



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2015

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2015

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Just before I get into the daily routine, it's with mixed emotions that I bring to you information that I've received from the honourable member for Sydney-Whitney Pier, as well as the honourable member for Cape Breton Centre, that they have advised the Speaker's Office of their resignations, effective 11:59 p.m. tonight, as MLAs. I just wanted to bring that forth as a matter of public record for the benefit of all the members in the House.

The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a point of order. Yesterday in Question Period the Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism implied that I wanted to see the Yarmouth ferry fail. His assertion is not true. Like all members of the Opposition, I want to see a sustainable ferry service with a good prospect for long-term success. Asking questions about the transparency and accountability for taxpayer dollars is a privilege that all MLAs enjoy and that I regard as an important responsibility that comes with this job.

Nova Scotians deserve to know how their money is being spent, and members of this House deserve better than the intimidation tactics that the minister employed yesterday. I ask that you direct the minister to withdraw his unfair and inaccurate comments. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: It is not a point of order. It's a disagreement of facts. We'll move on with the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1288

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

Whereas Thursday, April 2nd, is World Autism Day, a day to raise awareness of issues surrounding those, particularly children, who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder worldwide; and

Whereas today is the first day of a new evidence-based Atlantic-wide regional training course, entitled *ASD and Behavioural Interventions*, designed to strengthen support for students with autism spectrum disorder and to provide school personnel with additional learning resources; and

Whereas the initiative is supported by the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training and the APSEA Autism in Education partnership and by many school staff that participated in the pilot project;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly recognize all school personnel and their ongoing work to provide a better learning environment for all students, a key part of Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 1289

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

Whereas the Hon. Anne McLellan will become Dalhousie University's seventh chancellor in May 2015; and

Whereas Ms. McLellan, a Dalhousie alumna, has incredible life and career experience to bring to the university, having served at the highest levels of government, taught in the halls of academia, and donated her time and energy to countless causes across the country; and

Whereas Ms. McLellan hopes to build on Dalhousie's strengths and identify new areas where the university can be a national and global leader;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate the Hon. Anne McLellan and Dalhousie University on this partnership and on new possibilities.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. GLAVINE: It is my pleasure this morning to introduce Kelly Cull, Manager of Government Relations with the Canadian Cancer Society Nova Scotia Division, as well as Heather Rice, the Daffodil Campaign Manager, and one of the current Lodge residents, Eugene Bouchard, and perhaps he has a family member with him as well.

So, if they would all rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1290

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

Whereas April has been designated Daffodil Month in Nova Scotia to raise funds for life-saving research and vital support services and programs for people living with cancer; and

Whereas the Canadian Cancer Society selected the daffodil, the first flower of Spring, as its symbol to represent hope for more than 6,000 Nova Scotians diagnosed with cancer each year; and

Whereas the Canadian Cancer Society counts on the tireless support of volunteers to sell daffodils across the province to raise money for the fight against cancer;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly wear the daffodil pin and buy a flower to support the Canadian Cancer Society and its volunteers as they work to fight this disease.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 77 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 35 of the Acts of 2010. The Conflict of Interest Act. (Hon. Christopher d'Entremont)

Bill No. 78 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 42 of the Acts of 2010. The Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act. (Hon. David Wilson)

Bill No. 79 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 70 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Civil Service Act. (Hon. Labi Kousoulis)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

**HFX. WEST HS: CDN. STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONF. (09/13)
- HOSTING CONGRATS.**

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few minutes to tell you about a conference that will be coming to Nova Scotia later this year. Halifax West High School will host the 31st Annual Canadian Student Leadership Conference this September. This event will bring over 1,100 student leaders and teacher advisors from across Canada to Halifax West High School so they can develop their leadership skills and make even more of a difference in their schools and communities.

The CSLC is the longest-running national leadership conference in Canada. The theme this year will focus on how leadership roles help students make a difference in others' lives, which then improves their own lives. I would like to offer my congratulations to the steering committee, made up of teacher volunteers from high schools across metro, on bringing student leaders and their inspiring teachers to Halifax, and wish them a terrific conference. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

BROOKLYN (HANTS CO.): ARENA COLLAPSE - RESPONDERS THANK

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They finally turned the light on.

I rise today - as most would be aware, yesterday afternoon in Brooklyn, Hants County, in my constituency, we had an arena collapse. I wanted to just take a moment to

thank all those who responded - the different fire departments throughout the Valley, the Kings County HAZMAT team, and others who took part well into the evening last night in securing that scene - and also to be very thankful that there were no injuries there yesterday. That's very important.

We look forward to support as that community rebuilds and comes together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

***LIFESPAN NEEDS FOR PERSONS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER:
STRATEGIES - IMPLEMENT***

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to recognize World Autism Awareness Day. In 2012 the federal government made April 2nd World Autism Awareness Day in Canada. Autism is a growing public health challenge which impacts many families in Nova Scotia. We have come a long way in understanding and providing services to people with autism, but we have much farther to go. Providing support to people with autism is not something that ends after childhood. Adequate support for people with autism must be in place for their entire lives.

The document *Lifespan Needs for Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder* made 53 recommendations to address many of these challenges. Today I urge the government to take action and implement new strategies to help autistic Nova Scotians and their families.

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

CABLE FERRIES - FEE INCREASES

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Within 18 months of taking office, the McNeil Government has cut over 80 rural Nova Scotia jobs in Community Services, Natural Resources, and the tourism sector. On April 1, 2015, Nova Scotians witnessed over 1,400 user fee increases. Now it's April 2nd, and Nova Scotians realize it was no April Fool's joke.

One example of these new user fee structures is in the annual pass of cars and trucks on cable ferries. These fees have spiked to \$250 per car and \$1,000 per truck. These changes can only lead to further depopulation of rural Nova Scotia, and I'm concerned that depopulation of villages and towns is the goal of this McNeil Government.

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

**HUBLEY COMMUN. CTR./WARD, HARRY/ZINCK-GORDON, LORNA/VOLS.
- COMMITMENT**

MR. IAIN RANKIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to congratulate the Hubley Community Center and the small but dynamic group of volunteers who work tirelessly to meet the recreational and social needs of the community they serve. In particular, I would like to single out Harry Ward and Lorna Zinck-Gordon for recognition of their commitment to community.

The mission statement of the Hubley Community Center is as follows: “Hubley Community Center services and supports the Lewis Lake & surrounding communities by maintaining recreation facilities, hosting events and organizing activities for all community members young and old alike. The HCC is made up of community members who are committed to conserving, preserving and improving the quality of community life.”

Starting on April 12th the Hubley Community Center will be working in partnership with the local Lions Club to host weekly bingo sessions. The profits from the bingos will be shared equally between the Hubley Community Center and the Lions Club. I would like the members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in thanking the volunteers behind the Hubley Community Center for their dedication and commitment to community. Thank you.

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

N.S. CHRISTIANS - HAPPY EASTER

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I read this statement on behalf of the member for Pictou West. I rise to wish all Nova Scotians of the Christian faith Happy Easter. In Christianity, Easter is one of the most important holidays as it commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ following his crucifixion. I am honoured to have this opportunity to send my hopes that Christians enjoy the holiday as they celebrate by attending church services, family gatherings, or by simply enjoying a time of reflection. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**STANLEY CUP BRIDGEWATER VISIT:
MURRAY, GLEN/L.A. KINGS - THANK**

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, Bridgewater enjoyed a visit this summer from the Stanley Cup thanks to a local hockey hero, Glen Murray. Glen, a former NHL player, is now part of the L.A. Kings with player development and was able to take his turn with the Stanley Cup and bring it to Bridgewater on July 21st. The crowds of people lined up early and everyone had a chance to take a picture and have a moment with one of the

world's most famous trophies. Glen was also in attendance willing to take a picture and chat with all who came out. I wish to extend a big thanks to Glen Murray and the Los Angeles Kings organization for allowing so many the unique opportunity to get up close and personal with Lord Stanley's cup.

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

JEWISH COMMUN. - HAPPY PASSOVER

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow at sunset Nova Scotians of the Jewish faith will begin to celebrate the eight-day festival of Passover. Jewish people celebrate Passover as a commemoration of their liberation by God from slavery in Egypt and their freedom as a nation under the leadership of Moses. All of us can draw inspiration from the Passover message of freedom from slavery. It illustrates the inspirational power of people coming together and acting collectively to build a just and peaceful world.

Passover is also an opportunity to recognize the many contributions the Jewish community of Nova Scotia has made to our province. I ask all MLAs to join me in wishing members of Nova Scotia's Jewish community a happy Passover filled with peace and happiness. Thank you.

