



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2014

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HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2014

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, just before we get into the agenda, the topic for late debate tonight was submitted by the honourable member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie:

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly send well wishes of safe travels to all involved with the Nova Scotia tree being delivered to Boston, and thank John and Ethel Ann MacPherson of Purlbrook, Antigonish County, for their generous donation of the 55-year-old, vibrant 43-foot white spruce.

The late debate tonight is at 5:30 p.m.

I am pleased to deliver a Speaker's Ruling just before we get into the agenda.

SPEAKER'S RULING:

Conduct of Deputy Speaker (Pt. of order by Mr. A. MacMaster [Hansard p. 2491, 11/13/14]) Out of order.

On Thursday, the honourable member for Inverness rose on a point of order to call into question the conduct of the Deputy Speaker with regard to a member's statement and her conduct in Committee of the Whole on Bills on the previous day.

There are numerous authorities that we consulted that provide it is improper to call into question the conduct or impartiality of the Speaker or a Deputy Speaker other than through the use of a substantive motion, which is a grave and serious thing. Using a point of order for such purpose is not in order and, accordingly, I am ruling it out of order.

If a member has any concern about the conduct of the Deputy Speaker or the Speaker it is always possible for them to approach me privately and I will carefully consider any points and thoughts they have, but I will not entertain points of order on such things.

We will begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

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

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave today to present the report, the *Nova Scotia Tax and Regulatory Review*, which has now come in.

No? Not this report?

MR. SPEAKER: We'll save that for the next item.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

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

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I thought that's what you had said in the previous moments, so as the House knows, I am standing today in my place to present the *Nova Scotia Tax and Regulatory Review*, which has been much anticipated by this House.

There are copies, I believe, for all members. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

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

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for granting unanimous consent.

Next week marks the start of the lobster fishing season in southwestern Nova Scotia. As fishermen prepare for what is traditionally known as “dumping day,” one of the most dangerous days of the season, we need to redouble our efforts and focus on safety. Fishing is a vital part of Nova Scotia’s culture. The industry represents a core industry in our province, contributing millions of dollars to our economy every year. It is also one of the most dangerous, particularly in the harsh winter months. We were reminded, just last week, of how precarious this industry can be. We lost a fisherman when he fell from a wharf after preparing his vessel for the upcoming season.

Mr. Speaker, my heart goes out to this man’s family and loved ones, and to the entire fishing community of Port Mouton. His death is a reminder that we need to continue making safety part of every conversation, and we need to continue our efforts to eliminate injury and death on the job.

I stand here today, Mr. Speaker, and reaffirm my commitment, as well as that of my colleagues. This commitment is also met by many workers, among them are fishermen. We are seeing some positive signs of change in the industry, with a greater emphasis on safety than ever before; in fact, pictures of last month’s dumping day along the Bay of Fundy show almost every fisherman wearing a personal flotation device, and we’re seeing similar scenes across the entire province. Man-overboard drills, which are supported by the NSCC School of Fisheries and other campus locations, have been welcomed on wharves across the province, with fishermen and community members often turning out in large numbers.

Last year fishermen supported the decision to delay the season due to bad weather. They made the decision because it simply wasn’t safe to go out to sea. Just last week, at a safety demonstration in Eastern Passage, a local fisherman commented that fishermen are safer than ever before.

These examples all represent a strong shift in the industry. We at the Department of Labour and Advanced Education - along with our partners at the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Workers’ Compensation Board, the Fisheries Safety Association of Nova Scotia, and the Nova Scotia Fisheries Sector Council - are doing everything we can to help accelerate this shift, and not just at the grassroots level.

Fishing, as I’ve said, is a key industry, and it’s key in our Workplace Safety Strategy. Over the past year we’ve worked closely with several industry representatives to create the Safe at Sea Alliance. We’ve engaged fishermen, their families, and other community members, and visited wharves and communities across the province to hear about what can be done to help improve fishing safety.

In order for our future fishery to be bright, vibrant, and prosperous, just the way the minister wants it to be, it needs to be safe. Right now we look to next week, and as fishermen prepare to head out on dumping day, we in this Legislature join the families and loved ones of our fishermen in wishing them a safe and successful season. Thank you.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the minister for the statement today, because it is such an important issue in southwestern Nova Scotia as we speak to the opening of dumping day coming up next week.

I can say that I've seen some positive signs in our fishing industry over the last number of years. More specifically, really working with the Fisheries Safety Association, the WCB, really taking it on of how we can make this industry safer. We know that as dumping day rolls around those boats get loaded up and head off to find the best and most lucrative grounds, and sometimes the risks are far too great.

It wasn't so long ago in southwest Nova Scotia that we lost Michael Doucette, a young gentleman, just off the shores of Wedgeport, and that we lost the *Miss Ally* - Katlin Nickerson, Joel Hopkins, Steven Cole Nickerson, Tyson Townsend, and Billy Jack Hatfield - and that was just in 2013. That's far too many lives, especially young lives, to be lost to something that probably could have been mitigated or stopped.

Safety needs to be the number one concern of fishermen as they head off on dumping day, and we wish them all well. We also know the importance of that season to the economy of southwest Nova Scotia is one that shouldn't be taken lightly either, but safety should be number one, and I thank the minister for her statement today.

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

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite, the minister, for her statement in advance. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about this issue. Certainly we agree with all the points the minister has stated in her earlier comments.

The lobster industry has been described by many across Nova Scotia as the economic engine that drives rural Nova Scotia. We also agree that the danger that's in this industry - I hope you appreciate my previous occupation, 38 years in the industry - I need not look any further than my own community as a testimony to the dangers of the fishing industry. As the previous speaker, the PC member, pointed out the tragedy of the *Miss Ally*, this is from my home community, the *Colville Bay*, and also the *Sir Echo*. These are all tragedies in the last 50 years, so our coastal communities know the importance of safety.

I want to highlight just a few things here, the positive change. I can tell you that any one topic that I don't know of a positive, co-operative atmosphere that needs to address this issue. I look forward to more discussions over the next sessions to address this issue. I'm encouraged by the creation of the safety alliance, and I just want to point out that not only can these tragedies happen in the open water but also at the wharf and also on fresh water.

This is one of the statements that I wanted to address at this time. Each spring we have a number of lost lives in recreational use in our sports fishing. It's something that needs to be highlighted, and that hopefully we'll bring more attention to. To me, there has never been such a positive shift of attitude toward safety since the Golden Age of Sail. Basically, the crew members, deckhands, when they go over the rail that has seen very little safety change since that time, over 100 years ago.

I think that with bringing this issue forward, we can collectively all make a positive change. I look forward to encouraging the industry to be involved in having personal floatation devices on every individual, whether it's recreational or commercial use. I do want to point out that there is a concern about the workplace friendliness of our personal floatation device, and I know the manufacturers are addressing that, so I'm encouraged with the work that has been done. I thank the minister for her work on this, and I look forward to a collective approach in bringing this issue to the forefront. Thank you for your time.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1029

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

Whereas during the month of November, Adoption Awareness Month, we highlight the need for adoptive families for children and youth in the permanent care of the Minister of Community Services; and

Whereas there are children over the age of eight, children with African Nova Scotian or Mi'kmaq heritage, sibling groups, and children with special needs who are waiting for a permanent, loving family through adoption; and

Whereas we recognize the need for adoptive families, including traditional families, same-sex couples, and single parents to provide loving support;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize and commend adoptive parents across the province as an inspiration for others to follow.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

LFA 34 LOBSTER SEASON - SUCCESSFUL/SAFE/PROSPEROUS SEASON

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, Monday, November 24th, marks the opening of LFA 34 lobster fishing season for 2014-15. There are 979 licence holders in Yarmouth, Digby, and parts of Shelburne County. Each year there are many fishing vessels and crews that leave port and come back home safely with their catch.

There are times, however, when things can go wrong. Safety is first and foremost to ensure that precautions are taken to minimize the chances of accidents occurring. In the week leading up to the start of the fishing season, fishing safety advocates are holding emergency safety drills at local wharves as part of an ongoing initiative to raise awareness about wearing PFDs aboard vessels. Please join me in wishing all our fishermen a successful, safe, and prosperous lobster season. God bless them all.

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

LOBSTER SEASON (DIST. 33 & 34) - SAFE/PROSPEROUS SEASON WISH

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a member's statement at this time of year, with the hopes that the Minister of Natural Resources and all other members agree. This Monday marks the opening of the lobster season for District 33 and 34, from Sambro to Digby, and has been called the economic engine that drives rural Nova Scotia. Perhaps all members of the House of Assembly will join me in wishing everyone a safe and prosperous season. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

SPRYFIELD SANTA CLAUS PARADE

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about a much-anticipated event in Spryfield, the Spryfield Santa Claus Parade. It's almost that time of year again. On November 30th, the Herring Cove Road will be lined with thousands of people eagerly awaiting the arrival of Santa Claus. For over 40 years now, the residents of Spryfield have waited in anticipation of the last Sunday in November for the Santa Claus Parade. The parade marks the beginning of the holiday season for many families in the area. On that day, the Herring Cove Road is transformed into a winter wonderland with many floats and bands parading along the street, with Santa Claus appearing at the end of the parade line. This is truly an event that brings the entire community together. Many businesses, schools, and non-profit organizations participate in the parade every year, and attending the parade has become a long-standing family tradition for many people.

I'm so proud of my community and how we come together to celebrate the holiday season. I look forward to continuing the tradition with my own family. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

PICTOU TOWN DETOX CTR.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: This is Addictions Awareness Week. The detox centre located in the Town of Pictou is a 12-bed facility where individuals can stay on-site and receive treatment for their addiction issues. The staff at the detox centre treat both the medical withdrawal symptoms of addiction and provide the education necessary for a successful recovery. Coping skills are taught and practised to encourage positive change for long-term benefit and relapse prevention. These services are completely free and almost entirely based on self-referral. Support is also provided to the clients' loved ones. Many more programs are offered on an outpatient basis, and the staff educate youth in the local schools about the dangers of drug and alcohol use. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

MACDONALD, FLORA: *MACLEAN'S* MAGAZINE - PARLIAMENTARIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, *Maclean's* magazine presented their Parliamentarian of the Year awards. Retired Member of Parliament Flora MacDonald received the Lifetime Achievement Award for her years of service in the House of Commons. As all members here know, Ms. MacDonald was born in North Sydney, Nova Scotia. She worked as a secretary in the office of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker. She

was first elected to the House of Commons in the 1972 general election as the MP for the riding of Kingston and the Islands. She remained a Member of Parliament until 1988.

During her parliamentary career, Ms. MacDonald served as Minister of Employment and Immigration, and Minister of Communications. At the 1976 Progressive Conservative Leadership Convention, she became the first woman to mount a serious challenge for the leadership of one of Canada's major political Parties, and as the Minister of Energy might be interested to know, his deputy minister was her convention day chair. Since 1988, she has devoted her time to international humanitarian work. I know all members will join us in congratulating Flora MacDonald on this well-deserved honour. (Applause)

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

SHOEBOX PROJ.

MR. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, the Shoebox Project for shelters is a national charitable organization founded in 2011 by the Mulroney sisters, whose mission is to collect and distribute gifts and packages in shoe boxes to women in shelters across Canada and to raise awareness about the risks girls and women face.

Last year, through the Shoebox Project, Canadians donated gifts to over 9,100 women in almost 200 shelters in 26 communities in the country. In Halifax, the Shoebox Project was able to provide gifts to nearly 100 women from Bryony, Barry and Adsum Houses. These shoe boxes let the women who receive them know that they are not forgotten. Through this process, the Shoebox Project is able to let Nova Scotians living through difficult times know their community cares, while at the same time raising awareness about homelessness, addiction, poverty, abuse, our shelter system and the thousands of Canadians who rely upon it.

I would like to thank members of the Legislature from all three Parties who have already agreed to help to support the Shoebox Project in Halifax this year. Many MLAs are using their constituency offices as drop-off locations, as well as personally putting together a shoe box and sharing it through Facebook posts and tweets. Drop-off locations for participants include the office of the member for Timberlea-Prospect, the member for Dartmouth North, the member for Bedford, the member for Clayton Park West, the member for Halifax Needham . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for the member's statement has expired.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

VEINOTTE, MR. JAMIE - MARATHON/TRIATHLON ACCOMPLISHMENTS

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lunenburg County is beginning to gain a reputation for turning out world-class track and field talent, such as Jenna Martin and Rachael McIntosh, just to name two. You can add Jamie Veinotte of Upper Northfield to that list.

A runner turned triathlete, Mr. Veinotte is not only qualified to participate in the next two Boston Marathons, he also punched his ticket to be part of Team Canada at the International Triathlon Union World Championship in Motala, Sweden next June. He came across the triathlon by chance, accepting a friend's invitation to check it out. It was obviously a good decision.

One of the messages that Mr. Veinotte says he hopes his own success can convey to the wider public is that you don't have to be a star athlete to make good choices, embrace some exercise and lead a healthier lifestyle. Good luck, Jamie, and perhaps your story can inspire others. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

HALMAN, TIM - EVERYDAY CITIZEN POLITICAL CITIZEN AWARD

MR. ALLAN ROWE: Mr. Speaker, each year Samara Canada celebrates unsung heroes of Canadian democracy through the Everyday Political Citizen award. Mr. Tim Halman is a political science teacher at Prince Andrew High School in Dartmouth and he has been nominated by several individuals, earning him one of just 14 spots on the short list for this award.

Just a few weeks ago I actually had the privilege of speaking to Mr. Halman's class about political process and involvement and I have to tell you that I am truly impressed by his passion, his sense of fairness and his pride in our Canadian democracy, as well as his respect for our political process, all of which inspires his students each and every day.

Mr. Speaker, this Everyday Political Citizen winner will be selected shortly and it is my opinion that no one is more deserving than Mr. Halman, inspiring and motivating young Canadians and Nova Scotians to participate in our democracy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

FAIRVIEW LEGION BR. 142 - CELEBRATE

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the hard work and tireless dedication of the Fairview Legion Branch 142. On November 10, 2014, I was

fortunate enough to have been invited to the Legion's annual dinner and dance. The event was tremendous fun and I was able to meet with dozens of veterans who have served our country proudly and was able to witness the many awards that were given to these men and women for their efforts and contributions to the Legion and to our community.

Kitty Slade, the president of the Legion, presented two service awards, one to Vice-President Murray Austin and the second to Joe Pineau. There are also 25 membership pins celebrating long-time service to the Legion ranging from 20-year membership pins to 60-year membership pins. It really speaks to the quality of an organization that people have dedicated 60 years to being a Legion member.

I encourage all members to celebrate the Fairview Legion with me and to congratulate all the men and women who are proud members of Branch 142.

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

WINTER SEASON - SAFETY ENSURE

MS. PAM EYKING: Mr. Speaker, winter is soon upon us and with the large proportion of seniors living in our neighbourhoods, I would like to call upon all Nova Scotians who are able, to help in the winter months, whether it is helping out a neighbour by lending a shovelling hand or a steady arm on an icy parking lot or checking in on someone during a power outage. Slow down on the roads and take extra care when outdoors.

Importantly, Mr. Speaker, I hope Nova Scotians will enjoy the beauty and excitement our province has to offer in the winter months: skiing, snowshoeing, ice fishing and watching the snow fall. Winter is coming, let's be sure it is safe and enjoyable. Thank you.

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

SACKVILLE HEIGHTS COMMUN. CTR.

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: Mr. Speaker, Sackville Heights Community Centre is an essential part of Sackville. Opening their doors in October 2003, the centre has grown by leaps and bounds ever since. The facility's tenants include the Boys and Girls Club, the Sackville Rivers Association, a C@P site, early intervention, local Councillor Brad Johns, music evenings and an outdoor gym and last but certainly not least, the community centre is home to the seniors' clubs.

On any given day the Seniors Silver and Gold and 50-plus clubs are a hive of social and fitness activities. From September to June the centre serves hot meals on Wednesdays. These meals are provided on site, prepared on site and served in the cafeteria for a small

fee. During income tax season the centre offers volunteer tax preparation for tax returns. The centre also is a contact for a book and ride program.

Mr. Speaker, the Sackville Heights Community Centre, through its focus on community, has become a vital presence in the Sackville-Beaver Bank area, a place where seniors can gather for social and physical activities and companionship.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for the member's statement has expired.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

BERESFORD, SUSAN - PHARMACY AWARDS

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to say that any community is only as strong as the people who live in it and support it. The Town of Mahone Bay is fortunate enough to have one of the province's foremost pharmacists choosing to work in the community. Susan Beresford is a multi-award-winning pharmacist and dispensary manager and has garnered yet another honour, this time from the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia. Ms. Beresford has been presented the Appreciation Award by her peers.

In her 30-plus year career as a pharmacist, Ms. Beresford has exemplified accessible, informative, and support services. She has also embraced a collaborative approach to aiding patients. When she isn't busy organizing eight in-store clinics a year, she's teaching at Dalhousie's College of Pharmacy or developing and delivering presentations. She is truly a valued asset to her community and it's a pleasure to recognize her here today.

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

NATL. CHILD DAY (11/20/14) - RECOGNIZE

MR. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place today to bring the attention of the House to tomorrow, November 20th, which is National Child Day. In Nova Scotia the rights of children of all economic, social, and political decisions and policies are ably represented by the Nova Scotia Child Care Association. This group is a not-for-profit organization that recognizes early childhood as the main ingredient in high quality child care.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child signed by Canada states that, "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best results

of the child shall be a primary consideration.” Mr. Speaker, let us all, members of this House, recognize National Child Day. Children are our greatest asset.

