



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

Published by Order of the Legislature by Hansard Reporting Services and printed by the Queen's Printer.

Available on INTERNET at <http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/>

Second Session

THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2015

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2015

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Just before we begin with the daily routine I would like to recognize the honourable Premier.

The honourable Premier.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I say a few remarks about our colleague, Allan Rowe, I would like to do an introduction, with your permission.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

THE PREMIER: I would ask the House to join me in welcoming Yvonne Rowe to our House. She has been a tremendous source of strength for her family in the last number of weeks and months and she certainly has been a tremendous amount of strength to us, as a caucus, as we try to come to terms with the challenges that her family is facing. Yvonne, if you wouldn't mind standing and receiving the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, as we gather here today, our caucus, our government and this House have the opportunity to honour the memory of our former colleague, Allan Rowe. Whenever he went to work or sat in this House he was a gentleman in every sense of the word. He brought goodwill, good nature and a sincere desire to help improve the lives of Nova Scotians. In words that he once shared in this House, he spoke about the shortness of life and about how important it was to work towards something bigger than one's self, and that was Allan's personal philosophy.

Nova Scotians are fortunate that he acted on his values and beliefs. Allan was known for believing in people's abilities, listening to their opinions and learning from their experiences. His attitude, his approach and his politics were shaped by the life he lived and by the people he met. We only have to look at the outpouring of support that followed his passing, to see the impact he had on our province and its people. Politicians of every stripe, journalists, Nova Scotians and people from his riding reached out, spoke out and shared their tributes. From radio to television and finally this House, Allan Rowe left his mark.

With his passing we have lost a great man. This House will feel his absence. We have an opportunity to honour him, not only with our words, but through our actions.

No matter how much this House has lost, it cannot match the heartache felt by his family - by his wife, Yvonne, their daughter, Deborah, his son-in-law, Nick, and his grandchildren, Michael and Hope. You are all in our thoughts and prayers, not only today, but as we move into the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it is at times like this that we are reminded how little our differences really are. I would like to start by extending our strong and sincere condolences to Yvonne and Deborah, the family of Allan Rowe; to the Liberal caucus; and to all members of this House, who share this place together.

One thing we know is that beyond our political roles, regardless of Party, we are all just people - moms, dads, and grandparents who have other jobs and other lives outside this Chamber. We ask ourselves, how much do we really know about each other? For example, it was only now, at this sad time, that I learned that Allan worked on the *Ocean Ranger* just shortly before becoming a reporter and then reporting on that terrible disaster. We can only imagine how that shaped his life as a reporter and as a citizen and as a politician after that.

I can tell you that I only knew Allan for a short time, but I have some great memories already. Just last Fall, as you know, Mr. Speaker, we had a few heated debates in this Chamber. I remember one particular night, late at night, I was making my points from this side of the House and I could see that I had upset some members opposite. I couldn't figure out why, Mr. Speaker - I thought I was making perfect sense - but Allan

met me behind your Chair after the debate was over, and we had a good talk about the point of view of the Liberal caucus - the government caucus - and our point of view as two people.

I learned then that Allan was a kind and decent man who just wanted to see the right thing done. He was a humble person who treated everybody equally and fairly, who was articulate and had a big heart and a big brain, and was the kind of MLA we want to see on all sides of this House. He has been taken from us all too soon.

Today, again, recognizing how little our differences really are, on behalf of the Official Opposition, I want to say that we will miss Allan as well. We wish to honour his memory, as all members do on all sides, and extend a united condolence to his family. God rest his soul. Thank you. (Applause)

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, it's with deep sadness that I rise in my place at this moment to pay tribute to our former colleague Allan Rowe, the member for Dartmouth South.

I want to start by extending my sincere condolences to his family - his wife, Yvonne, and his daughter, Deborah - on behalf of our caucus. I also want to extend my deepest sympathy to the Premier and the members of the government caucus, who have lost an esteemed colleague and member of their caucus.

In the last number of days I've been very much impressed by the stories of the people who knew Allan the best - people who worked with him for years, people who were mentored by him, people to whom he gave a start in the field of broadcasting. It was evident, listening to people, how well respected and how well loved he was by people who worked most closely with him, and with good reason. These stories were really touching, very amazing. He was an amazing man, and he was taken from this place much too soon, as a relatively new member of the House. He would have had a distinguished career in this Chamber given all that he brought - his caring, his commitment, his dedication, his decency.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those words I associate myself with the comments of the Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition, and I would like to join the other Leaders in asking that all members pause for a moment of silence.

MR. SPEAKER: Would all members please rise for a moment of silence in honour of our colleague, Allan Rowe.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. We will now commence with the daily routine.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie.

MR. LLOYD HINES: May I make an introduction, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. HINES: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the House's attention to the east gallery and recognize the presence of former MLA Sid Prest, one of my constituents from the fine community of Mooseland. (Applause)

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

MR. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present on behalf of the MLA for Eastern Shore. For the first one, the operative clause is:

“We, the undersigned, request that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly take such action as is necessary to reinstate the six staff positions to Porters Lake Provincial Park.”

There are over 300 names on this petition, Mr. Speaker, and I have affixed my name to it.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie.

MR. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the MLA for Eastern Shore, I would like to present the following petition to the House. The operative clause reads:

“We the undersigned, request the Nova Scotia House of Assembly take such action as is necessary to have the regulations covered under the NS Wildlife Act, ammended [sic] to allow lawful Hunting on Sundays of species classified as ‘Game’, and ‘Other Harvestable Wildlife’ as covered under the Act.”

I have affixed my name, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

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

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a notice of fee increases pursuant to the Fees Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

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

Whereas epilepsy is one of the most common neurological conditions and is estimated to affect more than 10,000 Nova Scotians . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. You have a resolution, Mr. Premier? Okay, one moment.

THE PREMIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm eager, it's the first day back.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1173

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas epilepsy is one of the most common neurological conditions and is estimated to affect more than 10,000 Nova Scotians, 300,000 Canadians, and 50 million people worldwide; and

Whereas a young Nova Scotian, Cassidy Megan, started Purple Day for epilepsy in 2008 to help people recognize types of seizures and respond with appropriate first aid; and

Whereas Purple Day is now celebrated across Canada and around the world to increase understanding, reduce stigma, and improve the quality of life for people with epilepsy;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize March 26, 2015, as Purple Day in the Province of Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 69 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 32 of the Acts of 2014. The Health Authorities Act. (Hon. Leo Glavine)

Bill No. 70 - Entitled an Act to Expand the School Vaccination Program to Include the HPV Vaccine for Boys. (Hon. Gordie Gosse)

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, with the unanimous consent of the House, I would ask that one of the bills just introduced, an Act to Amend Chapter 32 of the Acts of 2014, the Health Authorities Act, be added to today's order paper and be considered for second reading debate today.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

We'll add the Health Authorities Act to the order paper for second reading later today.

NOTICES OF MOTION**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

**RUDDICK, MAURICE: AFRICAN HERITAGE MO.
- LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life of Maurice Ruddick who was honoured this year, as part of the 2015 African Heritage Month, with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Maurice Ruddick was internationally known as the Singing Miner, after being trapped underground in the 1958 famous Springhill “bump.” Maurice Ruddick was credited with keeping the trapped miners’ spirits up by using his talents as a singer. Later he became known for confronting the segregation laws in Georgia when the then-Governor of the state invited 19 surviving Springhill miners to vacation at a state-built resort but segregated Mr. Ruddick to a separate campground.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to honour Maurice Ruddick and his family and wish them all the best.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: ROSEWAY HOSP. - ER CLOSURES

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, between September and today, March 26th, emergency room closures at Roseway Hospital have increased nearly 800 per cent, due to the nursing shortage. When the ER is closed, people in Shelburne have to travel up to an hour to see a doctor. This is difficult for people who don’t have access to transportation, for people with fixed income, or for people who are very ill.

I made the minister aware of this problem last Fall, but the problem still exists. While access to front-line care in Shelburne has deteriorated, the McNeil Government has been entirely focused on amalgamating district health authorities . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I’d like to remind the honourable member for Queens-Shelburne to not use the Premier’s name. Go ahead.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While access to front-line care in Shelburne has deteriorated, the government has been entirely focused on amalgamating district health authorities and shuffling health care workers from one union to another. It is time for the Health Minister and the Premier to realize that losing focus on patient care has

allowed problems in the health care system to spiral out of control, with emergency room closures at Roseway Hospital being just one example.

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

The honourable member for Hants East.

100 WOMEN WHO CARE - IMPACT

MS. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, the group 100 Women Who Care was started in 2006 in Michigan, and now there are groups across the U.S. and Canada, including the chapters in Halifax, Truro, and Kings County. Members are a network of like-minded, supportive, engaged, and caring women who commit to meeting and writing a cheque for \$100 four times a year.

Members each nominate a non-profit or charity organization. Three organizations are randomly selected, and they each give a five-minute speech to the members, who then vote. The selected charity is given a group donation of \$10,000 or more.

100 Men Who Give a Damn! - Halifax was started when women jokingly made a comment to male friends that it would be hard to find five men that cared, which proves that behind every man's good idea there probably is a woman. 100 Women Who Care - what a phenomenal way to directly impact lives for the better. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, in our west gallery I would like to ask Mr. Bob Martin and Mr. Dale Sutherland to stand. Bob and Dale are brave survivors of sexual abuse and dedicated advocates for justice. With Bob and Dale are Sandra Mills, author and journalist, and Margaret Mauger, executive director and counselling therapist at the Colchester Sexual Assault Centre. I would ask the House to acknowledge their presence here with us today. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MARTIN, BOB/SUTHERLAND, DALE/CO-SURVIVORS: EFFORTS - THANK

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Martin and Mr. Sutherland and their co-survivors have been mentioned in this House frequently over the past few months

as we've talked about Fenwick MacIntosh and the atrocities he committed against young boys in the Strait area and around the world.

MacIntosh was arrested earlier this month in Nepal. I applaud the efforts of the Nepalese Government, who were able to do in just 48 days what our governments here were unable to do in 15 years. MacIntosh's eventual arrest and conviction, long overdue, were due in large part to the persistent and brave efforts of Mr. Martin and his co-survivors, but sadly, not until more young boys were abused.

I continue to be amazed by their bravery. In coming forward publicly they have helped other survivors of sexual abuse in this province beyond and beyond. So many people have come forward and released their secret and told their story. I am hopeful that we can all learn something from what has happened, and that Mr. Martin and Mr. Sutherland and their co-survivors can continue in their healing process.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: ERs - OVERCROWDING

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, emergency room physicians from across the province have been sounding the alarm about chronic overcrowding in our emergency rooms. Dr. Sam Campbell, the site chief of the Halifax Infirmity ER, says we've seen unprecedented levels of overcrowding and that patients are waiting way longer than the nationally-recommended guidelines.

Dr. Robert Martel says, "Rome is burning and the managers of the system are fiddling with unions and governance structure." It's a wakeup call, Mr. Speaker, and time for this government to put its focus on what really matters: patient care.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

TIR: SNOW CLEARING - CONGRATS.

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the amazing work done by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal this winter. As everyone is aware, February was a month filled with many weather conditions, from snow to rain to freezing rain to flash freezes. All the severe weather played havoc on our roads and made our streets treacherous. Throughout these storms our snowplows were on the road consistently, with little time to rest. They cleared the main roads and then they went on to clear the side streets, trying to keep our road conditions as safe as possible.

We had many calls from constituents throughout the month of February, and DOT was quick to respond with updates on various roads. DOT has kept us informed with email updates during all the storms. Although there were many complaints made, we must

remember the extraordinary conditions this year and the challenges facing DOT to keep these roads clear. Our plow operators spent many hours in their trucks, under horrible conditions, doing their best to clear the roads.

I ask the members of the House to join me in thanking the workers at the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal for their hard work and countless hours spent clearing our roads. Too often they hear only complaints; they do not receive the recognition they deserve for all their hard work.

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

JUSTICE: SEXUAL ASSAULT LEGISLATION - MIN. CORRECT

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, last Fall the Minister of Justice brought forward a flawed piece of legislation. The legislation did not support historical survivors of sexual assault. By not including that retroactivity, the government told survivors of that time that their voices did not matter.

Their voices do matter, Mr. Speaker, and members of this House have a responsibility to do everything in their power, as legislators, to support victims and punish those responsible. So instead of doing the right thing and amending the bill, the minister did maintain at that time that she had brought forward good legislation. Maybe the Department of Justice didn't understand the issue and maybe the minister didn't either.

The minister has failed historical victims of sexual assault and has damaged Nova Scotia's faith in the justice system so I call on that minister to correct this grievance.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

WYNN, CST. DAVE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize the commitment and sacrifice of Constable Dave Wynn. Constable Wynn lived and worked in Bridgewater as a paramedic for many years before leaving in 2009 to pursue a career with the RCMP. I had the honour of working with Dave in my role as an RCMP officer and got to know him very well over this period of time. His legacy will be his three sons - Matthew, Alex and Nathan - who he has been very proud of. Dave was a man who loved life and was a great friend, father and husband to his wife Shelly.

Dave's death shocked the country and this community. Few of us realize the impact Dave had left in our lives until we were faced with sharing our memories at memorial services held across the country. I encourage all of you to continue to thank our first responders for their continued service and to remember a dear friend in Constable Dave Wynn. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

STEWART, DR. RON - JAMES O. PAGE/JEMS AWARD

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dr. Ron Stewart who was recently awarded the James O. Page/JEMS Award that recognizes individuals who have exhibited drive and tenacious effort to improve emergency medical services. Dr. Stewart has become the first physician outside the United States to receive this honour.

Born and raised on the Northside, Dr. Stewart had a stellar career playing many roles, from emergency room physician, community activist, teacher and is well-known to this House as a former Minister of Health. It is a true honour to have the opportunity to congratulate Dr. Ron Stewart on receiving this richly deserved award.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Whitney Pier.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: HPV VACCINE FOR BOYS - FUND

HON. GORDIE GOSSE: Mr. Speaker, it has been almost a year since I first learned of the link between the human papilloma virus and cancer. During that time I discovered that the HPV causes at least 95 per cent of all cervical cancers in women and an increasing number of throat and neck cancers in men. It's very important as a province and as a society that we not only vaccinate girls against this virus but protect our boys as well.

I urge the Minister of Health and Wellness to show leadership and make publicly-funded HPV vaccines available to boys and young men in our province this fiscal year.

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

TIR SNOW REMOVAL: OPERATORS (VICTORIA-THE LAKES) - THANK

MS. PAM EYKING: Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to thank all of our snow-removal equipment operators for all the work that they have done this winter season and will continue to do until Spring has sprung. Snow-removal equipment operators are out all hours of the day and night, ensuring that our roads are cleared as effectively as possible, under very difficult conditions.

I am fortunate to have a solid team of operators in my constituency, well-known for its geographic vastness and often difficult weather conditions. I would like to thank them all sincerely for the hard work they do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

SEXUAL ABUSE VICTIMS: HEALING - ASSIST

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I remember the very first day Bob Martin came to the Legislature last Fall; it was a couple of weeks before this entire Statute of limitations discussion started and was one of my most heartfelt moments in this Legislature.

You could hear a pin drop when my colleague for Inverness gave a stirring speech about Bob's bravery and courage, the courage that it took him to make his name public after years of only being known as Fenwick MacIntosh victim RM.