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

C.B. CENTRE MLA/SYDNEY-WHITNEY PIER MLA - RESIGNATIONS (02/04/15)

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, it's with a heavy heart I tell you that the MLAs for Cape Breton Centre and Sydney-Whitney Pier, the son of a steel worker and the son of a coal miner, will resign their seats in the Nova Scotia Legislature today. My caucus colleagues and I will greatly miss them both, and we thank them for their many, many years of service to their communities, our Party, and the province. I want to reassure you that the NDP caucus will continue to work hard on behalf of the constituents of our Party and the people of Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia is losing two strong voices for health care, for labour, for social justice, and for the Island of Cape Breton. I encourage all members of the Legislature to wish them well as they return to private life.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SMITH, RUSSELL - BIRTHDAY (100TH)

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Mr. Russell Smith, who on March 4, 2015 celebrated his 100th birthday. A recent article in *The*

Chronicle Herald featured Mr. Smith, calling him Mr. Clayton Park for his long career with Clayton Developments which developed the area of the city known as Clayton Park. Mr. Smith's work took the population of that suburb from zero to 10,000 in his time there, but Mr. Smith has been until recently a long-time resident of Dartmouth North. He worked at the Stairs rope work factory on the former Albro family land in North Dartmouth as a young man, as his father did before him before the war came calling.

He continues to be a member of the congregation at Stairs Memorial Church. Over his 96 years with Stairs Memorial he has been a Sunday school teacher and served as a member of every board they have. For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I would argue that Mr. Russell Smith on the occasion of his 100th birthday deserves the title of Mr. Dartmouth North and we are very proud to claim him. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

RURAL N.S.: COMMUN.: SUPPORT - CONFIRM

MS. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I have heard it said that acts of kindness and compassion that were once commonplace in our rural communities no longer exist. After the horrific murders of Bill and Ida Ward and their daughter Ann, the communities of Musquodoboit Valley and Hants East proved that statement to be totally incorrect. Members of those two communities came together to raise over \$50,000 to help with expenses of three funerals and to start a trust fund for Ann's young daughter.

More recently this theory was again proven wrong when the roofs of several farm buildings in East Hants collapsed under the weight of snow. Neighbours, volunteers from neighbouring communities and volunteer firefighters were quick to help in any way possible.

I am proud to be from rural Nova Scotia where people do come together to help others in times of crisis.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

SHOP LOCAL/SUPPORT COMMUN. - IMPORTANCE

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, this has been an extraordinary winter. The number of storms and the amount of snow forced many small businesses around the province to close and it has negatively impacted the incomes of many Nova Scotians who work for these businesses.

As we head into the long weekend, I want to remind all Nova Scotians of the importance of shopping local and supporting the people in our communities who create jobs and provide important goods and services.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take a moment to wish all Nova Scotians a Happy Easter. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

CHEBUCTO CONNECTIONS: FLOODING - COMMUN. SUPPORT

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today to talk about the generous nature of the people of Spryfield. In February, Chebucto Connections was flooded and many items were destroyed. Among the destroyed items were the dresses they had collected to give to graduating students who could not afford a prom dress.

The response from the community was overwhelming; in total over 250 dresses and suits were collected, allowing Chebucto Connections to proceed with their fashion show and give away dresses on February 28th.

I ask that members join me in recognizing the generosity of our fellow Nova Scotians. When a need arises in one of our communities, the people of Nova Scotia are quick to respond with a helping hand. There are many well-dressed and happy graduates in Spryfield, thanks to the generous donation of formal wear.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the honourable members for Cape Breton Centre and Sydney-Whitney Pier for their long, distinguished careers and I hope they enjoy their well-earned time off.

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

WORLD AUTISM DAY (04/02/15) - SUPPORT

MS. PAM EYKING: Mr. Speaker, as others have mentioned, today is Light It Up Blue for World Autism Day. World Autism Day was launched in 2010 by Autism Speaks and seeks to raise awareness and support for those impacted by autism. With over 14,000 families in Nova Scotia impacted by autism, I am glad that so many of the members here today are wearing blue and speaking up. Early diagnosis and intervention, along with life-long support, is critical in supporting those on the autism spectrum.

I know we are all committed to ensuring that supports are in place to ensure that all people with autism can live their lives to the fullest. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MCNEIL GOV'T.: PATIENT CARE - FOCUS

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, hospital patients with life-threatening conditions require constant monitoring, while in intensive care units the standards of care are to have one nurse look after one patient. However, increasingly, nurses with both the specialized training and experience are being asked to tend to more than one patient at a time in these units, putting patient care at risk and placing additional stress on the nurse.

Mr. Speaker, the McNeil Government can no longer ignore the concerns of nurses and must focus on patient care. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**S. SHORE HELPING HANDS/PLOW IT FORWARD:
SENIORS' PROJ. - CONGRATS.**

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker. To say this winter has been a harsh and unusual one would be quite an understatement but thanks in part to South Shore Helping Hands and its Plow it Forward campaign, it wasn't nearly as bad as it could have been for some residents of Lunenburg County. The campaign was launched to help raise awareness around helping our neighbours, particularly seniors, with snow removal.

South Shore Helping Hands worked to secure corporate donations to fund snow removal services for seniors and to seek volunteers who could help dedicate their time to snow removal. I am proud to say I live in a community where people are looking out for their friends, neighbours and seniors.

For many seniors it meant keeping appointments, receiving home care and just having peace of mind. I ask that all members of the House join me in congratulating the Mahone Bay seniors' project for another successful program.

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

GOV'T. (N.S.): SAVE OUR SCREENS/N.S. FILM JOBS - SUPPORT

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, after hearing the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board's comments about the Nova Scotia Film Industry Tax Credit, I have to say she's wrong in her assumptions about the film and creative industry. The truth is, if you tamper with a good, competitive film tax credit, a huge majority of production will disappear overnight because the nature of this industry is fluid. I know; I lived in many places across the country, going to the cities where most of the work was done. Most film production takes place in any province because of their film tax credits. In provinces where

the tax is eliminated, the film industry disappears and so do all the good-paying jobs and the money spent on economic spinoffs as well.

During the last election the MLA for Halifax Chebucto promised to improve the Film Industry Tax Credit and I hope he will join me in calling on the government to save our screens and support Nova Scotia's film jobs. Thank you.

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

ROY, JAY - CAPE & COWL COLLECTIBLES

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate Mr. Jay Roy, owner of newly-opened Cape and Cowl and Collectibles in Lower Sackville. Mr. Roy grew up in Fall River and attended Dalhousie University. With help from the Seed program in Nova Scotia he opened his comics shop in August 2014. Mr. Roy says his shop is much more than a comic book store; besides comic books and collectibles, Mr. Roy shares his store space with local crafters and artists to give them a storefront for their products.

Mr. Roy also wants his comic book shop to be a community hub with the focus on literacy and learning. He plans to introduce literacy classes where kids can reconnect with the love of reading through the wonderful medium of comics and graphic novels.

I would like to sincerely thank Mr. Roy for his contribution to Sackville. With his innovative thinking and determination I'm sure Mr. Roy's Cape and Cowl and Collectibles will be a great success.

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

WILLIAMS, ED: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MR. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, I seek the indulgence of the House today to recognize and respect the life of Ed Williams. He passed away last Saturday surrounded by family after a brief battle with cancer. Mr. Williams was a well-known member of the Hammonds Plains community and held in high regard by those who had the privilege of knowing him.

To note a few of his endeavours, he worked for the Sisters of Charity at the Motherhouse for 31 years, was a foster parent for 15 years, was a member of the Bedford Volunteer Fire Department and was active for years at the Sackville-Bedford Special Olympics with his daughter Kristen.

I will remember Mr. Williams as an individual with great respect and consideration for everyone. Furthermore, I appreciated his words of encouragement and excitement as I

pursued a seat in this Legislature. I ask that everyone in this House take some time today to remember somebody in their life like Mr. Williams and to show them gratitude.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

ST. GEORGE'S MASONIC LODGE - ANNIV. (230TH)

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the St. George's Masonic Lodge #20 in Wolfville on recently celebrating their 230th Anniversary. The St. George's Lodge is the oldest lodge in Nova Scotia, outside of Halifax. It was founded in November 1784 by Benjamin Hilton, Jr., a New York Loyalist. The lodge proudly has in its possession a meeting Minute Book that goes back 230 years to the founding year. In the same tradition, the men continue to gather every third Monday of the month and are always accepting new members.

Our community groups are integral to urban and rural life in Nova Scotia and on behalf of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, I congratulate the men of the St. George's Masonic Lodge #20 of faithfully carrying out their age-old traditions of fellowship and community building. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: I would just like to remind the honourable Minister of the Public Service Commission to keep the path clear between the Speaker and the speaker on the floor. Thank you.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie.