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

NATL. ABORIGINAL WOMEN SUMMIT (MEMBERTOU)

MS. PAM EYKING: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the important issues of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls. Nova Scotia was one of the first provinces to call on the federal government to launch a national public inquiry and we are committed to plan for national round table on ending violence against aboriginal women and girls. The Nova Scotia Government recently co-hosted the National Aboriginal Women Summit in Membertou alongside the Native Women’s Association of Canada. The summit closed with a Circle of Hope tribute that honoured missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls from across Canada.

We need to continue to provide support to our aboriginal women and girls in crises and we must also address the root causes and work towards ensuring that our aboriginal women and children are empowered and safe by re-examining the existing programs creating action plans to address all of these critical issues.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

NATL. DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR ROAD CRASH VICTIMS (11/19/14)

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Today, November 19th is the National Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims all across Canada. Almost of all of us know someone who has been affected by crashes on our highways or have been affected ourselves. This year, 48 people have been killed in fatal collisions on our highways. It’s a heartbreaking statistic that means 48 families are mourning the loss of a loved one. The main thing for all of us to understand is that there is much that we can do ourselves to stay safe on our roads. Distracted driving, impaired driving, and speeding are major contributing factors in most road fatalities.

The government will do its part to bring in laws that try to and influence driver behaviour and we are always looking at our roads to ensure we’re doing what we can to make them safe, but the biggest way to prevent crashes is still within our own personal control. I urge Nova Scotians to buckle up, put your hand-held device down while driving, do not have that last drink, and slow down for conditions, especially now that winter has arrived. A day of remembrance provides us an opportunity to rethink how we drive and make a commitment to driving more cautiously in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

ANTIGONISH MLA: DAUGHTER - BIRTHDAY CONGRATS.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I know during the session we tend to get feisty and engaged here as members but at the same time we do sacrifice a lot for the privilege to be here. Today I want to draw attention to not just the sacrifices we make but that of our families who support us back home.

I know we can't - and I think this probably goes for all members - we can't be there for milestones for our family members. For me today that is the second birthday for my daughter Claire, so I'd just like to table a birthday card on her behalf to let her know that I'm thinking of her today.

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

WAVERLEY ELEM. PLAYGROUND GRAND OPENING

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the Waverley Memorial Elementary Playground grand opening. Since the opening of the new Waverley Memorial Elementary School in 2011, organizers - including parents and staff - have been raising money to fund a new specialized playground that will allow all students, including those with special needs, to enjoy the playground equipment.

I'm very happy that our government, through the Department of Health and Wellness RFD grant program awarded the school a grant of an amount of \$2,500. November 19th, today, Waverley Memorial will thank the many people, businesses and government that allowed them to build their beautiful and much-needed playground.

I am pleased we are able to provide assistance and congratulate them on their playground grand opening. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HFX. ATL. MLA: FAM. - THANK

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to continue on in the same vein as the Minister of Environment. This wasn't planned, but I would like to take a moment to thank the two most important people in my life, Rena Maguire, my partner, and my son, Oliver Finn Maguire.

I knew from our first date that Rena was the partner for me, and I proposed a month later and luckily she said yes. From correcting my English to tying my tie, which one of the members opposite pointed out today, from being by my side she makes me feel lucky every single day. Oliver was born June 16, 2013, and the moment I saw his big brown eyes I

instantly fell in love. He is truly my heart and soul, and that day I promised to break the cycle and always be there for them.

In closing I want to recognize my family and all MLAs' families for all they do and for putting up with the late nights and the sacrifices they make so that we can do this job. Oliver, daddy loves you and Rena, hopefully I'll see you soon. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring attention to all members of the House, as well as the public, and to congratulate what we formally knew as Immigration Settlement and Immigration Services. Today is the launch of their new name, and I want to congratulate them on the new name they have chosen and that is going to be Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS).

Though the name has changed, the mission of welcoming and supporting immigrants to Nova Scotia remains the same. As noted, helping immigrants build their future here creates a stronger province and it's up to all Nova Scotians to make our communities welcoming.

Working in partnership with this organization offers services and creates opportunity . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I have to remind the honourable member that this is a topic for Ministerial Statements, so it's out of order in terms of this agenda item as a Member's Statement.

In the absence of any more Statements by Members, the House will now recess until 2:00 p.m.

[1:38 p.m. The House recessed.]

[2:00 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. - LIMITATION OF ACTIONS ACT: OMISSION - RESPONSIBILITY

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. We now know that there is a big omission in the Limitation of Actions Act, namely that it denies victims of past sexual assaults the right to seek justice from the perpetrators of such crimes. The Minister of Justice blames her own department. Just yesterday in this House, she said, “The statements I made last week were made based on the facts and information that I’ve been provided from my department.”

Those facts and information she is referring to include the very basic fact that four other provinces have enacted exactly this kind of legislation to ensure past victims maintain their legal rights and ignores a Supreme Court of Canada decision that does the same thing. I will ask the Premier - the minister can blame her department all she wants, but when something goes so seriously wrong in his government, who is ultimately responsible?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, let me say to the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and to all members of this House how proud I am of the Minister of Justice and the tremendous work she has been doing. (Applause)

She brought forward a piece of legislation that built on a previous piece of legislation. It improved it, made it stronger; included more people. As we said yesterday, there has been information that has been brought forward; if that bill needs to be amended in the future, we can amend that bill then.

MR. BAILLIE: Apparently no one in that government will take responsibility for such a serious error. I’d like to remind the Premier of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, which is, “Ministers are individually responsible to Parliament . . . for their own actions and those of their department, including the actions of all officials under their management and direction . . .”

In defending herself, the Minister of Justice said yesterday, “New information has come to light now that I’ve asked my staff to look into.” Well, that “new” information was provided to the minister by the member for Inverness two weeks ago and raised in this House repeatedly - in debate, in Committee of the Whole, in a motion to recommit, and on third reading. Worst of all, victims of sexual assault had to take out an ad in the newspaper to get the government’s attention.

How can the Premier defend the minister and her department when they acted so incompetently when it is so clear that they missed something as fundamental as the ability to defend the rights of past sexual abuse victims?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to remind all members of this House of the fact that the piece of legislation

that was brought before this House has built on a previous piece of legislation, has improved it, has made it stronger; it has improved that piece of legislation. If there are changes that are required in the future, we will make those changes - unlike the Progressive Conservative Party that, for eight years, sat on a flawed piece of legislation and didn't do anything about trying to improve the lives of Nova Scotians.

MR. BAILLIE: The fact of the matter is that there is a gigantic hole in this bill and the government knows it and it is the result of incompetence. The minister is responsible and the Premier defends it. But worst of all, victims of past sexual assault will have to wait until some other day because the government will not take responsibility for its own incompetence on this issue.

I'll ask the Premier, why wait until the Spring? There is a perfectly good bill to fix the problem today in this House. In light of the mess that they made of this, why not do the right thing today and pass the bill that we have on today's order paper?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, let me assure the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party that I don't need to look to him to do the right thing. It is this Party that has stood with Nova Scotians time and time again. We have said from the very beginning that we will look at the information brought forward, we'll assess it and we'll do it in the fullness of time. If that bill needs to be amended, we will amend that piece of legislation going forward.

We stand by that piece of legislation. They voted against that piece of legislation. They were prepared to let victims of sexual violence be left behind. We weren't.

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

PREM. - TAX REVIEW: HST EXEMPTIONS - DETAILS

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. Today, Nova Scotians got their first look at this Liberal Government's much-anticipated tax review. During the release this morning, Laurel Broten, former Ontario Liberal Cabinet Minister, stressed that the recommendations in this report are for a government to broaden consumption taxes. In layman's terms, that means putting the HST back on many essentials for which there are now exemptions, like home heat, children's clothing, books, diapers.

My question to the Premier is, are there any of these essential items his government is not considering charging the HST on?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we just received that report this morning. As a government we are going to be like all Nova Scotians who are interested; we are going to need an opportunity to read that and assess the entire report.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the Premier that on May 7, 2013, in this Chamber, the Premier read a resolution asking all members to support keeping the provincial portion of the HST off electricity bills in Nova Scotia and commit to not putting it back on in the future, which I will table. That resolution was passed unanimously in this House. My question for the Premier is, can he please explain why his Finance and Treasury Board Minister is now publicly contemplating breaking his promise to this House by adding the HST back on home electricity?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the honourable member that the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board just received this piece of information, received the report today. Like all members of this House, I would hope they would look at the report, they would analyze it. The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has said no such thing that the Acting Leader of the NDP is just saying. It's completely inaccurate and false.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, when asked at the press conference, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board would not rule that out of order. The tax review also recommends reducing income taxes for the highest-earning Nova Scotians in this province; executives at Nova Scotia Power, the presidents of our universities, and in fact, the Premier himself will benefit from this tax cut if enacted. The report recommends Nova Scotia's poorest seniors, who receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement and the income tax refund, will be asked to pay more in taxes. I want to ask the Premier, can he please explain how tax fairness will apply in this equation?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we will take the report, we will review the report; it will become part of an analysis that we do as we move forward. I do want to remind all members of this House that when the New Democratic Party was in power, all Cabinet Ministers got a tax cut under their provisions.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

**JUSTICE - SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVIVORS:
LIMITATION OF ACTIONS - REMOVAL**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Last week in the media, the minister said that legislation that removes the limitation of actions for all survivors of sexual violence doesn't exist in any other part of the country. We know it exists in Ontario, B.C., Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador. My question is, did the minister misspeak or is she honestly saying that she never knew about it until yesterday?

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, thank you to my honourable colleague for the question. Listen, we all feel for victims of sexual assault. I'm very sorry for what the victims have gone through. No one should have to go through that. The legislation we passed on Friday is good legislation; it takes a significant step for victims of sexual assault.

We are eliminating limitation periods altogether for any claims involving sexual assault. This is a good piece of legislation.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister found out yesterday when the victims of sexual abuse put an ad in the newspaper. The minister is now aware that there is legislation in the four provinces that abolishes the limitation period for victims. She knows it can be done because it has been done in four provinces. I say it should be done today. What is preventing the minister from giving victims in Nova Scotia the same rights as victims in Ontario, B.C., Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador?

MS. DIAB: Mr. Speaker, thank you to my honourable colleague for the question. I realize he has put forth another amendment for today.

As I said yesterday, and as I will say now and will say again, I've committed to this House and I've committed to the public that we will explore and examine the information that's before us, we will explore and examine the amendment he has provided, and we will do the right thing once we've had an opportunity to examine that documentation. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

JUSTICE: LIMITATION OF ACTIONS - B.C. TOBACCO SUIT

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, why should we believe that? We have been saying this for two weeks now and the government refuses (Interruptions)

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

MR. MACMASTER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's voice can stand for it today and we'll see how he votes.

On November 14th, I asked the Minister of Justice if she was aware of a 2005 Supreme Court of Canada decision where the Province of B.C. sought to recoup damages from Imperial Tobacco for harmful effects of tobacco smoke. The minister did not answer. Was the minister aware of this case before the November 14th question, or did department staff do their homework only after I raised the issue?

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, thank you to my honourable colleague. Listen, we've got nothing to hide here. I stand by the legislation that was passed that had been - we have been upfront to the House, we have been upfront to all Nova Scotians, and we're dealing with the information that has been received by us in the last few days. Thank you.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, it took a newspaper ad by victims of sexual assault to get the attention of this government. They wouldn't listen to it. (Interruptions) The government's now questioning who paid for it. They paid for it themselves. Their voice couldn't be heard in here, so they had to buy a voice in the newspaper.

On October 30th, second reading of Bill No. 64, the Minister of Justice said her bill put Nova Scotia in line with many other jurisdictions in Canada. Among the provinces the minister cited as adopting modern legislation were Saskatchewan, Ontario, and B.C., three of the four provinces that have abolished time limits altogether for victims of sexual assault. Did the Minister of Justice not read or investigate the limitation legislation from Saskatchewan, Ontario, and B.C. before suggesting them as models that should be duplicated in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. We brought forward a piece of legislation which was intended to protect and ensure that we improved and made access for people of domestic violence, which the Progressive Conservative Party voted against. We know that every piece of legislation that is brought forward, if it needs to be improved, we can make it and improve it - unlike the members of the Progressive Conservative Party, who don't get their own way - they throw up their hands and go looking for some big conspiracy theory. The fact of the matter is the minister has brought forward a good piece of legislation that improved the previous piece of legislation. If required, we'll improve it in the future.

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

FIN. & TREASURY BD. - SENIORS: TAX INCREASES - FAIRNESS

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Today, the government received recommendations from the tax review they commissioned a year ago. Unfortunately, the report recommends targeting middle-income earners, seniors, and young people. One recommendation is to eliminate the Seniors Provincial Income Tax Refund. Earlier today, the minister indicated there was no recommendation she was not open to exploring.

My question is, why does the minister think it's fair to ask Nova Scotia's poorest seniors to pay more taxes?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I shouldn't be surprised that the member opposite is cherry-picking from a report that we have just received today. This report is complex, it is comprehensive, it has a myriad of recommendations, and we're going to be taking our time to look at it, to see how it's interconnected, and to talk to Nova Scotians as well. Thank you.

MS. MACDONALD: Thank you very much. Well, now we're going to have a study of the study. The tax review commissioned by the minister also recommends that Nova Scotians be taxed more on family essentials including home heat, children's clothing, diapers, books, shoes, feminine hygiene products, and first-time home buyers. Nova Scotians are already struggling to make ends meet and the last thing they need is to be charged more for necessities.

My question for the minister is this, why is she considering more taxes on the essentials Nova Scotian families need the most?

MS. WHALEN: The purpose of the review was to bring some simplicity and fairness to what is a very complex system that we have right now. It has come about by successive governments of all stripes bringing in little changes in each and every budget that's brought down in this House. We wanted to bring some sort of clarity to it all and we asked Laurel Broten to please go and do that review. I think now it is really incumbent on members of this House to read that report and to understand what's been presented, and then we can have a fulsome discussion.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

JUSTICE - BILL NO. 64: RETROACTIVITY - MIN. CONCERNS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. After the 2005 Supreme Court of Canada decision was brought to the minister's attention on November 14th, it appears she got details about it from her staff, since she referenced the case later on that day in third reading. She had made no mention of the case before that date; in fact, she told reporters that retroactivity existed nowhere else in Canada and would be unconstitutional. Did the minister have any concerns about her position on Bill No. 64 after she was made aware of the Supreme Court of Canada case?

HON. LENA DIAB: I want to make it clear to the member opposite and to everybody that this is a good piece of legislation. There are no holes in the legislation as the member opposite is suggesting. It's a good piece of legislation. It's one that enhances the current Limitation of Actions Act that was there previously and had been there for a couple of hundred years. It is there to protect victims of sexual assault.

We have already said and will say again, given the information that we have received, we will ensure that we review that information, and if necessary, we will make the appropriate amendment.

MR. MACMASTER: If it's such good legislation, why didn't the minister consult the member for Cape Breton-Richmond, who just two years ago stated - and I'll table this document from an article stating that the province has refused to do away with the statute of limitations.

The member for Cape Breton-Richmond said, “For a lot of these people, they’re going to be statute-barred . . . That’s the problem. Many of the people that were here today are adults. It’s very clear they’re certainly beyond the statute of limitations.” He went on to say that a “minor amendment” by the Justice Minister would fix the problem, adding the government is perpetuating the abuse by not acting.

Mr. Speaker, that member is a lawyer. Why didn’t she consult the member for Cape Breton-Richmond to make this legislation the best piece of legislation that it could be made?

MS. DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak to what the member opposite is asking me to speak on because I have no idea what his question is referring to.

AN HON. MEMBER: He tabled it.

MS. DIAB: Well, I’ll have a chance to look at that later and be able to respond at another point. Thank you.

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

COM. SERV.: CAMP REACHABILITY - FUNDING CUTS

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Community Services about her decision to cut the funding to Camp reachAbility. There was some misinformation contained in her response, which I think requires clarification. For example, the minister claimed, “It has been there for two years.” I will table that. The fact is that reachAbility took over running this camp four years ago and the camp itself has been operating since the 1980s, serving a variety of youth including youth at risk and young people with disabilities.

It is clear the minister doesn’t have all the information, so I have to ask her how she decided this wasn’t an efficient use of government funds when her department hasn’t even met with the organization to review this year’s program.

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: The fact is reachAbility took over the camp in 2012, so they’ve actually had it for the last couple of years. What I do know is that for \$527,000 for eight weeks, in which people get one week of camping - I know that if you put an adult from a Boys and Girls Club or Big Brothers Big Sisters in front of a youth at risk, there will be an advantage to that every day, every time, not just for one week.

When we have scarce dollars, I am all about making sure that we spend our scarce dollars on the best possible and most sustainable outcomes. We found, and I agreed with my staff, that this was not the best use of this money because it was limited in its scope and it did not have long-term positive effects for the people using it.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the minister should check her facts again. They run programs, a music program that's on an annual basis, along with a leadership program. It is not just a camping program in the summer.

Perhaps Joanne Herritt, a mother from Hubbards, whose son has special needs, can better express to the minister what this camp does. After some troubling experiences at other camps, she sent her camp to Camp reachAbility. As Joanne wrote in a recent letter to the minister, kids all over this province go to the camp every summer to experience the fun, the independence, the making of new friends, except those kids with disabilities. They'll get to stay home next year because our minister obviously doesn't think they are worth it.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister reconsider her decision, knowing the impact it will have on families like the Herritts?

MS. BERNARD: I truly believe, Mr. Speaker, that one week makes some difference in some people's lives but I also know that putting money back into the transformation for services for people with disabilities makes a longer-term, more impactful statement, so that when Ms. Herritt's child grows up, that they are in structured workshops, that they are in the community, that they are living in community-based options that they've chosen that we've reinvested this money into, that children who are at risk and living on the periphery of the neighbourhood actually have an adult in front of them 365 days of the year - every day, every time. That is good use of taxpayers' money.

