other events, and from Select Nova Scotia participants.

I also want to touch on the Select Nova Scotia commitment by this province, that we have invested over \$500,000 in Select Nova Scotia in partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Communications Nova Scotia. The goal behind this - and I've been greatly privileged to work on this part of this - is to encourage more Buy Local. Already Nova Scotians buy more from local stores and producers than anyone else in Canada. So we can see this is working, and we can see that we're supporting our businesses, and we can see that government and small businesses can work together.

As a founding partner of the I Love Local HFX group and having discussions with this government - not the previous government, this government - we've been able to expand this. The previous government, when I said I Love Local HFX group came and presented to the past government, they were not interested in working with Buy Local at that time and the door was closed and it was shameful - and that is why I ran.

From there we worked on building this program, and Select Nova Scotia and the Buy Local group have been working in strong meetings together to ensure that small businesses get the support they need to grow their business in this economy - and this government is going to do that and we're doing that today. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Madam Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise to my feet today to speak on this bill, Bill No. 20, the Buy Nova Scotia First Act. I believe the member for Kings North introduced it and I want to commend him on that. The member is also a farmer so he knows very well how important it is to grow local, buy local to support our local farmers and try to keep our economy going and healthy, to keep our people and our children healthy with local food.

In this bill it talks about food items that are grown, raised, caught, harvested, produced, or manufactured in the province. It includes any food items that are designated in the regulations as local produce and that's what local produce means in this bill - "Subject to Section 7, where any department or office of the public service, within the meaning of the *Public Service Act*, buys food items to supply the operations carried out by a department or office, it shall give preference to the purchase of local produce and shall purchase local produce in accordance with the regulations made under this Act."

I really like the idea of this because, again, it pushes forward the notion that we need to look at and support the things that are made locally in Nova Scotia. I understand from the member opposite, on the government side, that there are interprovincial and international trade agreements. We understand that, but I think it's really important to acknowledge what the member for Kings North was talking about when he also mentioned the fact that you can now get boxed beef from stores like Giant Tiger in Truro. A lot of people who are on the lower income range do their shopping at these great big box stores like Giant Tiger. They'll go and buy as much food as possible for a very cheap price - and you can get steak and beef from Argentina, for instance, which makes a very good product of beef. My mum and dad have been to Argentina and they say the beef there is very good.

However, we also have wonderful beef here in Nova Scotia and I was quite proud under the former NDP Government to be part of a government that pushed for grass-fed beef. We had to introduce that idea to many people to whom it was a newer idea - a lot of the younger farmers jumped on it, but a lot of older farmers we had to really talk them into it at the beginning to understand why grass-fed beef was going to be profitable for them - it would save in bringing in the feed for the cattle, but it also makes a leaner cattle, a leaner product that is better for people to eat rather than the fatty product.

The other thing we did that I thought was really important for this notion was, we have the Agricultural Campus of Dalhousie University now in Truro - it used to be the Agricultural College. I was very pleased to be able to go on a tour of that when it was a college with the Minister of Agriculture, my colleague at the time.

We had many presentations about value-added products and how farmers needed to be able to make more money for their products. Rather than just selling the outright product to a company to just sell, they needed to come up with ideas of value added. This meant that, for instance, blueberry farmers were not just going to be selling blueberries; they are

also going to be getting a percentage of whatever value-added product was made from the blueberries, the part that was not perhaps used for the juice.

For instance, blueberries themselves are eaten, as we know. The juice is oftentimes marketed - very successfully by the way - but what do you do with the skins? Meanwhile, the skins of blueberries - and any fruit or vegetable, usually - have a lot of the nutrients in that skin. A lot of kids, for instance, may not eat the skins of vegetables. They'll cut that off or their parents will peel it off for them, but really the nutrients are in the skins.

What they came up with was an idea of how to market the skins, turning them into vitamin pills and things like this. Also scrubs for your skin, adding salt to it. Perhaps we could even talk to the Alton Gas people about the salt brine from around your area, Madam Speaker, and around my other colleague from the Stewiacke area. Who knows, maybe you could mix salt with blueberry products or whatever.

These are creative ideas that people can come up with to make value-added products that they can sell around the world and here at home. The people who benefit from that are also the farmers.

The other thing that I noticed that they were doing was, for instance, sunflowers. Now, people grow sunflowers in their backyards all the time here, but you can make more money by coming up with some value-added products from the sunflowers, like sunflower oil.

One of the things that they came up with at the Agricultural Campus was the idea of a bug repellent, an insect repellent made out of sunflowers. The sunflower has a natural element to it that repels certain insects. What the farmers and the college, the researchers, came up with was an idea to make a product that you can hang in your kitchen and it repels fruit flies. They partnered up with a company in Scotland to be able to market this product. That's another idea of things that are made locally, grown locally, that we can sell locally and also abroad to help increase our economy and increase the market for our farmers so that they have more money going into their pockets as well.

We all want to grow pulling in the same direction. I heard the member opposite talking about that and that is true, we do. I would believe that every member of this House wants to pull together to take our economy and our province forward. We also care about the health of our people. One of the benefits of eating locally, growing locally and trying to get our government departments to buy locally is the fact that, for instance, one of the worst diseases now of our 21st Century - it is considered a disease now - is obesity, morbid obesity. It is now considered a disease.

We need to get as many opportunities as possible for the people of our province to be able to feed good food to our children. There are many countries around the world where their schools provide two hot meals a day for free: Sweden, even Russia - in Russia they get

two hot meals a day - Cuba, Uruguay. Countries like this provide meals to the children of their schools and they don't have to pay for it. They provide local food - good, healthy, locally grown food for those children so that they know those children are going to grow up strong.

We all know that the amount of food and the type of food you put into your system at an early age affects your brain as well - brain food. We need to feed our children as much good, healthy, nutritious food as possible so that their little brains will grow and be healthy and strong so that they can get the types of jobs that are going to be needed in the 21st Century. We all know that the knowledge-based economy of the 21st Century is going to depend on bright, intelligent minds, quick minds that can move at a flash of change and grow with the times. It would be nice to see this government, or any future government, try to provide warm, hot meals, two meals a day, for children in the schools, and I would suggest that this bill would help go a long way toward helping with that.

I do commend the government on the Devour! program, if they have something to do with that. It's a film festival that is going to be focusing on local foods. Lia Rinaldo, an old friend of mine from the film industry, is helping to develop that film festival.

Anything we can get to remind people to grow local, eat local, buy local is a good thing. I also like the Select Nova Scotia cookbook idea - fantastic idea - 29 different people promoting local food and how to cook it here in Nova Scotia. That is a fantastic idea and we need to keep coming up with more things like this.

The other thing that my friend, the member for Kings North was talking about was roots and how we grow a lot of healthy root vegetables here in Nova Scotia. Some of my friends in California have had an idea for many years that it's healthier for you to eat food grown in your area at the time of year that it actually grows. Roots, of course, can be saved over the winter, but they say that rather than devouring foods that are grown right across the world in another country, it's healthier for your system to, say for instance, eat the honey that is grown in your area. It's a natural antiseptic; it helps keep you strong and healthy and the more honey that children have in their system at an early age, the stronger it will help them stay.

The idea is that foods grown locally will help ward off diseases, flus, and colds, because you're devouring the food that is grown right there in the area that you live, and it helps you to fend off diseases and such. This is why I believe that this local Devour! film festival is so great.

I also think that cheap food - many of our people in Nova Scotia are eating starches and salts and sugars. These are in the fast foods that you can buy very cheaply, and a lot of poor people will eat them. In fact, a lot of people will eat them, not just poor people, because they're fast and quick. If anybody has ever seen *Super Size Me*, they will know that if you eat fast foods that are greasy with lots of fats in them, like, for instance McDonalds,

which is what that film was about - this gentleman who did that movie gained an unhealthy amount of weight in a very short time, within 30 days. I think he ate nothing but McDonalds' products, and the doctors were shocked at how badly downhill his health went from devouring fast foods on a day-to-day basis.

They interviewed many people who said that they do that every day. It's cheap. It's quick. It's shoved in their faces from an early age, advertising to children with a clown face of Ronald McDonald selling the Happy Meals and come in for a happy time. They make these playgrounds where children can go and play and the adults are happy because the kids are quiet for a while, but really, meanwhile, they are all eating this really unhealthy food. Perhaps we need to come up with an advertising gimmick for healthy foods, where we can push the healthy foods and grown-local foods for our children.

To finish off, Madam Speaker, I want to say there are wonderful restaurateurs, for instance, Lil MacPherson, who started The Wooden Monkey in Halifax and Dartmouth. She has been pushing growing local food and selling local food and making food and selling it in her restaurant and selling it for local farmers, which is an amazing thing.

All the local farmers' markets, from Truro to Tatamagouche to Chester, Hubbards, Tantallon, Shelburne, Barrington, Liverpool - and I'm sure Yarmouth has one as well - right across the province, Madam Speaker, these local farmers' markets - Cape Breton and Sydney - we need to support them. We need to support the artisans and crafts people who also sell their wares there. If we are going to buy Christmas presents, let's buy them from there rather than the ones that are made in China, for instance.

One other quick thing at the end, Madam Speaker, I did notice, going to tourist shops around the province, many things are made in China. In fact, if you go to buy a sweater that looks like it is locally made by a local person, you look at the tag and it's actually made in Scotland. So I'm wondering, maybe we need to be able to encourage our store owners to buy local as well and sell local to the tourists, so they can go home with a nice made-in-Nova Scotia tag.

That's it for me today. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise and speak about Bill No. 20, which was introduced by my colleague, the member for Kings North. I believe this bill is worthy of being passed. I hope everyone will take an opportunity to look at it. I appreciate all the other members' perspectives with regard to the bill.

The member for Halifax Chebucto pointed out some areas in the bill that were of interest to him, and I took note of that as well, being a small business owner. I don't believe

he made a case strong enough, though, to not pass this bill - certainly if there was an opportunity maybe to put in an amendment from him.

I think the bill is very strong, and I think it's very much needed in Nova Scotia. We know that Nova Scotia is home to some of the finest foods and local products. We are all discovering in our local constituencies that we're seeing all kinds of local farmers' markets popping up, and we try to support those. Our agricultural industry produces high-quality meats and produce, and we acknowledge our fishing industry as being one of the finest in the world as well. The amount of lobster we export into the State of Maine alone is always astonishing.

I do want to move forward and share the fact that we all know our province has a lot of potential. We need to encourage growth in this sector and support the industry whenever possible. Once again, I go back to the local farmers' markets that are popping up. I certainly know that myself and my two children make it a habit every Saturday morning to go to the local market and get as much as we can there. It's always nice to see a lot of people supporting our markets.

This bill would require that all provincial institutions would give preference to local producers when buying food. My colleague, the member for Kings North elaborated a little bit on that. Being a farmer, he realizes how valuable that would be to that industry.

As well, the Ivany report states that we must double the value of our products produced and consumed in Nova Scotia, and I couldn't agree more. I think the government should lead by example and pass this worthy piece of legislation. I think we would reap the benefits.

Just as we were coming into the Chamber today, I was excited to read about the Select Nova Scotia cookbook. I think it's something we should all be very proud of. I know that I'm always excited to read it and see what local Nova Scotia chefs have contributed to it. The title is *Local Food and Local Chefs Select Nova Scotia 2014 Recipe Collection*. I like the idea, too, that the cookbook focuses not just on recipes but includes tips on how and where to find local products. So it's worthy of picking up.

The thing that I really wanted to point out is the fact that we had two ministers launch this cookbook. I was really pleased with their comments; we had the Agriculture Minister as well as the Minister of Communications Nova Scotia. I will table this. I was happy with them stating that "Nova Scotia farmers grow and produce top-quality food. We have many talented chefs that use these fresh ingredients to create uniquely Nova Scotian dishes."

They went on to say, "We hope Nova Scotians will continue to think local - local food, local business, local crafts, products, wine - the list is endless. Local is all around us, and the more money we spend locally, the more that money stays here."

Nothing could be more true. I would think that with those types of statements that perhaps the government would consider passing this bill, or it appears that these two ministers certainly are in agreement of moving forward with Bill No. 20.

We know that it makes a lot of sense economically and environmentally for our schools, hospitals and correctional facilities to serve high-quality food produced by Nova Scotia farmers and we want to see that. I think about Sysco who drives around all - probably outside the Maritime Provinces - importing food. I think if they were to stay here, they would certainly be cutting back on their carbon footprint.

But I also have experienced in my own constituency of Pictou West where we have a veterans unit. We fought for over a year - the food there was being imported from Quebec for our veterans.

AN HON. MEMBER: Frozen food.

MS. MACFARLANE: Frozen. Of all people to be served frozen foods - these are men and women who served our country who are eating food that is put in the microwave, heated up. Luckily, things were changed. It took a lot of fighting, a lot of yelling and screaming for a year, to rectify that wrongdoing, but we learned from that. I hope that we will continue moving forward and doing what's right and buying more local.