**GUYSBOROUGH OPTION FOR ADAPTIVE LIVING SOC. (GOALS)
- SUCCESS WISH**

MR. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize an outstanding group of individuals, the Guysborough Option for Adaptive Living Society. This is a vocational training centre for adults with special needs nestled in the Town of Guysborough and has been serving their community for 20 years. They offer a school-to-work transition program, provide an outstanding weekly dinner served every Friday, operate a used clothing depot and a small carpentry shop. They have the true definition of customer service. GOALS has an amazing crew of clients and staff who make their organization a vital asset to our community. I cannot express the importance of vocational training centres enough and the impact they have on the lives of so many. I would like to wish GOALS continued success in all their future endeavours. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

WHITEHEAD, RUTH HOLMES - ORDER OF N.S.

MR. JOACHIM STROINK: Mr. Speaker, the recipients of the Order of Nova Scotia for 2014 were selected from 117 nominated candidates by the ONS Advisory Council. Ruth Holmes Whitehead of Halifax Chebucto is recognized world-wide as a scholar, researcher, author, historian and mentor. For 40 years as staff anthropologist and assistant curator at the Nova Scotia Museum, she worked to ensure the stories of the Mi'kmaq and the Black Loyalists of Nova Scotia are enshrined and remembered. This led to the Nova Scotia Museum hosting the most comprehensive collection of Mi'kmaq material and cultural artifacts in the world.

The research for her most recent book, *Black Loyalists, Southern Settlers of Nova Scotia's First Free Black Communities*, served as a setting and as an inspiration for the acclaimed novel and the CBC mini-series *The Book of Negroes* by Lawrence Hill.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate Ruth Holmes Whitehead on receiving the Order of Nova Scotia and thank her for all her hard work in preserving the heritage in our great province. Thank you.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Government Motions.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that the adjourned debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be now resumed.

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

HON. GORDIE GOSSE: Mr. Speaker, may I do an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. GOSSE: In the west gallery today we have my wife, Jennifer Susan King. It is only her third time being here in 12 years. I don't know why she wouldn't come here all those years but I'd ask her to rise and receive a warm welcome. (Standing Ovation)

Thank you, everybody. Thank you to my wife who has been by my side through this struggle - my best friend, my partner - to my caucus colleagues, to all you guys for being great, to all Members of the Legislative Assembly, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank your office, the Clerks, Mr. Neil Ferguson and Annette Boucher, for all their help over the years. The House of Assembly operations, what a privilege it is to stand here in his historic building, 197 years old and look at the shape of this building: thanks to Mike Laffin and Peter Theriault, this building is in great shape. It has been an honour and a privilege to stand here.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the retired staff, Nancy Kinsman. That poor lady was here for 33 years and 11 Speakers - my, my, God bless her. The Speaker's Administration Office for looking after all our expenses - Deborah Lusby and all the staff over there. How can I not forget the man who has been here for 37 years, who writes up all our legislation, Gordon Hebb. He's been here a long time and I wish Gordon all the best also.

Legislative Television, the boys upstairs in the bird's nest, up on the third floor who nobody sees - Jim and Matt and those guys and you know what I mean, Paul and Matt and Jim and all the rest of the people up there - Mark - what would we do without those people? What would we do, as MLAs?

The Committees Office, I'd like to thank them personally for all the committees that I've been on and thank them for always having those little Rockets candies for me. Thanks to Kim and Sherri and Kim and those people, those Rockets candies, even though I was diabetic, I sneaked the odd one before I'd come in here.

To Nancy's husband Bob Kinsman, who is always up here in the gallery somewhere looking for how you spell Casenza, Kakoska - all those lovely names in Whitney Pier. I'll just say the Library, Margaret Murphy and all her staff, Heather and those guys. Security: Sergeant-at-Arms Ken Greenham, Buzz, Don, Clyde, all those guys - I certainly will miss all of them.

All of those people I will miss dearly, but first of all I would like to thank my brothers Lorway, Bill, Harold, my mother Edith, for always being there for me. (Applause)

And how could I forget my constituency assistant Albert Crawley, who has been with me from day one. He is probably one of the longest-serving constituency assistants in the province - he's sure looking for a break; he'll be happy to have a break. Keith Neville, you know recently on the news Keith's been doing the DVA file and they told him no, but Keith can be a determined young man - a little older than me - he decided that he would keep doing the DVA files and work hard.

Jamie Crane whom I love dearly, the outreach worker in Cape Breton; to all the caucus staff in the caucus office and, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank them, from Emily Reid to Nancy Sheppard, to Brandon Rose, to Linda Smith, Aaron Harpell, Mark Laventure, Mat Whynott - the youngest member ever elected to this Legislature - and Hannah. I think I got them all.

AN HON. MEMBER: Amanda.

MR. GOSSE: And Amanda, who can forget Amanda? My God, sorry Amanda, I couldn't forget you for all those emails - you won't be sending them to me anymore.

ANOTHER HON. MEMBER: Matt Smith.

MR. GOSSE: And Matt Smith, recently just started back with the caucus.

You know it's been a pleasure to be here as an MLA. I grew up in a company house and to come from there to here - what a journey. (Applause)

I don't want this to be a sad day; I want this to be a happy day. I'm happy. I am very happy. I have to look after my health, Mr. Speaker, it's something that is important to me. I'd like to thank the doctors here in Halifax, Mark Taylor and his secretary Julie and them, for the operation. The nurses on the third floor at the ENT, Amanda, Allison, thank you for all those needles every four hours. When you're in the hospital and you just get to sleep - and I see the Minister of Health and Wellness is laughing - they wake you up to give you another needle. Well thank you to Amanda, Adele, and Jen, and all of those people.

And to the minister yesterday for allowing my bill on HPV vaccination to go to second reading, thank you. (Applause)

Boy, the Class of '03, the Premier, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, the Minister of Health and Wellness, the member for Argyle-Barrington; and my best friend, the member for Sackville-Cobequid. (Applause) Class of '03, keep up the good work. (Applause)

My people who worked for years on my campaign: Melina MacGuigan, Allison Swan, Alice Swan, Diane Delany, Bernie Jessome, all of those people. also I would personally like to thank the people of Sydney-Whitney Pier and, you know, that old riding Cape Breton Nova, I'd like to thank those people too. I know the Boundaries Commission got rid of the riding but the people of Cape Breton just couldn't get rid of me.

It has been a pleasure, Mr. Speaker; you're doing a fine job. It's very difficult to be a Speaker and be impartial and I find that you are one of the most impartial Speakers that

have been here in my time and the time before that. Congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, and keep up the good work. (Applause)

I guess it's time to say good-bye. God bless. (Standing Ovation)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the House for giving me an opportunity to say a few words. First of all, let me say, you need to be more partial. (Laughter)

As I was listening - and if you don't mind, I'm going to break from the Rules of the House, I'm not going to call him the member; I'm going to call him Gordie. As I was listening to Gordie's speech, there were lots of moments in this House that flashed back. I remember a time when he stood in the back over there - when Junior Theriault and I were so close to that wall we thought we were going to have to renovate it so we could have room to get in here - and Gordie got up and to make his point he had figured out how many cases of two-four Keith's beer he could buy with the money that the government was spending on something else. We had quite a chuckle out of it.

I didn't know Gordie until I came here. I didn't have the good fortune of having him in my life before we were both elected in 2003. Quite frankly I think I can say this: it felt like I had always known him. It became pretty obvious why he got elected to the House of Assembly. It was his warm nature, his firm belief in who he was, his understanding of where he came from, where he was going, very proud of his past and very determined about his future. Former Premier Dexter and I would chat a few times about being in Whitney Pier where being with Gordie was like being with the King of Kensington. You would go down and people would be just waving to him. I happened to be in Cape Breton at CBU at a basketball game and Gordie, in his own way, very humbly standing by the court and people were walking up to him, not because he was the member, but because he was one of them. He was their friend and he greeted them the same way that he greeted every one of us in this House.

I am happy for him today. I am happy that he's getting an opportunity to spend more time at home. I had the good fortune of being away with Gordie and his wife and son. My family and I were at a same event outside of this province together and I want to wish his family all the best as he gets to spend some time to continue to improve his health, to continue to move forward so he can build that health back to enjoy the rest of his life and put that weight back on that we all began to love so much.

As I said earlier, I am happy for Gordie today but it's a sad day for us in this House. Oftentimes this place is very partisan, we know that - and it will be when Question Period starts, I'm sure - but Gordie Gosse is the kind of people that should be in this place. The challenge for all of us, who are obviously going to be looking to run by-elections and

looking - we need to find the next Gordie Gosse to come to this House to represent his community with the same vigour and determination that Gordie did, but most importantly, with the same decency that Gordie brought to this place. (Applause)

I'll look forward to going down and campaigning with him in the by-election. I'll be looking forward to coming down and seeing you in your own community, and I'll even buy, so that we can have an opportunity to get outside of this partisan place. I hope to continue to build on a friendship, Gordie.

