



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2015

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HOUSE RECONVENED AT 4:40 P.M.4090

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GOVERNMENT MOTIONS:

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HOUSE RECONVENED AT 8:47 P.M.4091

ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Thur., Apr. 23rd at 1:00 p.m.4092



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2015

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine the topic for late debate tonight, submitted by the honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg, is:

Therefore be it resolved that MLAs agree that increasing ferry fees by 27 per cent, and one book of 10 passes by 160 per cent, without consultation shows that the only plan the McNeil Government has for our economy is to take money from hard-working Nova Scotians.

That is the topic for late debate.

Also, just a note to members with regard to members' statements. It was brought to my attention this morning from Hansard that they have been receiving members' statements directly to Hansard that have not been read in the House. The mechanism for members' statements is they must be read in the House. It's certainly most welcome by Hansard to receive written copies for clarification of spelling and names and so on, but they must be read in the House; otherwise, they are not going to be entered into Hansard. Just a friendly reminder. Any of you who have done so and you want to make sure they do appear in Hansard are advised to get them back and to read them on the floor of the House.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

MS. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition. The operative clause reads:

“We, the undersigned, as concerned residents and/or property owners of Mt. Uniacke (NS) who oppose the establishment of a quarry in our community by Northumberland Capital Corporation Inc. (NCC). As of the dates of our signatures, we do not consider our concerns (which have been formally expressed to the Depts of Environment (NSE), Natural Resources, Transportation, the Premier’s Offices, etc.) to have been adequately addressed by Northumberland Capital Corp. Inc., the Province of Nova Scotia nor the Municipality of East Hants.”

There are 116 signatures on this petition and I have affixed my own.

MR. SPEAKER: I will take the petition under advisement. I will have to review the operative clause. It didn’t sound like there was a specific ask of government there, but we will take a look and verify that.

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

MR. SPEAKER: As Speaker, I would like to table the Annual Report 2014-15 from Elections Nova Scotia.

The report is tabled.

I am advised by the Chief Clerk that the petition does contain all the necessary information and the request of government, so the petition tabled earlier by the honourable member for Hants East is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of the Public Service Commission.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, this week, April 19th to April 25th, marks Administrative Professionals Week. It is a week that celebrates and shines light on the valued work of all administrative professionals. Each day, the leadership, dedication, and professionalism of administrative professionals is evident in the work they do. Because of

them, our offices in government, private industry, and the non-profit sector function smoothly and effectively.

I ask that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature acknowledge and celebrate our hard-working and talented administrative professionals and recognize their many contributions to our province. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the minister for providing a copy of his remarks to me in advance. We in the Progressive Conservative caucus want to join our voices to his in celebrating Administrative Professionals Week and thanking the talented, unsung heroes that work so hard in our offices in the private sector and in workplaces all over Nova Scotia.

In the PC caucus office, we are very fortunate to have Margaret Brayley and Sadie Hardiman working with our team. Their amazing work ethic and professionalism makes our office run smoothly and efficiently. We all do our jobs better because of the work they do. Today is the perfect day to say thank you to Sadie and Margaret and all the administrative professionals in our province for their dedication and many contributions. I'm very honoured to have this opportunity to recognize their important work. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I too want to associate my comments with the minister on this day. I'm pleased to rise today and say a few words about the importance of Administrative Professionals Week. Every single office in government would not function nearly as efficiently and effectively without our administrative professionals. They are the first faces we see when we enter any office, they're the ones who answer the myriad of questions thrown at them on any given day, and they often become the institutional memories in our organizations. They see it all.

Our constituency assistants have many hats, but one of them is to oversee the administration of our constituency offices. I know we would all be lost without their dedication, support, and problem-solving skills.

I'd also like to thank my constituency assistant for almost my full term as MLA, Marie Scanlan, who just last October surpassed 25 years as a constituency assistant for Sackville-Cobequid and recently retired, but is still working part-time in my office, and my current constituency assistant, Tammy Harnish, for all her work and their work that they do on behalf of the residents of Sackville-Cobequid.

I think all of us should do a better job of recognizing our hard-working administrative professionals, not just today but every day. Their organization and problem-

solving skills are integral to the private, public, and non-profit sectors here in Nova Scotia. On behalf of my entire caucus, I want to thank them for supporting us day in and day out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1512

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

Whereas today, April 22nd, is Earth Day, the largest environmental event in the world, with more than six million Canadians participating in an Earth Day activity; and

Whereas Nova Scotians are strong environmental stewards, which they demonstrate by their leadership in solid waste management and greenhouse gas emission management, and Nova Scotia is one of the only provinces in our country to be on track to meet our 2020 greenhouse gas reduction targets; and

Whereas the earth needs our help all year long, and everyone loves the earth;

Therefore be it resolved that we all recognize today as Earth Day by making a personal commitment to reduce our environmental footprint so that we can protect our air, land, and water, and ensure that it is here for the benefit of future generations.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Gaelic Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 1513

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

Whereas the Scottish Government adopted Achd na Gàidhlig, the Gaelic Language Act, in 2005; and

Whereas this language Act has assisted in fostering an environment of greater visibility and support for the language of one of Scotland's indigenous peoples, the Gaels, making it incumbent on government-sponsored groups, organizations, and institutions to establish Gaelic language plans; and

Whereas the Province of Nova Scotia sincerely values its many connections, relationships, and friendships with Gaelic Scotland counterparts, such as the Highland Council, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and the Scottish Government and many Scottish Gaels;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and congratulate the Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig as they celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Gaelic Language Act, which values and supports the linguistic identity of Gaels in Scotland.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

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

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, before I introduce the bill, I beg leave to do an introduction, if I could.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. WHALEN: Thank you very much. I would ask that the members' attention be drawn to the east gallery today, where we are joined by representatives from Nova Scotia's three professional accounting bodies. They are here today to see the introduction of the bill. I would ask that they rise when I say their names.

From the Institute of Chartered Accountants we are joined by Doug Reid, who is chair of that institute; Michele Wood-Tweel, the CEO and executive director; and Dan Ingersoll, the legal counsel for the Institute of Chartered Accountants.

Representing the Certified General Accountants of Nova Scotia, we have Stana Colovic, the CEO; Debra Bower-Pinto, first vice-chair; David Cameron, legal counsel for Certified General Accountants; and Don Connor, Director of Professional Services for CGA.

From the Certified Management Accountants Society, we are joined today by Joe Moore, who is chair of their group, and Marjorie Hickey, who is the lawyer for the Certified Management Accountants. Please join me in welcoming these representatives here today. (Applause)

Bill No. 98 - Entitled an Act Respecting Chartered Professional Accountants of Nova Scotia. (Hon. Diana Whalen)

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

The honourable House Leader of the New Democratic Party.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, am I permitted to do an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Thank you. I would like to draw the attention of the members to the west gallery. Today we have Nan McFadgen and her brother, Ray McFadgen, who are here visiting the proceedings, but also both of them have been strong advocates for their mother who resides in a long-term care facility. I would like all members to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

Bill No. 99 - Entitled an Act Respecting Accountability For Residential Care Facilities and Nursing Home Waiting Lists. (Hon. David Wilson)

Bill No. 100 - Entitled an Act Respecting Accountability and Sustainability of Universities. (Hon. Kelly Regan)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

HOPE BLOOMS - FUNDING REDUCTION

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the MLA for Halifax Needham, I, like many residents of North End Halifax, have watched with great pride the activities of the youth-run business, Hope Blooms. The mission of Hope Blooms is to empower at-risk youth to be actively engaged in projects that directly impact the social determinants of health in their communities. A big task, but one that the youth and adults involved embraced - Hope Blooms even managed to slay the hardnosed investors on CBC's Dragons' Den who gave Hope Blooms \$40,000 in late 2013 to pursue their dream of building a greenhouse.

It was sad, Mr. Speaker, to hear that the McNeil Government had significantly reduced the already small amount of funding that they provided to Hope Blooms. I'm disappointed, but I know the young people of Hope Blooms are a resilient bunch, and that community will continue to support them even if the McNeil Government doesn't.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources on an introduction.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to bring the attention of the House to the east gallery where a dear friend of mine, Alan Deveau, is in attendance here today. He works with the crew on Haven. I don't remember everyone else's name, I apologize, but I wanted to make sure that the House extended a warm welcome to Alan. (Applause)

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

“THE BELLS OF BADDECK”: PRODUCTION - WELL WISHES

MS. PAM EYKING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make Nova Scotians aware of a wonderful new production, from creator Lorna MacDonald, that's happening this summer in Baddeck. Baddeck is well-known as the home of Alexander Graham Bell and this summer the story of the great inventor and his brilliant wife will be told in a musical drama production called "The Bells of Baddeck." This production will take place, fittingly, at the Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site, will showcase Cape Breton talent, and has also drawn artists from all over Canada to perform.

Big Spruce also has a new beer based on Bell's recipe that they will launch as part of this show. I would encourage all Nova Scotians to take in the show and wish Ms. MacDonald, the cast and the crew all the very best. Break a leg, thank you.

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

FED. BUDGET - N.S. INVESTMENT

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, yesterday Finance Minister Joe Oliver tabled a balanced budget. The budget contained support for the shipbuilding contract, lower taxes for small business, and lower taxes for working families. But that's not all; in this federal budget support to Nova Scotia is at an all-time high. Nova Scotia will receive \$3 billion in federal transfers this year, an increase of 31 per cent since the Liberals were last in power in 2006.

Mr. Speaker, a budget that invests in Nova Scotia jobs instead of destroying an entire . . .

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

MR. MACLEOD: I'll have to start from the beginning, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: No.

MR. MACLEOD: Nova Scotia will receive \$3 billion in federal transfers this year, Mr. Speaker, an increase of 31 per cent since the Liberals were last in power in 2006. A budget that invests in Nova Scotian jobs instead of destroying an entire industry is the kind of budget that Nova Scotians need.

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

EATING DISORDER SUPPORT GROUP: CUTS - JUSTIFY

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the McNeil Government needs to have some compassion (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid has the floor.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the McNeil Government needs to have some compassion. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness - 10 per cent of those diagnosed with an eating disorder will die within 10 years, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information. The number of women admitted to the hospital

emergency rooms because of eating disorders tripled between 2010 and 2013 in Nova Scotia.

Despite this fact, Mr. Speaker, the McNeil Government has reduced funding for the eating disorder support group. How can the minister justify cutting resources for people struggling with eating disorders when a growing number of people are accessing our health care system looking for help? I hope the minister and the government reconsiders.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HART, DAVID: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, it's with a heavy heart I stand here today. The Hart family from Sambro: Donny, Mandy, Kady, Brandon, and David have been a pillar of our community since I was a child. Their door has always been open and they are always there to support our local causes. I stand here today feeling our community has been punched in the stomach. April 12th, David at aged 29 passed away. He will be remembered for his smile and his sense of humour. Donations can be made at the Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia. Rest in peace David, the community misses you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MACDONALD, SPURGE: TRENTON MINOR SPORTS COMMUN. CTR. - SALUTE

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place to speak about an individual who has been volunteering in his community for many years. Spurge MacDonald is a former employee at the Trenton Minor Sports Community Centre and now in his 80s has been volunteering at the rink since his retirement. Sport and recreation depend on volunteers. Spurge's many years in this capacity demonstrate his dedication and caring attitude towards his community. Spurge can be found at the sport centre every morning where he is sharpening players' skates prior to the daily ice rentals. He is passionate about the arena and continues to make a difference in the lives of residents who use the sport centre; the community of Trenton salutes Spurge MacDonald.

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

PREMIER'S OFFICE - RENOVATIONS

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that the taxpayers paid \$42,000 to have renovations done inside the Premier's office. According to the Premier, the only change is a new door. With such a high cost for this extra special door Nova Scotians might conclude that this is the door that was slammed in the faces of rural Nova Scotians and the film industry. With such a high cost, \$42,000 for renovating one

door, this actually may come in handy in two years' time when Nova Scotians want to show this Premier the door.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

ADMIN. PROF. DAY (04/22/15) - PROFESSIONALS ACKNOWLEDGE

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the hard-working professional administrators across our province. April 22nd marks Professional Administrators Day in Canada and I am happy to offer my sincere gratitude towards the people who help keep our lives more organized and manageable.

In our role as elected officials we often find ourselves with busy schedules and many responsibilities. The efforts produced by our constituency assistants ensure that we remain effective in our position and have a reliable resource to consult on a day-to-day basis.

Professional Administrators Day has become one of the largest workplace observations. The event is celebrated world-wide through many community events, social gatherings, individual corporate activities, which recognize support staff. In Canada there are over 475,000 administrative professionals.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my own constituency assistant, Adam Jacobs, who is punctual, kind and extremely hard-working. There are times in government when we must recognize the importance of our support staff. I am proud to have a person like Adam to be part of our team and I know there are many other employees across the province deserving of this special day of recognition. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

GILLIS, DEBORAH: WOMEN IN BUS. CONF. - ATTENDANCE THANK

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, on February 15th the first regional Women in Business Conference was held at the Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre with none other than Glencoe Station-born Deborah Gillis as keynote speaker. Deborah now calls New York City home. She is president and CEO of Catalyst, a global women's advocacy organization.

Deborah praised Cape Breton and Inverness County women for being very strong, describing them as the bedrock of their families and of their communities. She encouraged and praised women in the area for becoming entrepreneurs, creating new businesses and employment opportunities for themselves and for the people in their communities.

Join me in thanking Deborah Gillis for coming back to Inverness County to share her insights and words of encouragement for women in business.

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

FILM/TV IND. - EMBRACE & ENCOURAGE

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, today is Earth Day. I have been blessed to live in rural Nova Scotia all my life and enjoy the beauty of the gift of nature from the ocean to the forest. We cannot take these things for granted and must work together to respect our environment.

I am proud to say that when Haven was part of our community for five years, the cast and crew even won the coveted Mobius Award for Environmental Excellence in 2012. Haven not only put \$50 million into our community, the members of the cast became part of the community and our friends.

They are gone now, because of the McNeil Government. The film and television sector is clean, green and constantly renewable. It is an industry we need to encourage, embrace and support, not discourage, gut without notice and try to keep quiet.

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

MENTAL HEALTH/ADDICTIONS: ASSISTANCE - ENSURE

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Government has reduced funding for mental health and addictions by \$400,000, or 23 per cent, which includes a \$79,000 cut to the Nova Scotia Mental Health Association. The funding loss will impact the most in need, such as organizations for people with eating disorders, schizophrenia and Alzheimer's disease.

One local volunteer believes that these cuts will have a significant impact on an organization's ability to expand volunteer supports. The Mental Health Coalition of Nova Scotia says that 200,000 people in the province are impacted by some form of mental illness annually.

Governing is often a matter of priorities. It is hard to understand how mental health services have fallen down in the list of priorities when so many require assistance. Today I urge the minister to ensure that Nova Scotians who need mental health assistance do not fall through the cracks.

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

**HBR. CITY LAKERS U-16B RINGETTE TEAM:
OTTAWA TOURNAMENT - GOLD MEDAL**

MS. JOYCE TREEN: Mr. Speaker, on February 15, 2015, the Harbour City Lakers U16B ringette team travelled to Ottawa to compete in the West Ottawa ringette tournament. Under the guidance and leadership of their coaches, Liz O'Hanley, Sherri Doyle, Andrea Temple, as well as their trainer Emile Aucoin, the girls and one single male player defeated the other team and won gold. Their hard work and dedication to their sport is certainly evident and is a great example of how hard work pays off. Thank you.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to request to do an introduction, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. ZANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to draw the members' attention to the west gallery, where I have a constituent attending today who's been a wonderful supporter for my campaigns and helping me a lot in my community. He's well respected and well-loved in that community and I wanted to give him a warm welcome today. If he would please stand up to take a bow - his name is Mr. Wayne Burley. Thank you very much.

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

**ABORIGINAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS PROG.:
CUTS - CONSULTATION**

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have Millbrook First Nation as part of the constituency I represent in this Legislature. I actively support celebrations in their community whenever I can and I have a deep respect for their culture and their history. As the new Critic for Aboriginal Affairs, I will be honoured to represent their interests in this House.