When I think of the veterans, I think about - that was their home. They are there continuously, unlike us or someone who's in the hospital for a short period of time. I was glad to see that finally the health authority rectified that situation. By giving preference to our local farmers, we would have a more healthy and reliable close source of food, which again I'm sure every member in this House would want, especially for our children.

Just recently, we showed our support for these local producers during our Taste of Nova Scotia right here at the Legislature. That was a lot of fun and I know we all enjoyed going around and tasting all kinds of different wines and the lobster (Interruption Yes, you were hogging the lobster. (Laughter)

Nova Scotia doesn't just have a large agricultural industry. We also are fortunate to have a lot of variety within that industry, as my colleague from Kings North elaborated on many different vegetables and fruit. With what we have here, we could easily get a majority of our products from Nova Scotia farmers. If farmers were aware the government was willing to go forward with this initiative, they may look at even expanding some of their products to ensure that they do stay competitive. By passing this bill, the government would demonstrate more significant support for them and we'd spur growth in that industry even more.

Right now in Nova Scotia, we spend a \$187 million each month on groceries. If 10 per cent of that was spent on local food - just 10 per cent - our economy would be infused

with \$19 million a month. I think it's something that we really seriously have to give a lot of consideration to and see the value of this bill.

Don't underestimate Nova Scotians. I believe Nova Scotians like supporting Nova Scotians. I know I do, and maybe it comes from always being a small business owner and wanting to buy local and shop local, but there is a huge movement right now in Nova Scotia.

I remember one Christmas, my son - I think he was about nine then; he's 12 - he opened up his Christmas present one morning and he said, mom, are you ever going to shop outside the Town of Pictou? I thought to myself, well, this is a good opportunity to share with him why he needs to buy local. There is no doubt that we all like to travel and experience different adventures elsewhere, but I certainly do try to buy as much as I can within my own constituency, within Pictou County and certainly within the Province of Nova Scotia.

The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture is in support of this policy, which is a real positive step. I really hope that the government will be too.

In 2011, only 0.7 per cent of the money Nova Scotians spent on food went to locally-produced products. This is a \$21 billion industry. Imagine the benefits the government could provide this industry with if preference was given to our farmers. Many sectors in Nova Scotia are struggling, and the government needs to do what has to be done to reverse this trend. It should look inward for opportunities and lead by example. The agricultural industry is one of the most important economic drivers we have and while providing thousands and thousands of jobs, it also pours millions and millions into our economy.

This bill is one of the simple ways government can show support and their gratitude for everything that our local farmers provide us with. I always say, if you ate today, you can thank a farmer.

I hope the government sees the value in this piece of legislation and allows it to move forward and that they do the right thing. I think it truly is a good bill. I hope the members here in this Chamber did actually take the opportunity to look at it and decide for themselves if they feel this is the right way to go. I believe our caucus are all in support of it. With those few short notes, I'll take my seat. Thank you.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, I thought I would take a few moments to speak to this one as well. I think we've got until 2:50 p.m. on it. I thought I would maybe bring a few things forward as we thought about this. I've been around for 11 years now and I think all governments of all stripes have talked about buying local and

have talked about a bunch of different products, whether they be agricultural products, whether they be fisheries products, whether they be other things in this province.

I think we continue to sort of chip around the edge of this one, never really trying to get to the true meat of what “buy local” truly means. I want to sort of look at the issue of grocery stores, because where do the majority of us go shopping for food for our families? Well, the majority of us will go to a larger grocery store - maybe once in a while show up at a farm market or maybe once in a while buy from a local farmer, but the majority of the work we do, because of time constraints and other issues, prices, we of course go to the Superstores and the Sobeys and the SuperValus and that of the world, because that is where you can find the largest amount or the largest selection of products to feed your families.

What we continue to not do as governments, as even Parties, is to truly look at the accessibility of local products in that milieu, in that area, to look at what is available on their shelves that would qualify as local. That is a tremendous challenge. I remember the days when I was asking this very question as minister. The grocery association always stands up and says, well, listen, here’s why, for X, Y or Z, that we can’t do this.

Well, I think they can. I think in partnership with local growers, local producers, that they should be able to have a number of shelves in our grocery stores that have products from our local areas. Every once in a while you’ll see it - locally grown rutabagas or whatever, locally grown corn. They continue to have those kinds of things, but that’s a very small pile of the true SKUs or the number of products that grocery stores have available to them.

I think we all go to farm markets and we all try the opportunity of finding a little bit of product for us, whether it is some potatoes or some beans or some carrots, maybe a little bit of meat when we can, but truly to feed your family, I think it makes it a bit of a challenge. So why don’t we, as a Legislature, ask the grocery industry to really put its best foot forward on this one, to set a piece of legislation forward that is going to truly ask the grocery stores to have local products available to them year-round, and not just at specific times. What happens is that corn is available in Nova Scotia and they’ll put the corn up and say we had local this year. That’s really not good enough; that is something that needs to be looked at.

I’ve had the opportunity to travel around the world a little bit to see what other jurisdictions do with this. Quebec is a good example of local product. They do adopt more of a French way of doing things, the way France does things. As you look at it, agriculture is supported by government to a certain extent in order to maintain the paysage, to be able to maintain sort of a way of life in rural France, whether it’s through milk production, cheese production, all those kinds of things. The best example to explain this, they have markets every Saturday morning, they have markets available, they have the little shops available to pick up some product.

What I found interesting is the City of Paris - renowned for its cuisine - accesses their food through one market. It's in a place called Rungis and in Rungis it's just an airplane hangar's worth of markets. You have these companies that have a whole airplane hangar-sized thing of vegetables and a whole airplane hangar worth of meat, and a whole airplane hangar of seafood, and it just goes like that.

The rule in Paris is that no frozen product can be served to a customer. I'm sure there are more rules that go in around that, but it's incumbent upon the chefs, the restaurant owners, to order fresh product every morning or every evening after they close. What happens is that the chefs, once they finish up their evening chores, clean up, actually get in their car or take the transit down to Rungis and pick out their product for the next day and that product is then trucked into the city in the morning to be put on the menus of those restaurants every day.

Maybe we're not looking at such a harsh way of saying, okay, in the City of Halifax we need to have the supporting facilities in order to do this, you need to have a Rungis. It's really difficult to understand the size of this place, but through the years and through smart legislation from that city they still maintain their best cuisine in the world. All we would ask is that maybe a number of restaurants - there are a few in the city that do access locally grown products, locally sourced products, and there are other ones that don't. We need to find a way to balance that off.

Buying local is, again, a very important thing for all our communities. We do produce some really neat products even to the point my best example lately of too much of a good thing, Dragon's Breath Blue cheese is sold out. By the time they get some ready for stores - I went into Pete's the other day to grab a Dragon's Breath Blue cheese and they say it's probably a couple of months before they get the production back to a point where they can get to Pete's Frootique.

So there are successes in this province and we should be able to expand on those successes, but only we as legislators can push that or we can educate our population, our constituents, on the usage of local products. I think that's a win-win for everyone. I think that being able to truly do this is more than just saying we can have it available at some of our institutions.

I don't know how many meals are cooked in our hospital system every day - it's in the thousands. The majority of the product that's available in the hospital system is not sourced locally, they're actually sourced through Sysco or through . . .

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Not even on this planet.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: I hear from the member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisburg that it's not from this planet. I think he had a hard time with the food there when he was in the hospital. I don't think he found it that good and I feel sorry for that because we should

have really good food in our hospital system, good healthy food and it should be available locally. Like I was saying, most of that stuff comes in from Sysco because it has to have a Canadian-inspected stamp on all of it. So that means that you can't even get a carrot from the valley to be in our hospital system. You can't get a piece of meat from our Nova Scotia abattoirs into the hospital system. They all need to be federally inspected because of one regulation or another.

Government has a lot to do with what those regulations are and how they can access those regulations or how they can allow the access of those products to those institutions. The only ones that we've been able to truly change, or been able get our products into - whether it's meat or vegetables - is the justice system, into our jail system. That's it. That's all we really can do. The issue of hospitals and schools continue to be a challenge. We have products in this province that are, in my mind, better than anybody else's and yet we have trouble getting them into our own hospitals and into our own schools.

I don't think that's acceptable, knowing that - I don't know how much acreage in the valley is unused at this point. A tremendous amount of acreage continues to be left fallow every year. Our fish products, of course, get sold to the highest bidder, and normally the majority of it goes to Boston and to the States. Those things aren't acceptable. We should be able to access those things here. We should be able to get the price for them that we need and be able to access them for our families. When it comes to Bill No. 20, I think Buy Nova Scotia, again, flows along not only our food products, but also our local shops. I think the member for Pictou West can speak to this, probably better than any one of us, as she has run a shop in Pictou.

How many times have you heard, listen, we're going down to Maine, we want to go to the shops, we want to go to the Kittery Outlets and be able to buy our products there. How many times have we heard that? How many times do I hear in my constituency - and I apologize to the member for Halifax Chebucto - people in Yarmouth County that say, well, I want to go to the city to go shopping, knowing full well there are really some great products and shops in Yarmouth, and in Barrington, and Digby, and all those areas.

I know there are shops here that people access, but you know where they are going? They're not going to the Trail Shop. They're going to Costco and they're going to Walmart and they're going to all those stores that really have no benefit to Nova Scotians. They just simply exist to give us cheap prices.

We should support our local business owners and entrepreneurs, because it's not an easy thing to run your own shop. You're always a little worried about where your cash flow is and what kind of products you're going to be bringing in and how you're going to make those ends meet. But you know, there are thousands of Nova Scotians who continue to do that every year and they deserve to have our support, and I think we should continue to support them as they are.

With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and we'll see if maybe we can have a vote on this one. So I move second reading of Bill No. 20.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is out of order.

The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 56.

Bill No. 56 - Strengthening and Preservation of Community Buildings Act.

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

MR. LARRY HARRISON: I am pleased to rise today and speak on this bill. My constituency is mostly rural and I think this bill is extremely important. Community centres - the Legions that probably most of us touched base with yesterday, churches, and other local recreation centres - are really the heart of rural communities.

As I go into some communities now, some of them have good church halls, they have good community hall centres, but there are others that really do not have much of anything. You go into them and they are musty; they just don't have the facilities they need to carry on some community functions.

The role of these facilities - they play an important part in rural living. It is incredibly important to rural Nova Scotians to have a place just to meet. These centres are really what make small places a community, and I don't just mean geographically. I mean a centre where people actually get together to communicate, whether it's a local church supper or a recreation centre where families can get together, a place where they can go and celebrate a 90th birthday, hold a bridal shower, or hold a fundraiser that we need to raise money for a family. They keep people in small communities together. They give many people an opportunity to volunteer and also to get to know people in their area, because if they don't have a place to meet, they don't have a place to just gather and meet each other.

For many of our towns and villages, the Legion, the church, the community centre, or the recreation centre - they are places where people gather to socialize, they gather there to worship, they gather there to exercise, they gather to mourn, and they gather to celebrate. Communities just need a central place to be. It is important that the government makes sure these communities have these facilities for our children to be raised up in.

Yesterday we saw the importance of places like the Legions. Many of the Remembrance Day ceremonies were put on by Legion members and organized by local volunteers. I went to the wreath-laying in Stewiacke yesterday and then went to a banquet

following. Yes, the place does have reasonable facilities, but they are still not great. Royal Canadian Legions are the backbone of many Nova Scotia communities. Legion members provide hours of community service, and they do a lot of advocacy for veterans in the process.

Many of these centres are places that offer services to our most vulnerable Nova Scotians. They will house activities for seniors. I remember going to a card party in one of my communities. It was in an old community hall, and I mean old. It was smelly. It just did not have what the community needed in order to house that kind of activity.

They have programs for children. I know that my local church in Brookfield houses many activities. They did build a nice hall 20 years ago, and a lot of activity for children and the community itself is held there. The church may offer a soup kitchen for people who cannot afford to put food on the table.

Many of these buildings are supported through local fundraising drives and individual contributions. It is getting to the point now where volunteers are getting very tired. The money just is not there for the residents to give as they used to give. In many communities now, the buildings are just plain in disrepair.

I hate to think about the number of rural churches that are now being closed, or they are maybe being used part-time. It may be there for worship but it is not there for other activities because the church halls just cannot accommodate, because of heat prices or whatever. The high power rates and the increased operational costs, paired with the decreasing number of volunteers, make it very difficult for these facilities to stay open and provide services.

This bill would create the Rural Community Centre Fund. It could provide local facilities with another avenue for funding, when work is needed to preserve them. We've been very fortunate in one or two of our communities because the money has been given and work has been put on these halls and it has worked out great, but there are still many other small communities that just really do not have the facility.

By acknowledging the role these centres play in the lives of rural Nova Scotians by committing to keeping them alive and well, the government would show Nova Scotians that they do support the rural way of life. The rural way of life is really diminishing. Many people do a lot of travelling now to go to stores and so on, but at the same time they are missing that ability just to get together in a community to celebrate, to mourn, to do whatever the case may be.