MR. GOSSE: Bring Colleen with you.

THE PREMIER: I'll bring Colleen with me. For those of you who don't know, Colleen is my daughter and she was a Page in this House. I will say to you, Gordie, there's a number of you who know how important you are to her. She adored you. She adored the way you responded and treated her, as a Page in this House, as I am sure all Pages here do. I can tell you that I had a call from her this morning on her way to work, to make sure that you understood that you were in her thoughts today as well. I will let her know that you heckled me about her in the House.

I would also be remiss if I didn't say a few words about your time as Speaker. You spoke about the current Speaker. I said this to you when you were Speaker, and I've said it since: you were a tremendous Speaker in this House. The word "you" has never been used since you've had that Chair. I was going to start using "you," and you would know who I'm talking about, right?

You were a strong Speaker in this place. You brought decorum into a place that was chaotic at times, and that was as much because of the strength of your character as because of how much the rest of us in this House respected the authority you brought to that Chair. (Applause)

I also want to acknowledge Frank, a member who is not here, who also announced today that he will not be back. I want to thank Frank for his years of committed service to the people of his community, Cape Breton Centre, but also to this House. He served as Deputy Premier. He held many portfolios in the previous government. He always had a way to bring a little bit of colour to this place - as recently as last week (Laughter)

I do want to thank Frank for his time to the people of his community and to the province. I look forward to seeing him as well on Cape Breton Island over the next number of years, to continue to build on a friendship.

One of the things that is not known about Frank - everyone who was watching on television views Frank as a very partisan politician, when in actual fact, it couldn't be further from the truth. He obviously can put his elbows up with the best of people when it comes to this place, but he was not as partisan as everyone would perceive him to be when

you are watching it through the television screen. He was someone who tried to get business done in this House and move forward, not only as the Government House Leader but as House Leader of the New Democratic Party. He continued to try to work with the government before his when he was House Leader, and with this government, to try to move the business of any government through, to ensure that we were here to move the business of our province forward.

To Gordie and to Frank, I want to wish them all the best as they embark on the next phase of their lives. I want to wish their families the best as well, because everyone in this House knows that this is a team sport. Only one name is on the ballot, but everyone who loves you gets dragged into the match and becomes part of it. So I want to wish their families all the best, and thank them for their commitment to public service. Thank you. (Applause)

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I too want to say that I wish to join our voices, in the Progressive Conservative caucus, to the remarks of the Premier in congratulating Gordie and Frank - I know we're breaking the rules, Mr. Speaker, for a moment - on their time here.

I thought it was so interesting to listen to Gordie a moment ago as he gave his last speech and he basically talked about everybody in this place, everybody else but himself. He talked about you, Mr. Speaker; he talked about your staff; he talked about the NDP caucus staff. He talked about the people who worked for him and supported him in his constituency. He talked about the legislative staff; he talked about the Hansard staff, and people who work in this building.

That says a lot about Gordie Gosse, that in this last moment here in this House, the last chance to speak, it was about everybody else but him, and I really was struck by that and admire that. That is the kind of politician that we need more of in this Legislature, someone who puts everyone else ahead of themselves.

Mr. Speaker, there are moments in this House where we are all struck by the raw emotion of the moment and that becomes particularly true when one of our colleagues, regardless of Party, announces their retirement. It is intensely true today because we are watching the retirement of a member who served with honour and dignity and class, who elevated the debate whether as Speaker or a member, who represented his constituency, which Mr. Speaker, is made up of people from all over the world who have called Cape Breton home and the Pier.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's a national historic event.

MR. BAILLIE: It's a nationally historically - and he is still doing it, Mr. Speaker. Ukrainians, Italians, Poles, Hungarians, West Indians, I met them all; they all placed their faith in Gordie for all those years. He served them well and so we feel an extra tinge of raw emotion when we see a political career of that calibre conclude with honour today. Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition I want to extend our thanks and congratulations to Gordie's family as well.

I know that, time permitting, the member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg wishes to say a word or two so I'm going to take my place to allow that to happen, and maybe others, but just one quick word on Frank. Mr. Speaker, he's one of the first members I ever met, believe it or not, and I won't get into a long story other than to say the first thing I learned from Frank Corbett was he gave me a boxing lesson. It's not a skill I've needed to use as of yet in this Chamber but he is, among other things, an accomplished boxer, as some people know, and I wish him and his family well in his retirement also.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words I want to make sure to leave a little time for others.

MR. SPEAKER: With a minute and half in advance of Question Period, with the leave of the House we'll postpone Question Period till we're finished with our remarks about this, so feel free to take the time you need.

The honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: It's with a very heavy heart, very mixed emotions that I rise in my place to say a few words about my colleagues. I've been dreading this moment. Mr. Speaker, Gordie Gosse is one of the strongest, most courageous, most caring, most decent people I have ever had the privilege to work with and to know. (Applause) I will miss him greatly, as will all members of the NDP caucus, and family.

I want to thank Sue, his wife, who has been with him every step of this journey, and their children Daniel and Gordie Jr as well. They're a very, very tight, dedicated, loving family. I think the strength that Gordie has demonstrated and the courage is shared and it comes from the support that Sue and his children have provided, but Sue especially, I know that. Thank you so much for sharing him.

I and the members of the NDP caucus have nothing but the very best wishes in our hearts for Gordie, as he begins another journey back to private citizen. I'm very doubtful that there will really ever be a private Gordie Gosse, and as the Premier said, he's like the King of Kensington, when you walk down the streets in Whitney Pier and throughout Sydney, and with very good reason. I'm sure we will, in the future, hear things from Gordie from time to time and we wish him the very, very best of health. We know what a struggle he has been through up until this point. I think he serves as a beacon of hope for others who are engaged in this battle with that horrible disease of cancer and, ironically, I guess today

is the beginning of a month where we will mark the battle and the struggle to fight with and deal with this terrible disease.

I want to say a few things about my other colleague, Frank Corbett. Frank and I came to this place as kids, believe it or not, more than 17 years ago - this is the beginning of our 18th year here. We grew up politically in this place, but I remember very well our first day here. It is very much like Frank not to want the flowery tributes and the emotional features that go with these kinds of tributes, that's just not Frank Corbett. He won't be happy that I'm standing here saying this; however, I absolutely have to acknowledge.

Gordie said he grew up in a company house, what a journey to come from humble beginnings and then come to this place. Frank Corbett is the son of a miner. We've heard Frank occasionally here talk about his humble beginnings, and throughout his political career he rose to be the Deputy Premier of this province and held many significant portfolios in his time in government. I want to acknowledge his commitment to public service, to his community, to our Party, and to our province. (Applause)

I will very much miss both of these good men, who have collectively spent 29 years in public service in our province. I wish them both good health, great happiness and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to stand and say those few words. Thank you. (Applause)

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

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I figured I had this down pat, I knew exactly what I was going to say and after hearing everybody else, for once in my life I'm at a loss for words. But I'll change that, I'll change that.

Today is a pretty sad day for me as an individual and as a member of this House, because although Gordie and Frank sit in a different political Party, we're kindred spirits. We're spirits who believe in our Island of Cape Breton, who have on many occasions forgotten what politics was about and thought what was best for our home and our communities.

There have been many flowery things said about Gordie, we could talk about that, but I have to tell you, Gordie Gosse and his public service goes way beyond the 12 years that he has served in this House. He served in the youth centre in Whitney Pier and he made a difference in so many people's lives in that organization. Even after he came here he was determined that place would be successful so that the young people in his community would have a base to move forward.

When I look at Gordie, I have to tell you, I admire him. One of the reasons I admire him so much is because of the spirit that he has. When you take what he's gone through in the last year and how he has tackled that whole situation, he looked at it square in the eye

and he said, this isn't going to beat me. I've got too many things that I still want to do, I have a family that needs me, I've got a community that I want to be with.

When you think about that kind of determination from an individual like Gordie, it's hard not to be inspired and it's hard not to admire him. When you see Sue and what she has done - and you know they say that behind every successful man there's a surprised woman - but you know what? I'm sure it was no surprise to Sue because she saw qualities in Gordie long before any of us saw them. His family was there every step of the way and I know his brothers and I know they've been there for him through all this.

I had the opportunity to be Deputy Speaker under Gordie, and that in itself was an education. I did take great exception, Mr. Premier, to when he did away with the word "you" because as an old sheep farmer - ewe was always on my mind. (Laughter)

Our friend Frank, well, I think the Leader of the NDP hit it right on the head when she said about Frank not being the guy that liked a whole lot of flowery stuff, who wouldn't be here today for this because that just wasn't Frank's style. But Frank did have a style and his style was to make sure he did the best he could for the people he represented.

