



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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

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

Second Session

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2015

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2015

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

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

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order to respond to the point of order made yesterday by the House Leader for the Official Opposition. The House Leader was correct, there was a paragraph missing from the printed copy of my Budget Address, due to a production error. The paragraph was fixed immediately in the online version and it is available on the Finance and Treasury Board website. I have copies with me today for the House Leaders, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Just before we commence with the daily routine, I want to rule on a point of order and a point of privilege that were raised yesterday.

SPEAKER'S RULINGS:

House Galleries: Public Access - Restriction (Pt. of Order by Hon. C. d'Entremont [Hansard, p.3506, Apr. 9/15]) Not a point of order.

House Galleries/Chamber - Press Exclusion (Pt. of Privilege by Hon. M. MacDonald (Hansard, p.3506, Apr.9/15)) Not a breach of privilege.

MR. SPEAKER: The point of order was raised by the honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition who suggested that public access to the galleries had been restricted. This is very similar to a point of order raised previously by the honourable House Leader on September 30, 2014, when he complained about public access on the previous day.

It is important for all members to remember that the fire limit is set by the fire marshal for the galleries at 60 persons. This includes the security staff, the media, and any other public servants who may attend to observe the proceedings. Yesterday there were between 30 and 40 members of the public in the east gallery, to my left, seated behind the House Leader. Those people had arrived early and secured passes.

There was also a number of government staff in that gallery, many of whom had been involved in the preparation of the budget, as well as media personnel who were covering the provincial budget. In fact, I am advised by our security staff that a head count showed that there were, indeed, over 60 people in the gallery at one point, and security staff were waiting for that number to fall below the 60 threshold so that some of those who were waiting could move upstairs.

When the government staff in the gallery were advised that there was a complaint about lack of access, 16 government staff left and a security person attempted to let those who were waiting downstairs for access know that there were, in fact, more gallery passes available. Only a few people who were waiting downstairs chose to exercise their right to get a gallery pass that had become available.

The fire limit established by the fire marshal has been in place in this Assembly since the mid-1990s and is nothing new. It is normally not an issue but it does present challenges during a Speech from the Throne, Budget Days, or any other events here where there would be more than the normal amount of folks around. There is no point of order.

The point of privilege was raised by the honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party who complained that the media had been excluded from the Chamber and the gallery. I have been advised that no media were excluded from the gallery; in fact, a number of video and still photographers were clearly visible in the gallery from my vantage point, for much of the budget proceedings.

I am also advised that a small number of individuals who had identified themselves as media personnel, but who had not taken the necessary steps to obtain Province House media photo passes, had to proceed through security screenings. They may have been delayed but they were not excluded from the House. Those personnel who had obtained Province House media passes were not impeded in any way as they came and went.

I had issued a press release on March 25th that alerted the public, government staff, and the media to the additional security screening procedures that had been implemented

for the safety of members, staff, and visitors to the Assembly. I am advised that during the last two weeks an additional 10 members of the media have obtained the Province House media photo passes through the Sergeant-at-Arms. If other members of the media community wish to obtain such passes, they need only make arrangements with the Sergeant-at-Arms. They, too, will then be able to avoid the lineup for security screening.

I've also been advised that due to a serious overcrowding issue in the security holding area inside the front door when the media were scrumming - some of the people waiting in line for security screening - the head of our security detail on duty made the decision to ask the people waiting for passes to exit the building for safety reasons. I've seen photographs showing a very crowded situation downstairs, and I'm not prepared at this point to second-guess the security staff's decision in those circumstances. Therefore, I find there is no breach of the member's privileges.

The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you very much for that ruling, Mr. Speaker. It did look odd, because there were so many people behind us and nobody in front of us.

The question - for a future issue, as a suggestion, maybe we could do a ticket process, where you know who can get in and who can't get in. What happens is that people expect that they can just show up and end up in the gallery, so maybe in doing that, if we have a ticket process, you can get an invitation and you can come in, and that way we won't run into this problem like we would.

We do the same thing for the Speech from the Throne. Normally there are tickets that are sent out for people who are interested in doing this. Just a suggestion for next time.

MR. SPEAKER: I'll certainly take that under advisement, but right at the moment, as everybody knows, the system is first come, first served. So those who were here in due time yesterday were admitted, and those who waited until the last minute to attempt to get into the building, unfortunately, had to wait outside. So there you have it.

Just to remind everybody, we will go through the daily routine. When we get to the point of members' statements, we'll defer to the Official Opposition's reply to the budget and then over to the New Democratic Party's reply to the budget. Question Period will be delayed until such point as both Opposition Parties are finished with their replies to the budget. That was agreed upon yesterday by all Parties.

We will now begin with the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause being:

“We the undersigned, call upon the Nova Scotia Provincial Government to complete transfer of ownership of the Belle Cote Beach Road from DNR to TIR, and for the restoration of the RIM (Rural Impact Mitigation) budget so that funding is budgeted for the repair of this road.”

Mr. Speaker, there are 149 signatures on this petition. I’ve affixed my own as well, as per the Rules of the Legislature. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

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

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

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I hereby beg leave to table the Workers’ Compensation Board’s Report to the Community for the fiscal period ending March 31, 2014.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION****INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill No. 84 - Entitled an Act to Repeal Various Statutes. (Hon. Mark Furey)

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill be read a second time on a future day.

The honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, before I table my bill, would I be permitted to do an introduction, please?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery we're joined today by a very courageous lady, Louise Misner from the Annapolis Valley. Louise is the mother of Joellan Huntley, and I would ask her to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Standing Ovation)

Bill No. 85 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 432 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Social Assistance Act, to Prevent Recovery of Assistance Paid for Maintenance of a Person in Need. (Hon. Maureen MacDonald)

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill be read a second time on a future day.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable members for Kings South.

ANNAPOLIS VALLEY TARTAN - UNVEILING

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, April 6th was Tartan Day and I was delighted to represent the province at a special event in my riding, the official Annapolis Valley Tartan was unveiled. The guest of honour was Mr. Gordon Hansford who was piped in by Ed Coleman and his grandson Liam Coleman Aulenbach. Mr. Hansford designed this tartan 30 years ago and the late Joyce Pickwell of Canning wove it, but the newly woven tartan stayed in a drawer for 30 years.

Last year representatives of Clan Donald offered to help get the Annapolis Valley Tartan registered and I am pleased to say that on June 11th of this year, the Scottish Register of Tartans officially recognized this district tartan. You will see the beautiful Annapolis Valley in this tartan, the colour green represents the Valley's crops and forests, the blue-grey is for the Cornwallis and the Annapolis Rivers, the blue represents the mountains and the red represents the blood shed by early settlers.

Tartans are symbolic of families. We now have a tartan that brings together the Annapolis Valley as one family. Thank you.

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

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, yesterday during Budget Address by the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, this member for Queens-Shelburne witnessed the erosion of our democracy. In the past 18 months this government and we, as

sitting MLAs, have witnessed more police presence, more tinted windshields around this once proud House of Assembly. This is the people's House.

The House of Assembly should be open, free and for the public access. I am sad to report that the public and the media were prevented from accessing almost all the empty west gallery to observe yesterday's Budget Address. April 9, 2015, was a sad day for democracy in Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The member's statement is out of order. A few minutes ago I just provided a ruling on the matter where I clarified the facts involved in the situation.

[ORDERS OF THE DAY]

[GOVERNMENT BUSINESS]

[GOVERNMENT MOTIONS]

[Res. No. 1190, re Estimates - CWH on Supply: Referred - notice given March 27/15 - (Hon. Diana Whalen)]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East, with 43 minutes remaining on his clock.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this morning and continue the reply to the Budget Speech from yesterday. I want to pick up where we left off talking about some of the changes in the budget, particularly with the Film Tax Credit.

Yesterday morning when the minister spoke about the Film Tax Credit changes, she referred to the changes as still leaving Nova Scotia in the game. The minister was clear in her comments that the Film Tax Credit remains. But when you read the small print, it has dramatically changed. There have been a lot of changes to the Film Tax Credit and while it still remains, is true, the changes are so significant as to have a major impact. I know the people in the film industry can read the fine print and understand the changes.

Bubbles can read the fine print; he can see the impact of the changes of the Film Tax Credit. While Nova Scotia may be in the game, in the eyes of the minister, less than 24 hours after the budget was tabled it's definitely game on. We are seeing immediate changes in the industry and immediate hits to the province - immediate hits to our economy. Productions are cancelling, or at least rethinking what they're going to do.

This all leads to the point that government needs to understand the ramifications of its decisions, and it should try to understand those ramifications before it makes them, not after it makes them. The pattern continues with this government in reaching these decisions, turning around, and having to change them. We've seen it with the smoking

legislation; we've seen it so many pieces of legislation where they've kind of, in some of those cases, put the brakes on and come back and said, we'll look at that again. Well, Mr. Speaker, you need to look at that before, not after. The potential damage to the province in this case is very serious of not looking at the ramifications before. You have to understand the ramifications, and then you have to care about the ramifications.

I can't get past the one line in the Budget Address where the minister said, "Some of the measures that are recommended need more careful analysis." Mr. Speaker, you make that analysis beforehand. You don't make these historic changes, these changes with tremendous impacts, and say, well, we're going to have some more careful analysis later. With 10,000 bureaucrats at the disposal of the province - that's at the disposal of the government - do the analysis beforehand, not after.

We've seen this leading up to the budget - a lot of tough talk. A lot of hard-working people employed by this province had their emotions played with for the last few months by this government. I just wonder why that was. Was it for political gain? You think about the people in our communities who are employed at the Department of Community Services, those employed at Natural Resources. Think about how they felt leading up to this budget for the last few months and ask yourself why that is. This is completely unfair, what's happened here.

What's happening in the film industry is even more egregious, even more unfair. We're looking at it and the impact is so wide-reaching. I think of places in my community like the Pictou Lodge that would have had some productions shot there this summer, would have sold some rooms, would have sold some meals in their restaurants. Who knows what's going to happen to those now? All those people who work at the Pictou Lodge are now wondering, and in the surrounding restaurants - because that's who we're talking about. The reach of that industry impacts hotels, rental car companies, restaurants, hair stylists, artists. It's pretty wide-ranging.

