



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2015

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2015

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

MS. PAM EYKING: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition. The operative clause of the petition is:

“We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to **REVERSE** these approved rate increases that affect all residents and businesses of Victoria County. These fee increases will be a tremendous financial burden to local residents in a general low income area. This will also have a devastating impact on tourism throughout Victoria County affecting our local businesses. Our provincial government encourages small rural communities to become self-sustainable as identified in the Ivany Report; however, all efforts would be fruitless with increases of this nature.”

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

MS. PAM EYKING: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition. The operative clause of the petition is:

“We, the undersigned, have driven on this cold, sunny, April 16, 2015, to Jersey Cove Beach to protest the drastic increase in ferry rates this month. The Englishtown ferry is a vital, sometimes daily, transportation link for people from St. Anns Bay to Meat Cove. The rate hikes should be aligned with Nova Scotia’s expressed [sic] target of 3%. We are also severely impacted by the absence of ferry service for most of this winter, and plea for greater efforts to maintain a consistent run - or build a bridge.”

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for Victoria-The Lakes, I ask you to review the two petitions - I did not hear either one had her signature on it.

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

MS. PAM EYKING: I have affixed my signature, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We’re not there yet.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 1605

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

Whereas the Deputy Minister of Justice, Judith Ferguson, will be retiring on April 30, 2015, after 20 years of dedication to the Nova Scotia Public Service; and

Whereas Judith has been inspirational to employees across government, and as my deputy and friend, her guidance, wisdom, and support have been invaluable to me as minister; and

Whereas anyone who has worked closely with her considers it to have been a privilege and a valued opportunity, and her work ethic, strategic vision, and leadership style deserve the respect, appreciation, and recognition of this House and of all Nova Scotians;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize Judith Ferguson for her commitment to a better Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 1606

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

Whereas Nova Scotians recognize the National Day of Mourning every year on April 28th, a day to pause and pay tribute to those who lost their lives or who have been seriously injured on the job; and

Whereas 19 Nova Scotians did not return home from work last year, leaving a wake of heartbreak for families and loved ones; and

Whereas today is the day to remember these individuals, to reaffirm our shared commitment to the families and loved ones who have suffered unimaginable loss, and to continue our efforts not just to reduce workplace fatalities, but to eliminate them completely;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House stand united in recognition of this day, that we continue to raise awareness of these important issues, and that we commend the tremendous efforts of Nova Scotians to improve workplace safety across the province.

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 Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 1607

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

Whereas the Dalhousie Law Reform class presentation held in March gave law students an opportunity to share policy papers and legislative and regulatory reform proposals with myself as Minister of Justice; and

Whereas the students presented six projects, answered questions from myself and the deputy, and clearly demonstrated their ability to effectively contribute to the legal profession in our community; and

Whereas this Law Reform class was a clear indication of the many young, bright students we have working hard and studying in Nova Scotia and who will be part of our next generation of leaders;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize and appreciate and honour the Law Reform class and their professor, Mr. Brent Cotter, from the Dalhousie Schulich School of Law who have a meaningful and successful future ahead.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

NEPAL TRAGEDY - CONTRIBUTIONS

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians and people all over the world are shocked and saddened by the stories and pictures they are seeing in the aftermath of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake in Nepal. The earthquake has been devastating to the country; the death toll is in the thousands and climbing. Many Nova Scotians want to contribute to the relief effort and many agencies are taking donations, including the Canadian Red Cross, UNICEF, Médecins Sans Frontières, World Vision, Save the Children, Oxfam, the Salvation Army, and many more.

The Canadian Government announced Monday that it will match donations to the Nepal Earthquake Relief Fund, dollar for dollar, until May 25th. Today all our thoughts are with Nepal and the tragedy that is unfolding for the people of that country. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

NDP CAUCUS: WORKER SAFETY - INITIATIVES SUPPORT

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, every year on April 28th we come together to remember individuals who have been injured or tragically lost their lives

on the job. Today is National Day of Mourning the death or injury. In addition to paying tribute to those we have lost, it's also a day to renew our shared commitment to keeping one another safe. Every Nova Scotian who goes to work should come home safely, but sadly that is not the reality.

Most workplace injuries are preventable and we all play a role in educating each other and making our workplaces safer. Workers have the right to refuse unsafe work and a duty to report conditions that may put them or their colleague in harm's way. Employers also have an important role to play and must be held accountable if they do not live up to the standards we have in place. They must make worker safety a priority.

The NDP caucus remains committed to doing whatever we can to support initiatives that protect workers and make their job sites safer. I urge all MLAs to do the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

GERVAIS, FRANK - VOL. EFFORTS

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take the time today to acknowledge a wonderful man and volunteer, Frank Gervais. Mr. Gervais is a busy man helping our community. He volunteers at the Halifax West Ecumenical Food Bank Association, located at 50 Gesner Street in the Salvation Army Building, where he has been a founding member and treasurer for the last 23 years. He also helps host and organize the SupperNova Events at Saint Benedict Church; he is the trustee and director of church activities, where he helps prepare Hope Cottage meals; he works with his teams to distribute supplies to the homeless people of Halifax; and the list goes on. Mr. Gervais is truly a remarkable person who helps our community and the people who need it the most. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank him for all that he does.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

FRASER, ALLAN & MARY/A&M SMALL ENGINES - ANNIV. (30th)

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Allan and Mary Fraser, owners of A&M Small Engines, for celebrating 30 years in business on April 1, 2015. The business was originally located in Pictou, but after a year, they relocated to Lyons Brook. They have loyal customers from all over Pictou County, from River John to Hopewell to Merigomish. The business carries a wide range of products and provides repair service on engines ranging from lawn tractors and gardening equipment to snow blowers.

Allan studied small engines and takes training courses yearly to stay up-to-date on the changes in the products. He is quick to credit Mary's bookkeeping skills as a large

reason for the company's success. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to extend my congratulations to Allan and Mary Fraser and wish them continued success.

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

STORY OF A PREMIER

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, once upon a time, there was a Liberal MLA who wanted to be Premier. He told the people, trust me - no more corporate handouts. We'll also protect the film industry, and growing the economy in rural Nova Scotia is a priority. Health care services will be the best in the land.

Well, the Royal Bank got \$22 million even though last year they had a \$9 billion profit. The film industry is working on a retake. The rural Nova Scotia economy has lost services and thousands of jobs, and R2-D2 service machines soon will be dotting our provincial parks. Health care services - well, our ERs are closed more now with people travelling farther for services.

I wish this story had a happy ending, but it doesn't.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

MACNEIL, TIFFANY - EDUC. WK. AWARD

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, April 20th to April 25th was Education Week here in Nova Scotia. Since 1935, we have been honouring the commitment of teachers and education partners to our students.

On April 20, 2015, the Education and Early Childhood Development Minister presented Education Week Awards to four teachers from the Strait Regional School Board, including one from Antigonish. Tiffany MacNeil is a teacher at H.M. MacDonald Elementary School in Maryvale, Antigonish County. She is also one of the driving forces behind an important community project to build an accessible playground at the Antigonish Education Centre - "A Playground for 'Every Body'".

Ms. MacNeil is the ideal recipient of an Education Week Award not only for being a dedicated teacher and mentor, but for being a leader in the community. She has amazing passion and an astounding commitment to her students and the community at large. Mr. Speaker, I ask that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate Tiffany MacNeil on receiving her award and join me in thanking her for her commitment, leadership, and inclusiveness. Thank you.

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

VANBUSKIRK, CHRISTINE - MCDONALD'S REST. AWARD

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Christine VanBuskirk, who was awarded the Outstanding Manager Award by McDonald's Restaurants of Canada. Christine has worked her way through all positions in the restaurants since starting at McDonald's in 1985. Today, she is the manager of the North Sydney restaurant. She has the ability to empower and motivate her staff and demonstrates consistently exceptional leadership and performance. That must be the case because she manages my son who also works there.

It is a true honour to have this opportunity to congratulate Christine on this well-deserved national award.

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

MCNEIL GOV'T.: WORKERS' RIGHTS - AWARENESS

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the McNeil Government didn't learn anything after it introduced Bill No. 1 and Bill No. 37. It should have learned that taking away workers' rights is not only unfair and unethical, it is also unconstitutional.

Ignoring that fact, the McNeil Government has now taken aim at university employees like those in NSGEU Local 92, which represents workers at Dalhousie University. The people in Local 92 are filing clerks, lab technologists, maintenance workers, and many others who do important work to keep the university functioning day in and day out. These workers rely on the stability that their union brings them and the McNeil Government has now put that stability in jeopardy.

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

COLE HBR. PUBLIC LIBRARY: WORK - RECOGNIZE

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the Cole Harbour Public Library and the excellent work that the staff does there. Many people are not aware of the crucial role libraries play in our communities. The library as a space for community members to gather and to interact on a social and academic level is sometimes overlooked. I also want to highlight the benefit that the library provides to parents as they are given a wonderful opportunity to actively participate in their children's learning.

I have experienced first-hand some of the activities provided at the library, and also during African Heritage Month I listened to a talk showing our connection to Sierra Leone. Great efforts are put into providing a monthly calendar of events that go beyond the scope of books, magazines, and resource materials. The exciting schedule of programs includes,

but not limited to, wellness, parenting programs, and free movie screenings. I'd like to thank the staff for their tireless efforts in being such a great, positive feature for our community.

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

**MCCALLUM, SIR SYLVESTER -
KNIGHT OF THE FRENCH NATL. ORDER OF THE LEGION OF HONOUR**

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, this month World War II veteran Sylvester "Bus" McCallum was recently awarded the rank of Knight of the French National Order of the Legion of Honour in recognition of his professional involvement in the liberation of France. Sir McCallum signed up for the war effort at the age of 17 and was assigned to the Canadian Scottish Regiment from British Columbia. On D-Day, June 6, 1944, he was among the first Allied troops who stormed Juno Beach. Sir "Bus", as he jokingly likes to be referred, is the second local veteran to have been granted knighthood by the Government of France.

I ask the members to join me in congratulating Sir Sylvester McCallum on being awarded this highest honour, and thank him for his services to his own country and our Allies in France.

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

**MCNEIL GOV'T.: VULNERABLE/UNDER-SERVICED GROUPS
- BUDGET CUTS**

MS. LENORE ZANN: Like many Nova Scotians I was shocked by the McNeil Government's budget. I was, and still am, deeply concerned about their arbitrary cuts to the screen industry and important community organizations, in particular those that serve the vulnerable and under-represented people in our communities.

Why did every single member of the McNeil Government vote in favour of slashing funding for eating disorder programs? Why did every single member of the McNeil Government vote in favour of cutting funding to the LGBT youth in Cape Breton? And why didn't a single backbencher speak up against cuts to the offices of Aboriginal Affairs and African Nova Scotian Affairs?

Luckily, for Nova Scotians, they still have strong voices in this Legislature, in this caucus, voices like mine and my colleagues who will speak up against these cuts.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

MR. KEITH IRVING: May I make an introduction before reading a statement?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. IRVING: I would like to ask my colleagues to look up to the east gallery where we are joined today by Mr. Michael Bawtree, a fine actor, teacher, writer, and passionate voice for the arts, culture, and history in this province. I'd like to ask Michael to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

BAWTREE, MICHAEL - MEMOIRS

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to congratulate Mr. Michael Bawtree of Wolfville on the recent publication of his first volume of memoirs, entitled *As Far As I Remember*. Mr. Bawtree is well-known for his distinguished career in Canadian theatre, including being the founder of the Atlantic Theatre Festival. However, what he may be best known for in the halls of Province House is his portrayal of Joseph Howe right here in the Legislature, and his Joseph Howe Initiative eventually led to the designation of our Joseph Howe Room and the publication of the children's book *Joe Howe to the Rescue*, launched in the Red Room.

On behalf of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, I want to congratulate Mr. Bawtree on his distinguished career, captured now in the first volume of his memoirs, and to thank him for his many years of service to the arts and heritage of our province and Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South on an introduction.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I'd like to draw the attention of all members of the House to the gallery opposite, where Mr. Travis Price, the founder of Pink Shirt Day and an international advocate for anti-bullying, particularly in our schools, is with us. I would encourage Travis to stand and receive the warm welcome here from all sides of the House of Assembly. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

INTL. DAY OF MOURNING (04/28/15) - RECOGNIZE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize April 28th as the International Day of Mourning, a day to commemorate workers who have been killed or injured due to workplace accidents. Today our thoughts are with the 19 Nova Scotians who lost their lives on the job this past year, along with their families and their communities.

The International Day of Mourning is an opportunity for employees and employers and all members of this House to publicly renew their commitment to improve health and safety in the workplace - an issue that reaches all parts of Nova Scotia.

Today we mark the Day of Mourning by remembering those who came home injured or who didn't come home at all. On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I would like to thank everyone who has worked tirelessly to prevent accidents in the workplace.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**HFX. CHEBUCTO MLA - INTERPRETATION:
MCNEIL GOV'T. - POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS**

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, last week the member for Halifax Chebucto regaled us with his interpretation of the McNeil Government's support for post-secondary students. He told us that his government is "committed to making university and post-secondary education more accessible, more affordable."

Mr. Speaker, how does removing the tuition cap make education more affordable for students? Cape Breton University's board just approved an increase in tuition of more than 20 per cent over the next four years. This is only possible because of the actions of the member's government.

I can only assume that the member for Halifax Chebucto hadn't read his government's budget when he made those comments last week. If he had, he would have known that his government is actually making post-secondary education less affordable and less accessible for students in this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

BAXTER, BRUCE - BIRTHDAY (60th)

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say a few words about my friend and colleague Bruce Baxter. Bruce is a senior Crown Attorney in the Public Prosecution Service, where he has provided faithful service to the province for over 20 years. Bruce may seem curmudgeonly, crusty, or acerbic to some, but I call him intelligent, witty, and insightful. Of course, the humour quotient in Bruce's diatribes increases exponentially with every dram taken.