I know that all three Leaders have said this, sometimes this House is partisan and there are times when we seem to be stuck in one mode, but I truly believe that each and every member of this House is here for the right reasons: we actually want to do what is best for the people we represent and for the Province of Nova Scotia. The challenge is some of them are going down Highway No. 101 to get to Yarmouth, some are going down Highway No. 102, but at the end of the day it's the destination that's doing what's right for the Province of Nova Scotia.

Today is a sad day for us to see two colleagues, two fellow Cape Bretoners leaving this House of Assembly, but at the same time it's a day of celebration for them, a day when they will be able to go home, enjoy their families, work on doing all those things that many of us put aside for the time that we are in this House.

It is a great honour for me to be able to say a few words today about Frank and Gordie. I can only say on behalf of my family, to both of them, I wish you the very best, much success, and a long life. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Well I think we're not quite done yet, Gordie. I want to just take two minutes in my capacity as Speaker to thank you for your service to this office and the standard that you set as the Speaker previous to me. I certainly took great pride in learning from the pointers and the stories and the established decorum that you set in this House prior to me taking this Chair.

I also want to thank you on behalf of Nova Scotians with disabilities for your commitment to the initiative that you led, as Speaker during your time, to make MLA

offices barrier-free. The time was right for that and it did take a champion to do it. That will be among many of your legacies that you leave not only in this House but to the people of the province, so for that I thank you. (Applause)

As Speaker, you have the privilege to travel around the country and the United States, representing the Assembly of Nova Scotia, and true to the King of Kensington stories, as we go through the airports and we travel with the staff, the Clerks and some of those other members, as I look around, who have travelled with me in the role of Speaker, they say what a pleasure it is to get to the plane on time. As we would go through the airport there would be many stories by those colleagues, our colleagues here, to say gee, when we travel with Gordie through the airport, the plane always had to wait for Gordie as he was busy talking to everybody in the terminal, in the loading gate. Everywhere that Gordie travelled there were people he was able to relate to, either as constituents or just strike up a conversation about what was going on that day.

They have been big shoes to fill, and I hope I am doing your footprint justice here in this Chair now.

I also want to thank Frank, as somebody whom I have worked with as a House Leader, for his commitment to this Assembly and to the Province of Nova Scotia and to his Party. His style certainly was unique; it was very effective. I think this Assembly today, we as the 51 members who have the privilege to sit here, we all have a story and we have in the nearly two years that we've been here together as this version of the family, been brought together by many, many events, family situations, the loss of our colleague, the member for Dartmouth South. (Applause) And as the old saying goes: what doesn't beat us down will make us stronger.

Gordie, I wish you all the best and to your family in the coming weeks and months. I know you will beat it, and I want to wish Frank all the best as well.

Having said that, I guess we'll move on.

MR. GOSSE: I'm not staying for Question Period, boys, I'm moving on. (Laughter)

Oral Questions Put by Members.

MR. SPEAKER: One last call by the former Speaker. (Applause)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM. - FILM TAX CREDIT: CONTINUATION (2016) - CONFIRM

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I'm not even sure I feel like doing this today. It's a pretty tough moment to follow but I have a question for the Premier. Yesterday the Premier kindly and politely encouraged me to table any information that we have on the benefits of the film tax credit, so I am tabling today a number of documents.

The first one is the Canadian Media Production Association report entitled *Profile 2014: An Economic Report on the Screen-based Media Production Industry in Canada*. I also wish to table the Film and Creative Industries Nova Scotia Accountability Report for 2013/2014 from the Premier's own Film Nova Scotia. Finally I wish to table testimony given by the CEO of Film Nova Scotia to our own Legislature's Economic Development Committee a month and a half ago, in response to a question from a member of the Liberal caucus.

Mr. Speaker, all of these documents confirm that although the cost of the film tax credit to the government is in the \$22 million range that it returns direct investment in our province each year of between \$120 and \$140 million. In light of the fact that the benefit of the film tax credit to the economy of Nova Scotia is at least five times the cost, I would like to ask the Premier to assure those Nova Scotians who work in our film and creative industries that that tax credit will still be in place next year.

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question and for the information that he has tabled here today. The numbers that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is using are numbers that are associated with the entire production industry in the province, even those that do not qualify for the tax credit, but we will take the information that the Leader has provided. I know that the minister would have received some of that as well and we will wait for Budget Day.

MR. BAILLIE: I'm glad we're coming to some conclusion on the numbers but of course this is a story about more than just numbers, Mr. Speaker. There are homegrown success stories in our film and television industry here in Nova Scotia. One example is Arcadia TV and its President, John Wesley Chisholm, who I believe is in the building at this time. They are a successful Nova Scotia company employing 30 people here in the Province of Nova Scotia. Right now they are busy scheduling summer production. All of that work has been put at risk because of the uncertainty created by the comments of the government about whether there is any value to the film tax credit or not.

I'll ask the Premier, will he end the uncertainty today and assure Mr. Chisholm and his employees that they can continue to bring film and TV work to the Province of Nova Scotia with confidence that the film tax credit will be there for them?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Mr. Chisholm and all of those who have believed in the Province of Nova Scotia and invest in this province. I want to thank

all of the hardworking Nova Scotians who day in and day out go to work and contribute to the economy of this province. As all members of this House know, we have financial challenges facing this province. We are looking at all of the possibilities to make sure that we are spending tax dollars in the best possible way to drive economic development. We will continue to do so. Next Thursday the minister will stand up, deliver a budget that is focused on the future, and I'll be glad and very proud to stand here with her as we deliver and chart a course forward for this Province.

MR. BAILLIE: We all understand the financial challenges that the province faces and the need to make changes but I am sure that small business owners like John Wesley and other would agree that so far the only change that we've seen is that instead of the NDP giving away millions of dollars to the Irving's, we have the Premier giving away millions of dollars to the Royal Bank, but then telling companies like Arcadia TV that they can't go on to support them, Mr. Speaker, that's not the change that Nova Scotia needs.

It's great to thank them for the work but how can the government say that they support our homegrown success stories like Arcadia TV when they go out of their way to create such turmoil at a critical time in the film and television business?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am glad to know that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia is against good-paying jobs through payroll rebates that are coming here. The fact of the matter is that a company that has a global footprint chose Nova Scotia because they believe in this province. They believe in the workers and they believe in the workforce. It's unfortunate that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is opposed to that and is sending a negative message outside of this province.

The real challenge here is the uncertainty that is being spread by the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. The Finance and Treasury Board Minister said that change is required; she'll deliver a budget that will show change and chart a course in a direction to move this province forward.

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

PREM.: PATIENT CARE/SAFETY - ADDRESS

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. Intensive care beds at the province's only tertiary hospital are closed, and critical care nurses are asked to care for twice the number of patients they normally would. Travel nurses are being flown in to work in our hospitals from out of province, and yesterday during Question Period, when I raised concerns about patient care and safety with the Premier, he suggested that if I had issues with this, I should take my concerns to the employer, the new Nova Scotia Health Authority.

Can the Premier please explain why he thinks it's not his responsibility to address the issues I've just described?

THE PREMIER: Not only are we addressing that issue, but we're dealing with all of the unfinished business that the previous government ignored. We brought in essential services legislation to ensure that health care would be there for Nova Scotians and not brought to the brink every time there are labour disruptions. We brought the clarity of taking 50 collective agreements down to four so that we can go to the bargaining table and negotiate on behalf of all Nova Scotians for a free and open collective agreement.

What we've said, if there are issues on the floor when it comes to staffing, is that I encourage the staff to go to their employer to work with that. We know that across this province the staffing level will be different on every floor because of the acuity of the illness that is being looked after, but the simplistic fix that the Leader of the New Democratic Party is talking about does not work. She knows it doesn't work, and that's why she didn't implement it when she was the Health and Wellness Minister.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that every government leaves office with unfinished business. This government will leave office - sometime very soon - with unfinished business. My concern is that this government is creating new problems, worse problems, that weren't there under the former government.

Yesterday during Question Period, the Premier was boasting about the number of nurses currently in the system - and it's a good thing, because imagine what things would be like if even more nurses left. Even with the complement of nurses, we know that ERs are closing in communities around the province due to shortages, including in Shelburne.

My question to the Premier is, why won't he admit that we have a shortage of nurses, and when will we see a plan to address this issue?

THE PREMIER: The only time since 2008 that we've had a reduction in registered nurses in this province from one year to the next is when that member was the Health and Wellness Minister in this province. We have more registered nurses in this province than ever in our history. We have more licensed practical nurses in our province working than ever in our history. We've hired 90 per cent of the graduates from nursing schools - 90 per cent of them, the highest number we've hired to work here in the history of our province.

Are there challenges? Absolutely, and we're going to be there to work side by side with front-line health care workers to continue to improve the health care system for this province and for all Nova Scotians.