No matter what, we must never forget that the shame and secrecy of sexual abuse prevents healing, and that we must always strive to do better for victims.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: SHOREHAM VILLAGE REBUILD - PROGRESS

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, it is a fact that we need more long-term care beds in our province. It is also a fact that many of our existing facilities are in dire need of repair.

I was proud to be part of a government that earmarked \$60 million to rebuild long-term care facilities, including Shoreham Village in Chester. However, I'm shocked that under the watch of the McNeil Government there hasn't been so much as a whisper about the progress of this rebuild.

Residents at Shoreham Village are lucky to have caring and committed staff, health care workers, and volunteers. It is sad, though, that they do not have such a caring and committed government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. MACLELLAN: I would like to draw the attention of members of the House to the east gallery where we have today a good Cape Breton boy, Mr. Brian Gallivan, and his wife Gerry. You can stand, Brian.

Brian is our Director of Policy at TIR and has been very instrumental to me on a number of files including Cape Breton Rail, our relationship with the federal government, and with bus services in the province.

Today, after an incredible 41 years of service, Brian is retiring. We want to thank Brian on behalf of all Nova Scotians, and please give a warm round of applause for Brian's tremendous service. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

S. SHORE REG. HOSP. HEALTH SERV. FDN.: RADIOTHON - THANK

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, there are few things more inspiring than when people come together to make a community a better place to live. This has become an annual tradition in Lunenburg County, home of the South Shore Regional Hospital and its health services foundation.

A radio-a-thon organized by the foundation and hosted by radio stations HANK and CKBW on February 13th raised \$150,000 from over 800 pledges toward a journey room for the hospital - the room will serve as a cancer patient resource room. When built, it will be the fourth of its kind in the province and it will be because of the kindness and generosity of people of Lunenburg County, and beyond, who phoned in or dropped by money for a worthy cause.

Of course, who could forget those in the health services foundation who organized this, as well as the radio station for hosting, and those who donated their time to answer phones and take pledges - it was a record year for the radio-a-thon and everyone deserves a record of thank you.

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

MILLS, COURTNEY: EPILEPSY PRESENTATIONS - APPLAUD

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, today is Purple Day, a day designed to raise awareness for epilepsy. With more than 300,000 Canadians living with epilepsy, education is key and one individual is doing her part to do this.

Courtney Mills, a 19-year-old lieutenant with the Cobequid District Fire Brigade, was diagnosed with right temporal lobe epilepsy. She is organizing presentations at local fire departments, in Colchester and Hants Counties, to teach firefighters what to do when someone is having a seizure.

I applaud Courtney's efforts to draw awareness to living and working with epilepsy, and her educational presentations will enhance the care provided by one of our emergency first respondents, our firefighters.

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

NAT. RES.: PARK ROBOTS - TOURISM EFFECTS

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, our parks are the envy of the country. For decades they boasted old-growth forests, vibrant wildlife, and passionate employees. This year Nova Scotia has a brand new offering for tourists coming to enjoy our natural environments. This year, our tourists will get to meet our brand new park robots - or some may call them R2D2s.

Many people in our community have voiced their concerns about these changes. They've told me that cutting these jobs in rural parks will be a negative experience for Nova Scotia tourists and that is why today I intend to ask the Minister of Natural Resources about these jobs cuts. Now I hope he doesn't ask me to go ask Siri, or one of our newly installed R2D2s in our parks.

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

FRANSON, JOSIE: SPELLING BEE - CONGRATS.

MS. JOYCE TREEN: Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, January 29th, South Woodside Elementary held a spelling bee where all the students worked and studied hard for this competition. Josie Franson, a Grade 5 student of the school, competed and won. The regional finals were held at Citadel High School on Saturday, March 7th where Josie competed against other finalists from all over the province. The competition was fierce and all these young students did very well. Their hard work and dedication certainly showed during the event. Congratulations to Josie and all the competitors.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**PARKER, CHARLIE & MARILYN:
GERALD WHITMAN RESCUE - RECOGNIZE**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Charlie Parker, former Pictou West MLA who is credited with saving the life of Gerald Whitman. Mr. Parker was shovelling his driveway when he saw an undistinguishable object lying in the snow on the road. When he investigated he found Mr. Whitman lying face down. Mr. Parker was able to get him inside where his wife Marilyn called 911. The Parkers wrapped him in blankets and gave him a hot drink while waiting for the paramedics to arrive. It was later learned that Mr. Whitman had been in stage 2 hypothermia. It is an honour for me to recognize Charlie and his wife Marilyn for their quick action in assisting Mr. Whitman.

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

PURPLE DAY (03/26/15) - SUPPORT

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, today, March 26th is Purple Day for epilepsy. There are approximately 50 million people worldwide living with the illness and about 300,000 of those people live here in Canada. Epilepsy is a neurological disorder characterized by recurring seizures and with the proper diagnosis and treatment, 70 per cent of Canadians with epilepsy live a healthy life. In the words of Cassidy Megan, the founder of Purple Day for Epilepsy, I just wanted people to know, if you have epilepsy you are not alone. I encourage all Nova Scotians to support March 26th as the day to raise awareness about the condition and show support for those living with epilepsy.

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

**SGT.-AT-ARMS (K.H. GREENHAM):
MILLWOOD ELEM. SCH. VISIT - THANK**

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: Mr. Speaker, in December 2014 I joined Mr. Ken Greenham, CD, Sergeant at Arms of the Nova Scotia Legislature, on a visit to the Grades 2 and 4 classes of Ms. Olsen and Ms. Behie at Millwood Elementary. Mr. Greenham, in uniform and displaying the Mace, brought the essence of the ceremony and symbolism of the Nova Scotia Legislature to Millwood Elementary. The Grade 4 students had their questions prepared and asked about the role of the Sergeant at Arms, the symbolism of the Mace and the general questions on the Nova Scotia Legislature. I would like to thank Mr. Greenham for taking the time to visit with Millwood Elementary School, the students and teachers enjoyed his informative presentation on the Mace and his role as Sergeant at Arms for the Province of Nova Scotia's Legislature. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**MAGIC WINERY BUS (WOLFVILLE)
- TOURISM INNOVATORS AWARD (2014)**

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, Wolfville's Magic Winery Bus, North America's only hop on/hop off wine tour aboard a traditional British double decker bus and one of the top ten 2014 tourist activities in Nova Scotia, has won the 2014 Tourism Commission of Nova Scotia's Tourism Innovators Award. At each stop visitors enjoy a unique atmosphere including tours of vineyards, beautiful scenery, wine tastings and food pairings, a variety of dining experiences, and time to browse through wine shops. Wineries on the tour include Domaine de Grand Pre, Luckett Vineyards, L'Acadie Vineyards, and Gaspereau Vineyards. On behalf of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, I would like to thank and congratulate the Wolfville Business Development Corporation for bringing over \$600,000 in tourism revenue to the Annapolis Valley through this unique and remarkable tourism experience. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

CUMMINGER, JOANNE
- EXCELLENCE AWARD IN LEADERSHIP & PATIENT CARE

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to acknowledge, congratulate, and thank a special person from Pictou East, Joanne Cumminger. After 38 years as a nurse, 12 of those as a cancer navigator, Joanne was settling into retirement when she was recognized for her work with cancer patients. Cancer Care Nova Scotia honoured Joanne at their Celebrating Excellence event. The Excellence Award in Leadership and Patient Care that she received is for furthering cancer prevention, treatment and care for cancer patients and their families.

Joanne has always raised the bar and gone the extra mile for her patients and their families, including a homemade cake for everyone who completed their chemo.

I ask all members of this House to join me in saluting the work of Joanne Cumminger.

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

DENSMORE CONSULTING SERV. - CAN.-N.S. JOB GRANT

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to share the news that a Fall River business has been awarded a Canada-Nova Scotia job grant. Densmore Consulting Services was one of 24 recipients announced as receiving the funding. The Fall River company will receive \$16,000 in funding for employee training and development by embracing new technologies and techniques and deliver high-quality products and services.

This is an investment in more than just the company; this is an investment in the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

AGRIC. (N.S.)/AGRIC. CAN.: DAMAGED ORCHARDS - DISASTER RELIEF

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, recently I travelled to Ottawa to meet with Minister Gerry Ritz and Parliamentary Secretary to Agriculture, MP Gerald Keddy of Agriculture Canada.

I raised the issue of federal disaster relief for Valley apple orchards hard hit by fire blight in 2014. The answer was that this would need to be done in conjunction with our provincial government. Snow levels in Valley orchards and everywhere are now at record

levels. This has delayed winter pruning, a critical step in fire blight control, and means that the disease will likely continue to plague growers this year.

Mr. Speaker, I call on the Department of Agriculture to work with Agriculture Canada to implement a disaster relief for fire blight-damaged orchards in the Valley. Thank you.

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

MCNEIL GOV'T.: PATIENT CARE - FOCUS

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the McNeil Government has allowed the home care wait-list to triple in Capital District Health because they have been preoccupied with picking fights with health care workers and not making front-line health care services a priority. The wait-list for home care in the Capital Region has grown from 86 to 256 since October 2014. The Minister of Health and Wellness has been saying his focus has been improving home care but the numbers indicate otherwise.

The wait-lists in Annapolis Valley, Pictou and Antigonish have all increased since October. Overall, from April 2014 to February 2015, the wait-list province-wide has more than doubled. For over a year the McNeil Government has been completely distracted with fights with health care workers and they have ignored serious issues in patient care. That needs to change, Mr. Speaker.

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

EAST. SHORE MUSQUODOBOIT VALLEY LITERACY NETWORK/ GUYSBOROUGH ASSOC. FOR ADULT LEARNING - IMPORTANCE

MR. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the Eastern Shore-Musquodoboit Valley Literacy Network and the Guysborough Association for Adult Learning. They have been both offering literacy and essential skills development programs to foster continuous, lifelong learning for over two decades. They assist adult learners annually through their day and evening classes for Levels 1 and 2 of the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning program, GED preparation classes, computer literacy classes and individualized training.

All their programs incorporate the essential skills necessary for adults to prepare to enter or re-enter the workforce. These programs not only improve the clients' overall academic ability but equip them with the skills and self-confidence to help them achieve great things. I am very grateful to have such an essential service in our constituency. I can't express enough the importance of adult learning and the difference it can make in people's lives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

VAN NOSTRAND, KATHERINE & STEVEN: BUS. EXPANSION - THANK

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to be on my two feet today to congratulate Katherine and Steve van Nostrand, owners of Belmac Supply Limited in Sydney as they expand their business. This represents a significant investment in its operation and the purchase and renovation of a new building that doubles the commercial footprint.

Belmac recently added four staff and currently has a total of 26 employees. In the new location they will also have expanded hours of operation. The van Nostrands purchased Belmac in 1995 and will celebrate 20 years in business this year. It is my pleasure to thank Katherine and Steve van Nostrand on their recent expansion, which is also a great boost to our economy in Cape Breton. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

BIGELOW, ANN: 3M NATL. TEACHING FELLOW - CONGRATS.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I would like to congratulate Dr. Ann Bigelow, a psychology professor at St. Francis Xavier University on being named a 3M National Teaching Fellow for 2015. The Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education partners with 3M Canada to recognize exceptional contributions to teaching and learning at Canadian universities. Ann was recognized specifically for founding the Service Learning program at St. F.X. and she is referred to as Canada's godmother of Service Learning.

Service Learning is a teaching method that combines both theory and reflective practice. Thanks to Ann's dedication to integrating Service Learning into post-secondary education, the program was launched across the country and is now offered in every province and thousands of students are becoming engaged citizens throughout their pursuit of secondary education.

I would like to personally congratulate Ann for being recognized for her remarkable contribution to education of students, not only in my community but across the province and the country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

FRASER, WILLIE FRANCIS: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, Willie Francis Fraser, of Deepdale, recently celebrated his 100th birthday. With regret I must say that he passed away on March

24th, but what a life he lived. Willie was a dancer. At just five years of age he told his father about a stranger who taught him new dance steps the night before. His father brought out the fiddle to play and Willie Francis had new steps to share. Throughout his life he was in demand to perform his close-to-the-floor style of step dancing. At the age of 81 he was asked to go to Scotland to share his talent and he was welcomed in the land of his ancestors in his native Gaelic tongue. Willie Francis was a miner in Inverness and he raised a loving family of 11 children. How proud we are of him for the values he held and for the joy he shared, evident in the countless smiles he generated with his gift.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

CUMBERLAND ADULT NETWORKING FOR UPGRADING - CONGRATS.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate the Cumberland Adult Networking for Upgrading organization, also known as CANU, who are celebrating their 5th Anniversary. CANU and the GAP program, which they sponsor, have learned to change with the times to complement student needs and after five years they are about to welcome a new family of learners under a new program named right in Cumberland County; this will be called Transitions to Employment and Career Support.

The non-profit organization is dedicated to helping adults achieve higher learning and employment skills and is supported by the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education, Literacy Nova Scotia, and the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning. In the last five years the CANU programs have helped changed over 50 lives and now the centre is calling on those success stories to help usher in the Transitions to Employment and Career Support program.

I am proud to have such an organization in our community and I would like to sincerely thank them for their contributions to adult learning through their programs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

KENNEDY, DYLAN: GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS - WHEELCHAIR WHEELIES

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dylan Kennedy of Little Lorraine, who has received his certificate from the *Guinness World Records* for the longest stationary wheelchair wheelie for balancing for 12 hours and 30 minutes.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg has the floor.

MR. MACLEOD: Would you like me to start over, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Sure thing.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dylan Kennedy of Little Lorraine, who has received his certificate from the *Guinness World Records* for the longest stationary wheelchair wheelie for balancing for 12 hours and 30 minutes. Dylan achieved this at the Civic Centre in Sydney, Nova Scotia, on June 21, 2014. Dylan is the son of Derrick and Lisa Kennedy of Little Lorraine and he is an inspiration to all who know him and we all wish Dylan well as he moves forward in his future. He truly is an exceptional young man. Mr. Speaker, this young man is 6 feet 11 inches and wears a size 19 shoe, thank you.

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

PROV. VOL. RECOGNITION AWARDS: RECIPIENTS - THANK

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the upcoming month of April is traditionally when we hold our volunteer recognition ceremonies and awards presentations. I am planning to attend this year's provincial awards where this year's provincial recipients are Neil Pothier, Digby; Stacey Doucette, Weymouth; and Jocelyne Comeau, Meteghan River. Also, the municipalities will be holding their awards ceremonies in Digby and Clare, recognizing the many great citizens groups, and businesses that we have in our communities.

There are many things that make a community successful, but none more than the important, dedicated hard work of a volunteer. We're all so fortunate to have such a strong core of good citizens that provide the delivery of so many successful volunteer groups. Thank you very much to all of them.

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

LADY WALLACE RESCUE: HUNTIN' & FISHIN' CREW - THANK

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, on November 30, 2014, the *Lady Wallace* and its four crew members headed out to sea to set its last load of traps, when the boat suddenly listed and began taking on water. Unable to make a mayday call, the crew got into their PFD gear, climbed into a life raft, and shot off two flares. Luckily, someone saw the flares and within a few minutes the lobster boat *Huntin' & Fishin'* was at their side and brought the crew of the *Lady Wallace* aboard. It was minutes from the time that the crew realized the boat was going down to the time it sank. Proper training prevented a tragedy.