I remember, Mr. Speaker, years ago I had a chance to sit down with a member of the Canadian Business Hall of Fame. I sat down with my good friend, Donald Sobey, and he said to me at that time, Tim, he said you can't have a successful society without a thriving arts community. At the time I was in the middle of a business career working in venture capital and that statement struck me as very odd, but the more I thought about it, I realized he was right. I thought of places that I'd been like in New York - Greenwich Village, and different places - and you think of the impact that the arts have on economies and on communities. You cannot have a successful, thriving economy without a thriving arts community. It's an absolutely true statement. It probably took me a lot longer to comprehend that than Mr. Sobey would have liked, but it's a true statement.

And now, here we are. We're seeing a government that needs to grow the economy and one of their first orders of business is to try to devastate our arts community. I can't add that up, Mr. Speaker; that doesn't make sense to me. When we look at the overall

impact of this budget and we look at who is feeling the toughness of this government, it's the film industry, it's the university students, it's the small business operators. If I focus on the film industry, the change to the Film Tax Credit yesterday is a devastating blow to our film industry and the young generation that had all kinds of aspirations to make a career here in that industry.

After weeks of speculation, I hope yesterday was not the last curtain call on an industry that brings over \$100 million of investment to our province. The industry represents even more direct and indirect jobs, Mr. Speaker, than those that were impacted by the NDP's decision on the Yarmouth ferry at that time - and we all remember what happened following the Yarmouth ferry decision.

This has the potential to cause damage to even more Nova Scotians than that did. We hear numbers of 2,000 people employed directly by the industry and many spinoff jobs. We can haggle, Mr. Speaker, over whether that is 1,000 jobs or 5,000 jobs or whatever. The point that I'm concerned about is that it is a lot of jobs, any way you look at it.

The creative economy is important, and I'm worried about people working in that industry because they are worried about their jobs. Some of the people who are worried about their jobs or their potential career in this province are with us here today in the gallery, Mr. Speaker. They are Nova Scotia Community College students of the Screen Arts Program. There are a great number of them up there in the gallery today, and it shows their level of concern for what is happening.

Here are just a few of them: Kimmy Dewell; Ben Whynot; Jake Ivany - maybe some relation to Mr. Ivany; Alex Garnett; Brittany Stewart; Adam Bonner; Keith Dury; Devon Pennick-Reilly; Claire Fraser; Deves Matwawana, - I hope I got that one right, Dev; Liam MacDonald; Scott Lawlor; Bruce Dixon; Kassy Tench; Angela Bateman; Arthur Canning; Andre Fenton; Josh Owen; Pierre Hache; and Nicole McInnis. I want to thank them for coming down here today because they are the face of the people who are going to feel the impact of this government's decision and there are many, many, many more in their shoes.

Now these we are talking about today, for the benefit of the members of this House, are recent or soon-to-be graduates who have decided to embark on a career in the film industry. These are young people who saw a future for themselves and their industry here in Nova Scotia. They are young people who wanted to make a life for themselves here in Nova Scotia, at home.

These are the people we should be supporting. These are people who were brave enough to buck the trend and try to establish a career here. There are many other people, like Jim MacDonald from Sydney who has been a hairstylist on film productions, most notably the Trailer Park Boys and The Book of Negroes. He was featured this week in an article in *The Chronicle Herald*, Mr. Speaker.

These people want to contribute to our local economy; they want to be part of our communities; and they want to give back to their communities. This Liberal Government and this Liberal budget makes that harder, a lot harder. For many of them, sadly, it will make impossible and that's a shame.

These young men and women in the gallery aren't statistics, Mr. Speaker, they are people - real people with real jobs, real aspirations, real hopes about budding careers. I have no doubt that each and every one of them will go on to have great careers. I just wish it was here but for too many of them, it might not be. We can trace it directly back to this decision on the Film Industry Tax Credit, probably one of the measures in the budget, by the government's own admission, that needs more careful analysis. Imagine that, Mr. Speaker.

The responsibility for the changes that may happen in their lives will rest solely on the shoulders of this government. I challenge today, Mr. Speaker, I challenge the Premier and the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board to take a trip up to the gallery and sit with these young men and women and explain to them, face to face, why this government has decided to sacrifice their jobs and their futures. I extend that challenge to any member of the government who wants to go up and chat with these young people and explain to them why it is that this government doesn't see the importance of this industry.

Mr. Speaker, the Nova Scotia Film Industry Tax Credit was a labour-based incentive designed to encourage employment of Nova Scotians. It was available to local and guest producers, calculated based on an applicant company's eligible salaries.

Mr. Speaker, we're not talking about Brad Pitt here getting a tax break. We're talking about film productions like the Book of Negroes coming to Nova Scotia and employing our fellow Nova Scotians. We're talking about productions coming here and employing these young people. That's what we're talking about and I don't want to lose sight of that.

I want to quote an email I got that was shared with me this morning from Mr. Mike Howell. Mr. Howell is the executive director of Devour! The Food Film Fest. He says: While it may seem on the surface that Hollywood fat cats take advantage of the tax credit, the reality for organizations like ours is that our credibility and attractiveness to entice talent and investment is seriously jeopardized by this government's decision.

It's not Hollywood fat cats, it's these young people right here and the 2,000 people like them who are employed in this industry. It's carpenters, it's set designers, it's painters, it's seamstresses, makeup artists, hair stylists; it's many Nova Scotians, Mr. Speaker, because that's what the credit is for, to employ Nova Scotians. That's what we're talking about.

We can try to finesse that with flowery language and incite Nova Scotians to believe that maybe somehow they are being taken advantage of by this tax credit. That's not the reality, Mr. Speaker. This is also an industry that has been very successful at attracting new immigrants. All that may be lost now, Mr. Speaker, because of this short-sighted decision by Premier McNeil and his government.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure we're going to hear much more about the Film Industry Tax Credit later this morning when my colleagues offer their address, and I have much more to say about the Film Industry Tax Credit. We'll do that in the days and weeks ahead. Right now I am going to call on the Liberal Government to immediately extend the July 1st deadline to the end of the year. That's something that's within the power of this government.

The first thing they could do, since by their own admission they need more careful analysis - they should do that careful analysis now. They could try to mitigate some of the damage. Much damage has been done. I'm sure the government will say that people are bluffing. People don't bluff with their lives. The government, right now, could extend that July 1st deadline to the end of the year. I hope they will do that. It's necessary that they do that to try to salvage some of the projects that are on the brink. Take some steps to try to salvage some of these projects. Take that time to sit down with industry reps to work out a sustainable plan. Take that time to do the more careful analysis. It's the least that the government can do.

While we have a number of people here in the gallery today who are going to feel an impact from the decisions of this budget, there are many Nova Scotians all across the province who are in the same boat, who are feeling the impact of this government's budget. Ferry users. I know the Premier was saying yesterday, there are no tax increases, no tax increases. Well, we had \$8 million of fee increases last week. That's a tax. The \$30 million tax grab on small business owners. That's a tax. The \$30 million tax grab from every Nova Scotian through the bracket creep. These are all taxes. Many tax increases in this budget.

Ferry users in LaHave, Cape Breton, and Tanook are all feeling the impact of this government's budget. Protesters like Sadie Watson and community activists like Anita MacDonald, who called the increase in the ferry fees "disgraceful".

Nova Scotians who depend on staff in Community Services offices in Barrington Passage, Guysborough, Sheet Harbour - those Nova Scotians are feeling the impact. Will they be able to receive the services they need? Time will tell. Right now, there's a lot of concern. These are vulnerable Nova Scotians. These are the Nova Scotians who don't often ask for help. They're not the loud voices; they are the quiet sufferers.

We've all seen these people as MLAs travelling our constituencies. I know when I started campaigning, the first couple of days, I was in a very rural area. I was quite taken aback by some of the conditions that Nova Scotians are living in in our communities. They

are out of sight and sometimes out of mind. Maybe it's easy to cut the services to those Nova Scotians. They're certainly not the ones who are going to parade around Province House and protest. Those are the very people that we have a responsibility to protect. Those Nova Scotians are feeling the impact of it.

The Guysborough District Warden, Mr. Vernon Pitts, called the closure there "earth-shattering news" for the community. I'm sure it is. The Barrington Municipal Warden, Eddie Nickerson, said the move "will directly affect the service provided to vulnerable children in Shelburne County."

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: No, it won't. I fixed it.

MR. HOUSTON: I was just glad to hear from the Minister of Community Services that she has fixed it. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The honourable member for Pictou East has the floor.

MR. HOUSTON: The minister has fixed that. I'm sure that will be welcome news to the people there. Maybe that's something that got more careful analysis afterwards.

These are not the words of the member of Pictou East; these are the words of the Guysborough District Warden. These are the words of the Barrington Municipal Warden. These are their words. They are not my words. (Interruptions) Maybe the minister feels that those particular people don't understand the needs of their community but I beg to differ and I'm sure they probably do.

I have heard from people in our communities, people are worried about the level of services and they have a right to be concerned about it. Merging of the Community Services offices in the northern and eastern regions could very well be a loss for our communities. Having some of the things coming out of Sydney might well mean that the needs of people in smaller, rural communities will be lost. The minister will have to answer to that on her own with her own constituents and her own department.

These are concerns that Nova Scotians have. Nova Scotians are entitled to have concerns and I have concerns. I will raise the concerns of Nova Scotians every chance that I have in this Legislature. This is a concern of Nova Scotians therefore it's a concern of mine. Local communities who have seen their visitor information centres and provincial parks closed are concerned. In Pictou, Luke Young, president of the local business marketing society, said of the closure of the VIC there, "This is going to [sic] hurt a lot of people, not just in Pictou but throughout northeastern Nova Scotia." That's the president of the local business and marketing society. In Digby, Warden Linda Gregory said, "There's no strategic planning or connective thinking. . ." That was her conclusion on this decision.

These are people around the province who know their communities, Nova Scotians who trust that their emergency room services will be there when they need them at places like Northside General, Dartmouth General, Roseway and more. They're worried. We've all had a day now to think about this budget and to understand the ramifications and people have concerns. Wouna Chaloner, a doctor who often works at the Roseway wonders, "The time it takes us to get to another hospital - would [it] have made a difference in the outcome?" That's a doctor. She wonders if the time it takes to get to another hospital, would it make a difference in the outcome of patients.