Bruce is an exceptional lawyer and a credit to our profession. His preparation, skill, and knowledge always push me to be better and to learn more in my career. I learned more from being across the courtroom from Bruce than I did from almost any other experience.

Bruce is a committed community volunteer. He spreads his particular brand of joy throughout our community, in groups like the Historical Society, Trinity-St. Stephen's United Church, and various choral groups.

This Saturday Bruce will turn 60. I regret that I will not be able to gather with his family and friends to help remind him of what the advancement of the years has dealt him, but I do wish to take this opportunity to wish him all the best in the years to come.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

PICTOU CO. PIZZA FEST.: COUGIAS, ANDRE & RHONDA - WINNERS

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, for the second consecutive year, the Pictou County Pizza Festival was held to promote and celebrate a local passion for pizza. We have a unique niche kind of food that can and should be celebrated: Pictou County pizza. Glasgow Square was the venue, and in addition to pizza, the festival promoted another local business: Uncle Leo's beer.

The attendees, rather than a panel of judges, chose their favourites, and the winner for the best pizza was Acropole Pizza. It was a fun-filled night and plans are already in the works for next year. I can tell you first-hand that Andre and Rhonda create an excellent Pictou County pizza.

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

LIBERAL PLATFORM (2013) - ARTS & CULTURE

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from the Liberal platform of 2013: "A Liberal government will strengthen Arts and Culture and will continue to support our thriving cultural industries by . . . Extending the Film Tax Credit and the Digital Media Tax Credit for an additional 5-year period."

In my earlier statement today, I suggested that the gutting of the film industry, the loss of services, and the loss of jobs will again have a cumulative effect, specifically for rural Nova Scotia; 20,000 jobs disappearing in Nova Scotia during the McNeil Government's mandate is a hard act to follow. Sorry, Mr. Speaker - that was a poorly-timed pun.

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

**DIGBY & AREA HEALTH SERV. CHARITABLE FDN.
- FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN**

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the good work of the Digby and Area Health Services Charitable Foundation and wish them success in their current fundraising campaign. Founded in 1994, the foundation has had a positive impact on health services in Digby County. Recently, it contributed \$1.7 million to the new Digby and Area Health Services Centre, which is slated to be open at the end of June. Also in the last year, the foundation has helped purchase four cardiac monitors and defibrillators as well as other equipment needed for the care of patients at the Digby General Hospital.

To ensure that it will continue to bolster health services after these recent large outlays, the foundation is currently devoting more energy to fundraising. So far, the foundation has raised \$50,000 in this new campaign. Obviously others recognize the important role of the foundation in the county. Many thanks for their continuing support to health services in the Digby area. It's greatly appreciated.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MCGEE, MS. ROBIN - CDN. CANCER SOC. NATL. MEDAL OF COURAGE

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Cancer Society will present their National Medal of Courage to *The Cancer Olympics* author Robin McGee of Port Williams on April 29th. McGee, who battled colorectal cancer and medical indifference, gets a gold medal for her efforts and is this year's recipient from Nova Scotia. She is a CancerConnection volunteer. Since 2011, she has been matched with 21 cancer patients. Even as she continues through the ups and downs of tests and screenings after remission, the citation notes McGee is able to put her own worries aside and offer support to others facing similar battles. Since 2012, McGee has been the top fundraiser at the Middleton Relay for Life.

I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating Robin McGee on this well-deserved award and best wishes on her personal fight against cancer.

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

PREM. - LEGISLATION: CANADIANS - FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, on March 13th after the Premier unsuccessfully fired nationally renowned mediator/arbitrator James Dorsey, this government announced that it had reached an agreement with public sector workers to allow them to finally institute bargaining associations. Bargaining associations, also known as bargaining councils, were a victory for the health care workers. They are a solution to a problem of the government's own making, and one that was proposed nearly eight months

ago. Throughout the Bill No. 1 process, the Premier tried his hardest to circumvent the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but ultimately Mr. Dorsey helped navigate the Premier back into legal waters.

We all hoped that the McNeil Government had learned an important lesson during his climbdown on Bill No. 1, but then last week, much to our surprise, the Premier introduced new legislation that would take away people's fundamental rights as Canadians. It is our hope that the Premier hasn't irreparably offended Mr. Dorsey so that the Premier can pick up the phone and ask for his advice on how to change Bill No. 100 before the courts have to do it for him.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**LOHNES, GARY - "IT'S ALL ABOUT HER" CHARITY CONCERT:
ORGANIZING - THANK**

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, on January 17th, I had the pleasure of attending the second annual It's All About Her charity concert and auction to support breast cancer research. Organized by Gary Lohnes, this was a well-attended event for an important cause. This year, we had the pleasure of listening to Irish Mythen and Christine Campbell perform for a large crowd of supporters.

Breast cancer has touched so many lives and the funds from events such as "It's All About Her" will go a long way to helping support those living with this disease and someday find a cure.

I would like to recognize the initiative and hard work Gary has put into this event to make it such an overwhelming success. He has volunteered many hours of his time and energy to create an outstanding event for an important cause. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MACLEAN, DAWN: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place today to honour a friend and former colleague, Dawn McLean. Dawn will be retiring on June 30th, following 31 years of planning, preparing and delivering effective teaching to our students. Her career began in New Glasgow High School and continued to North Nova Education Centre in 2003 when this new school officially opened.

Dawn tackled every day with enthusiasm and exuberance and was always willing to develop new strategies to reach her students. She always had the ability to get her students to buy into, believe in and be motivated to become lifelong learners.

It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to work with Dawn, a teacher whose goal was to make a difference in the lives of young people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**ECOLOGY ACTION CTR. : SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANNING PROG.
- FUNDING CUTS**

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, when I was growing up in Truro, walking and taking bikes to school was much more common than it is now. Since 2007 the Ecology Action Centre has spearheaded a program called School Travel Planning, which aims to end the slower trend of biking and walking to school, to get more children active on their way to school.

This planning program works with families, schools and community groups to ensure that there is a safe and organized way for students to use active transportation. The program has been piloted in 24 schools including in HRM, Bridgewater, Chester, Annapolis County and Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

Sadly, the McNeil Government's austerity budget has cut funding for School Travel Planning, as well as other active transportation initiatives. Organizations will now be unable to access this funding and unable to use it to leverage other financial support from private foundations. Why has the Minister of Health and Wellness axed a program that not only encourages environmentally sustainable transportation but one that keeps our kids active and healthy, too?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

**MARONITE YOUTH CONVENTION (OTTAWA):
TABET, MOST REV. PAUL-MARWAN - SUPPORT THANK**

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, the second Maronite Youth Convention will be held from May 15 to 18, 2015, in Ottawa, hosted by the Eparchy of Saint Maron-Canada and the St. Charbel Maronite Catholic Parish. This convention gathers over 300 young Maronites between the ages of 18 and 30 from across Canada for a weekend of spiritual and fun activities. It is a terrific way for young people of faith to connect spiritually and culturally.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to have been asked to be the guest speaker with the Apostolic Nuncio to Canada on the theme: Touching Christ, creating difference. The goal is to transmit to the youth the importance of faith in our lives.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Most Reverend Paul-Marwan Tabet, Maronite Bishop of Canada, for supporting this religious youth initiative and wish all delegates a spiritually uplifting time. Thank you very much.

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

ALDRED, ADAM/HUSKILSON, ANDREA - EDUC. WK. AWARDS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, on April 20th teachers and education partners across the province were celebrated for their dedication to their students, schools and communities. Each and every school in our province has incredible stories to tell and it's important that we acknowledge their accomplishments. The successes can be credited to the many remarkable educators in our province who show unwavering dedication to their students and to the value of learning.

I would like to congratulate all recipients for their exemplary efforts to empower our students and a special acknowledgement to Adam Aldred from the Tri-County Regional School Board and Andrea Huskilson from the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, both residents of the beautiful constituency of Argyle-Barrington.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

KELLY, HEATHER - BEDFORD ADULT VOL. OF YR.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to take a moment today to congratulate Heather Kelly on being named Bedford's 2015 Adult Volunteer of the Year. Heather has held numerous executive positions and coordinated projects at the Fort Sackville Foundation over the last 15 years. Her accomplishments include: organizing the popular annual Georgian tea, coordinating the Antique Road Show, chairing the student art exhibit and acting as oral history interviewer.

Many other groups and organizations have benefited from Heather's participation and leadership. She served as area district commissioner for the Boy Scouts of Canada, overseeing all Beaver groups from Bedford, Hammonds Plains, Waverley, Beaver Bank, Middle and Upper Sackville, Windsor Junction, Grand Lake and Lakeview. She travelled the province as provincial adult leader/trainer and course leader. Historical societies, recreation and community organizations, health charities, St. Nicholas Church, Bedford Ringette, and the City of Halifax have all benefited from her assistance. I'm proud to have Heather a member of our community. She is an outstanding volunteer who is dedicated, reliable, and capable and she spreads joy wherever she goes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

THE MUSIC MAN: PRODUCTION - CAST/CREW CONGRATS.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise today to congratulate everyone involved with the recent production of *The Music Man* that played at the deCoste Entertainment Centre in Pictou for three nights in March. The musical was directed by Don Hill and had a large cast and crew. Once again, Amanda Hill and Jim Proudfoot were outstanding in their lead roles. The annual musical is widely anticipated by the residents of Pictou County and is a sellout every year. Don Hill is a member of the Pictou Rotary Club and the musical is their major fundraiser for the year. Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to witness the talent in Pictou County and I would like to congratulate the cast and crew on their performance of *The Music Man*.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

NEW BEGINNINGS MINISTRIES/GLOBAL OUTREACH - COMMITMENT

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the New Beginnings Ministries for the ongoing efforts to help many people both locally and globally through the work of their Global Outreach Team. The Global Outreach Team is travelling to the Dominican Republic in May 2015 to work for the Servant's Heart Foundation to renovate shanties into proper dwellings, build a well with clean water and provide individuals with jobs and skills training. This is one example of life-changing work of the church and the Global Outreach team.

The members of the Global Outreach team travelling to the Dominican Republic are: Spencer Colley, Eric D'Anjou, Shelley D'Anjou, Peter Field, Kevin Brooks, Connie Glasgow White, Dolly Williams, Lillian Loppie, and Lorraine Graves. I applaud and encourage the New Beginnings Ministry and the Global Outreach Team for their commitment to serve and help both here at home and away.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

OTTER, KATHY - RETIREMENT

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak about a friend from my constituency. Kathy Otter entered the nursing profession in 1985 after raising her children. She is a caring, understanding person with a strong ability to empathize with patients from all walks of life. Kathy possesses excellent interpersonal skills and always works well in a variety of situations with different people. She began working at the Glenhaven Manor in New Glasgow in 1986 and enjoyed working with the elderly, always understanding that the patient comes first. Kathy retired on October 31, 2014, from a profession where she had the opportunity to make a profound difference in the lives of numerous people. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BOYLE, CHRIS - OH&S CASE: EMPLOYER - GUILTY VERDICT

MR. BRENDAN MAQUIRE: Mr. Speaker, with today being the National Day of Mourning it only seems fitting that the Nova Scotia Provincial Court found the employer in the death of Chris Boyle of Williamswood, guilty of violating the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Chris, 39, left behind his wife, Tanya and two beautiful daughters, Jenna and Megan. Chris was a dedicated volunteer firefighter and very active in our community. I hope this ruling somehow helps the Boyle family in some small way. As someone who comes from a labour background, I want to remind every worker on their right to workplace refusal. Thank you.

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

CAPE NORTH FARMER'S MARKET - GET GROWING CONTEST

MS. PAM EYKING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize an initiative of the Cape North Farmer's Market. They are holding a Get Growing contest this year for all those living North of Smokey. There are three categories including giant pumpkin, prettiest root vegetable and weirdest root vegetable. Judging will take place in October at the Cape North Farmer's Market. Initiatives such as this helps get Nova Scotians excited about growing their own food, nutrition, nurturing the land, and learning more about our environment. I know I can't wait to get my hands in the soil and start enjoying the wonderful vegetables that we can grow for ourselves in our summer growing season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**BAILEY, MAYOR RACHEL/LUN. TOWN
- EQUALITY POSITION STATEMENT**

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, the saying goes that all men and women are created equal. In the eyes of society over the years this hasn't always been the case. The Town of Lunenburg, led by Mayor Rachel Bailey recently approved a position statement to reflect the changes in the equality landscape over the years.

The statement, drafted after a request from Second Story Women's Centre, reads that council ". . . believes that all women and girls have the right to live in safety and dignity, free from threat, intimidation and violence. Gender-based violence in all of its forms diminishes quality of life for all and is unacceptable to the people of Lunenburg."

The town has also agreed to ensure that any language that stereotypes gender roles, race, or culture, or inadvertently promotes inequality, will be removed from municipal

policies and procedures. I would like to congratulate the town for taking this step forward in recognizing that everyone - gender, race, or social status included - should be treated equally and with respect.

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

COUSINEAU, MEDRIC - SERVICE DOG LEGISLATION

MS. JOYCE TREEN: Medric Cousineau is a Canadian Armed Forces veteran from Eastern Passage. He is a retired Sea King helicopter navigator who suffers from PTSD, and is an activist for the need for service dogs. He started Paws Fur Thought, which campaigns for service dogs for veterans. Thai is Medric's Yellow Lab service dog, trained for PTSD. Medric's life has improved drastically since Thai has come into his life.

To people with PTSD, autism, epilepsy, diabetes, and anxiety, these service dogs are their wheelchairs to independent living. I have been working with Medric, the Nova Scotia Justice Department, and my fellow member for Eastern Shore to bring the need for service dog legislation to light. It is my hope that the government will be addressing this need in the near future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MACLEAN, LORRAINE: VOL. - THANK

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, volunteers are the cornerstone of Nova Scotian communities. They give generously of their time and talents, and they expect nothing in return.