I want to offer my personal thanks to the crew of the *Huntin' & Fishin'* and to everyone who played a role in bringing these fishermen safely home to their families.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

**BEDFORD BLUES BANTAM AA: NATL. CHAMPIONSHIP (04/15)
- WELL WISHES**

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the young women of the Bedford Blues Bantam AA hockey team on their provincial championship win earlier this month. The team played a very competitive round-robin at the provincial championships in Glace Bay, ending the series with a four-win/two-tie record. They ended up in the final against the Valley Wild team, which our Bedford team had never beaten.

That final game was a nail-biter and ended in a tie. They went into overtime when our girls scored and brought home the gold medal. Now the Bedford Blues Bantam AA team will head off to Paradise, Newfoundland and Labrador, for the national championships in early April, and we wish them luck.

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

OAKE, BAILEY: CBRM PEDESTRIAN SAFETY GROUP - INVOLVEMENT

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Bailey Oake for doing what she can to raise awareness about crosswalk safety within the Cape Breton Regional Municipality. Bailey was in a serious motor vehicle/pedestrian accident while living in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

While in Newfoundland and Labrador, she spearheaded a number of rallies to improve crosswalk safety. Now that Bailey has returned home to Cape Breton, she is actively involved in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality's Pedestrian Safety Group. Thank you, Bailey, for all your community service.

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

MEGAN, CASSIDY: PURPLE DAY FOUNDER - CONGRATS.

MR. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate Cassidy Megan, the founder of Purple Day, from Shad Bay. She started this initiative - originally she asked her mother where to do it. She wanted to go worldwide, and her mother said, let's just start locally. It is now worldwide. It's in every continent, including Antarctica, and just this past year she did a walk around the Mall of America in Minnesota. Vancouver City Hall is lit up, and tonight, Halifax City Hall will be lit up in purple for three days.

I want to congratulate Cassidy and congratulate all the members in the House for recognizing this important day.

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

**SCHENKELS, MARIKA: “BECAUSE I AM A GIRL” CLUB
- SUCCESS CONGRATS.**

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to offer congratulations to South Colchester Academy’s Marika Schenkels for initiating the Because I Am a Girl Club. This club is part of an international campaign spearheaded by aid organization PLAN, and is intended to address the issue of gender discrimination around the world.

Empowered by the concept, Ms. Schenkels started a club at her own school. Meetings consist of games, building friendships, and discussing pertinent issues. I encourage other schools to develop this worthwhile initiative, and I congratulate Marika on the success of her Because I Am a Girl Club and thank her for her spirit, commitment, and dedication.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West, 20 seconds.

FLEURY, THEO: BRAVERY - THANK

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, on January 28th the Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre had the pleasure of hosting former NHL player Theo Fleury for a book signing. Mr. Fleury recently released a second book, co-written by Kim Barthel, titled *Conversations with a Rattlesnake* - a book meant to inspire and help others who’ve dealt with personal trauma, as Mr. Fleury has.

He speaks candidly about being . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Members’ Statements has expired. We will now move on to Orders of the Day, with Oral Questions Put By Members to Ministers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The time is now 2:01 p.m.; we’ll finish up at 2:51 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: USER FEES - INCREASES

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Today we learn that the government is going to increase 1,400 taxes and user fees in an attempt to raise another \$8 million a year out of the pockets of hard-working Nova Scotians. This directly breaks a Liberal campaign promise, as in the 2009 election the Premier promised to freeze user fees and in 2013 his campaign said, and I will table this although it's not mentioned in the Liberal platform in 2013, a Party spokesperson says there will not be an increase in user fees. I'll table that for the benefit of the House.

I have a simple question for the Premier, why is he increasing user fees after promising not to?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the Progressive Conservative Leader acknowledged the fact that it was not part of our campaign commitment more recently as we were given the great pleasure by the people of the Province of Nova Scotia to form the government.

I can tell you though, Mr. Speaker, while in Opposition I asked many times from the former Progressive Conservative Government and the New Democratic Government in this province about the user fees and they continued to tell me it's cost recovery. So what we've done is we've taken those two Parties at their word and used CPI to raise them.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it's not the word of the Opposition that's in question today, it's the word of the Premier.

A spokesperson of his in 2013 said there would be no increase in user fees. Today we see an \$8 million increase in user fees. When he was in Opposition, the Premier himself said that user fee is just a fancy word for a tax - and I will table that for the benefit of the House.

Mr. Speaker, my question is will the Premier admit to what he said in Opposition - is it true today, is a user fee just another form of tax, a new tax on Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as the honourable member would know, former members of a Party who are in government clearly indicated that user fees were cost recovery. I heard members of the New Democratic Party tell us that in the last four years.

He well knows that the increase today is the cost of living, Mr. Speaker, which is a normal cost recovery piece to these fees. Nova Scotians want and rely on those services.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians never have to get anything from me in writing - when I tell them we deliver, unlike the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, that's ironic because it is only the word of the Premier that is in question here. His campaign said there would be no increase in user fees. He is the one who said that a user fee is just another word for a tax. His government has ruled out any attempt to hold the line on spending, as the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board says. Now we know that when we talk about tough times, the tough times are limited only to the taxpayers of Nova Scotia.

Will the Premier admit that his plan is simply to increase their taxes and their user fees and break the word of his campaign spokesperson, his own platform from elections past?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and all members of government for doing the tremendous work so that we, as a government, can deliver a budget to the people of this province which will show a clear path forward which will begin to rein in spending in this province, when it grew under both the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party. Finally Nova Scotians got a government that is going to do exactly what they said they were going to do in the campaign.

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

PREM.: HEALTH CARE REORGANIZATION - CHAOS ACKNOWLEDGE

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. Last Fall the Premier said his government was on a course to reorganize the health care system. On September 30th in this House - I'll table the Hansard - he told Nova Scotians that he was introducing legislation which was about protecting patients, it's about protecting workers.

Mr. Speaker, since that legislation was introduced we've seen unprecedented numbers of nurses retire, causing serious shortages. We've had the first code orange called at the Halifax Infirmary since the now-Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development was the then-Minister of Health, DHAs are over budget, ERs are closed more than normal . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Does the honourable member have a question?

MS. MACDONALD: Yes, Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is when will he acknowledge or explain how his plan to reorganize health care has done anything but create chaos for patients and health care workers?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker I want to thank health care workers across this province who have congratulated this government on finally tearing down the walls in administration from one end of this province to the other, looking at the health care budget

as one budget delivering services across this province. We are going to continue to work with health care workers in Nova Scotia to ensure that Nova Scotians get access to health care where and when they need it.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, while the Premier was picking fights with health care workers, our health care system has been deteriorating. Home care waits have gone up by 80 per cent, long-term care waits are at a record high, and ERs are either overcrowded or closed altogether. You don't have to take my word for it. A very reputable ER doctor, Dr. Robert Martel, said on CBC that "Rome is burning and the managers of the system are fiddling with unions and governance structures."

My question to the Premier is when can Nova Scotians expect a different approach to health care from the Premier and his government, one that shows respect for health care workers and puts the focus on patient care where it belongs?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, all of the decisions that our government has made around health care have been squarely focused on the patient and working with health care providers across this province, but we have a responsibility to protect all Nova Scotians when it comes to the collective agreements and bargaining for a fair collective agreement for all Nova Scotians and we will continue to do so.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, it is becoming crystal clear to Nova Scotians that the Premier and his government had no idea what they were doing when it came to improving the health care system. He and his government didn't respect workers and patient care is getting worse. In their futile effort to save money, they have thrown the entire system into chaos. My question to the Premier is when will the Premier recognize that his cost-cutting measures are forcing Nova Scotians to pay the high price of quality patient care?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I completely disagree with the Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party. Quality health care is alive and well in the Province of Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

JUSTICE - LIMITATION OF ACTIONS ACT: AMENDMENTS - TIME FRAME

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Survivors are here. Mr. Sutherland has travelled from across the country to be here. These people have been waiting for over 20 years. Will the minister ensure that the amendments to the Limitation of Actions Act that she will be introducing tomorrow will, with the unanimous consent of this Legislature, pass as the first order of government business tomorrow?

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for the question. As I indicated to Mr. Martin when I spoke with him yesterday, and met with him again today, the amendments will be introduced tomorrow and it is my hope that all Parties will agree to pass the bill tomorrow.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, our goal is to have these changes made. We want to make sure that it is the first order of business tomorrow because that is what these people are here for and we believe they deserve that. I and many others question why this amendment was not included in the minister's original limitations Act, or why a similar amendment proposed to the government was not accepted and passed last Fall. The minister met with Mr. Martin this morning and has heard his story. Does the minister now understand why this change is so important to survivors of sexual abuse and sexual assault?

MS. DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I will get directly to the question that has been asked, and that is this. When the bill was introduced by the member opposite, I needed time to ensure that and review that provision that was submitted by the member the last week of the House. I needed to ensure that we can update and correct the jurisdictional information that I had in my possession at the time, and thank God - I'm very grateful that I did take the time, because what I found out was that the provision was different in the various provinces across the country. What I will be introducing tomorrow will further strengthen the protection for victims and will broaden that provision. Thank you.

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

PREM. - HEALTH CARE DELIVERY: DHA BUDGETS - CORRELATION

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. This week the McNeil Government ran an ad in *The Chronicle Herald* boasting that it was making the health care system more affordable. I'll table that. The evidence suggests the exact opposite. In fact, according to a March 3rd *allNovaScotia.com* story, over the past year, while patient care has deteriorated across our province, DHA spending has ballooned, and it's currently \$26 million over budget.

My question is, can the Premier please explain to this House how allowing DHAs to go over budget by \$26 million is making health care delivery more affordable?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the ad that the Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party introduced was a message to Nova Scotians to clearly tell them that as of April 1st the walls inside our health care system will finally be torn down, and they will see a much more efficient health care system.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the people of the province will need more than ads in the newspaper to tell them there are improvements in the health care system. They'd like to see the wait-lists reduced. According to the same *allNovaScotia.com* story, the

Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness wrote top DHA administrators in late February asking them to control costs because “The magnitude of this forecast is concerning.”

So my question to the Premier is, why did his government wait until the very last month of the fiscal year to ask soon-to-be out-of-work administrators to control spending?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party. After experiencing the opportunity and being given the great privilege by Nova Scotians to come to government, we’ve discovered very quickly that we will not take an accounting lesson from the New Democratic Party when it comes to balancing books.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: SEXUAL VIOLENCE STRATEGY - STATUS

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Recently Nova Scotians learned about a Pictou woman who waited three days for a sexual assault examination. Mr. Speaker, she wasn’t even able to shower for three days while she waited for the SANE team to travel from Antigonish to the Aberdeen Hospital. Nova Scotians have also been waiting over a year for the provincial sexual violence strategy, and one would wonder if the minister does not consider it urgent when he states that it will be completed sometime before the end of this mandate. I’ll table that statement.

So I’m asking the minister if he will provide Nova Scotians with an update on the provincial sexual violence strategy, including specific dates on when real help and services will be implemented.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I want to thank the member opposite for the question, one that certainly has been very significant in terms of media coverage, but more importantly, drawing attention to a gap that does exist in service.

I’m not prepared to say it is one of those single situations that come along, which is unfortunate. It is for my department to recognize that there are improvements to be made. But what I’m very pleased about - and maybe this is where the next part of the question can go - is that under the leadership of the Minister of Community Services we are going to see a comprehensive program developed and put in place, and I think you’ll see it long before the end of our mandate. Thank you.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, services are not in place for these victims who need them and they need them now. There are only two SANE teams in the whole province. Margaret Mauger, executive director of the Colchester Sexual Assault Centre says the gap

in services is unacceptable. She says, "To me, if somebody is wanting a rape kit done, they should be able to access that at any hospital. Period." I'll table that.

In the Spring of 2013 while in Opposition, the MLA for Bedford asked the NDP Government to address the lack of SANE and medical services for victims of sexual assault. She asked, and I quote, "What advice does the Minister of Justice have for women who experience sexual violence in Yarmouth, for women in Cape Breton - how can they access these services?" I will table that statement.

So here we are, two years later, under the Liberal Government's watch . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Does the member have a question?

MS. MACFARLANE: Yes, I do. I will also ask the Minister of Justice, what advice does she have for women who experience sexual violence in Yarmouth, for women in Cape Breton - how can they access these services?

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that question. Again, with the help of the Ministry of Community Services and the Ministry of Health and Wellness, we have different programs available and we would be very honoured and privileged to have them address those questions to us and we can certainly send them the telephone numbers of people to contact. Thank you.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: HOME CARE WAIT LISTS - ADDRESS

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. When the Minister of Health and Wellness tries to explain why he has put a moratorium on new long-term care beds in the province, he states that the answer is not more beds but more home care. Yet in early March we learned that the wait-lists for home care in the Capital District alone has grown from 86 individuals to 254 individuals since October 2014. I will table that.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, when will the Minister of Health and Wellness tackle the growing home care wait-lists in Capital Health and throughout the province?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for a very, very important question that deals with the seniors in our province. One of the ways we know we can clearly improve the wait-list is by having the very most appropriate assessments to be done. We know that people have put themselves on the wait-list simply because of the long wait-list. Now we will have people go on the list based on their need and their risk. That is going to make a more accurate and a very real list. I expect to see it come down as we implement this new policy.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I just want the minister to be clear that I am talking about home care, not the long-term care wait-list. I don't think anybody is going on the home care wait-list just to go on the home care wait-list, Mr. Speaker. Province-wide the wait-list has doubled since last April and things are especially bad here in HRM. The minister has previously suggested that a competitive model of home care will reduce that wait time and those wait-lists but when they tried this in Ontario it resulted in home care workers leaving the profession and a race to the bottom in wages.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, when will the Minister of Health and Wellness realize his competitive model for home care tendering will result in upheaval, job losses and a race to the bottom in home care wages?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Yes, he did ask about the home care sector which we know does have a wait-list that we know we can make improvements on. One thing I can offer the member opposite is that we don't need to take Ontario's lessons here, just like we didn't look to Alberta for guidance on restructuring our health care system.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

AGRIC.: GREENHOUSE OPERATORS - COMPENSATION

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Greenhouses across our province provide good employment and contribute to our provincial economy. This winter with the significant snowfall and high winds, our greenhouses have suffered millions of dollars' worth of damage. One example is the Avon Valley Floral in Falmouth.

For many of these businesses this cost of damage may be very difficult to recover from. The minister has indicated that greenhouses will not be receiving compensation and turned down a request from Greenhouse Nova Scotia - and I will table that CBC article on that.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is, why has the minister turned his back on greenhouse operators?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, indeed we haven't met with the Greenhouse Growers Association yet where that meeting is scheduled. The Federation of Agriculture is working on a study to see exactly how much damage was caused to greenhouses and barns, and other buildings associated with these great storms and collapses of all those buildings, before we move forward on any kind of approach of how we're going to handle this.

MR. LOHR: I thank the minister for his answer and for the fact that he says they're working with the Federation of Agriculture. My question is, will the minister specifically work with the Greenhouse Growers of Nova Scotia?

MR. COLWELL: As I indicated in the first part of my answer, it is in progress now. We fully intend to meet with them and the meeting may already be set up - I haven't checked my schedule today.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: WAIT-LIST REDUCTION - MIN. PLAN

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. I have to ask myself what the government is doing to address the real problem with the stagnant wait-list for access to long-term care beds. Since the Fall of 2014, the wait-list is at a record high, hovering around 2,500 people waiting at home and in hospitals across the province. It makes me think that maybe the Health and Wellness Minister has been a little distracted over the last year.