This is a very small initiative the government could go forward on because there are significant benefits for rural Nova Scotians. It's a small price to pay just to preserve communities. I hope the government will give this bill proper consideration and really support it. I am involved in so many of these rural communities and the people are

struggling just to get together. I think this bill here would provide them with help in just being able to preserve a lifestyle that they have always had. These communities were so vibrant years ago. In fact, a lot of communities don't even exist anymore but they had their schools, their churches, their houses, but they are now gone.

More and more rural communities are just dying out. People are living there but there is no sense of community. So I am hoping this bill would help them have that sense of community and to stay together. I want to thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity to speak on this bill.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite. I have sat on many boards and chaired many boards of community buildings and facilities over the years, and I have to agree this bill has some merit in its vision. But I think it lacks a little bit on the details and that's what I struggle with.

This bill calls for a creation of a fund by the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage that will provide grants to support the maintenance and upkeep of important community buildings in rural communities. I find it confusing because this is a request for new funding - \$5.5 million - and it's not clearly stated in the proposed bill but it's assumed that this money would be an ongoing budget item. The Opposition has repeatedly asked our government to rein in its spending so here they are asking for more spending and we're trying to tighten up our builds and trying to work on a budget that balances.

I have a little bit of concern, too, with the creation of this board. It states the minister will appoint a board and it gives authority to the minister to pick and choose the board members. We have been getting out of that business of picking and choosing and political interference; it's a matter of our governance.

I have to agree with the member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley of the importance of community facilities and they are often the heart of a community and it cannot be overstated that these play a vital role in rural life in Nova Scotia. In fact, our government agrees that maintaining facilities that play such vital roles in communities throughout Nova Scotia is critical to the survival of those rural communities and has an impact on the ability to provide important community programs and spaces for community members to come together for celebrations and to support one another.

That is precisely why our government also provides opportunities for community facilities through grants, so I want to take this opportunity to thank the member opposite for Bill No. 56, which basically is an endorsement of already existing programs. For example, the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage has the Community Facilities Improvement Program which provides \$1.2 million annually to assist community groups in making upgrades, repairs, and maintaining community facilities.

This program has provided grants to more than 300 community facilities over the past three years, including the Middle Stewiacke Recreation Association and the South Branch Community Council, both of which are located in the member's constituency.

Bill No. 56 also suggests the inclusion of Legions. Municipal Affairs already has a program that does precisely what it is proposing. The program is called the Legion Capital Assistance Program and it provides \$100,000 annually to assist Royal Canadian Legions across Nova Scotia with capital upgrades to existing buildings that are used to house Legions or events by Legions and other community activities.

I also want to speak a little bit, Madam Speaker, on the inclusion of lighthouses. That is already designated a federal program. Communities, Culture and Heritage has supported many community groups in developing business plans not only towards taking ownership of their lighthouses, but to do it in a sustainable way.

Talking about sustainability, I have to go back and wonder what is a most important community building - because everyone thinks their building is important - and there is nothing more sacred than fire halls and community halls and church halls in Nova Scotia. Each group feels theirs is important but this bill does not speak to how this money is going to be broken up. Is each municipal unit going to receive an equal amount of money from that \$5.5 million or is it going to be picking and choosing the winners and losers in this grant program?

That confuses me because are we going to say this community is a bigger tourist destination so we have to keep these buildings looking better in this community to bring tourists in, or are we going to say this community has a lower population, they don't deserve an equal amount of this money? Details like that are lacking in this bill and I would like to see more detail presented.

Although the wording of Bill No. 56 is a bit confusing, I'm interpreting this to say that the spending of the \$5.5 million is over a four-year period and that works out to about \$1.375 million per year. I want to commend the researcher who put this bill together because as it turns out, it is almost exactly what is already going on here in Nova Scotia. We really don't need legislation that is already being done here but I thank the member for presenting it. It certainly is a program that I'm very familiar with; I've applied to it many times.

In Mahone Bay what we have done with some of our historic buildings, we recently created the Three Churches Foundation. We knew we had these sacred houses of worship that were also spectacular tourist attractions, and a group of us got together and formed a foundation made up of membership from each of those three churches and community members and the business association, because we knew we couldn't rely solely on government for money, yet each year all these churches, their budgets are eaten away by capital costs. These congregations are shrinking, it's like our communities are shrinking.

You said that the volunteers are lacking - I know many community hall fundraisers have had to be cancelled because of a lack of volunteers. So they are not keeping up their usual income.

We formed this foundation and we're getting creative. We're looking at creative ways of bringing money in to help the foundation. I'm not saying we will never ask for assistance from a heritage grant or something like that, but I think we have to look outside the box and get less dependent on government money for funding these facilities because it's not sustainable. If we're relying on these funds to sustain our working budgets for these buildings, we're just putting money into something that will never be sustainable.

There are many programs that are sustainable and it's hard work, lots of volunteer hours, and they are success stories. I understand we need to keep these social gathering places alive in communities. Some communities have five or six gathering places and we just can't afford to support every community building, so we have to find more sustainable ways of keeping these community facilities open. I think if we get too dependent on government grants all the time, we're not looking at this realistically. So I thank you for the bill, I think it has some merit, but I think there are some details that really need to be worked out. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Madam Speaker, it gives me pleasure to speak to Bill No. 56 today, Strengthening and Preservation of Community Buildings Act, introduced by the member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

It has been very interesting to hear both members from across the way, from the Liberal Government side of the House and also the member who introduced this bill, because we here on the NDP side support the idea of this bill. We do agree that these kinds of facilities are the heart and soul of our communities, but we also think that the source of the funding needs to be sustainable and that the funding should be annually consistent.

We want to make sure that a fund like this has strong guiding rules and regulations that are consistent and implemented in the same way that similar programs are already being governed. For instance, we do have the Legion Capital Assistance Program which comes in very handy, and that program is intended to assist Royal Canadian Legions across Nova Scotia with capital upgrades to existing buildings used to house Legion events and community activities. That program actually provides up to 50 per cent of total eligible costs, to a maximum of \$10,000 for eligible projects. In-kind trade work may be considered as part of the organization's share and Legions can only receive this funding, however, once every three years.

I think, Madam Speaker, the bill also talks about churches. It's not clear to me whether they mean churches in general or church halls because there is also another grant available from the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage that covers community centres and church halls, but not the churches themselves.

This particular bill also mentioned the lighthouses and community and recreation centres. So it says, "AND WHEREAS the buildings must be properly maintained and kept in good condition to increase understanding, heighten appreciation and foster acceptance of the role of the buildings in protecting, revitalizing and enhancing rural communities;" - I do agree with that, and we do agree with that here in the NDP benches - "AND WHEREAS rural community volunteers assure, in large part, the maintenance of these important buildings, financial assistance is, nonetheless, required to adequately maintain the buildings;"

Madam Speaker, for instance with Legions in my own riding, I have the Royal Canadian Legion, as well. (Interruption) Yes, in my constituency and my riding, actually, we have a few Legions. In my riding, we have a number of Legions. In Truro, we have one called the Truro Royal Canadian Legion, and we just spent some time there this weekend for various different projects. One was, of course, Remembrance Day. We had the annual banquet there after we laid the wreaths at the soldiers downtown. It was full of people. We probably had about 200 people there, and it was a beautiful event, as it always is.

They oftentimes have old-time dances there, and we have been able to get some money recently to help fix up that Legion, which has been holding dances for many, many years. In fact, an old band that Frank MacKay used to be the lead singer of, the Lincolns, got their start in that very Legion, and another band called Horse used to play there during the 1970s. We had a reunion of that band there recently, and it was packed as well. So the Legions definitely play a large, important part in our community. For a while there, it seemed like they were going downhill and less people were using them, but they're now starting to be used by many more people, which is fantastic to see.

The other thing our Legion was used for recently was the Music Nova Scotia week. It played an important role in that particular, very successful event. We had several different musical venues around town, and they chose to use the Legion as one of them. The place was packed, Madam Speaker. We had Sam Moon and Matt Minglewood do a reunion performance on Friday night, while we were in here in the Legislature slugging it out. I missed that concert, unfortunately. I was supposed to be at the opening of that festival and to be there at that concert. I do feel very sad that I missed it, because it was one of those once-in-a-lifetime events that may never come again.

But as I said, the place was packed, and we had line-ups around the block over those four or five days, Madam Speaker. I was talking to the organizers of the event on the final night, because I helped to sponsor the very final dance, the very final party, which the Mellotones performed at. I was speaking with the organizers afterward and they said, yes,

it was a shame, because the Legion made a lot of money during those days when they used it, but due to the Liquor Control Act, they were only allowed to let a certain number of people in and then proclaim the place was full, where they could actually have let a lot more people in. In fact, 200 people were waiting to get in that they had to turn away and had to go to other venues, who were apparently very upset that they didn't get to hear Matt Mays and the Stanfields and Charlie A'Court and a bunch of other top acts.

They said that we should perhaps take a look at that Liquor Control Act for these little community places to see if there could be some exemption put in for special events such as the Music Nova Scotia week and things like this, where music and entertainment are a part of it, and people want to come and see these acts in their community halls. That's something we could perhaps talk about at a later date.

The other thing that the member from across the floor mentioned, the member for Lunenburg, was when she said that churches are so important to our community, and also to our heritage and to our tourism. I would agree with that, Madam Speaker. There are so many cute little churches and inspiring churches that are falling into ruin, unfortunately. Many of the communities are having to sell them or tear them down. They are so beautiful and tourists just love them. It is a shame that there isn't some kind of a fund on an annual basis that could help them maintain these buildings and keep them looking as pristine and beautiful as they need to look, and perhaps let people in to take a look at them.

For instance, in Europe, there are many, many churches throughout the ages that are maintained and protected. They leave their doors open. Even though they might still be having events going on in the church, Masses and things like this, the tourists are allowed to come in and look and sit and take part, and between the Masses they're allowed to take pictures of the different objects throughout history. They're real draws, Madam Speaker.

The other thing is that the member for Lunenburg said that it lacks in details. I would agree that it does lack in some details - some that I've already mentioned - but she said that the government is getting out of the board business, of naming and putting people on boards. However, I would like to point out that in Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River for instance, in our Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition, this current government did choose people for the current board there. They're not in fact getting out of the board-choosing business; they are still in that. I think the member might need to look into that because that's not quite correct.

Also, I did agree with her about the three church foundations. That's a wonderful thing that she's involved in and I highly recommend others who care about these beautiful old buildings to get more involved with these kinds of things to help maintain them. However, I do believe that government has a responsibility, and in particular the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, to upkeep our beautiful heritage buildings right across the province so we don't lose them.

The other thing is that our government did start a grant program, which the member mentioned - the \$1.2 million grant - it was called the communities and jobs grant, I believe. This was given by the Communities, Culture and Heritage Department and different community places around the province are able to get one-time-only grants from that. That has helped a number of communities across the province, but I would like to point out that in fact it was the member for Sackville-Cobequid - when he was the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage - who introduced that grant for our community spaces.

There are many places in Nova Scotia where I feel that they need a community hall built or someplace found for them to use. For instance, in Truro I know that our African-Nova Scotian community has always said they would love to have some kind of community centre so that they can gather and play games and talk and entertain. Right now they use the Zion Baptist Church basement which is fantastic, but it's small. It would be nice to have a community centre for the African Nova Scotians community of our area, and I'm sure there are many others across the province who could also use a community space where they can gather to hear music and to talk and to have people come in and entertain them.

I feel that this bill would go a long way towards helping communities to do such a thing. I commend the member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley for bringing this forward and I would really hope that the government would continue to entertain this possibility, especially since they have announced that they are going to have \$535 million in capital spending. That's going to go towards five new schools and switching over hospitals to natural gas, which are wonderful ideas.

This will be in Nova Scotia's 2014-15 capital plan. The province is budgeting \$535 million in capital projects, which is about the same as in the year 2013, and five schools are in the early stages of being built, including in Bridgetown, Tatamagouche, Sheet Harbour; the other two are elementary schools in Yarmouth and in the South End in Halifax - where one is going to replace École LeMarchant St. Thomas School - and then schools in Eastern Passage and Bible Hill.

I announced that last one back when we were in government. We are very much looking forward to that elementary school because it will be replacing two other older schools, East Court Road and Bible Hill Elementary, which I went to when I was in Grade 3. I can definitely account that we need a new school. Both of those schools will be torn down and new one built in the place of the Bible Hill Elementary School now.

There is also a beautiful community ice pond in front of that which we opened up about a year and a half ago, while we were still in government. That was in the memory of a gentleman who was very, very kind to all the kids there and helped them skate and put a lot of time and energy into the children of the community. That pond will now remain.

Madam Speaker, on that note I would say I will take my seat but I totally agree that this bill should be considered and that it would be great if the members opposite could seriously talk about this amongst themselves and bring it forward to the next stage because without our community buildings downtown in our communities, we are not going to have these little rural districts any more. In fact, more and more people will move to the city. Schools, community centres, libraries, farmers' markets, all these things help create a community and make it vibrant and give communities places to gather to talk, to learn, to learn from each other and to grow and build their communities to be stronger.