MS. MACDONALD: During the time I was Minister of Health and Wellness, ICU beds never closed and we never had to bring nurses in from other provinces.

People who depend on the Roseway Hospital in Shelburne have seen emergency room closures increase by nearly 800 per cent due to a shortage of nurses in the past six months. The McNeil Government has put incentives in place to attract doctors to underserved communities.

My question to the Premier is, will the Premier put incentives in place for nurses so they will go to communities like Shelburne, where there is a nursing shortage?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to do what the Minister of Health and Wellness has been doing in working with health care providers from one end of this province to the other, to ensure that the health care teams are there to respond to the needs of specific communities. The Minister of Health and Wellness has been doing a tremendous job on behalf of the citizens of this province.

One thing that did happen, Mr. Speaker, that is clear, when that member was a Health and Wellness Minister and part of a government, they gave a 7.5 per cent pay raise to civil servants in this province, when the economy was the worst-performing economy in Canada and we were paying more than any other jurisdiction in the entire country. What they decided to do was throw more money at the union leadership instead of ensuring that the services were in place for communities across this province so that Nova Scotians could access that service.

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

PREM. - SMALL BUS. TAXES: NO INCREASE - CONFIRM

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, small business owners are worried that the Premier is about to raise their taxes, too. His own tax study recommended that the small business tax rate be increased by 5 per cent, or almost triple its current level.

Mr. Speaker, when in Opposition the Premier said, "Our small business tax is too high and we start collecting it earlier than our neighbours." Does the Premier stand by what he said in Opposition and will he assure small businesses across Nova Scotia that he will not raise their taxes next week when the budget is tabled?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the work I did in this House, on both sides of the House. I'm very proud of the fact that I've been very direct with Nova Scotians. I've told them exactly the direction our government is going to go. I will continue to do what I've always done, which is to keep my commitments and my word to the citizens of this province. I encourage the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party to wait until next Thursday when the budget is introduced.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, our neighbour is New Brunswick and despite the financial challenges there, the Government of New Brunswick is investing in small

businesses by actually lowering the small business rate in the Province of New Brunswick, which will directly compete against the small businesses here in Nova Scotia who are relying on the Premier to keep his word in Opposition that he believes their taxes are already too high and should be lowered and not raised. The government has ruled out several items from next week's budget but refuses to rule out an increase in the small business tax, because their own study recommends it.

Mr. Speaker, which statement does the Premier agree with - the one he made in Opposition or the recommendation to increase small business taxes, as made by his own tax study?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to thank the people who worked very diligently on behalf of the citizens of this province to deliver an independent study on taxation, regulatory reform in this province. It's like all information that is brought to the government, we look at it, analyze it and then chart a course going forward.

I want to remind the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party that the small business tax rate in this province is lower than it is in New Brunswick, even with the changes that took place. We're continuing and going to continue to partner with small businesses across this province to drive economic opportunities for citizens and to drive economic growth so we can afford the programs and systems that we, as Nova Scotians, have become accustomed to.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - TRAVEL NURSES: CONTRACT - PRODUCE

HON. DAVID WILSON: Yesterday I asked the Minister of Health and Wellness to provide the contract for the travel nurses who are coming from outside the province, due to the shortage in critical care units, nurses for critical care units at the QE II. His response was to wait for the Budget Estimates.

This contract has absolutely nothing to do with the upcoming estimates this government is about to introduce next week. My question to the minister is, why is he avoiding producing the travel-nurse contract? What is he trying to hide, Mr. Speaker?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Certainly that information can be made available. However, I have found that during estimates, a time when many of the matters that affect the Health and Wellness budget of the province, both when I was in Opposition and last year, as minister, it does allow those longer discussions to be able to drill down and that is one of those figures that can be discussed at that time.

MR. DAVID WILSON: So I guess my last comment was correct, Mr. Speaker, he is hiding behind it. He just indicated that it can be relieved but he's choosing not to, which

I don't understand. I mean, he should be transparent, the government has committed to being transparent to Nova Scotians.

So I would like to ask the minister again, why wouldn't he provide that information today?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, as we know that contract and that work was started under Capital Health, now the Central Zone. As we know, the new health authority in getting underway may have those figures available, but we know that work is pretty intense at the moment. What I can assure is that over the next while, the member for Sackville-Cobequid will get that information.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

PREM.: SMALL BUS. TAX - CUT

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Premier. While in Opposition, the current Premier announced the Liberal plan for a February holiday. With that he said he would help small business make up for any lost revenue due to the holiday closure. In fact, he told reporters that lost business revenue would be offset by other Liberal measures that would stimulate business activity, including a proposed cut to the small business tax.

Flash-forward to 2015 - the Premier got his holiday and he just told this House that he always keeps his word, so now will he keep his word and cut the small business tax?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, like all taxes in the province, the small business tax is being reviewed prior to the budget going forward. We will lay out, chart a course going forward. We've been very clear and direct with Nova Scotians and they've responded very positively to our government, and we're encouraged by the fact that so many Nova Scotians want to work with us to move this province forward, despite the negativity coming from the Progressive Conservative Party in this province.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure who the Premier is consulting with, but there are not a lot of Nova Scotians I know who are anxious to pay more tax, and the Liberal commission's Broten report calls for a 5 per cent increase in the small business tax.

After promising that the February holiday would be accompanied by a tax cut, it would be cruel to instead add 5 per cent to these small businesses. So, which is it, Mr. Premier, cut the taxes or raise them?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite does his best, along with his Leader, to continue to go around and send fear into communities that all this is going to

happen without any basis for it. They stand up in this House and they tell us to balance the budget in one year, then they say don't cut anything, specifically don't cut anything out of Pictou County, for God sake.

He stands up time after time - and they can't have it both ways; they can't have it both ways. Leadership is about setting a direction for this province. We're going to set a direction, and Nova Scotians are joining us and moving forward and leaving you behind.

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to remind the honourable Premier not to use the word "you." (Laughter)

The honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - N.S. HEALTH AUTH. MODEL: MIN. - AGREEMENT

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, where have we heard that before? (Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Earlier this week the CEO of the new provincial health authority, Janet Knox, was interviewed by allNovaScotia.com and she said that she implemented changes at the Western Kings Memorial Health Centre in Berwick back in September 2011 that could be a template for the new provincial health authority.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you're aware, but back in 2011, in Opposition, the now-Minister of Health and Wellness on this side actually organized a public meeting and invited Ms. Knox to it with the hope of getting her to change her mind about introducing the changes of which she spoke at the Western Kings Memorial Centre - and I'll table that at the end of my question.

My question to the minister is, does he now agree with the model that's being considered for the Nova Scotia Health Authority that he didn't agree with in 2011?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, any time a change comes about and there is a new model, there are aspects of the clinic and the clinic hours now at Western Kings Memorial that are serving the public very well. Now that the new health authority has officially started, we will do that health services plan, that clinical review, and Western Kings Memorial will be part of that review.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, when this model was being implemented in Berwick, which included a reduction in hours at the clinic, the now Health and Wellness Minister said, ". . . we are simply not prepared to let this go." and he requested an emergency meeting with the minister of the day in the hopes that the Annapolis Valley District Health Authority would reverse its plan, and I'll table that newspaper article.

My question for the minister is, when exactly did he see the light and change his mind about what was going on in 2011?

MR. GLAVINE: As I said, it has aspects of a good model of care. We know now that there are surge times during the year when the Valley Regional ER does have pressures and as part of the clinical review, Western Kings Memorial, and indeed all of our health centres and our regional sites, will get that intensive look as to what services we will provide from one end of the province to the other.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - MENTHOL CIGARETTES: LEG. - EXEMPTION

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: When the Minister of Health and Wellness moved second reading of Bill No. 60, he exempted menthol-flavoured tobacco products because, “. . . it has been on the market for decades and it's not marketed to youth.” - and I'll table number one. On November 14th the minister said that he would consider bringing forward legislation that did not exempt menthol - and I'll table number two.

So my question to the minister is, will the Minister of Health and Wellness confirm today whether menthol cigarettes will be exempted from the legislation that he said he would bring forward during this session?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: The member for Argyle-Barrington this morning is asking questions like we get from the media. He wants to pre-empt the bill that is going to come forward. I would say very directly to the member opposite, the session is far from over.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Well the Minister of Health and Wellness has said no truer words than that - that it's far from over, but quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, I think it's a valid question. We did have a long debate on flavoured tobacco and other things during the last session of the House and there was the big issue that the Canadian Cancer Society brought forward on menthol as a kiddie flavour. One in three Nova Scotia youth smokes menthol cigarettes, a much higher rate than the Canadian average for all smokers, and that's in this document as well - and I'll table that as well.