So I would like to ask the minister, if the minister has a plan to reduce the wait-list, why haven't we seen this wait-list grow smaller over the last year?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I guess the member opposite would like a second round on this particular question, so here we go.

In terms of getting the proper wait-list the member opposite knows that last year one-third of all people who were called by the department to go into a nursing home weren't ready to go. A random sample of the 2,500 on the list shows that as high as 46 per cent were not ready to go into a home. So what we did, as of March 2nd, is work on what is the need, what is the risk of a senior, and make sure that they get on the list and get in a home as quickly as possible.

MR. WILSON: So the solution really is to move them from one wait-list to another wait-list, which I think Nova Scotians will see through that plan. When a senior is confronted with an open long-term care bed, they are given one business day to decide to take that bed or get booted off that list for 90 days. This is a new policy brought in under the minister as a way to reduce the number of people on the wait-list. This forces our province's seniors to decide what to do with homes, their pets, their belongings in eight hours or less.

So my question through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, where is the McNeil Government's compassion for the life-changing decisions seniors have to make when entering long-term care, and will he change that policy of deferral?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, I think you will find through the Department of Health and Wellness, and Seniors, that in fact we are reaching for new ways of looking after our seniors, whether it's in a nursing home or providing long-term care and meeting as many of their needs as possible with the refresh of the Continuing Care Strategy, the dementia strategy, that will come out here very shortly, Nova Scotians will see that our compassion and concern is going to in fact be seen in the actions of this government.

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

EMO: BUS./PROPERTY - DAMAGE LIST/COSTS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister responsible for the Emergency Management Office.

I think everybody has noticed the winter storms we've been having have been something Nova Scotians have not experienced in many years. You know those stories that your parents always tell you, that the snowbanks were up to the power lines and you didn't believe? Well I guess you believe them now because we have definitely seen that over the last couple of months. Roofs have sustained widespread damage and collapse, for example the Halifax Curling Club, roofs at greenhouse operations across Nova Scotia, six barns where roofs collapsed in Milford, Hants County area in mid-February, and damages continue to pile up. And now we have 40 millimetres of rain being forecast in parts of Nova Scotia.

My question to the Minister of EMO, does the minister have a complete list of damage done to businesses and property of individuals and a total cost of these damages across the province?

HON. MARK FUREY: Specific to the member opposite and the question, we do not have a total number of events and the costs associated to those events specific to the winter storms. The one event that we do have total costs for is the excessive rains of December 9th to 12th. We have applied for disaster financial assistance through the federal-provincial government program. I'm pleased to say that that submission will be honoured and \$1.5 million in financial support will be redirected back to homeowners and small businesses that are impacted.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the list of calls I'm sure are lengthy with emergency officials responding frequently to both collapsed roofs and the fear of collapsing roofs. A partial collapse of the Colchester Community Workshop is yet another example of that.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada has cautioned Nova Scotians that not everyone will be covered. My question to the minister - he has announced the disaster relief as he

just said in his first answer, the relief of flooding back in December in several counties across the province. When will disaster relief be made available to assist Nova Scotia businesses and residents who have been hit exceptionally hard by this year's snow?

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, the individual storms that the minister opposite has referenced certainly have caused extensive damage. As we speak, the circumstances of individual storms would be on record within individual municipalities. We continue to engage municipalities as to the impact these storms have had and as we speak there has been no submission to our provincial Emergency Management Office for financial support.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: ROSEWAY HOSP. - ER CLOSURES

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I attended a community meeting in Shelburne to discuss the emergency room closures at Roseway Hospital. Between September and today ER closures have increased by nearly 800 per cent over the previous year, due to nurses' shortage. I will table that document.

Mr. Speaker, I made the minister aware of this problem last Fall but apparently he has been too preoccupied with picking fights with health care workers because nothing has been done to fix this situation. My question, Mr. Speaker, through you, is why hasn't the minister been able to find a solution to keep the ER at Roseway Hospital open for the residents of Shelburne County?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, yes, a community meeting did draw attention to the ER, also I think to the requirements around a medical clinic in the community of Shelburne. In terms of the medical community, what I can offer the member is that we will be getting down to business a lot quicker than his four and a half years of government where nothing was done.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Well it's a good sound bite, Mr. Speaker, but we kept the ERs open during our term. When the ER is closed, people in Shelburne have to travel up to an hour to see a doctor. This is difficult for people who don't have access to transportation, for people with a fixed income or for people who are very ill. Then, when they arrive in Yarmouth, for example, they find that the emergency room is filled to the brim and wait for hours, up to eight hours. It's a domino effect, Mr. Speaker.

My question is, Mr. Speaker, when is this minister going to start to pay attention to front-line patient care and make sure the ERs stay open in Roseway Hospital?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, we know that nurses, especially from the satellite program in Yarmouth, are going to give us a very good

opportunity to have local or regional nurses become available as they graduate from that program.

I think, again, we have the opportunity with those who live in the local area to be trained in Yarmouth in the Dalhousie Nursing Program, and those graduates will help solve some of that dilemma at Roseway.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

ENERGY - HYDRAULIC FRACTURING: INDUSTRY SUPPORT - CONFIRM

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, Minister of Acadian Affairs, Minister responsible for the Utility and Review Board Act, Minister of Communications Nova Scotia, Minister responsible for the Gateway Initiative, Minister responsible for the Innovation Corporation Act, Minister responsible for Nova Scotia Business Incorporated (Applause) But wait, there's more - all in his capacity as the Minister of Energy.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the member have a question?

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, following his meetings with industry stakeholders over the past several months, does the new minister agree with the former minister that industry supports the ban on hydraulic fracturing?

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, one of the things I can say is that I had the pleasure of meeting with representatives from Shell and BP, who were very excited about the drilling that is going to take place off the coast of Nova Scotia and the potential there. The fact is that these companies have cancelled drilling programs in various parts of the world due to the downturn in the price of oil. Instead, they have continued to show their interest in Nova Scotia. They are quite excited by it. Our staff is working very closely with them, and we look forward to seeing drilling taking place on our offshore this summer.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, certainly we are all excited about the offshore potential, but over on this side of the House we also recognize the onshore potential. While we stand by and wait for this government to do something with the ban, we hear in the news now that it's a conditional ban, a temporary ban, all kinds of variances on what type of ban this government has implemented and variances on what "high volume" means.

My question today is, can the new minister provide this House with his definition of "high-volume hydraulic fracturing"?

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the honourable member is that staff at Energy have been working closely with jurisdictions both in Canada and the United States that do have experience with fracturing. As a result of that they are working very closely

with them to see what process they have in place from a regulatory viewpoint, what definitions are being used. That work is underway, and as soon as that is completed, we will be sharing it with all Nova Scotians.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: BARRINGTON PASSAGE DIALYSIS CLINIC
- MIN. ASSIST**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. As the minister is surely aware, a group has been formed in Barrington Passage to advocate for a dialysis clinic in that area. Lee Goreham-Smith and David Cleaver are co-chairs. Over 90 people interested in this issue met with the Barrington Municipal Council to get their support, which of course they did. This is an important issue for many residents who have to receive dialysis, who are in renal failure in the area.

Will the minister commit to work with this group to help the residents in renal failure in our area to receive this life-or-death procedure closer to home?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite who is also a former Minister of Health - he knows a great deal about the renal program in the province. It is one of our life-sustaining programs, and it is very often the wear and tear, especially on elderly people who have to go a great distance to receive this treatment - that communities and individuals start to take a look at what can be done closer to home. I was very pleased to meet yesterday with the good representatives from the Barrington area to start to take a look at the needs in their community, and over the next while, we'll be providing sound information on which they can start to act.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: As the minister alluded to, residents in Shelburne County must travel over an hour to Yarmouth to receive this service, and that's in good weather. This year we know that the weather hasn't been that great and there have been stories of some of these individuals actually getting stuck in the snow and having to turn around. We know that is not an option when it comes to dialysis. They need to have that service that day or, quite honestly, they get sicker and end up in an emergency room and admitted to hospital.

Primary care is continually changing and the committee feels that this service is needed in our area. We have a strong group, supportive municipal councils and at least 10 residents who need the help of this government. Please do what you can as a government to make this happen and I can tell you that I would be happy to work with the minister as I was very happy to meet with him yesterday with that group. So what can we do to make this all happen?

MR. GLAVINE: To the member opposite what I can commit to is to provide him and the working group in Barrington with some of the basic requirements before you can look at meeting what is necessary for a dialysis unit of some size, of some magnitude, but also I'll go a little further, Mr. Speaker, and in the not-too-distant future we will get down to meet with the folks in Barrington and explore first-hand what the needs of that community are.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Whitney Pier.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - HPV VACCINE: FUNDING EXPANSION - DETAILS

HON. GORDIE GOSSE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you and to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Almost five months ago the Minister of Health and Wellness told my colleague from Sackville-Cobequid that he had set his department in motion to look at vaccinating boys in the HPV and promised to have further details on this very shortly; I will table that. Unfortunately the minister has not provided us with any further details or confirmed whether he has included the expansion of this vaccine in his department's budget.

My question through you, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Health and Wellness please tell us how much of his department's budget is dedicated to expanding the HPV vaccine this fiscal year?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: To the member opposite I want to first commend him for the great advocacy that he has done for getting this vaccine available to young Nova Scotians, to boys in particular, since there is a program for girls in our school system. So this along with meningitis and a number of other vaccines, it has been very much a part of the work that our department has been doing to offer Nova Scotians greater access and availability of vaccines, which in fact can prevent, as we know, the Human Papilloma Virus. So what I want to say to the member opposite this time is stay tuned - our budget is not too far away.

MR. GOSSE: I will thank the Minister of Health and Wellness for that answer. Mr. Speaker, according to the National Post, Nova Scotia took a leadership role in 2007, and I was at that announcement at Whitney Pier Memorial Junior High when we announced that we will vaccinate young women for HPV. It has been a very successful campaign. My question through you Mr. Speaker, how much longer will we have to wait before the minister takes action to protect the health of girls and boys equally in Nova Scotia?

MR. GLAVINE: I want to say to the member opposite, we are getting pretty close to having the ability to make some announcement on where we will be going with this particular vaccine and if there is an occasion for an announcement, I would hope that the member opposite from Sydney-Whitney Pier would join me when we get to that point.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

FIN.: CARBON TAX - IMPLICATIONS

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question today is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. The minister has been noncommittal on whether or not she will introduce a carbon tax in Nova Scotia, yet at the same time she has admitted that her department is reviewing the implications of such a tax; she is reviewing what might happen. What can the minister tell us today that she has learned so far about the possible implications of a carbon tax on Nova Scotians?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to talk a little bit about some of the recommendations from the tax review and one of them was the introduction of a pollution tax. I said yesterday in my speech at the Halifax Chamber of Commerce that there are a lot of issues in that tax review, a lot of recommendations that need more study, further study. That is certainly one that I think has a lot of implications, the member opposite would agree.

In terms of the analysis right now, all I've looked at is the experience in British Columbia, which is in the report, which has been a positive experience. Tax rates have come down for individuals and for corporations. We know that it's a different jurisdiction in Nova Scotia and we're still looking at the differences. Thank you.

MR. HOUSTON: We did run the numbers ourselves - we applied B.C.'s carbon tax to the coal consumed by Nova Scotia Power. By applying the B.C. carbon tax formula to coal fuel used to produce electricity, it would cost ratepayers in Nova Scotia over \$130 million, a potential 10 per cent increase in rates. So what worked in B.C. may well not work here.

My question for the minister is, will the minister admit that a 10 per cent increase in power rates from a carbon tax is completely unreasonable and unnecessarily harsh on Nova Scotians?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have a further chat on this. The fact of the matter is that doing numbers like that is fear-mongering. I spoke yesterday about the need to find other ways to get the revenue for our province. I spoke about our demographic challenges, about the declining number of people in the workforce and our reliance on income tax.

I would hope that members of the Opposition will also be part of those discussions as we look for a sustainable way forward for all future governments in this province, for future years, as the province goes along - that's exactly what we need.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, one last point on this is that if you read the tax review it said very clearly that the recommendation was not to touch any home heating or electricity for the first five years because of sustainability. (Applause)

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

NAT. RES. - RURAL N.S.: JOB CUTS - NUMBERS

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Natural Resources, or should I say the minister responsible for the depopulation of rural Nova Scotia, now that he has introduced self-service machines, or as some locals call them R2-D2s, into our provincial parks.

Mr. Speaker, before we've even seen this year's budget, the McNeil Government has eliminated - I repeat, eliminated - 80 jobs from rural parks and tourist destinations. Will the minister give us any indication how many more jobs in rural Nova Scotia he intends to eliminate from rural communities or do we have to wait until April 9th?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the fact is, as the Premier and the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board say, we have a lot of work to do to ensure that future generations in this province are not burdened by our current financial challenges. We need to review our programs, we need to review what we're doing. Parks were part of that. In fact, the seven parks out of the 30 that I believe we have that are camping that were impacted have very low occupancy rates.

The park in the member opposite's riding has a 20 per cent occupancy rate. We're losing on average \$3 for everyone who goes into the park. We know that system is not sustainable. We know parks are important to Nova Scotians, that's why we want to have a system in place that's sustainable, so we can be proud of those parks for years to come.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, quickly, R2-D2s do not pay taxes. The budget job-cut threats aren't only coming from Natural Resources. We've also seen the Minister of Municipal Affairs threaten to cut from the Land Registry, the Registry of Motor Vehicles and from the Registry of Joint Stocks.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Natural Resources, the minister responsible for R2-D2s, now that he has already been through one round, exactly what advice has the Minister of Natural Resources given to the Minister of Municipal Affairs on how best to slash more good jobs in rural Nova Scotia?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, all of our Cabinet colleagues work together to address the fiscal challenges we have. I work very closely with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, along with all my other colleagues on this side of the House.

The fact is that our parks, there are some points in the year where there were more staff in those parks than actual campers. It is a very difficult decision obviously when there are employees who are impacted by these decisions, but if we want all our parks to stay in place for years to come, to be sustainable and to be these places that we can be so proud of, Mr. Speaker, we need to move to a different model. This model has worked in other parts of the country and in the United States to great success.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

AGRIC. - CARBON TAX: FARMERS - EFFECTS

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. A member of the B.C. Grain Producers Association told the B.C. Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services that the average farmer pays an extra \$4,300 in carbon tax - and I will table that. Taxing our hard-working farmers, many of whom are struggling to make ends meet is not the answer. Not only would a carbon tax take more money out of pockets of farmers, it would make them less competitive compared to farmers in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is, does the minister agree that it is irresponsible to unfairly penalize farmers and place the agriculture sector in jeopardy through the introduction of a carbon tax?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Thank you very much for that question. Anything that adds cost to the farming industry would be a detriment. However, that's a decision that would have to be made on the facts of whether it would, indeed, cost the farmers more and we'd have to look at it at the time.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that answer.

In his submission to the carbon tax review in 2012 in British Columbia, a B.C. greenhouse industry representative said that a five-acre greenhouse would pay \$50,000 in carbon tax annually. The Ivany report does not tell us to kill our rural industries through excessive taxation, we need our farmers and agricultural businesses in order to get the provincial economy back on track and provide good jobs for hard-working Nova Scotians.

My question for the minister is, will the minister today provide reassurance to Nova Scotia's agricultural sector by confirming that the Liberal Government will not introduce a carbon tax?