I am also aware of the challenges facing many First Nations in this day and age and we want to help find supports and solutions. I am shocked to hear the Be, Think, Feel Aboriginal Mental Health Awareness program in HRM will have its funding slashed this year by this government. With all of the talk about the importance of meaningful consultations with our First Nations people, I have to ask, what consultation did the McNeil Government do with our First Nations community leaders before reducing funding for this important cause? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**LIGHTBURN, RON:
FRANKENSTINK! GARBAGE GONE BAD - PUBLICATION**

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on Earth Day to congratulate a talented Coldbrook writer and illustrator, Mr. Ron Lightburn, on the publication of his excellent educational book for children, *Frankenstink! Garbage Gone Bad*. Mr. Lightburn's book helps children learn about the importance of waste reduction through imaginative and engaging illustrations and poetry. This morning, I was pleased to be in attendance as Mr. Lightburn met Grade 3 students from the Coldbrook and District School at the Valley Waste Resource Management Centre for a recycling demonstration and special book reading.

On behalf of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, I would like to congratulate and thank Mr. Ron Lightburn for his many creative contributions throughout his productive career in literature and illustration and for helping our young people understand that they have an important role to play in protecting our natural environment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: CMPA PROG. - EFFECTS

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the various cancers that can affect the female reproductive system and the importance of quick access to an OB/GYN and subsequent treatment. Ovarian cancer is often referred to as the silent killer because it is generally symptom-free until it has reached an advanced stage. Many other reproductive cancers are often diagnosed in later stages because the symptoms tend to be mild or intermittent. Due to late-stage diagnosis, time is of the essence.

I am concerned that women will face detrimental wait times to see OB/GYNs due to changes to the CMPA program. Several of these specialists have already resigned. I urge the Minister of Health and Wellness to rectify this situation immediately. Thank you.

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

HOCHMAN, DONNA/TEAM: WORKS FOR YOU PROG. - THANK

MR. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, March 20th marked the completion of another successful program delivered by the Antigonish/Guysborough Black Development Association. The Works for You program was an eight-week job readiness program designed to help participants to enter or re-enter the job force.

The Antigonish/Guysborough Black Development Association is a not-for-profit employment community development organization which operates through funding from Employment Nova Scotia. They have been delivering employment-related services to African-Nova Scotian communities of Guysborough and Antigonish for the past two decades. Not only do they continue to offer excellent services to their clients, but they do so with their motto of unity. Joining hands to build better partnerships, the organization strives to impact the lives of community members through the development of a broad base of service delivery partnerships.

Thank you to Donna Hochman and her team for continuing to deliver such an incredible service to our communities. Participants, I wish you much success as you embark on your next journey. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I would just like to remind the members again that members' statements are to be written in third person and not speak directly to the subject of the statement.

The honourable member for Kings North.

CALL ME FITZ ET AL: PRODUCTIONS - SAVE

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, Call Me Fitz is one of the most nominated comedies ever produced in Canada. It has won dozens of awards in Canada and around the world, including awards for best series, best writing, best directing, best acting, and best cinematography.

Call Me Fitz was shot in New Minas. Starring Canadian actor Jason Priestly, Call Me Fitz has been sold in over 100 markets worldwide, and was instrumental in the Nova Scotia-born series creator getting a development deal with Jerry Bruckheimer's production company. Without the Nova Scotia Film Tax Credit, this production would never have happened in our province.

Mr. Speaker, today I urge the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board to save productions like Call Me Fitz by reaching a reasonable agreement with the Nova Scotia film industry.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

JAMES, ANICA - EDN 2015 AWARD

MR. JOACHIM STROINK: Mr. Speaker, the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Network (EDN) held their annual awards dinner at the Atlantica Hotel on Thursday, April 16, 2015. This year, Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year was won by Anica James, an artist originally from Ontario who moved here to Nova Scotia to live and work in 2014.

Anica is a freelance photographer who has the passion and talent for photojournalism. She has a unique way of capturing moments in life, and bases her business in Halifax. Anica has recently been recognized as one of the top 30 Under 30 Women Photographers. She studied photojournalism at Loyalist College and has a background in fine art.

Anica has travelled extensively, including a trip to Nepal in Spring 2014 to work with the Nepal Epilepsy Association. Anica moved to Nova Scotia in July 2014 and has been very involved in the community, working as an assistant coordinator at the Outsider Insight and exhibiting at ViewPoint Gallery.

Anica will be teaching photography classes this summer of 2015. I congratulate Anica on winning the EDN 2015 Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year Award, and wish her the best success going forward.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

SMITH, BONNIE/DAY, KIM - RECOGNIZE/THANK

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today, as many others have, to recognize my constituency assistant, given that it is Administrative Professionals Day. Bonnie Smith has been with me for a number of years now, does a great job, and looks after the many, many issues that come into our office, just as all of our CAs do each day.

I want to take this time to thank her very much for the continued work she has done, and to also recognize that she is a volunteer for doing seniors' taxes, and has done in this season alone more than 250 of those. That's a lot of work, plus the office work that she does.

I should recognize my casual who comes in from time to time as well, Kim Day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

N. SYDNEY HIST. MUSEUM - MUNRO ACAD.: EARTH DAY - MARK

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to tell members that the North Sydney Historical Museum will host students from Munro Academy to mark Earth Day this year. The students won an international energy prize in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, this year. They created a solar air heater made from recycled materials to win the \$70,000 Zayed Future Energy Prize. The students will talk about their experiences in the United Arab Emirates. The prize money will be used to install solar panels on their school. It's a true honour to have this opportunity to congratulate the Munro Academy students for their richly-deserved international award.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

ALZHEIMER'S SOC. - FUNDING REDUCTION

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we all know that Nova Scotia has an aging population. In fact, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are tied for the oldest jurisdictions in Canada, and if it weren't for Florida, we would be the oldest jurisdiction in North America.

As our population gets older, certain health issues become more prominent, including mental health issues like dementia. Dementia impacts thousands of families every year, and organizations such as the Alzheimer's Society of Nova Scotia work directly with these families. They provide support to caregivers and they direct them to resources in their community through their toll-free help line.

With this evidence in front of us, Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable that the McNeil Government would be slashing the province's annual grant to the Alzheimer's Society. Our seniors and our families deserve better.

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

POTERI, MICHELLE - FAIRVIEW ARENA: SUPPORT - THANK

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, Michelle Poteri at the Centennial Arena, located at 27 Vimy Avenue, is a community supporter and advocate of the highest level. She works tirelessly at the rink and within our community to support programs and participants alike. She is an organizational force and part of the fantastic team at the Centennial Arena.

It's clear by the number of statements I make in regard to Centennial how much this rink means to me and to our community. It is so much more than a place to play hockey. So with that, I'd like to thank Michelle for all she does to keep the rink running smoothly and for promoting our strong community values. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

HIGHLAND REG. CONS. SCH.: RESIDENTIAL RENOVATION - CONGRATS.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, today it gives me great pleasure to share with this House that the Town of Westville has announced a major accomplishment. They have signed an agreement with a New Brunswick developer that will see the former Highland Regional Consolidated School turned into 41 residential units and six commercial office spaces. This is a considerable feat for the Town of Westville and CAO Kelly Rice. In a

relatively short period of time, they were able to sign this agreement and will have a very positive influence on the town when this development is done.

Signs of construction send a positive message and that is my wish for the Town of Westville.

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

JUSTICE: EMERGENCY RESPONDERS - PTSD COVERAGE

HON. DAVID WILSON: Yesterday I asked the Justice Minister if she supported my legislation to give emergency responders, including the hundreds of correctional officers her department works with, automatic coverage for post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. The Justice Minister had not reviewed my legislation, but I am confident, Mr. Speaker, after our discussion that she will.

New studies show that correctional officers have the highest rates of PTSD - they are exposed to attempted suicides, violence in our jails, hostage situations, and even being taken hostage themselves. Emergency responders who suffer from PTSD need automatic coverage from workers' compensation so they can recover from cumulative exposure to traumatic events.

I encourage the Justice Minister to meet with me about this legislation and together we can do the right thing for correctional officers and all emergency responders.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

MACDONALD, TOMMY - X-CEPTIONAL AWARD (ST. F.X.)

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to tell you about Tommy MacDonald. Mr. MacDonald lives in the Town of Antigonish and is one of those individuals who goes above and beyond what is expected of him.

Mr. MacDonald was recently presented with the X-Ceptional Award at the annual St. F.X. Athletics Award Gala that was held on April 7th. This award recognizes individuals who go that extra mile to contribute to St. F.X. athletics in a positive manner. Mr. MacDonald has worked for the university for over 37 years. Known as the "keeper of the ice" at the Charles V. Keating Millennium Centre, he has a high standard for condition of the ice surface and takes a great amount of pride in his work.

His work extends to more than just the ice, though. It is said that he goes out of his way to help the X-Men and X-Women hockey teams and is always willing to lend a hand - he never misses a hockey game, even on nights when he isn't working.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Mr. MacDonald for receiving this well-deserved award, and thank him for his years of service to the St. F.X. athletic community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

ISRAEL: INDEPENDENCE - ANNIV. (67TH)

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate the 67th Anniversary of Israel's independence. It is an honour to extend warm greeting to all Nova Scotians celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut. The creation of the State of Israel is an incredible testament to the triumph of faith over tragedy and adversity. Generations dreamed of the day when the Jewish people would have their own state in their historic homeland - 67 years ago today that remarkable dream came true. The courage and fortitude that this democratic nation was built on continues to inspire Jewish communities around the globe and across Canada. Israel thrives as a diverse and vibrant democracy; it is a nation that celebrates entrepreneurship and great innovation.

Today we send our best wishes for a peaceful and prosperous year again.

MR. SPEAKER: Just before we proceed to the next member's statement I want to remind the honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid that although he wasn't debating his legislation, per se, he certainly was referencing it, and we're getting awful close to the (Interruption) one of the guidelines for member statements: "a statement should not be used to debate any legislation or resolution currently before the House", so we're getting awful close there.

The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's.

SENIOR SAFETY GRANT PROG. - FUNDING REDUCTION

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the Senior Safety Grant program, co-founded by the Departments of Health and Wellness, and Justice, promotes awareness of elder abuse including physical, mental, and financial. In 2014, fourteen community-based organizations received funding for safety projects, including the South Shore Safe Community Initiatives which received \$20,000 last year.

I was disheartened to hear through the media that the government has reduced the funding available for this program in 2015. With more and more Nova Scotians reaching 65 every year, why is the McNeil Government taking money away from projects that help keep our seniors safe and secure?

What happened to being one to the people? Since being elected the McNeil Government has instead become one for themselves.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Portland Valley.

BEL AYR ELEM. SCH.: WE ACT INIT. - FUNDRAISING

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to take a moment to express my gratitude to some young students who attend Bel Ayr Elementary School in my riding. This past December, students from Grades 4, 5, and 6 participated in Free the Children's We Act initiative. Participants focused on a local and global charitable cause.

The students met with the director of Margaret's House who taught the students about the importance of charity. After hearing how clients of Margaret's House still desire to give Christmas presents, though they do not have any, the Bel Ayr students decided to do something. They approached local businesses for donations and held a bake sale to fundraise. The students were able to gather 80 gift cards from Tim Hortons, 80 coffee mugs, and boxes of chocolates as well as gloves and blankets for Margaret's House clients to give out.

I wish to thank the students for making a difference in their community as well as anywhere else.

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

**MCEWEN, EMILY/DODSWORTH, ARTHUR/FISHER, CARLI:
N.S. SKILLS COMP. – CONGRATS.**

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, the Nova Scotia Skills Competition provides opportunities for youth to explore skilled trades and technologies, enhance their skills, and strive for excellence in a chosen field. A recent competition held in Halifax saw three South Colchester Academy students sweep the photography category. Carli Fisher took home the bronze medal for her wide-angle picture submissions, Arthur Dodsworth won the silver medal in his category, while Emily McEwan won gold, both for their submissions of close-up photography.

Ms. McEwan's gold medal win means she will represent Team Nova Scotia at the national level in Saskatoon in May. I wish to congratulate Emily McEwan, Arthur Dodsworth, and Carli Fisher on their outstanding performances at the Nova Scotia Skills Competition, and wish Emily the best of luck as she moves on to represent Team Nova Scotia at the national level.

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

ALMON, MARC/SIMPSON, SCOTT: SCREEN N.S. - COMMEND

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, today is Earth Day, a day to celebrate the beauty and power of our little blue planet and to bring more public awareness to the fragility of our ecosystem when it comes to the urgent issues of climate change and global warming, which will affect all of us.

Today is also the day that representatives of our screen industry meet with the McNeil Government. I and my NDP caucus are hoping that a workable solution will be agreed upon after the disastrous and short-sighted decision by the McNeil Government to gut our successful Film Tax Credit and eliminate the agency Film & Creative Industries Nova Scotia.

I want to commend Screen Nova Scotia, who are bright, young filmmakers, and in particular Marc Almon and Scott Simpson, who are the kind of people who we want to keep in Nova Scotia, to attract to Nova Scotia, and retain. These are the kind of people our province needs in order to forge ahead to a bright future. I would also like to commend the film industry and the creative community itself, because we are culture and we mean business. Thank you.

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

BOAT HBR. CLEANUP: TEAM PICTOU - SUPPORT THANK

MR. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to thank the members for Team Pictou for their unwavering support for our efforts to clean up Boat Harbour. After 50 years of supporting jobs over the environment, the McNeil Government is making the first progress we have seen in a long time on this file. The Leader of the Official Opposition had a chance to address Boat Harbour while working for a Premier who hailed from Pictou County, but unfortunately this didn't materialize.

As soon as the treatment facility stops receiving waste water from the mill, the fact is the full cleanup can start. This government is committed to removing this environmental scar and making Boat Harbour a place the community can enjoy once again.

I applaud the government for moving forward with this very important initiative and I encourage members opposite to work collaboratively with government to meet this historic benchmark and move forward unreservedly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

BUCHANAN, HON. JOHN MACLENNAN - BIRTHDAY (84TH)

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, today is the 84th birthday of Nova Scotia's 20th Premier, John MacLennan Buchanan. Premier Buchanan was first elected to this place as the MLA for Halifax Atlantic in 1967 and was re-elected six times thereafter. He was Premier of Nova Scotia from 1978 until 1990, the fourth-longest-serving Premier in our province's history.

I know that Mr. Buchanan would be too shy to say it himself, but I think it is important to note that he won four majority Progressive Conservative Governments, Mr. Speaker - the third Premier of Nova Scotia to achieve that impressive milestone.

Premier Buchanan was the consummate constituency man: he never forgot a name, a face, or a birthday. Today it is our honour to wish him a Happy Birthday. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

L&B ELECTRIC - LUN.-QUEENS BUS. EXCELLENCE AWARD

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, on February 17th I had the honour of attending the Lunenburg-Queens Business Excellence Awards at the Best Western in Cookville. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge this year's recipient of the 2014 Large Business Award, L&B Electric. L&B Electric started in 1985, has built a solid reputation for quality work and is an outstanding local company. The company has diversified themselves to include work in the offshore gas and petroleum industry, mining, and food processing, just to name a few.

L&B Electric has become a substantial employer in the Bridgewater area and a great supporter of our local community. I would like to congratulate L&B Electric for their award; it is truly deserving.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

PICTOU CO. LIGHTNING BOYS BASKETBALL TEAM - BRONZE MEDAL

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the Pictou County Lightning bantam boys basketball team captured a bronze medal recently at the 2014-15 Nova Scotia Division 2 boys basketball championship held at North Nova Education Centre.

The Lightning finished 4-1 in the tournament, their only loss coming at the hands of the eventual champion, Canadian Martyrs from Halifax by a score of 66-65. The Martyrs fired a three-pointer, with only six seconds showing on the clock, to secure the win.

Pictou had recorded earlier wins over Halifax West, Truro, and Fall River. Jaren Johnson from the Lightning was named to the tournament all-star team. Congratulations to the Lightning on a bronze medal win while wishing them every future success.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ÉCOLE JOHN W. MACLEOD: WE ACT TEAM - SUCCESS WISH

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to speak about the amazing students at École John W. MacLeod School who make up the We Act team. This group of dedicated and proactive students meets every Tuesday with teacher Jennifer Little to plan how to make a positive impact in the world.

In January the We Act team made 50 pairs of koala bear mittens for koalas injured in Australian wildfires. In February the team raised \$900 to buy 16 goats for Free the Children. In March these students helped to organize a speaker to come from Free the Children to talk about Aboriginal awareness so the school could participate in the We Stand Together for Aboriginal awareness movement.

On April 16th this exceptional group of students also took part in a silent stand for those around the world without a voice. Students from Grade 4 to Grade 6 raised pledges to donate to Free the Children and stood in silence on the side of Purcells Cove Road for a period of 10 minutes to demonstrate to the community their We Are Silent! campaign.