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

PREM. - NEW HST: CHILDREN'S BKS./DIAPERS - CONFIRM

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The government's tax report that was released today says that the government is not collecting enough income tax revenue because the labour force has shrunk and that's true. But rather than recommend ways to create new jobs in the province, like onshore gas development, the report says that they should raise the HST and put it on things like diapers and children's books.

I ask the Premier, will the Premier rule out new HST taxes today and instead focus on job creation to solve this problem, like onshore gas development?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I am going to do like anyone should do and take the time to read the report. I do want to assure the honourable member, though, that job creation is at the forefront of this government. We are very proud of the \$2 billion investment in the offshore. We've recently just see Shell get a new partner. We are very proud of the work that's happening at Donkin. I don't know if the members there are against good jobs in rural Nova Scotia.

I want to talk to the member about what's happening by Vulcan Materials Company - it's looking at creating jobs in Guysborough County. Not to mention, Mr. Speaker, something very near and dear to you - Atlantic Gold, the job creation that is happening in the resource sector across this province. We are going to continue to work with the private sector to drive job creation, no matter how disappointed the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party may be that we are actually moving this province forward.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, what I'm disappointed in is a government that makes promises that it can't keep. So the Premier hasn't had a chance to read the report from today - that's fine, but I hope he has had a chance to read his own Liberal campaign platform from the last election which says, and I quote, that the government will "maintain all current HST exemptions." I'll table that page from the Liberal campaign platform.

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the Premier: Does he intend to abandon his campaign promises and actually put the HST back on children's books and diapers, or is he going to keep his campaign promise, as I just tabled it?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to thank all members across this province who helped work extremely hard to build that platform that Nova Scotians believed in and were inspired by and again I want to thank those Nova Scotians who put their confidence in our government and I again want to thank all those Nova Scotians who 13 months later are still working extremely hard with this government to move this province forward, instead of listening to the doom and gloom coming from the other side.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: VALLEY REG. HOSP. - CAPACITY ISSUES

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, we have learned that the Valley Regional Hospital in Kentville is facing an over-capacity Phase II level and that's not a good level to be at. The emergency room currently has seven admitted patients waiting for a hospital bed. Many of the hospital beds are now filled with people waiting for home care or long-term care placement.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness, with the Health and Wellness Minister delaying the introduction of his continuing care strategy until next Spring, what are the minister's immediate plans to ensure that Valley Regional Hospital will not need to cancel surgeries due to a capacity issue this winter?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I want to convey to the honourable member and to the House that periodically many situations in our regional hospitals will get a spike, and sometimes it takes 24 or 48 hours to deal with such a situation. In fact, when we take a look again, not just at today but over the past 12 months, it's one of the areas that has made

considerable improvement in reducing the number of seniors and people that are in acute care beds waiting to go to a nursing home - a tremendous improvement, from 30 down to now usually 9 or 10.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, that's cold comfort for those patients waiting in the hospital who need home care or long-term care placements. An 80 per cent increase in just six months. It's not a 24-hour issue. When the Valley Regional Hospital faced capacity issues in 2007, the *Kentville Advertiser* reported that patients were transferred to Soldiers' Memorial, causing capacity issues there, and I'll table that article.

Can the minister tell us which hospitals in the province are approaching capacity, and what his plan is to ensure that emergency rooms are not overcrowded with patients waiting for hospital beds?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what the member talks about is a reality in our province. Our regional hospitals are generally working at capacity. When I visited Valley Regional this past Sunday, I was on one of the wards where there were three or four beds that were available for patients. The member opposite knows very, very well that the hospital setting is always a dynamic one. I know that this situation is temporary and will need to be addressed, however, on the side of making sure that we have a continuous flow of patients who need to go to transitional care, restorative care. This is happening across the province. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

FIN. & TREASURY BD. - CARBON TAX: GOOD PUBLIC POLICY - CONFIRM

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Mr. Speaker, it will be apparent to everyone that Ms. Broten's pollution tax is little more than another Liberal carbon tax. In fact, the term "carbon tax" actually appears in the document at least nine times. On two separate occasions, Ms. Broten quotes Stéphane Dion, the author of a famous carbon tax scheme. Ms. Broten says that the former federal Liberal Leader ". . . knows better than most that a carbon tax, while good public policy, makes for challenging politics."

So my question for the minister is, does the minister agree with Ms. Broten and Mr. Dion? Is a carbon tax good public policy, yes or no?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: I really appreciate the opportunity to discuss in general what's in the report today. I think what's interesting for all members of the House is that it is a complex, comprehensive report with a lot of information, a lot of evidence, a lot of research, and a lot of recommendations. I would hope that the member opposite will join with all other members and read the report.

MR. HOUSTON: Indeed, it is a comprehensive document, but what I'm asking for today is the minister's personal feelings, which I'm sure she has. Ms. Broten writes that pollution taxes - or carbon taxes, as they're better known - ". . . are excise taxes on environmental pollutants or on goods whose use produces such pollutants." So this equates to a tax on pretty much everything.

Would the minister confirm today that she will not follow Ms. Broten's advice and introduce a risky carbon tax that will raise the price of everything?

MS. WHALEN: I've already said that we just received the report this morning, and that we are going to take our time, read it, and study it. I also know that there is a revenue-neutral aspect to these taxes and they need to be seen in their entirety, all of the different changes, and that that is where the complexity comes in. There are a lot of moving pieces, if you look at the tax system, and I would hope that that complexity is not lost on members of the Opposition. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

PREM. - CARBON TAX: JOBS - EFFECT

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. In Opposition the Liberals called the NDP efficiency tax a carbon tax and they fully opposed it. At the time the now-Minister of Energy quizzed the Premier of the day saying, have you explained to your Cabinet colleagues how increasing power rates, including the carbon tax you opposed just days before the election, is making Nova Scotians less competitive and is a job killer? That was the now-Minister of Energy.

My question is, does the Premier stand by the Energy Minister's belief that a carbon tax, like the one being proposed by Ms. Broten, will make Nova Scotia less competitive because it is a job killer?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the honourable member we just received that report. I do want to tell you what really does hurt the province is that we have members of the Legislature who continually want to be on both sides of the fence. There's one thing I want to be very clear with to that member, and it is this Party, this Premier, will deal with Pictou Landing and clean out Boat Harbour and not do what the Progressive Conservatives did, which was make a promise and not deliver.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Premier's enthusiasm. Today we're talking about a carbon tax, which is a subject he does know a little bit about, because during the 2008 federal election the current Premier was asked about Stéphane Dion's risky carbon tax scheme and the Premier said it was up to Dion to promote his plan, and affirmed he was going to be selling "my own vision for Nova Scotia and that will not

include a carbon tax.” I will table that. During the same campaign the Premier also said, I have come out not in favour of a carbon tax.

My question today is, now that Ms. Broten’s review has been completed, will the Premier confirm that a carbon tax is still not the way to go for us?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I’m glad to see that he’s doing some reading. I want to tell all members of his House that we just received the report from Ms. Broten. As the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has said, we will look at that report in its totality and we will then make assessments as a government to move this province forward.

In his preamble he talked about taking an opportunity to communicate a vision for this province, which we communicated and Nova Scotians responded in such a resounding way I’m very pleased to be sitting with a majority government in this province.

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

ENVIRON. - THIRD PARTY COMPLAINTS: PROHIBITION - RESEARCH

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, as all members of this House are now aware, the Minister of Environment has an ongoing pilot program in the western region of the province. This pilot program prohibits inspectors from investigating allegations that come from anonymous sources or third parties. It seems odd since other jurisdictions like British Columbia - and I’ll table that - encourage anonymous tips and understand that many circumstances require witnesses’ identities to be protected.

Can the minister please explain what research his department has done on the benefit of anonymous reporting in other jurisdictions?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Thank you to the member for the question. With respect to the question she asked, yes, around anonymous complaints coming through, I want to assure the member opposite and all members of this House and all members of the public, Mr. Speaker, and you in particular that when there are environmental issues, particularly large environmental emergencies such as the case with the scenario that you mentioned with British Columbia for oil spills and so on, we still receive those responses and respond accordingly.

In fact, just earlier this year there was an environmental incident that took place that was under the jurisdiction of the federal government, but it was our department that was contacted, it was our department that responded because we respond when environmental incidents and emergencies take place in this province and we respond quickly, efficiently, and effectively.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, it would be nice if he would really answer the question.

We heard last week from the minister's staff that at least 20 incidents in the western region haven't been investigated because of the minister's new rule. I can only imagine that number will be far greater if the minister decided to roll this out across the entire province.

I would like to ask the minister, when will he be reviewing this program and, in the interest of openness and transparency, will he commit to making those results public?

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the credit being given to me by the member opposite, indicating that this is the minister, that is my policy being rolled out, when in fact I encourage that member opposite to just turn her head slightly to the right, talk to the former Minister of Environment, her seatmate, because in fact this policy started under the previous government two years beforehand.

In fact, this particular policy was brought forward to the executive team in the Department of Environment before I even took on the position as Minister of Environment. I encourage the member opposite to talk to her colleague and find out what exactly led to this move. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

ENERGY - POWER BILLS: TAX ADDITIONS - MIN. RESPONSE

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. In discussing her Liberal carbon tax policy, Ms. Broten writes, "Getting energy prices right involves extending motor fuel taxes, which are already well established and easily administered in many countries, to other fossil fuel products, such as coal and natural gas . . ."

So for all the times the minister has stood in this House and declared victory for reducing power bills, how does the minister feel hearing that Ms. Broten's recommendation will be to stick another tax on power bills?

HON. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I really do appreciate the question. What I will say is I haven't even seen the report. I've seen the title. I've been in meetings all morning. It amazes me that this Party stands and complains about getting a response to a fracking report that we took 11 months, with chapters being released one a month for 11 months, and yet now they want a response to this report in an hour.

MR. HOUSTON: Just for the benefit of the Minister of Energy, I will tell you that Ms. Broten recommends extending taxes that are already on motor fuels to fossil fuels such as coal and natural gas. I know that is something the minister knows about because he had

quite a few debates in this Legislature complaining about the NDP's carbon tax and how that was a bad thing. So carbon taxes were a bad thing back then.

My question for the minister today is quite simple, will Ms. Broten's recommendation of a carbon tax increase - will it increase the cost of electricity if you put in a carbon tax?

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I'm hearing so much about the report today. I'm looking very much forward to reading it and joining in discussions with my caucus colleagues and the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and I look forward to our response in the coming months.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

**C.B.-RICHMOND MLA - SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS:
STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS - STANCE**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we have an important matter before the Legislature, to give historical victims of sexual abuse and sexual assault rights to go after the people who did that to them. The Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, does he still believe in these rights as he was championing this very cause just two years ago?

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Well clearly, Mr. Speaker, the member knows that this does not fall under my portfolio, but allow me to say this: we called upon the government of the day, which was the NDP, to remove the statute of limitations going forward. Our bill has done that today and I'm proud to be part of a government that has done that.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, that's not what he said two years ago. I'll table it again - he said, "For a lot of these people, they're going to be statute-barred. That's the problem. Many of the people that were here today are adults. It's very clear they're certainly beyond the statute of limitations." He also said a "minor amendment" by the Justice Minister would fix the problem, adding that the government is perpetuating the abuse by not acting.

Why the change of heart, Mr. Speaker? This member is a lawyer. He knew what he was saying two years ago. Was he being sincere then, or is he being sincere now that he has so far voted against this very measure three times?

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I spent 14 years in Opposition as Justice Critic and I make no apologies to the member for Inverness or anyone else for how I fought and stood on behalf of victims of all sort of crimes in this province.

We asked for that limitation to be removed. The Minister of Justice, with the department - eight years they worked on this. Eight years. Finally, this government brought that forward, has made that change. We've already committed to looking at what is being proposed. I don't know how the member can ask for any more when we've already committed to doing that.

This is legislation that the government sat on for eight years. We brought it forward and I'm proud of the Minister of Justice for the work she has done.

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

TIR: LITTLE TANCOOK ISLAND WHARF - OWNERSHIP

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

The other day the federal government announced that they are divesting their responsibility for the wharf on Little Tancook Island. It is the only wharf located on the island and it serves as a vital link for people who live and work there. Fishermen use the wharf year-round and the province's ferry docks there to bring passengers and supplies to the island. Residents of Little Tancook are worried about what's going to happen to the wharf.

My question for the minister is, can he assure residents of Little Tancook that the province will take ownership of the wharf and make sure necessary repairs on the wharf are done so it can continue to be used?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. With respect to Little Tancook, the member and I have spoken about a public conversation that we will have before Christmas, or I'm going to travel to Tancook and have this discussion with the residents who are impacted. At the end of the day when the federal government decides to divest, critical pieces of infrastructure for the province will be part of that conversation. So it's in DFO's hands now and they say publicly that they have a number of options for how they may proceed, but I can assure the member, and all the residents of Tancook, when those conversations take place and it involves the Province of Nova Scotia, we'll be there to have those. Thank you very much.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for being a good minister and co-operating and working with this member, and I truly appreciate it.

Fishermen who use the wharf are afraid it may be condemned and they won't be able to continue to lay their boats and fish out of that area. So I would like to ask the

minister can he assure those fishermen that they will continue to be able to use the wharf to lay their boats and fish from that area?

MR. MACLELLAN: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the member on her very good judgment here in the Legislature. (Applause)

Again, Mr. Speaker, this is a conversation, with respect to the fishermen, with the fuel and bait that will obviously impact the upcoming lobster season. For us, we have to get those supplies there so, again, I'm meeting with John from our ferries department this afternoon here in Halifax to have the conversation about ensuring we have those products and the services delivered to Tancook and, again, when we have that public meeting we'll be wide open to hear all concerns, all issues, and we'll address them the best we can. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

FIN. & TREASURY BD.: TAX INCREASE/GROWTH INCENTIVE - EXPLAIN

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, through you.

The government's tax review recommends increasing the small business tax rate from 5 per cent to 8 per cent. In an Orwellian turn of phrase the government says in a press release that jacking up the small business tax is intended to remove disincentive to grow. Will the minister please explain how increasing costs on small businesses with higher taxes will be an incentive to grow?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite about small business and about the economy of our province.

The reason this whole report was commissioned was to find ways to stimulate our economy, to help us break the years of poor results. We have had 20 years as the slowest-growing economy in Canada and that's something that we all agree has to change. So the report is before us now with a myriad of different recommendations looking at how we can encourage growth, encourage job creation, and make a better future here in Nova Scotia for our families.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, every month in the CFIB Business Barometer, tax and regulatory costs rank among the issues small business owners identify as major costs restraints. In early November at the Sydney and Area Chamber of Commerce, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board committed to not raising taxes - and I will table that newspaper article shortly. Well-known Sydney businessman, Marty Chernin, is quoted in the same article saying: "Like everybody I'd like to see lower taxes, that's for sure. I

think that lower taxes would create more economic activity here and therefore more jobs, and it would increase their revenue in the future.”

Does the minister intend to break her promise to attendees of the Sydney and Area Chamber of Commerce and increase the small business tax to 8 per cent?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I think that particularly the Party to which the member opposite belongs has said repeatedly in this House that we have the least competitive taxes in the country and in that regard I think we do agree that we have very poor taxes in terms of the overall. So what I would ask all members, including the member opposite from Pictou West, is to look at this in its entirety and to consider it. Our government is going to do just that. We’ve just received it; we’re going to read it, and we’re going to consider the very complex issues that are put before us, and not only that, I am going to speak to Nova Scotians and people in all corners of the province as well.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

PREM.: RE-VICTIMIZATION ACCUSATION - BELIEF CONFIRM

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I just heard the Premier state and suggest that we are re-victimizing the people that we on this side of the House have been standing up for. Does the Premier really believe that?

THE PREMIER: I think, Mr. Speaker, if the member had actually been listening to what I said - the former member drove around with the former Premier for a number of years that he could have actually changed legislation, which they didn’t. Let me be clear (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: I want to again, as I stand here, tell you that the Minister of Justice has brought forward legislation, Mr. Speaker, that has been improving on a piece of legislation which helped victims. This government has stood directly with victims of crime at every opportunity that we have had and we’ll continue to do so and we’ll continue to make sure that we improve legislation that reflects the values of all Nova Scotians and we will not stand in this House on any case looking for political points no matter what the issue may be.

MR. MACMASTER: Maybe the Premier won’t stand but he will sit in his place, he will look me in the eye, and he will tell me that we are re-victimizing. That’s what you said - Mr. Speaker, I apologize, I’ll direct my comment to you.

How can the Premier say that when it is the people who put the letter in the paper this week who are leading the charge and calling for these changes?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again, I will tell the honourable member I did not look him in the eye . . .

MR. MACMASTER: You did.

THE PREMIER: When I did look across and look that member in the eye exactly what I said to him was that he spent his time driving around with a former Premier when what they should have done would have been working (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier has the floor.

THE PREMIER: There are a number of pieces of legislation that have been sitting on the Cabinet Table through successive governments. We brought it to this House, we've passed it, we've improved the legislation. We've improved the fact that the victims (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll give the honourable Premier a chance to answer the question and we'll keep . . .

MR. MACMASTER: He said it.

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

THE PREMIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue that piece of legislation that we bring forward improves legislation, improves the protection for Nova Scotians, and makes this province a better place to live, work, and play.

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

TIR - PROJECT TENDERS: OVER BUDGET (100%+) - DETAILS

HON. DAVID WILSON: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Today we learned in Public Accounts that the Department Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal has recently received some project tenders that were over 100 per cent or more over the original estimated cost of the project. Some projects were as high as 200 per cent over budget, Mr. Speaker.

So a very easy question for the minister. Can the minister tell this House exactly how many project tenders have come into the department more than 100 per cent over budget?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I know that member was very active in the Public Accounts Committee today asking questions to our department. My understanding from the responses from Chief Engineer

Bruce Fitzner was that it would only be probably one in every few hundred of the projects overall of our capital plan local roads plan that are over budget. In any instance where that takes place, normally what we do is try to reallocate any of the remaining money, if it was under budget or over budget, to similar projects in that area.