MR. COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that we're doing everything we can to make the Nova Scotia farming industry more profitable and more in touch and, indeed, more cost-effective than it is today.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: SHOREHAM VILLAGE REBUILD - TIME FRAME

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

My Party had a plan for taking care of seniors. It involved many things, including building new long-term care beds and renovating existing ones.

In 2013 we announced \$16 million for rebuilds to various long-term care homes, including Shoreham Village in Chester. Mr. Speaker, my question through you is, can the Minister of Health and Wellness please tell us when the much-needed rebuild will begin at Shoreham Village?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what I want to convey to the member opposite, and to all members of the House and Nova Scotians, is that our replacement of aging nursing homes, we now have a report that the department has put together over the last months. I think the member opposite would also know there are some priorities in the province and those certainly will be addressed first.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, it's hard and sad to hear such a vague answer when a commitment was made by that Party to fulfill capital projects that were announced by our Party and that is now not happening. We know he is not committed to creating any more long-term beds and at least not even improving the current ones.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you is, how long will our seniors and their families have to wait until the McNeil Government commits to providing them with the long-term care that they said they were going to commit to?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, again to the member opposite, we needed to put in place a plan that would work for Nova Scotians, one that would be sustainable for the long term. Our ability to go out and borrow \$400 million or \$500 million to replace all of the nursing homes that are scheduled over the next number of years is not realistic, but we do know that this year some of our first rebuilds will get underway.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount, 30 seconds.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. This June thousands of students from across Nova Scotia will graduate high school with a plan to continue their education in September at a post-secondary institution. Unfortunately parents and students have no idea what the full cost of their degree will be due to uncertainty around university tuition fees. My question to the

minister is, can the minister confirm whether the cap on tuition will increase or remain in place?

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 69.

Bill No. 69 - Health Authorities Act.

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

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I now move that Bill No. 69 be read a second time. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to speak to all members of the House today about amendments to the Health Authorities Act. These amendments allow an historic agreement between health care unions and government to take effect. Under these amendments, councils of unions will be able to represent health care workers at the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all members of this House are well aware that getting here has not been a straightforward process. We have always been clear about our direction for health care; our goal is less administration, more focus on the patients. We have created a unified health authority, the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and given it an important job: to reimagine the way we deliver health care, and that's where its focus needs to be. In order to do that, we needed a streamlined collective bargaining process.

In the past health care employers were signing new contracts many months or even years after the original contract had expired. We wanted to make sure that the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK could avoid confusing and inefficient bargaining. It shouldn't take years to negotiate and reach settlements. It didn't make sense, Mr. Speaker, but we now have a better approach.

One key point for our government is that each bargaining process will be led by one union. For example the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union will lead negotiations for all nurses across the province. That means that when the IWK and the Nova Scotia Health Authority come to the table to bargain, they will know that one lead union speaks for the entire council. One lead union will get consensus before coming to the table to bargain. One lead union will go to all employees in that unit for a province-wide vote, either to ratify a collective agreement or to get a strike mandate.

That is the important benefit to this historic agreement, but it's not the only one. Last summer when we were trying to reach agreement with the unions we wanted all nurses - NPs, RNs, and LPNs - in the same bargaining unit. The unions couldn't get there at that time but we have that now. Nurses work together under similar conditions and it only makes sense that they bargain together.

Mr. Speaker, both this agreement and an arbitrator's orders from January move us from 50 collective agreements to just four for the whole province. Four rounds of bargaining - that's a significant accomplishment. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, we now have the ability to make sure that health care workers with similar jobs are in the bargaining unit that best fit them. Most importantly, we have the structure we need to take a province-wide approach to reshaping health care. Nova Scotians know our health care system can be better and they understand that we don't have billions of dollars to spend in order to make it better. They know we have to rethink the way we deliver health care and they also know the system can't focus on patients if it is constantly in labour negotiations.

I am sure all members of this House remember all too well when just the potential of labour disruptions in health care brought the system to its knees three times in a year and a half. Nova Scotians certainly haven't forgotten. They want us to focus on patients, and that is what these amendments will allow us to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Thank you very much, it is my pleasure to rise and speak on Health Bill No. 69. I know the minister and some of the more long-standing members of the House will see the irony in the numbering of Bill No. 69 as it relates to the organization of our health system. It feels like just a short time ago we were here having this same debate about these same issues. I'm not sure if the minister is a golfer or not but he clearly knows the meaning of the word "mulligan" because here he is taking a mulligan today.

Sadly though for the Nova Scotia taxpayer it is a very expensive mulligan indeed. After all of the turmoil in our health system, after all of the expense, hundreds of thousands of dollars in fees covered by the taxpayer of Nova Scotia, we are right back where we

started. Although the tax cost is significant, the six months of lost time is even more significant, time that could have been spent working on the underlying issues of service delivery in our health care system for Nova Scotians, issues the minister was elected to address, issues like wait times, which go up; long term care for our seniors, where the list gets longer; the provision of emergency services in rural areas, which is under stress - all of that was set aside for six months of turmoil, and where are we today for all of that? We are right back where we started.

The minister and the Premier may think this is an historic agreement that they have reached but there is nothing historic about what is happening here today. This is all the way back to where we were just six months ago. We are now asked to support a bill that sets up a structure that the Premier himself rejected six months ago, a structure that he ruled out as unworkable. We are now asked to accept this as some kind of historic agreement and it is nothing of the kind. It is a government that has flip-flopped; it is a government that has given in; it is a government that has decided that the course of action they were on was impossible and so they have taken us back to where we started. For anyone that doubts that, I will share with you in the House the words of the Premier himself. When the health unions working together suggested a structure almost identical to the one that the minister is proposing today, he has changed the name from bargaining association to council of unions, but it is the same thing.

Here is what the Premier had to say about this exact same structure last September, more than six months ago. He rejected the proposal from the unions to do exactly this and called it the status quo. I will table that in a moment. He went on to say that this structure makes absolutely no sense to anyone, said the Premier of September. Now the Premier of March and his minister call it an historic agreement. There is no history here. The Premier went on to say about this exact same structure, "It doesn't do anything to ensure that we have the kind of consistent negotiations that we wanted." - the words of the Premier last Fall. And now the spin that comes across the floor from the government side, to say it is an historic agreement - the very thing that the Premier rejected only six short months ago.

The Premier also said at that time that the union's proposal to retain their workers but bargain in four segments doesn't make sense. According to the Premier, Madam Speaker, it doesn't make sense to do exactly what we're now being asked to support the government in doing. Of course we all ask, what's changed? If it didn't make sense six months ago, why does it suddenly make sense now? There's nothing historic in giving up, in giving in, in throwing in the towel, in taking all of that money that has been spent and all the turmoil that has been caused and casting it aside and going back to where we started. I will table all of those quotes, and there are many more, I might add. I won't get into all of them. It's pretty clear what the position of the Premier and the government was six months ago.

When the original Bill No. 1 came to this House last Fall, it contained two components, as you will recall. One was to reorganize, if I will say, the employer's side -

the nine district health authorities down to one. But in that same bill was the convoluted mediation process to assign the health unions that has become such a debacle for the government today. As Official Opposition, we tried hard to convince the government to split those two different concepts into two bills. We were prepared to pass the reorganization of the health authorities themselves without holdup, because we agree with the need to find savings in both the administration side and the management side of health care.

You know, Madam Speaker, we actually had a slightly different vision - not a slightly different vision, but a somewhat different vision from the government about what the health authorities should look like. We made the point, and continue to make the point, that rural health care is very different from city health care, that the challenges of health care delivery in rural areas are very different than the challenges of health care delivery in the City of Halifax, that we ought to have a structure that matches those challenges, and that would mean an extra health authority - a rural health authority along with the urban health authority, then the IWK. But to recognize that the overall objective of administrative savings was one that we shared with the government, we were quite prepared to support their different approach to how to get to that administrative savings.

That's why we argued to split the bill, so that the health employee side or the labour side could be examined separately. Because we knew then that the process the government wished to legislate was unworkable, was unfair and, to be honest, a sham. A pretend arbitration, a pretend process designed to get to the government's preferred outcome, where they would hire an arbitrator that they believed would do the government's bidding - not an impartial one, in the government's hope, but one that would just do what it was told. As the arbitrator put it, to just assign the chairs rather than actually sit and look at what's right and fair in this situation.

The government denied that but when the test came, when the arbitrator didn't rule exactly the way the government wanted, they tried several times to dismiss the arbitrator. What more proof than that do we need that the government was not serious about a fair arbitration? One does not need to be schooled in arbitration law to know that that just offends common sense, to say you want an impartial arbitration and then try repeatedly to fire the arbitrator when his rulings don't go your way.

Madam Speaker, it laid out for all Nova Scotians to see that the government could not accomplish what they wished to accomplish through the structure that they had set up. In fact, I have the reporting here from the time. The arbitrator actually considered bargaining associations, and the Premier and the minister told him that that was not allowed. I will table those articles for the benefit of the House where they ruled it out, the very agreement that they now want to put in law this time. They ruled it out when the arbitrator wanted to consider it.

Madam Speaker, the only thing that is historic here is the government's complete reversal after all that effort and all that money was spent. When the government refused to split Bill No. 1 in two so we could pass one and get on with the administrative savings and examine the other more closely to make sure it would work, the government said no and we had a choice to make with a consolidated omnibus Bill No. 1. I think quite responsibly at the time we knew Nova Scotians wanted this administrative savings to happen, we knew Nova Scotians supported the idea of finding savings in our health system, reorganizing the way bargaining happens in a new way so that those savings could flow into front-line services.

So we actually voted for the government's efforts in Bill No. 1, which is a matter of record, and I know the Minister of Health and Wellness thanked us at the time for our vote. It was not an easy decision, but it was the right thing to do.

Boy, have we learned a big lesson since then, Madam Speaker - that we need to examine in detail government bills, we need the ability to split bills in two so we can look at the components and make sure they actually do what the government says they will do. We've learned not to take their description or their word at face value about what a bill will do. With all the lawyers on the government side at their disposal, all of the departments of government, whether it's health, labour, or justice, they couldn't bring a bill to this House that actually worked and accomplished what they said they wanted to do.

This isn't the only lesson, of course, we're going to learn it again tomorrow when they have their mulligan on limitation of actions, where an entire department full of lawyers told us something couldn't be done that is hopefully about to happen, to the benefit of the people we are all here to serve, tomorrow. Have we ever learned a lesson, Madam Speaker.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, the questions that Nova Scotians now have about this bill are very valid: How is it different from what you rejected as a government just a short time ago? Will it work this time? Will health care actually get better? Will it make a difference in the emergency room or in the long-term care home? Will it make a difference when I go to my family doctor? These are questions that Nova Scotians are validly asking, and no wonder. I guess we'll see, but I can tell you this. I know that our confidence, and their confidence, in the ability of the government to do this one thing right has been badly shaken. Thank you.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to rise this afternoon to participate in this debate. And I think that in thinking about this legislation and what it was that I wish to say here on the record, I want to first of all express that I have this great feeling of satisfaction about our democracy at this moment. This bill represents a win for democracy.

So often we hear people talk about our democracy being in trouble, our democratic institutions being broken. In fact, I think CBC has a panel happening on the national news tonight with a yes side and a no side that our democratic system is broken. I think if political science students were to look at this case of the restructuring of the health care system in Nova Scotia and what has gone on so far, they could only conclude that the democratic system is not broken - that the democratic system, in fact, works. The democratic system is so strong that a majority government, just because they have a majority, does not get to trample on the rights of the minority or the people who are not in this place, or those on the Opposition benches who don't have equal numbers to stop a bad piece of legislation.

That is the lesson I take away from why we are here now, fixing a piece of legislation introduced last Fall that failed. It failed the health care workers, failed their democratic organizations, failed patients, failed Nova Scotian taxpayers. It failed on every level and now we have an opportunity to fix a flawed piece of legislation.

Let's take a minute to celebrate the fact that the democratic process worked and that a majority government was unable, by virtue of the fact that they had a majority, to trample the rights of people in this province. This government thought because they had a majority, they could do whatever they felt like and trample on the fundamental rights and freedoms of health care workers in this province. They soon found out that in a democracy, even a majority government can't do whatever they feel like.

I hope that each and every member of this House, not only on the Government bench but all of the benches in here, take a lesson from that. We may have power and we may be sent here to exercise our power, but our power has limitations in a democratic system where, for example, the rule of law and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms still mean something in this country. That is why we are here fixing a flawed piece of legislation that's basic assumptions and process didn't think it mattered, Madam Speaker, and it mattered.

I want to say to the health care workers of this province who felt like they were put through Hell by this government, that their solidarity, their continued hope, their belief in the democratic process by meeting with their MLAs, by meeting together and continually voicing the concerns they had about what was being taken from them and their support for their democratic organizations and institutions. We live in a society where collective bargaining and trade unions are part of our institutional fabric, whether we like it or not, whether those organizations are inconvenient for managers and administrators who want to do whatever they want in the provision of services. You have to understand we are not some banana republic where people don't have the right of association to organize in terms of what their own interests are as workers, as mothers and fathers who have to put bread on the table and put their kids through post-secondary education, who have to take care of aging parents.

You can't just willy nilly treat people in employment at the whim of an employer. You have to respect people's rights and you have to respect their right to have a choice about how they are represented and who is best able to represent them. We had a very, very long debate in this Legislature on that terrible piece of legislation, Bill No. 1 which will become an infamous piece of legislation. It will be referred to, I'm sure, in many, many law schools, in case law looking at employment and labour precedents. This bill will no doubt be trotted out as an example of where a majority government thought they could do whatever they felt like - trample on the fundamental rights and freedoms of a group of workers - but they soon found out that in a democracy there are limits on what even a majority government can do.

Let me also reflect on my disappointment around the impact that this terrible first piece of legislation, which has led to the bill that is in front of us now, has had on our health care system. Make no mistake about it, there have been some phenomenal health care professionals who have left the health care system because of that flawed piece of legislation. We have seen an unusually high number of nurses leave the profession here in the Capital District. The leaving of those professionals has contributed to what was already a strained situation with respect to staffing, particularly in ICUs, and every day there are nurses working in our hospitals short-staffed. I don't know what the rate of overtime is, but I would like to know what the rate of overtime is. I bet you it's astronomical.

I haven't seen this situation with nurses since the early days of the Hamm Government and a situation not created by the Hamm Government, a situation that the Hamm Government had to clean up after the previous Liberal Government. The nursing crisis in this province was severe. It took probably close to five or six years, easily, to just get it to some kind of stability and then start to work to improve it.

So we have seen a flawed piece of legislation make the health care system worse, led to health care professionals leaving, creating shortages, creating bed closures, creating nurses working overtime and not being really happy about not being able to get days off or vacation time. For the first time in probably - well, actually, ever - we have travel nurses coming into the Province of Nova Scotia. We are having to bring nurses in from out of province, pay their fees, pay their travel, pay their accommodations, put them up, pay them higher rates of hourly pay than the nurses who are here in our system.

Long-term care beds are hard to come by. Growing lists - home care, growing wait-lists, ERs in crisis - worse than Code Orange - ambulances tied up over at the QE II. These situations, frankly, have not been seen for probably more than 10 years in our health care system. It has taken 18 months under the current McNeil Government to set our health care system back, and DHAs have ballooning deficits. DHAs haven't had big deficits for the past four or five years.