I just look at Tatamagouche, for instance, Madam Speaker. The Creamery Square is a great example of forward thinking where they have their farmers' market, they have the Senator's Stage, which is an outdoor stage where people can perform any time they want. They have the Grainery which houses many little stores and many little interesting artisans and they also host the Fear Festival every year which is about horror films. I've spoken there a number of times, from my days as a screen queen in Canadian films of the 1980s. Then there is also the new theatre being built as well, right beside there, which was an old ice house. That will soon be finished. It's called Creamery Square; there is also a museum there which was an old creamery and there are all kinds of exhibits there . . .

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

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak to this bill today, Bill No. 56, Strengthening and Preservation of Community Buildings Act. I've been listening to all members of the House speak on this bill and in particular the member for Lunenburg. When she stood up to speak, she talked about what buildings she thought would be picked as winners and losers, as the most important.

Madam Speaker, the bill says the most important buildings in our communities are ones in rural Nova Scotia such as churches, lighthouses, Royal Canadian Legion halls, community recreation centres, we've got seniors' clubs - they are all important. What we propose to do with this bill is to allow them a little bit of money to make sure they can maintain those halls, to spend it on things they don't normally spend their money on, things like doors and windows or a little bit of paint or maybe they need to fix a floor or a bathroom needs a little bit of an upgrade. Money that wouldn't have to come out of their general revenues, I guess you could say.

These buildings must be properly maintained and kept in good condition to increase understanding, heighten appreciation and foster acceptance of the role of the buildings in protecting, revitalizing and enhancing our rural communities. Madam Speaker, our rural communities, the volunteers there ensure, in large part, the maintenance of these buildings. The financial assistance is nonetheless required to adequately maintain the building.

In this bill it proposes that \$5.5 million would go into a Rural Community Centre Fund. That would be used for these buildings - a maintenance fund, Madam Speaker. The amount referred to would be paid out over the next four years and I think the member figured out it was about \$1.2 million a year.

Madam Speaker, she got into talking about picking winners and losers, which is quite ironic because as soon as this government was elected, they picked a protocol officer without a competition. In my opinion that's picking a winner and it's leaving all the rest of them to be losers. They didn't even have the opportunity to apply for that job. So if that's not picking winners and losers, my definition of that is completely different than that of the members on the opposite side.

Madam Speaker, we sit on a board over here, this HR board, and they want to get out of the business of picking boards. We just had a board picked - the Invest Nova Scotia Board. Now I believe the people on that board are good people, I believe they are going to do a good job. But that board was picked by the government and it was brought here to the Legislature before the committee could even get to vote on if those board members were going to go through. So we asked the question in that board of how it worked and, again, we were put down. So if that's not picking winners and losers, there's something wrong.

Back to the bill itself, investing in our communities is one of the biggest things we could do as government. We have a lot of people leaving the province, a lot of jobs that are disappearing and these community halls, these Legions are all places of gathering for people who live in rural Nova Scotia. The people of rural Nova Scotia rely on these community buildings, church halls, seniors' clubs - they have fundraisers there for individuals in the community, and I know the member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg does a lot of auctions for charities.

I've been around where a lot of these auctions have taken place, and some of them are small little seniors' clubs, small little church halls and when you go in to these auctions where the members raise money for each of those charities, or an individual in the community needs assistance, we hear about is there any money available for a door? Just yesterday when I was at the Westmount Legion talking to one of the people in charge there, they had two doors to go on the building they bought out of their own funds, but they didn't have the money to get them installed.

I could sit there and look out that door and I could see at the bottom of the door there's a gap like that, so I asked the gentleman, why not just replace the sweep on it? He said the door was that twisted from people either trying to get in the door or getting out the door, the sweep had been replaced four or five times a year. In the dead of winter the wind is blowing through there, so they're paying more money for oil, the security of the building is in jeopardy, it sets the alarm off, so every time that happens they have to send someone to check the door. This is an important bill ensuring that communities have the necessary resources to maintain those buildings, and the important connections they have with our

community. These church halls and these community halls and Legions are putting people in places to have meetings, to have functions, to have fundraising efforts.

Again I spoke to the Legions in Sydney and just yesterday, they all joined to have one big service in one of the main areas in Sydney. It would be something if that building wasn't available because of maybe something that needed to be done for a fire regulation, maybe something needed to be done for safety regulations. That wouldn't have happened, all these Legions in Sydney coming together and having their Remembrance Day service where, from what I can understand, there were over 2,000 people who took part in this ceremony. So without that, and without that little bit of money that could have done something to keep that up, that may not have happened.

The veterans got to stay indoors. Yesterday was a beautiful day, we were fortunate, but I know last year it poured rain, and the year before that it was deathly cold. Some of these veterans sat there because that means a lot to them. It means a lot to the people in the community and I know I looked around yesterday at the services I attended and I'm starting to see young people show up at these services. Madam Speaker, if we can get our young people involved in stuff like Remembrance Day, what more can we get them involved in?

The bill proposes that community buildings, including churches, lighthouses, Legion halls, and recreation centres should all be adequately maintained for the betterment of the communities across our province. Allowing them to use some of this funding instead of their hard-earned, hard-raised funding allows them to keep the doors open and keep the heat on.

The seniors' club that's in the same building as my office, they have a lot of seniors involved and they gather on Saturday nights to have their dances. They have an even split, a couple of times a year they have suppers and they're trying to raise money to maintain these halls. It might not seem like a lot of money if it's \$5,000 or \$2,000 or however we want to divvy it up in the details and the regulations, but that means a lot to them. It gives these people a place to gather.

The bill recognizes the importance of these structures because without these structures our communities don't prosper. They provide opportunities for individuals to congregate, they provide centres for holiday events to be hosted. I know myself, Madam Speaker, the fire hall in North Sydney allows the community to put on a dinner at Christmastime. That dinner allows people in our community to have a good hot meal with people in the community. People who would never normally get out or spend some time with family or friends, or who don't have family or friends left to spend time with, are able to come to this community hall to enjoy a hot meal with family and friends and new friends. They just recently underwent a renovation to replace the heating system. Wouldn't it have been nice if they'd had a little extra money at that time to help replace that heating system?

Most of these people give these community halls for free. They may make some money off the refreshments that they sell, they may make some money off an even split that they sell, but the halls usually allow the people to use them for free. They recognize the importance of these gathering places in our communities.

I used to do a lot of work with the Kinsmen in North Sydney. They had a little room in the old North Sydney forum where they could have their meetings. They did a lot in the community. They fundraised. They had a couple of big events through the year. Their numbers dwindled over the years from people having to leave to go away or the members starting to get older, but they gave all that money back to the community. They gave it all to people in need. People might need a wheelchair. They may have needed money assistance to make a doctor's appointment in Halifax. They may have needed assistance to whatever, but that group now - the old North Sydney forum is gone. Not gone, but it's shut down. It took away their meeting room. They had a hard time finding a place to meet. It was going to cost them money, so they kind of dwindled away - that and the numbers. (Interruption)

AN HON. MEMBER: If those walls could talk.

MR. ORRELL: I guess they could.

We now have the new Emera Centre in North Sydney. I know that centre in North Sydney - I heard someone say it didn't have any character yet, but every new building has to develop its own character. When you'd go there to play hockey on a Sunday evening like I used to be able to do, you'd look up in the meeting room upstairs and they had exercise classes. They had baby showers. They'd have fundraisers for food banks. You'd look up around and the new building has a walking track, and you'd see seniors walking on the walking track. They had to do a lot to try to get the little extras to make a big difference for the people in our community. The walking track itself - I think it cost something like \$60,000.

We were fortunate to be able to secure some federal funding for it, and the municipality threw in some money for it; I think the provincial government may have contributed a little bit of money for it as well. Just think of what they could have done if they'd had that money to start. These buildings create new friendships. They maintain old friendships. They allow our people to stay healthy.

We're here in this Legislature debating bills on smoking, on the Motor Vehicle Act. There is all kinds of controversy over different things, and we're trying to make this as healthy as we can for individuals. We're hearing the consultation, and then we hear people saying that this bill here, we don't have the details. It's spending money we don't have. By spending this money, we keep our individuals healthy, physically and mentally. It allows people to be proud of our communities. It allows these groups to put these events on, to use their buildings to keep connecting people together.

In many cases, these community establishments provide opportunities for children - whether it's sports, sock-hops, dances. I know some people rent these halls to have their dance troupes in there, they hold their Girl Guide meetings, they hold their Brownie meetings. The Air Cadets meet in these buildings. This keeps our kids off the streets and mostly away from harm, but it also teaches them the necessities of life, like respect.

Yesterday at the Legions and the cenotaphs that I was able to attend, I noticed that respect is something that most of our kids are starting to develop more of. I went to two services on Monday at the junior high in Sydney Mines and the high school that serves the whole area. The whole student body was at these services and the veterans were there, they put on an amazing service of music, of slideshows. The veterans that were there, in speaking with them afterwards, they couldn't believe the amount of respect. They called for a moment of silence and there wasn't a peep in both school gyms.

That just shows me that what we're doing with our kids, we're doing it right. With the operation costs such as rising power rates, high taxes - I mean some of them are able to go tax-free, but this bill will allow them to use their hard-earned money to put on the programs and not necessarily for the maintenance of the buildings that they have.

It doesn't sound like a lot of money - or it might sound like a lot of money - but to these groups or these individuals, it's enormous. If we can maintain these structures and let them concentrate on doing what they do best, then the whole community benefits, the whole province benefits, the whole area benefits.

Knowing that things like the Legions provides the backbones of our communities, our community halls, our seniors clubs - I mean, we've seen the number of people attending services increase over the last number of years. This year was records for numerous reasons. But without these buildings and without this bit of money that would help keep these structures in proper maintenance, they may not exist and we may not see that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Your time has lapsed. Thank you.

The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to rise and speak for a moment on this bill that has been put forward by my colleague, the member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley. I've been listening to all the members from different sides of the House speaking on this bill and everyone has made some valid points. There is no question about that in my mind.

The thing that I think we have to realize when we speak about this bill is that we're talking about rural Nova Scotia being under siege. The very fact that our population is declining all across rural Nova Scotia is one of the reasons that this bill was brought

forward. When we live in a small community, a central meeting spot is a pivotal point for people to keep that community alive.

I want to share with the House, if I could, a little stretch of communities along the coast where I live. Part of them are in my constituency of Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg and some of them are in the constituency of the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. It's about a three-quarter-hour drive. You go from a community named Marion Bridge, which has been made famous by the song *Out on the Mira*, to a little community called L'Ardoise.

I remember not too long ago, when you would drive that drive, you would come to the Village of Gabarus and there would be two stores and one gas pump. You'd come to the community of Gabarus Lake - there would be a small store and there would be a gas pump there. You'd move on to the Village of Fourchu, and there in that little fishing community, you'd find again two stores and a gas pump. Framboise, you'd find a store and a gas pump, and then you'd move on to Grand River, where there were there were two stores and two gas pumps.

You say, what difference does that make now? None of those communities have those services anymore. None of them have those services, but what they all do have is small meeting halls - halls that are important to the fabric of the community. You know, it's expensive to keep a building like that operating as the member for Lunenburg had mentioned, and she's quite correct. Like her, I've been involved in many of these community organizations, trying to help to keep them open.

But today, when you go and you purchase a door or you purchase some building materials, the cost is extremely high and the communities in the rural areas are under siege. They talked about the important buildings and which one is an important building and which one isn't. Well of course, if you're in a community, the building is important to you. That makes sense. I understand that. I live that.

In my constituency of Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg, Madam Speaker, we have 16 volunteer fire departments to service that constituency. Who is the one that would tell them that none of those fire departments are important? The other question of course, more important than that, is how many people realize the service that is provided by those volunteers in those buildings? The very fact that when you go for insurance on your home, the question is always asked, how close are you to a fire department? That has an effect on the premium you pay.

These volunteer fire departments that are in rural Nova Scotia - the area that this funding would help to serve - have a real challenge. The challenge today is not just about keeping the doors open; it is about having enough people to make them work. We've seen in our rural communities an out-migration of people. That out-migration didn't start a year ago, or four years ago, or five years ago - it has been going on for a while.

So how do we tackle that? Well we try to make it as easy as possible for those institutions to stay and keep their doors open. I know in some of the areas that I have the honour to represent, our volunteer fire departments are staffed with seniors because a lot of our younger people are away, working out West in Alberta, or in fishing season, most of our young people have gone out on the water and if there's a fire, there's a challenge. But then besides all those challenges, it's keeping the doors open on those very special buildings and keeping them alive in those communities.

Yesterday everybody in this House was at a Legion service somewhere, honouring those people who have done so much to give us the privilege of doing the very work that we do. In the course of the last three weeks, serving your country has taken on a whole new meaning in the losses that we've seen in Ottawa and Quebec, the individuals who lost their lives here on our own grounds.