For us, obviously, over budget is only a situation where there are extreme circumstances. If it's a bridge structure, if it's something that we're not familiar with doing all the time, then they can be somewhat tough to predict. For the most part when it's our usual paving, we're usually pretty much bang on there. In any instance that it's over, Mr. Speaker, we try to adjust and make it better for next time so that we certainly understand what we're dealing with. There are challenges with some of those projects but for the most part I want you to know that we put our heart into getting the tenders right and I can assure the member that we'll continue to do so.

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

The honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park on an introduction.

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, if I could raise the members' attention to the east gallery, where Shani and Lloyd Court are visiting us today. Shani and Lloyd have been amazing supporters and volunteers in both the Fairview-Clayton Park area and the Clayton Park West area . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: And Bedford.

MS. ARAB: And Bedford. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, according to the Rules of the House, I'd like to rise on a point of order. During Question Period, the Minister of Environment indicated that the member for Queens-Shelburne had initiated a pilot project with respect to laying complaints. In fact, that pilot project was initiated under the member in May of this year. I have a document here that indicates that that I would like to table. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. This is not a point of order. This is a disagreement of facts.

The honourable Minister of Environment.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to clarify the comments from earlier in Question Period. I believe you can go back to Hansard and see that what I was referring to was the policy - not the pilot, but the policy was initiated under the former minister. Thank you.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: I'm having a hard time calling business here today. Before I call our bill, I'm going to alert you and other Parties that I'll be asking for unanimous consent to pass the bill through all stages of the House, including third reading, when our speakers are done.

Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Private Members' Public Bills for Second Reading.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 68.

Bill No. 68 - Limitation of Actions Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to congratulate my colleague, the member for Inverness, on how very proud I am of him and how honoured I am to be able to speak on the bill he introduced, Bill No. 68. Many victims of sexual assault never fully recover, never. Victims don't find strength to confront their abusers on a set timetable. It's not something that is laid out for them.

When I think of these victims, I'm sure that they go through a lot of emotions where there's a healing process that allows the ebb and flow of many emotions to run through. I think of someone walking on a very pristine beach, where everything is nice and peaceful, and a wave comes in and grabs them and pulls them back out into a very dark, tumbling, emotional place that they don't know how to stop it, they don't know how to escape, and they don't know how to call for help.

For some, it takes many, many years to accept it, to own it, to forgive, and to heal. For too many people who are victims, they find that the time they are legally able to begin a claim has expired by the time they are ready to come forward. Some never come forward.

They bury it. They bury it so deep that they can never, ever find that pain ever again. Some find a little bit of courage, they make some baby steps, they think they are able to get there to heal themselves, and they turn back. They are pulled back by that terrible darkness of hurt and abuse. Then there are some who eventually push forward. They push forward to justice, justice that is to serve them and to help them heal.

We know that Bill No. 64 fixes that problem for future victims, but it does nothing for victims of historical abuse. That's why Bill No. 64 is flawed. It's wrong. Some may be frustrated with this side of the House, as many of the PC members will not give up on this issue. It's way too important. I often think about its importance, but I sometimes can't even comprehend it all, and I wonder sometimes if it's such a big, big issue that my heart or head can't really wrap myself around it to understand it.

We have attempted to move an amendment to Bill No. 64. The Liberal Government completely just outright rejected it. So in my opinion, this bill as is, that was passed, rejects hope. It may have passed, but it still rejects the hope for those victims who have been abused in the past, to come forward and heal, to seek justice.

In fact, the Minister of Justice told reporters that a bill that abolishes the time limit for all victims of sexual abuse to bring a claim forward is not something that has been done in Canada. We know she made a mistake - we all make mistakes. She indicated that her department had given her incorrect information and that does sometimes happen, and we can accept that. I commend her for standing up yesterday and having the courage to say that it was a mistake. But you know, smart people change their minds. Smart people change their minds; they don't let pride get in the way of making good decisions, and in this case, making good legislation, legislation that will help victims who have been abused.

Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Ontario have all amended their laws so that there are no time limits. They created good legislation because they knew it was the right thing to do. The minister has said that her bill is an attempt to balance rights, but whose rights? All I can think about and wonder about is, whose rights?

If it is a question of the rights of victims and the rights of perpetrators of sexual violence, we on this side of the House will tip the scale in favour of victims always, every time, Mr. Speaker. That's what this bill does. Bill No. 68 is about all victims. The Premier said he would take all new information into account and review the bill and do what is best for Nova Scotians. The minister said yesterday in Question Period that she stands behind Bill No. 64. She feels that it is truly a good piece of legislation and that we cannot have it both ways. When she said that, I was stunned. What did she mean that we can't have it both ways, or did she mean the victims can't have it both ways?

You know, we can have it one way and that way would be to make this piece of legislation conducive and available to all victims. Passing this bill means that all victims of

sexual abuse can sue their perpetrators at any time - past, present, or future. This bill is absolutely the best bill for Nova Scotians, victimized Nova Scotians, those who have yet healed and need closure on the sexual assaults made on them, mostly as little boys and little girls.

We need to be their voice, Mr. Speaker. We need to step back, take a deep breath and remember the night that our member for Inverness stood up and did his Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. We could have heard a pin drop in the Chamber that evening, and I know that each and every one of us got goose bumps from his speech that night. The minister took a long-overdue step forward when she introduced Bill No. 64. Unfortunately, that bill, once again, is flawed. It doesn't make sense, and it doesn't treat all victims the same way. I question that. Why? Why not? A victim is a victim. The crimes are the same, so justice should be the same.

Today I am urging the government to do what is right for people like Bob Martin, who sat in this Chamber. I know we all had a hard time looking up at him without feeling the emotions that I'm sure he was feeling being here. For people like Dale Sutherland, Alvin MacInnis, Barry Sutherland, Jeff Hadley, Weldon Reynolds, and many others, I ask that you think about them. I ask that you just stop for a moment and think what it's like to be them. What it was like to be them, innocent little boys who couldn't help themselves, who couldn't call out for help, who were embarrassed, ashamed. Just stop for a moment and think about them and how you would feel.

I urge everyone in this Chamber today to step back and to consider this bill and pass it. It is the right thing to do, and we can all unite and know that we did it together. It's not a partisan issue.

By now the minister has had time to speak with her counterparts in other provinces, not just the Justice Department staff who have apparently already provided incomplete or incorrect information. But that is okay. We'll accept that those mistakes were made. We just want to move forward and do what is right. We want to do it together. We want everyone in this Chamber to unite and go forward on this very serious issue. We need the minister and the government members and the NDP members to pass this bill in this session and give Bob Martin, Dale Sutherland, Alvin MacInnis, Barry Sutherland, Jeff Hadley, Weldon Reynolds, and many, many more - people that you know.

I know each and every one of us in here knows someone that is seeking justice, who is seeking the opportunity to heal and to close that door. I don't really think you can ever actually close the door on something like this. I think you can bring it a little bit forward and make steps, but I don't think you can actually ever close the door on such criminal acts as have been brought onto them.

I think everyone is like me here today talking about this. I think we grieve. I think we're grieving today for the men and women who have been harmed, who have been

sexually victimized, assaulted, and because of the date of this injustice that occurred in their lives, they may never be able to seek justice.

I implore everyone in this Chamber to collectively unite. Uniting has power, and we in this Chamber right now have the power to do what is right - and to do what is not only right but what is expected of us to help in the healing process of those who right now in Nova Scotia are shattered and cannot help themselves.

I want to help them. I know you want to help them as well, so let's do this together. Thank you.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to my feet today to speak to Bill No. 68, An Act to Amend the Limitation of Actions Act Passed during the current session of the 62nd General Assembly. This bill has been brought forward by the member for Inverness, who happens to be in a different political Party than ours, but labels don't really matter, shouldn't really matter, and have never in particular mattered to me.

People are people, and women and men who have been abused in any way, shape, or form - it does not matter what Party they are with, it doesn't matter what religion they are, it doesn't matter what colour their skin is, and it doesn't matter how much money they have.

When I lived in Los Angeles, I started going to a support group for, in that particular case, women who had been abused - domestic violence, they had also gone on - had been date raped, many women who had been abused by and sexually assaulted by people they didn't know, and some by people whom they did know. I've been in many different group situations both as a speaker and as somebody who has taken part in them, but I can tell you that out of all of the different groups that I have been to, the saddest looking people who walked through the door were in groups where people had been assaulted, sexually assaulted, and were suffering from domestic violence-related illnesses, mental health issues, poverty issues, and post-traumatic stress. They were so sad it just would break my heart.

But the interesting thing was as they started to talk to other women who had suffered from similar issues, their burden began to lift and they started to feel back to themselves again and started to get some confidence again, and started to feel like they could actually enjoy the smell of the flower or the taste of a cup of coffee or whatever originally gave them joy which they had no longer felt after their experiences.

The sad case is that a 2009 study of campus sexual assault found that by the time they're seniors, almost 20 per cent of college women will become victims,

overwhelmingly of their fellow classmates. Very few will ever report it to authorities. The same study states that more than 80 per cent of campus sexual assaults involve alcohol. Frequently, both the man and the woman, or two men and two women, have been drinking. The men tend to use the drinking to justify their behaviour.

This survey of research on alcohol-related campus sexual assault by a professor of physiology at Wayne State University illustrates that while for many of the women, having been drunk becomes a source of guilt and shame, sometimes the woman is the only one who is drunk and runs into a particular type of shrewd and sober sexual predator who lurks where women drink, like a lion at a watering hole. For these kinds of men, the rise of women binge-drinking has made campuses a prey-rich environment.

To be totally clear, perpetrators are the ones who are responsible for committing these crimes and they should be brought to justice, but we're failing to let women know that when they render themselves defenceless, terrible things can be done to them. Young women are getting a distorted message that their right to drink and their right to match men drink for drink is a feminist issue, but the real feminist message should be that when you lose the ability to be responsible for yourself, you drastically increase the chances that you will attract the kinds of people who shall, as we say, don't really have your best interest at heart. That's not blaming the victim; that's trying to prevent more victims.

Experts want young women to get this information and they're aware of how loaded it has become to give women warnings about their behaviour. Some women say that it's up to them whether they drink or not, but what many people are trying to tell them is don't make yourself vulnerable to the point of losing your cognitive faculties.

Now, again, this isn't to take the onus off the men who are doing the behaviour because boys and men should be taught that they are responsible and that no means no. But we really need to tell our young people that drinking or being very careful, even in a bar, somebody might put a drug into your drink or if you go to somebody's house, they may drug your drink. These are very common practices and we need to be very careful about these.

Sometimes these victims fall asleep and they wake up and find that their clothes are off or they wake up in their beds and their clothes have been messed around with or they are missing pieces of their clothing and they don't know what happened. Now unfortunately, right now in the news, there are more stories about famous people. I won't bother saying any names but there are a lot of stories right now coming out about famous performers who allegedly are criminals, who have done these kinds of things to young women, but innocent until proven guilty.

However, if somebody knows that they have been attacked, if they know that something has happened that was done without their consent, throughout the years the practice has been, oh just sweep it under the carpet; don't bother anybody; nobody is going

to believe you; you don't want to bring shame on the family; you don't want to bring shame to yourself; you were a loose girl or a loose boy; you shouldn't have worn that skirt; you shouldn't have done this; you shouldn't have been in that place at that time; what were you doing - what type of girl would be out there at eleven o'clock at night, wherever you were?

Mr. Speaker, times are changing and it is time for women and young men to speak up and say enough is enough. We will not take it anymore; we are mad as hell and we're not going to take it anymore. That was a statement in a movie by Peter Finch back in the 1980s, I would say. I would say that in this day and age, it is time for us to take up that cry again.

As far as I'm concerned, with an amendment to the former Act that we passed the other day, this Act, Bill No. 68, the amendment to that Act, would actually help people who have been abused, who did not have the courage to come forward earlier, go to a lawyer, go to a counsellor, go to a police officer and say, I am a victim of sexual assault and I really need to see justice done.

Madam Speaker, I would have to say that as a young person I did not have that courage myself. I was ashamed. I didn't know what to do. I did not want to draw any attention to myself about it and so what did I do? I swept it under the carpet. What happens is the more instances of abuse that you suffer in your life, and the more and more you sweep those things under the carpet, they bottle up inside you and many cases of alcoholism and substance abuse, acting out in certain ways, have been proven now to be connected, statistically, with people who have been sexually abused at younger ages. We call it self-medicating. When in doubt, when they are feeling uncomfortable or anxious, they will take a drug or use alcohol in order to dull those senses, to pass out basically, to make themselves not feel the pain.

Some young people use cutting methods, they'll cut themselves. Why? Because they've stifled their own feelings so much that now they feel that in order to feel anything, they need to really hurt themselves, to cut themselves. Madam Speaker, this is a huge problem in our society today. Some people will starve themselves: they'll become bulimic, they'll become anorexic. Some people will do the opposite: they'll overeat, they'll put on weight. Why? Because there's part of them deep down that wants to look unattractive to the opposite sex or to the sex that has abused them. This is also very common.

I know that some people feel the extra weight makes them feel bigger, like a cat - when a cat gets upset, it bristles. Its hair raises up to make it look bigger. So some people will put that extra weight on as a protection mechanism. I would say that in order to deal with the feelings and the trauma and the post-traumatic stress that these types of experiences bring on in a person, you need to be able to first of all admit it to yourself, admit it to somebody else, and then get help for the issues that are plaguing you. Oftentimes, once you start to go on that healing journey you realize you really do need to approach somebody about it from a legal perspective, and if you have the opportunity to

find justice and have justice occur, that is an extremely fulfilling feeling once that circle has closed - once you have gone full circle and justice is done. It might take a while, but it's worthwhile.

We need to take the shame away, we need to peel the shame away that people have been laden with for years over these kinds of issues and say it wasn't your fault. You didn't cause this; somebody else took advantage of you. You were either vulnerable or you were in the wrong place, you were not in your senses, or you were just overpowered - who knows? These issues are all different for all people, but the very sad part of it is that for most women, there's a very high percentage of women in particular who have been assaulted, and sexually assaulted in their lifetime, and will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime and we need to, as a society, say zero tolerance for this.

By doing so I think we have to show that legally we are prepared to do the right thing, to make sure the perpetrators are meted the fate that they deserve. Again, going back to that circle of healing that I used to go to in Los Angeles, and when I first started going, to see the different ages of women who would come in, the different types of women from various economic circumstances. Some were very rich women and they were being abused and sexually assaulted by their husbands, by their husband's friends, and their children were being assaulted and they finally had to get out, to save their own lives.

These people have a way of threatening you and trying to say if you do this I'm going to take the rights for you to see your children, I'm going to make sure that everybody thinks that you are an unfit mother - you know, the list goes on. So many of these people are afraid. They are afraid to come forward, they're afraid to get out of the trap and it takes a great deal of courage. In society as I said, for many, many years, we've not been very open to helping victims of abuse and, in fact, we tend to abuse the person who has been abused.

Even in my own case recently, which was not a sexual abuse case, but it was a cyberbullying case, I came forward and stood my ground in that case, and said I'm sorry but I'm not going to put up with this and, all of sudden, it seemed like a lot of male media reporters started to try and twist the story and make it that I was the one at fault.

I always say, I'm a woman first and my job comes second. I'm a woman first, and as a woman if I am feeling that I am being disrespected, I am being abused in any way, shape, or form, after everything I've been through, I'm going to say no. I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore. I would hope that that message can get through to all young women so that they can feel the same strength of conviction to say no. No. We will not put up with it, we will not listen to the naysayers, we will not take these men trying to tell us that there's something wrong with us for wearing a nice outfit out to a party or going out with a few friends.

To hear these stories of these young women just recently who had gone out celebrating their mid-term exams, the one out West, a young Native woman, and then going out with her friends and a couple of guys taking her aside and talking to her and the next thing you know she winds up dead, left for dead in a river. It's disgusting. Where do these people learn these kinds of behaviour?

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please. The time has elapsed.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Madam Speaker, I want to start by saying how proud I am of the Minister of Justice that she was able to pass this bill, which was eight years in the making. I think we can all agree that even though members opposite from us have some issues with the bill, there are some good things with this bill and the member deserves some credit for - in one short year - passing a bill that was eight years in the making.

I would also like to say that I know the Justice Minister. I know her quite well. She is actually the MLA for the riding beside me, and I know she is somebody who pours her heart and soul into everything she does. We all know how important this bill is. It got a little heated today and the member for Inverness has shown a lot of passion and a lot of - he has been great on this, and we're listening. That's why we've heard the Premier say, and we've heard the Justice Minister say that we're going to take this, we're going to look into it; we're going to make sure that it's done right, and if an amendment needs to be done, we will do that.

The Justice Minister is small but she's mighty. Her shoulders have gotten a lot bigger over the last few days and weeks. She is small in stature but don't let that fool you. I know the Justice Minister is someone who's intelligent, who's kind, and who is hard-working. You can bet your bottom dollar that she worked long and hard on this bill. I stand beside her today and I am proud that she is our Justice Minister. I'm proud that she is a friend and a colleague and I don't think there is anyone else that I would want as Justice Minister and out front on this bill.

There are a lot of things we can say, going back to the eight years. I've only been here for a year and it makes me wonder. I'm not pointing fingers. I don't think this is a bill that we need to point fingers about, but we do need to wonder why it took eight years to get this bill, and have this bill put in front of this House, and have a bill like this passed.

You know, this bill, Madam Speaker, takes huge steps toward assuring the rights of victims of sexual assault - huge rights. And the member from Pictou West just stood up and spoke and there wasn't a peep over here. You couldn't hear a word from this side, and the same with the member for Pictou East. We're just asking, you know. We stood here and listened, and so hopefully you can afford us the same kind of respect. (Interruptions) Are we done? Can I continue, Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic has the floor. I would remind the honourable member to please address the bill.