You know, it's with a fair amount of frustration that I stand here, on the one hand feeling really good that the democratic process worked and a majority government didn't

get to trample on the rights of a group of workers in the province, but it's with a very heavy heart that I look at the impact of this government's decision and the path they're taking our health care system on, and their refusal and their failure to listen to people who have gone before them in terms of options.

I remember once saying to a CBC interviewer that there is more than one way to skin a cat. I got into trouble with some cat lovers, which I myself am, but it's a saying, Madam Speaker, if you will. There is more than one way. If you want to cut administration in your health care system, you can certainly do it without throwing the whole system into chaos. We did it when we had the opportunity. Administration was above the national average, and we have the CIHI data that shows it went below the national average. That was even with adding infection control units that hadn't existed before, and those got counted as administration. Even with that growth in non-front-line health care providers, administration still went down. Could it go down more? Yes, probably, but there's a way to do that without throwing your entire system into the kind of crisis and disarray that we've seen.

So there is a lot of work to be done to rebuild the health care system and to deal with these problems that have been created. Take it from someone who knows, there is no such thing - and I think my honourable colleague for Argyle would agree - as ever getting to a point with health care where you can kind of let your guard down and decide that it has all been taken care of now and everything is going to run smoothly. It's a big system and I don't envy the Minister of Health and Wellness one little bit. It's a big system. It has many, many moving parts; it's a huge amount of financial responsibility. But, more to the point, the responsibility for people is enormous. It is probably our most-valued public service if you ask members of our constituencies and the public at large.

People will go a long way to protect the health care system and see it improved, and very much if you're a patient in the health care system or you have a family member or close friend, you're engaging with the health care system and you recognize how lucky we are, but that's not to say it isn't a system that requires improvement and constant change, constant change. But the things that government do, the things that the Minister of Health and Wellness does with respect to the direction that the system is taken in, it's a very sensitive system, you have to treat it with a great deal of respect and sensitivity. The bill that we have in front of us now, hopefully will move us somewhat in that direction.

Madam Speaker, the bill we have in front of us now essentially sets up this council of unions which will allow for the government's objectives to have four clear collective agreements for various groups of workers negotiated. It allows for the existing unions not to have runoff votes, but to keep their members. This is exactly what the unions were recommending more than six months ago that the Minister of Health and Wellness and the Premier rejected.

I just want to say I listened very carefully to the Minister of Health and Wellness on many occasions talk about what direction the government was going in. I must say on several occasions it seemed to me the Minister of Health and Wellness was indicating that he was open to this model. However it also is very clear to me that the person who shut that down wasn't the Minister of Health and Wellness, it was the Premier. The Premier, in fact, called the press conference in the middle of Law Amendments on the previous bill and said no way, we are not open to a bargaining association in any way, shape, or form. He very much expressed the position that they had been given the mandate to govern - we're a majority government, this is what we've decided to do and we really don't have to worry too much about what other groups are saying, what the Opposition is saying, what the unions are saying, what health care workers are saying because we have the power.

Well you know what, Madam Speaker? They didn't have the power. The government has power but it's limited, it's limited by the fundamental rights and freedoms that are vested in a system that rests on the law and a constitution that gives legal rights to the citizens of this country and our province. It took an independent arbitrator from British Columbia, with a distinguished career as a legal arbitrator, to essentially act in a principled way, within the confines of the law, to establish that you may have a majority but you don't get to trample on the rights of people just because you won more seats. That's not the system we have.

I think I speak for a lot of people who are very grateful to Mr. Dorsey and who have learned a lot, actually, from Mr. Dorsey. I don't know how many people have actually read those very lengthy decisions. They are fascinating decisions. I am not trained as a lawyer but I have worked in a legal environment and it's fascinating to read the decisions. I think it was pretty clear where this was headed and I think that it was pretty evident that the government was getting itself into a deeper and deeper hole that they would have a much more difficult time to climb out of, unless they were prepared to retrench, retreat and take another look at what had initially been proposed by the unions.

Here we are today, with what I think is for students and people who care about the democratic process, we have a real lesson in how democracy works, we have a victory for democracy. We have unfortunately a lot of work to be done to repair the damage that has been done to the health care system and just the very fact that the government was so preoccupied with winning this particular fight that they picked with health care workers, rather than focused on the real problems of patient care and the health care system.

All those things will not go away with this legislation. This legislation solves one little problem, one little problem that the government had that they created, so it solves one little problem but there are a lot of problems that this legislation does not solve. We will have lots of opportunity to talk about those problems in the coming days, I know. That certainly is a priority for myself and the NDP caucus to talk about all the problems that are in the health care system. What are the government's plans to deal with those problems, to improve patient care, to ensure that we have high quality?

I talked about the relationship between the government and health care workers and believe me, as a former Minister of Health and Wellness, I know that the number one thing you need to do is have a good working relationship with your health care providers because if you want to make change, you need to have them on your side, not against you. That means respecting them, and that means listening to them; that means understanding the realities that they deal with on the front lines every single solitary day. I have to tell you, as somebody who has had recent family experience in the health care system, I have nothing but the utmost respect for the women and men who are working in our health care system. They work under very difficult circumstances and they are very capable, very professional, very caring, and in many cases, very experienced health care providers.

We have a large number of aging health care workers, just like in every other part of our labour market, and it's not work for the faint of heart. Doing 12-hour shifts and sometimes doing back-to-back 12-hour shifts, it's gruelling. It's gruelling work and we need to put a lot of effort into understanding this and addressing deficiencies and problems so that we don't burn our health care workers out and end up in even more difficulty in our health care system.

I think those are pretty well the points that I wanted to make on this bill, Madam Speaker. I want to say, not only to the members of the government but to people who are working in management in the health care system, let this be a lesson to us all that sometimes we may find it inconvenient to have to look at and deal with third-party organizations but they are fundamental to the operation of our democratic system and we ignore these organizations and the interest they represent at our peril because they are a fundamental part of the democratic institutions and structures of our province and our society. We need to recognize that, be respectful and work with them, not go out and pick fights with them. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand here today and talk to Bill No. 69 that is before the House. I can say, it does feel like déjà vu all over again. I thought we were talking about this not so long ago, on a very similar bill doing some very similar things.

I would say or I could say that I'm shocked and appalled, but I'm not. After seeing what we experienced in the Fall sitting of the Legislature and what we saw happening at the bargaining table, it is no surprise that we're here today. Quelle surprise, it is not.

It was just exactly five months ago that we were debating the first attempt at the Health Authorities Act, and today it's time for a mulligan, for those who play golf. I know what a mulligan is in golf because I'm terrible at it, and I don't play it very often. I probably take more mulligans than I need to, but government should not be taking mulligans on legislation.

This is the first of the government's mulligans, bringing forward legislation to correct previous legislation. There's more to come. The government is taking another shot at this bill in hopes of getting it right, and they have to get it right this time, because they are out of time and out of room to negotiate with the unions.

Over the last number of months the mediation, the arbitration, the firing, the firing, the firing, and I think there was a fourth time trying to fire the arbitrator, had ended up in deal-making - the same deal. After the Premier came to the scene on this issue - basically put the Minister of Health and Wellness in a timeout and came forward with this plan - I'll talk about it in a minute - it's the same deal they rejected only five months ago, and that should be a concern to everybody.

The uncertainty of our health care system surely could have been avoided. If they were going to do this in the first place, they could have got it right from the get-go. Last summer the unions came to government with the idea of bargaining associations, and the government rejected the idea out of hand. I've seen them talk about 51 collective agreements to four. But the unions at the time said, okay, listen, here's how we can help you get to what you want. With a hard hand the Premier said, nope, that's not what we're going to do, here's what we're going to do. The Premier called it a proposal that would basically leave the status quo that became unacceptable for us. The Premier said this to the same thing that's being proposed here.

Fast-forward six months, and the idea suddenly became acceptable by crossing out every reference to bargaining associations and replacing them with "council of unions." This government attempted to put a good face on an embarrassing capitulation. Madam Speaker, quite honestly, if it looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, it's a duck. This is bargaining associations as proposed by the unions back in the summer.

After a year of confusion this government had no choice but to raise the white flag and surrender. I know I'm not supposed to use a prop, but white flag and surrender. (Interruption) Maybe it's the snow. Maybe the snow this season made them see the white flag flowing - well, let's move on and try to come to some conclusion to the issue that was before us.

The government is up against another deadline, and if they miss it they're in a bigger mess. Don't forget, the nine district health authorities and the IWK cease to exist at the end of March, and on April 1, 2015, the new district health authority is created to take over those services so there's no interruption of services in hospitals and health care centres across Nova Scotia.

During the course of debate in this House, in a few short days that we had to debate the first bill, Madam Speaker, we raised some serious questions on whether the government can actually deliver on any of the objectives that the bill laid out at the time.

It turns out that our concerns at that time were founded. The last five months have shown us that the bill was seriously flawed and, in fact, could not be enacted. In fact we, the Progressive Conservative caucus, brought forward a resolution to the Chamber to split the bill so that the government could move ahead with the restructuring of the health authorities, which we agree with, but take some time to navigate what they soon came to understand to be the complexities of the labour piece.

At that time they said no, everything is fine, we are going to go in this direction – that direction – I don't know. Well, we in this caucus support better service delivery in a streamlined system. That is why we brought the amendment to Bill No. 1 and recognized that health care delivery is very different in rural areas than it is in the city. Rural health care is different than city health care and the management of our health care system must reflect that. That's why we proposed the amendment to this bill, to actually create a health authority for mainland Nova Scotia and Cape Breton where the challenges are so different from the city, but the government said no to that as well.

Instead of even considering our reasonable approach, this government went to extraordinary lengths to pass a bill in only four days. That was a fun time. I don't know if everybody remembers us hanging out here on 24-hour missions, listening to a number of union friends visiting outside and spending some time. But four days, maybe had we just let it go, taken our time, had the opportunity to read it through, and had we had the government willing to make changes that would have made this better legislation, maybe we wouldn't be here at all today.

But here we are, debating a bill, in haste once again, because we do have that real deadline. Given that they made a mess of their signature bill in the Fall, we should be a little concerned on whether they did their homework right this time.

What Nova Scotians will be wondering is how this bill is different than Bill No. 1. Will it finally accomplish what the first bill didn't? Is it different from the proposal that the Premier dismissed out of hand last Fall? We're asking that question and I know Nova Scotians are asking that question. Will it improve their health care? Will money be freed-up to invest in health care for everyday people?

Madam Speaker, the budget is coming in a couple of weeks, or in a week and a half. We will be watching closely to see if the objectives laid out by the government for Bill No. 1 are achieved. Will there be savings for taxpayers? I've said many times that maybe there aren't savings in health care but at least you can take those dollars and shift them to a place where patients get better benefits and better access to a system that they deserve. Will we see improvements in front-line health care? After all, those are the things that our caucus has long supported and those are the things that we worry may have been squandered by this government because of months and months of uncertainty on the labour front.

We have heard stories of health care workers retiring early. We are curious about the cost of the imported nurses who are coming to fill gaps in those retirements. Two nights ago I had the opportunity to visit the community of Shelburne where that community is tremendously concerned about their emergency room, because of the lack of RNs or nurses being able to participate in keeping that ER open. By the way, the ER is closing this evening at 11:00 p.m. until morning and it will be closed once again Saturday evening at 7:00 p.m., until it opens again at 7:00 a.m. in the morning.

Maybe had there been less labour unrest, maybe the South West District Health Authority could have been doing the hiring that it needed to do. Maybe they would have been able to find the people to fill those positions so that people of Shelburne County, even the people of Yarmouth and the people of Queens who do use that emergency room would make sure that they had that service in case they do.

The emergency room is a funny thing, many of the people who go there, of course, probably need the clinic space, that by the way the hospital is asking for it too, but in an emergency room situation that ER is needed because it is a good hour from the nearest regional hospital - it's an hour from Yarmouth and it's an hour and change from Bridgewater. The people from Shelburne deserve that.

The meeting on Tuesday night opened my eyes a little bit because I kind of knew that this was going to happen, but there was a little bit of blame, a little bit of blame, or a little bit of using the excuse, well listen we're going to try to do this as quick as we can but, and you don't want to hear the "but" when you hear this kind of debate happening - but the but was that okay listen we're still as of April 1st we become a new district health authority and we're looking at better health care integration and we're trying to do hiring in a different way, and it turned into one of those blah blah blah discussions, blah blah blah later on, blah blah blah something else is going to happen, be patient with us.

Well quite honestly, Madam Speaker, the problem we have is that this has been going on for a good year, if not longer. Why didn't the South West District Health Authority correct this problem? Why couldn't they have found some nursing that could have filled that position whether they're in Yarmouth or whether they're in Digby, or whether we had to bring them in from Ontario, which is a tremendous challenge I'm sure and expensive? The people in Shelburne deserve emergency care just like the people in Yarmouth do, the people in Digby, the people in Bridgewater and so on.

AN HON. MEMBER: North Sydney.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: North Sydney, well that's a whole other discussion because of the closures that happened there.

So the unrest, the uncertainty in the system, I'm sure has not helped the situation in Shelburne. You know, and as we look at the creation of the new district health authority I

first want to wish good luck to the board chairman Steven Parker who, I do think, is a great individual whom I'm hoping will do a great job of taking on that challenge. So Mr. Steve Parker, good luck, and to that whole board good luck, because it is going to be a tremendous task for them. To all the vice-presidents, directors, and executive directors that it does create - I mean, don't forget as much as this is about streamlining there is a tremendous bureaucracy that gets created to manage district health authority and I hope, I plead with the minister to keep an eye on it because government departments do, in a lot of cases, try to expand their beings and we can't let that happen because the dollars should be invested in the people, in the patients, and in the services they require.

We are worried that the last six months of labour drama has set the system backwards, and I think I've said that in my comments. We're concerned that while the government was working so hard to manufacture a political win, patients in the province were the biggest losers. It's difficult to have faith in this bill when the last one missed that mark so seriously. Every person in this House should go through this bill with a fine-tooth comb. We will be and should we find some holes and some concerns I do hope this time that the government listens to us to make those changes, to make the system better for all Nova Scotia patients. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HON. DAVID WILSON: I guess I'm glad to be able to stand up today to talk a little bit about Bill No. 69, but it has been an interesting couple of months since the last time we were here in this Chamber. We had a tough-talking minister, a tough-talking Premier, a tough-talking Liberal Government, Madam Speaker, and there was no way that they were going to do anything but what they had set out to really, I think, pick a fight with the unions that represent health care workers and health care support workers in this province.

We stood in our place and I stood in my place for hours on end trying to maybe get the government to back down on that tough stance that they were taking around Bill No. 1 and the amalgamation of the district health authorities and really their attack on the rights of workers in our province. When you talk about the rights of workers in our province, of course I'm talking about our health care workers and our health care support workers, but that's not who they are. These are men and women - and I have to say mostly women - who provide care to my family, to your family, to the families of members of the House who find themselves requiring health care services in our province. They are not just health care workers, not just a union member. That's kind of the tough talk we heard over the last six to eight months, that the government was going to be tough on the unions - very popular to say, I think, for some people to hear that, let's be tough on the unions.

These unions represent those women and men who are working 24/7 throughout facilities across our province, to be on call to support us and our families if we become ill or if we have an accident. That's the tough talk that we were trying to break through to the

government that we don't need in this province. We don't need a government taking that kind of stance against health care workers and health care support workers.