Mr. Speaker, the We Act team is very inspiring and I wish them success in all their philanthropic initiatives. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

DALBRAE ACAD. - ADVANCED ENGLISH STUDENTS/TEACHER: SCH. GUIDE - LAUNCH

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, congratulations to Dalbrae Academy's Advanced English 12 students and their teacher, Ms. Francene Gillis, on the launch of their first school guide, entitled Dalbrae Academy's Guide to Success.

The guide was designed to support students, parents, guardians and teachers with navigating school life at Dalbrae Academy in Mabou. The celebratory launch took place at Dalbrae on January 16, 2015, during which students shared highlights from their personal involvement in the project and explained how it enhanced their media literacy, technology, and citizenship skills.

Work was completed through the Tribes philosophy in the classroom. Tribes is a philosophy where students focused on the three principles of inclusion, influence, and

community as well as the four agreements: mutual respect, the right to pass, attentive listening, and appreciation.

MR. SPEAKER: We are drawing to the end of the time allotted for members' statements. They were most interesting today but the time has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM. - CMHA (N.S. DIV.): FUNDING - CUT JUSTIFY

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Nova Scotians struggling with mental health issues rely on services provided by organizations in their communities. These organizations are the front lines of mental health service. They include the Nova Scotia division of the Canadian Mental Health Association, who had its funding cut by half this year and will be reduced to zero next year. Inevitably, that will lead to less service in the community and a greater stress on our hospitals and general health care system.

How can the Premier justify that cut, knowing the impact it will have?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question, and I want to thank all those in our province who help deliver services to Nova Scotians. I also want to inform all members of this House that since taking power we've added an additional \$2 million to mental health services across this province.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that we aren't able to deal with the mental health issues that families across Nova Scotia face now. Wait times to access mental health services at the front lines are already too long. Data from the Department of Health and Wellness already shows that for children with urgent and semi-urgent mental health issues, those who see specialists within the national standards of wait time has dropped from 42 per cent, which is already too low, to as low as 15 per cent that get the help they need in the standard time.

Now the health care system will have to deal with even greater shortages because of cuts to the very service providers in our communities like the Alzheimer's Society and the Canadian Mental Health Association. How does the Premier expect the health care system to make up for the loss of mental health services in communities that are provided by important organizations like these?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank all members of this province who help government deliver services to the most vulnerable citizens of our province.

The fact of the matter is that the status quo is unacceptable. The Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party has said himself that we have some of the longest wait times in this province. We've added an additional \$2 million to ensure that when we deliver services to the vulnerable citizens of this province, those services are actually going directly to those Nova Scotians who require our assistance.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, of course we all thank people who work in the provision of mental health services for families and individuals who need help. We want them to know that they are supported by their government, instead of facing cuts at a time when we're already struggling as a government to provide services in communities across this province. In fact, the people who are dealing with mental health issues in their own families need to know that the service will be available to them from the provider close to them in their communities. They are the ones who are facing the cuts.

This is a false savings, and a cruel one. Will the Premier reconsider the short-sighted cuts that the government has made and find the savings he needs in his budget somewhere else?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member and tell all members of this House there's an additional \$2 million being provided for mental health services. That is not a cut. That is not a reduction. That is an additional \$2 million since this Party has taken power.

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

PREM.: FED. BUDGET - RESPONSE CONFIRM

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, decades of Liberal and Conservative federal governments have put Atlantic Canada behind the eight ball. For years the federal government has implemented stealth policies designed to fly under the radar, and they have gradually eroded our social fabric and our economic fabric.

Yesterday the tradition continued when the Harper Government introduced another budget that really undercuts our region. The only thing worse was our own Premier's reaction to that budget.

So my question to the Premier is, does the Premier stand by his statement that to him there were few surprises and that there are only a few aspects missing from the Harper budget for our region?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Again, I want to let her know that I don't put the federal budget together. I had an opportunity to look at it. What I said was that we were grateful that there wasn't the kind of changes that happened when we moved from per capita funding, when she was a member of the government who had to deal with that.

We were disappointed, quite frankly, that we didn't see an opportunity to allow the immigration file to come to provinces and allow provinces a greater say on the immigration file in their respective provinces. We also saw that there was a fund built in western Canada, in Vancouver, that was really toward port development. We would have liked to have seen that. At the same time, we've said we have seen some issues in and around infrastructure, military spending. We were grateful to see that the ship project is still going forward; it has been committed to, grateful to see military spending in and around stuff on land. Those are the signs, as a part of this country and a region that has huge military spending, we can begin to benefit from.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the Premier and I would agree on the absolute importance of the ships project. However successive federal governments have changed the cost funding structure for health care, social transfers, they've narrowed EI eligibility, they've encouraged out-migration of the population of our province, and yesterday the Harper Government introduced a budget that will continue those trends. So my question to the Premier is, does the Premier really care about what effect these policies will have on our province and what is he prepared to do to change the direction of the federal government's approach to our region?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again I do want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to remind her we have had a positive growth development in this province. Our population has increased. Since they have left power our population has gone up; we've seen a growth in the manufacturing sector. Yesterday, as part of the federal budget, we saw a capital write-down on manufacturing sector. We think that's a positive thing.

We are hoping that Michelin will see that as a good sign and continue to reinvest in this province. We're seeing what has happened in the manufacturing sector in rural Nova Scotia, those are positive things. We see as part of that a capital write-down at LNG, Bear Head and Goldsboro. These are all positive signs, positive projects. Those initiatives will help Nova Scotia capitalize and grow good jobs in this province and continue to move forward.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, there are 10,000 fewer jobs in this province than when that government came into power. The Ivany commission talked about the need for the federal government to be a partner in terms of moving our province's agenda forward and after the Harper's Government budget yesterday the Premier walked out to the media and he gave Prime Minister Harper a free pass. I want to ask the Premier, when

Nova Scotia and the Atlantic Region are in desperate need of someone willing to fight for our region, why is he satisfied with staying deadly quiet when our province is being ignored.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Maybe she missed the first answer. We saw issues that were missing in that budget that we thought would have benefited this province and the region. We have actually led the country in harmonizing apprenticeship opportunities in the region, which will spread across the country. I was very honoured to represent Premiers as we're unifying the apprenticeship opportunities from one coast to the other, Mr. Speaker; those are all positive signs.

We're building a relationship with the national government that they ensure and understand where Nova Scotia fits in the role we can play in ensuring that the European Free Trade deal that they want to move forward on, we can capitalize on. But unlike the Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party, we're just not going to go out and complain about everything under the sun simply because that's what she thinks her role is. We believe there is a constructive way to move this federation forward.

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

PREM. - SM. BUS.: TAX LEVEL - MAINTAIN

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: I can't help but say that I found the questions from the Acting Leader of the NDP interesting because we all know how the NDP dealt with budgets from Ottawa. When Ottawa lowered taxes, like the HST, for all Canadians, the NDP jacked them right back up here in the Province of Nova Scotia. In that light, Mr. Speaker, the national budget, or the federal budget, yesterday reduced the taxes on small businesses across the country. I'd like to ask our Premier if he will assure the small businesses of Nova Scotia that he won't jack their taxes back up like the NDP did with the HST?

THE PREMIER: The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has tabled her budget, Mr. Speaker. There has been no change in small business tax in this province. We will continue to work with them to ensure that there is fairness in the taxation system in this province and we're going to continue to do so.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I was hoping the Premier would say no they're not going to backfill the reduction in small business tax that is coming to all Canadian small businesses. In this same vein the budget from Ottawa yesterday included an increase in the threshold for the Tax-Free Savings Account, something that's used by 11 million Canadian families to save for all kinds of life events. The Premier was quoted last night as saying there will be "an adjustment" for us here in Nova Scotia on the tax side. I will table that quote.

The same question to the Premier, will he assure the families of Nova Scotia that he will not claw back the tax break they are getting from Ottawa with their Tax-Free Savings Accounts last night?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the question asked to me yesterday was, what impact would this have on the financial revenue of the province coming from Ottawa? At that point and today, we are still working on that. We said there would be some adjustments that would affect the income that would come into our province.

We have not asked Nova Scotians to make up for changes that have happened at the national level. What we've continued to do as part of the federation is continue to ask Ottawa to work with this province to allow us to control our own destiny to move the province forward. It's why we continue to hope they continue to lift the cap on immigration. We as a province know we can drive that better. It's why we've continued to ask them to not only work with this province, but the private sector to allow them to prepare for the export opportunities that we're seeing.

We as a province are beginning to work with exporters and we're seeing tremendous results from that. We just need the federal government to continue to be our partner.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES - PATIENT SWAPS

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Nan McFadgen wants her mother, who is in a long-term care facility in Truro, to be closer to her in Pictou. The McFadgens were aware of a person in Pictou who conversely wanted to move to Truro. The McFadgens have been working for months to arrange the swap, but the Department of Health and Wellness says it's not allowed. Can the minister please explain why two people who are willing to simply trade places in long-term care facilities aren't allowed to do so?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I just became aware of this case today. I'm more than prepared to take a look at it as minister.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for that. It's not a complicated issue. Two people, both in long-term care facilities, simply want to swap places. There is no cost associated with this, no wait-lists, nobody on the wait-lists will be displaced or no queue will be jumped.

I want to ask the minister, how quickly will he be able to direct his department to allow families like the McFadgens to trade places in long-term care facilities?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. This is not the first time this type of issue has come along to the department. It happens to be the first one since I became minister, but it is one that I actually brought to the floor as Health Critic. We will get onto looking at this issue as quickly as possible.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

TIR - YAR. FERRY: RFP (2016) - TIME FRAME

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of TIR. In February, the Minister of ERDT said in a news release that the government would issue a request for proposals this year for the Yarmouth ferry for the 2016 season. I will table that. So far, we have not been provided with an update as to when the RFP is expected to be issued. There are concerns that if the RFP is delayed, there will not be enough time for a new operator to allow for the 2016 season to begin smoothly. My question to the minister is this, when can we expect the request for proposals for the 2016 Yarmouth ferry service to be issued?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I truly appreciate the question from the member opposite. The reality is that we've committed to the *Nova Star* vessel for this year. There have been a number of discussions and announcements made about what the RFP would look like and what the timeline would be for us - for myself and certainly for my department. We're engaged with those on the ground who are operating this service. We're also engaged with the larger community, those who have an understanding of this service and what it will take in the future to ensure sustainability.

We were looking at the timeline. We're certainly aware of what the timeline is for the RFP. We still haven't made a final determination. I'm very engaged in this file; I'm aware of it. When things come to update, I will be happy to share them with the member and all Nova Scotians. Thank you very much.

MR. LOHR: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. Many tourists and operators in the tour bus trade need to be able to make bookings one year in advance and need to know that the ferry will be there. Many want to be able to book this summer for the summer of 2016. There have been some concerns that if there's any delay in this process, people will be unable to book early, as this was the case in the past. I will table that - delayed bookings.

Can the minister tell us when the expected RFP closing date would be and when the decision will be made for the ferry for 2016?

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, again, we're looking at the components of the ferry service, but I can assure the member that that's a conversation I've had many times with my friend the MLA for Yarmouth. The worst-case scenario, the thing that we can't

allow to happen, is any discontinuance or disruption in service for 2016. That's an absolute non-starter for us, so that's part of the conversation. That's a big component of that.

We have to have continuity. We're going to give that vessel the opportunity and that service to succeed. We know it will succeed and with that, we have to have a continuous service. That's a key piece for us and we'll be sure to do everything we can to maintain that service and have stability not only in 2015 but for many, many years to come. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

FIN. & TREASURY BD.: FILM TAX CREDIT - BILL NO. 49

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Bill No. 49 was passed through this House just five months ago. That bill included a Liberal promise, now enshrined in legislation, to leave the Film Tax Credit alone - leave it as is until 2021.

My question for the minister is a simple one. Was the minister mindful of this bill when the Liberals were deciding to gut the Film Tax Credit?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I think the important thing to remember again is that this is in place, that there are a Film Tax Credit and a Digital Media Tax Credit. Both of them are in place until 2020. As the members know in the House, there are discussions underway to look at the form that that will be going forward. Thank you.

MR. HOUSTON: I guess the "as is" part had little value, even though it was enshrined in legislation. I'll redirect to the Minister of Business.

My question for the Minister of Business is, Bill No. 49, passed just five months ago by this government, required Film & Creative Industries Nova Scotia to submit a strategic plan by March 1, 2015. Now unfortunately, the Film & Creative Industries Nova Scotia website has been taken down, so we're unable to see if this plan was there.

My question is, was this strategic plan, as required by the government's bill last November, actually submitted to the government? If not, why not?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague. The Film Industry Tax Credit, as the minister has indicated, remains. The administration of the industry itself has been transferred to NSBI. Staff within NSBI presently are responding to the needs of that industry and they will continue to do so.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

TIR: GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE - UPDATE

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. A few years ago - and a former government ago - some changes were made to the geographical areas that local Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal offices covered. I wonder, could the minister tell me today whether or not any assessment of that change has been done or whether data has been collected and whether there actually have been some savings or efficiencies?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. That was done a number of years back; the member is correct. What the department and the government of the day looked at was to try to streamline services in areas that had overlapping and dual coverage on some services like winter and summer maintenance and some of the brush-cutting, those types of things that were happening, as well as, of course, capital projects and maintenance paving.

What happened was there were a number of jurisdictions that were pulled into this restructuring realignment. Some were successful and some weren't. Overall, it seemed to be a positive endeavour by the department, but certainly there were some challenges and they are part of the ongoing discussions.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that response. He is right; one of our areas has certainly been a challenge. It has not worked very well. I would just ask if the minister would once again give it some consideration, because anyone in his department would know that this is not the first time that I've asked this question. It probably does work well in some areas, but it is not working well in West Hants, so I would ask if some consideration could be given to some changes for us.

MR. MACLELLAN: When I had this discussion with the Department Director of Operations, Barb Baillie, I specifically mentioned some of the successful areas and some that have worked well, and she also pointed to Hants West in terms of some of the problems they had and some of the inefficiencies that resulted there from this change.

So, in identifying areas where the change wasn't so positive, the region of that member opposite was part of those who really had some concern, so I can tell the member today that Barb and her staff are looking at changes and that's one particular area where we're going to look hard and make real improvements. Thank you very much.

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

PREM. - FILM & CREATIVE IND.: ELIMINATION - EXPLAIN

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the McNeil Government's decision to shut down Film & Creative Industries has had a massive ripple effect through

the creative sector, and it's clear that the government had no plan in place when they decided to lock the doors on this important agency. Yesterday the Premier couldn't differentiate between the Film Tax Credit and the important youth apprenticeship program offered by Film & Creative Industries Nova Scotia. It shocked people I talked to, how little knowledge the government seems to have about those the cuts have affected.

I want to ask the Premier if he could please explain why he eliminated Film & Creative Industries without any plan in place for the important programs it administered.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I'm very encouraged by the conversation that happened between government and Screen Nova Scotia on a go-forward basis. We will continue to work with them to find a solution that works for the entire sector. We're encouraged by the fact that a number of the sector now are being able to reach out and getting contact information through NSBI and our relationships seem to be beginning to build.

During the transition, no matter what it is, there are always difficult challenges, but we're very pleased that in very short order those things seem to be coming together.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we all know that in closing down Film & Creative Industries, the government laid off six of the nine staff who were there, and the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has indicated that one person moved to NSBI was a film person, one person was a music industry person, and one was an administrator, and the Minister of Business has said that in order to transition he's had to hire three people.

My question now to the Premier is, can he explain why it made sense to lay off six experienced people from an agency with 30 years of expertise and replace them with three casual individuals?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question; I want to thank those Nova Scotians who worked on behalf of all Nova Scotians through government. Thursday, the 9th, was a difficult day for a lot of Nova Scotians who worked for government who lost their employment. We continue to move and transfer certain staff within government, others will apply for jobs within government, some of them moved to NSBI and if there are vacancies in NSBI, I'm sure those Nova Scotians can apply for those as well.

The reality is this province cannot continue to do things the same way that they've always done and expect to get a different result. We are broke, we need to keep moving this province forward and change direction, and we're very encouraged by the support that we are receiving from Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

FIN. & TREASURY BD.: CAN. FILM CAPITAL - FILM TAX CREDIT INFO.