She raises the point that shouldn't be lost on us because what the budget is all about is considering the outcomes on Nova Scotians. The government spends \$10 billion a year and all of that should be done with consideration of the outcomes on Nova Scotians. We hear from doctors and nurses all the time. Dr. Sam Campbell, chief of emergency medicine at the Halifax Infirmary, says his staff can't keep up with the constant flow of ambulances because the beds are full. "There are people who can't afford to call an ambulance when the emergency department is closed, and have no one to call" - that's Nick Phillips, spokesman for the Friends of the Northside General.

What we're doing here is we are starting to understand the impact of the budget on Nova Scotians. I don't think in this Chamber we should ever lose sight of the impact of the budget on Nova Scotians. It should always be front of mind, should always be foremost. We're here in this Chamber to do the people's business.

We have many issues in Nova Scotia from firewood to hospital beds to jobs, and everything in between. When I look at this budget, and I look at it through the lens of opportunities for young people, opportunities for people in their 30s and younger to stay here, make a career here and build a life for themselves here, make a good living and receive services that they expect, we have to ask ourselves - does this budget advance that agenda?

Now think of how through their early 30s, young men in particular continue to struggle with joblessness in Nova Scotia. More than one in 10 Nova Scotian men aged 25 to 34 are unemployed - one in 10, Mr. Speaker - and the rate for women the same age is 6 per cent - pretty high numbers for youth unemployment. Together, their unemployment rate is the fourth-highest amongst the provinces.

These numbers might surprise some Nova Scotians who are in the career in their later years, thinking about their own spot in life and what is next for them. But it certainly doesn't surprise young people and they certainly didn't surprise Dorothy Halliday, the director of Community Cares, a non-profit in northern Cape Breton that tries to improve the prospects of people aged 17 to 30.

If we think about the tradition of Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, in the past, young people who didn't want to continue with school could find an entry-level service job or

work in the trades. Those were opportunities that were available to young people. Ms. Halliday said that there was a place for them to go - it was either into the fishery or into the forestry or into the mines - but now for young people, and up into their 30s, those doors are closed. Those sectors are closed.

Where is the plan to grow those economies? Where is the plan to grow the economies of rural Nova Scotia and to grow our natural resources? (Interruption) Okay, the member says I'm on the right track with talking about rural Nova Scotia and the economies there.

We, as a province, have to learn how to attract young people. We have to use them, help them, be with them, while they grow our economy and help our economy improve. Maybe we can borrow from the playbooks of states and cities that have figured out that young people and young labour are mobile. It's an economic driver. Maybe here we can start implementing some of those things that have worked in other areas, can add a few of our own ideas.

We have to do something. We aren't going to reverse the problems facing this province with the status quo. Other places aren't sitting by, and they are where the young people are increasingly heading. I think back to the comment that you can't have a successful economy without a thriving arts community.

What is it that young people look for in life? We have to figure that out. We have to start working toward that - giving young people opportunities, giving young people hope. We need to start throwing some welcoming parties, as opposed to some going-away parties here in Nova Scotia.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to reflect on some of the comments that we've seen from the Ivany report and from the Auditor General lately. I want to refer to some of Mr. Ray Ivany's comments. I'm sure Mr. Jake Ivany might share these comments, if given the chance, but Mr. Ray Ivany said, "The scope for government to counter these trends, while grappling with expanding pressures on health and social services, will be progressively narrowed by weakening tax revenues and unsustainable levels of public debt."

What Mr. Ivany is talking about is that this province spends 40 per cent of its money on health care. It spends an incredible amount on social services. Both of those departments can use more; there's always more need. What he is saying is, how are we going to fund those things in the face of weakening tax revenues and unsustainable levels of public debt? Mr. Ivany feels like the province is facing weakening tax revenues, and yet when we look at the budget we're seeing more tax revenue out over the next couple years - I think yesterday I went through the numbers, projections for \$500 million more in tax revenues over the next two to three years; I think maybe it was \$700 million over three years.

Mr. Ivany sees weakening tax revenues; the government sees increasing tax revenues. I can't reconcile those today, Mr. Speaker, and maybe over the next few days the minister will have a chance. But to me that spells, that taking more taxes, taking more fees, taking more, more from the people of Nova Scotia, that's what that spells to me, and the people of Nova Scotia can't afford to pay more. They can't afford to pay more.

We need to grow the economy, we should be finding ways to grow the economy, growing the film industry, not shrinking it; growing rural economies; finding sustainable ways for our natural resources. That's what we need to do, Mr. Speaker, and the Auditor General talked about the debt. Now in this budget we did see the debt levelling off and that's a good thing, that's a good thing if that holds - we can't add more debt because we look at where we are already.

I'm going to quote from the Auditor General here - he says, "Look at the net debt per capita. It's \$15,659 per Nova Scotian . . . It was \$13,847 in 2010, so my comment would be that eventually somebody has to pay for this. Nobody is going to ride into town with a big check to cover all of this." Those are the words of the Auditor General. Every Nova Scotian's share of the debt right now - it might surprise some people in the gallery today to know that their share of the debt is \$15,659, plus maybe some student debt, plus maybe some other debt.

We'll see, Mr. Speaker, we'll see how we do that. The debt has a cost; the debt has to be paid; and debt will be paid. It will be paid through taxes, or are we going to grow the economy? It shouldn't be lost on Nova Scotians that as we sit here today we are still two full months from Tax Freedom Day. Tax Freedom Day in Canada, nationally, is June 9th. Tax Freedom Day is the day where all of the money you earn starts being yours - up and to Tax Freedom Day every cent you own goes to the government. Two more months of earnings, folks, going directly to the government - after that you can start to earn some of that for yourself.

Last year Tax Freedom Day in Nova Scotia was June 14th. Only one province had a Tax Freedom Day later than we did; only one province. That means Nova Scotians worked as many months for the government as they did for their families. Now, that puts a great amount of responsibility on the government, doesn't it? Everything you earned since January 1st and for the next two months, you will pay over to the government in taxes - every penny. And yet you have to ask the question, in the face of expected growing tax revenues, did this government find a way to push Tax Freedom Day out even further, and why are we doing that, Mr. Speaker?

What plan does this government have for all that extra money they're going to collect from you, through HST, through more income tax, through higher fees - what will they do with all that extra money? That's the question that people want answered because all those families, Mr. Speaker, that we all know and love, young and old, are deciding whether they are getting good value for their tax dollars, whether the government is setting

us on a course that they can believe in. What are all those families going to think when they hear that this government is looking for more from them? Those families are facing major choices and too many of them have decided to leave; 19,000, almost 20,000, people have left the province since 2012 according to the government's website. When will we see that reversed in a sustainable way?

Building up to this budget, the Premier proudly said that the fingerprints of Nova Scotians would be all over this budget. He said we'll see the fingerprints of Nova Scotians all over this budget. I think we better call in a forensic team and analyze exactly whose fingerprints those might be, because they are not the fingerprints of the Nova Scotians whom I know. I don't know whose fingerprints they are, but they are not the fingerprints of the Nova Scotians whom I know. They are certainly not the fingerprints of these young Nova Scotians up there today who are trying to make a future in this province.

The Premier said we'll see a plan. Just wait. Just wait. On Budget Day, you'll see our plan. Nova Scotians will know the direction that this government is taking. In fact, I think he made that point emphatically and suggested that I would be the only one left behind from that plan that he had. Well, I feel like I'm in great company today, because all Nova Scotians were left behind.

I feel cheated. I don't see a plan. I don't see a plan. The only plan I see is to collect more taxes to fund the operations of this government. Where's the plan? Where's the province going? What is the message that we're sending to Nova Scotians who are deciding whether or not it's worth trying to stay here? What message are we sending to them?

What message are we sending to those Nova Scotians who are thinking about starting a company here? We're sending the message that small business owners are going to pay 30 per cent more in taxes this year. That's a good message to send to the people who are thinking about starting a company, now isn't it?

What's the endgame? Nova Scotians are looking for leadership and what they are seeing is management: management of a budget, not leadership of an economy. Leading up to the budget, I really hoped we'd see a plan. I really thought we'd get a glimpse. I said yesterday I had some apprehension leading into the budget and I was worried about what might happen to Nova Scotians and our rural economies, but I didn't see anything in this government. I was a bit let down by the budget in terms of a plan to grow the economy.

Maybe we'll see that over time, but we can't lose sight of the fact that the government is responsible for \$10 billion of taxpayers' money. It's a great responsibility. I know the minister takes it very seriously, but we need to be leading the province toward a self-sustaining, growing economy where we can fund the operations of the government, where businesses can grow. That's what we need to have. I'm disappointed to see that might be a surprise to the minister that we need a growing economy, but be that as it may.

Today, Nova Scotians are asking themselves, having thought about the budget now for 24 hours and read media, they're asking themselves if this government has achieved the desired results. Are these the results Nova Scotians were looking for? Every member in this House would do well to remember the words of Emma Watson when she said, ". . . if not me, who? If not now, when?" Today is the time to set the province on the right path. It is time for this government to accept that it is me and it is now. We haven't seen it yet, but for the sake of all Nova Scotians, I hope we see it shortly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise on a point of order. I take great issue with the member opposite, with all due respect, suggesting that myself, senior staff, and staff in the front line in the areas where we were restructuring, based on historical context and critical and rigorous analysis, would in any way, shape, or form jeopardize child welfare in this province. I take great offence to it. It's the worst part of political pandering, and it's unnecessary for the many families who rely on our services within the Province of Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: That's not a point of order. That's a disagreement of facts.

The honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to have an opportunity to stand in my place here to speak on a variety of issues. I think there is no greater responsibility for members than to understand the annual budget of the province and the implications of that budget for our province, and for people in the province.

Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to say that I have been very privileged to represent the constituency of Halifax Needham, which is part of the Halifax peninsula in the north end of Halifax. It is an extraordinarily vibrant constituency, and its vibrancy is enriched by the extraordinary number of talented people who work in the film industry and in music, publishing, and other cultural industries as well. It has been my great privilege and the privilege of all the residents, in our community in the north end of Halifax in particular, to have such a vibrant constituency because of their presence.