One of those valuable volunteers is Lorraine MacLean of the Westville Heritage Group, and I know that group feels very fortunate to have her as a member. For the last 18 years, Lorraine has taught line dancing and ukulele to seniors all around the county. I would like to salute Lorraine for helping keep our seniors socially and physically active, and I ask all members of this House to join me in wishing her continued good health and happiness.

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

VET. AFFS. - POST-KOREAN WAR VETS: CAMP HILL HOSP. POLICY - CHANGE

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, veterans should no longer be denied access to care while beds sit empty at Camp Hill. The federal government needs to allow all veterans access to Department of Veterans Affairs-run hospitals and long-term care facilities. There are over 10 empty beds at the Camp Hill in Halifax, yet these beds cannot be filled by post-Korean War veterans, due to strict eligibility criteria.

A veteran is a veteran, regardless of where and when they served. I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Assembly to join me and the federal NDP in calling on the federal government to make this policy change for our veterans.

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

INTL. DAY OF MOURNING (04/28/15) - OBSERVANCE

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: Mr. Speaker, April 28th marks the 24th Anniversary of the International Day of Mourning, which is now recognized in about 80 countries around the world. Every year ceremonies are held in memory of workers who have died, been injured, or suffered illness due to workplace-related hazards and unsafe conditions. While remembering the dead and the injured, we also remember their families and those impacted by these losses.

Fellow workers, families, and employers join in the annual observance on this day to remember and to renew our commitment to improve occupational health and safety in the workplace. The annual Day of Mourning is not only about the victims of workplace incidents but also a call to protect the living.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TIR - HWY. SAFETY REVIEW REPORTS (HWY. NOS. 101, 103, 104): MIN. ACTION - RECOGNIZE

HON. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the release of the highway safety report by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal today. When I was 10 years old, only a few weeks before Christmas, I answered the door to a priest and my father's boss. My father had been killed in a head-on collision on Highway No. 101.

There is no way to make that news okay for a child who is old enough to understand death but not old enough to know how to deal with the loss of a parent. It's something that I rarely speak about, but hardly a day goes by that I don't wonder how my life might have been different.

Mr. Speaker, my situation is not particularly special; there are too many stories like this in the province. But 30 years later, I understand that time, capacity, and money have prevented the twinning of every 100-Series Highway to prevent head-on collisions, and so I am confident that today's report about highway safety will lead to action to help ensure that fewer people answer their doors to learn that a family member has been taken away suddenly and too soon.

I would like to recognize the minister and his department for their action and concern about this.

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

STAN ROGERS FOLK FEST. - VOLS.

MR. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, every year on the first weekend of July, Canso hosts the annual Stan Rogers Folk Festival, which was created to honour the late Canadian folk singer and songwriter Stan Rogers in 1997.

Jennie and Troy Greencorn play a huge role in making the Stan Rogers Folk Festival happen every year. The festival was cancelled in 2014 due to hurricane weather. The festival is filled with many singers and songwriters, as well as many booths with handcrafted products, and loads of food and enjoyment. They even have a campground for individuals coming from afar.

The event has won a number of East Coast Music Awards and attracts over 10,000 music fans each year. Many fans come from far and wide across the country to spend time at this event. It brings countless amounts of revenue and tourists to our community and our county.

There are numerous dedicated volunteers involved in making this festival possible, too many to mention, so I thank you all greatly for supporting this event and volunteering your time and effort. I am honoured to have these volunteers at such an amazing, well-known event in my constituency. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

PERRY, LILLIAN SCOTT - PROV. VOL. AWARD

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the 41st Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards are a special day to acknowledge those who dedicate their time and effort to support others in our community. Amongst those being acknowledged was Lillian Scott Perry from Barrington. Lillian has been a member of the Nova Scotia Guides Association for 35 years, giving young girls the opportunity to develop healthy life skills. She is also actively involved in the Goodwill Club, Barrington Bay Trail, Cape Sable Historical Society, and the Barrington Exhibition, to mention a few.

The community and province recognize Lillian Scott Perry as a valuable member of her community, and once again I'd like to congratulate her for her dedication to so many great organizations.

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

MCNEIL GOV'T.: CNIB - FUNDING CUTS

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, Pamela Gow-Boyd is the Canadian National Institute of the Blind Regional Vice-President in Atlantic Canada. Pamela is shocked by the recent comments made by the Minister of Community Services about the funding of CNIB's vision rehabilitation services.

The McNeil Government cut CNIB's funding by 30 per cent. Rehabilitation therapy services help Nova Scotians who are blind, or who have partial sight, to learn skills to accomplish everyday activities that we take for granted - like cooking or crossing the street. The McNeil Government's cut put the safety and independence of people who are blind or are living with partial sight at risk.

Governing is about making choices, but the McNeil Government needs to make more compassionate choices, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

W. COL. COBRAS BANTAM B HOCKEY SEASON - OUTSTANDING

HON. KAREN CASEY: The West Colchester Cobras Bantam B hockey team has had an outstanding season. They won the Northern Conference crown in March with a 3 to 1 victory over Pictou, earning the right to play in the Day of Champions.

They went on to capture the provincial crown at the Hockey Nova Scotia Day of Champions, doubling West Hants 6 to 3 in the provincial final. The Cobras were the lone Colchester County team to qualify for the Day of Champions event. The Cobras continued their winning streak when they captured their third banner this season by winning gold at the SEDMA tournament, posting an impressive 6 and 1 record at the 13-team tournament and defeating Cole Harbour 2 to 1 in the final, to claim top honours in the Odyssey Division. Colchester North is proud of these excellent young athletes.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

ABRAHAM, ZOE - YOUTH VOL. OF YR. AWARD (2015)

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to take a moment today to congratulate Zoe Abraham on receiving Bedford's 2015 Youth Volunteer of the Year award.

Zoe was nominated by the Bedford United Church for her dedication to her community. She has been an active volunteer with the church for three years, taking on

many leadership roles - she is a singer in the youth worship band, ReGenesis, a congregational scripture and song leader, and a member of the discernment committee.

Zoe's passion to help others goes beyond her involvement in the church. At school she has coordinated fundraisers for the IWK, and has planned garage sales with her friends to raise funds for World Vision. Zoe was nominated by the IWK and given a Citizenship Award by the City of Halifax.

I am proud to have Zoe as a member of our community, she is an exemplary young person, dedicated and compassionate, and she brightens every space she graces. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEXICO LINDO/ANA/WILSON/TEAM - SUCCESS WISH

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, Mexico Lindo Restaurant in Fairview, located at 3635 Dutch Village Road, is one of the most unique and delicious restaurants that we have in our community. Led by a dynamic husband and wife team, Mexico Lindo provides fresh, delicious, and authentic Mexican cuisine. Ana Jimenez Jenkins is the chef extraordinaire and Wilson Jenkins is the restaurateur with exceptional skill.

Mexico Lindo has been voted best restaurant outside of downtown for three years in a row and is a favourite spot among locals. They have been in business since 1999 and are celebrating their 16th year in operation. Ana and Wilson not only provide our community with delicious Mexican cuisine, but are strong community builders and philanthropists, using their business as a hub to help serve our community and its needs.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I wish to give thanks and congratulations to Ana, Wilson, and the entire team at Mexico Lindo and hope that they have continued success in the years to come.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

STEWART, JULISSA - BARTLETT MEM. BURSARY

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, you and some of my colleagues may know of a remarkable young woman who tragically passed away in 2010. Holly Bartlett was born with an eye condition that caused her to lose her sight at the age of 13, but she never let that disability define who she was. Holly graduated from Prince Andrew High School in 1997, winning several awards and scholarships including the Walter and Wayne Gretzky Scholarship. She then went to St. F.X. and graduated with an honours arts degree in psychology. She also earned a human resources certificate from the Nova Scotia Community College, and at the time of her death was enrolled at Dalhousie University and

working on her Master of Public Administration, which was awarded posthumously in 2011.

Besides her long list of academic achievements, Holly had a great sense of humour and adventure. She was truly an extraordinary person and it is no wonder that Holly's family and friends started a bursary to be awarded annually in her honour. The Holly E. Bartlett Memorial Bursary is available to a full-time undergraduate female student from Atlantic Canada who has a minimum average of 75 and who demonstrates financial need and a commitment to community service as well as student activities.

This year's recipient is Julissa Stewart, a second-year student at St. F.X. University planning to major in psychology. Julissa volunteers on campus, has two part-time jobs, and will soon be travelling to Belize as part of the St. F.X. Service Learning program.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Julissa on winning the Holly E. Bartlett Memorial Bursary as we remember the amazing woman for whom it was named.

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

HIGH SCH. MATH LEAGUE - DIGBY REG. HS TEAM

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate a team of four students from Digby Regional High School for qualifying for the provincials at the math competition known as the high school Math League. The Digby students are Gillian Stanton, Leo Li, Yusuke Fujiwara, and Nicole Moulaison.

The Nova Scotia Math League is an interactive opportunity by the Mathematics and Statistics Department of Dalhousie University with a goal of challenging students in this subject. The students participate in three regional championships during the school year, each lasting around three hours. At each competition, the students work as a team to answer 10 different problems as well as participate in two math relays.

In the regional competitions, the Digby team finished third behind two teams from Barrington. Their success must be attributed to teamwork and the attention they paid to their math studies in the past. I wish them good luck at the provincial championships to be held at Dalhousie University at the end of the month.

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

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: I would like to draw the members' attention to the gallery opposite. We have two very distinguished guests today who are visiting. They are part of the MLA awareness program that is being offered by the Union of Nova Scotia

Municipalities. We have with us today the Mayor of Antigonish, Carl Chisholm, as well as the Warden of Victoria County, Bruce Morrison. I'd ask them both to rise and get the warm welcome of the House.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I too would like to do an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, in the west gallery, we're joined today by a resident of the Fairview area. I believe he has been here before on at least one other occasion to watch the events of our Legislature. His name is Paul Chiasson and I ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for members' statements has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM.: BANK TAX - CAP JUSTIFY

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. In the details of the government's budget there is a tax break for our largest financial corporations like banks and insurance companies. The budget actually put the cap on the amount of tax these large corporations have to pay. Ironically, the government justifies by saying "this change will encourage financial institutions to grow."

I would like to ask the Premier, why is it okay to cap the tax on banks to encourage them to grow, while capping the film grant which will stop the growth of our own homegrown film industry?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question, and I want to thank all members of the film industry, Screen Nova Scotia, who came together to work with our government to lay out a path forward that not only continues to allow the film industry to operate in this province but broadens the opportunity for more people.

This is a great news story for this province. I'm looking forward to continuing to see growth in the film sector as well as animation, the digital side, and yes, of course, we're looking to see growth in the financial sector as well.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it turns out that the biggest thanks that the Premier has given is to our largest financial corporations. We've had a cap placed on the amount of tax that they will pay in our province - oddly, so that they can grow - while we can't get a straight answer from the government about whether the film grant that encourages our own homegrown industry will be capped or not. So it's fine for banks to grow, but we cap the homegrown film industry.

I'll now ask the Premier, since they're negotiating with the animators, will he now tell the film industry and our digital animators, are they going to be capped or not?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to remind him very clearly that banks, like all financial institutions, pay taxes in this province. We're looking forward to continue to have them grow and to pay more taxes in this province; corporate tax that is.

We made it very clear that we were more than prepared to change the Film Tax Credit to an actual tax credit that could be applied against taxes. The film industry said that didn't work for them, so we said to them to find us an alternative mechanism that would work for you - and I'm very proud of the fact they ignored the rhetoric coming from the Opposition members on this floor. They came to government with a solution, we're moving forward to create good jobs in this province, move this province forward despite what the members of the Opposition think.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the Premier acknowledge that banks pay tax, but do you know who else pays tax? The small homegrown small business Nova Scotia film industry and they're still upset that the government said 99 per cent of them don't pay tax - that's not the case. The City of Toronto, in Ontario, on their website they make it very clear that the Ontario Film Tax Credit has no caps and no limits on the number of productions they support because they want their industry to grow. But here the Premier would rather give a tax break to the largest corporations like the banks.

Let's at least find out where the government's priorities are, who they really want to help. Will the Premier agree today to provide to this House a list of all of the banks and other financial institutions that he expects are going to benefit from his big break for them?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I know it's difficult for the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party to understand. There is no tax break for the banks. The banks have paid the tax last year and they will pay the same amount of tax today and tomorrow. Every banking institution in this province has been paying taxes to the people of this province, and will continue to pay the same amount of tax after the budget is passed. This is a

government that is working with all sectors to move forward, to show it is fair for taxpayers as well as fair to grow the economy of this province.

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

MCNEIL GOV'T.: COM. SERV. BUS PASSES - REMOVAL EXPLAIN

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, Paul Chiasson is a person who lives with cerebral palsy and other disabilities. His monthly budget from the Department of Community Services for many years included a bus pass. However, in January, Paul was told he no longer qualifies for a bus pass and he's now been given enough money for 10 round trips per month on the bus.

My question is for the Premier is, why is the McNeil Government taking away bus passes that people have qualified for, and depended on in many cases, for years?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for her question. I will take the question you brought to us. I don't know the specifics about that case. We'll have a look at it and get back to Mr. Chiasson on the issue brought before us.

I do want to remind all members of this House, though, that after four years of the New Democratic Party being in power, this province is in tough financial challenges. They spent four years of inaction, and it's time that we get our fiscal house in order.

I agree with the honourable member. We will look in to ensure that Mr. Chiasson is treated fairly by the people of this province.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, Paul isn't alone. He's not the only one who has had his bus pass cut. Kenna Davison is a loving and supportive mother with a son, 23 years old, who suffers from schizophrenia. His bus pass has also been taken away, as have the bus passes of many other people. He gets just \$10 a month now, for medical appointment transportation only.