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

The Canadian Film Capital Corporation has supported productions in Nova Scotia for over 15 years, representing more than 950 productions. On April 21st the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and her deputy received correspondence from CFC, who were compelled to provide factual information regarding the Nova Scotia Film Tax Credit and the actual impacts of the changes imposed. I will table this document.

To remain competitive in a global landscape, the CFC cautioned that Nova Scotia must remain vigilant and ensure that the Nova Scotia tax credit is perceived as stable, reliable and predictable by domestic and foreign producers alike. Has the letter been reviewed by the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and her deputy, and is it being given the weight it deserves as the discussions with the film industry continue?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. I'm sure the member opposite knows there have been many letters, we've been reading them, looking at them, studying them, understanding them. I indicated earlier that we have certainly taken everything very seriously and, as I said today, the parties have been meeting. It has been collaborative, and we will meet again tomorrow.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her answer. The Canada Media Fund also wrote to the Premier, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, her deputy, and others. Valerie Creighton, president and CEO, states that under the government's changed credit, *The Book of Negroes* simply would not have been made. She is firm in saying:

“Your contention that not all \$122 million of Nova Scotia film and television production volume can be attributed to the FITC, as it ‘includes the value of funding from the Canada Media Fund which would be made in the Province without a tax credit in place . . .’ is incorrect.”

My question is, with growing evidence from these experts, will this government act in good faith and restore a workable credit that the industry can actually use to generate investment and save jobs in Nova Scotia?

MS. WHALEN: As the member opposite knows, we have been working in good faith. There have been a number of long meetings - good, but long and real working meetings - to discuss and better understand the position of the industry, how we can go forward.

I mentioned that in the first meeting both parties said of course we want to have an ongoing film industry here in Nova Scotia. We have a meeting of the minds about that, and now it's working together to make that happen.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

PREM.: CNS POLLING - EXPENSE JUSTIFY

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Well, the beat goes on, and we now know that the Liberals, through Communications Nova Scotia, have spent another \$330,000 in taxpayer-funded research between July and February. Topics included gas regulation, the art gallery, perceptions about the now-defunct Economic and Rural Development and Tourism Department, and fracking. More than \$330,000 in eight months - that's about 13 times the median after-tax earnings for an ordinary Nova Scotian.

My question is, how can the Premier justify spending \$330,000 on polling while telling Nova Scotians to cut back?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member. I'm sure his research department that he has over there that seems to miss a few beats would recognize and, I'm sure, tell him that it was considerably lower than has happened in this province. But I think he and the members of his caucus who continually ask us to go out and talk to Nova Scotians think it should be important that we go out and consult Nova Scotians and ask them, what is he against? Is he against the art gallery? What are you against? Why are you afraid to let Nova Scotians have a say?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind the honourable Premier not to refer to members opposite directly.

The honourable member for Pictou East has the floor.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'll redirect to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Of the \$330,000 of taxpayer money the Liberal Government spent on policy, almost \$70,000 went toward the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board's pre-budget tax review. The only significant tax reform in her provincial budget was the government's decision to eliminate the Film Tax Credit. So is gutting the Film Tax Credit really all that taxpayers received for the minister's \$70,000 spent?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, as we probably all know, there was a completed option of the regulatory section of the tax review. That was looked at. As well, the member opposite knows that eight meetings were held around the province and that there was a lot of consultation.

I've said further that there would be more talk on some of those issues, and we've talked about them here in estimates.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - HFX. INFIRMARY:
SURGICAL EQUIPMENT INVESTIGATION - STATUS**

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, for the third day in a row at the Halifax Infirmary, surgeries have been cancelled due to contaminated surgical equipment from an unknown source. Yesterday the public was supposed to receive a report on the results of the investigation. As of today, more than 200 operations have been postponed, creating surgical backlogs and adding to the mass of wait-lists.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the event has worried Nova Scotians about the safety of medical equipment in our hospitals. I'd like to ask the minister, can the minister provide the House and all Nova Scotians with an update on the status of the investigation?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question. It is always a concern to Nova Scotians when we have a disruption in the health care system, especially at the QEII Health Sciences Centre.

In this case here they are elective surgeries. There has been no impact on urgent and emergency surgeries. This is a problem that has developed in a few other jurisdictions as well. We have experts in the province today to help figure out what it is with the wrap on surgical instruments that has some small debris on them. The big story here should be that the now one provincial health care system meant that almost immediately we could place instruments for sterilization in five other hospitals across the province.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I think the minister needs to check. Over 200 surgeries - and I know some of them are urgent in nature - are being cancelled and it is going to create a massive backlog. With the recent cuts of more than \$7 million from hospital equipment, many Nova Scotians are concerned about the quality and safety of medical instruments. Although this event occurred at the Halifax Infirmary, it raises important questions about similar sterilization methods in medical equipment across the Nova Scotia Health Authority. Can the minister detail what steps he has taken to ensure that all medical equipment across Nova Scotia is safe for use, even after a cut of \$7 million to hospital equipment?

MR. GLAVINE: We can give the member opposite, and therefore all Nova Scotians, the long answer during estimates. The short answer is simply that we were able to purchase more equipment in last year's budget and therefore needed considerably less in the budget for 2015-16.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - CMPA FEES: OB/GYNs - EFFECTS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: The Liberal Government's decision to slash the Canadian Medical Protective Association Rebate is forcing some rural doctors into early retirement and deterring any new recruits from practicing in the province. Since April 1st to April 6th obstetricians and two locums have either relocated or resigned in rural Nova Scotia. In a media story, Dr. Don Wescott from Antigonish says he is truly exhausted and unable to get any help in any form of any other OB/GYN. I'll table that as well. How does the minister expect Dr. Wescott and other doctors like him to continue practising when the government seems to be going out of its way to ensure that no OB/GYN will come to practise in rural Nova Scotia?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: That is a concern that has developed over the last number of months. We are currently paying 80 per cent of the CMPA fees. It has been at 90 per cent. We are in negotiations and we will see where the level of compensation on CMPA fees will be decided. We know that for part-time specialists, when your fees jump by over 100 per cent, it does indeed have an impact.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Out of the five graduating obstetric students at Dalhousie University in Halifax none of them have plans to practise in Nova Scotia. Dr. Wescott's practice has been understaffed for the last eight months and recruitment efforts have been futile. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, what does the minister say to women in rural Nova Scotia who are worried that obstetrical services won't be there for them when they need it?

MR. GLAVINE: What we do know is that we have over 40 specialist obstetricians and gynecologists in the province. We know that retirements occur each and every year. The physician resource plan is looking after most of those positions that will need to be filled on an annual basis and I am sure that, as negotiations go along, we will reach the right compensation around fees. There is a much bigger problem with CMPA and in fact all provinces are currently looking at that.

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

TIR - ENGLISHTOWN FERRY: ANL. PASSES - PRORATE

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of TIR. As the minister knows, the rates for a yearly pass for the Englishtown ferry have gone up - a drastic increase. As the minister also knows, the ferry has been out of service on numerous occasions over the last six months. Many local residents and businesses have these annual passes but the service is unreliable. In an answer earlier in the House today

the minister talked about how, with the Yarmouth ferry, continuous service is so important, and it is the same with this ferry. Although we know it is a cable ferry.

My question to the minister is, quite simply, will there be anything done to prorate or offset the cost of the annual pass for local residents and businesses that are using this pass but can't use it on a continuous basis because of the unreliability of the ferry?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, in response to the member's question - I know he thinks I'm an incredible minister, but I can't control the flow of the ice in the Atlantic Ocean.

In all seriousness, it is a considerable issue. The ice floes are something that we deal with and it has been a frustration now with respect to Englishtown. The member for Victoria-The Lakes has brought this to the House and to my department many times. The reality is that it is a reasonable point. I think that with these discussions about fees and with service, there are ongoing discussions with the community. We're open to listening to that. If there is a defined and a definitive number of times that it's out, we can look at something like that. All the options are on the table. We've been down the road in terms of the increases and why they were necessary. We're going to be fair and reasonable with the people of Englishtown and all Nova Scotians that are impacted by the service.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank the minister for that reply. I think he is an incredible minister and when he paves the New Boston Road he will be a fantastic minister.

The government has jacked up the costs for these families. The minister has said he's willing to look at something reasonable to help those families and, again, I want to thank him for that. My question is, will the minister take time out of his busy schedule to sit down and talk to the residents and determine a way to make this happen?

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, again, the member for Victoria-The Lakes, I know the member opposite, and many on Cape Breton Island are discussing with stakeholders and people in the community about what happens moving forward. I feel very comfortable that I'm getting the information and an understanding of what's happening there on the ground. The warden and councillors have been reaching out to my department and to me directly, so we're listening. We're happy to look at what range of options will be on the table. Again, we fully appreciate and are sympathetic to the fact that the ice does disrupt the service. We'll certainly do our very best. Thank you very much.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - HOME CARE BIDDING PROCESS (WHITNEY PIER)

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, 170 people showed up to a meeting in Whitney Pier last evening. They are concerned the Minister of Health and Wellness' plan to open home care to a competitive bidding process will result in the exact same problems we've seen in Ontario and British Columbia. There, home care workers lost their jobs and service declined as an international big-box for-profit home care company, paying lower wages, trimmed their budget to boost profits to the detriment of their clients.

I would like to ask, what will the Minister of Health and Wellness say to Cape Breton home care workers and the province's home care workers who are worried that they may lose their jobs as a result of putting this out to competitive bidding?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to address that issue. Just like the great fear-mongering when we restructured the health care system, the same tone and the same issue are now coming back around. We found a Nova Scotia solution to restructuring health care; we'll find a Nova Scotia solution for home care as well.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, nurses being flown in because nurses quit and retired - if that's fear-mongering, I don't know what the minister is thinking. Last night in Whitney Pier, Karen Kennedy - maybe she's fear-mongering, I don't know - said simply, "I don't know what I'd do without them." Karen is a dialysis patient who receives services in Sydney. She was talking about her home care worker. "I don't know what I'd do without them." I don't think that's fear-mongering.

What does the Minister of Health and Wellness have to say to people like Karen who are concerned about losing the home care workers who they have known for years as they deal with their health care issues?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that all the RNs, the LPNs, and the CNAs that provide home care in the province will all be employed after the restructuring. We'll be much more efficient in service delivery and I believe as well that those wait-lists will be reduced. As far as flying nurses in, if we didn't have the antiquated system of defining the workplace by the union you were in, we would have had no problems whatsoever.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - HOME CARE BIDDING PROCESS (SYDNEY)

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is also to the Minister of Health and Wellness. As has been mentioned, there was a meeting in Sydney

last night, with 170 people in attendance, to talk about the quality and the service that people require and get for home care.

It has been said that there is indeed going to be a guaranteed price put on the RFP as to what the cost is that is going to be paid out. The question is not about what is going to be paid out, the question is, in the RFP, will there be guaranteed standards of service that the home care receivers are now getting, so they can be assured that the quality of care they are getting now will remain the same, regardless of who are the delivery persons?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Thank you very much for the question - a very, very good question. What we do know is we have to change the way we do business in Nova Scotia around home care. In last year's budget we put \$30 million in just for home care and that simply was into the system and used almost immediately. We have to change the way then in which we structure our home care.

What we do know is that those who will provide the care will be well compensated and we will have all those who are currently working in jobs providing home care in the province.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, it is very important to the people who receive home care, especially in rural Nova Scotia, that the standard of care to which they have become accustomed stays in place and they get the quality of service they need to stay in their homes.

Mr. Speaker, it's nice that the minister has said they are going to be paying a good salary, and that's important, and that they've invested more money. But the question is, can he guarantee the quality of service that a client will get will remain the quality that it is now, when and if this change takes place?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the honourable member is that currently there are - we do have good home care, there is no question. However, there isn't the criteria and the accountability that actually will be built into the new contracts that will be delivered . . .

MR. MACLEOD: Will it be to the standard they have now?

MR. GLAVINE: It's going to be better. Thank you.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - NORTHSIDE GEN./C.B. ERS/LABS:
REVIEW - STATUS**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is also to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Over the last year or so there have been lots of closures and lots of talk about emergency rooms and labs in Cape Breton, especially on the Northside. In an article after his visit to the Northside in early December, the minister said there will be a full clinical review across the province, but in the short term he expects the issues surrounding the emergency room, lab, and point of care to be settled early in the new year.

We're now well into the new year and there has been nothing settled with respect to lab services or emergency closures. So my question to the minister is, can the minister give the residents and staff of the Northside General and Cape Breton emergency rooms what the status is of this review?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. He started asking it a couple of days ago; we'll finish it off today.

A couple of things have happened - yes, there will be that provincial clinical review of what services, where they take place. That is currently underway when the new provincial health authority got underway on April 1st. In the short term we know that two of the doctors at the Northside are heading up a community health centre project, another doctor has opened a walk-in clinic, and people are discovering that you can actually do real good medicine outside of a hospital.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the closures of the emergency rooms, especially on the Northside, are wearing on our community, and the longer we wait for a solution, the more anxious the people are becoming. So my question to the minister is, can the minister give us an update on what the plan is for the Northside General and when we can see that plan implemented?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we know that some form of a community health center - a CEC - some modelling of that, and we've had Dr. Ross in to take a look. Also, we need to consult with the 16 physicians who work out of Northside. Many of them now - a good number of them - are nearing retirement age, slowing their practices down. They do not want to work the emergency room overnight. We had to put another model in place and we're hoping that by summer we will have something very definite for the future of Northside.

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

JUSTICE: SEXUAL ASSAULT COMPLAINTS - PROCEDURES

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Justice. We're learning today of a very disturbing story out of the Strait area in the Herald. A Port Hawkesbury woman who works in the Department of Justice reported a sexual assault to her supervisor in 2008. According to this victim, that complaint was never reported to the higher-ups in the Department of Justice, but it was reported to the accused. For the next four-and-a-half years, the victim had to continue to work with the man she had accused as the assault was never reported and it's in the courts.

I recognize I cannot ask a question about a matter that's in front of the courts. My question is not about the court case. My question is, what procedures are in place in the minister's department to ensure that complaints of sexual assault are properly investigated?

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that very important question. Sexual assault anywhere is unacceptable, there is no doubt about that, including in all our correctional facilities. She's quite right; I'm unable to speak to any of the specifics of the situation because it is in our court system. As I answered yesterday - actually I had my estimates yesterday and I spoke at length about the various things that we have available for our staff in our correctional facilities. If you want to give me a second question, I'll be able to answer that for you.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, well, according to the Avalon Sexual Assault Center, 88 per cent of all sexual assaults go unreported; 84 per cent of those that are reported are made by women, and many women don't report because they believe their complaint won't be taken seriously and they're afraid to suffer even more humiliation.

I think we're all very concerned when cases like this inform us that systems have broken down. I want to ask the minister, will there be an internal investigation as to what occurred in the Department of Justice if a system indeed did break down?

MS. DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question. Yes, of course; we always undertake internal investigations anytime there are any issues arising, whether it's between staff, between offenders and staff, or between offenders. So yes, we definitely will. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

NAT. RES. - FIREWOOD: AVAILABILITY - UPDATE

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. During the Fall session, my colleague to my left, the member for Queens-Shelburne was very concerned about the lack of firewood. I wanted to know if the minister

could possibly give us an update on firewood, the availability of firewood, and is there a possibility that that particular issue might be arranged to satisfy my colleague to the left?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, again, the issues around the shortage of firewood in certain areas in the province last year were a result of contracting capacity because of a contraction in the marketplace. That said, our Department of Natural Resources reached out to our private partners in the industry, and because of that work, we actually increased the flow of hardwood into the fireplace market threefold. We also . . .

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 96.

Bill No. 96 - Revenue Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this bill, a piece of legislation that our Party has introduced several times.

Members of all Parties will be familiar with the substance of this bill. It has been a long-standing request of the mining industry in Nova Scotia. Mining is the largest private-sector employer of Aboriginal peoples in Canada on a proportional basis, and employment is poised to increase. The mining industry would like to be on an equal footing with the forestry, fishing, and farming industries and be exempt from the provincial gasoline and diesel oil tax.

The provincial fuel tax is supposed to help pay for roads by charging the vehicle owners who use them. Vehicles used in forestry, fishing, and farming get a rebate for this tax since they do not go on public roads. The Ivany report said traditional industries like

mining and quarrying will provide the essential foundations for Nova Scotia's rural economy. Here in Nova Scotia, we have a long way to go to achieve that goal.