If there's anything that troubles me about the budget that was tabled here yesterday, it's the impact this budget will have on my community, on the residents of my community, and the young families - and maybe some not-so-young families as well - who I have a very great fear will be looking at leaving our community and our province.

I know we will have an opportunity to talk and question the government, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, and the Premier with respect to this very, very significant change they are making in the Film Industry Tax Credit and the impact this will have, but I wanted to start first by saying that before I get too far into my Budget Speech.

The other thing I want to say that really concerns and troubles me is that this is the second budget that has been tabled by this government, the McNeil Government, and this is the second year that young people, the young families in our province, are bearing the brunt of the bad choices being made by this government.

Last year in their budget the McNeil Government ripped \$50 million out of the pockets of young Nova Scotians, young graduates, when they eliminated the Graduate Retention Rebate. We heard literally from hundreds, if not thousands, of people across the province who had made decisions to put roots down in Nova Scotia and stay here where the Graduate Retention Rebate was a factor in their decision. I am hearing from some of those same people now, who were hit last year by this government when they removed the Graduate Retention Rebate, who are being furthered disadvantaged with the decision to gut the Film Industry Tax Credit and this very much concerns me.

If you then heap on top of that, Mr. Speaker, the decision of this government - the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, the Premier, the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education - to remove the cap on tuition, the profound impact that this will have on our students and on our university sector is very, very troubling. I have to ask what in the world does this government have against the young people of our province that they would do this, that this is the kind of policy and the kinds of choices?

We have on the government side members of the government caucus who were student leaders in the universities. How in the world have they allowed this to happen? Were they consulted? Were they involved in these decisions? Do they support these decisions? Do they think these are good decisions? It is their peers who are being impacted by these decisions. It's the people they advocated for as student leaders, who are bearing the brunt of this government's policies.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about budgets and what budgets are about first of all. Budgets are a whole variety of things, they're not one thing. Some people like to reduce budgets to being financial documents, and indeed they are financial documents. They tell us the revenues that government have available. They tell us how government are doing to distribute those revenues, so they are financial documents in that sense. But they are political documents. They are documents that express the priorities of a government and they express the choices that a government makes.

They are also economic documents, particularly in a province like ours where a budget of \$10 billion is a significant amount of money and forms a significant portion of the GDP of the province. For thousands of people, literally their livelihood depends on these expenditures, either because they are directly employed in the public sector providing public services, they sell goods and services to the public sector, or they receive public services.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, what a budget is about and what it should be about is about people. This budget should be the people's budget. It should be about children and young people and how we provide for them and ensure that they have a good today and a good tomorrow. It should be about the most vulnerable people in our province as well - people who live on the margins, people who live in poverty. It needs to be about seniors, people who have left the labour market and have fixed incomes and require certain supports and services so they can continue to contribute and have a place of respect in our province. It very much needs to be about working people, people who build our province, contribute to our province. Budgets have to be about people.

The largest department of expenditure in our provincial budget is the Department of Health and Wellness, Mr. Speaker. I want to start there by talking a bit about the Health and Wellness Department's budget, which we will have an opportunity to examine line by line; I have no intention of doing that here. I think this is the fourth legislative session under this government and each session has seen an attack by this government on the health care sector. The first session we came into this House the McNeil Government attacked home care workers; they attacked other health care workers. Then they repeated that attack in the next session, and then in the next session.

We've come back to this session and health care is under attack again, Mr. Speaker. It was almost mind-boggling yesterday to look at the Department of Health and Wellness' plan for health care for this year, to see that the health budget will grow by \$33 million. That's it, \$33 million.

Now that may sound like a lot of money. A million dollars sounds like a lot of money to me and to most people, so \$33 million sounds like a lot. But I want people to understand that the Department of Health and Wellness' budget, for all intents and purposes, is getting a cut. It's not going to grow by 1 per cent. It's going to grow, according to the government's estimates, by 0.8 per cent - \$33 million. That's less than this government spent last year on a ferry, Mr. Speaker. That \$33 million has to cover hospitals and all of the requirements that hospitals have to function, long-term care, home care, mental health, Pharmacare, physicians' services in their offices - the list goes on and on.

This budget does nothing to address the problems this government has created in the health care sector: growing wait times for home care, growing wait times for long-term care, nurses retiring at record numbers, nurses having to be brought in from out-of-province. This government is spending more on severance, for how many people we don't know but my guess is that it's under 50 - \$4.7 million, \$4.8 million so far in severance, and they're putting \$3.-some-odd million into home care?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Thirty million dollars the year before.

MS. MACDONALD: Thirty million dollars under our government. The Minister of Health and Wellness says \$30 million the year before. The former government put \$24

million in and then put an additional \$3 or \$4 million in. I know the numbers. (Interruption) I was there and I know the numbers.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party has the floor.

MS. MACDONALD: I'm not sure, the member from the south end of Halifax has no problem with the health care system receiving less than 1 per cent of budgetary increase this year, but I dare say that member will hear from people in the health care system. He doesn't have to listen to me and he doesn't have to have any respect for the time that I have to stand in my place and speak. That's fine, but there are people in this province who go to work every day in the health care system that I would recommend he spend some time listening to, because they know what they're talking about and they'll inform him quite quickly of the problems that this budget will create for people who work in the health care system.

These members didn't want to listen to myself or anybody on this side of the House when they messed up Bill No. 1 so bad, but at the end of the day it was members on this side of the House who knew what they were talking about when it came to that bad, sorry piece of legislation - and I dare say on this budget it's people on this side of the House that know what we're talking about with respect to the impact of this budget on the health care system.

Now we know that health care isn't a priority for the McNeil Government. ICU beds are closed at the Queen Elizabeth - this hasn't happened since the 1990s, since the last Liberal Government; travel nurses have had to be flown in from out of province as a result of a nursing shortage in the HRM - that's what you get when you go out and you pick fights with health care workers rather than approaching them with respect; and ERs are closed - the number of hours are up considerably in communities like Shelburne, so much so that residents sometimes think that their hospital and their hospital services are going to be next. There is real fear in many communities, and fear from people who have experienced a former Liberal Government, and it looks very much to many of us that many of the policies of the McNeil Government are the recycled failed policies of the last Liberal Government.

The home care wait-list has doubled, and the long-term care wait-list has reached record levels, Mr. Speaker. Today approximately 1,250 people need a long-term care bed immediately, but they can't get one. All told there are close to 2,500 people on the waiting list for long-term care in Nova Scotia, and this winter ER overcrowding in Halifax, in Dartmouth, and in the Annapolis Valley got so bad that ambulances were literally unable to unload their patients. The last time ERs in our province faced a similar crisis was back in 2009.

This budget provides none of the resources that are required to deal with these problems.

I think we all know that in our province we have the oldest population in the country. The government talks about all of their plans and all of their commitments but plans and commitments require resources in order to make them real. All we see from this government is talk. As I said, this is a government that has invested more on severance for their amalgamation than they've invested in home care. They've invested more in the Yarmouth ferry last year than they will invest in the entire health care system this year.

One has to ask, when the Finance and Treasury Board Minister says we're putting patients first, I have to say, come on, get real. None of us are that stupid that we will buy that argument that patients are being put first. Patients aren't being put first. How in the world can you possibly put patients first, in the health care system, with \$33 million?

Something else we know isn't a priority for the government is making university education and post-secondary education more affordable for students. As I said, this is an issue that this government said was a priority for them when they were in Opposition but now we know that simply wasn't true. We've seen two budgets now - probably the greatest casualties from those two Liberal budgets will be our young people. Farewell to Nova Scotia as StudentsNS campaign says.

I want to remind people that the single highest tuition increase in the province's history happened - when? In the 1990s under the former Liberal Government and possibly the Leader of the Official Opposition is right, possibly yesterday - yesterday, removing the cap. It's inexcusable that the cap for tuition has been taken off, even for one year. This is allowing universities to raise tuition as much as they want, offloading their costs onto the backs of students that already bear too heavy a burden and struggle to be able to get their post-secondary education.

There are other measures in this budget that did not help students whatsoever. You remove the cap from the tuition so universities can do whatever they want and no increase for the financial assistance program that students use to fund their education. Moreover, yesterday's budget cuts, it cuts \$3.2 million from the Nova Scotia Student Bursary Program, more than \$2.55 million from Student Financial Assistance for Nova Scotians and they have also cut millions of dollars from their initial commitment to the Graduate to Opportunity program, which they announced this time last year. They are already cutting it.

Mr. Speaker, in the election platform, the Premier said that ". . . post-secondary graduates are the key to Nova Scotia's success," but his actions dictate that he wants to drive our young people away. The single largest tax increase in this province's history happened under this government when they cut the Graduate Retention Rebate. And now, to throw salt on the wound, they'll allow universities a free pass for a one-time tuition

increase - a free-for-all. It's clear that university students, our young people, aren't a priority of this government.

Let's look at some other areas. Let's look at the Department of Community Services. Is that the government's priority? Well, no, Mr. Speaker. Jobs have been eliminated in that department. Poverty reduction is just a concept; it's not a reality.

This government has frozen income assistance payments now for the second year in a row. The minister said they were protecting income assistance. That, Mr. Speaker, is code for: we're not going to cut it, but it's not going to keep pace with the cost of living and the rate of inflation. There will be no increase again this year. Mr. Speaker, that allowance had been rising on an annual basis for some time.

So Community Services and people who are living in poverty aren't the priority of this government. People in the health care system aren't the priority of this government. Students in our universities aren't the priority of this government. Well, maybe people who create their own employment and who grow our economy and who contribute to the economy of the province through their own creativity - maybe they are the priority of this government. Ah, oops! No, they are not. I'd never be an actor, I'm sorry. (Applause) It's very obvious to me, with the assault on the screen and film industry, that the creative economy is not the priority of this government.