I want to ask the Premier, how can the Premier justify his government's decision to cut transportation to people like this young man, who has to walk now from Clayton Park to north end Halifax if he wants to visit his mother?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I again want to thank the honourable member for the question. As I said, we'll take the question she has provided us under advisement. We'll have a look and see what the honourable member is referring to, and we'll get back to those Nova Scotians.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, earlier this year the Premier told the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, "We shouldn't be doing all things that we are doing. Our ministers,

our departments have been asked to go through what it is they do, what is their core business, and the things that don't belong in their core business.”

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier if he can explain to Paul and Kenna and others why he thinks it's not government's role to provide transportation allowances for people who need to travel for more than medical appointments - to food banks, to support groups, to see family?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I think all members of this House recognize that all of us have a role to play to ensure that Nova Scotians need our support. We'll get those - I told the honourable member that we would take it under advisement. We'll look at what has changed.

What I can tell this House, Mr. Speaker, is that when that honourable member had an opportunity to choose, she decided to embed in the cost of government \$700 million - \$700 million she embedded in the cost of government. If she had just kept pace with the growth in the economy, this government would have an additional \$200 million, an additional \$200 million . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - FILM TAX CREDIT: NEW SYSTEM - DETAILS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Since introducing the budget, there has been a lot of disagreement between the Premier, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, and the film industry about a number of important things - something you might call a disagreement of facts.

There's disagreement about the value of the film industry, disagreement about whether it's a labour incentive or a grant, disagreement about whether the industry is actually growing in Nova Scotia or not. The Premier has said that the tax credit was effectively a grant that didn't make sense for a province with a struggling economy, and then turned around and introduced a new one that is based on the Alberta model, which is a grant itself.

I'd like to ask the Premier for clarity, is the new system a tax incentive, a credit, or a grant?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, under the new system, any money that is distributed out from the taxpayers of Nova Scotia to the film industry will be open and accountable for all Nova Scotians to have a look at. We're very encouraged by and very supportive of

the work that Screen Nova Scotia has done, and we continue to look forward to working with them to ensure that they continue to grow their businesses here in Nova Scotia.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, last week we couldn't get a straight answer about whether it will be capped or not. Now we can't even get a straight answer about whether it's a credit or an incentive or a grant. No wonder the industry has lost all faith in this government. They've had their jobs put at risk. They deserve straight answers, and they're not getting them.

Now our digital animators - another group of young, energetic, taxpaying Nova Scotians - are up for negotiation with the government. They need to know what the future is for their industry. There is even confusion now about what is being offered to them. So I'll ask the Premier, will the new digital animation tax credit be capped, yes or no?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question and I want to thank all those who continue to work with government to ensure that we can provide financial assistance that is fair to taxpayers as well as to allow them to operate and thrive in this province. We are continuing to work with them. We continue to have an open dialogue. We will continue to work with them not only in the months to come but in the years to come, to continue to grow good opportunities here in our province.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: SURGERY CANCELLATIONS - UPDATE

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness because he was asking for a question. As of today, more than 400 surgeries have been cancelled at the province's only tertiary hospital, due to problems discovered 17 days ago with sterilization equipment. All of the QEII Health Sciences Centre machines have been shut down and no word yet on when surgeries will resume or when the problem will be resolved. More than two weeks have passed and the backlog has grown. I want to ask the minister how much longer is this very troubling situation going to go on?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite asked a very important question, one that is of great concern to our government, to the department. As of this morning we were at 60 per cent capacity for doing all scheduled surgeries but in another day or two, it should be at 75, working towards all surgeries, even without temporary sterilization equipment, or without a new piece of equipment ordered. We are making very good progress, shows the value of an integrated system, whereby we have a number of hospitals doing sterilization work.

MS. MACDONALD: I doubt very much it would have been hard under the old system to send things from Halifax to Colchester or to Cumberland or to the South Shore.

I am not aware of any walls that have been taken down. Patients and their loved ones have had to take time off work, organize travel plans, and prepare themselves mentally for surgery. We have seen many cancellations and it has created quite a backlog on an already long wait-list but the real cost is on Nova Scotian families. I want to ask the minister, when will those affected find out what will happen with respect to rescheduling their surgeries and how long do you expect it will take to clear the backlog?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, yes, as the number of cancelled surgeries mount, it is creating a difficulty in terms of looking after the backlog. However, the Provincial Health Authority and the QEII Health Sciences Centre are meeting every morning to improve the amount of sterilization of equipment that is going on across the province and as of today looking at ordering new equipment. One of the most complex aspects of this problem is actually not knowing what the cause is and we're supposed to find out late today what the metallic substance is on the equipment after being sterilized.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

BUS. - FILM & CREATIVE INDUSTRIES: SERVICES - REMAIN

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Business. I don't want members of this House to lose sight of the fact that Film & Creative Industries Nova Scotia is still gone, possibly along with all the services they offered and I've heard from a number of folks in the industry who certainly appreciated the knowledge and the services they provided. My question to the minister today is, will the minister commit to ensuring that the same level of service previously offered by Film & Creative Industries Nova Scotia will remain offered to the industry?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. Obviously this industry remains important to us. The new Nova Scotia Film and Television Production Incentive Fund will continue to provide the support to the industry and those programs transitioned to NSBI will receive the same level of support that was previously provided.

MR. HOUSTON: I'm sure the industry will be relieved to hear that they will be receiving the same level of support. But today, if you go to the NSBI website, there is a stock image of a paintbrush to welcome film and creative industries folks which links them to a blog by Laurel Broten. There is nearly no information on any of the services offered by NSBI to the film industry. Once the government decided to eliminate Film and Creative Industries Nova Scotia, a better communication plan should have been put in place.

My question for the minister is, why wasn't a proper transition strategy put in place to ensure services for the industry would not be interrupted?

MR. FUREY: I want to inform my colleague that there is a transition plan in place. They continue with that work to find efficiencies in that service so that we are able to continue to support the industry. We recognize it's very important to Nova Scotia and we'll continue to work with the industry to achieve the same outcomes that they've assured in the past.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

FIN. & TREASURY BD. - FILM IND.: FUNDING - ASSURE

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, if they want to put a blog up there, I can certainly help them with that.

My question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Last week, I asked the minister whether the new plan for the Film Tax Credit would be capped. We didn't get a straight answer on that day and I haven't seen one since. The industry is worried that the fund will quickly be used up and that winners and losers will in fact be chosen by the government, leaving companies with little confidence that they will be able to complete projects in Nova Scotia. This doesn't give much reassurance to those contemplating whether to film in this province or whether to look elsewhere.

My question for the minister is, how is the government going to ensure that the film industry isn't once again abandoned in six, eight, or 12 months from now?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member opposite for the question. As I said on Friday - I think it's worth repeating again - the budget for this year is there. It's over \$24 million. We expect all the films that have begun principal photography by July 1st to - everything will be a commitment and will be honoured. On the go-forward, the new film and television incentive program will be in place and that has \$10 million. We'll begin to receive applications on that. We'll have a good idea how it's going, we'll monitor it through the year, it will be public and transparent, and we'll be able to see what the uptake is.

MR. HOUSTON: The industry is left with more questions than answers. They don't know how the government will assess whether or not certain projects go forward or if the funding level is adequate to support the industry, and they also don't know how this government is going to ensure that the distribution of funds is done fairly.

My question for the minister is, has the government given any thought whatsoever to what criteria will be used to assess the adequacy of the level of the fund as they go forward? How does the government propose to fairly distribute monies without picking winners and losers?

MS. WHALEN: Again, when we look at the criteria, the criteria for the fund will be set, so that will determine whether or not a production is eligible for support through this incentive fund. As well, there has been communication directly back with Screen Nova Scotia which said - and I'm just going to read it - it says, "As we enter the budgeting process for 16/17, we will meet with industry to discuss our view around the dynamics surrounding the fund forecast and our planned budgeted approach." So really, going back to what was just said in the first question, there will be ongoing and continual conversations with the industry representatives.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

ENERGY: COMFIT - ALTERNATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question today will be to the Minister of Energy. Just very quickly, the COMFIT program has been in place for some years now. Are there any changes coming for alternative opportunities for groups who may wish to become part of that?

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the question. As we announced earlier this Spring, we have put a pause on the COMFIT program, in fact mostly because of the success that it has had. The question is, what should the program look like going into the future?

As well we are undergoing our electricity review which we'll be tabling in the House very shortly, as well as looking at legislation this Fall. Nova Scotians have clearly told us they would like to see a mix in their choices for electricity in this province. We have listened to that and we will be bringing forward legislation this Fall to put that into action.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the answer. Could the minister confirm that solar will be considered as part of that as an option?

MR. SAMSON: What I can confirm for my honourable colleague is that solar is not currently part of the COMFIT program, but it's certainly part of the mix that is being considered as part of our electricity review in that Nova Scotians have clearly told us they would like to have a choice in the producer's electricity, as well as the different types of electricity. We've made great strides certainly in wind energy; we have some very exciting opportunities coming up with tidal energy as well; and certainly solar will be part of the discussions that we have going forward.

We will be tabling the results of our electricity review very shortly and, as I've indicated before, we will be bringing forward legislation this Fall to put into action the results of that review. Merci.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES - FUNDRAISING

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and Wellness has cut \$3.6 million from the long-term care facilities budget, cutting in half their allowance for small equipment replacement. The minister stated last week that he expects the long-term care facilities will make up the shortfall by leaning on their fundraising foundations.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister realize that not all long-term care facilities have fundraising foundations, and those that do fundraise for extras and not to support operating budgets?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we feel that with a number of facilities that also benefited from some of the small capital projects, that they were able to include some upgrade on their requirements, like dishwashers, furniture and so on, we feel that the amount in the budget this year will meet the needs. If there is a point in the year when we get a request from a nursing home, that will certainly be given every consideration.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the minister also suggested last week that long-term care facilities will adapt to the cuts to their small equipment replacement budgets because of bulk purchasing, which will drive down costs. To establish a bulk purchasing system requires a lot of planning, coordination, and time, as a standardized procurement system will have to be put in place.

Is the Minister of Health and Wellness prepared to leave these long-term care facilities without important equipment while he sets up an entirely new system for bulk purchasing?

MR. GLAVINE: I think the member opposite, a former Minister of Health and Wellness, would be aware that there are actually some homes that do group purchasing now and we know that that indeed can be expanded. And, yes, in order to make it province-wide will take some time, but I think we're already seeing the benefits of bulk procurement in our province.

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

PREM. - ACADIAN COMMUN.: CONCERNS - ADDRESS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. A series of changes by the previous government made the Acadian community feel less important in the eyes of their government. Bringing the Office of Acadian Affairs under the umbrella of the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, changes to the French-language Services Act, and changes to the electoral boundaries all contributed to the disappointment and frustration of the Fédération

acadienne. The Acadian people are an important part of our province's history and government should work to help preserve it and protect it.

My question to the Premier is, will the Premier reassure members of the Acadian community that he will address their concerns?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. This issue has been raised at our caucus and the Cabinet table by the member for Cape Breton-Richmond, the Minister of Energy. All of us lived through what took place here when we redrew boundaries, and the frustration that was shown by the Acadian communities across this province and, indeed, by many Nova Scotians who supported the cultural and linguistic differences of the Acadian community here in this province and felt it should have been protected inside the legislative arrangements when we look at the boundary review. I have committed to the member for Cape Breton-Richmond, the Minister of Energy, that I will work with him to see what we can do to alleviate the concerns that are being brought forward.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, earlier today la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse held a press conference. They outlined the concerns they had regarding government support. They want to invite the Premier to meet with them so my question to the Premier is, will the Premier commit to meeting with members of la FANE to discuss ways to reverse the policy changes regarding the Acadian community undertaken since 2011?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I will be more than happy to take that meeting and with any luck there will be rappie pie there for us to enjoy as we solve the challenges that have been left with us.

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

DIS: PROCUREMENT POLICY - UPDATE

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Internal Services. The last time the government's procurement policy was reviewed was in 2009. It is fair to suggest that there have been changes in procurement best practice since that time and I realize the government is planning to review procurement policies in the province. My question to the minister is, can the minister provide us with an update as to when we should expect an updated procurement policy to be introduced in this House?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the honourable member for his question. We have been improving procurement on an ongoing basis in the Province of Nova Scotia. A couple of initiatives this government has taken: for the first time ever

we have two dedicated auditors who are in the process of being hired right now who will audit all procurement done in the Province of Nova Scotia.

As an accountant myself and one who has done quite a bit of audit work, I was very surprised to see that the Province of Nova Scotia, which does over \$1 billion of procurement, had no auditors in place to actually have checks and balances. I'm pleased to report to the House that those auditors are now being interviewed and I look forward to them starting and reviewing all of our procurement processes.

MR. MACLEOD: Well, that was great information but I mean, he still didn't answer the question - but then, I'm not surprised. When bringing forward significant changes as we are talking about, it is important to ensure that we are utilizing best practices and the addition of the auditors is a good thing. One of the most effective ways of doing this though is by consulting with the people who are involved in the process, both buying and selling. This can help prevent hasty mistakes that are made, which has become a trademark of this government. (Interruption) I know, I know. Actually, I've toned that down a lot.

My question to the minister is, will the minister ensure that his department consults with suppliers, including small businesses and independent suppliers, to consider their perspectives when they are making changes to procurement policies to make sure their tax dollars aren't used to drive them out of business?

MR. KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable member for the question. Our procurement department already does that. We have an open door policy. We meet with any Nova Scotian suppliers who would like to come and get more information on how they can do business with the government. I would also like to add that over 80 per cent of the procurement that was done by the Province of Nova Scotia last year was done with Nova Scotia companies. Thank you.