According to the Mining Association of Nova Scotia, the industry lost 800 jobs in the past six years and its economic output shrank by \$80 million per year. They are high-paying jobs. Those who work in mining enjoy the highest wages of all industrial sectors in Canada with an average annual pay exceeding \$110,000, which surpassed the average earnings of workers in forestry, manufacturing, finance, and construction by a range of \$31,000 to \$46,000 for those sectors.

Instead of supporting mining jobs in this Province of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia is the highest-cost jurisdiction in Canada in terms of tax and royalty payments to the province. The Fraser Institute's global survey of mining executives shows that Nova Scotia is seen as the least attractive province in Canada to invest. Nova Scotia has ranked last in this study for six straight years. In 2011, all mining provinces and territories except Nova Scotia experienced an increase in total exploration and deposit appraisal expenditures.

The fuel tax issue broken promise is a symptom of a larger problem: this government does not recognize the potential for growth in this sector. The Ivany report also highlighted the need for government to provide a modern and responsive legislative framework to support and promote sustainable mineral resource management.

The Liberals made a promise and the mining industry in the province took them at their word. In fact, the Liberal Minister of Natural Resources promised on November 10, 2014, that they would start phasing in a fuel tax rebate program for mining and quarry vehicles in 2015. (Interruptions)

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

MR. DUNN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of the industry had reason to believe that the fuel tax issue would be dealt with by this government. In an election questionnaire, the Liberal Party said that they would extend the fuel tax rebate to the mining and quarrying industry. Last May, in a letter, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board said the Liberal Government would begin phasing the rebate in during the last three years of their mandate. That means this year. Finally, in a November 2014 press release from the Department of Natural Resources, the minister said the government would start phasing in a fuel tax rebate program for mining and quarrying vehicles in 2015.

It looked like a done deal, but this often-promised rebate was not included in the recent budget. It's a familiar story, one that those in the film industry understand all too well.

It starts with an election promise and it ends in disappointment. The similarities don't stop there, though. Both the film industry and the mining industry create jobs, especially in rural Nova Scotia. Both were blindsided by the actions of the government - a government that is repeatedly surprised by the unforeseen consequences of its own decisions.

For mining in Nova Scotia, we are talking about jobs. In Nova Scotia the mining industry supports 5,500 jobs, mostly in rural areas. It gives \$420 million in economic activity each year. Again, mining is the highest-paying natural resource industry and one of the highest paying of all industries in this province.

Passing this legislation will give the industry confidence that the new promise to rebate gas tax to the mining and quarry industry will be fulfilled, because it is enshrined in law. As the Ivany report said, mining should be a foundation industry in our province. Government costs and red tape are preventing investment in the industry and killing jobs. This bill will reduce one of those costs and signal to an important industry that government is serious about supporting mining jobs. For these reasons, I urge members to support this bill, Bill No. 96. Thank you for those few short words.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: It's a pleasure to stand in my place and address some of the comments that were made by my colleague opposite. It's very clear to Nova Scotians that we need to restore fiscal health in this province. That is a priority for people of this province, and it is a priority for our government, the reason being that if we do not have fiscal health, if we do not have government's books in order, future generations will be placed at risk. Government's ability to provide those core services that people in this province depend upon - health, education, transportation - those needs will not be able to be met because of the financial limitations of government.

So it's a priority of all of ours, Mr. Speaker, to get our fiscal house in order so that in the long term, future generations won't be saddled by debt, won't be saddled by deficit after deficit, and will have the supports they need for the services that they require in the province. You can't look at this particular question without looking at those wider implications.

When it comes specifically to the mining sector, this is actually a very exciting time, Mr. Speaker. For any member of this House to stand up and suggest that Nova Scotia is not a competitive place to do business, I would suggest they go tell that to Chris Cline, one of the world's leading coal producers, who is looking, for the first time in a generation, to come back and restore coal mining to the Island of Cape Breton. That will double mineral production in this province. Try telling Mr. Cline that Nova Scotia isn't a competitive place to do business. Avalon Resources, for the first time since the early 1990s, are looking at

re-establishing a tin mine - in the riding of the member for Argyle-Barrington, actually. First time since the early 1990s.

We have many companies doing exploration for copper, zinc, and coal in Springhill, where the Leader of the Opposition resides. We have a lot of excitement on the exploration side of things and potentially on the production side of things, and all that considering that globally there has been a downturn in the mining industry as the result of lower commodity prices. Despite those global market challenges, we still have great potential and opportunities here in businesses that are looking at Nova Scotia to come and explore and produce our minerals here.

Just to clarify a couple of things that the member opposite expressed. He mentioned that we've lost mining jobs in the last number of years. That's actually not the case. There is an independent report done by Gardner Pinfold which shows that employment in the mining sector has gone up. I'll table that for the member's information.

Also, when you look at the costs associated with exploration licences, keeping those licences, and renewing them in our province, compared to other jurisdictions, we're actually quite competitive, Mr. Speaker. We're not the most expensive jurisdiction to do business, if you look at all the costs associated with the process of exploration and bringing a mine to production. I'll table this information for the member as well. We are actually in the middle of the pack with our jurisdictional competitors in our provinces and we're in a very competitive position, which is why we haven't seen a halt in exploration in the Province of Nova Scotia, we've actually seen an increase since this government has taken office, and I will table that.

For the first time in 25 years our government is also looking at our Mineral Resources Act - the Act, the laws that govern, the exploration, production of minerals in the province. In Nova Scotia all of our minerals belong to the taxpayers, belong to the public. We need to ensure we have a legislative framework in place that at one time makes us a more competitive jurisdiction to do business. We want to encourage more people to come here and explore and to see what Nova Scotia has to offer on a mineral front.

We also want to make sure that our communities, our environment and our people are protected, so we'll be bringing forward a robust piece of legislation in the Fall, which will be achieving all of those goals for us. That is something that I know the industry is very excited about as well as other stakeholder groups that are involved with this.

We have made it very clear to the mining sector that the fuel tax rebate is a commitment that we are going to keep, but in light of what I said earlier and the financial challenges that we are facing in this province, they need to understand that we can only do that when we are able to afford that commitment.

We have relayed that information directly to the industry, directly to the representatives that lobby and advocate on their behalf and that's something that is understood. The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board explained the other day why we cannot phase in this sort of tax credit; it needs to happen all at once. We are still committed to doing that within our mandate, but I want to be very clear, we are not going to involve ourselves in any further expenses before we are in a financial position to do that.

This is a very difficult budget for a lot of people. There were people working within the Public Service that are no longer employed with the Public Service. There were community organizations across the province that were asked to receive a reduced amount of contribution from the taxpayers of the province. We have seen how these decisions are impacting people and we don't take any of this very lightly. We would ask the mining industry to be patient with us as well, understand the fiscal challenges that we face as a province, and continue to work with us as a partner to bring this in at the right time, in the right way.

For any member to stand in this House and suggest that Nova Scotia is not a good place to do business, it's unequivocally wrong. You don't need to take my word for that, Mr. Speaker, all you need to do is look at all of the numerous companies currently involved in mineral exploration in the Province of Nova Scotia, that are looking to bring projects to production because those facts speak for themselves. Thank you.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have a moment to join in the debate on this particular bill, Bill No. 96. It is a bill that would see a tax break for the mining industry.

This has been an agenda item for quite some time; in fact, I remember previous debates about this particular topic and it is an interesting question. It's interesting listening to the minister talk about the state of play right now. I understand the current government made a commitment, a promise that they would, in fact, bring this in in this year and now they are backing away from yet another commitment that they have made, although they've left a little crack in the door open to say well, okay, we're not going to do it this year as we promised we would do, but we might do it before the end of our mandate, if the finances of the province look better.

I understand their embarrassment, I suppose, that they have committed yet another broken promise and they have a lot of people out in our province who are feeling somewhat betrayed by the broken promises they've experienced so far from this government with this budget. Specifically, the big one, I guess, would be the Film Tax Credit that the Premier committed to extend for a five-year period, but nobody saw the small print, the little asterisk that said oh, by the way, we'll extend it but we're gutting it so that it will, by and large, be irrelevant; you won't be able to really take advantage of it in a meaningful way.

That reminds me of small print on a variety of things that the government made commitments around that we're not seeing come into any realistic kind of change in the province. Breaking Nova Scotia Power's monopoly comes to mind; lowering rates, decreasing power rates, that comes to mind; ending corporate handouts, that comes to mind. We could be here for a long time, I guess, talking about the things they said they were going to do and then the promises that have been broken.

Nobody really saw the small print, the fine print or the asterisk, or maybe the footnotes, the appendix at the back of the electoral platform, Mr. Speaker, got lost some place between the printers and the distribution system into the households of Nova Scotia.

I want to say that the mining industry is an interesting industry and it has a very long, long history in Nova Scotia. I think about gold mining in Guysborough County in the Goldboro area where my dad grew up, the coal mining in Cape Breton and in Pictou County as well, the tragedy of the Westray mine, the tragedies that we've seen in Springhill, and the lives that have been lost. We've seen mining in Yarmouth in the tin mines, and we have salt mines in Nova Scotia, up in the Pugwash area.

I, and some of my colleagues, had an opportunity to tour the salt mines at the latter part of the summer or early in the Fall. It was really a pretty interesting experience. Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important that the government in the province supports investment in our province, and we have a variety of tools with which we can do that. Investment results in good job creation and good jobs for people around the province. We need to do it in an environment where there are very, very strong regulations.

When we give tax breaks we need to have them based on probably a body of evidence and information that will show us that it makes sense to have these kinds of tax breaks. Now I've been told that the difference between tax breaks for other primary production endeavours, like agriculture and fisheries, is that those activities are sustainable in that if you are doing work in agriculture or in forestry or in the fishery, that's an ongoing kind of resource that you're working with that renews itself, especially if you treat it properly, if you have the regulatory framework and the planning and the enforcement and you make sure that you do things properly.

The mining industry is a little different. When you extract minerals out of the earth, they are not going to be renewed, they are not a renewable resource. Once they are gone they are gone; once they are extracted they are extracted forever and they are gone forever. So the question becomes, is that an industry that should get a tax break or not? The industry itself likes to say, well, these other industries - agriculture, fishery, and forestry - get tax breaks and we don't and we want to be treated the same, but they are not the same industry, Mr. Speaker. There is a difference between the mining industry and those other primary producers. Those other primary producers are primary production industries that are

sustainable. Mining is not a sustainable industry in terms of that resource; once it is extracted it is gone.

I am not sure that a tax break for the mining industry that is predicated on the fact that these other industries get it is the right approach to the kind of incentives you want to have available for the mining industry. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, our caucus does not support this particular tax break for the mining industry. We would support other kinds of supports through government for that industry but not one that is predicated on - here is the tax break that is available to all these other industries. They are not the same.

It's like the Film Tax Credit is not the same as the mining industry so you have to have tools in government that actually are sensible, that have the knowledge that these various sectors are all different and the tool you have has to be appropriate for the sector. That's what the film tax industry folks have been trying to tell people. They've been trying to say our business model is different because our industry is different and the Film Tax Credit is structured differently because our sector is different. Don't treat us like the mining industry; don't treat us like the manufacturing industry; don't treat us like pulp and paper; don't treat us like IT; don't treat us like the banking sector - we are different.

So in that way I would say we really need to look at this particular proposal for the mining industry, which is predicated on the idea that these other primary resource sectors - as I said agriculture, forestry, and fishery - have this kind of a tax break. They are different, those three sectors, from the mining industry and therefore, I don't think, just because the mining industry would like a tax break of this kind, which would be significantly more than a million dollars and if the sector is growing in the province over time, as the minister indicates his aspirations are for an expansion of the mining industry in the province, then that will mean the tax break will grow.

For those reasons, at this stage, I am really not convinced that this is the appropriate course to take, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: It is my pleasure to rise to speak to this bill and I'm torn between addressing the comments from the Third Party or from across the House, so which should I address first? I would just like to comment on the difference between forestry and agriculture and mining, and I will concede that the Acting Leader is correct that mining is an extracted resource, which is not renewable.

I would like to point out that one of the interesting things about mining of those resources is that they belong to all of us. What's underneath the ground - even though I, as a property owner, would like to think that if gold was discovered on my farm, I would own that gold. But in fact, the mineral resources anywhere in the province, the oil and gas,

belong to every one of us. I've often wondered as I've worked on the farm, will I ever find a nugget of gold? As we picked rock and all that stuff, we never have.

The interesting thing is that those resources belong to the province. When they are extracted, the companies that extract those resources pay a royalty. I believe that that royalty is meant to address the issue of the difference between farming and forestry and mining that the member speaks of. It's interesting that across Canada, there's a small section in southwest Manitoba where actually the landowners do own all of the mineral reserves underneath their property. Some of them have benefited immensely. It has something to do with history of how that part of Manitoba came into Confederation, but that's a side issue. In fact, in this province, the landowner does not own the mineral resources underneath the ground and the mining companies would pay a royalty to the province, whatever that royalty is established at.

My understanding is that the fuel tax, this tax that we wish to have this exemption for, is a road tax. In fact, the mining gear does not go on the road. If you were to see mining gear, there would be two different types of mining gear that I understand exist; that would be open-pit mining gear and mining gear that's actually down in a mine. The mining gear that's actually down in a mine is highly specific equipment. I actually, too, have had the privilege of going in a mine - not in Nova Scotia, but I actually had a trip into a potash mine in Saskatchewan at one time. That is really a mind-blowing experience, to go into a potash mine in Saskatchewan in what's called soft rock mining. We were told that in that trip down that nothing that went down in that mine pit ever came back out. Any equipment that ever went down there - and in fact, we drove around in a jeep in this mine. We drove around in a jeep, so they were using gasoline, presumably, diesel fuel - both, I'm sure, down in this mine.

These industries are not in fact - this exemption would apply to equipment that's used in the mine. Open-pit mining - and I was recently in the Wellness Centre in Pictou because my son had two hockey games, and in behind that is that big open-pit mine. I had a very brief look at it. In fact, it was quite clear that the equipment being used in that mine does not go on the highway.

The point is, though, I believe that this tax exemption - there are a number of reasons why this should be in place. A very significant one is because the minister himself made a commitment to do so. I believe that signals matter, and when you signal to an industry that you're going to do something, there's an expectation that you'll do that. Even the fact that you're changing course midstream is an important signal to an industry. Actually, even though I know the minister has said he has been communicating with the industry, I believe that sort of damages the reputation of the province across the country for this sort of mining. For mining, the signal has been sent one way and then is reversed.

Signals are important, I believe, in how we relate to industry. In fact, I would say that would be - and I know the Acting Leader of the Third Party drilled into some of the

other things like the signals on the Film Tax Credit. I think signals, in and of themselves, are very significant. To give one message to an industry and then to, just a few short months later, give a totally opposite message to an industry is a very damaging signal to the industry and sort of impairs the reputation of your area to do business. I think that in that sense, this signal really matters.

In terms of the lost revenue, I will point out that we have been talking about fixed elections - that would save over a million dollars. So if lost revenue was the only thing, there are other ways government could make it up. That's one way the government could make up that revenue. But I would also like to point out, what would the value of one more mine be in Nova Scotia, or slightly more mining, if this exemption made a difference?

I would point out that the mining industry creates an enormous amount of traffic on the highways. It's quite clear, again, from my brief visit to the Pictou Wellness Centre and just taking a brief look at what was happening on that mine site, that there was an enormous amount of highway traffic generated from that mine. In fact, the coal that's pulled out of that mine is put on a fleet of 18-wheelers that is just making steady trips back and forth. All of that activity will attract this tax that we're saying should go off the equipment in the mine. So, in fact, the mining industry, if there was even a slight increase in the mining industry there would be quite a considerable increase in road traffic and I think it would more than make up for the loss. So it's an investment in the industry, I believe, in a certain way that would benefit.

If you're looking at these tax credits or this exemption of tax then you'd have to ask yourself, what do we gain and what do we lose on that? And the Film Tax Credit is no different, you cut that tax and if you take the time to figure that out you can see the results to that. Certainly, if it does happen that way, after the fact, we'll be able to figure that out rather easily. In the meanwhile, when we're looking ahead in the future we can say that a certain amount more mining activity would benefit the province immensely in many ways and more than make up for the lost revenue for the exemption on the oil and tax spent on this exemption.

Again, I would like to point out that this exemption is only for equipment that will never go on the highway. The reason for the exemption was, in the beginning even, I think, in forestry and agriculture this was a tax that was meant to be for highway usage. If there's not highway usage, what is the justification for the tax? That is the question. It is clear that in the mining industry this equipment is not going on a highway, so what is the justification for the tax? That's part of the logic of that which, again, I would debate with the member for the Third Party that this is the difference between these extraction industries. That isn't the point.