I want to speak to something other than the Film Industry Tax Credit for one moment. I want to speak to the elimination of the office in government for creative industries that was created that was wiped out yesterday. The Film Industry Tax Credit is a very big and significant issue. This may be a smaller issue to some people, but let me tell you, it's a really significant failure of this government to understand the importance of having an entity inside government that is prepared to be the conduit for the industry into government, to work with them, to support them, to nurture them, and to help them grow and develop. That was eliminated yesterday. A number of staff people were shown the door - they were escorted out of the building - and it's very, very distressing that this entity, an entity that had considerable possibility for the ongoing expansion and growth of this industry, has been lost.

Yesterday we saw the devastation of an industry in this province - an industry that I said at the outset I value because it has enriched my community but I think all Nova Scotians have so much pride in our creative and our cultural industries. When we see productions like *The Book of Negroes*, the exquisite scenery from Shelburne Harbour, when we see those rolling hills out at Bissett Lake in Cole Harbour, when we see local actors who we recognize, it brings such a sense of pride to each and every one of us. Our identity as a province is so much shaped by the stories that have been told in our province through many of these productions.

Then there are stories that are told that are shot here that have nothing to do necessarily with our culture, our stories, but they create significant economic impact in local communities for people who do catering, people who have accommodations, people who provide transportation services and security services. I have friends who have a little business doing massage therapy in the film industry for people who work in all kinds of weather, rain or shine - long, long hours on their feet, often in very difficult conditions and requiring physiotherapy massage. There are many, many people who rely on this industry. This industry is worth millions of dollars to our province. It creates many, many jobs and many spinoff opportunities.

It is so obvious from the disinformation that is being spread by the government about this industry that they don't fully understand the importance of this industry. They don't understand the implications of cutting the Film Industry Tax Credit. I am hoping that in the coming days we are able to help them understand so they can get a clearer appreciation of the importance of this industry to our province and why we need to reverse the path they have chosen in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure I am getting close to the end of my time. I want to talk about something that is very, very important to myself and to the NDP caucus, and hopefully to people in the province - I'm sure to people in our province - and that's jobs. There is nothing more important than having a secure, well-paying job in our province, or in any province. Since coming to government, the McNeil Government has seen the loss of nearly 4,500 jobs and we're seeing unemployment reach 9.1 per cent. Yesterday, the government laid off more than 90 people, many of them from one department, the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. We have heard the Premier talk repeatedly about how the government shouldn't be in the business of creating jobs.

I want to take this opportunity to express a sincere thank-you to those members of the Public Service who were escorted out of their offices yesterday for their dedication and hard work on behalf of the people of this province. I want to particularly say to the people who worked in the former Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism how much we appreciated the work that you did over your many years in that department to ensure other people in this province had work. You know, there has been a lot of criticism of the work of people in the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

The other casualty of this government is rural Nova Scotia. The department that was eliminated yesterday spent an extraordinary amount of its time ensuring that moms and dads across this province, in rural communities particularly, had jobs to go to. Those jobs might have been in the forestry sector, in the pulp and paper industry, in the fishery, in aquaculture, in agriculture, in manufacturing, in the technology industries - many, many sectors. Many of those men and women worked long hours and they worked diligently. Often, when an employer got into difficulty, they were the first people in. They were the first people in because they had been working hard with those employers to try to look at

what the options are to keep this business going, to keep people who are employed in those industries at work.

I think about the work that people in that department did around the poultry processing industry, which was in a bit of a crisis not so long ago - a number of years ago. Now we have significantly fewer of these people doing that work. We're not sure who's going to replace them, how the work that they did is going to be replaced. If people in this Chamber think for one moment that industries and businesses in this province aren't going to feel the ups and downs of operating and they're not going to need somebody to be on their side, then you're dreaming in Technicolor - we're dreaming in Technicolor, Mr. Speaker. We really require people to be able to work particularly in our rural communities that have been very hard hit by the kinds of economy and economic change that's going on throughout the country.

The only good news I saw in yesterday's budget with respect to the economy was the fact that we're going to see increased rates of employment for the next two years. That employment is predicated on, according to the minister's documents, the ships contract that they criticized and denigrated when they were in Opposition; the Maritime Link, which they criticized and denigrated when they were in Opposition, and the Nova Centre.

Those are some of my observations and comments about this budget. This is a \$10 billion budget. In a \$10 billion budget there will be some good things, and I'm not going to go through what they are, but I will name one or two that I think are worth noting. There is a commitment to increase the caregiver allowance in the Department of Health and Wellness budget and that's a good thing; it's \$1.-some-odd million. But this budget is a failure in terms of the challenges that people are facing in our province. This budget does not pass the people test, and ultimately that's what test a budget has to pass. It has to pass the people's test, but it fails. It fails rural Nova Scotia, it fails youth, it fails the health care sector, it fails our creative industry sector, and no doubt, as we start to look at each department and find out how they're going to manage a funding freeze across the board in government, we'll be finding other failures.

That's our job but it is a very sad time for the Province of Nova Scotia. It's ironic, I often think about the irony of the Ivany report and some of the champions around the Ivany report. They want us to change our attitude. They want us to be perky and positive. I hear the member for Halifax Chebucto saying I don't know how to be perky and positive. (Interruption) Well, you don't know me very well, Mr. Speaker, he has no idea. If this government gave us something to be perky and positive about, we'd be perky and positive.

It's hard to be perky and positive when they're gutting one of our most creative sectors in the province. It's hard to be perky and positive when they're telling the students of this province that they're going to have to shoulder a greater debt load to go to university. It's hard to be perky and positive when they are putting more money into a ferry to bring a

few tourists into the province than they are for the entire health care budget for the coming year.

Mr. Speaker, we'll be perky and positive when we see them change the provisions on the tax credit. I'll be happy to be perky and positive when I see you back away from those changes.

MR. SPEAKER: That brings us to the conclusion of the address in reply to the budget. The House will now recess for a few minutes while we get organized for Question Period.

[10:46 a.m. The House recessed.]

[10:49 a.m. The House reconvened.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Just before we get into Question Period, the honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce my constituency assistant, Carole Perkons, and her grandson who is visiting here from Calgary, Ryan Perkons, as well. I'd ask them to both rise and receive a warm welcome from the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We'll now proceed to the order of business, Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers. The time is now 10:49 a.m. We'll conclude at 11:39 a.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM. - FILM TAX CREDIT: CUTS - MISTAKE ADMIT

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing that we count on the government to get right in its budget, it is to protect the jobs of Nova Scotians. We got a big reminder of that this morning, because the latest job report shows that in the last month, 5,800 full-time jobs have disappeared here in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget this government made a huge error, they have put at risk 2,000 jobs in our film and creative industries by the changes they have made to the Film Industry Tax Credit. These are jobs of young, talented Nova Scotians, and I can tell you right now this will be a bigger mistake than the cancellation of the Bluenose ferry and

the jobs that went with it - sorry the Yarmouth ferry. We'll talk about the Bluenose another time - as big a mistake as the Yarmouth ferry.

So I'll ask the Premier, will he admit today that his government has made a big mistake that is going to cost jobs, or will he tell us why he wants to put 2,000 jobs for young Nova Scotians at risk?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I want to inform all members of this House that yesterday's budget was about moving this province forward in a new direction; it was about engaging and providing an opportunity for the private sector to create these jobs. It was a challenging day. We said all along all Nova Scotians are going to have to be part of the solution, and when that's the case, all Nova Scotians will be able to benefit from the results.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, this is a huge mistake, and it is going to cost 2,000 people their jobs. Just overnight we are getting reports of real jobs being killed, real productions being cancelled - and these are young Nova Scotians and some of them are in the gallery today from the community college. I'll give you one example, Kimmy Dewell is here, and she's a make-up artist. She has already had two jobs cancelled. This is not rhetoric, these are real people with real jobs, and they deserve better than what they got from this government yesterday.

What does the Premier have to say to people like Kim Dewell and the 2,000 other young, talented Nova Scotians whose jobs are now at risk?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The Film Tax Credit is still in place in this province. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, 25 per cent of that credit is given directly to the producer to take to the bank to help finance it, the other 75 per cent is a true tax credit which goes against the taxes you pay in Nova Scotia - why is it unreasonable for the Leader of the Opposition to believe that when you receive a tax credit it should be applied against the taxes you pay in this province?

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, we all heard that explanation yesterday. What is unreasonable is to ask 2,000 people who work in our film and creative industry, the very young people we need more of here in the Province of Nova Scotia, to watch their jobs go because the Premier, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, and the government, do not understand the effect of what they have done. We need more jobs, not less jobs and, bizarrely, for a government that loves to consult on anything they had no consultation, or very little consultation, with the industry that is now reeling today.

So will the Premier, if he won't admit that this is just a big error, will he at least agree to meet with the industry and fix the mess they've now created?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to again remind the honourable member that they constantly asked for change.

We recognized yesterday there are very difficult challenges for some Nova Scotians. The reality is some people who worked in government lost their jobs yesterday entirely; they went home because we had to restructure government. Do you think those decisions were taken lightly? Do you think any member on this side of the House finds joy in the fact? But the reality of it is we are on an unsustainable path and it has to change; the reality of it is the Film Industry Tax Credit was not a tax credit, it was directly given out the door. What we're now saying is apply this as a true tax credit. As the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has said there is also now a \$6 million creative fund for the creative economy which publishers, recording artists and, yes, the film industry can take advantage of.