MR. MAGUIRE: You know, the truth is, that as of November 14th, a bill was passed in this House that protects victims of horrific crimes. It protects our mothers, our daughters, our sisters, our sons, our brothers and our fathers, and this is something that I am hugely proud of. I know the members opposite, like I said, have some issues with this bill. (Interruption) Pardon me?

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member for Halifax Atlantic to please address your comments to the Chair instead of across the room, please. Thank you.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

MR. MAGUIRE: So as we have heard over and over, Madam Speaker, we heard the Premier say it today; we heard the Justice Minister say it today, we heard them say it ever since this new information came to light, that we are going to review this information, we are going to look through this information, we're going to make - if an amendment and when an amendment is needed, we will do that.

There are a lot of things that have come out of this bill that we're not talking about. This is a bill that standardizes limitation periods for most civil claims by establishing a two-year basic limitation period and a 15-year ultimate limitation period. It provides more certainty and long-term stability for businesses and professionals who may be involved in lawsuits.

We heard this a lot where . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: We're talking about Bill No. 68.

MR. MAGUIRE: I'm talking about Bill No. 64 (Interruptions) Well, we can talk on both, can we not? They are connected.

One of the things we heard about the bill from a professional standpoint, we heard of people who owned businesses . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member to please speak to Bill No. 68, not the bill that was passed the other day.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

MR. MAGUIRE: My point, Madam Speaker, is that the changes that are being put forward, we're talking about the original bill also, which the changes that they're putting

forward are going to change the original bill, so I wanted to talk about the whole bill. But if you want to get down to the nitty-gritty, I can continue to speak on that too.

As I said, we know regardless of what is being said out there, this is a good bill. This protects victims. We believe in it and we stand behind it. We believe in the Justice Minister. We believe in this bill. Like as I said, it's eight years (Interruptions) I'm just going to let them waste time if they want to waste time.

As I said, it's a good piece of legislation. We will continue to support the minister on this and we'll continue to support this bill. (Interruptions) I'm just going to let them talk if they want to.

So what we will do is we will take a look at what has been presented to us. We read the paper. We listened to the members opposite. This isn't a government that leads with deaf ears; we actually listen to what people say. We consult with the public, we do what's best for the public and we will continue to look at any and all information that has been put forward to us. From there, if there's an amendment needed, we will do it. With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Madam Speaker, if there is one thing that I've learned from this situation and with this government, that this government has taught me, is that the only way to get change is by trying to shame the government. If Nova Scotians want this government to do something, don't bother trying to reason, don't bother trying to appeal to their moral conscience; you need to shame them.

It seems clear that the government members couldn't care less about anything I have said in this Legislature about empowering survivors of sexual abuse or sexual assault, because their actions speak louder than their words. Three times they voted against giving rights, giving power back to people whose power was taken from them when they were children, when they didn't know what was going on and they were sexually assaulted by someone, someone who had gained their trust and someone this government continues to stand up for. Let's not make it four times today with this bill, with the government voting against it.

The Justice Minister said we need to balance rights. She told me that my amendment was not consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and with other provinces. She was absolutely wrong. That has been proven.

Is the minister honestly saying that no one in the Department of Justice had other provincial legislation until yesterday when she stated that new information came to light? Or was it the advertisement that victims of Ernest Fenwick MacIntosh put in the paper that made this issue public, more public than it has been made by way of this Chamber, and

brought the issue to the very feet of the Premier? They had to pay money to do that. When will the minister admit that she knew that legislation existed to give victims the right that they have in four other provinces in this country?

Madam Speaker, I just don't understand why the government in this case is standing up for the people who have committed the abuse. If that is not their intention, why are they making survivors wait when we know, today, with the passage of this bill that we can give those victims those rights? If the government changes its mind and supports this bill, I'll take it all back and I'll give them full credit in the public.

Right now we have a Minister of Community Services who stood up for 90 seconds and basically told me I didn't know what I was talking about and stated that the amendment, which is the same as this bill before us here today, would weaken the bill passed last Friday. She's supposed to be leading a sexual assault strategy for the province. She doesn't support all victims of sexual assault having the same right to go after the person who assaulted them. She only supports victims from now going forward. Why not give them those rights? Why does she say no, we don't want to give them their rights? How paternalistic - it sounds like something you'd hear from the 1960s.

We have a Justice Minister who says that new information came forward yesterday. That information was mentioned in this House many times before it came before the public yesterday, by way of an advertisement in *The Chronicle Herald*, an almost full-page advertisement that was paid for by victims of sexual abuse. They had to pay to get that message out there because it wasn't being heard here in this Chamber.

Where is the leadership on this matter? It seems to look like the government is starting to relent a little bit here. But is now the time for us to take our foot off the gas pedal? I don't think so because I've not seen anything yet that has given me comfort to trust the government on this issue. Why should we take our foot off the gas pedal? The victims themselves are leading this charge and we will not let them down.

The option we have before us in this province today is this bill. We will have a chance, if we all agree and give unanimous consent, of passing it here today. That's why we are all here right now. It is our only option to put this bill forward because this government has tried to make this issue go away. Three times they have voted against the rights for Nova Scotians who have been sexually assaulted or abused in the past. Madam Speaker, the cock crows. They know what they are doing is wrong but they will do it anyway. They are caught. They need to show some integrity to get themselves out of this matter today.

It took an almost full-page ad in the Halifax *Chronicle Herald*, Madam Speaker, paid for by Bob Martin, Dale Sutherland, Alvin MacInnis . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. It is unparliamentary to question the integrity of members of the House. I would ask that you retract that statement.

MR. MACMASTER: I retract that statement, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

The honourable member for Inverness has the floor.

MR. MACMASTER: It took an almost full-page ad in the *Halifax Chronicle Herald* by Bob Martin, Dale Sutherland, Alvin MacInnis, Barry Sutherland, Jeff Hadley, and Weldon Reynolds - people who were failed by the Nova Scotia justice system and now by this government.

Madam Speaker, isn't it wonderful that these victims are taking their power back by ads, being on the radio, being on television, and here in this House being recognized for their bravery and standing up? These people stand fast. They stand firm. They know what they want, and they are right. I'm keeping my eye on the clock.

I think of some of the comments by Bob Martin today, who was interviewed on the radio. Some of the things he mentioned were that he wanted the Premier to say that he cares about victims, and that by passing this legislation it would prove that he cares and that he is there for them. They are working on another ad. He did make the point, does it take a little guy from Port Hawkesbury and his buddies to take out an ad? Because the results have been outstanding - he has had well over 700 positive emails last night alone, people who were there for him and for all those other victims.

His message to the Premier and everyone here today in this Legislature is to pass this bill, make the amendment, and say that we're on the side of the abused. Why can't we all in this Legislature say that we're on the side of the abused?

Mr. Speaker, more people are coming out. The more people hear about this, the more people are starting to get their power back. Mr. Martin went on to say that the Premier can champion this today. There's no reason to take the side of the abusers. He can take the side of the abused victim, whether they be young, old, male, female. He said the Premier can step up to the plate, and he said what a wonderful way to close the Fall sitting of this House.

There have been expressions of public support, and I'll read briefly from a letter that I'll be happy to table, directed to the Premier: "So many boys were victims of sexual abuse in my hometown of Port Hawkesbury by Fenn MacIntosh and also as members of the . . ." Port Hawkesbury Youth Band. "I am not related to any of the six men in yesterday's ad . . . However, I have finally found my voice because we failed them, then the Justice System failed them. I support them now in their request for . . ." an amendment to the

Limitation of Actions Act “. . . so that it will also apply retroactively; therefore, all victims of sexual abuse can sue their perpetrators at any time - past, present or future.”

The writer goes on to state that you can now amend the Act passed last week so that it will apply retroactively to abuse that has already taken place. Justice has continually failed these men and boys, but people care.

Mr. Speaker, there's a point that I raised in Oral Question Period. I will not raise it in any great length again, but the member for Cape Breton-Richmond was supportive of this just two years ago, this very bill that we're putting forward here now. Anybody can check the record of Hansard for that. That was discussed earlier today.

We could be passing this bill today, and if we don't, this government is giving Fenwick MacIntosh and others like him another free pass to continue. In MacIntosh's case, he is travelling the world with his spice company. We can only imagine what else he is doing, because there were certainly reports from India that we know about that were widely written about in the press.

We on this side of the House just don't understand. What I would say to the members opposite - it is never too late to do the right thing. With that, Mr. Speaker, and noting the amount of time we have and the opportunity to pass this bill unanimously here now, I move that with unanimous consent of the House, we pass Bill No. 68 through all processes of the House including third reading today.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for unanimous consent.

Is it agreed?

It is not agreed.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. LENA DIAB: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the amendment that has been raised by the honourable member for Inverness. In Question Period, I answered the questions truthfully, honestly, and best as I can, I believe.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to stand again and speak to this very, very important issue. I have said and will say again that I am very sorry for what these victims have gone through, and no one should have to go through that. We are on the side of the abused, and we are on the side of all victims, all of us as legislators here in this House, regardless of political affiliation. I truly believe that. I believe that (Interruptions) Is it okay to continue, because I see a lot of noise coming from across the - okay, thank you very much.

I believe speaking in English the last two days, maybe it hasn't been heard by every Nova Scotian, so just a very few words in the French to make sure that people really understand what this is all about here.

M. le Président, comme j'ai dit dans la langue anglaise, je suis très désolée pour ce que ces victimes ont enduré. Personne ne devrait vivre une telle agonie. Mais l'importante question ici est la vérité - elle n'était pas comme les membres de l'opposition ont dit. Ils ont dit qu'il y a un trou dans cette législation. Ce n'est pas vrai. C'est une bonne loi qu'on a passé la semaine dernière. C'est une bonne loi pour notre province, pour les victimes d'agression sexuelle et pour tous ceux qui ont besoin de démarrer un procès à la Cour.

I stand behind that, Mr. Speaker. This was a good law and good legislation that we passed on Friday.

AN HON. MEMBER: We're speaking on Bill No. 68.

MS. DIAB: I am speaking on the bill to do with Limitation of Actions and I'm speaking on the bill with what the intent of the bill was, and I'm speaking on the amendment that has been put through.

Mr. Speaker, we have gone through a first reading in the House (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice has the floor, speaking to Bill No. 68.

MS. DIAB: Thank you very much. When we speak about the Limitation of Actions Act - quite frankly, when we speak about any Act in this Legislature - I think, even though I've only been in this Legislature for 12 months, we all now know what the process is, particularly in such a complex Act that is a Limitation of Actions Act that deals with sexual assault matters and that deals with claims brought forth by any victims and any person who wants to sue anyone else in this Province of Nova Scotia.

We, the Justice Department, had done a bill briefing to the media, a bill briefing to the Opposition. All questions that were asked were entertained and answered. First reading was also passed in the Legislature here, and then we went through second reading. After second reading, as everyone knows, and any legislation that's put through, whether it's an amendment or a new bill or an old bill that we're trying to amend or anything, we go through the Law Amendments Committee.

On any given Statute, when you go through the Law Amendments Committee, people have the right to come forth and speak. When we're talking about the amendment that has been put through here and specifically to deal with victims of sexual assault, at the Law Amendments Committee all the presenters that came forth praised the legislation that was before them and said this was a good legislation.

At Law Amendments Committee, everybody praised the legislation that was before them. I was sitting there and I heard them and I've got notes to say they all praised the bill for the sexual assault piece. This is a new Act that has taken the significant step in the Province of Nova Scotia for all victims of sexual assault. It's a significant improvement over the existing Act and everybody praised it. Yes, I stand by that again, new information has come forth now. I've said, and will say again, that I stand behind the Act. I've got new information in front of me. We intend to look at that information. If necessary we will bring in an amendment.

This is not about politics; this is nothing to do with who is bringing it, who is not bringing it. This has to do with the fact that this is a complicated piece of legislation, and I would submit that any piece of legislation is complicated, but particularly in the Limitations of Actions Act that involves all Nova Scotians to do with any kind of actions with respect to people suing each other in any kind of proceedings. Whether it is contract, whether it's torts, it doesn't matter - personal injury, motor vehicle, there are so many things in this piece of legislation. Granted, yes, we are today talking about one piece of it.

We need to have a little bit of time to assess that information that we now have before us and I want to thank the honourable member from Inverness, because of his contribution as well, and I don't deny that. I want to thank him and I want to thank him for all the work he's done on behalf of all victims, but what I said is true and I will stand behind that: this legislation has been in the works for a number of years. When I came to the department a few months later, I was told there was a limitation of actions here and I was told that previous people did not want to put it through because they found too complicated.

We did the best that we could and we believe that we have good piece of good legislation. We brought it forth through all the normal channels and more. We contacted the media, we briefed them all on it; we contacted the opposition, we briefed them on it; we brought it through the House. We did the first reading, the second reading; we did everything til the end. Things happen; life isn't perfect, life is never perfect, okay?

The honourable member mentions the fact that he told me about a tobacco legislation in B.C. I had the staff look at that legislation and with all due respect, it was talking about retroactivity but it was talking about retroactivity in a specific case to do with the tobacco industry and it was a limited retroactivity that went two years.

We will recheck it again and this is why I'm requesting that we want to check everything to ensure that what we put forth in Nova Scotia is going to be applied forever, probably, again, law is ever-changing in this province, in Canada, and everywhere. That's why we have these forms and that's why we have amendments and that why we have legislation that we repeal and that's why we have new legislation that we bring forth. This is the way it works in Canada, thank God. We have this opportunity to do that.

Bottom line, this is good legislation that we put through. With respect to the amendment that's been brought forth, the important thing here - and again, we're going to look at it - nous nous pencherons sur la question de savoir si le projet de loi devrait être modifié.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the only point that that I would make in the few short seconds that we have left is that it would be good if the government would circle back to some of those groups that supported the bill before because I know that some of them, now that they have this new information. . .

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: I'm just wondering whether everybody got a copy of the little sheet where it says where everybody can speak, where it's PC, Liberal, NDP, and then PC again. That's the sequence, a long-standing tradition of this House to follow that. I know the member for Halifax Atlantic spoke for just a few moments and that was the Liberal opportunity to speak to this bill, so I just find it interesting that the minister didn't speak up during her time allotted during this proceeding. So, Mr. Speaker, would you call Bill No. 3, and maybe we can follow the schedule as best as we can.

MR. SPEAKER: I just want to remind the honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition that it has been the practice of this House in past weeks during this session when time does allow and people don't use their entire time for debate that we have rotated it, so just following what has been happening in recent weeks here.

The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

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

Bill No. 3 - Red Tape Reduction Act.

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

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, after debate like that's it's tough to rise and speak to another bill now, but it's an important bill to the people of Nova Scotia. It's a bill to reduce the regulatory burden on small businesses in Nova Scotia - actually we're calling it the Red Tape Reduction Act.

Mr. Speaker, small businesses are the economic engines in many communities in Nova Scotia. Small business owners are the people who are willing to take the risk and

work hard, they're the driving force behind economic growth, and they are the entrepreneurs who create jobs in our province. Small business owners are energetic, they're smart entrepreneurs who continue to be constrained by unnecessary red tape in our province. This is a huge obstacle to our economy moving forward.

Shortly after the beginning of this session, on October 1st, we rose in the House to debate the Red Tape Reduction Act. Over a month and a half later we can see that we still must stand and alert the government to the problems of red tape in this province. Over a month and a half into this sitting we can see that the government has not taken any meaningful measures to reduce red tape and make it easier for small business in this province to get ahead. Mr. Speaker, get out and talk to the business people because if we think there is no red tape in the province we're wrong.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have a little story here about a small business owner in my area who, ironically, came to me last week to talk about the problems that he has had in starting up a business here in the province. This is a businessman who has some other small businesses that they took him a while to get up and running, that are fairly successful in the province. This gentleman though is a registered oil burner technician or mechanic or whatever you'd like to call it. For years and years and years he worked with his father and his father had a business name and he worked with him for years.

His father passed away about a year and a half ago I guess now, and this young gentleman - and I'll tell you his name is Paul Fenney - he didn't do the oil business much anymore, he has other small businesses that he wanted to try to move forward, but he wanted to start a business, another heating business, installing heating systems.

Mr. Speaker, he knew what he wanted, he knew what he needed, it was installing ductless heat pumps. So he knew he had to have a gas technician to do the purging of the system and airing the system out, and charging the system up. He had another person hired to be the labourer, to be the person who did a lot of the labour work, and himself - that's three people that he wanted to put to work.

He wanted to do it right, so he went to get his business up and running and here is what happened to him. First thing he was told was he needed a name. He could have operated under his father's name, but that was an oil burning system, Mr. Speaker, so he picked another name. He had to do a search for that name, so he went and he applied to have a search for the name done and it cost him \$65 to search the name, and he was told it was going to take two days to search that name. Two weeks later, when he had no word he called the office and he was then told that the name was rejected and he needed to apply for another name.

Mr. Speaker, he did, he applied for another name, another \$65 to do the same thing, and after a week, after being told again another two days with no phone call, he called again and he was told this time that name went through.

Now, with his name he went to Access Nova Scotia to get a business number and, lo and behold, another \$65 to get the business number. Then he was told he had to go to Revenue Canada for a GST number, and now three to four weeks later he still has no business, no results and he's ready to get up and running now. He has people ready and he's all ready to do his business. How many others are in the same boat, who just gave up because of the red tape, small business people in this province who could put more people to work, and without that red tape could put more people to work?

What he found was that all this red tape and all this extra money to apply for these permits and the numbers and then the business numbers, he wondered to me why such a money grab for him to get up and running in this province to put people to work so that they would be able to pay taxes, he would be able to pay his business taxes and he would be able to run his business. He wanted to do things right. How many people out there just give up on it and start working in the underground economy where there's no compensation, no guarantees on the work that is done?