The point is not the fact that agriculture and forestry are renewable and mining isn't, the point is that these pieces of equipment are not going on a highway and are not contributing to the wear and tear of the highway. In fact, all of the support services for

these mines, and for agriculture and forestry, they generate an enormous amount of truck traffic, there's no doubt about that. Those vehicles do attract that tax, and in reality you might say that if this exemption was in place and that brought one more mine in, or it caused even a slight increase in activity in one mine, that might actually increase the amount of provincial diesel and gasoline tax that came in, simply because of the increased traffic of the trucks on the highway to supply those mines.

As I said, it's quite clear from my trip to the Wellness Centre in New Glasgow that there was quite a fleet of trucks hauling coal to Nova Scotia Power, and apparently they go non-stop. I would suggest that we need to look upon these sorts of things as an investment - not as a cost, but an investment. I believe that sometimes small signals can make a big difference and to have said you were going to do it and not do it, I think, sends a negative signal to the industry. We're not going to see the mining industry walking around the building; it's probably not the way they operate. They are just going to stay in their offices and go, okay, they said they would do it and they're not doing it, fine, and they're not going to come and take a look at what's going on maybe.

It just sends a negative signal and maybe the minister is right, it won't make any difference at all. I hope he's correct and maybe it will all happen as it was supposed to. As I said, these signals matter and if we go back to the resource extraction industries in general, we had a bill last year that put a moratorium on onshore gas exploration. In fact, it was a moratorium on a very specific slice of that; it wasn't really a moratorium, it was just a moratorium on high-volume hydraulic fracturing. So medium volume in shale; it didn't say anything about sandstone; didn't say anything about medium volume, low volume, hydraulic fracturing, presumably they're also still permitted; didn't say anything about coalbed methane - so, in fact, there were a lot of parts of that moratorium.

The word "moratorium" was used, but in fact there were a lot of things in theory still permitted in that bill on hydraulic fracturing, but the use of the word "moratorium" sent a very negative signal, I believe, across the country about our province. I think that was very unfortunate that that was done. The fact that the minister has said that they would do this and indicated it would be done this year, and now has not done it, I think, again sends a signal across the country about what we're about in this province. Those two things are very, very important - the signals we sent last year and this year - those things matter to companies that are looking to invest. If there's a company out in Alberta trying to decide whether they are going to invest in Nova Scotia or - who knows where? Peru - you know what I mean - or Quebec. They look at the jurisdictions. Clearly, we offer a very stable jurisdiction to invest in, in many ways, in terms of stability of our culture and government compared to the Third World, but we offer a very regulated environment too.

What matters is how we compare to other provinces in Canada. My understanding is that this tax exemption is available in other provinces in Canada. So if they have to decide between a mine in New Brunswick or a mine in Quebec or a mine in Nova Scotia, there is

a limited amount of money to invest and investors are always - the small things make a difference in those types of decisions.

I would suggest that the signal is the most important thing. I do respect the minister's comments on the toughness of this budget and how there has been a number of people who lost jobs. No one in this House takes any pleasure in that and we realize that those are very difficult decisions in a government's life. I do recognize that. But I'm saying the signals and statements of what was said are critically important to the reputation of the province and the reputation of the government. It is very important that the government do what they said they were going to do and follow through and create what the industry will see as a stable environment in terms of predictability.

I think that is probably the double - I mean, there are the two elements to this. The failure on that side is just as significant as the failure to bring in the fuel exemption, in my opinion. With those words, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat. Thank you.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Merci beaucoup, M. le Président. Would you please call Bill No. 93.

Bill No. 93 - Transparency in Ministers' Expenses Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill No. 93, the Transparency in Ministers' Expenses Act. This bill will increase transparency and accountability in our government, but will not be an onerous task for ministers. We're just purely talking about giving Nova Scotians more information and more access to information about how our government spends its money. I would presume that if we were to take the government at its word on its goal of being the most open and transparent government in history, the only thing that would upset them about this bill is that they didn't put it in before we did. It would be a complete slam dunk for this government.

This bill requires ministers and their executive assistants to post their monthly expenses online, just as MLAs do. Now, ministers already provide copies of their expenses to the Legislative Library and this bill asks them only to provide the same information in a different, more modern medium. So instead of having paper expense forms in the Legislative Library, they would be online. I think it would be hard to argue that the world is moving online. Why should this House be any different in this single respect? These expenses should be online for all Nova Scotians to see.

At the moment, Nova Scotians can examine the expenses of ministers. They can have a look at ministerial expenses. All they have to do is travel all the way to Halifax, find

a parking spot, clear security at Province House, come up to the Legislative Library, and dig through some papers. That's what they can do. It's absolutely their right to come and look at these expenses.

Why should we ask them to do that? Why wouldn't we just put them online? If you have to go through that exercise to see them in person, it frustrates a lot of people from getting access to that information.

Let's put them online and that's all this bill is about; it's a pretty simple thing. The process we have at the moment basically limits people who are in Halifax, for whatever reason, it limits them as the only cohort of people that can scrutinize the expenses of members of the Executive Council. That's not necessary in this day and age. The requirement to provide the expenses to the Legislative Library is not actually enshrined in legislation. It's not in legislation. It's something that is a tradition.

This legislation makes that information available to everyone and ensures that future governments must meet the same standard of transparency. If we can get these expenses online now, the chances are they will stay online. We have seen where new governments come in and they may change that. It will be very difficult for them to change that. The optics of that would be very poor, much like the optics of voting against this bill would be very poor.

If adopted, under this bill Nova Scotia Cabinet Ministers would join ministers in almost all other Canadian jurisdictions. This is not innovative. This is just necessary and responsible. This is happening in other provinces. In Alberta, ministerial expenses and those of their executive assistants and administrative support staff have been posted online since 2007. Each month's expenses are posted at the end of the following month. MLAs in this House would be familiar with that process, that's what we do as MLAs.

Anyone in Alberta, no matter where they live, can log-in and see how much ministers have spent on meals, accommodation, travel, hospitality, working sessions, goods and supplies and services – it is information that is available to taxpayers there. They can also see how much an office has spent to date. This is information that should be available to taxpayers, it is taxpayer money and it should be readily available to people who are interested in knowing that information to go online and access it.

Quite frankly I can't believe we've come this far and this is still a part of our system that is stuck in the paper world. Manitoba began making minister's expenses public at the same time Alberta did, back in 2006-07. Their report covers cost incurred by Cabinet Ministers and paid by the minister's department: travel, transportation, accommodation, meals, hospitality, communications, the type of stuff the ministers spend in their jobs and people have a chance to know just how much.

Also in Manitoba, ministers must provide quarterly reports that cover out-of-province trips including: dates, destinations, purpose, expenses, airfare, ground transportation, accommodation. It's not rocket science. It is taxpayer money that is spent being made available in the Province of Alberta and the Province of Manitoba in a format that makes sense in today's day and age. Next door in New Brunswick, the government also makes information available through routine disclosures, all that information on expenses claimed by ministers, senior executives and some officers of the Legislative Assembly. Newfoundland and Labrador make minister expense reports available twice a year on a website. Expenses are those pertaining to accommodation, travel, meals, living expenses.

So, Newfoundland and Labrador twice a year, Alberta and Manitoba monthly. Nova Scotia, zero. I think we can do better than that. New legislation in Ontario makes it mandatory for online posting of travel, meals, hospitality expenses for ministers, Opposition Leader, and their respective staff.

You can see the trend, Madam Speaker. We should be part of that trend. There is no reason for us not to be part of that trend. Transparency in the spending of all elected officials is always important, because it provides for a level of accountability and it allows people who work hard for their money - it allows those taxpayers - to know where and how their taxpayer dollars are being spent.

Flash forward to our financial situation in this province. The Premier said today that we're broke, and I can sympathize with the Premier, because many Nova Scotians are feeling the pain of budgetary belt tightening. Having ministers show they're open, accountable, and transparent by posting their expenses online for all to see will give taxpayers confidence that their dollars are being treated carefully and with respect.

During the 2013 election campaign, the Premier vowed to make Nova Scotia the most open and transparent province in Canada. He didn't just do it then, Madam Speaker. He's actually quite proud of staking that claim and saying that's a fait accompli, that it's true. Well, this is an area where we can be a little open and a little more transparent, and passing this bill would be a step toward showing Nova Scotians that the Premier is serious about that.

Earlier this year, members of our caucus wanted to understand a little more about ministerial travel. We asked the Premier's chief of staff to come to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to explain the process behind ministerial travel and how ministerial travel was approved. Sadly, the Liberal members on that committee used their majority to block this effort, keeping Nova Scotians in the dark about how this government makes decisions on ministerial travel, how this government makes decisions on taxpayer money at the minister level. Well, we don't want Nova Scotians to be in the dark about things like this.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

MR. GORDON WILSON: It's a privilege to rise here today to speak on Bill No. 93 - an Act to Amend Chapter 155 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, the Executive Council Act. I'd also like to thank the member for Pictou East for bringing this forward. It's a very good topic to speak on - one of accountability and transparency.

I guess I want to reflect a little bit back on my experience. I certainly don't have experiences as a minister and submitting expenses, but I was, Madam Speaker, a bureaucrat for the Province of Nova Scotia for 30 years. Not only did I administer my expenses but I administered expenses for several staff. I guess in one sense, that is part of what this bill is talking about when they talk about the executive assistants for ministers - those are actually staff of the Province of Nova Scotia. I do have a bit of experience on the processes and the protocols for doing that.

I guess also we all sat through and have memories - I certainly know my colleagues, my previous colleagues, the two MLAs for Clare and for Digby, Junior Theriault and Wayne Gaudet. I remember the experiences they went through when the expense scandal hit the province, and how bad they felt to be brought up in part of that and what that meant to them.

I know there have been a lot of changes brought forward to how we operate with our expenses through the Speaker's Office. I must say that it is a very onerous process to make sure that you submit a proper expense claim. I must say right now, right off the top of my mind, I think we are well protected as citizens, as people in this province, that we are clear and transparent in the way that we submit those. I am also a firm believer in that I don't think we should just simply be creating bureaucracy when there is already an opportunity there to deal with things within current legislation policies and procedures. I guess that is one of the bigger reasons that I'm not really firmly agreeable with this.

I will go back to the accountability and the trust side of it. I guess it raises some immediate questions right off the bat with me also of why in this bill the Leader of the Official Opposition wasn't included in that if we're talking about full transparency and accountability. That person is paid the same amount of money as an executive member is and it is kind of suspicious on my part that the Leader of the Official Opposition was not put in there. I'll even go a little bit further and wonder how interesting it would be to have made the recommendation to go back a number of years, say let's go back four or five years and have all Executive Council members' expenses posted online.

We know that it's all available; we do know that. One thing that concerned me - and I'm not going to dwell on what I feel are the bad sides of it, I'm going to give more reasons why we shouldn't do it. It did upset me to sit and listen to the member for Pictou

East make a statement that this province prided itself on being elected as being the most transparent government there was and then did nothing. That was the quote - did not do anything. I'm very proud to say that we are actually the most accountable province in Canada with what we have done with our website for economic development, the first of its kind in Canada. I think that is a big step towards accountability.

Back to transparency, that is the key message here and it's the most important principle. I don't think we need legislation. This is something that we can do in practice. It is something that is being done in practice right now.

I will throw out a bit of an olive branch that I would support ascertaining and advocating that this government could look into some work towards best practices that are seen across the country. I don't think you need to change the legislation to do that, Madam Speaker, but I think that certainly we can always strive to improve.

Ministerial expenses are available, all of them, through the Legislative Library. It isn't like they are hidden. Any person who wants to get access to them, certainly they are there. Again, they are audited at the end of the year; they are available there. All travel expenses are reported on an annual basis and not only for the ministers' assistants but also for the Public Service. So to simply change a piece of legislation to do this, I don't think is warranted.

MLA expenses have been posted online for some time now. I don't think I've had one constituent who has come to me since I've been elected, curious about why I expensed this or why I expensed that. I'd be very curious how many of our constituents and our people in the province actually even look at what we put online - not to say that it shouldn't be there but, Madam Speaker, I don't really think that it's a big step.

I'm very curious to know why we would be addressing this if there have been concerns that have been brought forward I think by the Opposition that maybe we're not doing things the right way or maybe there are some things that are being hidden, I think that would be a more pertinent discussion for us to have before this House. I think that would be something that would be more fruitful.

If there are suggestions, Madam Speaker, that things are not right there, this is the place where we talk about those, not bringing forward a piece of legislation that isn't necessarily proactive or helpful for moving forward transparency in government.

We do understand that these things are not online; we do understand that. That doesn't mean that we can agree that looking at the current practices isn't something we couldn't do. Certainly ministers and executive assistants have to complete very detailed travel claims with all supporting documentation. We know that. Summaries of their expenses are prepared from travel claims for both ministers and EAs, so there are summaries that are prepared. They are required to be filled in at the end of each month and

it allows each one to be claimed and paid for - they're reviewed. At the end of each year, there is a fiscal summary done of these. I can't understand, really, what we're missing in the legislation and the policies and procedures that we have right now.

To go forward with this, again, it's going to create another level of bureaucracy in a time where we know the pressures that are on this province. Anybody who tries to tell you that initiating a website or putting something in place that means that there's going to be more administrative checks that are already in place, duplication of services - if they're trying to tell us that there isn't a cost for that, then I disagree. I worked in government for 30 years. I know what it's like to administer these things.

Transparency, to sum up, is a very important principle. It's one that this government takes seriously. As I've mentioned already, we're leading the country in transparency in posting our economic development contracts online - first time. I don't think legislation is required for this and I don't feel comfortable that we certainly need a change in it. I do feel very comfortable that the current legislation protects us. The current legislation and policy and procedures are sufficient, and I don't think we will be supporting the bill as it is brought forward. Thank you very much.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity to make a few remarks on Bill No. 93. This is a bill that will require members of the Executive Council and their political staff to not only file their expense claims, but to have them posted online, which will make it much more convenient for members of the public and members of the media to actually do research and see how people in these really important positions are spending public dollars that are entrusted to them.

Now I've listened to the debate so far. On the one hand, I would be really happy if we just saw good compliance with what we already have in place. I and my staff have noticed that the filing in the Library can be quite substantially behind. The practices that I've seen there in the past - and we've had this practice for a long time that members of the Executive Council and the Premier would have their expenses filed in a book in the Library and you could go there and check. There have been months and months that have passed when there has been nothing in there for some of the ministers. In fact, I think it was maybe the last session of our Legislature, back in the Fall, when just hours before the Legislature came into session, some of this paperwork actually appeared. That was interesting timing, Madam Speaker.

The compliance, I guess, that we have for what have been the procedures for a very long time leaves a lot to be desired. The member for Clare-Digby says there is no need to legislate because we have this great procedure in place. Well, I beg to differ. Let me say that this procedure we have in place, there's no requirement anywhere, it's a convention. It's

a practice and a convention. But really, if any particular member of the Executive Council decided to stop sending their expense information to the Legislative Library there's absolutely nothing in law, in Statute, in the House of Assembly Act, to require that be brought to the library - nothing. It's a practice; it's a convention that we've had. And we're moving into a more modern era now where people expect, and rightly so, they expect a higher level of accountability from their elected officials - and from their unelected officials. Case in point, the Senate and what we witness unfolding in the Mike Duffy case.

There's a reason why you have legislative requirements for the filing of information and the making clear, because every now and then you get some outliers. This piece of legislation, tiny and little piece of legislation in some ways, but pretty important, pretty significant, could make a real difference in terms of ensuring that no individual thinks that they do not have to account for how they spend public money. I would be fully in support of a piece of legislation like this and, with respect to the retroactivity, I would also have no problem with the retroactivity that was suggested by the former member. Having been in the position and having been very vigilant about how much money I spent on travel and any other expenses, I would welcome the public scrutiny.

I welcome the public scrutiny and so should we all - so should we all. I don't know what the government members feel threatened about from this particular piece of legislation, but they shouldn't really feel threatened by this piece of legislation. They should embrace some change, they should see that in fact the current regime is a little bit too loosey-goosey - parliamentary? I think loosey-goosey is probably permissible. We should tighten this up and this will allow us to do just that.

So with those few remarks, Madam Speaker, I will take my place.

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

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think they asked me to clean this up because I was a minister for 41 years and, always did - I must admit I even stopped doing things and going places that I was entitled to simply because I knew that money was extremely tough in the churches and I just felt a little bit off doing that.