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

LAE - YOUNG PEOPLE: ATTRACTION/RETENTION - STRATEGY

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education claims that she is working to attract and retain young people to Nova Scotia. However, with the recent deregulation of tuition costs in the province, it doesn't seem her department is taking this claim seriously. For example, Cape Breton University is increasing tuition by 20.7 per cent over the next three years. How is increasing tuition by over 20 per cent part of a strategy to attract and retain young people?

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. I would like to make one correction in what the member said - that is over four years, number one, and number two, the other part of this equation is that universities want

to charge similar tuitions for similar programs. We think that is a reasonable thing. What in fact happened was the previous government took \$35 million out of the system and did not allow tuitions to move up. There were certain universities that were disadvantaged because tuition had been frozen early.

If they want to keep up the quality to make sure that we can continue to attract young people here, the money has to come from somewhere. We've been through this before: government can't pay a whole lot more, and taxpayers can't pay a whole lot more, and unfortunately, that's where we are.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I know government is not going to pay a whole lot more, but students in Cape Breton sure are. In May 2011, the minister herself expressed her concerns over a 3 per cent tuition increase at Cape Breton University while in Opposition. I'll table that. Four years later, the minister claims that a 20 per cent increase over four years is okay for students.

Can the minister explain why she has changed her mind about rising tuition costs now that she's walked the six feet across the floor of this Legislature?

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, what's clear to us is that if we want to maintain the quality of Nova Scotia universities, we have to allow universities some leeway in this matter. I do wish that we were not in this position, but after the New Democrats cut \$35 million from the university system, what did they think was going to happen?

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

**TIR - GRAND MIRA SOUTH RD.:
WORK/COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - ENSURE**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of TIR. As people know, the people who live in small communities like Grand Mira South and rural Cape Breton get little services, but they expect good roads. There have been numerous meetings over the roads in Grand Mira South. We've had the deputy minister, the head engineer, and the local staff. The minister has agreed to travel that road with me on a few occasions, and because of my health challenges, we haven't been able to do that.

My question to the minister is quite simple. Will the minister work with the local staff to make sure that there is some work done on the Grand Mira South Road this year and a comprehensive plan put in place to the completion of that project?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to say that I'm shocked and appalled by the question from that member; I've toned that down a lot. (Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, it is a legitimate question. The member brought it to our attention, and he has a very good relationship with the local TIR folks. Of course we'll look at it. There are lots of elements in the equation, but this year, seeing that the member is healthy and back to being his old self again, I'd be happy to do that tour. We can take a look and then get the details first and upfront.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for that answer. I would suggest that the day we go on that trip we will probably travel the New Boston Road, because the New Boston Road has been an issue since back in the early 1980s. There was time and time again - I really believe that if we did a review and looked at the amount of money that's been spent on the New Boston Road, we could've had pavement there three feet thick.

But we don't have any pavement yet, so the question is, will the minister look one more time at doing something for the people of the New Boston area?

MR. MACLELLAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we'll certainly have one more look at that road. Thank you very much.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - HOSP. EQUIPMENT:
RENEWAL - GOV'T. ACTIONS**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Earlier you answered the question around the sterilization program at the QEII. We know that hundreds of surgeries have been cancelled because of those issues with the surgical equipment at the Halifax Infirmary. As of yesterday, 387 surgeries were cancelled, and that number continues to grow - the dust that was collected, discovered more than two weeks ago, and the hospital cancelling up to 80 surgeries per day. Media reports show that a doctor has questioned whether the province should take a more proactive approach to renewing the equipment.

So my question to the minister is, has the minister considered the suggestion by the doctor to be more proactive, and what actions will the government do? Can he table that?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, when I did receive an update this morning, as the situation continues to add cancelled surgeries, we now need to, yes, get a report from the specialist who has been brought in to try and locate the problem as to why this black metallic substance is on the equipment after coming through the sterilization process.

We're now moving to a point where ordering new equipment is very much at hand.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Also as troubling, Karen Mumford, senior director of the QEII Health Sciences Centre, would not comment on whether reducing summer slowdowns would be considered as a way to make up for lost time - as we know, a lot of the ORs go unused during the summer months.

So far Nova Scotians who have surgeries cancelled have waited weeks for a solution, but not all options are being considered. I heard the minister say that maybe ordering new equipment is at hand. So if a prompt solution is not found to address delayed and cancelled surgeries, does the minister plan to intervene and direct the health authority to act immediately?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, this morning I met with the deputy minister and I did express not just concern but that we had to take now very, very planned corrective measures to get those cancelled surgeries rebooked but, more importantly, to make a long-term plan for when any piece of equipment in our province goes down, that we have an exceptionally strong backup plan so that we don't get behind in our surgeries or diagnostic procedures.

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

BUS. - NSBI: FILM PROJECTS - DEVELOPMENT

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the McNeil Government's decision to shut down Film and Creative Industries Nova Scotia is hurting the creative sector. The Premier locked the doors without a plan. Nova Scotia Business Inc. has been given the task of taking over the work of Film and Creative Industries Nova Scotia, but the industry is having trouble finding people at NSBI who can answer their questions.

My question for the Minister of Business is this: How will new film projects be developed by NSBI?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. The transition within NSBI continues. The creation of the Nova Scotia Film and Television Production Incentive Fund is now in place. There are resources at NSBI. I've had a number of calls myself and have physically handed two initiatives to NSBI staff for follow-up, to ensure that there's continuity to the services that have been provided.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that a transition should take place before a decision is made, so that everybody is ready to go after that decision.

With the sudden closing of Film and Creative Industries Nova Scotia, the province is losing expertise to an organization that had nearly 30 years of experience working in this sector. Question: Who at NSBI has the industry knowledge to take on this file, and how will NSBI handle the exponential increase in demand for their resources?

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated previous - there are three staff who have been transitioned into NSBI; they each bring subject matter expertise in movie, tax, and film. NSBI are prioritizing those needs for service. They continue to provide that service and they draw down on the expertise of those individuals who have transitioned into the department.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

BUS. - DSME TRENTON: EMPLOYMENT LEVELS - CURRENT STATUS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Business. In January of 2011 the government of the day announced that 100 people were working at DSME Trenton Limited and that the plant had orders for over 30 towers to construct for wind farms. Whether the previous government was getting a little ahead of itself is unknown, but in late January, 2012, a year later, DSME Trenton received its first order for towers for a wind farm in Amherst. That was more than three years ago.

Is the Minister of Business able to provide an update today of the current employment levels at the plant, considering that the province has a 49 per cent ownership at stake?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I don't have those numbers or that information with me, but I'd be more than pleased to source that information for my colleague and provide that to him.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that answer. Tower construction for wind turbines is a reasonably healthy and competitive industry in the Maritimes and elsewhere. However, DSME has struggled when attempting to secure orders to build wind turbine towers.

We now have a new Department of Business. My question to the minister is, is the Minister of Business able to provide any details today as to what kind of marketing assistance his department will be able to provide to ensure DSME Trenton is competitive in this industry?

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, the industry itself obviously is well established. Just recently, they've achieved GE certification for towers - that was this past year. Any number of the Crown corporations - NSBI, Innovacorp, and others - are able to provide support. I'll certainly pursue the matter and have that discussion myself with the CEOs in those areas. When the opportunity presents itself, I plan to attend Pictou County again and I'll be sure to drop in and meet the management team there.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

TIR - HWY. 101 (ST. CROIX-FALMOUTH): SAFETY STUDY - OMISSION

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Today, the minister released three safety studies, but none were for the dangerous section of highway between St. Croix and through Windsor to Falmouth. In fact, the section that was studied on Highway No. 101 was the very low-volume section from Digby to Weymouth, but this section I'm referring to through Windsor has been the site of many, many fatalities and has been a subject of discussion in this House.

My question for the minister is, why was there no safety study done on this section of highway from St. Croix through Windsor into Falmouth?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I thank the member for the question. When we looked at the number of safety reviews that were released today - Highway No. 103, Highway No. 104, and the specific section of Highway No. 101 - for our own uses, we did the internal study within TIR for Highway No. 101, and we were looking at that very specific section there because of the controlled and uncontrolled access nature of that specific area. We were asked to look at that because of some of the challenges that we've had there and what it would look like to do improvements in that particular section.

The result of today's conversation was about the large-scale things that we have to do to make full and widely impactful changes to our entire system. That's what today was about. Certainly, the member makes a good point. Our department and the public are well aware of the challenges on Highway No. 101. What we've released today will certainly give us an opportunity to continue to look at those areas and make improvements as we see fit and as the capital plan allows.

MR. LOHR: I thank the minister for that answer. Last year, the minister promised a number of small improvements or temporary improvements to the section of highway through Windsor and Falmouth. To date, these improvements have not taken place. My question for the minister is, when can we expect these small improvements through that section of highway to take place?

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, again, there are two approaches here. Certainly, today's study and the plan moving forward will about the long-term impact to Highway No. 101 and how we manage the heavy volumes coming out of Metro and some of the challenges we have along the way. I can assure the member opposite we've heard about many of the challenges on Highway No. 101. Particularly, the member for Hants West has brought this to the House and to my department a number of times.

There are short-term options that we're looking at, certainly through the Windsor corridor, the causeway, and other areas. We'll continue to work on those. We are working on some very specific plans for those short-term measures. Some of them will be in place

for this capital season, this construction season, so we'll get on that and I can certainly provide the member with a list of those.

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

EECD - STRAIT AREA SCH. BD.: CHANGES - DETAILS

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, this morning, the *Chronicle Herald* reported that the Strait Regional School Board is eliminating 17.3 full-time teaching jobs due to budget cuts. The board serves 6,454 students at 21 schools across northeastern Nova Scotia and southern Cape Breton. To quote board superintendent Ford Rice, "We are experiencing a budget reduction."

The story goes on to say that the school board is crunching the numbers, having received its funding allocation for next year. My question for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is, could she please outline changes to the Strait Regional School Board's funding for the upcoming fiscal year?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. As we look at how school boards are funded - I've said this earlier on - a straight funding formula based on enrolment was not the most appropriate way to fund school boards. So last year we looked at a hybrid model which looked at enrolment and program funding. That combination is what has been used to provide the funding to all boards this year.

I think it's important to recognize that the Strait board does have a significant decline in enrolment. So when you put the hybrid model together, it did translate into fewer dollars, fewer teachers, and still maintaining quality programming for the students in the board.

MS. ZANN: Thank you to the minister for her response. Saint Mary's Academy in Sherbrooke will actually be losing three full-time teaching positions. In fact, their Primary to Grade 6 will become multi-grade classrooms with two grades to a teacher.

In April 2011, the current Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development stood in this House and said it was impossible to make education cuts without an impact in the classroom - her words, Mr. Speaker, not mine. I will table that.

My question to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development today is, could she please describe the impact that her funding cuts will have on students in the Strait Regional School Board?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to state in the House here that the boards do receive their funding based on that hybrid model, and they make decisions at the board as to where they will allocate the teachers, based on the student needs.

I would also mention to the House that for many years we have had classrooms in this province where a teacher was working with more than one grade level - and, I might say, very successfully.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**ENERGY - HANTS CO. POWER BILLS:
WINTER METER READINGS - MIN. INVESTIGATE**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. During the election campaign, the government said Nova Scotians would see a decrease in their power rates. Today I am tabling a power bill belonging to an 85-year-old woman living on her own in Three Mile Plains, Hants County. Nova Scotia Power told her that they were estimating meter readings during the winter's heavy snowfall. As a result, this woman was stuck with a two-month power bill of \$962.10, which is up from her usual bill of \$275. Unfortunately, this is not the only example of \$900 power bills being sent out in Hants County for the months of February and March.

My question for the minister is, is the minister prepared to look into these estimated meter readings?

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, obviously I don't have all the details of this particular account, but I'd be more than happy to look into it. In fact, as an MLA for 17 years now, I've had the opportunity on many occasions to work with constituents and Nova Scotia Power to have a dispute resolution process as well internally.

I found them to be quite helpful over the years in assisting constituents, whether it be ones who had fallen into arrears or had specific questions regarding their accounts. I'd be more than happy to look into any concerns regarding this specific account.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I do thank the minister for that answer. We've had some success with that process ourselves, but in this case, for some reason, Nova Scotia Power seems to be digging their heels in.

The minister will know that such a bill is inexcusable for an elderly lady living on her own. It's one thing for there to be a \$20 increase, but a \$688 increase over two months gives the impression that she's running a large commercial operation, which she is clearly not.

I thank the minister for his answer. I just ask that he also consider asking the URB to investigate the practices that are causing such large winter increases for Nova Scotians.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to my colleague, I am more than happy to look into the specifics of the situation. I would ask him to share more information so that we can get the details from Nova Scotia Power.

He is correct that Nova Scotia Power is a private utility governed by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board. If Nova Scotians have specific concerns, they can bring those directly to the Utility and Review Board for their consideration. Again, I'd be more than happy to review this specific matter and see if a resolution can be found for the honourable member's constituent. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers has expired. We'll now move on to Government Business.

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 House on Bills.

MR. SPEAKER: The House will now recess for a few minutes while it resolves itself into a Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

[2:50 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Ms. Margaret Miller in the Chair.]

[2:55 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Kevin Murphy, resumed the Chair.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: That the committee has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 97 - Quality-improvement Information Protection Act.**Bill No. 98 - Chartered Professional Accountants Act.**

and the chairman has been instructed to recommend these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, each without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 82.

Bill No. 82 - Change of Name Act and Vital Statistics Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill No. 82. Amendments to the Vital Statistics Act include eliminating the requirement for sex reassignment surgery to change the sex designation on a birth certificate, requiring a self-declaration from the applicants stating that they have assumed identity with and intend to live in a gender identity that corresponds with the desired sex designation; and requiring a letter of support from a person with the professional designation as defined in regulations including a doctor, nurse, social worker or psychologist; and requiring minors under 16 to have parental consent.

The letter of support must be from a doctor or psychologist who has treated or evaluated the applicant and must include a professional opinion that the minor has the capacity to understand the impacts of their decision.