If the government remains content not to tackle the problem of red tape they are also wrong. The longer the government remains silent and not committed to this red tape reduction, the longer Nova Scotians like Paul Fenney and other small business owners are going to suffer. There are lots of ways this government can do better.

This morning in the tax regulatory review release, Laurel Broten stated that the CFIB says that red tape in this province cost small business owners \$747 million in the year 2013. That's a pile of money that it has cost this government for them not to ignore. From the last time we debated the bill it seems as though the Deputy Government House Leader, the member for Cumberland North, takes this problem of red tape very lightly - he says that red tape is definitely in the eye of the beholder.

I know myself, my colleagues, and probably 900,000 other Nova Scotians think that \$747 million a year would stand out for every Nova Scotian. Further he went on to claim that the regulatory burden of this province does not hurt any businesses. I just gave you an example of a business that it hurt, and I would assure the member opposite in excess and redundant regulations will hurt small businesses and those who are trying to start small businesses in this province.

This was acknowledged by the report, which apparently the member opposite will take issue with based on his previous remarks. I hear him over there talking about the small amount of money it would have cost. It's not the amount of money it would have cost, it's the weeks and weeks.

I would also like to draw the attention to another recommendation of the tax regulatory review - it calls on the province to name a minister for the regulatory modernization. This is almost exactly what we called for in this bill, a recommendation that the member for Cumberland North maintained was destined to fail. Again, I suppose, the

member opposite will have a problem with the tax and regulatory review as well. The regulatory burden that government places on business kills jobs across this province.

We have smart business people who are being constrained by unnecessary red tape. In this sitting of the Legislature our Party has raised a number of examples that government has shown how red tape is hurting Nova Scotia businesses - and I just gave you one. I can say that as we are approaching the end of November the government has yet to find solutions for these people and is not committed to reducing red tape in the province.

The government has yet to find a solution for people like Rhonda Frank or Gordon Fraser, they are still frustrated that there's no solution to their problems. Small businesses may not have staff or departments to deal with piles and piles of paperwork and complicated regulations imposed by government. They know how to run businesses, they know how to run businesses in this province and we'd like to see red tape reduced so they can continue to do that. Thank you.

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

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a few moments to talk about bureaucracy in government. I don't like the words "red tape." Every government should always consider the due process in deliverance of reducing bureaucracy, and the government is doing that. Our government is making efforts to streamline the regulatory program and structure of the province and to make things easier for businesses large and small. We have many successful businesses in the province, of all sizes, that exist and in fact prosper within our existing regulatory framework. They certainly are capable of navigating their way through the system, and do so quite successfully with the co-operation of civil servants across the province.

Regulations are sometimes a necessary part of society in that we are all better off because of regulations and can prosper in a fair and well-managed regulatory environment. Considering our due diligence, there is real action being taken by this government to streamline the work that is being done by the hard-working civil servants in this province who administer our regulatory and other government agencies.

For instance, the Department of Finance and Treasury Board in particular, with the help of other members, has undertaken a regulatory and tax review. This report has been tabled today, and we'll be reviewing it over the coming weeks. In preparing this, *Charting a Path for Growth*, hundreds of Nova Scotians and businesses throughout the province have been consulted about the review and about how to improve the system they work in. We have heard there are many concrete examples from businesses and Nova Scotians about what regulations aren't working, and in fact, that many regulations in this province are being well administered and are working just fine. Our government is acting to tackle red tape in a coordinated and sustainable manner.

Mr. Speaker, this government has already acted to reduce the regulatory burden on businesses in a number of different ministries, and we'll speak about a few of these, if I may. Removing the automatic access to first contract arbitration by streamlining the administrative penalty system for occupational health and safety; microbrewers can now sell products made on site, within their premises; and we have scrapped proposed regulations on the scrap metal sector. We have modernized the apprenticeship system, including allowing more apprentices to train under one journey person. International graduates from Canadian colleges and universities with a job offer from a Nova Scotia employer can now apply for permanent residency through the Nominee Program's Skilled Workers Stream.

I would like to finally indicate that every department, under the direction of our government's Executive Council members, is engaged in reducing the regulatory burden on Nova Scotians. Having said that, thank you for the opportunity to speak. I will now take my seat. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand for a few moments on Bill No. 3. I think we would all agree that small businesses are a key component to our economy here in Nova Scotia. Whatever our government can do to ensure that, especially for new businesses that start up or are trying to start up, government services are there to support them do just that - it supports them. It doesn't put up roadblocks for those new businesses.

We've heard time and time again that government needs to continue to work at reducing what is known as red tape. I know the member across the way used another term, but for the debate in the few minutes that I have, I'll use that term. We know and we've heard over the years that can really slow down the opening of a new business. When you look at young entrepreneurs or new entrepreneurs in our province, they work hard to just get the doors open. I think we should do whatever we can do as elected officials, as MLAs, as Opposition or government members, to improve the effectiveness of the rules and regulations and all the paperwork needed for new business.

There needs to be regulation. I don't think anybody is calling on the government to get rid of regulations around businesses and opening new businesses, Mr. Speaker. I think even the business owners recognize that there are certain things they have to follow when they are trying to open a new business, but not only to open a new business but to operate a business. Of course there are regulations, annual regulations and things that companies need to follow to ensure that they are living up to their responsibility as an employer or as a company, as an entrepreneur in our province.

I know over the last number of years something that helps them is trying to make sure that we, for example, lower the small business tax, something that we had done for

four years in a row, Mr. Speaker. It might not seem like a lot but I think if you are one of those entrepreneurs, if you are one of those new business owners, you appreciate any support, especially if it means putting more money back in your pocket, that most, if not all of those business owners, put right back into their business.

It's interesting, of course, the tax review report that was out today that was released, I believe there was a call in there to increase small business taxes, I think to 8 per cent, well increase the small business tax. I hope that the government doesn't look at that one recommendation and adopt it because I think you will undo some of the good work that has been done over the years to try to reduce small business taxes here in this province. That's not a tax relief for big corporations that have hundreds and hundreds of employees. Small business tax is just that, it's a tax that is on those small businesses that are operating throughout our communities in Nova Scotia and it's important that we continue to be competitive and I think really get to the point where we eliminate the small business tax. I think that was the direction we were heading in over the last four or five years, so I hope that trend continues.

I would hope that the government would look at this legislation. As we heard from my colleague a few minutes ago, there have been a few things adopted in this legislation currently from the current government. I would hope they will continue to look at legislation that Opposition members bring forward and if they want to take good things out of Opposition legislation, they should, and make sure that when we make changes, especially around small businesses, that they are positive changes.

I think the government should have an opportunity to look at this and see what we could do to improve the efficiencies around businesses that operate in our province, especially around reducing what you would call red tape.

This isn't a new thing, Mr. Speaker. I mean that call for reduction of red tape has gone on for quite some time. I think well before I entered this Chamber in 2003, there had been calls for red tape reduction - I think red tape reduction strategy or initiative was one that has been talked about for many years and there has been some reform.

AN HON. MEMBER: That was orange tape.

MR. DAVID WILSON: There was never any orange tape, it was always red tape. It's interesting that they call it red tape, I don't know if it's because the first real introduction of regulation for small businesses, it might have been a Liberal Government at the time, Mr. Speaker. I don't know, I'll have to look back and maybe they wanted to use the red tape on that but of course I think we can all maybe joke a little bit about that.

It is important, I think, when we talk about supporting small businesses that government brings forward changes and that businesses can't wait for years and years of seeing what a government will do, especially a new government. I mean, they talked the

talk when they were in Opposition, Mr. Speaker, and now in government, they need to act. They need to support small businesses in the province, and for that matter, larger businesses, especially around the regulation component of it and the possibility of trying to reduce the red tape that we have in the province. I know it's not something new from the Progressive Conservative caucus. I believe one of their other members brought similar legislation in in 2012, and I would hope that, at this time, we will see some movement on this.

I know that the 2014 budget that was passed set aside \$7.4 million to help reduce what we would call red tape and try to enhance the Access to Business and Access for Citizens web portals that are available to give those small businesses access to the services that are available, to try to compile it and make sure that people know that they can go to one portal or one website and find out exactly what the requirements are for their business or for their new company that they want to start.

I'm just trying to think of what time I'm on here. I still have a few minutes. I think the last speaker was a little bit earlier.

So one of the things we want to encourage, and I've said this on other pieces of legislation, is that just because it's not a government piece of legislation or government idea doesn't mean it shouldn't be looked at. The government shouldn't be just dismissing it, because there is a lot of good legislation that comes through this Chamber. I know at times it's difficult to say, well, that was a good piece, let's see if we can adopt that. But I think Nova Scotians would expect a government to look at Opposition legislation. That's why we have the opportunity, like Opposition Day on Wednesday, so that Opposition Parties have an opportunity to bring forward some of the bills that we have.

The unfortunate thing is a piece of legislation like this, a Red Tape Reduction Bill, has to be called on Opposition Day, because it's not just on Wednesday and it's not just on Opposition Day that pieces of legislation can be called. The Government House Leader has the opportunity and has control of the Order Paper whenever we sit in session, other than on Opposition Day. They can call legislation at any time, and over the years, each political Party has committed to trying to look at Opposition Party legislation and bring that forward. It shows Nova Scotians that you're willing to look outside just your own caucus on some positive changes that could happen.

I hope that the Liberal Government will do that throughout their mandate. I know there's one instance of that this session, but I don't think it should just be held at one. Government, when looking at legislation and changes to legislation - everything should be on the table - all pieces of legislation. I hope that they'll consider some of the good things that are in this piece of legislation and adopt them for themselves, and support businesses throughout the province. Thank you.

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

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, and I'm very pleased to be able to take some time to speak on Bill No. 3, the Red Tape Reduction Act. First, I want to start out by thanking my colleagues from all Parties for the words that they had to say about this bill.

I think it's interesting to note that this is a bill that talks about reducing red tape, and it's not aimed at anything in particular, or any Party in particular. It's about doing what's right to make it easier for Nova Scotians to live within the laws that are on the books.

Red tape reduction is a subject that has been on the lips of every government that I've had the opportunity to sit in here and listen to. It's also on the minds of the small businessperson, and if we look around in our communities, and wonder who it is that really drives our economy, it is the small businessperson. When you look at our communities, places like Louisbourg, in my community, the big industries that were there, the fisheries, have disappeared for the most part and it's small businesses now that try to keep it going.

If you think about the whole economy of the CBRM, when we used to have the mines that used to employ thousands of people and we had the steel plant that employed thousands of people. Today, the average employer has less than eight employees and they are the ones who are affected by the challenges and pieces of legislation that are before us. So the Red Tape Reduction Bill is to make it easier for them to do business.

Most small business people will tell you that they spend 20 per cent of their time filling out forms, doing documents for government; it eats up like 20 per cent of their time. If you have a five-day week, that's one day a week that you spend following procedures that are probably repetitive and not very useful for you as a business person to actually make a real contribution to the economy of a community, and not only that, but keep your doors open. At the end of the day that should be what drives us - making sure that the small business person is able to do that. Helping them reduce red tape is something that we should be looking at.

I think my colleague from Queens-Shelburne will tell you there's a saying around fishing industry, and that saying is if you get a red tide, when it comes in it kills everything that it touches. Well, guess what? We have red tape that when it touches these small businesses, it helps to destroy them. It helps to make them less effective, it helps to make the entrepreneurial spirit of the individual less. The member over opposite is kind of choking because I was choking over that word too.

The fact of the matter is we as a group, as legislators, should be looking at ways to make it easier for businesses to do what they need to do. I look across and I see some of my colleagues who are recently elected who were small businessmen, and still are, who are struggling with this. And we had a talk about it one day and he was telling some of the things - it's hard to believe some of the things you had to tackle.

When we as people in this House are passing bills, we should be looking at what the long range effect is. I have long been a believer that when we put a piece of legislation in place in the House of Assembly here in Nova Scotia, we should have a sunset clause in it - this piece of legislation has to be reviewed in eight years or ten years, or whatever the number is to make sure that it's actually doing what it was meant to do, that it's not being an impediment to people in business, but it's actually helping them. If there was a sunset clause put in as you putting the legislation together, you would know that in a few years you are going to have to review this to make sure it was working and doing what was needed to be done.

I can't help but remember the question that the member for Pictou East asked earlier this week about a law that's on the books of the Province of Nova Scotia about able-bodied people having to use shovels to clean the roads. Well, with the way things are in the province we might need to have that on the books. The reality is, there are many, many laws like that that are on the books that make it hard for business people to do their job, and they don't do anything to actively make life easier for those in business.

I think having red tape reduction actually does make a whole lot of sense and it doesn't matter who is sitting in the governing chair, it's about what can we do to help small businesses stay alive so that they can contribute to our economy, so that we can make sure that there are jobs, especially in rural Nova Scotia, because I can tell you in my neck of the woods jobs are disappearing time and time again. Some of them are disappearing because of the economic times, but others are disappearing because they just can't keep up with some of the red tape that's in place. We, as a group of people, have a job to do and that is to make sure there's not as much.

We heard today about the tax review that came in. It's something that we've all been waiting for a long time and, yes, the report is fresh and the ink is still wet and there are ideas in there. One of the ideas that really blew me away - and my friend from Sackville-Cobequid mentioned it earlier - was the fact that small business tax was going to go from 3 per cent to 8 per cent. Now it's only a recommendation at this period, we have to understand that, but imagine if you're a small business person in the Province of Nova Scotia and you hear they are thinking about bumping up the taxes by almost three times what they are today.

Now like I said earlier before the minister came in, I understand these are recommendations. I understand that they are things that people are looking at, but just imagine if you are a small business person and that's what you heard, and that's what's highlighted in the media reports, or that's what's highlighted by the Opposition or whatever. It still makes you wonder why would you want to continue in business in the Province of Nova Scotia and that's not what anybody in this House of Assembly wants. We want to make it easier for people to work and to provide for the economy, not harder.

You know when you look at the legislation that is on the books in the Province of Nova Scotia, there are quite a few pieces of legislation. Where do we start? How do we reduce the red tape? There are all kinds of red tape so how do we reduce that? This bill is part of the solution. It's not the complete solution, but it is part of the idea to reduce the red tape of this province.

We need each of the ministers to look in their departments and find some of the obvious glaring things that are there that make it hard for small businesses to go forward and do what needs to be done. The red tape may have been brought in with good intentions - there is no question about that, Mr. Speaker - but have since become redundant due to changes in technology, how business is conducted, or quite frankly, simply no longer has a purpose for various reasons that we could spend hours and hours discussing.

Very simply put, some of the red tape that is in place, some of the legislation that's in place, is outdated and needs to be removed. We need to allow business to remain competitive and agile, and government needs to be regularly reviewing the red tape within the system so that the people who are trying to create employment in this province can do so as easily as possible.

Mr. Speaker, there are all kinds of places where there are extra costs, as you know - whether it be legal fees or whether it be other aspects of what business is being done - but in reality when you're in small business you have to find every way you can to make it more significant. When you are faced with increased costs, you have one of two choices: you either find efficiencies in the systems that are there by cutting the red tape and helping get red tape cut by the government or you have to cut costs. A lot of the time, cutting costs mean you lay somebody off and I don't think that is what anybody in this House of Assembly wants.

Regardless of who is sitting in the government benches, it is the responsibility of government to enable the private sector to create jobs and develop economic growth by removing red tape. By enacting this type of legislation to remove red tape it makes it easier for those in business to do what they want to do. Mr. Speaker, we need the entrepreneurs of Nova Scotia to have as many tools at their disposal as possible to move forward. With that I'll take my place.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, maybe we can make an adjustment to about 10 to 12 minutes each, if that's all right just to bring us to about 5:10 p.m., if that's okay with everybody, which was my original plan here.

Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 47.

Bill No. 47 - School Supplies Tax Credit Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I'll take the next few minutes and talk on Bill No. 47, School Supplies Tax Credit Act.

While back to school shopping may be an exciting time for young kids, it's not always so exciting for parents, especially parents with one, two, or three youngsters at school that have to be prepared and ready to start to school in September. It can be a tough time for parents. Unfortunately, for too many parents, it's a time of financial stress, going back to school shopping, getting the clothing, getting the necessary utensils and so on for students to get prepared for the school year.

Another problem too is that many of these parents are not working. Many of these parents are in some sort of a transition and this extra financial burden is something that they would prefer not to be faced with at this time of the year. Many families are struggling with high taxes, high power rates, and basically providing the necessary essentials for their families. So purchasing things needed for school can be quite expensive. One item that's very expensive is clothing - the clothing that families have to purchase to outfit their children when they're heading to school in September.

The list of things they need is a long list, and it seems to get longer every year. The list depends of course on the grade level, if they're elementary, junior, or senior high school. You have uniforms, you have backpacks, you have markers, erasers, and I could go on with so many items there - notebooks, highlighters, sharpeners, and again there are so many items they require prior to beginning the school year. Other lists require specific colours of binders and scribblers, expensive items such as flash drives, calculators. Families usually spend a few hundred dollars for each child preparing them for the new school year. The stress of assisting students is enough when the school year begins. This particular bill will reduce some of that pressure for families with school-age children.

It's very common to see teachers in our schools purchasing necessary items to help out in the daily chores and the work that goes on in the classrooms, knowing that some families cannot afford to buy these types of utensils and things that they need to do their work in the classroom. Families that have two or three children returning to school find it very difficult to purchase this stuff and outfit all of them.

I can recall very vividly having six children of my own and coming in August trying to get them ready for school. In particular, having to buy two new sets of sneakers - that's a lot of sneakers, Mr. Speaker, when you have six children in school at the same time. One set is to stay in school; the other set is to get back and forth. The merchants always loved to see us coming and we used to clean the rack with several sneakers needed to start off the school year.