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

PREM. - DHX EMPLOYEES: CUTS - EXPLAIN

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as we know yesterday's budget has left Nova Scotians in the screen industry reeling and in panic mode. Today we learned This Hour Has 22 Minutes, a show in its 23rd season, Canada's longest-running comedy, produced entirely here in Nova Scotia, is leaving the province due to this government's misguided budget. The studio that produces 22 Minutes, DHX Media, has decided to close its doors, throwing 155 people out of work.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier explain to all of those people at DHX and throughout the province's film industry why he thinks they are not worth investing in?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I completely disagree with the Leader of the New Democratic Party's entire question and the parameters that she put around it. Of course we believe that the industry is worth investing in. That's why we didn't get rid of the Film Industry Tax Credit. What we changed was the fact that you applied it against the taxes you paid in this province. They stand on that side of the House time after time asking us to invest more in health care, more in education, looking after the most vulnerable Nova Scotians, and we believe that we have a responsibility as a government. But in order to do that, if we're going to use taxpayers' money, it should be applied against taxes paid in Nova Scotia.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker. In 2013, this Premier seduced the creative sector into voting for him by promising to extend the media tax credit for an additional five-year period. The film industry is feeling a little jilted today because this Premier has decided to cut the tax credit, leaving 2,000 people in jeopardy. Can the Premier please explain to those who are feeling betrayed why he failed to mention in his campaign promise to extend the tax credit that he also intended to gut it?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the honourable member, we did not cut the tax credit. What we've done is make it a true tax credit, where you apply it against the taxes you pay in the Province of Nova Scotia. On top of that, we broadened a fund made available to the creative economy, from recording artists to publishers. Those are all positive things. We are looking forward to continuing to work with the creative economy to continue to move this province forward.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I don't think the Premier really understands how the credit worked and why it was so important to the industry and what a tool it was in order to raise capital for their productions. Yesterday, the chair of Screen Nova Scotia said a program that once made Nova Scotia competitive with all of North America now puts us at the bottom of the list. I want to ask the Premier, what analysis did he and his Minister of Finance and Treasury Board have that justified taking away this industry's competitive edge? Would he table it, please?

THE PREMIER: The reality of it is, as the credit was going up, we were actually getting less and less of the national business. The reality is that we were paying more and getting less business in the province as a percentage of what was happening in Canada. The reality of it is, in order to deliver services to the people of this province, tough decisions have to be made. We're continuing to work with people who are going to move this province forward. The credit is available as it was the day before, and it will apply directly against the taxes you pay in the province. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River that if she has a question, her turn will come. We'll try to keep a little civil tone here.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - FILM TAX CREDIT: JOB LOSSES - PROGRESS EXPLAIN

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, this government isn't the only one that tried to cut a film tax credit and then see the devastating results that happen for young people and jobs that it creates. Saskatchewan tried the same thing in 2012; 1,200 people worked in the film industry at the time. Now, a few years later, less than 50, which led the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce to say that the decision to cut the tax credit, in the same manner that it's being cut here, affected real people and real businesses that were committed to growing the film sector and their businesses were shattered.

We need jobs even more than they do in Saskatchewan. So I'll ask the Premier, in a province where jobs are so scarce, how is putting 2,000 jobs at risk in any way moving the province forward?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to tell all members of this House that we finally have a government in this province that is engaging with the private sector to grow jobs in this province. The reality of it is, in order to change, it will affect people. We recognize that. Yesterday was a difficult time for Nova Scotians. Some Nova Scotians paid a greater impact than others, but in order for us to change this province and move it forward, we have to change the way we're doing business. A tax credit is applied against the taxes you pay, not a non-forgivable loan or a direct grant; a tax credit is applied against the taxes you pay in this province.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the whole point is about the effect of what they have done, not the formula. The fact of the matter is there are difficult times but after yesterday we finally have an answer from the government about difficult for whom? If you are a young person wanting to go to university, it's difficult for you. If you have a seasonal job in one of our rural parks, it's difficult for you. If you are going to the community college to take film tech courses, it's difficult for you. If you work as one of the 2,000 people in this industry, well your job is now at risk.

There is nothing wrong with saying that we made a mistake and we're willing to fix it and we're willing to sit down with industry and extend their deadline to the end of the year and give them a chance to come back with something that works. Will the Premier at least agree to do that?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Yesterday was a day when we invested in young Nova Scotians' public education. Yesterday was a day that we protected Nova Scotia students when it comes to post-secondary institutions and allowing them to keep the quality of post-secondary education as high as it is in this province. Yesterday was a day that we had to make difficult decisions that we know are affecting Nova Scotians.

Yes, some are paying a higher price than others. Mr. Speaker, this is about moving forward in the future and a tax credit is applied against the taxes you pay in this province so that we can afford to deliver health care, provide more job opportunities and making sure that this province is moving in the right direction.

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

PREM. - FILM IND.: DESTRUCTION - RESPONSIBILITY

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: The film, television and animation industries were devastated by yesterday's budget cut of the Film Industry Tax Credit. I have to believe that the government is doing this out of ignorance and not malice.

I want to tell you about production companies with projects that are on hold or effectively lost because of the changes: Ocean Entertainment, Big Motion Pictures, Magic

Rock Productions; Topsail Entertainment and DHX Media are all affected and looking to shoot elsewhere.

My question to the Premier, why does the Premier seem so intent on being known as the man who killed an entire industry?

MR. SPEAKER: I'd like to remind the honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's that "ignorance" is an unparliamentary term so I'll ask her to rise and please retract that term.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I'm sorry I called the Premier ignorant.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again I want to say to all members of this House that the Film Industry Tax Credit is still in place in this province. It is one that you will receive 25 per cent of it. It is the same as it always was. The other 75 per cent is being applied directly against the taxes you pay in this province.

I also want to remind the House that we broadened the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, in the creative economy when it comes to sound recording, when it comes to publishers; we're actually broadening opportunities to drive the creative economy. All we're suggesting is that if you are receiving money from the people of the Province of Nova Scotia in a tax credit form, you should apply it against the taxes you pay in Nova Scotia.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Big Motion Pictures Limited, a 20-year employer of Nova Scotians - best film technicians - is already looking for alternate locations for their 2015 production slate. Their president, David MacLeod, said yesterday, "We are forced to explore options for company headquarters for 2016 and beyond." I'll table that.

"Grits Killed DHX in Halifax". I have to wonder what the MLA for Lunenburg had to say to the Premier about the Film Industry Tax Credit. After all, Big Motion Pictures produces the TV series Haven, which has done so much for the County of Lunenburg.

Can the Premier tell us if the MLA for Lunenburg has expressed concerns about Haven stopping production or is she in favour of the Film Industry Tax Credit cut?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. It gives me an opportunity to tell all members of this House how proud I am of the great work being done by the member for Lunenburg, not only on this file but on every file that her constituents bring to her office. She continues to represent them in a classy, professional way in this House.

The answer to question, Mr. Speaker, is that the member for Lunenburg, like all members on this side of the House, is looking to move this province forward. We're doing

it in a way that is fair and is balanced and we're looking forward to continuing to work with Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

SNS: COURIER COSTS - JUSTIFY

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Service Nova Scotia. A freedom of information request obtained by the PC caucus shows that in the last fiscal year, courier charges at Service Nova Scotia cost taxpayers \$222,539 - over \$220,000. That sure seems like a lot of money to me. It's also an average of more than \$338 for each item sent by courier, and \$338 per courier is very expensive.

My question for the minister is, how can the minister justify this amount to Nova Scotians who will certainly be feeling the pain of yesterday's budget?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member from across the floor for the question. The reality is that continued services in government require some outside sourcing to support government's activities. It's no different than the governments that have preceded us. Within the department we continue to find efficiencies and savings wherever possible, and I want to assure the member opposite that we'll continue with that objective.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the response. I can tell you that when I was in business we sent many courier packages, and very rarely did they cost anywhere near \$338 per courier. In the face of yesterday - yesterday was a tough day for many Nova Scotians who lost their jobs in the film industry and in the civil service, and many others know this budget will make life harder and more expensive for them. The average Nova Scotian salary is under \$43,000. That means courier charges at Service Nova Scotia are roughly equivalent to five jobs.

My question is, what does the minister say to all those people who lost their jobs yesterday or are facing a reduction in services, knowing now that one department spent this much on courier charges?

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I want to share with all Nova Scotians that we're very much aware of the impact of job losses that the member refers to. I want to assure the member that I too hear and feel the impact of government's decision as we try to restructure and find efficiencies for the province so that we can sustain services and continue to support both our population and our economy as we go forward.

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

LAE: TUITION CAP - EFFECTS

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget sent a clear message to current and future university students in this province. The government told students that if they want to go to school here, they better pay up. By looking the other way and allowing universities to hike tuition fees with no limits by the government, we are intentionally pushing students away. While in Opposition, the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education referred to removing the cap on tuition as a handicap to recruitment and said it was a sure way to price ourselves out of the game. I have that article here.

My question to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education is, why is the minister allowing universities to price themselves out of the game?

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I do know that yesterday was a tough day for students to hear. Over the past number of years, students have seen a 3 per cent increase in their tuitions, and for the most part that will continue in the future.

I would prefer that we were not in this particular place right now, in that we find ourselves in a position where we have to raise tuitions. I imagine it's much the same way that the Leader of the Official Opposition felt when he voted to raise tuitions at Dalhousie. Thank you.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, we are constantly losing young people to other provinces due to their lack of employment opportunities. The government has no plans to keep young Nova Scotians here. The Ivany report is a roadmap on how to make our province viable for future generations. After the news broke of the tuition free-for-all, students and young people posted all over social media about moving away because of the bleak future here. A common message on social media was that the government finally answered the "now or never" question of the Ivany report, and the answer was "never."

My question to the minister is, why did the minister reverse her position on tuition hikes, and is she really willing to let our province lose more young people as a result of this?

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question, and I want to welcome the opportunity to actually speak about what we're doing for our young people in this province. Just a couple of months ago my colleague, the former Minister of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism announced the Graduate to Opportunity program, which will help young people get that crucial first-time job once they complete their studies. What we heard from students was that, in fact, the reason why they will stay in the province is if they have a job to go to, and that's just one of the programs that we're investing in - co-op opportunities, summer jobs programs. We also

have a variety of student supports for our young people, and in a really tough budget year, we maintained those for Nova Scotia students.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - LONG-TERM CARE: PATIENTS - NUMBERS

MR. CHUCK PORTER: My question will be for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Mr. Speaker, as all in this House would know, over the course of many years, there has been great debate on long-term care, wait-lists, new beds, not new beds, new plans - maybe not new plans. I wonder, could the minister answer today - does he know how many Nova Scotians actually reside currently in long-term care facilities in the province?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the number of Nova Scotians in long-term care beds is about 7,500 to 7,600. That's in those that receive a per diem from the province. Of course, we all know that there are additional private homes in the province. I think the member opposite will be very pleased with the new direction that we will put in place around making sure that those at high risk and need get in first.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that answer. Something we haven't heard before in this House, I don't think - or I haven't - is actually how many beds and how many people are actually residing in those homes. I understand, I don't know what the number would be on the private side, but probably quite a few more.