An amendment to the Change of Name Act will eliminate the requirement for parental consent for minors who are 16 to 18 inclusive, to align with the changes to the Vital Statistics Act. These amendments will remove the requirements for Nova Scotians to have sex reassignment surgery to change the sex designation on their birth certificate.

I'm pleased to bring these changes forward. We need to make sure that all Nova Scotians are free from discrimination and this change is a step in the right direction. Making these changes will provide needed peace of mind and confidence to transgender Nova Scotians.

We take gender equity seriously and we are taking steps to ensure this is reflected in our lives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister and the government for bringing this change and this piece of legislation forward. I think it continues on a path that government recognizes the importance to change legislation, to make sure that it reflects what is going on and the environment that is in the province currently as it is.

I think over the years government needed to recognize the fact that gender reassignment surgery, for example, which is now covered under MSI, something I was very proud to bring forward as the Minister of Health, and also trying to improve the rights that transgender individuals here in Nova Scotia have is extremely important. Again, I think this piece of legislation continues on with government's process and ability to ensure that we are bringing forward good policy changes that reflect and support communities and individuals within our province.

Again, we do support this piece of legislation and we are glad to see it get to this point. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my biggest concern with this bill is that people who have been advocating for the changes may not feel love for who they are. I know there are some issues here for parents as well: the legislation aims to be supportive of young people who are requesting these changes.

We have talked about it. There has been some concern about the age of 16 versus 18. I know that we have a bill that I think is coming forward this week to change the definition of a child to increase from the age of 16 to 18 and I think that recognizes young people in their situations in life at that age. They can be vulnerable, so there's some concern about that.

I know that there were changes made in Australia with an intent to curb discrimination for people who are travelling - for Australians who are travelling. Some of the changes made there were to allow a marking of X for intersex and also that transgender could select male or female provided they were showing an indication that changes were being made. I know there are also concerns about that.

I think that's an issue for the federal government, but it's one, if there are changes being made here in Nova Scotia, those things should be considered, because if people are changing their birth certificates and their driver's licences, they are going to be using those

documents to get passports. I presume they then would be travelling potentially outside of the country in other jurisdictions. I know Australia tried to address that. It is perhaps more of a question for the federal government, but it's one that we should be keeping in mind here in this Legislature for making changes that are going to impact documents that are issued by the federal government, because we want people to be able to travel safely.

I know there's also support for young people. This kind of pits, in some cases, young people against their parents. They may already be in a situation where there's disagreement within the family. I know this bill now gives power so that a judge can dispense with the consent of the parents based on the opinion of medical, actually prescribed professionals including social workers. There may be some reason why that was chosen, but I do note that we are the only province that has that ability to allow social workers to write a letter that could be used in a court. That causes me some concern that we could have parents and children who may be at odds. It's not to say that they are not at odds to begin with, but it's a difficult situation. For young people, there's a lot going on in their lives in their teens and I think we have to be careful.

I know this legislation is born out of compassion. There are some studies that say that people can lose feelings of transgender upwards of 70 to 80 per cent. I know in the case of changing a name, a name can be changed back, so that may not be such a serious concern. But I do know that - and this is something that has been talked about as well, and it's something that the province now funds, sex reassignment surgery - in some cases, individuals who undergo that surgery are 20 times more likely to commit suicide. That's a very sobering thought. It's something that I'm concerned about because in my first statement, I indicated my biggest concern is people may not feel like they are loved and they may take actions to address that. My concern is that if that does not make them feel better, they could go down a road where they may suffer more personal harm.

I know one might suggest - and I think with this bill, there is mention that by changing one's name without having to have reassignment surgery, that eliminates that. I think that's a good thing because if it does, that eliminates that decision that they would have to make to have their name changed or to have their sex changed on their documents. There are obviously challenges with that.

Again, I think I will close by saying, for all of those people who are advocating for this legislation to be changed, I want to say personally that I feel that they should feel loved by our society and I think there are lots of ways we can show that support for them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to speak. I've listened to the member opposite and I think that his assertions and his genuineness are absolutely real and heartfelt. But as a member of the LGBTI community,

I can tell you that these teenagers don't feel loved. They don't love themselves, and their parents often don't understand what they are going through so oftentimes they are thrown out, they don't leave voluntarily. They are put into a chaotic system of child welfare and a society which doesn't understand their needs.

It's not just about their name, it's about the identity of who they feel in a gender, of who they are. Oftentimes the discrimination against transgender people is complete - it's real; it's violent; and it's more than any other segment of the population experiences, including those of us who are already identified in sexual orientations in other ways.

I've experienced homophobia; I've never experienced transphobia, but I know people who have experienced both and I don't wish that on anybody. I do strongly feel that being able to identify and change your gender, based on what you know within yourself, is a basic human right; it's as simple as that.

With those few words, I'll take my leave.

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their comments in these discussions. With that, I move to close debate on Bill No. 82.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 82. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 87.

Bill No. 87 - Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists Act.

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

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 87 be now read a third time and do pass.

With the passage of this legislation, audiologists and speech-language pathologists will be required to be members of a self-regulatory body. This legislation will protect the public by preventing anyone who does not possess the necessary certifications and competencies from practising professions governed by the legislation. It will also ensure that these highly trained health care workers can ensure that the highest professional standards are upheld. This legislation will put Nova Scotia on a par with eight other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation would help Nova Scotians have confidence that the audiologists and speech-language pathologists they rely on have the training and skills they need to help their patients.

And with those few words, I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand and speak to this bill for a few moments. As we know, self-regulation in this province is something that we've done in many other occupations, whether it's nursing, or whether it's a number of health professions that fall under this. It does give them the opportunity to manage themselves and provide clear guidelines on the practice of their professions.

In the case of audiologists, we know that they are in a number of places in this province and lots of Nova Scotians need their services. The question, though, that I hope maybe the minister might be able to answer later on, when he gets to close this debate, was a question from, I believe, the Teachers Union, when it came to those audiologists who actually work for school boards. Many of those speech-pathologists are actually teachers as well, and I think the question they had was whether or not they would be doubly disciplined or there was some overlap in the way that they would be treated because of these two Acts. Teachers are managed in one way and audiologists would be treated in another way. I thought the Teachers Union made a good presentation that they wanted some clarity on how those two things would mesh once this bill became law.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, as always, we do pass legislation in this House sometimes, especially with a self-managed profession like this one, that requires a lot of work afterwards in drafting regulations and setting up the college and doing all those things. I'm also wondering, maybe there is an guesstimate now of how long it would take before many of these things go into place because I think even the paramedics at this point had set up their own college and even to this day, they still have trouble organizing in one way or another.

We just want to make sure that when we provide this kind of basis and/or legislation that it is actually doable in the end. From what I understood from our briefing - and I thank the minister and his staff for the briefing we did receive on this bill - that there are 200 or

300 audiologists in this province so it does give them that group of people who can help manage themselves. In some cases they are very small groups. The example that I continue to use is midwives and there weren't a lot of midwives in this province when they asked it to be a self-directed occupation or profession in this province. It took some time before they were able to truly gel together and provide that service to Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, with those short words it is a move forward that we can support as a caucus, as a Progressive Conservative caucus, but I do hope to hear maybe some more answers on some those final questions that I have to the minister.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: I'm glad to rise to say a few words on Bill No. 87. I think it is important, as we see legislation come forward, to support those professionals that provide important services to our residents in the province. I would definitely consider and rank audiologists and speech-language pathologists amongst those whose work is extremely important, especially to our young people here in the Province of Nova Scotia.

We know over the last number of years there has been an expansion of their services and their supports within the education system to ensure that our young people get off on the right track and are able to overcome some of the challenges that they may have while learning. I know through Law Amendments Committee that the Nova Scotia Teachers Union made a presentation and brought forward a few concerns. I hope that the Minister of Health and Wellness will undertake and listen to those concerns and work with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to ensure that - I think the essence of this piece of legislation is to support the industry and support those professionals, and I don't think by any means we want to see, especially if its fees, the way the fee structure is, that anybody is put at a disadvantage. I hope that the minister will do that and within his department I believe he will. Being a former teacher he would recognize some of the challenges that some of our professionals find themselves in when they are working within the education system.

I think self-regulating bodies is something that is extremely important for professions here in our province because it gives a level of recognition that is needed within certain sectors of delivering services that are delivered to Nova Scotians and I definitely see the benefits of doing that. We do support it and we look forward to the implementation of this bill and the recognition that comes with it.

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Just to make a few comments from my colleagues, in fact both former Ministers of Health and Wellness who probably had some of this come during

their time in office to take a look at not just audiologists and speech-language pathologists but actually a number of our other self-regulatory bodies. I've met with representatives of the 21 regulated professions in the province. There is no question of the value of self-regulation. The self-regulatory process has many advantages and many strengths.

In terms of the point that the member for Argyle-Barrington brought forward - just a quick comment to say that yes, there remains work to be done during the regulation process. Over the next year or year and a half, that certainly will be carried out. We don't want to create any dissonance with teachers who do marvelous work in our school system. Working with them to reach that balance with them will be certainly one of the goals as we move into a regulated profession. I thank the members opposite for the points that they indeed have brought forward.

With that, I move to close debate on third reading of Bill No. 87.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 87. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 88.

Bill No. 88 - Dental Act.

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

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 88 now be read a third time and do pass.

The Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia is responsible for licensing dentists in the province. Currently, the Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia can only approve or reject a full licence to an applicant. The dental board came to the province and asked for greater flexibility and options when it comes to licensing its members. These amendments grant greater responsibility to the board and provide the authority to grant a licence with conditions or restrictions.

These are reasonable and appropriate options that boards in other provinces have and Nova Scotia should have. These amendments not only help empower the Provincial

Dental Board, but they also ensure the high standard and quality of care that people expect. With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I'm only going to speak a couple of seconds on this one. The challenge I think that this one creates is allowing certain dentists who may have been in front of disciplinary action - to provide them with an opportunity to continue practising under certain conditions. We do know a lot of the fallout of what happened at Dalhousie University, especially with the Dalhousie dental class, and we just hope that everybody continues to watch this one closely and that, of course, nothing happens to the public.

The protection of the public, I think, is the number-one responsibility of us as legislators, to make sure that no one is unduly harmed because of a decision of this House. I hope the minister is providing a piece of legislation that was asked for by the dental association, but we also know maybe some of the background for this one as well.

With those few words, I will move on to the next one.

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Argyle-Barrington for his support and commentary as well as the NDP, who spoke to this bill during second reading and listened to the interventions at the Committee on Law Amendments. With that, I now close debate on Bill No. 88.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 88. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, if I could have your permission for an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce Kelly Cull of the Canadian Cancer Society - if she would rise - and also Barbara Stead-Coyle, CEO of the Canadian Cancer Society. I just want to point out their strong leadership in our province and leadership across the country on this very, very important issue. I would like the House to give them a warm welcome today. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 90.

Bill No. 90 - Tobacco Access Act.

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

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 90 now be read for a third time and do pass.

With the passage of this bill, Nova Scotia will have the most progressive tobacco control legislation in the country. Starting May 31st, the sale of flavoured tobacco will be banned, it will be illegal to sell e-cigarettes to minors, the display and promotion of e-cigarettes will be restricted in stores where minors are allowed entry, it will be illegal to use e-cigarettes and water pipes in indoor public places and workplaces, and public health inspectors will have the ability to issue summary offence tickets for the sale of tobacco or e-cigarettes to minors.

As previously noted, we believe e-cigarettes and juice need regulation at the federal level and we strongly encourage our federal partners to take swift action. Our tobacco control measures that will start May 31st will help protect Nova Scotians, especially young people, from the health harms of tobacco.

In my teaching days, I saw first-hand how young people would get addicted to nicotine because the tobacco industry made smoking look cool. They would get addicted and Big Tobacco would have customers for life. This industry is clever. Big Tobacco knows that older customers will either quit or die. They need new, young customers to survive, so they came up with flavoured tobacco to entice young customers.

Today, I believe we will stand united in this House to say no to Big Tobacco. We will not allow our children to be sucked into lifelong addiction to a product that kills. By taking flavoured tobacco off the shelves in Nova Scotia, we're taking a big step toward reducing youth access.

It's often not easy to be the first to take a bold step. I'm proud that legislators here in Nova Scotia are brave enough to bring forward and support this legislation for a healthier population. I thank all those here in the House, especially former Health Ministers and their

Parties, who were part of bringing forward the most progressive legislation in the country. On a day like this, I think of the work of the former mayor of Wolfville Robert Stead, who was truly a leader in this area by having his community bring forward very progressive legislation.

In addition to my honourable colleagues here in the Legislature, I want to thank Dr. Robert Strang and staff in my department, all of the Nova Scotians who participated in our consultation, and health organizations such as the Canadian Cancer Society that have supported this bill. Together, we're making Nova Scotia a healthier place now and for generations to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand and speak in third reading to Bill No. 90. It wouldn't be a good start to this debate if I didn't say we could have done this right the first time back in the Fall, but it's good to have it here today - a positive end to a long story that was far longer than it should have been.

I, too, want to thank the Canadian Cancer Society because I think without their steadfast support to make sure that these products are removed from our stores, to get them away from the hands of young individuals in this province, I think without them pushing so hard that maybe we wouldn't be here in this amount of time. Maybe it would have taken even longer so I do want to thank the Canadian Cancer Society for their steadfast work on this file as they are here today listening.

Back in the Fall, we spent lots of time in this House talking about our own personal experiences with tobacco use, about those loved ones we have lost due to lung cancer and those of us who have been touched by all forms of cancer and how any little bit that we can do to mitigate that, to stop that, to save our loved ones, is a valuable thing to be doing. As I said earlier, if we do anything here in this House of Assembly but keep people healthy, to make sure that there is no undue harm to them, I think we are in the right place.