The damage that has been done since the Liberal Government started us down this path with this tough talk and this tough approach to dealing something, I think, that we see now amending that piece of legislation that we saw in the Fall that will achieve what the government wanted in the first place and that was reduce the number of bargaining units in the province to what the government is saying is a more manageable number. The interesting thing about this tough talk and this tough stance that the government took is that the unions realized that okay, there may be an issue here with the number of bargaining units that we have here in the province. We understand the government wants to move towards reducing that number and we're going to see what we can do to achieve that goal.

The government was presented with an option before we had the last session of the House, before we saw the chaos around the Legislature and the amount of security alone, which I still believe was such overkill from the government. I've been around for almost 12 years now and there have been a number of labour disputes, and I have to say, having health care workers and health care support workers around this Legislature trying to get their voices heard, I don't think endangered any of us here. There are other organizations and maybe other services that you might be a little bit more concerned about but I have been here a long time seeing, I think, what is a respectful demonstration of the workers and their rights and their abilities and trying to protect those rights.

What I witnessed the last session, I hope that I don't witness again in my career - having to come through walls of police officers and riot gear officers, although they are not called riot squads, there's a new name, they're not called squad. I asked one of the officers what it was, it was to lessen that kind of, I think in-your-face type of unit that they have. I hope I don't ever see that again in my career, however long it is.

It's not necessary. I think the men and women who were around the Legislature in the last session were here for a reason. It was that they wanted to be heard; they wanted the government to back away from the tough stance that they were taking and the tough roll they were going on and hopefully make them realize that there have been generations of workers in our province and in our country that have worked and fought and picketed and some have died for workers' rights and improvements for workers' rights in our country. We knew going in, that's why we stood up as a Party, into the debate saying the approach the government was taking was the wrong approach and that they cannot just wipe out the work of thousands of men and women who have worked so hard to achieve workers' right in our country, and in our province, through Bill No. 1 and through the legislation that was passed.

I must add that we were the only caucus that opposed that legislation even though we knew, and I think that everybody knew, that there were challenges across the country

around similar legislation that government had brought in to try to take away those rights of workers; there was a Supreme Court decision.

So Bill No. 69, really right now I see, will avoid what I believe would have been a long legal battle that the Government of Nova Scotia would have entered into because of the tough stance that they took because they were going to be hard on the unions, hard on the men and women who provide health care, hard on the men and women who support those who provide health care in this province. That's why we stood up at two, three, four, five o'clock in the morning resisting a majority government's attempt to pass draconian legislation that rips the rights away from workers, rips the rights away of women and men who are delivering health care, who work 12-hour shifts in conditions that most people would not want to be working in.

We heard from them, Madam Speaker, in Law Amendments, the women - and I believe there were a couple of men there - the women who work on the burn unit trying to tell the government that they're trampling on their rights and that their fight, the health care workers' and their support workers' fight is not about making more money, increasing their pension, getting more vacation, it was about their working environment, trying to get the attention of the government to ensure that their working environment is one that they can go to work and feel safe, to feel that they are providing the best care to the patients that they are taking care of. We heard time and time again that that wasn't happening, that these workers were working overtime, they cannot get their scheduled vacation off. If they are off they don't dare answer the phone or they need to come in because they know their leaving their co-workers in a tough position.

Our health care system has suffered damages because of this tough talk from the Liberal Government, Madam Speaker, and I don't know if they're able to repair that. The morale in our hospitals on some of our floors now is at a record low. I've never seen and never heard the comments that I've heard over the last six months from women and men who have their careers in the health care system, who tend not to speak up. I mean the morale is at an all-time low. I could assume maybe the morale was similar back in the 90s, before I was in this Chamber, when the cuts were happening, because they were pretty low then. I was a health care worker then, I was on the ambulance as a medic and I know that morale was low, but morale right now is very low.

We've had health care workers, support workers, put in their retirement, are leaving and have left and have really - I say retirement but they've quit really, Madam Speaker, they've quit because of what they feel is an inappropriate way to deal with what the government wanted to achieve, and that was reduce the number of bargaining units.

I started off, Madam Speaker, saying that the government had another option and the unions that represent these men and women realized okay we want to play a role and be part of trying to reduce some of the challenges that there are when you're in government, when you're a Minister of Health and Wellness. I was there, and it is challenging. You

have to work extremely hard every day to maintain and, hopefully, improve health care delivery, and that should be your goal - improved delivery of health care for our citizens. It's a difficult job, but the attempts that they have had over the last number of months to do that, they could have agreed with what was presented to the unions. They wanted to work with the government so they brought forward the idea of a bargaining association.

We hear chirping from some members across the way, Madam Speaker, because the Premier, the minister, other members are trying really hard to say oh wait a minute, this bargaining council is not the same as a bargaining association - it's different, yes, it's not the same.

Come on, get real. They were willing to go and work with the government and bring forward four bargaining units to negotiate contracts for health care workers and health care support workers so don't tell me it's not the same thing. You could change the name all you want but the unions recognized that they wanted to be a part of hopefully improving health care and the relationship with government. So the government is going to try to say that over the next few months, and with this piece of legislation, that it's different than what they proposed but it really isn't, Madam Speaker.

The damages we have seen since - and I've tried over and over again to get the government to refocus, to change what their priority was. This tough speaking, tough action they're going to take on the unions was their first piece of legislation that they really were behind and had all the fire in their belly over, Madam Speaker, but what needed to happen was that priority should have been on patient care. It should have been on front line health care services.

I heard my Leader speak earlier and she mentioned that there are other ways of achieving the reduction of health care administration costs, for example. Something we know well, Madam Speaker, because we worked on that from day one when we were given a chance to govern in the province. In the 2008-2009 fiscal year, Nova Scotia's health administration costs were the third highest in the country. The only areas in the country that paid more for health administration were the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. We knew that was something we needed to change. We needed to reduce health administration.

We worked on that, our Leader started the ball rolling and worked extremely hard with the district health authorities, worked with the health care workers as partners to try to achieve that. We were successful, Madam Speaker. Over a three-year period we were able to reduce VP positions by over 18 positions. We brought our health administration costs down below, I think after the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, we were better than Ontario; we were better than New Brunswick, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, just in three short years.

We reduced our health administration costs from 6.3 per cent of our overall budget to 4.83 per cent. That might not seem like a lot if you just say those percentages but when

you are dealing in billions of dollars, it's quite a bit. It's millions of dollars that were saved in a responsible way - not in a tough way, not in a let's-get-you way with health administration and health costs, it was with - how do we work with our partners? How do we ensure that we put the economy in our province and the costs that we incur in health administration on a downward slope, not on an upward slope?

I believe that the highest increase we have ever seen in our history was a 30 per cent increase, under a Progressive Conservative Government, in health administration costs - unheard of, a 30 per cent increase. So there were other ways for the government to look at trying to achieve what I think is a goal that we all would want to see, a small amount of money going to health administration. You cannot eliminate it. I've said this before in one of the hours I spoke on at length in the last session, that we need health administrators. They are a key component to delivering health care in Nova Scotia.

There is a bottom. I think the lowest in the country - and I'll table this after I'm done, these aren't figures that I just have that I made up, they're from CIHI - the lowest health administration in the country as of the time they've posted here, 11/12, was Alberta at 3.65 per cent. Interesting that I pick out Alberta, because they've gone down the path that we're just about to go down in a few days, with the merger of health authorities in our province. Interestingly enough, if you look at the information you'll see an increase in health administration under the Province of Alberta, and interestingly enough, it was right after they amalgamated their district health authorities, because there was an increased cost to it. Now we heard Premier Jim Prentice just recently indicating that they're going back to that model, because they realized that the superboard model is not one that supports communities throughout your jurisdiction.

What I mostly mean is that it's rural communities that suffer, and we're seeing it right now. I was in Shelburne at the meeting talking about Roseway, and people are concerned in rural communities. The issue down there now is a shortage of nurses. There was a shortage of doctors for many years down there, and a lot of work has gone in - a lot of work from our caucus and our Party has gone into changing that around, and there is some work going on now with the current government to make sure that the complement of doctors is there. They're there right now. That can change, but I hope it doesn't. But now what we've seen is a shortage of nurses, and that's the result of most of the closures that we see in Shelburne, down at Roseway.

When you dig into that, you ask, what's the reason? Many of them have left, many of them have retired, and you can see the connection to how they are treated. When you're not being treated well, when you feel like you're under attack, when your morale is low and you're at retirement age, for example, why would you stay? Let's just get out of the system.

In this province we need nurses who are at retirement age to stay and work. If we don't, we're in serious trouble in the next few years - serious trouble. The minister knows

that there are hard numbers there, that if everybody chose to retire who could retire right now, for nurses alone, our health care system would be crippled and we'd have closures all over the province, even in Halifax and Cape Breton. We need these experienced nurses to stay in the system, so that we can hopefully replace them with more experienced new nurses. That's the problem we see now at Roseway and here in Halifax.

I don't recall in the 12 years I've been here hearing that the ICU beds were closed at the QEII - never heard it since I was here, since 2003. It never happened when I was Minister of Health and Wellness, but 18 months after the Liberals take over and start this hard talk and hard-nosed approach to unions in the health care sector, we have ICU beds closing in our province. Not only that, we have nurses being flown in from outside our province to work here alongside those dedicated men and women, and they're getting paid more. What do you think that does to morale?

I've spoken to a nurse who has to go to work standing next to someone who is making - I might be off by a few dollars - \$20 or \$30 more an hour for the same work. It's not fair. That should be an eye opener, and maybe that's what happened when the Liberal Government threw up their white flag here about Bill No. 1 in the last little while, and the need to introduce Bill No. 69 in the Legislature. The white flag went up: let's retreat.

I'm glad, I am. I'm glad that they've done that, but my lord, Madam Speaker, what we've gone through in the last six months - home care wait-lists increased by 80 per cent, long-term care wait-lists at a record high; DHA budgets, right now from over here, \$26 million over budget; a commitment that the government made to reach the national benchmark for wait times for knee and hip surgery thrown out the window, because there's no way they're going to achieve that now.

Ambulances, my former colleagues sitting at the QE II for hours on end - 10, 11, 12, 13 units sitting outside the QE II and those units aren't just from Halifax, Madam Speaker, those units are from Cape Breton, from Yarmouth, and every community in between that has an ambulance standing by. That's 13 ambulances, 26 paramedics, men and women who are highly trained, highly regarded as emergency responders who should be ready to respond to your accident, to your heart attack, or to your injury or sickness at a moment's notice, but where are they? They're in Halifax, they're at the QE II; they're lined up out the door providing care in the bays.

Unacceptable, Madam Speaker, unacceptable, and it's because the government's priorities have been wrong. The energy that the department and the government have put on trying to squash workers' rights is in the wrong place, and it wasn't until Dr. Sam Campbell spoke up recently that we hear that the deputy minister is going to go down and have a meeting now at the QE II ER to try to fix some of the problems that you can relate directly to how workers are feeling and how Bill No. 1 has created chaos within the health care sector. To have Bill No. 69 here now trying to fix the damage, I guess, is the first step in what we've seen over the last six to eight months.

It's important we recognize that patient care should be the priority and patient care is suffering. The Minister of Health and Wellness has said that himself about the long overcrowding at the QE II. Is that the legacy from a tough-talking minister, Premier, and government that they want to have in the future? I mean I can't believe what we've been through as an Opposition Party over the last six to eight months, having to try to refocus the government on what's important. So we've been down this journey of what I would call attacking rights of workers where we had a tough-talking minister and Premier and government trying to tell Nova Scotians what they want and what they see as fit, but not willing to work with these unions and with health care workers and support workers.

I have to say as much as the government wants to paint the unions as blocking the way that it's simply not true. They were willing from day one to work together and work with the government to achieve the goals they wanted, to reduce the bargaining units to four, to ensure that when they go to the table that they can bargain in good faith for their members to try to make sure that they protect the rights that they've fought for years and years and years. These rights that workers have didn't happen overnight, it has been generations of workers trying to make sure that government - and especially government - treats their workers properly and treats them well.

I have to say I see us going down the path and being in an environment that we were in in the 1990s. The issues were overcrowding at the hospitals, long wait times for people trying to get into long-term care, and I would assume - and I'm not 100 per cent sure but I would assume - similar waits for home care. We had shortages of nurses, we had shortages of doctors, we had reduced - the government at the time had seen a reduction in hospital beds so the capacity of our hospitals was reduced to have patients admitted to the hospital. Déjà vu, I think that's what Dr. Sam Campbell was talking about. We have a capacity issue in our system today; we need more beds. That's what I think I'm bothered by the most, Mr. Speaker, is standing here some four months later after the last session. I believe when we left there were protesters around the Legislature and the first day we come back there are protesters around the Legislature. That's quite the legacy they are starting here.

I hope that the priority of the government will shift now, that they will realize that the path we have been on over the last year or so was the wrong one. To be quite honest, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Premier, the minister, the government, owe an apology to health care workers and support workers here in this province. I believe they owe them an apology and I guess Bill No. 69 is somewhat of an apology, but it should come from them and it should be genuine; it should be that they believe that yes, we made a mistake. It's okay for the government, it's okay for an MLA to say I made a mistake and I would hope that maybe the government will reflect on this and give that apology to health care workers and support workers because they've worked extremely hard and I think they've been extremely fair in trying to move forward and to achieve the goals of the government.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, we will be supporting this, obviously - all the work I've done in the last session trying to achieve somewhat of what is in Bill No. 69. Now I'm not going to stand here and say everything is forgiven, everything is good, not with the wait times we see now, not with the closures of the ERs. Four years in a row we've seen reductions in ER closures. The first year in government we saw an increase in ER closures. There are many things the government needs to tackle and it shouldn't be the same approach they've had with their goal of trying to reduce bargaining units in this province. The heavy-handedness of how they did that shouldn't apply as they move forward to try and fix and improve health care delivery.

I'll be here during Question Period and during debates to make sure that the priority for this government should be on patient care, it should be on front-line health care and hopefully I will see them offer that apology to the health care workers and the health care support workers in this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today and speak on Bill No. 1, Part 2. As we go through and over the next few days or weeks, as the case may be, we'll see a series of bills re-enter this Chamber to be fixed. You know that's a shame but something good can come out of this because there are lessons to be learned here and I hope that this government has the courage to learn from those lessons because Nova Scotians are paying the price for a majority government that sat in this Chamber and rammed bill after bill through here with all-night sittings, days on end.

I think we all remember, at least over on this side we all remember, how hard the government members fought to support the very bills that they are now bringing back before us to change and correct. I think we all remember - and there is a lesson to be learned there, yes, about listening to Nova Scotians. There's a lesson to be learned about blindly following. I hope the lesson is learned because Nova Scotians deserve it because Nova Scotians are paying the price for what has happened with some of these bills. We're all paying the price for what this government has done with some of these bills in refusing to listen to Nova Scotians.

I remember very well, and I'm sure many members of this Chamber will remember, bills that were before the Law Amendments Committee, the Red Room over there absolutely chock full of Nova Scotians who were patiently waiting their turn to speak about what they thought about certain bills that were before this House. Before that process was even finished, well, many of those people who had made their way to Halifax, made their way to Province House to have their say - before they had a chance, we had a Premier who stood out there in a scrum and announced to the world that his bills would come back here unamended. That's the message that was sent on that day to Nova Scotians, and it didn't work out so well. Bills are coming back. They need to be fixed. One, two, three, who knows, maybe more of them - they'll be back here to be fixed.