These are tough times and when I go home at night my wife is usually watching the news and watching the outcome of what's going on in Ottawa, and people are really just plain wondering where our heads and hearts are sometimes when we do spend public money.

This bill doesn't stand out to be anything really out of the ordinary. It just ensures that ministers' expenses as well as MLA expenses are accessible to the public. It's just a level of transparency that Nova Scotians deserve from all elected officials, and as my colleague just said, from unelected officials as well. As it stands now, Nova Scotians are

unable to access ministers' expenses unless they do come to the Legislative Library. This is really unfair to those who are living outside of Halifax. It just should not be a difficult process for people to find that transparency. Ministers do take their expenses to the Legislative Library but it is based on an honour system. Sometimes they're brought in; sometimes they're not on time. It is just hard to access it whenever we feel we need to.

Following the Auditor General's Report in 2010, many Nova Scotians were disappointed and they were skeptical of public officials and how tax dollars are spent. After that MLA expenses were posted online for all Nova Scotians to have access to. This bill just goes that one step further. In 2010 the Premier said he believed in taking immediate steps on openness and transparency. He knows that it's critical in restoring the public's confidence in us, in the institution that we call the Legislature, and if we don't have that confidence back we're going to take an awful hit.

The Premier actually said that we would be taking a hit if we didn't do that. I can table that a little bit later. He also said, "I think any time you add openness and transparency, it's a good thing for taxpayers, and I think it's, in the end, a good thing for members . . ." - I will also table that comment. The Premier is right. By opening up expenses for public scrutiny, members will hold themselves accountable and taxpayers know where their money is going to be going.

This bill would further that and provide peace of mind knowing that ministers also have nothing to hide in their expenses. This bill is not an unprecedented practice. As indicated, it is done in other provinces. Nova Scotia is one of the only provinces that does not have their public ministerial expenses online.

The Premier pledged this government would be the most open and transparent government in Canada. This is one way of showing Nova Scotians that he really meant it. We believe this bill will increase transparency in government. While Nova Scotians are struggling to keep their own family budgets in line, it will bring them peace of mind to see that the ministers are also being responsible with what they do concerning expenses.

I just want to close by saying I think this is a good piece of legislation, simply because of the atmosphere that is out there right now in our country. People are very skeptical about us as to what we do with their monies, and I think this transparency level will certainly help ease their peace of mind. Thank you.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, that concludes Opposition business for today. I will now pass it back over to the Government House Leader to call business for the rest of the hours this evening.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have reached the moment of interruption, if you would please call the late debate now.

MR. SPEAKER: The Adjournment motion was submitted by the honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg:

“Therefore be it resolved that MLAs agree that increasing ferry fees by 27 per cent, and one book of 10 passes by 160 per cent, without consultation shows that the only plan the McNeil Government has for our economy is to take money from hard-working Nova Scotians.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

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

TIR: FERRY FEES - INCREASES

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to get up on my feet today to speak momentarily on this very important subject that has an effect on many rural Nova Scotians who are serviced by the ferries of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

There is a saying, and the saying goes something like: there is no future in the past. But there are indeed lessons to be learned from the past. If this government would look back to a former Liberal Government, one that was managed by the Premier of the day, they would know that they did, too, have increases in service fees; they did, too, put their hand in the pockets of Nova Scotians. As a matter of fact, when they did that, the Party turned on the Leader of the day and he ended up being tossed out by his own because they learned a lesson.

You know, Mr. Speaker, people in rural Nova Scotia have many, many challenges. People who are served by these ferries have an issue and a problem to see the rates increase. We say that we have no toll highways in the Province of Nova Scotia, yet here we are putting on higher and higher fees. People who are employed by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal - people who are much more wise in these methods than I am, sir - they tell you that the ferry system was never meant to make money. It was meant to provide a service.

It's interesting how a ferry that crosses a short distance like Little Narrows costs an incredible amount of money - \$7 - and yet you can go across one of the bridges here in Halifax for \$1; 80 cents if you have a MACPASS.

It was interesting that when the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board was giving her opening statement about her estimates, she talked about the value of those very bridges and how essential they were for moving traffic around in the metro area. Isn't it ironic that you can actually get in a car and drive around the Bedford Basin and get to the other side? You don't really need the ferries and you don't need to have the bridges that are in place. Yet this government sees fit to spend millions and millions of dollars on those very bridges to make sure that it's easy for the people in the metro area to move across it.

Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? I agree with that. I think that's important. But I also think that it's very important for the people of the Province of Nova Scotia in the rural areas to make sure that they have easy access to their areas.

We've just seen in Sydney River a new bridge put in place to make it easier for travel from Sydney River to Westmount and Point Edward. Again, I think it was money well spent. But you know, at the same time, that bridge was closed for a year and a half and people had to travel around. That seemed to be okay, and yet it's part of the transportation system. We don't put a toll on the bridge for people to make sure that they can get across it to recover the cost of the bridge.

Well, these ferries in all different parts of the Province of Nova Scotia are their bridges. It's their method for getting across. It is their reason for travelling back and forth. Living in rural Nova Scotia has its own challenges. The challenges are great, but people live there because that's their home. That's where they've decided to live. But it's our job in the House of Assembly, through the different departments that service the areas of Nova Scotia, to make sure that we give them the same type of services that other Nova Scotians have and enjoy. So when we see these kinds of drastic rate increases in ferry services right across this province, we have to wonder why such a thing takes place.

Now the minister, who is very responsible and works hard in his department, will stand up in the House and he will say time and time again, we have to get some cost recovery. It costs a lot of money to operate those ferries and we only take a little bit in on this side of the coin. But you know, Mr. Speaker, for someone who pays their gas taxes, for someone who pays their licence taxes, for someone who pays all the other fees that are imposed upon them, then they expect to have a transportation link that would work for them and that is reasonable and not an added burden.

In places like Little Narrows, you have new businesses starting up that are wondering now if the ferry increases are going to have an effect on them. Some would say, well, you know, it's not that big an increase, but it has increased and increased and increased, and every time you turn around. A return trip across the Little Narrows Ferry now will cost you \$14. So if you have to travel back and forth, if you're a senior living on the other side and you don't have a pass and you're travelling to Whycomagh or Baddeck or somewhere in those areas, looking to get your medical assistance or pharmacy or groceries, those things are indeed costly.

The delivering of services - when an oil truck goes across to bring fuel to those areas, there is an added cost on that. Where does that go? It's a cost factor that the people in the areas are looking at.

Now, of course, we have the issue of these yearly passes, and the minister, to his credit, has said he's going to look at seeing what he can do about having yearly passes, and maybe making the fees available to those individuals a little easier to obtain. I think we're pleased with that. But by the same token, we have some of the ferries that have a lot of interruptions, and we spoke about this earlier today in Question Period. There are a lot of interruptions in service, so we have to look at how do we treat those people to make sure that they are treated fairly?

When you buy a MACPASS, for example, you buy the service. Every time you use it, it comes off, and there is no expiry date. There is no end date to it. That way it doesn't matter how much you use - at the end of the day, you're not going to be losing anything on your purchase. So those are some of the things that need to be looked at.

You know, Mr. Speaker, these fee increases on the ferries have put their hands in the pockets of people in Nova Scotia one more time - something that the government said that they weren't going to do. They said that that wasn't the way they would do business, that they would be open and transparent. Yet here we are a few days before the budget comes down, and we see thousands and thousands of increases in rates and service fees in all of those things, in the name of saying that we're going to give better service to Nova Scotians. I think the people who live in the areas that are served by these ferries deserve better. They deserve better from this government. They deserve better from this Legislature.

When you think about us as a group trying to do what's good for people, I think we should really ask that this government revisit the deal with the ferries, which are an important transportation link. A government, by the way, that spent millions and millions of dollars for a ferry to cross over to Yarmouth from the New England States. Again, it is a ferry and a service that is important to the Province of Nova Scotia - a service, quite frankly, that should never have been denied to that end of the province, but that was another time and another government. We'll get at that one of these days as well.

The intent is good, but one of the things that they said, time and time again, about this service is that it's a vital transportation link to make things work. Well, Mr. Speaker, the ferry to Digby is important. The ferry at LaHave is important. The ferry to Country Harbour is important. The ferry in Little Narrows and the ferry in Englishtown are all important to the people of Nova Scotia.

This government should sit down and revisit what they're doing to the people who live in these areas - talk to them instead of preaching to them. You have to sit down and meet with them. The people of Victoria County have reached out to me. Councillors from

all over Victoria County have said, we need to sit down and we need someone to listen to us. So in that vein, this Sunday I will be meeting with people north of Englishtown and people in Little Narrows to discuss their concerns about this government putting their hands in their pockets and taking outrageous charges for their ferries.

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

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the resolution and the topic of late debate today - certainly one, for myself, that has been a topic of discussion over the last number of weeks, of course during the budget deliberations and as we have proceeded through the budget, but also with respect to the Legislature with the media and, of course, those impacted areas with regions that have one of our seven ferry services, four being ferry services with alternative routes and the three island ferries that we operate in the province.

First off, to the member for the PC caucus who just spoke, a couple of things I would say is first of all, I appreciate his comments and perspective on these things, but a couple of things I would take exception to. First and foremost would be the idea that we haven't been open and transparent with this issue, with the conversation. I think we've been very upfront in terms of where this led, why we had to get to where we are now. Certainly, it's not a cost recoverable, break-even situation that we are in, but we have closed that gap and I think that's important. I really don't believe that we haven't been open and transparent. We will talk about what this decision meant and those types of things that impact real people in Nova Scotia and it's certainly not an easy thing.

For me it's good to have this opportunity to speak and it's an important topic. I'm glad rather than in the context of Question Period or the media conversations that we get a few minutes here to discuss the impact and where it came from.

In addition to my colleague for the PC caucus, I also know it will be the member for Chester-St. Margaret's who speaks next, who, of course, has the Tancook ferry service which is an island ferry, one that I had the great pleasure of travelling on with the member. It was a great experience because when you come from a particular place you get used to one type of culture and for me, that's Cape Breton, and to see the people on the Tancook Islands was a really interesting experience. It's a great community and one they take great pride in. There are a number of issues that are affected by the Tancook ferry service. One relates to a federal wharf there that the member and I had good discussions with the community. We are looking at a plan moving forward to address some of those concerns.

I just want to mention, with respect to my colleagues who are here in the Legislature, we are now very familiar with the areas that are impacted and the effect that this has had on Nova Scotians but, of course, on constituents and that is where we get information from and feedback from. The member for Clare-Digby has been a champion

for his people, again, with the two island runs that he has as part of his jurisdiction. His first move, when these decisions were publicized, was to go down and meet with the people, hear their concerns, understand what the situation was, and it's a tough one in his community. He took that on and he has been great to give me information and provide me with details on behalf of his constituents.

Of course, the member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie has Country Harbour, which in this context has the longest drive around. It is an alternative route ferry, but it does have a significant drive around so the impact on his community is significant to having that ferry service. When the fees were announced, the member was good to get on the ground and organically get a sense as to where people were and relay that information back to me.

The member for Lunenburg West - that was interesting when we had this discussion - showed me a video from the 1990s where hundreds and hundreds of people in the LaHave area, who were impacted by the ferry when the government talked about the possible discontinuance of that service, were very well-organized and came together and mobilized in a hurry. In the days prior to social media when it's a little bit easier to get people together, the fact that there was probably close to a thousand people in a hurry in one spot is a significant testament to what the people of LaHave and that area think of their ferry service and the importance of it continuing. He also was part of the protest, when it took place, as a good member should, talking to the people and being involved, as was the member for Lunenburg, who sort of ties in, indirectly from a regional perspective, with both LaHave and with Tancook, so she has heard concerns and requests and had information flow through her office as well, so again, I appreciate that from that member.

Finally, we have the member for Victoria-The Lakes, who has been involved in this obviously from the beginning with both the Narrows service and the Englishtown service. I can tell you first and foremost - and I hope that the people of her region and her community are watching - this has been tough on her, no question about it. It has been tough from a physical perspective getting replies to the emails, answering the phone calls and, of course, hearing the complaints from people. She is the government representative and taking the brunt of this, obviously. It's a government decision and she has been a champion for that community.

She has voiced her concerns and she's still part of the conversation, Mr. Speaker. She is in touch with the community. She knows it that it hurts certain people and it impacts them and that's why she's at the table. No one ever said this was an easy gig and certainly for the member, she's taking it directly and is doing her best to play her role and represent her constituents.

I do appreciate the impact and the input from all the members that we have here in the Legislature and I can tell you, on a personal note, this has been a little tough for me, to be quite honest. I came in here in 2010 - and I know the members with Executive Council

experience are nodding their heads - but you come in thinking that there are easy decisions and you change the world and we know everything and the Opposition doesn't get it, or the government, in my case, when I came in in 2010, and things are simplified.

When you make these decisions, it impacts people. The member talked about pocket book and taking money out of people's pockets. If that is the perception that is brought to me as Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal Minister, then that's a tough thing to realize and to accept. That is the nature of the business. I'm proud to be a member of the Executive Council here in the province and proud of my relationship with the Premier and my caucus, and to stand in this Legislature, but it doesn't make it any easier when you make these types of decisions.

When you look at the numbers, when you look at it on paper, when you have these program reviews and talk about the different ways it impacts Nova Scotians, then certainly, for us, it makes sense but then when you hear the stories and you get the emails - I have read them all - it's not an easy thing. It certainly has a way of affecting you and I know that we'll continue to have this dialogue and this discussion and it's something that has really impacted people so we're listening. Again, I'll continue to soldier on and try to explain where we're at and then talk about what options are there to alleviate some of these pressures on people.

When you talk about the ferries and again, my experience as a Cape Bretoner, when you look at Narrows and Englishtown in particular - for us it really is the lifeblood of the community. When you look at the numbers of revenue and travel time and operation, it is the significant spike on a graph, a clear point between July and August. It means tourism is a big part of Englishtown in particular but the Narrows as well and that's how you see the results and you see the importance and the value of this ferry. It's the lifeblood for some people who use island ferries, it's the highway, and that's what it is.

People talk about it in the same terms that they talk about their bridges and their roads. This is how they get to and from their home. It's a significant thing for people and again, that's not lost on any of us, but there are tough choices. When you look at the numbers, we had to look at a way to close the gap and I know that that gets repetitive for people and this becomes the excuse for us but from my perspective it's not the excuse, it's the reason.

When you look at \$9.2 million per year to keep the seven ferries operating, with about \$1 million in revenue collected, that is a significant subsidy. You're in the range of \$8 million and that's the operational side with of course, some capital, but when you look long term, these vessels have about a 30-year operational life and then you're into the capital cost to replace those. We have the Torquil MacLean in Englishtown, which is our newest vessel, and you look at the fleet so you have to look at it on a long term basis to see how you're going to handle those and manage that.

I think that when you look at these fees increases and the fairness of it, the one exception that I make - and I always talk about this and I want to make sure that this is on the record as part of this debate. We have had this cost structure very wrong for a number of years. When you look at the annual pass, people can see it's relatively reasonable. Is it easy to pay? It isn't but is it reasonable given the amount of service and what's there? I think it's in that range.

From \$5.50 to \$7.00 for a single trip, that has been seen to be reasonable. When you look at the ten passes though and the fact that \$13.50 for two trips means we subsidized eight of every 10 trips. I don't think that makes a whole lot of sense and that's the one that people gravitate to because of that subsidy level. The alternative for us was closing ferries and that's the reality of program review. That was a nonstarter for the four alternate route ferries, there's no way we would do that.

In closing - I know my time is getting short - I just want to say that there are things we're going to do looking forward. We are going to look at what the impact has been of these fee increases. We are going to look at the annual subsidy that we can provide. We are going to look at a whole host of things that we can do to make things better. It's an important service. We will never end operations. We will never impact operations but we have to close that gap and be fiscal managers. We get the advice and the guidance that we look after the province's finances, we have got to have this subsidy under control.

So, again, an important topic, I thank the Opposition for bringing this forward and I want the communities to know that we're listening and we're doing our very best. Thank you very much.

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: I would like to thank the minister. I have great respect for the Minister of TIR; he did take the opportunity to go to Big and Little Tancook Island.

I want to express my concern with what has taken place in the province with regard to rural Nova Scotia. It really feels like the door is being slammed on rural Nova Scotia and especially after we had the Ivany report and all the recommendations. Some of the decisions that are being made are very difficult to understand why they are made - and it's an accumulative effect. I mean, we're looking at increases in fees that are quite substantial, we're looking at what's happening with our film and television industry that is a mainstay in our rural communities in investments, and we're looking at offices being closed.