I am going to quickly apologize to Imperial Tobacco for not calling them back because they tried on a number of occasions to call us. I just want to apologize to them for not calling them back because I don't think they should've been called back, as I saw their presentations during Law Amendments. They are Big Tobacco and Big Tobacco is there for one thing and one thing only and that is to make money, regardless of what the repercussions or the outcomes of that money is. So, sorry.

I did have a chance to talk to a number of convenience stores owners over the last number of weeks and months. They are concerned about how to make those adjustments, to be able to change their practices. They're not dramatic changes, but insofar as moving products to one side, to be able to move things behind the counter, no differently than when power walls were taken out of convenience stores and yes, at that time they cried foul, that

it was going to cost lots of money. But for the most part, all of those convenience stores are still place today providing convenience to their local communities.

If an adult wants to make the decision to smoke, their access really hasn't changed. They know what they want; they know what they are going to be asking for and they can go get it when they need it. They just can't smoke it where they want to smoke it for the most part. They can't do it in the bars anymore and they can't do it in public spaces anymore, all due to the hard work of the Canadian Cancer Society and many hundreds of people around this province who have spent so much time convincing governments to make those changes.

As I've said to some of those convenience store owners though, you know it's coming down; there's a deadline now. If you do have those products, try to get rid of them or you are going to be stuck with them. They are asking if there is a possibility of some help with that. I don't know if that's required in this particular case but ultimately, any little bit that we can help to keep tobacco and nicotine away from students I think is a valuable way forward.

On the second issue, when we talked about vaping, we ended up learning an awful lot about vaping over the last number of months as well because I thought if there's any organization that is able to use social media, it was definitely the groups that support vaping. Yet my concern for it is that it's still a very untested product. I think we can go online and get as many reports one way or another on it so I do hope that the government continues to look closely at it, to understand the long-term repercussions of that vapour product, to see what the long-term effect is going to be on health of Nova Scotians.

I do hope that the minister and hopefully his successors along the way - this is only one battle in a whole long war and I hope that people who replace him, and as things do roll around in this House, that they continue the fight. This was a fight that was brought forward by many Ministers of Health before him. It's good to see that we continue down that road of keeping these products away from people. We look at the repercussions and the cost to our health care system - they continue to be far too much.

The ban on menthol, though, is one that I'm happy to see here as well. It's a very small proportion of the total numbers of cigarette smokers in this province, but it is again one of those things that takes the harshness out of smoking and allows someone to keep trying it until they are addicted to it, so it's good to see that one going.

The only part that I question how we do a better job of convincing the federal government to ban some more of these products is, as we know for those of us who have Aboriginal reservations or on-reserve convenience stores, these regulations really don't reach far enough into their businesses. I hope that through all of us that we continue to convince our friends that this is the way to go, that we need to limit access to these products and that those products are treated the same way on reserve as they are treated off reserve.

Once this goes into effect, this law is not necessarily binding on reserves, so I hope we take our time and convince others that this is the right way to do it.

As the minister said, sometimes it's hard to be the leader in these things, to be the trailblazer in these things but, quite honestly, someone has to go first. We can learn from that and be able to convince others that it is the right thing to do.

On a final comment, though. I think this is a good bill, one that will have the support of our caucus, but the last kick at the can I have is that we could have done this a little bit sooner, minister, we should have done it sooner. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I, too, am pleased to have an opportunity to rise in my place and say a few words about this bill. I want to congratulate the minister for bringing forward the changes that we really so adamantly argued over back in the Fall.

I have to say this is an occasion for celebration, I think, that the measures in this bill do the right thing for the youth, the young people in our province. They also do the right thing for young women in our province, the menthol provisions I'm tremendously happy to see.

I was sitting here thinking about when I was a young person - a long, long time ago it now feels like some days - when I was a young woman looking through the women's magazines and what have you, and there was an ad for Virginia Slims cigarettes: "You've come a long way, baby". I couldn't help but think about that ad and think about the irony that here we are, over a period of probably 17 years or so in our province, we've made great progress on the regulation of tobacco.

When I first came to this Chamber smoking was a common, everyday occurrence in bars and restaurants and sporting events and all kinds of places . . .

HON. PAT DUNN: And bingo halls.

MS. MACDONALD: And bingo halls, my colleague from Pictou Centre says. Indeed, that's the truth.

It's fantastic really to have seen the transformation in so many places in our province and the ability to go out and be comfortable, enjoying an evening with friends and not being smothered by that purple haze that used to be ever-present. You know, I think about over the years the various adjustments, the various changes to legislation that have come through.

I remember particularly that lady - there was a woman who had gotten lung cancer as a result of second-hand smoke working in a diner. I don't know if there are other members in this Chamber who remember this lady. She was from Ontario. She went across the country and she came to our Legislature. There were changes made in our legislation subsequently to that that did more to protect people from second-hand smoke in the restaurant industry.

I remember every time there were new changes, a different level of regulation, we would go through the same kind of dance in this House to some extent. The tobacco industry would mount the barricades. There would be a great attempt to lobby us. We would be told that the sky was going to fall and we were going to put literally hundreds, maybe thousands, of small businesses out of business in the province and this would be very damaging to the province's economy and to our local communities.

That was the argument versus the enormous health impacts of continuing to allow tobacco to be so freely available and the terrible consequences it has. I bet you there is nobody in this Chamber who hasn't been touched by the consequences of tobacco use in terms of disease and illness and perhaps even death. I know I myself have lost two very, very close friends who were heavy smokers. I despair for some of my other contacts and friends who have not been able yet to kick this habit.

Anything that we can do to discourage that next generation of new smokers to come along, it is incumbent on us, I believe, to do that. This is a good piece of legislation. I am very pleased to have had an opportunity to contribute to any debate in this House that would move us in this direction. I applaud the minister for bringing this bill back and having it brought back in an improved way. I'm pleased to support this.

I want, before I take my place, to give a shout-out to Smoke-Free Nova Scotia and the Canadian Cancer Society. Both of these organizations are dogged and tireless in the work that they do on behalf of the people in the province. They have such incredible expertise. They are on top of all of the latest research and they help educate us as legislators in terms of what steps we can take and should take are. I really want to thank them. They've been champions for all of the legislation over the years that I have seen come through this House.

The last thing I do want to say is about my concern that the federal government will not act to regulate in other areas. I know that this is a fight for another day, but I do want to say that I was deeply disappointed in the federal government's response to flavoured tobacco when it became clear that there were loopholes in the legislation that they passed or the regulations that had been adopted.

There was a time in this House when one of my former colleagues, the member for Dartmouth East at the time, Joan Massey, introduced a bill as a Private Member's Bill, to make it illegal for those little cigarillos and flavoured tobacco. The government of the day

was very interested in the bill. I can't remember if it passed or not, but I remember the discussion was that the government was waiting for the federal government to regulate, because this then would give legislation in place nationally. In some ways, I think the federal government has greater jurisdiction. I'm not a constitutional lawyer, but I think that's somewhat the argument. We kept waiting and waiting for the federal government to do this, and they never did do the right thing, which meant it was now incumbent on provinces to do the right thing.

So I'm pleased that this bill is here and we're about to move it along. I have my doubts that we will see much activity at the federal level, in terms of e-cigarettes and what have you, but I also know that the Canadian Cancer Society and other advocacy groups, that are so effective, won't give up. I applaud them for that, and they will certainly have the support of myself and my colleagues in the NDP caucus in that work.

With those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to take a few moments to talk about this bill, and I would like to commend the government on bringing this bill forward now. I think it's a much stronger bill than it was a few months ago, and is much improved.

I'm particularly proud that we can say, anyway - probably only for a brief moment in time - that we are leading the country in banning menthol, and in our position on e-cigarettes. Certainly we know in this Legislature that other - we're always looking to other Legislatures to see what they are doing in certain areas. I know that other Legislatures across the country will see what has been done here and will follow suit. I think that taking this stand is really good.

I know that when I was in the Law Amendments Committee I was listening to a presentation by the convenience store owners. One of the things they talked about was the fact that 20 per cent of cigarettes in Nova Scotia are contraband cigarettes. I'd like to speak about that for a moment.

There is sort of an interplay going on all the time between the legal and the illegal market. I remember many years ago - we've talked about the change in attitudes toward tobacco. Many years ago tobacco was considered fine and no problem, and I suspect even in this Legislature there might have been quite a bit of smoking going on.

We've seen such a change in society, and we've moved away from that, yet there is - and I even remember in the 1970s, my neighbours were farming tobacco in the Annapolis Valley. There was quite an active industry farming tobacco. I always liked to tell people that I went to the "Frank Ansems School of Cultivation." My neighbour, Frank

Ansems, would cultivate the tobacco in just such a precise and perfect way that I learned how to cultivate from watching him.

That industry is gone now. I have a good friend in Ontario who has been very active in the tobacco industry, and even in the industry in Ontario, there has been a serious decline or a huge decline in the number of tobacco growers to where it's almost gone. My friend Mark Wales, who is a past president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, tells me that in Ontario it's about 40 per cent of the tobacco consumed that is contraband tobacco. He tells me that if it's being sold for \$2 a pack, they can make money at \$1 a pack. In other words, it's profitable to sell contraband cigarettes at \$1 a pack. They can actually make more than a dollar profit on \$2 a pack in cigarettes.

That might seem inconceivable, but when you think about the volumes of product going through this modern machinery and the amount of tobacco actually in each cigarette, in fact, I have no reason to doubt him.

I think that this issue of contraband cigarettes is going to continue to concern this Legislature for some time to come. I realize it's a little bit beyond the scope of this department and this bill, but I think it's a very serious issue. It's interesting that any time you make a move to restrict the legal side, you kind of do something to slightly promote the illegal side of consumption.

One of my huge disappointments about Big Tobacco is the fact that it is quite clear from what happened in Ontario that they actually supported the illegal market. There was a case where it was proven that they were sending production into the U.S. with Canadian markings. It was turned right around and brought, illegally, right back across the border into Canada with all the correct markings and was being sold illegally. This was proven a few years ago.

One of my big disappointments is that Big Tobacco is quite willing to participate in the contraband market. As a result, in that contraband market, there will be all sorts of flavoured cigarettes available. Those aren't being produced by mom-and-pop operations; they are being produced by big factories. The contraband cigarettes that are able to sell at \$2 a pack - at a profit - are not coming from mom-and-pop operations; they are coming from big factories somewhere. This whole business of Big Tobacco supporting this contraband market is something that I think - and maybe this is an issue for the federal government - but I think it's an issue that needs to be addressed. The whole contraband market, I think, really is hurting our province.

I know that the budget put in a very small increase in the price of cigarettes, I believe. Anytime there's an increase in the tax, that's probably offset by a slight increase that drives more people to that contraband market. We're probably at the law of diminishing returns on increasing the taxes on tobacco. There's probably some sort of mathematical calculation you can get there.

But I don't believe that we should be stopping our fight against tobacco. I think we should be looking at how we address this contraband market and deal with some of these issues of this importation of contraband product. It's clearly not being produced in this province. I don't know of any tobacco growers myself, but most likely coming in through Amherst. I think it's a big issue for us to look at.

I don't think that we'll ever win that war - I think that there's always a market for that stuff - but I think it's a very serious part of the whole story. I do know that I was surprised. I think that we could all agree that it turns out that tobacco is surprisingly contentious. It was, I think, contentious three or four months ago.

I would applaud the minister for bringing this bill forward. I know I had one of my own constituents take me to task on this ban on menthol. She really disagreed with it and literally said in an email that she would be buying contraband menthol. I heard what the Canadian Cancer Society said - I hope they're correct; I have no reason to doubt it - that if menthol is banned, a certain number of menthol cigarette users will quit. That's for sure. Some will find it somewhere else and some will switch.

I would applaud the bill. I think it's an interesting dilemma that we are in in controlling the illegal importation. I think the terrible thing about it is that Big Tobacco, in some background manner, is supporting that. Maybe that is the way we have to get at that.

I think the appeal of cigarette smoking - I think we are up against very sophisticated marketing and it's drawing our young people. I know that my mother told me that after the war, when the Dutch nation just started getting a little bit more money again, the first thing people did to treat themselves was to start smoking.

Around the globe, I understand that cigarette use is on the rise. We're kind of leading the globe in fighting against that as governments. I think governments around the globe, by and large, don't fight against this, but maybe are moving that way more so. But here where we have health care costs carried by everybody, we look at what the effect of smoking is. The cost to society is just immense in many different ways: the cost of lost lives; the cost of treating very ill people.

I think it's a very worthwhile fight to take this stand against tobacco, to curtail menthol and try to curtail and bring this industry under control, and I think the element of the illegal industry is something we need to try to wrap our heads around and ask ourselves how we're going to address that. Certainly we need the federal government in on that. I think that is a crucial element in this whole equation.

I know that there will actually still be flavoured tobacco available - it will just be contraband flavoured tobacco. That's unfortunate and I think that was part of the frustration of the convenience store owners, they know that. Again, I believe we're absolutely making

the right choice and what we need to do is look at how we're going to address that contraband issue in our province.

Mr. Speaker, with those words, thank you, and I will take my seat.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to be at this point in debate of a piece of legislation that I feel is extremely important to have in front of us. I know we've had some lively debate and I've been extremely critical of the government throughout this process, and I admit to that. I have been for a number of reasons.

I think all of us would agree we can't argue the stats and the statistics that are out there that revolve around the use of tobacco. Nearly 100 people a day, I believe - and I'm not quoting any specific figure - at least about 100 people a day die from smoking-related illness in our country and 85 per cent of all lung cancer is attributed to smoking - 85 per cent, that's thousands of Canadians and Nova Scotians who die because they've picked up a cigarette and tobacco products throughout their lives.

As a former paramedic I've treated so many people over the years with ailments, especially around the lungs, and each and every one of them don't hide the fact that the reason I'm contemplating putting a breathing tube down into their lungs or helping them breathe through a mask or an AMBU bag was the fact that they were a smoker. You could tell that they had regrets and it's not by any means anyway that someone should suffer as you see people who suffer from lung diseases and cancers of the lungs attributed to tobacco use.