We estimate that this measure would probably cost about \$3.9 million. This bill provides a 50 per cent tax credit for parents, and also for teachers, that are purchasing school supplies up to the cost of \$200. The bill puts money back in parents' pockets so they can focus on helping their children in many other ways and other areas of their education. This bill is also available to teachers who buy supplies out of their own pockets, as I mentioned earlier, for their classrooms and their students. Again, it's just an important investment in the future education of our children.

Many families in our province, for a lot of different reasons, are unable to purchase things they required, due to the lack of purchasing power. This particular bill will address some of those pressures with regard to preparing students to begin a year.

When I look around the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, we have lots of members here who have youngsters attending school. The member for Pictou East, the member for Pictou West, the member for Argyle-Barrington, and the member for Antigonish - we all have children who are attending school. It seems like every year there's more and more required for these students who are attending school.

Mr. Speaker, this particular bill is to address some of those cost pressures for families, in particular families that are having a difficult time keeping their budget where it should be. This bill here will alleviate some of that pressure. With those few words, I will take my seat. Thank you.

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

MR. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, the intent behind this bill, I would say, is certainly a noble and noteworthy one and I want to thank the member for Pictou Centre for his words on the bill. It is my thought and my position on this that I think the fiscal reality of this province prevents us from considering these types of initiatives at this juncture.

I will say that in the final analysis Nova Scotians will ask which Party and which government is supporting education. We are reversing cuts which enable us to cut class sizes and will, in fact, address the underlying problem of strained funding, as opposed to focusing on the multitude of symptoms, which is the result of the deterioration of public education in this province.

We have schools with deteriorating infrastructure. We have rotting roofs, unsafe parking lots, lack of proper accessibility standards and just 20-some schools in HRM alone. Again, while this bill would help some in public education, most indeed, our government and this Party must keep its specific commitments listed in our platform. This is one of the challenges of all Parties in the election cycle itself, I believe, that there are many important, good initiatives that are put in place from prior Parties that you don't want to get rid of and then you have your own commitments that you've made to the people, which you are going to implement.

We intend to keep those commitments and I'll just list a few of them that are well underway and some might be just as important as this bill elucidates in itself. The class size caps: we are working in collaboration with school boards; the department initiated a class size cap in this school year from Primary to Grade 2 of 20 students. We have expanded the SchoolsPlus program where four new SchoolsPlus sites were added in 2014 with four additional sites planned in 2015-16. New school construction: we are now able to have 11 new schools under construction for the school year 2014-15. School capital repairs: the government allocated a portion of TCA funding towards smaller projects, which amount to projects that are up to \$1 million which will address those rotten roofs, the pavement that is deteriorating, the playground equipment, and much more.

Guidance counsellors: the 2014-15 budget allows for 17 additional counsellors to be added in the three school boards to ensure that counsellor-to-student ratios are met in all boards. Skilled trades centres: two new centres opened in the Fall of 2014, in Glace Bay High School and Cole Harbour District High School. The math curriculum is getting support, which is a commitment of ours. The new math curriculum is being introduced through a phased approach, beginning in 2013-14, where there's funding provided for additional math support teachers.

I won't go through the exhaustive lists that my colleague, the member for Cumberland North, did so eloquently some time ago about all the tax cuts the PC Party promised in their platform, but I would conjecture that these projects would not have been possible with that loss of revenue.

It would be irresponsible for government to accept more initiatives, as important and noble as they may be. I could come up with a plethora of these types of tax credits for people who help children, help different interest groups. However, even with a balanced budget, which we don't have today, a responsible government would have to find savings to pay for loss of revenue. I'd like to challenge the Opposition to bring forth a few bills that would or could finance some of these types of ideas they're bringing forth.

Literacy was another one of our commitments in our platform where you see funding increase in 2014 for Reading Recovery teachers or leader training, an ongoing early literacy support for Grade 3 and intensive support for students identified through Grade 3 Provincial Reading/Writing 2013 Assessment results. We've also invested in students with complex needs, targeted funding provided to support programming and services for students with complex needs.

This government has formed government with the primary focus on education, after systemic neglect on its infrastructure, not only in education but in our hospitals and more dilapidated buildings owned by government. We were left with an education deficit, a fiscal deficit, an infrastructure deficit of over \$3 billion. We had the courage to run on a platform that chose to invest in education instead of instant cuts to the HST.

The people spoke in October 2013 that this was important to them. We are able to reinvest because we did not choose to rashly cut HST. The public knows, the media knows, members of the school board all know which Party stands up for education. We will not waver on our commitments to restore an underfunded system, and I want to thank the members opposite for bringing up the pinnacle of what the Liberal Party of Nova Scotia stands for.

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: We would like to support this bill, and I would like to actually remind the member who just spoke that the budget is on balance because of the figures they were flipping around to make it look unbalanced, and we know that. And we know the reason for that, and people do. (Interruptions) They can laugh as much as they want. They had an opportunity to pay off . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's has the floor.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A couple of things. They had the opportunity in order with the retirement plan to pay that off in a 12-year amortization, which they decided not to - that was their decision to pay it out all at once. Also, I guess they don't give credit to our former Auditor General who gave his stamp of approval to the information that we provided in the budget.

But let me get to this particular Bill No. 47 and the importance of supporting those individuals in our society who are vulnerable and are low income.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Our government did not have anything to do with the budget that she is talking about. It was actually an Auditor General recommendation. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. It's not a point of order; it's a disagreement of facts.

The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's has the floor.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They have difficulty with the facts. I do understand that, but that will come along as the time goes past after the next several years.

What we're concerned about is that we did a lot of work in terms of helping those who are most vulnerable in low-income Nova Scotians. The poverty level in the Province of Nova Scotia actually dropped for the first time in decades under an NDP Government.

We are concerned that those who have children and are going to school - it does cost. It does cost for them to be able to provide for each child to attend school. We know that the teachers work very hard and they're really dedicated to the students and to their classes, and it means so much to them that often they will take money out of their own pockets in order to buy supplies.

This type of tax credit is a good piece of legislation because it is supporting those who are in the most need. One of the things that we are fearful of is that we are seeing in the new tax review that was presented today that there are recommendations that will hit very hard in the pockets of those very individuals. So we know that it's really important for us on this side of the Legislature to make sure that those voices are heard on how difficult it can be.

We know that the education system has had fewer students because of a decrease in population base, out-migration in the province, and that is something that is a challenge in the education system in order to balance the budget and provide the funding in the school system when there are fewer students there.

I know that - you know, there were many promises that were made around the education system, and no one can stand in the House here and get blamed - that's the game it seems to be, pointing fingers. People come here and genuinely are working hard for their constituencies and they also work hard for the entire province. I know with respect to education, many promises were made, and we're hopeful that after the report has been presented - the education review - that in January when the minister puts her plan in action, that we will see some of those things.

I think it is a good reminder that some of those promises already have not been kept. In fact, one of those would be that there was supposed to be a student support grant, and we haven't seen that yet. I do know about that one because the now-Premier, before the election in September, had promoted that. One of the examples he gave was the Tancook Island school, that they would be able to access up to over \$5,000 for their school for special programs, and that has not happened. There are several other things that people had heard about during that time frame. The reality in terms of the reduction in cost in the education system nowhere equated to the numbers that were being thrown out.

I think it's important that as we go forward and we're looking at the need to support our children and their families and those who struggle that the priority should be on low-income Nova Scotians. That's what this bill does. Bill No. 47 gives a little help to families. For each child, a family could get a tax credit up to \$200. So if you're a family with three children, that would be very beneficial if it was up to \$600, because as my colleague said, it's very expensive in our world for children to go to school and it's expensive for the teachers and the teaching assistants who give a lot of their time and effort and that they know that some of the resources aren't available.

One of the areas that I feel is very important for the government to focus on and that I would like to see the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development look at is the consistency throughout the province in terms of resources for different schools. I know for a fact that it's not balanced. You'll have some students going to a school in a rural community and they don't even have math textbooks; whereas other classes, same grades and everything, in other parts of the province have iPads or laptops available to them.

I think that if we're going to create a fair system and provide everybody with the education that they deserve that the first big step is to create that consistency throughout our province before you go forward with other initiatives. I think that that was part of the review that - I know that the panel worked very hard on the review, did a very good job, but that's one area that seemed to be a gap. There was no talk about those inconsistencies throughout the Province of Nova Scotia.

I do hope that the government will support this. I think that it's getting a bit redundant to be always saying that we can't do that because of fiscal constraints, because on the other hand, we're seeing money flow out of the doors as fast as possible in other areas. You know, if you're going to be consistent with a message, you have to make sure that it's consistent not just in the message, but with the actions that you take and those who you pick and choose as winners and losers when you're supporting them. We have seen that happen over and over and that is our concern.

In closing, I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that our government would see the fact that our children and their families, those who are most vulnerable, truly deserve to be provided with a tax credit of this nature that is being brought forth by the Progressive Conservatives. Those teachers and assistants deserve a little help. I hope they will see the light and provide that support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to today and speak to Bill No. 47, the Schools Supplies Tax Credit Act. We've heard some conversation in the House here. Members of this House know that many families all across Nova Scotia are struggling to make ends meet. It's just a fact of life for many Nova Scotians. They pay their power bills, their groceries, their fuel costs, and just at the end of the month there's not a lot of money left over.

Then along comes the start of a school year, or during a school year there are new expenses. There are certain expenses that every family has, and as a government, we believe that the government has a responsibility to try to make things easier for families where they can. We have obvious fiscal realities we have to face, but that means making decisions. It means making decisions about what we're going to support and what we're not going to support. There's a role for compassion in government. Governments can be compassionate. I think this is one of those areas where this is a good place for compassion.

With this credit - which there is a cost to, obviously, \$3.9 million a year - that's a cost that's spread across Nova Scotia families that have school-age kids. Wouldn't it be nice when they're filling out their tax returns for them to know that their province cares about them, their province recognizes the challenges that they're facing? The amount may seem minimal for the individual - 50 per cent of \$200 might not seem like a lot - but I think the message that it sends to those families would do a lot for the confidence of the family.

We see how sending messages to Nova Scotians that the government cares means something to them. Ms. Broten's tax study was just out this morning. I'm sure most members of this House haven't had a chance to fully read it, but I can tell you the number of emails that I have received from volunteer firefighters about the recommendation to remove the volunteer credit. People aren't becoming volunteer firefighters to take advantage of the volunteer tax credit, but it's a simple little message that they receive when they do their tax return that their commitment is valued.

I think this is the type of tax credit that could send a similar message to Nova Scotia families that the government realizes the challenges they face. When we look at these things, we should look at them through that lens as well. (Interruption) Quite a few emails, actually, considering it's only five o'clock and it came out this morning.

The other issue is that the families that are purchasing the supplies, that relief may mean that they can get that set of sneakers or something for their child, to send their child back to school with a bit more confidence. I think when we look at bills like this we need to consider the message that's being sent and evaluate whether that message has value to our government. I think that sometimes you will come to the conclusion that that is something we value and that is something we will support.

Each and every Fall, parents from all over the province are buying those new sneakers, those new backpacks, jackets for their kids who likely outgrew everything over the summer. So we're looking at - I think I saw that the average family spends \$400 to \$500 a child at the start of a school year. I don't know, that's the average. There will be some people that believe it's higher in their instance, some people will say it's lower, but that's the average, and I don't have any reason to dispute that number. Some are higher than the average.

On top of that, they have to go out and get the proper school supplies. We all know in this case that many kids are coming to school unprepared for their school day, whether it means they haven't had a proper breakfast, whether it means they don't have the proper school supplies. We all know teachers who buy a lot of the school supplies for a lot of kids. We all know schools that have breakfast programs staffed by volunteer parents.

What can we do to help prepare those children to start their day, to get benefit from their day? That's a very complex question, I realize, and there are lots of answers to that question, but I do believe that one small measure that can be taken is a small measure like

the one we're talking about today. Every year parents are telling all of us, our friends and through our social circles, that items are getting more expensive. While we know that school supply lists change from grade to grade, technology has also resulted in more costly school supplies. That's why we see some teachers step up.

Who knows what will happen, Mr. Speaker, with the HST on various items going forward, in terms of books and things like that. Maybe if that changes, then that will increase the cost of those supplies. The cost to send your child to school is not a small amount of money for any family. When we consider some of the economic situations, the economic reality of certain families, there may be a parent not working, a parent working part-time, or seasonally employed. We all want to send our kids to school properly prepared, as best as we can prepare them in so many different ways. We all want to send our kids to school with the proper supplies, so they can feel like they are dressed appropriately, so that they are fitting in or whatever the case may be; Nova Scotians all want that.

Nova Scotians are having to make decisions about how they can make that happen, in the face of less and less disposable income; due to financial pressure, they are having to make decisions. I certainly have talked to parents who have said they did without this or they did without that, to get the school supplies. Maybe it meant that they didn't eat quite as well that week as they might have wanted to, or they didn't eat quite that well for a couple of weeks because they made a decision, or they turned their heat down; that's one that people do all the time. They do what they can to prepare their children for school. I have no doubt that in some instances it is very difficult for them because parents will go to extreme measures to get their kids ready and give their kids the best.

The cost of living continues to rise, and digging into their pockets a little further for a number of things, this is just a way that we could maybe send a message to those families that we hear you, we sympathize with you and we're going to do what we can in our own small way to help you. That's all that this is all about. This legislation would give parents a break. In many ways it would be more of a symbolic break than an actual financial break, just because of the dollar amount and I do think that's important. It would provide a 50 per cent tax credit for parents and teachers on school supplies up to \$200.

This won't ease all the financial pressures and aspects of life but it will give them a break. It's the job of government to find opportunities like this where we can give Nova Scotians a break. Mr. Speaker, it's a relatively small bill but it's a message that we believe should be sent to Nova Scotian families to help them where we can. With those few words, I will take my seat.

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

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to take a few minutes. I want to stand here and speak a little bit about Bill No. 47.

I want to start out by saying that teachers stepping up in support of students and families who are unable to provide is not something new. This is not a phenomenon that has just occurred in the last 10, 15, 20 years. Each and every one of us in this House, who vary in age, whether we were aware of it or not, when we were in elementary school, there were teachers, principals, support staff, and admin assistants who were pulling into their own pocket and giving to students whose families were unable to provide the necessities for being in school. That's something to be commended. Teachers and support staff, all of us who work with kids - and I still say us because even though I'm not working as a teacher currently, I am still a teacher. This is a very important subject to me.

I think that we have two independent reviews that have just taken place that really speak to the heart of this specific bill. We have an education review that through talks - and I will be the first one, I have lots of notes on that review, I have had the time to look into it and to make all kinds of stickies - can look at what the expectations of the parents are. What are we doing within our school system, within education?

The way for a student to be successful is not just about what they bring to school to help them. In order for schools, and in order for students to be successful, they need to feel supported as a whole. I appreciate all of the comments that have been given here today. I respect all of the members who have gotten up to speak on this issue. I do have one thing though specifically to reference. There was one individual member who had said that we need to stop talking about how we can't afford tax incentives. I have to say, I'm not an accountant, but being \$278 million in debt for this year alone, it would be irresponsible for us as a government to not continue to talk about that debt.

Our second review, we just got today. I have not had a chance to take a look at it, but our independent review on the tax structure of the province - I want to look at that. I want to have time to see who's going to benefit from the recommendations by that panel. Are we going to be helping low-income families? Are we going to be helping the middle class? What is the plan? I need more time to look at that and to see really what the meat of that review is. I promise the members of this House now, on record, that I will take the time to do that.

As a teacher, I've probably spent thousands of dollars of my own money in the classroom, not just for supplies. Like I said, if a student didn't have lunch, if they needed a new pair of shoes - teachers in general, anybody who works with kids, are inherently generous people. We don't go into the profession to make money. We definitely don't go in for the two months of summer vacation - actually, the first orientation that was ever given to me in my Bachelor of Education was, if you're here because you want to have summers off, you shouldn't be here. No truer words. That was 14 years ago and I still remember that as if it was yesterday, because it is not why you get into this profession.

Teachers don't look and see what personally we can get back in terms of dollars and cents for why we do things. We understand that parents have a huge responsibility. We

understand that it doesn't matter what kind of an income level you're at; it is expensive to have kids, and this is just one small portion of that great expense.

I think it's really important to us, for all of us, to take a look at these two independent reviews and see, really, at the end of the day, what is going to be the most beneficial to these families and to these people that we're here advocating for. I encourage all the members of the House to do so and to provide any feedback that they can, whether it's on the floor of the House or whether it's directly to the ministers responsible. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you. I wasn't going to speak a whole lot, but I want to thank the member for Fairview-Clayton Park for speaking on that. Unprompted, I think she spoke more than the member for Halifax Chebucto did on a couple of his bills already, so thank you so much for speaking. I think that's great.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's mean.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Not really. Not really.

Also, as someone married to a teacher, I can say that she was right on. You know, there are thousands of dollars that are spent by teachers every year, whether it's paper for your printer at home, whether it's a winter coat, whether it's food, whether it's - you know, it goes on and on and on from there, to make sure you are giving the children that you're taking care of in teaching, every opportunity to succeed.

In the end, what happens is as those children go through life and have that better base - that best base that we can possibly provide to them - that they become citizens of Nova Scotia that can provide as much to us as we provided to them. They are the ones who can continue to get those good jobs, add to the tax rolls of the province, and truly make this great province even greater. That's what we all need to aspire to, to make sure that our children in our school system get everything that they possibly can. I think that's why this bill is before us. Any little bit that we can do to make sure that we're giving them that extra, I think, is phenomenal.

With those short words, I guess I'll call it even on that one.