Our Legions are suffering. It's a challenge for them to keep their doors open. Part of the reason it is a challenge is, again, the people who make up those institutions are getting older and it's harder and harder for them to raise funds and to keep their doors open.

I had the opportunity a week and a half ago to speak to a man who was very involved with the Legion; he's a life member. He has been involved for 90 years and he still sits on the provincial command of the Legion. I asked him, what rural Legions in Cape Breton Island are under siege and why? He went through a list of about seven or eight that were really having a job to keep their doors open.

This type of bill would help. It's not the be-all and end-all and I know that the member opposite has talked about the fact that there is money available for Legions but it's every three years and it's not a great amount of money. Every penny is important and the member for Lunenburg would know that because she has been involved in fundraising. It's part of what we need to do to make it a little easier for rural Nova Scotia to maintain its fabric.

So where is that money going to come from? I know the minister opposite who is involved with the culture is a pretty good fellow to deal with. I think it would be fair to say that if he could help, he would. But it comes down to what dollars are left for him to work with, for the province to work with and for the government to work with.

So where does that money come from? I don't know if I have that complete answer but maybe there has to be a little bit of money coming from the different departments around, to allow those different organizations to stay alive. I will tell you, Madam Speaker, it is a lot cheaper to maintain the facilities we have than to go out and start building new facilities. Anybody who has done any renovations or decided they were going to change their cupboards can tell you that it is an expensive venture to do that.

Now do we have too many facilities? Well you know what? That could be. I know in the community of Donkin they had a Legion, a fire hall, a band hall, a cadets' hall. We worked as a group to get together to decide, which structure was the soundest, which one would we have to spend the least amount of money on and then put them all in that one structure together, working together, and put a schedule together so that they could indeed do the functions they wanted to do but at the same time cut down on the operating costs. One of the things that I insisted on is if we do that - and we started down that road, but if you do that, the old buildings have to be torn down. If we don't tear the old buildings down, somebody will want to go in there and start up another organization and keep that one going.

Some people might say that's a radical idea, but it has come to the point where we really need to start thinking outside the box on how we are going to be able to move forward but keep our identities and our communities in rural Nova Scotia alive. What I've seen in my time living in a very small community - I live in a community with 42 people in it. I have to get home every weekend to make sure Nova Scotia Power doesn't cut off the power to the whole community.

But in reality, there are many of those small communities around the Province of Nova Scotia who need help to keep their identity and who need help to make the people who have had their whole entire lives in those rural areas, to give them the opportunity to spend the rest of their days there.

When the member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley came up with the idea of this type of a fund to help maintain vital buildings in the area - sure, there has to be work on identifying which buildings they are and do we do this and do we do that, but tell me, what community should have to survive without the use of a volunteer fire department? What area should not have a Legion to represent the veterans who have given so much to our country that we take the time in Nova Scotia, who we're so proud to celebrate on November 11th?

When I think about the very fact that we do take the time as a province to celebrate November 11th - did you know, Madam Speaker, that there are some provinces in this country that only take two minutes at 11:00 a.m., and the rest of the day is just a normal day for them? They don't honour our veterans the way we do in Nova Scotia. It's one of the things that makes me very proud to be a Nova Scotian.

So we sit here in this House and we talk about bills that may or may not be able to do some good for us and good for our communities, but here we have a bill - very similar in my mind to the Railways Bill that went through this House not very long ago - where we have the opportunity as a group to do something for the people of rural Nova Scotia who have seen a siege on their lifestyle, who have seen a siege on the very fabric of what they have built in Nova Scotia. None of us, not one of us in this House, would be here if it hadn't

been for the work of the people in rural Nova Scotia and what they have done and given back to our communities.

So when we say we should spend some money on them, that we should offer up an opportunity for them to maintain their identity, for them to maintain their buildings, and for them to make sure their communities stay alive, I think it's very vital.

There are many different bills that have gone through this House. We'll sit around and we'll talk about that's not a good bill for this reason or that reason - I've done a fair share of that myself - but I'll tell you, when it comes to making sure that the fabric of this province stays together, that the people of this province be able to maintain their pride and their communities, then it's something that I would like to, and am happy to, give support to.

I think this is a bill that's really worthy of the consideration of all members of this House. I would ask the members opposite and in the other Opposition Party to give it some serious consideration, and I look forward to seeing this bill move forward in the days of the House. Thank you.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 57.

Bill No. 57 - Elections Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand and take my place to speak to this bill, the fixed election dates bill. This is not a concept that is new to this Chamber. It has been much talked about in the past session and in the past. In fact, the Premier himself introduced a Private Member's Bill in December 2007 asking for fixed election dates. The former MLA for Cumberland South introduced a bill calling for fixed election dates several times also.

Fixed election dates were included in the Progressive Conservative Modernizing Government Act in 2011 and 2012. In fact, we introduced a bill to establish fixed election dates by our caucus in December, and one of my first experiences speaking on the floor of the House here was to address this subject of fixed election dates.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, in a recently released annual report of the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Temporale made several recommendations to the House of Assembly regarding new changes to the Election Act, and chief among them was fixed election dates. In fact, I believe in that Act it said that that was the key recommendations upon which most

of the other recommendations hinged or made sense, and in fact, in that report there were considerable savings to the Province of Nova Scotia for having fixed election dates. I believe that it was in the order of close to a million dollar savings to our province if we had fixed election dates.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, which I think is a compelling reason to think about having fixed election dates, Nova Scotia is the last holdout in the country when it comes to having fixed election dates. Federally, elections are held on the third Monday in October every four years; in British Columbia a general election is held on the second Tuesday in May every four years; in Newfoundland and Labrador the general election is to be held on the second Tuesday of October every four years; the Ontario general election is to be held on the second Tuesday in October every four years; and the New Brunswick general election is to be held on the fourth Monday in September every four years.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan the general election is to be held on the first Monday in November every four years - and I understand right now that in Saskatchewan it's minus 13, minus 14 is the daytime high today, so you have to wonder about Saskatchewan having a general election in November, but nevertheless there it is - you think they might have chosen October.

In P.E.I., the general election is to be held on the first Monday of October every four years; the Manitoba general election is to be held on the first Tuesday in October every four years. In fact if there is a theme in this, it's mostly October elections across the country. Unlike that, Alberta's general election is to be held within the three-month period beginning March 1st and ending May 31st in the fourth calendar year following the polling of the most recent general election. And there you have most of the jurisdictions across the country - Quebec, not to be left out, general election to be held on the first Monday in October every four years.

Just as I speak about and read through that list, Mr. Speaker, I can probably answer the question about Saskatchewan and Alberta, both of those general elections are not held in October on account of the importance of the wheat and grain harvest which happens in October in those provinces, no doubt that is why they have chosen November or the Spring.

In all of the provinces across the country and in all jurisdictions they have fixed election dates, Mr. Speaker, and traditionally under a parliamentary system of government general elections are called at the discretion of the Premier, although they may be held at any time if the government loses confidence in the Legislature. In recent years there have been calls for more predictable election dates for federal, provincial, and territorial Legislatures, and for restrictions on a government's advantage in calling elections when it is most politically advantageous to do so - as I mentioned, all other provinces have answered that call.

Because this is the home of democracy right here in our country and in British North America more broadly, it ought to be the place where we are on the lead of democratic reform and not on the tail of it, not the last. That's why it's so striking that Nova Scotia is the last province in Canada to deal with fixed election dates - when we used to be a leader, we are now a follower on that subject.

The intent of the fixed election date legislation is to create a regular cycle of planned general elections with specific predictable election dates and a fixed term for the Legislature. Beginning with British Columbia in 2001, a total of eight Canadian provinces and territories have passed laws for the fixed election dates; in 2007 the Parliament of Canada passed a law which introduced fixed election dates at the federal level.

All of the Canadian Statutes provide for general elections every four years; however, elections can still be held earlier if the government loses confidence of the Legislature and nothing restricts the royal prerogative of dissolution. By-elections to fill empty seats in the Legislature are not affected by the introduction of fixed-date elections and continue to be held between the dates of a general election as required.

In a parliamentary system such as we have in Canada, governments can time election calls to coincide with economic upturns, the completion of capital projects, favourable public opinion polls or the inexperience of new Opposition Leaders, or with almost any circumstance they wish.

While it is difficult to find hard evidence to prove that clever timing really does improve one's chances of winning an election, there is at least anecdotal evidence that the government thinks it does. However, I will say that with the last general election in Nova Scotia, the fact that the sitting government of the day held off calling an election, as most of us remember. When we met in December and talked about - this was very clear in our minds, the experience of last summer, when most of us were waiting the whole summer for the election to be called. There's no doubt that that did not serve the sitting government of the day any benefit, but saw the further erosion of their place in the polls I think. I don't know if they would disagree with that, but it did not serve them well.

It's debatable whether having the option to call an election, to delay the election call, is of any value. I think it's debatable whether having the option to call it early is of any real value. Former New Democratic Party MP Lorne Nystrom, speaking in the House of Commons in February 2004, claimed, "There is not a party in this country . . . that has not manipulated the election date in order to suit their own political interests." That is from Hansard, February 17, 2004.

The manipulation of election dates likely contributes to increased voter cynicism as well as erosion of the political system's relevance and legitimacy in the minds of citizens. In fact, I know that most of us when we were on the election trail met many citizens who believed we did have fixed election dates; maybe that was because it was in October and so

many other jurisdictions in Canada already have their election in October. Many of my voters, when I met them at the door, were surprised to hear that we didn't have fixed election dates actually, even with the fact that it was so well known in public that it was being dragged out. I don't know what that says about how information disseminates from this House to the public. In reality, that's the way it was. Many of them thought we did have fixed election dates and were surprised to hear that we did not have them.

It's an obvious solution for this Legislature to have fixed election dates. In fact, last December, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board indicated that the government agreed with fixed election dates. She said that the government and the PC caucus were on the same page. At the same time, she had difficulty with the date being included in the bill. So strangely enough, even though we agree on fixed election dates, we have difficulty agreeing on the date, which is the point.

Accordingly, the legislation that we have - this legislation for fixed election dates, this bill - allows the date to be fixed by regulation. Last week, the Deputy Premier said that the government is looking at the issue of a fixed election date. I hope this isn't an indication that the government is backing off this important issue.

This is a great chance for us to change the rules of our great historic democracy, of this Legislature, together, which is the way they should be changed. The fact that this was debated in the first session of this government and now, in the very closing days of this second session, it is an Opposition bill coming forward calling for fixed election dates and is being debated again is personally disappointing to me because I believed at the time, last December, that this government was in fact in favour of fixed election dates. They publicly said so, but in fact did not appear to be in favour of actually fixing the election date. To be in favour of the concept without actually doing it, personally, doesn't make a lot of sense to me.

Going back to the effect of not having fixed election dates on the previous government - there are many effects that that had; for instance, there is a lot of planning that goes into an election and each one of us has an extensive team of volunteers. My own team had about 35 or 40 volunteers, and I know that most of you would have had close to that number and some of you, no doubt, had more volunteers. When you line up your volunteers, you can say, I can't tell you for sure when the election is going to be, but when it does come, will you volunteer?

For me, the very key role of campaign chairperson, my campaign manager, was a lady who had a planned vacation in August that had been planned for some time, and when I asked her to be my campaign chair she said, yes, I'm willing to, John, except I'm going to be away for three weeks in August. In order to accommodate that, we actually had a co-campaign chair.

I tell you that just to say that the lack of a fixed election date is not simply an academic matter to us personally, or to this House, it is a matter of significant personal importance in the lives of our campaign teams and in our own lives, with vacations. My time is up? So Mr. Speaker, those issues are very real to us. I believe that, as time goes on, actually the...

MR.SPEAKER: Thank you for the cue - as time goes on. The honourable member has reached his time.

MR. LOHR: With those few words I take my seat.

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

MR. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and offer a few remarks on Bill No. 57, a bill to amend the Elections Act. Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded of the adage that says if it's not broken, don't fix it. No election is imminent in this province that I'm aware of, and I have faith in our Premier that he would let us know if he had that in his mind. What this does is it gives the government the gift of time. In all our lives, time is probably the most important thing that we can be given. And that gives us time to examine all the methods, review some of the data that my colleague, the member for Kings North put forward, and see which would be suitable for our great province.

The current Election Act is silent on fixed election dates. I would note that the proposed bill permits the possibility of Sunday voting. Perhaps that's not bad, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps though, consultation on that might be required. I should say that I'm somewhat familiar with elections in our great province. My first elected public office was as a school board member. Subsequently I joined the legions of municipally-elected people in Nova Scotia and served for quite some time. I'm very proud of that service that I had and the elections that were involved there.

During that period, I actually let my name stand in eight consecutive elections. Not all were elections, I must say. Two, I believe, were acclamations, and we can all talk about acclamations and what an acclamation means. Is it an endorsement because you're doing such a great job that people are satisfied, or is it reflective of apathy, which I must say, we do have our fair share of in this province? I haven't decided just what the gift of the two acclamations was for me.