Given that one of the biggest issues, of course - we know how those beds turn over. Unfortunately, somebody passes away - the bed becomes vacant. One of the issues around entrance is the time it takes to gain access, and obviously, there is a process that must be gone through in clearing out and so on. Can the minister also maybe today just clarify, there is a release that he did some time back talking about the number of days. Is there an accurate number of days that it takes to enter? What's the wait time, the true wait time, for someone on the list waiting to get in to a long-term care facility?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, a couple of parts to that question. First of all, the timeline for somebody to get in a bed that has become vacant can be anywhere from six to, unfortunately, about 20 or 21 days. That's why our new policy will work on six, seven days - about a week - to make sure that somebody now has moved in.

In fact, one of the nursing homes in the member opposite's area had a cumulative of one full year of vacant days in the home, so we know that's another one of those areas where we are committed to making a big improvement.

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

PREM.:DHX CLOSURE - RESPONSE

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, Michael Donovan of DHX Media has said, “This is destruction. This is assassination of the film industry in Nova Scotia. They have made the decision to kill it.” He said this to allNovaScotia.com yesterday. This founder and executive chairman of the successful children’s animation powerhouse says that the Finance and Treasury Board Minister’s changes to the Film Tax Credit will make it impossible to raise financing, something that the department doesn’t seem to understand.

One thing that I notice that the Premier doesn’t seem to understand is that 75 per cent of a non-refundable tax credit - you cannot take that to the bank. It’s only the 25 per cent that actually makes a difference. That’s why the industry is moving.

My question is, what does the Premier actually have to say to the fact that DHX Media president Michel Donovan will now have to close his 155-person animation studio?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. What I said very clearly in response to the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party was that the 25 per cent could be taken to the bank to use as leverage to raise capital to continue to move forward, to allow DHX or any other film to move forward.

The reality of it is that 75 per cent of it will be applied against the taxes. I’m sure Mr. Donovan enjoys using the health care system in Nova Scotia. I’m sure he enjoys using public education, and I’m sure he enjoys doing all the other services that Nova Scotians buy. Mr. Speaker, we’re giving him a very generous tax credit against the taxes he pays in Nova Scotia.

MS. ZANN: Again what the Premier doesn’t seem to understand is that the money these producers get actually goes to the labour, so they are paying for the labour out of the money they get, the investments they get. They need the money from the banks to be able to ensure their productions, and without a heftier tax credit they are not going to be able to compete with Ontario and Montreal and British Columbia. That’s the problem.

Mr. Speaker, DHX President, Michael Donovan, is also quoted in allNovaScotia as saying every single show - Trailer Park Boys, 22 Minutes, all the others - will have to leave the province. The Trailer Park Boys production . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Does the member have a question?

MS. ZANN: Mr. Speaker, The Trailer Park Boys production has done so much for the economy of Colchester County . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The time allotted for the member’s question as expired.

We'll move on to the member for Pictou East.

ENERGY - NAT. GAS: NEW SUPPLY - TIME FRAME

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Energy. This year's budget shows that petroleum royalties are more than half of what they were last year. This is the lowest amount the province has received from our offshore oil and gas royalties in more than a decade, so it's obvious that our offshore oil production is in decline and our offshore natural gas supplies are dwindling.

My question for the minister is, when does the minister expect a new supply of natural gas to come online?

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, as I've previously indicated to the House, Shell will be undertaking its drilling program this summer and British Petroleum as well has indicated that they intend to continue with their scheduled drilling program in the province.

Mr. Speaker, as well there will be bids again that will be submitted for offshore parcels. We're hoping that companies will see the value in investing in our offshore.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, those projects, while exciting, are obviously years away, and our offshore natural gas supply is in decline today. So far there seems to be no plan to replace it.

We have several LNG export projects proposed for Nova Scotia and these are multi-billion dollar projects and they need a supply of natural gas to make sure they go forward.

My question for the minister: How does the minister plan to help these companies secure natural gas supplies so we receive their much-needed investment?

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Energy is extremely supportive of all our companies, especially the LNG projects he has made reference to. We continue to facilitate discussions that are taking place, especially along the Eastern U.S. Seaboard where there is an ample supply of gas.

There's a bit of an issue with distribution right now. We are excited by the opportunity that this might provide a supply base to Nova Scotia so that the LNG terminals that have been proposed can proceed.

This is an exciting opportunity. One of the sites is the Bear Head site in Point Tupper, in my own constituency, along with some projects proposed in Guysborough as well. Again, we'll certainly continue to attend a number of the conferences that are held and work directly with the industry to support these Nova Scotia projects.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - HEALTHY LIVING TAX CREDIT:
CUTS - MIN. STANCE**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. According to the IWK, Nova Scotia children spend almost five hours a day in front of a screen and less than 50 per cent of children and youths get the daily recommended amount of exercise - and I'll table that.

Too much screen time is linked to many problems, including attention and learning problems and healthy body weight and type 2 diabetes. Yesterday the McNeil Liberals cut the Healthy Living Tax Credit, leaving families with no provincial relief on the cost of sport and recreation.

My question is to the minister: What does he think of the government's decision to make it even more difficult for children and youth to get the recommended exercise that they so dearly need?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the member opposite asked that question; it's a very important one to our government and this Minister of Health and Wellness. That particular program was getting a very small pickup. We will be engaged in another program that I think will make a big difference in our school system. I'm sure the member opposite now sees we're moving back to strong ParticipACTION ads and that is to engage not just the children but also the entire family in a more active lifestyle.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: According to the Childhood Obesity Foundation there's significant improvement in both physical and mental health when children and teenagers obtain their required level of activity. There are many families struggling in varying degrees of mental health concerns and worries as well. The sneaky part of this, too, is that many people are working on their 2014 taxes and really won't be looking at this tax credit and realizing it's gone until next year when it's far too late.

My question to the minister is, does he stand by government's decision to get rid of the Healthy Living Tax Credit and make it more difficult to receive that physical activity that the need?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased the member for Argyle-Barrington brought this very important question to the floor of the Assembly. He knows that we're a government very dedicated to improving fitness and well-being of all Nova Scotians. This was one of those tax areas that unfortunately was not available, again, to lower income Nova Scotians. We are putting this into a place where we will need to re-examine and make sure that it spreads right across our population to get the desired benefit.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable for Pictou East.

FIN. & TREASURY BD.: BRACKET CREEP - INCOME TAX INCREASE

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. I'm going to begin with some words from the now-Minister of Agriculture from way back in May 2013. At that time, the now-Minister of Agriculture pointed out that bracket creep makes a huge difference to people's personal income tax and drives people out of the province. He went on to say at the time that the NDP was hoping that nobody really looked at the numbers and saw what was going on here because they're talking about a huge increase in personal income taxes.

The now-Minister of Agriculture was pretty concerned about bracket creep back then so my question for the minister is, does the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board agree with her cabinet colleague's opinion that by not addressing bracket creep, the McNeil government saddled Nova Scotians with a huge increase in personal income taxes.

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to have a little history lesson because the reason we have bracket creep is because under the leadership of Premier Hamm, he decoupled our tax rate increases and credits from the federal ones. That's how it began and it has increased year after year after year. So, perhaps that's long enough for the first answer.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, a little history lesson is always valuable and especially if we're going to use history to make decisions today because the Liberal budget includes \$30 million in bracket creep hidden in a schedule.

I want to remind the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board of some of the now-Minister of Health and Wellness's words when he was also pretty concerned about bracket creep a ways back in November 2012, when he said, "Not dealing with bracket creep means the NDP has been very accepting of a natural bracket movement that allows for additional tax increase year after year."

The McNeil Government has made the same decision today; it's \$30 million of additional tax. My question for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is, does the minister share the concern of her cabinet colleague, the Minister of Health and Wellness or does she agree with the NDP that we should just let bracket creep continue?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I think this is very interesting because the member opposite is quite mixed up: bracket creep is about not being linked to other rates as we are with the federal government. What he is talking about here is closing a loophole and I believe you are referring to the non-eligible dividend tax credit because that is \$30 million and that's closing a tax loophole. Thank you.

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

**BUS. - PROG. ELIMINATION: GRAD. RETENTION
- CORRELATION EXPLAIN**

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: To the Minister of Business, I'd like to read a line from the defunct Liberal platform. Under the heading "Keep our best and brightest here in Nova Scotia", the platform reads, "Businesses need workers, and recent graduates and skilled workers need experience." I'll table that.

Yesterday we saw again how empty those words were back in 2013. In yesterday's budget the government hit a new low when it fired 320 of its employees and blamed our workforce for the province's deficit.

My question is, can the minister explain how on the one hand he expects to retain new graduates while on the other hand the McNeil Government keeps eliminating the programs and people who keep young people here?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I think it's quite clear over time that the economic development strategy of the province has been broken. The objective of the new department going forward is to provide strategic advice and guidance to ensure that our private sector will have the support of government, creating an environment where we can allow business to do what business has asked us to do: get out of the way and allow business to create jobs and secure employment for Nova Scotians.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you to the minister for his answer. Since 2008, rural Nova Scotia communities have been hit especially hard by the global economic downturn, but through it all, the workers in our Public Service have been there during the hardest of times, finding solutions to keep people working and paying the bills.

Yesterday the now-Minister of Energy gutted the very department that kept 1,400 families working in his own backyard during one of the biggest crises Port Hawkesbury has ever faced. My question is actually to the Minister of Energy. What does the Minister of Energy now have to say to the people he fired yesterday - the same people who kept the biggest employer in his constituency from becoming an empty shell of a factory?

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, the member very well knows that that's a question better put to the Minister of Business. But let me say this: we truly value those who work in the Public Service. (Applause)

One of the most difficult parts of being in government is making decisions that can have an impact on people's livelihood and have an impact on their employment. I had the privilege to work with the staff over at Economic and Rural Development and Tourism.

They were dedicated Nova Scotians, working for the best interests of our province, but we can't keep doing the same things and expecting different results.

The Premier has made it clear that Nova Scotians need to move forward with new direction. We need to find new ways of being able to get better results. That was what the decision was yesterday, as painful as it was. We look forward to having all employees in the Public Service join us in moving our province forward.