AN HON. MEMBER: He's speaking as much as I am.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Just wait.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: That concludes the business for the Opposition today. I will pass it back over to the Government House Leader to call work and business and hours for tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci to my colleague, the House Leader for the Official Opposition. Tomorrow, the House hours will be a bit changed because of the Medal of Bravery ceremony which is taking place here in the Red Room at 1:00 p.m. As a result of that, the House will sit from 2:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m., at which time, following the daily routine, we will continue with third reading of Bill No. 60, the Smoke-free Places Act and Tobacco Access Act.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow, November 20th, between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We have now reached the moment of interruption. We'll now proceed with the topic for late debate:

“Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly send well wishes of safe travels to all involved with the Nova Scotia tree being delivered to Boston, and thank John and Ethel Ann MacPherson of Purlbrook, Antigonish County, for their generous donation of the 55-year-old, vibrant 43-foot white spruce.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

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

**BOSTON CHRISTMAS TREE - SAFE JOURNEY/
MACPHERSON, JOHN & ETHEL ANN: DONATION - THANK**

MR. LLOYD HINES: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to my colleagues on both sides of the House for the confidence they are showing in our forestry industry in Nova Scotia. It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak about the tradition, the history and the tremendous goodwill intertwined with the gesture of gratitude that is Nova Scotia's Christmas tree for Boston.

All Nova Scotians were again reminded of this wonderful tradition this week. Congratulations to the MacPhersons of the Antigonish area for producing that tree. I can tell you that Antigonish and Guysborough Counties in eastern Nova Scotia have tremendous heritage in the Christmas tree industry, certainly rivalled by our good friends in Lunenburg County. It is a great industry for that part of Nova Scotia.

The 2014 Christmas tree for Boston was given a great send-off in Halifax yesterday, with the Premier and several members of our government attending along with the mayor of Halifax, His Worship Mayor Savage. It was a good gathering. There was an honour guard of uniformed representatives of the RCMP, Halifax Police, HRM Fire Department, and the province's conservation officers. There was also live music by Nova Scotia's own band, The Stanfields, whose lead singer and bouzouki player are both from the Village of Guysborough, so we're particularly proud of The Stanfields in that part of the province.

Hundreds of Nova Scotians gathered in the Grand Parade for the festive farewell to this year's Christmas tree for Boston. As the Premier said, it is hard to think of a better way to kick off the holiday season.

It is important to remind the House and to put on the record the history and the reasoning behind this big evergreen gift that Nova Scotia sends to the people of Boston each year. As we are all aware from the lessons taught in Nova Scotia schools, the Halifax Explosion was a dark time in our province's history. About 2,000 people lost their lives in the aftermath of the blast on December 6, 1917. We're quickly approaching that date. Thousands more were left injured, and many were left homeless.

Our capital city needed help. The City of Boston was among the first to respond. The people of Boston were there to reach out in our time of need, because that's what friends do. They are there for you in good times and in times of need, and like any good friendship, we nurture it and strengthen it and make it grow.

We can proudly say that to this day the relationship between our province and Boston remains very strong. Through travel and tourism, business and trade, to say nothing of hockey and baseball, Madam Speaker, our relationship remains strong, and we're

finding new ways to work together. The tradition of the big beautiful tree we send to Boston each Christmas is helping to maintain and support that working relationship.

We have been sending Boston a tree each year for 43 years now - 43 years that we've been doing this. As you know, it is a very popular and quite touching event that Nova Scotians respond to with warm hearts. I had the pleasure of making a member's statement last week about how important the Christmas tree industry is to our province, and I think this is a suitable highlighting of that importance and also the relationship we have with the so-called Boston States.

It is really a people's event, beginning with the day the tree is wrapped and brought down to begin its journey to Boston. This year the tree for Boston came from the northern half of the province for the first time in the history of that tradition, Madam Speaker. The 2014 tree is about 13 metres tall, a white spruce from Purlbrook, Antigonish County.

AN HON. MEMBER: Woo-hoo!

MR. HINES: Yeah. On Monday, Environment Minister Randy Delorey represented the government at the tree-cutting ceremony in Purlbrook . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. It's not permitted to mention the . . .

MR. HINES: Oh, sorry. The member for Antigonish. Sorry, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie has the floor.

MR. HINES: On Monday, Madam Speaker, the member for Antigonish represented the government at the tree-cutting ceremony in Purlbrook, and I understand by all accounts that he wields a mean power saw. It was a great account for the beginning of this tree's journey. There was a crowd of more than 400 people there. That's how seriously the citizens in that part of our wonderful province take the tree business and the honour that was bestowed upon them around this wonderful gesture.

More than 300 were young elementary students from Antigonish Town and County, all cheering and waving small Nova Scotia flags. Mr. Scott Whitmore, United States Consul for Atlantic Canada, was there to say a few words. There was a town crier with a proclamation, and of course, being Antigonish, there was a bagpiper, a uniformed honour guard, and even Santa himself made an early appearance as he arrived on a horse-drawn wagon.

It was a festive occasion, and it was a media occasion. Many media were part of the crowd to photograph and videotape the tree as it was lowered onto the truck. This was not just a wonderful event for everyone attending. It was also a great promotion for the tree

tradition and for the Nova Scotia Christmas tree industry. The Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia attended that Purlbrook event and the Halifax Grand Parade event yesterday with an information booth to promote homegrown trees. I would urge all hearing my voice to take that into consideration this year when you're looking for your Christmas tree: shop local and get a Nova Scotia balsam fir.

Madam Speaker, all of this excitement and media attention helps to support that relationship between our province and the City of Boston, but let us not forget that at its core this tradition has a message of gratitude. The Boston Christmas tree from Nova Scotia means thank you - thank you for the help the people from Boston sent to our province after the Halifax Explosion, 97 years ago. This is a proud tradition that shows we will always remember the kindness shown to us by our American neighbours.

Madam Speaker, the people of Boston began gathering supplies for Halifax as soon as they heard about the devastating explosion. They got a supply train on its way to Nova Scotia within just a few hours. The train had to fight its way through a snowstorm but persistence paid off and the people of Halifax, who were devastated by this incredible explosion, the greatest that was ever held in the world up until that point in time, were very glad for the help.

Madam Speaker, each year the tree is donated by a generous Nova Scotian and this year it came from the property of John and Ethel Ann MacPherson of Purlbrook. Of course the province is very grateful to them for volunteering their beautiful tree to represent Nova Scotia. I want to reiterate our thanks here in the House and also mention their children, Tyler and Jessica, who I understand used to enjoy the tire swing hanging from the tree. But they are now grown and so is the tree. We thank the whole MacPherson family for finding a new purpose for this big tree; it is now part of Nova Scotia's Boston tree history.

Madam Speaker, we hope Nova Scotians will help our province to continue this great tradition in the years ahead. All the young people at the tree-cutting ceremonies were given packages that included seedlings, small trees that they could take home and plant. They were told that maybe one day their seedling would grow to be a future Boston Christmas tree. The fact is that we do need help in finding future trees.

We urge all Nova Scotians that if they want to help keep this tradition alive over the years ahead, please keep a watchful eye for the perfect tree, like the one the MacPhersons donated. The Department of Natural Resources welcomes reports on suggested trees that could be used in the future. Madam Speaker, a Boston tree must be a white or red spruce, or a balsam fir, be 12 to 15 metres high - that's 40 to 50 feet - and have good symmetry and easy road access. Anyone who knows of such a tree can contact their local DNR office or check the DNR website.

The Premier, on behalf of Nova Scotia, dedicated this year's tree to the memory of Mayor Thomas Menino, Boston's longest-serving mayor and a proud Nova Scotia supporter. Mayor Menino passed away on October 30th . . .

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

The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his impassioned speech here, taking up a whole 10 minutes, it's amazing. Thank you so much for that.

It was a cold day here in Halifax in 1917 - the member for Pictou Centre knows all about it. He said it was cold, he said he had never been so scared before that day. (Laughter) But honestly, when something like the Halifax Explosion happens, you really get to see how communities come together. Even someone as far away as Boston, as they heard through telegraph and heard what happened here in Halifax, in no time at all they had organized a train to come here to Halifax to provide supplies, to provide medical help to those who had been injured, and to help start finding people who were caught in the wreckage. You can only imagine, by the pictures that we do see of the Halifax Explosion, to know that this was a dark hour here in our capital city.

Since 1971, 43 years ago, the City of Halifax sent a tree to Boston and we've been doing it ever since; 43 years is a long time to be keeping up a tradition, regardless of what that tradition may be. To see what happens in Boston when they do have the opportunity to receive it, they had the opportunity to have that show and light that tree - I've never had the opportunity to go to the Boston Tree lighting but what I have seen on TV is it's a phenomenal opportunity for Nova Scotians to showcase who it is. Thousands of people end up on the Boston Common to be there for the lighting, to be for there for the show, where we do get to showcase Nova Scotia talent, where we do get to talk about this gesture that Nova Scotia gives to Boston, to be able to showcase what Nova Scotia is.

Along with that - I know the Minister of Energy has gone, I don't know if the DNR Minister has had the opportunity to participate in that yet, but there's a whole bunch of other meetings that go around it. (Interruptions) Madam Speaker, I don't know where to go with that one. He could bring a few friends along with him and make it all work well. Never mind, I'm not going down that rabbit track.

Quite honestly, there is a whole bunch of other activities that go on around that as well where they do get to do more work on presenting Nova Scotia tourism, Nova Scotia produce, Nova Scotia activities. It's a great opportunity for us to be in the biggest market that we can access within a couple of hours flying time. We look at the opportunity in the Eastern States - where do our fish products go, where do our agricultural products go? That's where it goes, it goes into that Boston market and it goes into the New England

market. Any opportunity that we get to showcase that is a phenomenal thing. Beyond the notion of giving a tree to someone, really the benefit is Nova Scotia's benefit to be able to showcase what we are as a province and for that we need to thank all of those who are involved in it.

I had the opportunity in 2012 for the tree to be chosen from my constituency of Argyle at the time - Argyle-Barrington today, but it was the community of Argyle, Argyle Head, where a 44-foot white spruce was picked from the property of Ken and Donna Spinney. It was a phenomenal day, just like they experienced in Antigonish, where a number of schools came to see the cutting down of the tree after it had all been tied up and gotten ready for transport. It was actually from me to the government off the highway, so the truck just parked on the pavement and stayed on the pavement, the crane went over and picked up that tree, and my neighbor Wayne Hubbard was the DNR employee who cut the tree down.

To watch that happen was phenomenal. They got that crane on there, were able to pick it up and it seemed like no effort at all. They had a 44-foot white spruce knocked over and onto that trailer to be travelled across Nova Scotia. In that particular case it went off through Digby and cut down through the States there, but you could follow it on Twitter as you can follow it today on Twitter, I don't know what the Twitter handle is, but you can see where it is at all times, and there will be pictures available to it.

You can follow it; if you're sitting at home and you're wondering where the tree is today you can follow it. So, I want to thank Ken and Donna Spinney for their donation of it. On a sadder note to that one, Ken had cancer. When they gave that tree away he was able to be there with his family when they did cut it down and get it sent to Boston, but a few weeks later Ken did pass away, but he did have the opportunity to see and be able to do that kind of notion to be able to send that tree to Boston and was very happy to do it, and of course Donna and the rest of her family were so happy to do that as well.

One final comment before I sit down . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: No, not yet.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: I think I've said enough, I really have, but quite honestly because of the firewood problem that we have in southwestern Nova Scotia maybe a suggestion is that we should get it back and cut it and give it to the member for Queens-Shelburne so that he can pass that on to the people who won't have firewood today.

Madam Speaker, with those few short comments, thank you for the opportunity.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for certainly I'm delighted to participate in the debate and the resolution that was put forward by the member from Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie. I do want to take the opportunity to thank John and Ethel Ann MacPherson for their contribution for this Christmas tree.

First of all I have to get a few things out of the way here. I know the temptation of some forestry issues that I've raised in this session and I want to point out that I know the seriousness of this issue so I am going to be focused entirely on the tradition so I'm not even going to raise that.

The other thing I want to get out of the way is that this Christmas tree tradition has been going on for a number of years and there is another thing I don't want to get confused about my support here tonight as I stand. I do not want my support to be confused for a certain Boston hockey team - I don't even remember what their name is. I know the former MLA for Timberlea-Prospect did a resolution every May and there was somebody called Bobby Orr and I still can't remember what team he belonged to. (Laughter) I just want to be clear that my support is about the tradition of this Christmas tree that has built this relationship with the City of Boston and Nova Scotia. I want to talk about that bond.

This is something I think is really, truly important to Nova Scotia and I have three or four examples here if we can have a moment to talk about it. I know exactly where I was over a decade ago when 9/11 happened. I instantly was glued to the television and I visualized how much difficulty those air traffic controllers had in getting those airplanes in a relatively short period of time. We all know that our tarmacs in Canadian cities were literally full of international planes - that is a bond. That is about having a safe secure place to visit on very short notice.

To me, the relationship goes much deeper than that. If you look at our tradition of our fisheries and if you have had the privilege of being in Gloucester and visiting the Fishermen's Memorial there, you will observe that over 100 years that fishing community, the New England States - each Spring as they proceeded to the Grand Banks, they stopped in Nova Scotia to acquire their crew. A lot of those lost souls on the Gloucester Fishermen's Memorial are from Nova Scotia.

The bond has literally 100 years of building and to me there's a quick community story about how we are noted for our hospitality. A number of years ago there was an individual whose automobile actually broke down in my community. He and his wife went to the general store and said my car broke down just a few yards away from the general store. There was a heavy snowstorm in the winter months and that person stayed overnight, literally, in the home where the car broke down. He didn't have to go across the street and to me, that is the hospitality that Nova Scotians and Canadians are noted for.

When we talk about the New England States, I can go back to my family members who have worked in New York City, have worked on the Boston waterfront and I'm confident that all Nova Scotians have family connections to this great city. Something we seriously want to consider continuing is this Christmas tree tradition and thanking the City of Boston because it was through their Red Cross branch that immediately, during the Halifax Explosion, they immediately sent assistance to our province during a devastating disaster.

I also want to point out that southwestern Nova Scotia is roughly three hours away as we drive on Highway No. 103 and that explosion at that time was felt in southwestern Nova Scotia. As a young child I remember them very clearly telling me of those stories. I want to thank the government for over the past years, since 1971, reviving this particular program that was actually brought along by the Lunenburg County Christmas Tree Producers and since 1971 the government of the day, provincially, continued this tradition. I'm here to state that this is something that we are proud of. I'm proud to be a Nova Scotian, I'm proud to see that Christmas tree lit every year and the enjoyment that all the individuals get out of it.

I just want to close on a few personal notes. In my home, I've got to tell you that there's somewhat of a quiet debate going on about an artificial tree and a real balsam Christmas tree, of which I am a strong supporter. I can tell you how this may unfold. As I said today, there is an artificial tree in my home, which I recommend is not the same - it doesn't have that same smell. And you talk about buying local - I am your cheerleader when it comes to that. So the intent was to get the artificial tree to smell somewhere close to a balsam fir. You go out and buy some artificial balsam fir sticks. Madam Speaker, I can tell you that unless I've got some problem with my smell, it is not working.

I'm a true supporter of our traditional balsam fir tree and I want that industry to succeed. As a small child, I went in my elementary school and went in with the boys and harvested trees to come out and put our Christmas tree up in our small school. Some of the stories that we have are simply a treasure because it brought us to appreciate that Christmas tree.

I can tell you that maybe that's another discussion for another late debate - artificial tree versus a real live tree - but I'll give everybody a heads-up that I'm on the side of the real balsam fir industry. I'm proud to be a Nova Scotian. I'm proud that our sitting government continues the tradition. Please do not stop and keep up this great tradition. Thank you, Boston, for all your help.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. If I may, I'd like to add a little note to the Boston tree. For me, also it's a very memorial tree. In 2012, the last thing that my brother did before he passed away for the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal was to deliver that tree to Boston, so it holds a special place in my heart as well.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

MR. BEN JESSOME: Madam Speaker, I rise today on a point of privilege, actually. As a member of this Legislature, I have the right to access all the information to help me out to debate to the best of my ability. Today, the member for Queens-Shelburne . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Could you save that for tomorrow? The House has already adjourned for the day. We were doing late debate.

MR. JESSOME: Oh, the Boston bit. Forget about it. I wanted to know which hockey team he was alluding to. (Laughter)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Thank you everyone for taking part in the late debate tonight.

The House is adjourned.

[The House rose at 5:29 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1030**

By: Ms. Pam Eyking, MLA (Victoria-The Lakes)

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

Whereas Boularderie Island Press launched five books on November 19th, 2014; and

Whereas the books included: *Festive Flavours* by Lars Willum, *The Value of the Land* by D.C. Troicuk, *Elementary Yoga* by Patsy MacKenzie, *Hanging Daisy* by Paul Deikelman, and *A Trail of Words* by Whitney Pier Ink; and

Whereas Boularderie Island Press focuses on community and works with Canadian writers in a variety of genres;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly congratulate Boularderie Island Press and the writers of their most recently launched books, and wish them success in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1031

By: Ms. Pam Eyking, MLA (Victoria-The Lakes)

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

Whereas anniversaries are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of two individuals united as one; and

Whereas it was once said that a marriage anniversary is the celebration of love, trust, partnership, tolerance and tenacity, but the order varies for any given year; and

Whereas on the 16th of November, 2014, Mr. Ivan and Mrs. Rita Langille of St. Margaret's Bay, Nova Scotia, will celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Mr. and Mrs. Langille on this remarkable milestone in their life together and wish them many more happy years.

RESOLUTION NO. 1032

By: Ms. Pam Eyking, MLA (Victoria-The Lakes)

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

Whereas Schooner Cove Marine, established in 1982, is a family-owned business located in Boutilier's Point, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Hoskins family, owners of Schooner Cove Marine, is committed to ensuring customer satisfaction by providing a premiere boating experience; and

Whereas Schooner Cove Marine has won many industry awards and has been featured in boating magazines;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Schooner Cove Marine and the Hoskins Family on the continued success of their business as well as their significant contribution to the local economy.