So while the minister might believe that menthol products are not marketed to young people, it is young people who are certainly using them. My question to the minister is, what steps is the minister taking to ensure that smoother flavoured menthol cigarettes are not the first smoking experience for Nova Scotia youth?

MR. GLAVINE: I'm very, very pleased with the work of Dr. Strang and the Department of Health and Wellness and the level of consultation that has gone on over the past three months. We have a very clear picture now around the e-cigarette and how that is

being picked up, flavoured tobacco use in the province, chewing tobacco, we can keep going through the list including menthol and that intensive survey, consultations that were done with numerous stakeholders. Our legislation will reflect the voice of Nova Scotians.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - DART. GEN. HOSP.:
RENOVATIONS - 5TH FLOOR EXEMPTION**

HON. DAVID WILSON: The Dartmouth General Hospital is constantly overcrowded and important medical procedures and surgeries are being cancelled as there are no beds available. Doctors at the hospital readily admit to using every nook and cranny to treat patients. Last April, the Minister of Health and Wellness announced \$7 million for renovations to the hospital, but this money did not include the currently-empty fifth floor. I'd like to ask the minister, why did the minister not include the empty fifth floor in the renovation and upgrading investment made last year?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we are pleased as a government to be responding to the Auditor General. That is first and foremost on the third and fourth floor making sure that infection control is at the standard that it should be for the Dartmouth General. That work is well underway. I've signed off on that work for the third and fourth floor, and we were told at the time that engineering was giving us the picture that work would need to be done on the third and fourth floor before work could even start on the fifth floor, because there have to be some structural changes to the Dartmouth General.

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I think the patients and the residents of Dartmouth would be shocked to know that, when they walk into the Dartmouth General and see the overcrowded emergency room and wait times through the roof, there's a completely empty floor. The Premier, the minister, and his Party committed to renovating that fifth floor. There was a plan in place to do that, and I'm wondering, why did the minister throw that plan out and not continue on to renovate that fifth floor that could relieve some of the pressure that we see throughout the Dartmouth General Hospital?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, maybe this is the time when the member opposite and two former Ministers of Health and Wellness want to totally have four and half years of government disappear in a flash. They had an opportunity to work on this.

What I can tell the people of all of Dartmouth and the new Central Zone is that during our mandate we will be addressing the needs of Dartmouth General and, in particular, work on the fifth floor.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

PREM.: CORRIDOR RESOURCES - HYDRAULIC FRACTURING BAN (N.S.)

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Premier. Corridor Resources is a multi-million dollar oil and gas company based in Halifax. The company is banned from conducting hydraulic fracturing operations in New Brunswick. They are also banned from operating here in Nova Scotia. Now Corridor is opening an office out West, concerned about the dwindling opportunities onshore here in the Maritimes.

What does the Premier have to say to the people at Corridor Resources that want to do business here but feel like they are being left behind by this government?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all those who've invested in the economy of the province. We're very encouraged by the work that we're seeing from BP and Shell. The province has been chosen from a global company that's done looking around the world for where to locate, and they chose Nova Scotia. Those are all positive things. Companies will look for opportunities all over the globe. They'll open offices in other places. We, as a province, see that as an opportunity. We'll continue to work with anyone who wants to operate in this province, but they have to do so under the rules and regulations of the Province of Nova Scotia.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the sad irony is that providing a definition of "high volume" might allow Corridor to do business here in this province. Yet it has been over seven months since the Premier banned high-volume hydraulic fracturing, and we still don't have a definition for what it means. The other day I asked the Minister of Energy for a definition and he said that work is underway to define it. Imagine how sad that is, that they ban something when they don't know what it is.

Today I'll ask a simple question of the Premier. Does the Premier know what "high volume" means?

THE PREMIER: One of the challenges when you're in government is that you have to deal with the reality. When you're in Opposition, they create their own little reality that that member seems to be living in in his own little world. The reality is that we have fracking waste in this province. Is he prepared to take it in Pictou County? Is he prepared to take the fracking waste to Pictou County? Because we've heard him stand up in this House on one side about Harper helping us deal with that environmental problem. We've heard him stand up in this House and tell us to close the mill to protect the environment. On the other hand we hear him saying, don't lay them off. The reality of it is that there are rules in this province. If you want to do business (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: Follow the rules.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - AUTISM TREATMENT PROGS.:
REVIEW DELAY EXPLAIN**

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question again is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. In the 2013 Liberal platform, this government promised to invest in services to eliminate the wait-list for early intervention programs. A year after the election the Minister of Health and Wellness launched a review on autism treatment programs and we were told the recommendations would be released late last Fall.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell us why parents are still waiting for the results of that review?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite indeed talks about a very important program, one that the Premier and I have been directly involved with supporting through the years. We'll continue to support this program and I believe it's just a matter of days before this report will be available to the public of Nova Scotia.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his response. We are very much looking forward to seeing something concrete.

Mr. Speaker, this past September the minister told the *Cape Breton Post* that we must act quickly on improving the process for children to participate in the EIBI program. Now the minister has delayed the release of this report and many families continue to wait and they are worried. They are worried that this is going to be yet another broken Liberal promise. As one mother told the *Halifax Chronicle Herald*, “. . . for us that platform promise is the difference in our child's success.”

Mr. Speaker, with early intervention, time is of the essence. When will the minister live up to his commitments and eliminate the wait-list for these important programs?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, this is a program that is proving very successful before children go to school. When we had a very strong panel put together to take a look and review the current EIBI program, in conjunction with the IWK, we were certainly at a good point in time to know that it is indeed working very well. I would advise the member opposite to stay tuned for Budget Day.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**NAT. RES. - WOOD PELLET SHORTAGES:
STAKEHOLDERS - MEETINGS CONFIRM**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. This winter Nova Scotians faced a shortage of wood pellets, which are used as both a primary and a secondary home heating fuel. Many have been forced to drive from store to store, looking for bags of this valuable product, which are almost nowhere to be found.

My question to the minister, has the minister met with producers, retailers and consumers to discuss ways to address the challenges of wood pellet shortages in this province?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, to answer the question directly, yes, we have. We meet with stakeholders from that industry on a regular basis. Also, when it came to the hardwood shortage last year, our government acted immediately. We worked with our private sector partners, encouraging them to have a greater output of hardwood into the firewood market and it actually produced a three-fold increase in firewood supply last year. Of course we'll keep an eye on the situation moving into next year and act again if necessary.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for that answer, especially that he didn't refer to Pictou County in his answer.

Mr. Speaker, wood pellet heat is highly regarded and is known for its efficiency. In fact Efficiency Nova Scotia encourages Nova Scotians to buy these stoves by offering a rebate of up to \$600. I'll table that. While Nova Scotians are being encouraged to buy wood pellet stoves, there are persistent shortages of supply.

My question to the minister, will the minister commit to continue working with producers and retailers to work towards improving supply of wood pellets to Nova Scotia consumers so they will be able to take advantage of the benefits of this heat, instead of having cold homes and stoves they cannot use?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we take a very active role in working with our private sector partners. I want to be very clear, the majority of wood that goes out into the marketplace in this province comes off private land - 75 per cent of the wood supply is coming off private land; it does not come off of Crown land.

We are working directly with private woodlot owners to ensure that they have a model that is accessible and economical for wood harvesters to access, and we continue to work with all community members and stakeholders in that sector to strengthen our forestry sector and ensure there is the highest volume of hardwood available for heating purposes.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: HOME CARE AGENCIES - FUNDING

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Millions of dollars are wasted each year as people wait in \$1,000-a-day hospital beds for long-term care options. One of those options is home care. Rural home care agencies who deliver the service are facing challenges. I know in my area there's a shortage of workers. They are funded by what is known as a direct service hour which doesn't always cover costs that would be associated with sick time and lost time due to storms. These agencies have no control over the terms of employment because they're set by government, and they don't have any control over requirements like that to have caregivers using mobile GPS and BlackBerrys.

Money could be saved and redirected towards these agencies to better fund them - will the minister do that?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the member for Inverness is well aware that we not only have a Continuing Care Strategy that is still in the making but, more importantly, home care, home support will get that very intensive look and some redevelopment through the RFP. We want to make sure that we have some levelling of the costs right across the province, that we also modernize the system as well. We are now spending hundreds of thousands of dollars with mileage, for example, that does not need to be used in some areas and still be able to give good care.

This is an opportunity to realign some of that home care, home support delivery, and that's exactly what we're doing.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's comments because there is a need for realignments.

On March 12th the minister was reported to have said that tenders will be issued to open up home care to new service providers. The next day the Department of Health and Wellness corrected that statement to say that it was not happening. There's a lot of uncertainty out there. Changes need to be made. I think there's a sense by people who are volunteering in this sector as board members and whatnot that maybe government is not listening to the situations they're facing.