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

**TIR - ENGLISHTOWN FERRY:
SERV. INTERRUPTIONS SM. BUS. PEOPLE - EFFECTS**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. The Englishtown ferry is out of service time and again and again, and people who live north of Englishtown in Victoria County have become frustrated. Half of Victoria County's population live north of the Englishtown ferry, and the economy faces hardship when the ferry is not operational. One example is that stores are out of supplies when the ferry is not running, because delivery trucks are hesitant to drive the extra 45 minutes around St. Anns Bay.

My question to the minister is, what does the minister say to small business people whose businesses are being compromised because the ferry is so frequently out of operation?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the reality with the Englishtown channel is that there are significant ice floes both coming in from the ocean and coming out from the lakes. The reality is that it's a cable ferry. It doesn't have an engine. It operates on cable entirely, so if that cable breaks, if we have some kind of malfunction when the ice is moving, we put lives at risk, we put our infrastructure at risk. It's a very dangerous situation.

We certainly understand those frustrations, no question, but first and foremost it's about the safety of the vessel, the safety of our staff, and the safety of the people who use the vessel.

We're looking at reviewing the entire system and the entire operation at Englishtown, thanks to the member for Victoria-The Lakes, who had that idea. We're also going to look at upgrades to the road. We know that's an important roadway, and we're going to continue to make improvements as best we can. Thank you.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for that answer, even though he is not completely correct.

Mr. Speaker, jobs are scarce enough in rural Cape Breton, and poor service and increased rates make it tougher for people who live north of Englishtown. My question to the minister is quite simple, will the minister assure the residents north of Englishtown that access to their community is a priority to his department?

MR. MACLELLAN: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Look, the reality is, with the fare changes, we did what we thought was fair for all Nova Scotians, including those who use the service. We had to close that gap between the overall cost of the services across the entire province with the revenues that we collect. We will continue for the people of Englishtown and for all of our seven operations for the ferries of Nova Scotia to look at ways we can make improvements, increase safety, and increase mobility. That's what we're here to do. We'll use all stakeholders in the communities to help us make that happen.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

TIR - NOVA STAR: TRANSPARENT REPORTING - DETAILS

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. With the transfer of the *Nova Star* responsibility to TIR, we now have new questions about how this project will be managed, including the transparency of how the money will be disbursed. My question for the minister is, how does the minister plan to provide transparent reporting of the money provided to *Nova Star*?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. First and foremost, with respect to the \$13 million which was committed by our government this year, it will exist and be available on the website so all Nova Scotians, including the Opposition, can see exactly where the money is flowing, when it's flowing. That is the commitment we'll continue to make.

In terms of transparency and next steps, our department's now arranging meetings with the Governor of Maine, with officials in Yarmouth of course, with the help of the MLA for Yarmouth. We're going to talk to Mayor Pam Mood. We're going to have conversations with many people in the industry. We're going to talk to the *Nova Star* folks. I'm going to have conversations with each and every person who's impacted by this who can help us pull this service forward and make sure we can sustain it for the long term.

MR. LOHR: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer to the question, Mr. Speaker. I certainly hope that turns out as stated.

In regard to the \$13 million, I have a specific question. It was announced in February that \$13 million would be provided to *Nova Star* this year. So far, we understand \$4 million has been provided under the former Department of ERDT. In the Budget Estimates, it says \$8 million will be provided to *Nova Star* this year. I'll table that.

My question to the minister, is the government now expecting to provide the company \$1 million less than announced two months ago, seeing how four plus eight equals \$12 million? That's my question.

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the way that the money is going to flow to the *Nova Star* officials for the vessel is very specific. There are deliverables; it's stage-gated. At this point, we collected the \$8 million under our department with TIR. That's why that line item is there. The member's right, that leaves \$5 million; \$4 million has been paid to *Nova Star* operators, so they have that. The additional \$1 million is held in treasury based on some of the specific requirements and deliverables that *Nova Star* has, so that \$1 million is held in treasury. When those deliverables are met, the money will flow to the *Nova Star* operators.

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

PREM.: SAVE SUNNYVALE - ACTIONS

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for my questions now. DHX president Michael Donovan is quoted in allNovaScotia.com as saying, "Every single show, Trailer Park Boys, 22 Minutes, will have to leave the province, all of (DHX's) animation shows will have to leave." He added that incentives in Vancouver now are better than the ones here in Halifax.

Mr. Speaker, the Trailer Park Boys production has done so much for the economy in Colchester County. The question is, what steps will the Premier take to ensure that he saves Sunnyvale?

THE PREMIER: Again, I want to remind the honourable member that the Film Industry Tax Credit is still in place in this province. Again, I want to remind the honourable member that 25 per cent of that is given directly to the producer to take to the bank, to take to lending institutions to capitalize the project, and the remaining 75 per cent is a true tax credit which is applied against the taxes paid in this province. Why is it so hard to believe that Nova Scotians should expect that taxes be paid in this province? It is their money that is being used. They should expect that the taxes be paid in this province.

MS. ZANN: Well, my answer to the Premier on that is the taxes are paid in this province. Every single one of these people in the creative industry is living here and paying taxes. That's why they've started a whole lobby thing saying, we pay taxes too. They also have a huge economic spinoff in this province.

My next question for the Premier is - I've heard him saying over and over again that you cannot keep the status quo. But my question is, the status quo is what used to be here in Nova Scotia and the creative economy is something new that was just starting to

build, so how can he justify going back to what was the status quo instead of moving forward?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for her question. I want to remind her that the Film Tax Credit is in place. I'm sure she would know that in order to qualify for that Film Tax Credit, only 25 per cent of the production crew actually has to be in residence in Nova Scotia. I'm sure she recognizes that.

Again, I want to remind the honourable member as she stands in this House and talks about the taxes that are being paid and the amount of taxes that companies are paying on the table, we appreciate that. I encourage her then to ask them to put on the table, how much money are they getting from the taxpayers of Nova Scotia directly from this tax credit?

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

COM. SERV.: COUNSELLING THERAPIST - TRAVEL COSTS

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Services. I was talking to Marian McDonald, who is a registered counselling therapist living in my community. She often receives requests to provide counselling from the Department of Community Services. She has travelled all over the northern region of the province. She takes her own vehicle and takes time from her normal work. The department's policy says that travel in excess of 100 kilometres will be paid for at a 50 per cent rate of her hourly wage. Is the minister aware of this policy and are there any plans to change it?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: I am aware of most of the travel policies within my own department. I'm not sure what the question was in terms of - I'm not going to change it, no. It's a fair policy. It's certainly in line with the private sector, the non-profit sector, and other government departments as well when it comes to travel policy.

MR. HARRISON: The thing is that Marian McDonald does not want to turn down these clients who really need that kind of care. She is asking about the compensation and if that compensation can be better than what it is now?

MS. BERNARD: I absolutely appreciate the service providers that do provide contracted services for our clients, but we are not in a position to pad that any more than what's available to every other person in the non-profit/private sector and other government departments.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Business. Yesterday in the budget, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board did not mention small business. Our small businesses pay among the highest taxes in the country and are major job creators. Before the last election, the Premier said, "It is time for Nova Scotia to have a provincial government that recognizes that hard working Nova Scotians and small businesses are the backbone of our economy." I will table that.

My question for the minister is, when will this government stand by those words and recognize that maintaining high taxes for small business hurts all Nova Scotians?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Business, with seven seconds.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to run out of time here. I don't think I'm going to get a chance to answer the question.

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

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a document that was requested by the member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg on April 17th regarding a number of bridges in Nova Scotia. I think with the consent of the House, would I be permitted to table this information on the Melanson, Crowdis, Whitman, Gillis and Leonard bridges?

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The report is tabled.

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 you do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply unto Her Majesty.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

[11:40 a.m. The House resolved itself into a CW on Supply with Deputy Speaker Ms. Margaret Miller in the Chair.]

[3:56 p.m. CW on Supply rose and the House reconvened with Deputy Speaker Ms. Margaret Miller in the Chair.]

MADAM SPEAKER: The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole on Supply reports:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole on Supply has met, has made progress and begs leave to sit again.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

HON. TERRY FARRELL: Madam Speaker, I believe that concludes the business for today. I move that the House do now rise, to sit again on Monday, April 13th, between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. At that time, we'll call Government Business, Public Bills for Second Reading, Bill No. 84, and we will also call Committee of the Whole on Supply.

With that, I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Monday at 4:00 p.m.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise, to meet again on April 13th between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until 4:00 p.m. on April 13th.

[The House rose at 3:58 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1414**

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas 20-year-old Stephanie Boone, daughter of Susan Fletcher and Daryl Boone of Newport Station, was selected as Princess Windsor on March 28, 2015; and

Whereas Stephanie volunteers in many forums while continuing her second year of university, with career goals to attend medical school; and

Whereas Stephanie will now represent her community in the 83rd Queen Annapolis Pageant as well as the many community events throughout the next year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Stephanie Boone for being crowned Princess Windsor and wish her every success during the Apple Blossom Festival throughout the coming year.

RESOLUTION NO. 1415

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas the 2015 Nova Scotia Karate Team was well represented at the Canadian National and Youth Karate Championships in Richmond, British Columbia, from January 30 to February 1, 2015; and

Whereas three of the athletes of the provincial team were from the Windsor Karate Club, located in Three Mile Plains; and

Whereas Makayla Sexton from Windsor, taking part in her first national competition, represented the team well in kumite, which is sparring;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the 2015 Nova Scotia Karate Team on this success at this year's national event and wish them all the best in future competitions.

RESOLUTION NO. 1416

By: Mr. Chuck Porter (Hants West)

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

Whereas to help celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Hockey Canada, the Century Tour is visiting communities coast to coast; and

Whereas when the Century Tour passed through Windsor on March 17th, Greg Wile was named Canadian Tire's Hero of Play; and

Whereas Greg stated coaching hockey in 2003, coaching at every level of the game, which included three teams going to provincial championships, and now continuing as the development coordinator with the West Hants Minor Hockey Association;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Greg Wile with helping many players and other coaches and for being named Canadian Tire's Hero of Play.