So when you put that all together, that's why people are feeling that the doors are being slammed in their face. With respect to the Tancooks, because there is Big and Little Tancook Islands, they're very dear to my heart because in fact I know some members know that I have Tancook blood running through my veins. My great-great grandmother lived on

Tancook Island and actually had 20 children way back then, which is pretty amazing. Not all of them survived, but a fair amount of the family did survive.

I can tell you that the bloodline of the Tancookers is very strong, determined, stubborn, hard-working, and friendly people. My grandmother came from Tancook Island from the Stephens side - and those who are boat builders would know the famous Stephens boat building, the smaller Bluenose and the boats that were built by the Stephens family.

With my grandmother I learned about the fact that you have to stand up for what you believe in and you have to express those views. My poor gram was born with a hole in her heart and she was born with club feet - and actually her father on Tancook Island built a little coffin for her when she was born because she wasn't supposed to live. With her determination and drive, my grandmother lived until she was in her 80s, and she actually found a loving Swedish man who was 13 years her elder. But I saw them together and I saw my grandmother where she came from, Tancook Island, she wasn't supposed to live and she did, and she was determined to make a difference. And I think that's why I'm here today. I'm determined to make a difference and to be able to stand and talk on behalf of those residents of Tancook Island.

I know that the minister really appreciates this and understands this, I know that he gets it and how difficult, as he said, it is when you're looking at an overall provincial budget and you're looking at pieces of paper and numbers and you have to make those decisions, it's not easy. The part that is kind of unfortunate is the fact with all the workload and the pressures of being in Cabinet is trying to have that time to think about how a decision trickles right down to people. And you take the people from both Big and Little Tancook - Tancook Island in the summertime has about 200 residents and then in the wintertime it normally goes down to about 120 people living on the island. Little Tancook you have about 35 people living on the island, and I know that sounds small, but boy I tell you they are mighty. They have an emergency measures organization, they have a fire department, they have a little school, they have a community centre, and if you want to have lots and lots of fun go to an event on Tancook Island and you'll see hundreds of boats in the summertime lined up around the island because of the fun that you will have with the Tancookers - and while you're there, make sure you have a little sauerkraut too, on the side.

What I'm trying to express today is the reality of life for those who live on Tancook Island. The school kids have to get up at four or five o'clock in the morning to get themselves ready to go to school, because the school that's on the island is just for Primary. When they get to the middle school they have to come into Chester. So little folks are going on the ferry very early in the morning, and if the ferry is not running they miss school, or if they're on the other side, on the Chester side and the ferry has been cancelled - and we know there have been lots of issues around the ferry because it has outdone its life, it needs replacement and we have to work with the minister to move towards that someday.

For the people of Tancook Island, if they want groceries, they need to go to the mainland and if they need oil - it all comes from the mainland. So they're quite isolated in the sense that the transportation sustains people's lives on Tancook Island.

When it comes to cost and a rise in the fees as quickly and as much, 60 per cent with regard to the book of tickets of 10 - I can understand what the minister is saying when he is trying to compare it to the other charges, the annual pass versus the single pass. But the book of 10 tickets is something that most people on the island would utilize because of the fact that they don't have the cash in hand to put out for an annual ticket, especially if you are a family of four. If you are a family of four coming from the island to the mainland and back and forth, it would be about \$2,400 more out of your pocket.

So you can understand, Mr. Speaker, how a decision of this kind - we're often isolated in a room here in the city with individuals who never set foot on the island making that kind of decision. Now I know that the minister understands better because the minister took me up on an invitation to go to both Big and Little Tancook Island on December 16th or 17th. I remember the date because I was very impressed with the fact that the minister would take the time and go talk to the people on Little Tancook and Big Tancook and understand their concerns. I do know that the people of both Big and Little Tancook really appreciate that and they do think a lot about the minister and they felt very comfortable that he does support them.

I think there was quite a surprise when this increase came about. It's very important that when the decisions are made - it's about priorities and it's not easy. No matter what decision you make, there are going to be people who are for and against it. But I believe that every person in this House is here because they knocked on doors and they talked to people on an individual basis and they had discussions about their needs, their stresses and their vision for their own families and for Nova Scotia. That vision was the one-on-one personal touch that we're enabled to have when we do go door to door during election. I think that's the part that's lost when these big decisions have to be made. We actually are not thinking how that will affect that person on an individual basis.

People are finding it difficult, we are going through and we have been going through difficult times. So I would ask the minister who I know is trying everything, I would encourage that he would communicate with myself - and he's very good with that - to let me know how things are going along in terms of some decisions that may help the people on the island, whether it's an annual pass that there will be a payment plan or some other system in place, whether there will be a look at people's incomes and whether they are a year-round resident or not. If that communication flow can be kept with me, then I can certainly let the good people of Tancook Island know that.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I know that from my discussions with the people on Tancook Island that this particular minister is always welcome back to the island and

hopefully maybe we'll be able to have him back. The next time we'll have some lobsters and sauerkraut and some good homemade cooking for him. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: That concludes the time allotted for late debate.

The honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank on an introduction.

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to make an introduction. Up in the east gallery I'd like to ask four people to stand, if they would: John and Krista Alford and their daughter Emily and also her good friend, McKenzie Metham. One other component is that Emily is on her way in a couple of weeks to go to Ontario to compete in the Youth Darts National and she is the youngest of her team so she's doing very well, first year, a very good dart player. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I move the House recess for a period of five minutes while we prepare for the next order of business.

MR. SPEAKER: The House will now recess for five minutes.

[4:31 p.m. The House recessed.]

[4:40 p.m. The House reconvened.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that the Committee on Law Amendments is still hearing presentations in the Red Room, which will delay estimates in that room while we can get started here in the main Chamber, there will be an overlap.

Traditionally it would require a recess in this Chamber waiting for the Red Room to be finished. In light of the time change there, I would ask for unanimous consent of the House that we waive Rule 62F(2)(a) to allow the Subcommittee on Supply in the Red Room to continue its business even after the House wraps in the main Chamber for this evening.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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.

We will recess while we resolve ourselves into Committee of the Whole on Supply.

[4:41 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CW on Supply with Deputy Speaker Ms. Margaret Miller in the Chair.]

[8:47 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 and has made considerable progress and begs leave to sit again.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, Thursday, April 23rd, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. At that time we'll call Government Business. Following the daily routine we'll call Government Business: Public Bills for Second Reading, Bills Nos. 91, 95, 97, 98, and 100. We will also call the Committee of the Whole on Supply.

With that, I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow at 1:00 p.m.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on April 23rd between the hours of 1:00 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 1:00 p.m., April 23rd - tomorrow.

[The House rose at 8:48 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1514**

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (The Premier)

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

Whereas Wednesday, April 22nd, marks Administrative Professional Day for 2015; and

Whereas the hundreds of administrative professionals across government exhibit a wide variety of skills, from communications to accounting to project management, and more; and

Whereas these professionals apply their skills and experiences daily in supporting the delivery of essential programs and services to Nova Scotians;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature acknowledge and thank these highly skilled and dedicated employees for their valuable contributions to the province, and wish them every success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1515

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 Windsor's own Integrity Cheer Elite (ICE) All Stars spend many hours training or at competitive cheerleading performances; and

Whereas on April 12th the group decided to host the Cheer for a Cure, raising funds for cancer research while putting on an amazing show; and

Whereas cheerleading is a fairly new sport in our area, the ICE family wanted to raise awareness in the community for their sport and raise monies for a great charitable event;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Integrity Cheer Elite (ICE) All Stars for making the Cheer for a Cure triumphant, and hope they make it an annual event.

RESOLUTION NO. 1516

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 Karen Ferguson, the owner and operator of Errands by Karen, is celebrating her 1st Anniversary in business; and

Whereas Karen offers a personalized service committed to helping seniors, shut-ins, disabled, or the sick; and

Whereas she carries out many everyday activities such as grocery shopping, cooking meals, transportation to and from appointments, along with providing blood collection services and staying in communication with family members about their loved ones;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Karen Ferguson on her 1st Anniversary with Errands By Karen, and wish her many more years of success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1517

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others, or a particular cause, without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas Donald McNeille has been nominated by the Ellershouse Community Hall Association where he has been an active volunteer for over 15 years, helping with fundraising projects including the 11 months of the year that there is a breakfast held at the hall; and

Whereas Donnie has worked tirelessly sorting out a survey issue with the hall boundaries so they could have clear title to the property; he has also been a volunteer with the St. Louise Union Church as an elder and secretary; he also serves on the board of stewards for the church and is the clerk of session for the St. Croix Pastoral Charge; and he is responsible for maintaining the plot records for the Oakhill Cemetery;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Donald McNeille on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award, and thank him for his ongoing dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1518

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others, or a particular cause, without payment for their time and service; and

Whereas Ralph Lyon has been nominated by the St. John the Baptist Anglican Church, Poplar Grove, where he has been an active member for 42 years; and in addition to being a lifetime member he has been a hall trustee with the Avondale Community Hall for 39 years; and

Whereas Ralph has volunteered with a number of other organizations including the Mermaid Imperial Performing Arts Centre, Windsor Elms Village, Windsor People First Society, Seniors Safety Program of Hants County, Avon River Heritage Society, West Hants Branch of the Arthritis Society, West Hants Historical Society, Matthew 25 Good Neighbours Organizations, Dial-A-Ride, a past canvasser for the Canadian Red Cross, and he has also given blood on 100 occasions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ralph Lyon on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award, and thank him for his ongoing dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1519

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas Ed Martin has been nominated by the Windsor Hockey Heritage Society where he has been active in many roles including vice president of the board, museum manager and site management; and

Whereas Ed is also on the organizing committee of the Long Pond Heritage Classic and the Golf Committee, one of the organization's major fundraisers, and he has volunteered at the Birthplace of Hockey Tournament and the Canadian Inner College Hockey Championships where Ed promotes "Windsor, the Birthplace of Hockey";

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ed Martin on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award and thank him for his dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1520

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas David Mailman has been nominated by the Windsor Fire Department where he has been a member for almost 5 years; and

Whereas David participates in the Partners for Life with Canadian Blood Services and many Windsor Fire Department Committees, has chaired the Windsor Fire Department Recreation and Entertainment Committee, participates in the fire prevention activities to educate citizens of Hants West and is committed to furthering his training and the firefighters he leads;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lieutenant David Mailman on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award and thank him for his dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1521

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas Allison Boyd has been nominated by the Town of Windsor where she had a busy year representing our region at community events as Princess Windsor and 1st Lady in Waiting to Queen Annapolis; and

Whereas Allison continues to be a great ambassador for our community, providing support to this year's Princess, and plans to volunteer with the Princess Windsor Tea Committee in the upcoming years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Allison Boyd on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award and thank her for her dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1522

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas Joanne O'Leary has been nominated by the Windsor Forks District Home & School Association where she has been a valued and active member for nine years; and

Whereas Joanne has volunteered for many school events such as suppers and the annual Spring fling and her family is also a supporter of her volunteer efforts and assists with the bottle return fundraiser, which is an additional source of income for the home and school;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Joanne O'Leary on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award and thank her for her dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1523

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas Juanita Hiscock has been nominated by the Windsor Forks School where she has been an active member, even after her children graduated from elementary school; and

Whereas Juanita manages the school website; keeps the school foyer looking nice by maintaining the large planters; in past years has helped with suppers, Spring flings and noon duty; has served as a Girl Guide Leader and 4-H Leader; has also created and managed the websites for 106 Air Cadets in Windsor and Windsor Curling Club of which she has been the membership chair for the past seven years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Juanita Hiscock on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award and thank her for her dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1524

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas Betty Richards and Jim Crilly have been nominated by the Friends of Ferals, where they have been active members in this great organization for a number of years; and

Whereas Betty and Jim can often be found building cat shelters, providing shelter and socializing cats until they are adopted, and assisting with the trapping of cats for the trap, neuter, and release program of Hants County, and they often transport animals in need for Hope for Wildlife, which is a society that has helped give thousands of injured and orphaned wild animals a second chance at life;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Betty Richards and Jim Crilly on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award and thank them for their ongoing dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1525

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas Karen and Art Ward have been nominated by the Friends of Ferals, where they have been active members in this program for a number of years; and

Whereas Karen and Art can often be found building cat shelters, providing shelters and socializing cats until they are adopted, volunteering with local fundraisers, and transporting food for distribution to cat colonies, and Karen has also volunteered with the SPCA and Art is a volunteer with the Brooklyn Volunteer Fire Department;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Karen and Art Ward on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award and thank them for their ongoing dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1526

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas Gary Oickle has been nominated by the Glooscap Heritage Archers Association, where he has been an active volunteer and executive member for over 25 years and currently holds the position of president; and

Whereas Gary was a committee member helping to organize the 2010 Canadian National 3-D Championships, where he was the recipient of one gold Canadian National 3-D title and two silvers, and he has also been involved with the CKF Emergency Response Team for 16 years and captain for three years, and he also sits on the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee and is a past member of the Employee Assistance program for Nova Scotia, and continues to give of his time to many local events throughout Hants West;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Gary Oickle on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award and thank him for his dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1527

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas Laine Thomas has been nominated by the Glooscap Heritage Archers Association, where she is a member who dedicated over 135 hours in 2014; and

Whereas Laine has assisted with the renovations to the club house in preparation for youth courses, helping set up targets for 3-D shooting events, attending weekly events and setting up equipment, and she has also volunteered to be on the 3-D committee.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Laine Thomas on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award.

RESOLUTION NO. 1528

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas Kim Wieggers has been nominated by the Ardoise Community Hall Association, where she has been a member of this very active organization for over seven years, holding the executive position of secretary; and

Whereas she was also instrumental in organizing and cooking for the annual Family Fun Day Pancake Breakfast, where she, along with her family, took on the behind-the-scenes job of setting up the tables for many regular events, and she also participated in many hall fundraisers, which included auctions, senior suppers, special events, and delivery of meals;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kim Wieggers on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award and thank her for her ongoing dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1529

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas Kameryn Harvey has been nominated by the Ardoise Community Hall Association, where she has been a member of this very active organization for the past two years; and

Whereas Kameryn can often be found volunteering with the children's events held at the hall, has chaperoned the monthly pre-teen dances, and volunteers with the seasonal children's events, helping with the games;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kameryn Harvey on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award and thank her for her ongoing dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1530

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas Kathy Harvey has been nominated by the Ardoise Community Hall Association, where she has been a dedicated volunteer for over four years; and

Whereas Karen has been a regular volunteer at the monthly pre-teen dance, chaperoning the youth and working in the canteen;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kathy Harvey on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award and thank her for her ongoing dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1531

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas Tanner Campbell has been nominated by the Ardoise Community Hall Association, where he has been a youth volunteer for two years; and

Whereas Tanner volunteers his time with the children's events and pre-teen dances, helping with the games and cleanup;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Tanner Campbell on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award and thank him for his ongoing dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1532

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 volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services; and

Whereas Spencer Wright has been nominated by the Ardoise Community Hall Association, having been an active volunteer with many organizations and events since the age of nine; and

Whereas Spencer has been a volunteer with the Ardoise Community Hall for over eight years, assisting with the monthly pre-teen dances, hall bingos, and the annual Easter and Halloween events that are held, and he has volunteered with the West Hants Middle School for five years as a percussion mentor at the fall beginner band clinic and helping with the Remembrance Day ceremonies, and he has been an active volunteer with the Avon View West Hants Band Parents Association for three years, assisting with the annual craft fair and the Brunch with the Bands events, and most recently he has participated in performing at local seniors' homes and community jamborees;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Spencer Wright on receiving the 2015 Community Volunteer Award and thank him for his ongoing dedication and commitment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1533

By: Hon. Keith Colwell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas Brenda King was born in Eastern Passage, moved to Lake Echo with her parents at the age of three years, and remained in Lake Echo to the present day, and later married and, with her husband, brought up a daughter and two sons; and

Whereas she joined St. David's United Church and became an active member and served in many key positions in the church; and

Whereas she also found time to continue her volunteer work and provided the leadership for the formation of the Lake Echo Food Bank, and was also a charter member of the Lake Echo Lioness Club, of which she was a member for 13 years with perfect attendance, and has organized many special events to help others in their time of need;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize Brenda for the many contributions she has made to the community of Lake Echo.