My perfect record was altered, however, in my first attempt to transfer to provincial politics, when I was unsuccessful in my first attempt to join this wonderful Assembly here. But perseverance is a great gift, Mr. Speaker, and though sometimes I had a difficult time convincing my wife that perseverance was such a great gift, I was successful in the 2013 provincial election, which has given me the great privilege of making these remarks today and joining all these wonderful people in the House of Assembly.

Without a doubt, Mr. Speaker, Elections Nova Scotia will continue consulting on this matter with the respective caucuses and, of course, the Election Commission. There have been several attempts, as my colleague has mentioned, to introduce amendments to the Election Act regarding fixed election dates for general elections. Private Member's Bill No. 5 was introduced by the Honourable Stephen McNeil. Actually Deputy Premier Diana Whalen spoke to it within the House, noting that the Liberals had brought a similar bill in the past, indicating in principle that the Liberal Party supported the bill though thought the bill should have more flexibility. Flexibility, of course, when it comes to democracy is of utmost importance.

When we, the members of this House, begin to alter the Elections Act in Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, we are making profound adjustments to the very essence of our democracy, to our commitment to responsible government, which was so valiantly fought for, and eventually secured, by that most famous of Nova Scotia's Legislature, the Honourable Joseph Howe. I would direct the attention of the House to Mr. Howe, who is on the Speaker's right hand, and bears witness to everything we do in this Legislature. I would suggest that we reflect on the task of Mr. Howe and, of course, on the other side is his archrival, Mr. James Johnston, who is also witnessing the activities here.

I'd like for us to reflect on the task of Mr. Howe who, fighting for the rights in the colony, fighting for responsible government, journeyed to Britain on many trips that could take as much as 10 months, round-trip. This wonderful democracy that we enjoy in Nova Scotia deserves the respect of sober second thought when it comes to matters such as those involved and recommended in Bill No. 57.

I'd like to commend Elections Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, on the most recent changes that were enacted in the most recent election in 2013. I believe that in the instance of Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie, one of only two ridings in Nova Scotia to rise to a 70 per cent turnout - the other one being Cape Breton-Richmond - were a result of some of the good innovations that Elections Nova Scotia brought in during that period of time. Seventy per cent turnouts are something that I would like to see return to all of Nova Scotia in our provincial elections, federal elections, and our municipal elections also because we seem to have fallen off, and maybe some of that apathy that I talked about earlier is rubbing off.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would offer that Bill No. 57, though perhaps beginning to point toward a favourable haven, seems overly eager and unnecessarily impatient. Nova Scotians have the gift of time, and to size up the opportunity from all sides, to assist our democratic system in a manner that will make Joseph Howe proud should be our objective. With those remarks, I'll take my seat.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to take a great deal of the time of the House, but I am pleased to have an opportunity to rise and say a few words on Bill No. 57, which is a bill that seeks to fix election dates in the Province of Nova Scotia for provincial elections.

You know, this is an interesting topic. Of course, electoral reform of any kind is always interesting. There are lots of different ideas about how to improve our electoral system, and this indeed may be an idea that could make some improvement or then again it might have some unintended consequences as quite often changes that are made in our institutions and our institutional practices often do.

We have fixed election dates for quite a number of our institutions now at the local level. We essentially know when municipal elections are going to occur in Nova Scotia. We know when municipal elections will occur and along with that are the elections of school board members. This has served that level of government really quite well and there is no reason to imagine that it couldn't serve our level of government well, as well.

However, having said that, one of the things that I always think when I look at the system that is the most familiar to us in some ways for having used fixed election dates is the American electoral system and it's a fascinating system to study, sometimes a little hard to get a handle on. The more you start to understand that system, the more you realize you don't know about that system, certainly that's the situation in my case.

We see in the United States, with the system they have adopted of fixed elections, every four years a president and half of the members of their House of Representatives and their Senate and then mid-terms every two years, we see a system where you have a perpetual electoral cycle. I know for myself, having been here now for close to 17 years and having run in quite a number of elections, more than is normal in a four-year electoral cycle, during that 17-year period.

We had an election in 1998 and that was following the Savage Government fulfilling pretty much five years of its mandate before it called an election. In 1998 we had a minority government that only lasted 16 months and there was an election in 1999. That resulted in a majority government of Dr. Hamm and I believe that Dr. Hamm went back to the people in 2003 and it was about three and a half years into the mandate. That election did not result in a second majority mandate; it resulted in a minority government that lasted until 2006.

In 2006, we had another minority government, this time with Premier MacDonald and that particular mandate lasted for less than the four-year cycle and resulted in an election in 2009; and then the 2009 election, the NDP Government were in power for about four years and a bit and had an election just slightly three months beyond the four-year mandate.

If we take that period of time - our province has had more than its share of provincial elections in that time. In fact, there are probably two more elections in that electoral cycle, but unavoidable in our system because of the minority government situation, where governments do have to maintain the confidence of the majority of members in this Legislature.

So I guess on some level I ask myself what is the problem this legislation seeks to solve? What is the problem this legislation seeks to remedy? Do we have a problem in the Province of Nova Scotia of majority governments calling elections too frequently or too infrequently? I would say, no, we really don't have a problem.

I know that the four-year term is kind of a trendy thing that started on the West Coast as part of a reform package for our electoral system, pretty much promoted by the Reform Party of Canada and the Canadian Alliance Party, and what has become the Conservative Party without the Progressive part of that Party. They really adopted this idea as if it presents some kind of panacea to address the problems that people are concerned about in our democracy.

With all due respect, I really don't think it does address the problems that are needing to be addressed in our democracy, which is not to say that I'm not open to being convinced and to having more conversation and discussion around this issue. But I really think that, certainly in isolation of a package that would look at true reform, that would address the concerns that people have about whether or not our democratic system is working to its full potential, I think there are probably a number of things we need to do.

It is not that long ago that our Legislature celebrated its 250th Anniversary. Some of us here will remember the Democracy 250 initiative. Our Legislature has the distinction of being the oldest Legislature in the country. We did celebrate our 250th Anniversary a number of years ago and a select committee, an all-Party committee, of our Legislature was put together as part of that initiative. We went around the province conducting public meetings in all parts of our province from Cape Breton to Yarmouth - I sat on that select committee - and we heard from people with respect to the concerns that they had about how our system was working, and the suggestions and recommendations that they had.

This idea came up infrequently. It did come up, but there were other things that people really were more interested in seeing, including proportional representation. That was something that there was a great deal of interest in and a lot of discussion around. Again, an interesting topic, one that doesn't have a clear cut answer and has many variations, just as fixed election dates can have many variations.

The last point that I would make - my understanding is that in Opposition, members of the government were interested in having a fixed election date and so it will be interesting to see whether or not we will get such reform during this mandate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: It's my pleasure to stand for a little while and speak to this bill, and I thank the input from the previous members on this one - from the member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie on that and congratulate him for so many won elections. It is a testament to perseverance, I think, sometimes on how many times we put ourselves up for re-election and how many times that our members, our community members, allow us to do the things that we do as politicians.

You know this is not a new issue for this House of Assembly. This has been here in a number of different iterations by different members, by different Parties for many years now, the idea of a fixed election date. I believe the Premier himself, when he was here in the Opposition in December of 2007, introduced a bill on fixed election dates. I know we've done it on a couple of occasions as well since we've been in Opposition, and of course recently we have the report of the Chief Electoral Officer who is looking for a slate of different changes to the Elections Act in order to make things, I would say more accessible to Nova Scotians. One of the chief recommendations within that report is the issue of a fixed election date.

Now whether you believe in the fixed election date or not, looking at the history of Nova Scotia and the last number of elections, why do they happen in three years or three and a half years, or four years? You know it really boils down to the opportunity to win the election, so the government, of course, holds those cards. When things are going to well, looks like government is on the uptake, of course the government would call an election at that time, and I think that's one of the things that leads to the voter apathy in this province - that election dates tend to be looked at as more opportunist, they don't necessary fall into the requirements of the populous.

Really one of the chief issues that the Chief Electoral Officer puts forward is just planning for his office. Being able to work towards a date so they can have everything printed, they can have all the officers appointed, they can have all of the things ready to go. Look at our experience before the last election, I don't know how many members of this House were previously nominated or how quickly . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Nineteen months.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Nineteen months. Nineteen months is a long time to be nominated and thinking about other things in the meantime and, in many cases, many of us couldn't maintain our jobs if we were nominated candidates, so you go from one extreme to the other of being nominated for a really long time or really holding things off, hoping like heck that the election is not called so that you can sort of make that quick transition between the job you have to the nominated candidate and run the election.

Having a fixed election date, I think negates a few of things and allows people, not only Elections Nova Scotia to plan, but those of us who are interested in public life to be able to get their ducks in a row, I guess is how you would call it. I think that addresses a bunch of different things too - I think all of us would be successful in getting different people offering themselves up for public office because you'd be able to say okay, listen, here is where the plan should fall into place.

We've talked many times in this House of Assembly for representation of different professionals, peoples from different areas, different backgrounds, different genders, making sure that we have that cross-combination - I would say right cross-combination of individuals in this province, and I think that a fixed election date is one of those things that will of course help us make that happen.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we are the last holdout province in the country right now that doesn't have a fixed election date. Of course the federal government has theirs, with elections to be held on the third Monday in October every four years; B.C., where this all sort of started, the general election to be held on the second Tuesday in May every four years; in Newfoundland and Labrador the general election is to be held on the second Tuesday in October every four years; in Ontario, the general election to be held on the second Tuesday in October every four years; in the Northwest Territories, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, P.E.I., and Manitoba, a general election held on the first Tuesday in October every four years; Alberta, Quebec.

So traditionally under a parliamentary system of government, general elections are called at the discretion of the Premier, although they may have been held at any time if the government loses the confidence of the Legislature. So even though we'd have that date, we know that if we have a minority government - and I got to work through two minority governments, and as the previous speaker said, one was about three years, the other one was about three and a half years, but they all add up to time served. But as election comes along, you are doing a whole bunch of other things instead of really focusing on what you should be focusing on. I think that's the challenge, too.

I do understand where the previous speaker comes to when we compare ourselves to the American system, because it seems that in the American system they are continually in a state of campaign, which I think this province has adopted in the last number of years, of always trying to get ready for that next election, as governments should do. They should be doing the right thing for their constituents, but at the same time, looking forward to the next election.

I think being able to call for predictable election dates will do a number of things, not only, again, for the Chief Electoral Officer, as far as planning, because the planning for them includes a whole bunch of things - like I said, the printing, the hiring of electoral officers and their assistants, so they actually can get ready. They were ready on a couple of occasions previous to the last election. Of course, all that adds up to a fair amount of waste.

I can only use my experiences in the last four elections. In my first election, we didn't know when it was happening. That would have been the 2003 election with John Hamm. I remember talking to him on a couple of occasions that I was interested in running, but my job didn't allow me to get nominated. Then we were trying to work our way into getting me nominated so I actually would have a paycheque coming in, because I was young and didn't have a whole lot of savings sitting in the bank. You can only survive on so much when you don't have a job.

We were able to work until one day I saw Premier Hamm, and I said, should I get nominated? He said, you should get nominated, and within two weeks we were on the hustings, knocking on doors. But you can't always hope that's going to happen, and 19 months is a long time to be sitting around and waiting. There is a benefit to it, I would say - you get to knock on a lot of doors ahead of time, but I think it's a long time to be working on.

It's obvious that this is, again, one solution to a number of issues when it comes to voter apathy. I believe, and we believe, that actually having a fixed election date creates a little bit of predictability in how things are going to be rolling on. I guess the debate really is going to be, is it a Fall election, is it a Spring election, where does that fit in? We see different provinces have different dates. I think that we just need to make sure that we have the date that is right for our population - not necessarily right for political Parties, but right for the population to make sure they do turn up and vote on election day.

With those few short words, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill tonight.

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

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to have the House take a look at the east gallery. I have a young lady up there who is very, very interested and active in politics, and her parents, so I'd like Krista, John and Emily Alford, thank you and give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, that concludes our business for today.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: I move that you do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into a Committee of the Whole on Bills.

[4:30 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CW on Bills with Deputy Speaker Ms. Margaret Miller in the Chair.]

[5:30 p.m. CW on Bills rose and the House reconvened. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Kevin Murphy, resumed the Chair.]

MR. SPEAKER: The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: That the committee has met, has made progress, and begs leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: We have reached the moment of interruption, and the topic for late debate is:

“Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature acknowledge that the Tancook ferry represents a vital link for families living on Tancook Island and that an appropriate vessel needs to be in service as soon as possible.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

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

TANCOOK FERRY: VITAL LINK - ACKNOWLEDGE

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: This is a vitally important topic and I have a close connection with both Big and Little Tancook, as my grandmother was from Big Tancook Island. So I have a great familiarity with both those islands and the lifestyle and what it takes to be a Tancooker, and that's what we are proud of - we're Tankcookers and very strong people.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, I really wanted to bring this as a late debate topic because what people have to understand is what it's like to live on those two fabulous islands and the importance of a transportation link for those individuals who live there and those who have businesses there and those who visit the island.