In terms of this bill I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, are we further ahead in health care for all of the manufactured chaos that Nova Scotians had to endure? I would ask you, are we further ahead? Not according to the orthopaedic surgeons I've been talking to who schedule surgeries, who have their patients travel to the hospital at 3:00 a.m., 4:00 a.m., 5:00 a.m. for their surgery, and in many cases have relatives with them - relatives travel to Nova Scotia to be there when they recover from these surgeries. The surgeons and the patients and their families get to the hospital in the morning - got to cancel the surgery, no beds, and reschedule you for another time.

If you ask those people if we are further ahead in health care for what has happened here, I think they would tell you no. I think anyone who is honest with themselves would tell you no. Are we further ahead? I think if you ask the people who are on the wait-lists that are growing and growing, who are waiting for services, are we further ahead for what has happened in this province for the last six or seven months, I think they would tell you no, we are not further ahead. Not according to those people.

If you look at the time and energy and cash that have been spent on this process - I can't even imagine how many people who work for the civil service have just had their time consumed with trying to figure out how to make this bill work - probably lawyers, definitely consultants. Time, energy, money, all spent on a bill that couldn't be fixed. The bill was wrong from the beginning. It couldn't be fixed. You couldn't put lipstick on it; you couldn't fix it up. How much money did we spend?

So if you ask people, are we further ahead, if you ask all of those organizations who have come to the government in search of funding - and I'm thinking of the Roots for Youth House that came to the government in search of \$75,000 and was told that there's no money. The cupboard is bare for those people, but there's lots of money for arbitrators and Liberal consultants and everything else. That's the problem. I think if you asked those people, are we further ahead, they would tell you no, we're not further ahead. If you ask me, I will tell you we're not further ahead.

I am an optimist by nature. Maybe this bill will work. Maybe it will, I don't know, but it's hard for me to bet on this government. It's hard for me to trust that this government has a bill that will work. I will support this government when it has new ideas that are good ideas, and I don't know about this one because the track record is not very good for this government.

I hope this government looks at their legislative agenda for this session and I hope they do their homework before they bring bills to this floor and use their majority to flex their muscles and push stuff onto Nova Scotians. I hope they bring bills here with an open mind and listen to those Nova Scotians who make suggestions, listen to those Nova Scotians who provide feedback and yes, listen to those Nova Scotians who criticize bills. I hope they do all that before they bring them to this floor and put them down as a fait accompli, because that's what we've seen - bills brought here that were clearly flawed, that

were not well thought out, were not well researched, and were based - if you listen to some of the ministers - on bad advice.

Have an open mind, there are lessons to be learned here. I will say that I sincerely wish the government well with this legislation. I hope it works for them because Nova Scotians deserve a government that does something that works. Nova Scotians deserve real solutions, complete solutions, solutions that are well thought out before they are thrown down here to be pushed through. That's going to take some time on behalf of the government; they have to do the work up front.

I would say in closing that it is my sincere hope that the government does that work before they bring stuff here because this government needs to start putting real solutions forward the first time. Out of mulligans, Nova Scotians don't have time and my colleague, the member for Sackville-Cobequid said he looks forward to the priority going back to the users of the health care system, and I share that hope. I hope that is where the priority does go, because right now they have not been well served and I hope the priority for all legislation is squarely focused on Nova Scotians because that's where it needs to be. With those few words I'll take my seat. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the areas that I always regard in this House is the comments that come from Opposition. They can be helpful, yes, you can label it a critical perspective. I like to see it often as a constructive process that can help with legislation as we move it forward. I want to thank all those today who did make some very, very good points and observations about the amendments that we have brought forward to Bill No. 1.

I'll be the first one to say and recognize that we knew this would not be a straightforward process. No government had ever gone down this road to look at how we could streamline the bargaining process in the province. I think these amendments will be very valuable to Bill No. 1 and we'll see what the Committee on Law Amendments will have to say, as well.

I want to close debate and move (Interruption) I thank you, Mr. Speaker, I thought you were asking me to close debate but I see that we do have a few moments. So with that, I believe that with this piece of legislation the real benefit I think is to the one health authority - they needed a streamlined process to allow the collective bargaining to go forward in a more timely manner than we have seen in this province.

I know that when I arrived at the Department of Health and Wellness - and probably other ministers, and there are three former ministers here in the House - to see

contracts go out the door that had already expired, I found that to be a very, very concerning moment for the department, and how much time and how much expense in that process. I think today these amendments help us move to a much better place.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I close debate on Bill No. 69.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 69. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Just before concluding the business I wish to advise that Bill No. 69 will be considered at the Committee on Law Amendments on Monday, March 30th. Any interested parties can contact the Legislative Counsel Office if they wish to present at that time.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. We will meet again tomorrow, March 27th, from the hours of 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. Following the daily routine there have been discussions with the Opposition regarding the Limitation of Actions Act which will be tabled tomorrow by the Minister of Justice - and we'll talk more tomorrow about potentially having that bill proceed to second reading tomorrow and we'll see where it goes from there. Since there was nothing on the order paper I just wanted to advise that we are hopeful we will have business tomorrow to conduct at the end of the daily routine.

With that, Mr. Speaker, tomorrow morning we will meet again from the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

I move that the House do now rise.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again tomorrow at the hour of 9:00 a.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.

The House now stands adjourned until tomorrow.

[The House rose at 4:38 p.m.]

NOTICE OF QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

Given on November 20, 2014

(Pursuant to Rule 30)

QUESTION NO. 1

By: Hon. Denise Peterson-Rafuse (Chester-St. Margaret's)

To: Hon. Diana Whalen (Minister of Finance and Treasury Board)

The tax review commissioned by the minister and released yesterday recommends a tax break for large corporations and a tax hike for small businesses. The Liberal Government campaigned on a promise to stop helping large corporations and start helping small businesses. A quote from the Liberal platform says, "Nova Scotia needs jobs, not corporate welfare."

(1) Why is the minister considering tax recommendations that clearly go against the Liberal election promise to stop helping large corporations and start helping small businesses?

QUESTION NO. 2

By: Hon. Denise Peterson-Rafuse (Chester-St. Margaret's)

To: Hon. Diana Whalen (Minister of Finance and Treasury Board)

During the last election the Premier repeatedly said, "Small businesses are the backbone of our economy." However, the government recently introduced a \$30 million tax break to big corporations and is now considering even more tax breaks for big corporations while raising taxes for small businesses.

(1) Does the minister intend to give more breaks to large corporations while raising taxes for small businesses?

QUESTION NO. 3

By: Hon. Sterling Belliveau (Queens-Shelburne)

To: Hon. Geoff MacLellan (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal)

Through a Freedom of Information request obtained by our office, we have learned that work planned for the Newell Road in Yarmouth County was reduced from its original proposal: Reduce from the original 2.1 kilometers of maintenance to only 700 meters of actual work. I will table that document.

(1) When did the minister first learn of a desire to change the work that was originally planned for Newell Road in Yarmouth?

QUESTION NO. 4

By: Hon. Sterling Belliveau (Queens-Shelburne)

To: Hon. Geoff MacLellan (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal)

Yesterday at Public Accounts Committee the most senior civil servants at the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal went on record as having no recollection of this project change, yet the documents received by our office say that additional funding for two other roads in Yarmouth County were made available when the work planned for the Newell Road was cut in half.

(1) Can the minister explain how this happens?

(2) How does work on an approved project become reduced in favour of two new projects that weren't originally on the five-year plan?

(3) Who makes that call?

QUESTION NO. 5

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

To: Hon. Leo Glavine (Minister of Health and Wellness)

According to the Palliative Care Society of Inverness County, many Nova Scotians who are in their end-of-life stage suffering from cancer and congestive heart failure are in need of oxygen supplies on an outpatient basis. The society has paid more than \$10,000

more this year to help their patients. They brought this to the attention of the minister, however, his response was there are no plans to change the home oxygen coverage. I will table that letter.

(1) Can the minister explain to the House why he won't cover the cost for this oxygen therapy for at home palliative care patients?

QUESTION NO. 6

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

To: Hon. Leo Glavine (Minister of Health and Wellness)

People who are at home in palliative care are suffering. They are in the final stages of life. They should be given the respect and comfort that they deserve.

(1) When will the minister have a change of heart and fund the oxygen therapy program for palliative care patients living at home?

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1174**

By: Ms. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Tina Raftus is a strong community leader and an advocate for the youth in her neighbourhood; and

Whereas Tina has organized multiple events and programs for the children and youth in her community, taking time out of her busy schedule to give her community; and

Whereas Tina's events such as the Children's British Fest, Natal Day festivities and the summer community celebrations have been a huge success and have been received with overwhelming support from the community;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate Tina Raftus for her community advocacy and wish her great success in her continued pursuits of community togetherness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1175

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

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

Whereas Sole Sisters Women's Race celebrates the strength of female runners and the lifelong friendships developed on and off the running roads with the goal to raise money for breast cancer and many other charities; and

Whereas this is a 5K race exclusive to women and is the largest race of its kind in Canada; and

Whereas the third annual Sole Sisters Women's Race took place June 9, 2014, at Dartmouth Crossing, with more than 3,200 women from across the Maritimes taking part;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly recognize Sole Sisters organization and the success of their event and promotion of women's physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

RESOLUTION NO. 1176

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

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

Whereas Blended Athletics is Dartmouth North's newest fitness facility located in Burnside and is locally owned by Dave Rafuse and Chad Furey; and

Whereas the Blended Athletics team has placed 22nd overall out of 179 gyms at the International Reebok Crossfit Games Open with Chad Furey placing 8th overall; and

Whereas the Blended Athletics team were the only competitors from the Atlantic region to move on to the regional finals in Markham Ontario in May 2014;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly join me in welcoming Blended Athletics to our community, and wish owners Dave Rafuse and Chad Furey every success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1177

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

Whereas the sport of darts has been popular since the 19th century with origins in the United Kingdom; and

Whereas May 14th-16th saw the Canadian National Darts Championships held at the Ramada Hotel in Burnside in the constituency of Dartmouth North; and

Whereas the 2014 Nordor Cup, celebrating the best Canadian youth darts team, was awarded to team Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Emily Alford of Nova Scotia on winning the Nordor Cup and offer best wishes for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1178

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

Whereas the sport of darts has been popular since the 19th century with origins in the United Kingdom; and

Whereas May 14th to May 16th saw the Canadian National Darts Championships held at the Ramada Hotel in Burnside in the constituency of Dartmouth North; and

Whereas the 2014 Nordor Cup, celebrating the best Canadian youth darts team, was awarded to team Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Christine Probert of Nova Scotia on winning the Nordor Cup and offer best wishes for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1179

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

Whereas the sport of darts has been popular since the 19th century with origins in the United Kingdom; and

Whereas May 14th to May 16th saw the Canadian National Darts Championships held at the Ramada Hotel in Burnside in the constituency of Dartmouth North; and

Whereas the 2014 Nordor Cup, celebrating the best Canadian youth darts team, was awarded to team Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Taylor Probert of Nova Scotia on winning the Nordor Cup and offer best wishes for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1180

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

Whereas the sport of darts has been popular since the 19th century with origins in the United Kingdom; and

Whereas May 14th to May 16th saw the Canadian National Darts Championships held at the Ramada Hotel in Burnside in the constituency of Dartmouth North; and

Whereas the 2014 Nordor Cup, celebrating the best Canadian youth darts team, was awarded to team Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Monique Bruce of Nova Scotia on winning the Nordor Cup and offer best wishes for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1181

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

Whereas the sport of darts has been popular since the 19th century with origins in the United Kingdom; and

Whereas May 14th to May 16th saw the Canadian National Darts Championships held at the Ramada Hotel in Burnside in the constituency of Dartmouth North; and

Whereas the 2014 Nordor Cup, celebrating the best Canadian youth darts team, was awarded to team Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Serina Bruce of Nova Scotia on winning the Nordor Cup and offer best wishes for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1182

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

Whereas the sport of darts has been popular since the 19th century with origins in the United Kingdom; and

Whereas May 14th to May 16th saw the Canadian National Darts Championships held at the Ramada Hotel in Burnside in the constituency of Dartmouth North; and

Whereas the 2014 Nordor Cup, celebrating the best Canadian youth darts team, was awarded to team Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Devin Sanford of Nova Scotia on winning the Nordor Cup and offer best wishes for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1183

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

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

Whereas the sport of darts has been popular since the 19th Century with origins in the United Kingdom; and

Whereas May 14th to May 16th saw the Canadian National Darts Championships held at the Ramada Hotel in Burnside in the constituency of Dartmouth North; and

Whereas the 2014 Nordor Cup, celebrating the best Canadian youth darts team, was awarded to Team Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Ryan Sanford of Nova Scotia on winning the Nordor Cup and offer best wishes for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1184

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

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

Whereas the sport of darts has been popular since the 19th Century with origins in the United Kingdom; and

Whereas May 14th to May 16th saw the Canadian National Darts Championships held at the Ramada Hotel in Burnside in the constituency of Dartmouth North; and

Whereas the 2014 Nordor Cup, celebrating the best Canadian youth darts team, was awarded to Team Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Wyatt Sanford of Nova Scotia on winning the Nordor Cup and offer best wishes for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1185

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

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

Whereas the sport of darts has been popular since the 19th Century with origins in the United Kingdom; and

Whereas May 14th to May 16th saw the Canadian National Darts Championships held at the Ramada Hotel in Burnside in the constituency of Dartmouth North; and

Whereas the 2014 Nordor Cup, celebrating the best Canadian youth darts team, was awarded to Team Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Nick Smith of Nova Scotia on winning the Nordor Cup and offer best wishes for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1186

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

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

Whereas the sport of darts has been popular since the 19th Century with origins in the United Kingdom; and

Whereas May 14th to May 16th saw the Canadian National Darts Championships held at the Ramada Hotel in Burnside in the constituency of Dartmouth North; and

Whereas the 2014 Nordor Cup, celebrating the best Canadian youth darts team, was awarded to Team Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Dyson Smith of Nova Scotia on winning the Nordor Cup and offer best wishes for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1187

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

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

Whereas the sport of darts has been popular since the 19th Century with origins in the United Kingdom; and

Whereas May 14th to May 16th saw the Canadian National Darts Championships held at the Ramada Hotel in Burnside in the constituency of Dartmouth North; and

Whereas the 2014 Nordor Cup, celebrating the best Canadian youth darts team, was awarded to Team Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating team member Braeden Campbell of Nova Scotia on winning the Nordor Cup and offer best wishes for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1188

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

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

Whereas the sport of darts has been popular since the 19th Century with origins in the United Kingdom; and

Whereas May 14th to May 16th saw the Canadian National Darts Championships held at the Ramada Hotel in Burnside in the constituency of Dartmouth North; and

Whereas the 2014 Nordor Cup, celebrating the best Canadian youth darts team, was awarded to Team Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating coach Danica Probert of Team Nova Scotia on winning the Nordor Cup and offer best wishes for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1189

By: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Community Services)

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

Whereas the sport of darts has been popular since the 19th Century with origins in the United Kingdom; and

Whereas May 14th to May 16th saw the Canadian National Darts Championships held at the Ramada Hotel in Burnside in the constituency of Dartmouth North; and

Whereas the 2014 Nordor Cup, celebrating the best Canadian youth darts team, was awarded to Team Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating coach June Bruce of Team Nova Scotia on winning the Nordor Cup and offer best wishes for continued success.