My question is, is the minister really working with existing rural health home care agencies to understand their needs, or have they been set up to fail?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the member for Inverness asks an excellent question. In terms of what was reported in the newspaper, it sounded as if the RFP was coming out

right away and what the department was saying, no, it's still a work in progress. We've brought in the vendors and probably by Fall we will have the RFP ready to go out.

He also makes a really good point around the fact that some agencies now are doing some of the kinds of things that we actually need to be doing right across the province. They have reached a very high level of efficiencies and we will have to look at that and embrace good work where it exists. While there may be a bit of uncertainty, one thing we know for sure is that every home care worker in the province will have an opportunity to work in home care.

MR. SPEAKER: Before we go on to the next question, for those keeping track at home, QP will conclude at 11:06 a.m. I don't think I mentioned that when we started.

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

FIN. & TREASURY BD. - FILM IND.: N.S. COMPETITIVENESS - ASSURE

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, representatives of the film industry left their meeting with the Finance and Treasury Board Minister last week convinced that their sector is a complete mystery to the minister and to senior bureaucrats in her department who have no understanding of the benefits - economic, cultural, or promotional - of their sector.

Let me help the minister and her Premier better understand the film and TV industry. Trust and confidence are extremely important to create a thriving and successful film and TV industry. Anything that creates uncertainty sends producers with their much-needed investment dollars to a more competitive jurisdiction.

I ask the minister, will she provide assurance to the creative industries today that she will not make Nova Scotia a less competitive place for this very fluid but lucrative industry?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, again, the member opposite in her question refers to the meeting we held. We had a good meeting. The representatives of Screen Nova Scotia were able to raise their points. I think there is somewhat of a difference of opinion between the two, because we look at it from a fiscal responsibility point of view. In our department we look at how much money is returned to the provincial revenues of the province from every industry we support.

We agreed that we would continue to talk, that there would be future meetings. Mr. Speaker, we are not finished talking and discussing with the industry.

MS. ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see the members of the opposite side of the House so enthusiastic about possible changes to the film and television tax credits, because

I am sure they are hearing from many people in their constituencies about their concerns for what is going on and hoping that nothing will change.

In an email to AllNovaScotia.com, a spokesperson for the Finance and Treasury Board Minister actually said that she is reviewing the film tax credits so that the province will be better able to seize opportunities for a future here for young people. I would suggest that the government already sent a message to young people in Nova Scotia when they cut the Graduate Retention Rebate, and I hear they are now planning to lift caps on student tuitions as well.

My question for the minister is this: does she understand that weakening the Film Industry Tax Credit will, in fact, exile an enthusiastic, successful, growing, creative sector made up of young people who want to stay in Nova Scotia and earn a decent living in the creative economy?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, again, I appreciate the question, and I know there's a lot of interest and anxiety because a budget is coming. Earlier today we heard other questions around other taxes that are of concern to Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier said earlier, my message has been clear. We are a province that has been in deficit for 20 of the last 30 years. We are carrying a deficit of multi-millions of dollars, and we have to look at every dollar that we put out to support industry of any sort and see how it returns the benefit to the province. Every tax, every tax credit, all of the benefits that are available to business, have been on the books this year. It has been no secret. We've been public about that. Thank you.

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

TIR: ROAD CLEARING - TIME FRAME

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. I want to go where no man has ever gone before and ask a question on roads.

I've had a number of calls in my constituency, of course, concerning the storms and the roads. We all have had those calls. I just want to narrow in on one particular concern. People are losing two and three days of work, and some are concerned about being able to get out to a doctor or getting emergency services in.

My question is, is there a time frame for when the roads should be cleared and open?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. Certainly this has been an issue. It has been a very challenging winter for the

department, for all Nova Scotians, for our municipal partners as well. The snow clearing has been a tremendous challenge with the precipitation, the change in weather, with temperatures, so it has certainly been tough. I know the member and all members of the House have been hearing from constituents, particularly in rural and remote areas where the roads are just very difficult to get to.

The way the standards are built is that it's an eight-hour window for all 100-Series Highways, 12 hours for the secondary roads, and 24 hours for the rural roads. That has been the standard, and it's basically for 99 per cent of the storms; so all things being equal we can get to those roads within 24 hours.

There have certainly been significant challenges this year but with the amount that we've spent we're ranging about \$75 million for the annual budget, we're doing our very best but obviously there will be some lessons that we'll try to get from this winter and continue to work hard. As I said to the member before and all members of the House, these individual situations we certainly want to hear from the MLAs and do what we can as the department.

MR. HARRISON: Yes, I was just being concerned for the ones that are, for instance, losing two and three days without being able to get out. My question is, is it possible for the roads to be given one swipe just to open the road and then have folks go back in and do a proper job later? That was one suggestion given to me, either by municipal gear or by private gear?

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that is a reasonable question. I think what we're going to do is we'll do a post study of this whole winter and Barb Baillie at operations has been tremendous on this work and I think that, to the member's question, there haven't been a whole lot of concerns and requests from the department about people who have been stranded for that number of days. Certainly, regardless of the weather conditions, two or three days to wait is a very long time for medical needs, for work, employment, school, and those types of things so I think what we'll probably do is look at that on an individual basis. I appreciate that question, if the member wants to bring those specific roads forward, we'll certainly have a look. Thank you.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - VALLEY REG. HOSP. OVERCROWDING:
SURGERIES - CANCELLATIONS**

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the overcrowding of our hospitals is a serious issue across the province, not just here in Halifax and Dartmouth. Hospitals all over, such as the Valley Regional Hospital are experiencing situations where surgeries are being cancelled and surgical beds are being filled with medical patients. I would like to ask the minister could the minister provide this House how many surgeries have been cancelled

at the Valley Regional Hospital since January 1st due to the overcrowding situation at that hospital?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, in relation to the figure I'll have to have the department provide that. I know there have been some days when of course, a number of factors, and especially we had winter storms that kept patients from being able to get to their surgeries so we have different reasons for cancellation.

We are now at a wonderful opportunity with the new health authority to be able to take a look province-wide at the integration of the system. What happens in the ER is really that microcosm, that place of entry into the system that is affected by, as we know, flow through a hospital and also there are occasions when, in fact, we could avoid somebody coming to the ER all together. This is a great time now to look at what we can do in other parts of the province to take pressure off the QE II and regional hospitals where most entries of EHS occur.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, documents obtained by the NDP caucus through FOIPOP show that on March 5th, the Valley Regional Hospital was so overcrowded that the emergency department was advised to avoid overnight observations of emergency patients where possible and I'll table that, Mr. Speaker. How can Nova Scotians have confidence in the health care system when their emergency departments are so overcrowded that doctors and nurses are being advised to limit who is being observed overnight in the ER?

MR. GLAVINE: As the former Minister of Health and Wellness knows, there are those surge points, those pressure times due to extreme conditions that are sometimes relating to seasonal events. We know this year for example that the flu was considerably more serious than we have had in recent years even during the H1N1 because the vaccine that year covered H1N1. This year we only had about 30 per cent coverage of flu viruses from the high percentage, in fact of Nova Scotians who get the flu shot, the vaccine wasn't the best selected by the World Health Organization. We know that more cases of flu, and with elderly people - and the member opposite is talking about one of the areas of Nova Scotia where we have five communities already with 25 per cent of their population over 65 years of age and we know that puts extra pressure on the ER.

What I can tell the member opposite is that we are going to listen and act on the advice of Dr. David Petrie, Dr. Sam Campbell, and we'll have a plan in place to look after those surge times when they occur in the ER.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I want to thank the honourable minister for that extensive and thorough answer and I do want to remind everybody in advance of next week, please take the extra time this weekend to practice in front of a mirror with the 45 second clock so that we can try to stick a little bit closer to the 45 second timeline. Use 30 seconds to set up your question and 15 seconds to pose your question.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a point of order. During Question Period today, the Premier accused me of standing in this House and saying that I wanted the Northern Pulp Mill closed. The Premier knows that statement is simply not true, so through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask him to either table documents to support it or to withdraw the statement. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: I would rule that that is a simple disagreement of facts and not a point of order.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, everything that is said in this House is recorded in Hansard. It is not an opinion as to what somebody said - it's a simple matter of fact. If I made that statement, it will be recorded in Hansard and I ask the Premier to defend his comment.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: That concludes the government's business for today. We will be meeting again on Tuesday, April 7th from the hours of 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at which time following the daily routine, we'll be calling for Public Bills for Second Reading on Bill Nos. 75, 76, and 79.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Premier and all of my colleagues I want to wish everyone a very happy Easter to you, to all our colleagues here, and to all the staff who work for us as well and look forward to seeing everyone back next week. With that I move that the House do now rise.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again Tuesday, April 7th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

[The House rose at 11:08 a.m.]