A little bit of geography - Big Tancook Island and Little Tancook Island are about six miles, or 9.6 kilometres, from the Chester areas. They are part of the Lunenburg Municipality; however, I have the privilege of representing them as the MLA for

Chester-St. Margaret's. Now on Big Tancook Island, normally in the summertime there is a bit of an explosion of tourists and people who live there, and the population base equals up to 200 people. In the Fall and winter months, we're looking at about 110 to 120 people living on the island. Now Little Tancook Island would have approximately, year-round, 35 individuals. You may think that is not a lot in terms of residents, but I can tell you that even with those small numbers Big and Little Tancook Island have the heart of a big city and the people work very hard every day in their lives, and there is such a history of Tancook Island.

The concern is the fact that the ferry, the *William G. Ernest*, is a 36-year-old ferry and it has outdone its time. The issues around the ferry are because the federal government brought in, through Transport Canada, new regulations which were not grandfathered clauses. So therefore what that has meant is that the new safety regulations have to be adhered to with a ferry that was built 36 years ago.

So the end result is now the ferry can't travel as fast, as many knots as it used to be able to - it takes about 45 minutes to get to Tancook Island from the Chester area. It also has reduced the capacity of the number of passengers who can go on the ferry, and also there is a great need to have a new ferry for Tancook - it's time to look at that because of the age of the ferry and it has been a topic of discussion for probably at least 13 years.

I've had the privilege to go to the island and talk with members of the community and we have formulated a new committee that I have spoken to the minister about, and what we're looking for is to do some strategic planning around the long term and the need for a new ferry service and what that would look like.

But, Mr. Speaker, right now the key issue is not just the long term, it's the short term. It's just like the Ivany report - it's now or never. And the problem is that the ferry has broken down a number of times and you can imagine the chaos and what that creates for the people living on the island. We have high school children and junior high school children who have to take that ferry to go to classes in the Chester area. We have people who are taking their groceries and whatever they need for living, back and forth from the island.

We also have businesses on the island, and it's impressive if you look at, even the last few years, when the economy of Nova Scotia has been dropping, business-wise, Tancook Islands have actually been flourishing with new businesses. It's absolutely amazing in terms of new bed and breakfasts, in terms of a bicycle business; there is a restaurant on Tancook Island. They have a fabulous community centre.

They have come together in order to create and fundraise for a fire department, and a first responders organization. However, this is all being totally hampered by what is being put in as a replacement when the ferry breaks down. Recently, last week on Friday, the ferry broke down again, and what happened was that the Department of Transportation

and Infrastructural Renewal replaced it with what is called the *Eastern Points*. That ferry, Mr. Speaker, is not doing its job. It does not have the capacity the islanders need.

Now, I know TIR will say that it can take the number of occupants that normally travel this time of year, back and forth to the island, but what they are not addressing is the fact that we are right around the corner from the opening of lobster season in that area of our province. The lobster fishers require the movement of bait and equipment to the island for the work that they do each and every day for their livelihood. This is a huge concern that needs to be addressed. We can't keep putting it off. It's lovely that we're going to go forward with the committee, and I've talked to the minister who has been very open about that in terms of those discussions. So that is the future and I'm glad that we have this opportunity to do that, but it is the now that counts.

Also on the island, you have to understand that the lobster fishers require fuel. We have no way, right now, to get that to the island. That would be the same as asking us as MLAs to get rid of all the tools that help us do our job - you know, that we come to work one day and we're told, no cellphone, no iPad, no executive assistant, no constituency assistants. Well, what crises we would be in. We would be saying, well, we can't do our jobs without those tools. That's what's happening to the people of Big and Little Tancook Islands. They are being given the improper tools to be able to equip them to travel to the island for their businesses and for their lifestyle.

What this is going to mean is a really difficult time. Is the government prepared to bring in some kind of financial program to support those who are losing greatly on their income and their business?

As I'm pointing out, and you can hear the crisis in my voice because it's truly a crisis - for people who do not travel to an island where they live or for their lifestyle, I don't know if you understand how important that vital link is for them. We need to have discussion now, so I invite the minister and his staff to call an emergency meeting that would include the islanders, some representation from the island, and myself, so we can address this issue now. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and in the absence of the minister and the acting minister, who I quite often teased a lot before we came into government that I had a ferry and he didn't, because I have a cable ferry in my constituency, the LaHave River ferry, which is the *Brady E. Himmelman* ferry, I welcome the opportunity to speak here today because I am well familiar with Tancook Island and have travelled the ferry many times. I've biked the island. Our member for Kings North will be happy to know they grow lots of cabbage on the island and make superb sauerkraut. Keep your ears open, this may affect your transporting of cabbage.

Before I specifically address the Tancook ferry, I'd like to provide some context around the ferry service in general. The province owns and operates nine ferries in seven different locations across the province, from Digby to Englishtown. The ferries are part of our highway system, and as such, we know how critically important the ferries are to those who use them year-round, as well as the many tourists who travel our ferries during the tourism months. Our ferries are safe, affordable, and reliable, and provide service 365 days a year, day and night, in all kinds of weather.

A 90-person marine service staff works with a budget of \$8.640 million to safely and efficiently transport more than one million passengers and over half a million vehicles each year on our seven crossings. The length of those voyages range from 90 seconds long, as in Englishtown and Little Narrows, up to almost an hour, as in the case of the Tancook ferry. Each of our ferries picks up where the highway leaves off.

Aside from the Nova Scotia weather, we know there can be challenges to operating a ferry. These are mechanical vehicles with engines, and like our own cars, they need occasional maintenance and upgrades to stay on the road. Sometimes unexpected mechanical issues crop up that mean the ferry will be out of service for a short time. If it looks like it will be out longer, we do our best to ensure that service can continue and have continuity in place for those occasions.

Last Friday, November 7th, we learned of an engine problem with the *William Ernst*, the Tancook Island ferry. The captain and the marine services manager took the ferry out of service to diagnose the issue, and once it became apparent that an alternate solution would need to be found, they enlisted the services of a charter ferry so that the service and the ferry schedule could resume. The charter was in place within three hours of first learning of the engine problem.

There were concerns expressed by fishers about the ability of the charter ferry to transport their necessary bait and fuel to the island for the start of the fishing season - the lobster fishing season that the member for Chester-St. Margaret's mentioned. While the charter ferry has the capacity to take 100 litres of gasoline per voyage, as much diesel as it can carry onboard in approved containers, we wanted to take further steps to alleviate the concerns. Earlier this week it was suggested to the local fishers that the department could arrange for a special voyage to carry all their necessary bait and fuel from the mainland to the island.

Further, I want to assure the House and the member for Chester-St. Margaret's that no one will be left on the docks. The charter has the capacity for 43 people. During this time of year, we are seeing only an average of 25 passengers per voyage. The charter is also keeping to the same schedule as the regular ferry.

Recently, marine services staff including John Majchrowicz, the manager of marine services, attended a community meeting on the island. I think you referred to that

meeting. The meeting was hosted by Lunenburg County mayor Don Downe and was attended by residents of Big and Little Tancook. I sent my constituency assistant, Adam Jacobs, there as well to represent me and take in information so that I would be in the know of what was going on with the ferry and the meeting.

I understand it was a productive discussion and it allowed for good dialogue. The residents asked questions about the service, and provincial staff provided an overview and an update on the ferry service. Residents did voice a concern about the service reliability, which once again has been raised as a result of the current engine issues with the *Ernst*.

As the sole means by which residents can move on and off the island, I can understand those concerns. Mr. Majchrowicz explained at the meeting that in the past three years, service was halted for five days, and that was due to weather. So far this year the *William G. Ernst* has been out of service for maintenance for about 13 days. However, during those days the province provided another means of transportation on and off the island.

The ideal situation is to have a ferry that does not miss one day of service. Staff and crew work very hard to ensure maintenance is up to date and they anticipate problems before they happen. However, sometimes there are issues that we cannot predict and that require us to pull the ferry out of service. We always ensure there is an alternative, whether it's a detour route or, in the case of the Tancook ferry, another ferry is in place as soon as it can be arranged.

The department has been approached about replacing the ferry and that is certainly an option under consideration. In the meantime we have responded by providing another means of service. We also are currently working to meet Transport Canada's requirement to upgrade the 32-year-old ferry so that it complies with the recently introduced regulations.

In closing, I will say that I sincerely appreciate the concerns of the community and those expressed by the member for Chester-St. Margaret's. You live on an island, it is your only mode of transportation off the island, and it needs to be there when you need it. We do our best to ensure that that is the case and we apologize for the few times a year when it is not in service.

I have agreed, in principle, to sit on the committee that the member for Chester-St. Margaret's spoke about, so that there would be a local presence there with the government as well, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate to discuss the ferry between Big and Little Tancook Islands and Chester. I have to admit that

I've never been on that ferry. I think it's the only one in the whole province that I haven't had an opportunity to have a try at. But living on an island, and it being the sole means of transportation back and forth to that island, I can imagine the importance it has for the people on the island.

As I understand it, the ferry's engine seized up on November 7th and created problems so that there was no longer the ability to have this ferry in service. The residents have been told that the ferry will be out of service at least until November 21st. Now again my understanding is that in August of this year, Transport Canada reduced the number of passengers the ferry could carry by half, taking the number from 90 to 45.

I just heard the member for Lunenburg say that the number of people on the sailings have lessened quite a bit. On the same token, it's my understanding that the fishing season will start on the 24th of this month and people will be looking to get more travel back and forth, but also the issue is about getting their bait and their fuel back and forth. The replacement that has been put in place by the government does not carry that. It will carry passengers but it doesn't actually carry the fuel or other things needed by the community.

It is interesting, too, one of the things I read in an article about this is they are worried about getting firewood. Well if they were listening to the member for Queens-Shelburne, they'll know there is no firewood to get. But taking that out of the equation, it just seems to me, from what I've been seeing and watching and listening to - with this government, if it floats, it's in doubt. It could be *Bluenose II* and we can't get that off. It could be the ferry going across to New England, and we're having problems with that; we spent \$27 million on it and it's still not working properly.

Now we have the Tancook Island ferry that we've been warned about having an issue and the replacement ferry for that is in Englishtown because the Englishtown ferry is now getting worked on and it is behind schedule as well. It just seems that with this government, if it floats, it's in doubt. There's no question about that. (Interruptions) I don't need your help. Mr. Speaker, the member for Queens-Shelburne is trying to get me in trouble and I can do that without his help.

What it really comes down to, Mr. Speaker, in all seriousness, is that this is a vital transportation link. It's no worse, in my opinion, than it was for the people of Yarmouth and area when the ferry was taken out of that community. It had a major impact on its economy. It's not like some of the other areas in this province where you can actually drive around and there are other routes. This is the sole link to where people need to go, to get back and forth to their homes and to their jobs.

When we stand here and we talk about this, there have been warnings. I know for a fact that the members of the TIR department who are doing maintenance on these ships are doing the best job that they can with what they are given. They are very competent individuals looking after the maintenance of these ships, but when you get to be 32 years

old, well, you just need a little more maintenance than you did if you were five or six years old, and all we have to do is look at own bodies to know what I speak of in that respect.

Now, it's great that they've hired a replacement - and it's a whale-watching boat - to run the people between the islands and the mainland while the ferry is out of place. But a part of this goes back to the very fact that there were issues with the ferry in Englishtown. There were maintenance issues with that. People have been promised time and time again that that ferry was coming back, and it's still not back, so the replacement ferry that would have been used here, that would transport bait, fuel, and other commodities, along with vehicles, is not there, and that is a real problem.

If you're trying to run a business and it's fishing season and you only have that one period of time to make your money, and you can't get all the things that you need to make that happen, well, it puts your income in doubt. It puts your whole outlook for your family a little bit in doubt.

Again, for this government, if it floats, it's in doubt! I can't help but keep on going back to that, because every time we talk about something that floats in the water we have an issue with it - we overspend on it, we can't get it in the water, we can't keep it in the water . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Can't get it out of the water.

MR. MACLEOD: Can't get it out of the water sometimes. So it's a real challenge, and that challenge leads back to the leadership, not the people on the ground that are doing the maintenance and doing the work.

Now, residents would normally be stocking up on their firewood and their fuel this time of the year, and they can't do either of those. We just witnessed this last week, actually. When I was coming here to Halifax I drove over to Mount Thom, and we had four inches of snow, and in northern New Brunswick they got snow. The weather can turn in this province in a heartbeat, and those people could be in a position of not having the proper transportation link and not being able to get the proper things they need in order to maintain their homes.

This being brought forward, I think, is a very timely issue, because again, it goes back to quality of life. Earlier today we talked about how rural Nova Scotia seems to be under siege and being given second-place consideration, and I think this shows a little bit of that, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker. It just shows that the people on that island should get more respect than they're getting. Hiring a whale cruise boat and I'm sure the captain of the boat - from media reports that I've read, he's doing the best he can, but that's not what he does. That's not what he does. He's not there for transportation purposes. He's there to make a few dollars, and he is now filling a gap that the province neglected - neglected, Mr. Speaker - to make sure they had the proper safeguards in place for.

It's not like they didn't know this could come. Back earlier in the summer, back early in September, we were told that the ferry would be on standby, that the *Scotian* would be on standby because of the problems that we were having with this ferry down in Tancook. Now here we are, and we have no visible means of transportation for cars and fuel and firewood.

Then there is also the issue that once it's fixed, people are wondering, will it pass Transport Canada's stability test? Even when it's fixed, there is still no guarantee that this solution has been finalized and the problems are fixed. Again, Mr. Speaker, I'll say it one more time: with this government, if it floats it's in doubt. Every time you turn around, anything that's on the water with this government seems to be going adrift.

Mr. Speaker, the people on Tancook Island have said we have to have something that is feasible for them. They need something that is feasible for them. The current boat being used as a replacement is okay for passengers but if we had the *Scotian*, we wouldn't have to worry about our bait and our fuel.

It keeps on going back to that for me, Mr. Speaker. It's about people being sure that they can do what it is they do in the line of keeping their jobs safe and stable and it can't be done because this ferry is in jeopardy.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge that the government look at the issues that have been put forward to them, listen to what the member for Chester-St. Margaret's has had to say and make sure that indeed there is a good, viable transportation link. Not a ship that can take only passengers, but a ship that can actually do the work that needs to be done so the economy of the island can stay stable and people who have invested their livelihood into fishing can make sure they can do their job and do it with the tools they need. At the same time, we make sure that the people are transported in a safe and efficient manner because at the end of the day, the safety of the people using that ferry is by far the most important issue.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, and the very fact that with this government if it floats, it's in doubt, I'll take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: Baring no more speakers, that concludes late debate.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Bills.

[5:59 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CW on Bills with Deputy Speaker Ms. Margaret Miller in the Chair.]

[11:57 p.m. CW on Bills rose and the House reconvened with Deputy Speaker Ms. Margaret Miller in the Chair.]

MADAM SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: That the committee has met, has made some progress, and begs leave to sit again.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, the concludes the government's business for today. The House will meet again tomorrow at which time we will continue, following the daily routine, with Committee of the Whole on bills, on Bill No. 60, third reading on Bill Nos. 6, 51, 64. The House will meet tomorrow from the hours of 10:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. With that I move that the House do now rise.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again tomorrow between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 11:59 p.m.

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

We will recess for one hour.

[11:58 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

MADAM SPEAKER: Are the Whips satisfied?

There has been a request for a recorded vote on the Adjournment motion. I would ask all members of the House again to be very silent during the recorded vote.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[12:58 a.m.]

YEAS

Mr. Colwell
Mr. Churchill
Mr. Samson
Ms. Whalen
Mr. Glavine
Mr. MacLellan

NAYS

Mr. MacLeod
Mr. MacMaster
Mr. Dunn
Mr. d'Entremont
Mr. Orrell
Mr. Harrison

Ms. Diab
Mr. Horne
Mr. Hines
Mr. Stroink
Ms. Arab
Mr. Delorey
Mr. Ince
Mr. Kousoulis
Mr. Farrell
Mr. Gordon Wilson
Mr. Rankin
Mr. Rowe
Mr. Maguire
Ms. Lohnes-Croft
Ms. Treen
Mr. Gough
Mr. Jessome

Mr. Lohr

THE CLERK: For, 23. Against, 7.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until 10:00 a.m. later today, November 13th.

[The House rose at 1:02 a.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 860**

By: Hon. Jamie Baillie (Leader of the Official Opposition)

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

Whereas paramedics routinely respond to a variety of calls, making them quiet, unassuming heroes who help Nova Scotians when they need it; and

Whereas Lieutenant Governor J.J. Grant presented paramedic Mike Newman of Nappan with the Emergency Health Services Exemplary Service Award at a recent ceremony in Halifax; and

Whereas in order to qualify for the medal, Mike was required to serve 20 years as a paramedic, including 10 years in an emergency services medical position involving potential danger;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud the dedicated service Mike Newman has given our province and thank him for being a valued member of the EHS system.

RESOLUTION NO. 861

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas the valiant spirit of sportsmanship exhibited by my daughter Marena Diab and the Fairview Junior High Girls A Soccer team is inspirational and commendable; and

Whereas the hard work and dedication of the team has culminated in winning first place in the Citadel Championship and regional semi-final playoffs; and

Whereas the Fairview Junior High Girls A Soccer team had an excellent season and won the finals of the Capital Regional Championship on Wednesday, October 22, 2014;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Marena Diab and the entire Fairview Junior High Girls A Soccer team on their outstanding victories and wish them continued success in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 862

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas the Halifax Dunbrack Premiere Women's Soccer team participated August 15 to 19, 2014, in the 2014 Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the hard work and dedication of my daughter Monica Diab and her teammates culminated in taking first place in the competition; and

Whereas the team went on to represent Nova Scotia in October at the Premiere National Soccer Competition in Vaughan, Ontario, and claimed 5th place overall across Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Monica Diab and the Halifax Dunbrack Premiere Women's Soccer team as 2014 Nova Scotia Provincial Champions and on their outstanding ranking at the Premiere National Soccer Competition.

RESOLUTION NO. 863

By: Hon. Maureen MacDonald (Halifax-Needham)

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

Whereas Annette Strug established the mediation mentoring programs in Small Claims Court and the old family courts in both HRM and Sydney, and is a founding member of AMS Mediation Associates, the first firm devoted to non-adversarial resolution of conflict in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Annette Strug is an active educator in the field of conflict resolution, having provided training programs to Dalhousie University, Saint Mary's University, federal and provincial government departments, and private organizations; and

Whereas Annette Strug was recognized this month by the ADR Institute for her groundbreaking work in the field of alternate dispute resolution;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Annette Strug for her receipt of the Distinguished Service Award, and express its gratitude for her contributions and commitment to the field of alternate dispute

resolution in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 864

By: Hon. Maureen MacDonald (Halifax-Needham)

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

Whereas Suki Starnes mediated for many years in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission's mediation program; co-founded Atlantic Canada's first conflict resolution practice, AMS Mediation Associates; and is currently helping to develop a Community Dispute Resolution Centre for Nova Scotia's Lunenburg and Queens Counties; and

Whereas Suki Starnes has developed and taught mediation courses around the world, including the Negotiation for Peacekeepers course in Canada and, internationally, through the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre; and

Whereas Suki Starnes was recognized this month by the ADR Institute with the Distinguished Service Award for her groundbreaking work in the field of alternate dispute resolution;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Suki Starnes on her receipt of the Distinguished Service Award, and express its gratitude for her contributions and commitment to the field of alternate dispute resolution in Nova Scotia and around the world.

RESOLUTION NO. 865

By: Hon. Leo Glavine (Health and Wellness)

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

Whereas David Walsh of Waterville, Nova Scotia, was surprised with an open house in his honour on March 31, 2014; and

Whereas the crowd of about 50 people were there to present Mr. Walsh with a plaque recognizing him as a founding member of the Valley Search and Rescue team, helping to build their current building and giving 43 years of service; and

Whereas Mr. Walsh served as search director for the majority of his time with Valley Search and Rescue, his top priority always being to get the lost person out of the woods alive and caring for the safety of his team;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate David Walsh of Waterville, Nova Scotia, on founding and giving many years of service to the Valley Search and Rescue team.

RESOLUTION NO. 866

By: Hon. Leo Glavine (Health and Wellness)

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

Whereas Esther Chute was presented on Wednesday, September 25, 2014, with the Centurion Award on behalf of the United Square Dancers of America; and

Whereas this award recognizes Esther as the title holder of the oldest active square dancer in Continental America, she is also a model to seniors and our Valley citizens of community and church involvement at 101 youthful years of age; and

Whereas Esther Chute is a poster person for wellness and a life so well lived she discovered square dancing at midlife and it has given her a special joy for the past 53 years with one of the best times being 1967 when she boarded the Centennial train and literally squared danced across country;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Esther Chute on the Centurion Award and wish her many more years of experiencing the pure joy and fun of square dancing.

RESOLUTION NO. 867

By: Hon. Leo Glavine (Health and Wellness)

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

Whereas volunteers make an enormous impact on the quality of life in our communities by bringing an array of talent, skills, and energy week after week; and

Whereas Elsie Parrish and Jim Sherrard have given so generously to the Children's Wish Foundation and the Waterville Fire Department through hosting regular yard sales; and

Whereas Elsie and Jim are always making a difference to their two selected organizations, it is events like the annual Wishmaker Parade where they really shine;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Elsie and Jim for being Berwick Representative Volunteers and for being recognized at the April 7th Provincial Volunteer Recognition Event.

RESOLUTION NO. 868

By: Hon. Leo Glavine (Health and Wellness)

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

Whereas 50 paramedics with 20 or more years of experience received Paramedic Long Service Awards on May 27, 2014, at a ceremony in Halifax; and

Whereas these 50 paramedics combined have 1,282 years of experience providing emergency health services in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas four men from Berwick, Nova Scotia, received awards for their years of service: Richard Campbell for 28 years, Gary Galley for 25 years, Steve Menzies for 26 years and Earl Russell for 31 years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Richard Campbell, Gary Galley, Steve Menzies, and Earl Russell on their many years of service as paramedics in Kings West and on receiving Paramedic Long Service Awards.

RESOLUTION NO. 869

By: Hon. Leo Glavine (Health and Wellness)

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

Whereas Wayne Fowler of Kingston, Nova Scotia, has been recognized as volunteer of the year for bringing the community together in multiple events for the Credit Union Centre Arena; and

Whereas Wayne headed Kingston's bid for Kraft Hockeyville 2014 and has worked hard for the Credit Union Centre Arena over his years in Kingston; and

Whereas he has forged relationships with businesses like Greenwood Credit Union, raised awareness of the challenges the area faced, and brought young and old together in support of the arena, which is used for much more than just hockey games;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate

Wayne Fowler on being recognized as Volunteer of the Year and bringing the community together to improve the Credit Union Centre.

RESOLUTION NO. 870

By: Mr. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas the Birch Bear Woods Homeowners' Association (BBWHA), registered in 2007, is a volunteer community organization consisting of a vibrant group of residents who care about their neighbours and their community; and

Whereas the BBWHA have worked co-operatively with various levels of government and other community organizations to provide more options for living a healthy, active life to area residents, making the community more welcoming with a new sub-division sign; and

Whereas James Hanifen, a resident of Birch Bear Woods in Lewis Lake, has stepped up into a position of leadership as chair of BBWHA, and much has been achieved since the organization's inception;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly acknowledge the tremendous volunteer commitment of Jim Hanifen to building community.

RESOLUTION NO. 871

By: Mr. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas John Bignell is a community leader, actively engaged as a proud resident of Sheldrake Lake Subdivision, and the president of the Sheldrake Lake Homeowners Association; and

Whereas John is a man of many interests and passions, ranging from preservation of archeologically-significant places, restoration of historical artifacts, water quality awareness, and sustainable practices to beekeeping and cooking; and

Whereas John and his wife, Kellie, enjoy family life to the fullest, teaching their children by example and being a role model for community service in his chosen career as a paramedic, and John has been providing excellence in emergency medical care for more

than 20 years;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly congratulate John Bignell and commend him for being actively engaged in building community.

RESOLUTION NO. 872

By: Mr. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas John Cascadden has repeatedly shown his commitment and civic leadership by investing his time to research and report on issues and matters of concern to community; and

Whereas John attends countless meetings, public hearings, and other information sessions and is actively engaged, often sharing his findings with the larger community through social media; and

Whereas John serves on the board of the McDonald Lake Residents' Association and the Five Bridges Wilderness Heritage Trust, and is most knowledgeable on municipal issues with a keen interest in ensuring wise decisions are made to ensure environmental safeguards are in place at the Otter Lake landfill;

Therefore be it resolved that this Nova Scotia House of Assembly recognize the tremendous contribution of time and talent that John Cascadden puts into his quiet community service for the betterment of the community life.

RESOLUTION NO. 873

By: Hon. Jamie Baillie (Leader of the Official Opposition)

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

Whereas paramedics routinely respond to a variety of calls, making them quiet, unassuming heroes who help Nova Scotians when they need it; and

Whereas Lieutenant Governor J.J. Grant presented paramedic John Campbell of Parrsboro with the Emergency Health Services Exemplary Service Award at a recent ceremony in Halifax; and

Whereas in order to qualify for the medal, John was required to serve 20 years as a

paramedic, including 10 years in an emergency services medical position involving potential danger;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud the dedicated service John Campbell has given our province and thank him for being a valued member of Nova Scotia's EHS system.