Also, in the capacity of being an MLA and being the Minister of Health and Wellness, I know the sheer impact that illnesses that are attributed to smoking have on our budget for health care. We spend \$4.1 billion providing care to Nova Scotians alone - well, we provide care to more than Nova Scotia - but I know there are probably stats out there and I can't imagine what the figure is to treat someone who has complications due to an illness that had been attributed to smoking, that they used tobacco products.

There are 250 Canadians every year that die from second-hand smoke. People who chose not to smoke but for some reason, maybe in a house that has someone who smokes, maybe around someone who smokes, and there are even stats about infant deaths that have been attributed to second-hand smoke. That is part of why I felt compelled to criticize the government immensely when they gutted the first piece of legislation. I criticized them for the length of time it took, because with my other hat as a father of two teenage kids at home, knowing the pressures that they're under, knowing that the trend over the last number of years around tobacco use was geared towards the flavoured tobacco. Knowing that our young kids, some of them are very bright, athletic, involved in their school,

involved in team sports - they're chewing tobacco that is flavoured and the flavours are just beyond what the industry has targeted these young people with.

That is my main reason for the criticism for the delay in this and I'm glad to be here at this point. As parents, my wife and I have worked extremely hard to make sure that our kids know the ramifications of tobacco use. I've held nothing back; I've told them that they could die from it, plain and simple. They could get lung cancer; they could be in a position where they can't breathe because of the use of tobacco.

Now I can't be 100 per cent positive, but I'm pretty sure my kids are pretty good. We're very open and they're very open with us that they both have strong opinions about tobacco and the use of tobacco. I believe they've listened, I hope, to the advice that my wife and I have tried to make sure that they have.

It's not only my advice, but I think that of the province, and the Canadian Cancer Society has done an amazing job over the last number of years to try to make sure that the message is there, that that message of the complications and the issues that come with using tobacco - it's not just having a cigarette and inhaling and having a good time, it's much greater than that; the consequences of smoking are much greater than that.

We've seen it through ad campaigns on television. I don't think anybody can forget that commercial that showed an older gentleman sitting in a wheelchair, barely able to breathe, hooked up to IVs and oxygen. I believe he had COPD and it was related to his smoking for years.

I want to commend the Canadian Cancer Society, especially the people here in Nova Scotia who have worked extremely hard to tackle an issue that I think society has taken some time to realize is extremely important.

We know that the smoking rate had dropped for a number of years. The scary thing is that it kind of plateaued and, if I'm not wrong, I believe the uptake is a little bit from our youth and I contribute that directly to the flavoured tobacco and the products that are on the market today.

I do feel some sympathy towards those retailers who have that product, but I have to say that the public has known about this for some time, that the government was looking at potentially bringing this in. I would hope that the tobacco companies will step up to the plate for once and maybe buy that product back from the small business owners and take the loss themselves. There has been a loss taken on the budgets of provinces across this country for providing the care after the fact, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the tobacco industry can step up to the plate - and I challenge them to do that - and maybe assist some of the small business owners around our province with taking back the product that will finally be banned in our province, here in Nova Scotia.

I've been critical, definitely, but I have good reason for it. I'm glad to be here today in a position to say that this piece of legislation will finally get passed and that some strong restrictions will be placed in our province. As my Leader indicated, Mr. Speaker, I am skeptical of the federal government to step up to the plate and hold up and change legislation federally that will deal with some of the pending and new issues that we're starting to see around vaping and vapour cigarettes and that.

I think it's still early on in that product, but I am concerned and I've been very up front with the industry. I am concerned with the fact that people are still inhaling a product, and I haven't been convinced that there's no harm in it.

Is it less harmful to use a vapour cigarette than a real cigarette? I agree, it is. I know it's difficult to quit smoking - I've had family members and friends who have tried and tried. I do see some light and some hope with the use, and the proper use of these vapour cigarettes, but I think there are some concerns there around what the content is with that and the complications of that. I hope that industry recognizes that the ultimate goal should be to get people off cigarettes. Maybe a little bit of time with a vapour cigarette, but ultimately the end goal should be to quit smoking. I see that industry growing. I hope we don't see the industry take a stance and say, listen, just continue to vape for the next 20 years and you'll be okay. I hope they realize that it should be a step toward helping people get off tobacco and get off using cigarette products.

Again, I'm glad to be here. I again want to thank the Canadian Cancer Society and every single individual who has contacted me on either side of the argument for enlightening me on their position, but more importantly and overwhelmingly in support of a ban and a restriction of flavoured tobacco products here in our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I'll keep my comments brief. I just wanted to respond to the comments of my colleague, the member for Kings North, specific to contraband tobacco. We certainly recognize that that's a problem in Nova Scotia. The administration and enforcement of contraband tobacco falls under the Alcohol and Gaming Division within Service Nova Scotia, which I'm responsible for. We have had extensive discussions over the past 18 months with regard to the availability and sale of contraband tobacco.

The rate of consumption that my colleague has referenced is a position that the Atlantic Convenience Stores Association has presented. I've met a number of times and have had several discussions with Mr. Mike Hammoud around this very concern. We have just recently partnered with the Atlantic Convenience Stores Association on a number of initiatives that will enhance our ability to gather intelligence and to monitor the sale, transportation, and movement of contraband tobacco.

I would be remiss if I didn't share, for the benefit of my colleague, the member for Kings North and all members of the Legislature, the tremendous partnerships amongst our law enforcement agencies not only here in Nova Scotia, but across Atlantic Canada and into Quebec and Ontario. There is a significant effort to build on those relationships and to eradicate - as much as we possibly can - the sale and movement of contraband tobacco. Having said that, we know it's a challenge. I simply want my colleague to be aware that the department, our resources, and their work relationships with their colleagues throughout Atlantic Canada and into Upper Canada are ongoing and very extensive.

The other piece of that that we are involved in is the social marketing and the promotions. You've probably seen the Crime Stoppers commercial specific to targeting contraband tobacco. These are initiatives that have demonstrated their ability to work. Nova Scotia, in the recent past, has had the lowest percentage of contraband tobacco use in the country. Those numbers are fluctuating and there are a number of contributing factors to those circumstances. We see this as a priority in the Alcohol and Gaming Division. The staff within that department are committed to moving a number of partnerships to address contraband tobacco. We want all of our colleagues in the Legislature to know that it is a priority on our radar and we will continue to work on those efforts to address that. Thank you for those few moments.

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, just a few short comments to conclude the debate on Bill No. 90. I want to thank my colleagues here in the House for their interventions last Fall and also during the current Bill No. 90 for the strong comments that they had to make to advance this. I felt reassured that with three former Health Ministers in the Opposition that there would be relentless efforts to make sure this bill went forward in its full measure.

I was certainly committed to that. We got a little bit off track with giving e-cigarettes the same status as regular tobacco and it led to a lot of confusion - do you include e-juice now as a flavoured tobacco? With that confusion rising in the Committee on Law Amendments last Fall, I think it was best that we take the time out and make sure that we had a strong piece of legislation before the House this Spring. We knew that we would not be implementing it fully until May 31st and we now have that opportunity to make sure that does take place.

I do want to point out that the member for Halifax Needham, who has been here in the House for quite a number of years, has been one of the strongest advocates for a smoke-free province, creating a culture where smoking is not the norm, and I applaud her for her efforts for more than 15 years with many pieces of legislation that have come forward here. I don't think by any measure the issue of reducing smoking and having a smoke-free culture

in our province is over. As several members pointed out, the e-cigarette is coming at us in a big way and a big wave.

Just last week in New Brunswick a number of schools brought their alarm to government to make sure that strong measures are taken to keep them out of the schools and the introduction of the addictive power of nicotine out of the hands of our youth as much as possible.

Yes, being a leader for a short time in the country around a bit more of a comprehensive bill on smoking is not nearly as desirable for this minister as actually being a leader in the country on the number of people who are smoking. I would like for us to be a leader in that regard and be cultivating a stronger province of all the health measures that need to be taken and really create a shift where we take those daily measures for a healthier society.

I get reminded by those in the clinical world and anybody who has had the opportunity, in my capacity as minister, to know the tremendous burden of cost on the health care system and while we may have a bit of short-term impact on the revenues of selling tobacco, the cost benefits in the long term and above all the benefits to individual Nova Scotians who quit smoking and those who never take it up and the benefits that it will be for families not to have to go through those painful days of dealing with a cancer or a heart disease related to smoking, we will all be the beneficiaries in our province.

With that I thank all who have put forward a strong stand, a strong position for creating strong legislation because research shows there are two or three very powerful instruments: one is access to tobacco; and secondly, where people can smoke is also a very, very powerful way of curbing and making smoking an abnormal, if you wish, part of the whole smoking culture. With that, Mr. Speaker, I now move that we close third reading on Bill No. 90.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 90. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington on an introduction.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you very much. I just want to turn your attention to the west gallery where a friend of mine and a constituent, Tommy Amirault, is joining us for the proceedings today. I just want to extend a warm welcome to Tommy here today and hope he enjoys the show. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: I'm not sure which act we're in for the show, but we're going to proceed now.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 109.

Bill No. 109 - Tourism Nova Scotia Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. MARK FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 109, the Tourism Nova Scotia Act, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to tell you about this new legislation and explain why it's so important to Nova Scotia. This legislation will transform the Nova Scotia Tourism Agency into a private sector-led Crown Corporation, Tourism Nova Scotia. We know that the One Nova Scotia report spoke to the need for change and for government to clear the way for private sector to lead the way. The report also sets a very specific goal for tourism growth: to double tourism revenues in 10 years, from \$2 billion to \$4 billion. The creation of this new Crown Corporation is one way we can do this.

This change responds clearly and directly to the wishes of industry and tourism stakeholders. The tourism industry is changing rapidly. To be successful, businesses must be able to take advantage of opportunities whenever and wherever they arise. To do this, Tourism Nova Scotia needs to operate at the speed of business, not the speed of government.

The new Crown Corporation will be more nimble. It will have autonomy and more decision-making authority, including how to allocate and spend their budget. The new structure will clarify roles and allow Tourism Nova Scotia to focus on the things that can be done most effectively: bringing more new visitors to Nova Scotia. That is the Crown's most important objective: to achieve tourism growth in Nova Scotia and maximize the value of tourism to the economy of the province.

To do this, the new corporation will develop and implement a long-term strategy to drive sustainable tourism that delivers growth and profitability in the tourism sector, provides economic benefit to the province, and is consistent with the province's strategic priorities. It can't do it alone. To be successful, Tourism Nova Scotia will communicate and collaborate with communities, private industry, and the tourism industry. Finally, it will be accountable to meet the outcomes as outlined in this business and strategic plan. As Nova Scotia's leading source of service sector exports, tourism employs 24,000 Nova Scotians. That's one in 20 employed Nova Scotians in communities all across the province.

There's no doubt that tourism is a key economic driver in the province and that growing this industry is good for everyone. This Crown Corporation makes good business sense, and it is our best chance of meeting the goal of doubling tourism in Nova Scotia. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise to speak to this bill. I do recognize the comments the minister made, that the most significant aspect of the change, I think, is simply that it will be industry-led in the board, and certainly I do recognize that having industry leading this Crown Corporation and this board will be, I believe, positive. I think that as the minister said, they will be more nimble and more responsive to what is going on in the tourism industry.

One of my concerns about this board of 10 members is, will there be regional representation? I know that in my already short political life as an MLA, I have seen that in some cases, the regions of the province can be competing for a small amount of funding to promote certain events. Sometimes we're living in an environment where there's really not quite enough money to go around to do all the projects everybody would like to have done.

One of the ways in which we believe this bill could be improved is if the makeup of that 10-member board could be more specified in that there would be regional representation. However you want to define those regions, each region of the province would have some representation on the board. I realize that's likely the intent of the minister in any case. However, we feel the bill would be better if that was put into the bill, that there was going to be regional representation from the whole province.

Another concern I have about this move from the Nova Scotia Tourism Agency to a Crown Corporation is that I question if simply putting in an industry-led board is quite enough. It's clear that if you look at the estimates in the budget, the Tourism Agency under ERDT had a budget of \$23,863,000 last year; they actually spent \$26,295,000. I don't know where that increase in spending came from, but this year's budget for the new Tourism Nova Scotia is \$22,618,000. It's an over \$3.5 million decrease from last year's budget.

I recognize that the budget has had some cost-trimming measures throughout, so clearly this is cost-trimming in relation to tourism, yet it's quite clear that when you change the name of an organization, many things change. Letterheads change and there are a certain amount of expenses that are incurred simply because you made those changes.

That is a concern of mine. If we are going to reach that Ivany goal of doubling tourism in 10 years - which is now nine years, right? Essentially, from when this report came out, I think nearly a year has gone by, so the goal is in the next nine years. I question if simply putting a board in place will do that.

I know that when I look at what sort of advertising is done for the Bay of Fundy, if you didn't know any better, you would think that completely belonged to New Brunswick. They've done such a good job of advertising the Bay of Fundy, yet we have the highest tides on our side of the Bay of Fundy. I think we have many of the most amazing places on the Bay of Fundy and the Minas Basin and really a great news story to tell about that. It's not clear that we've done as good a job as New Brunswick has in advertising that Bay of Fundy.

If we think about our province as a whole, I also think that it's not clear. It's clear that Newfoundland has done just a fantastic job of advertising their province. I'm not sure that we are really ready to step up and make that. I hope that this new organization will be able to step up and meet the challenges that even within our own region of advertising our province, we're competing with New Brunswick and Newfoundland and PEI in reality to draw those people in. Certainly, I think it's clear to all of us that Nova Scotia just has a fantastic array of beautiful places to visit and I take the minister's comments about how important this is. Clearly, tourism is enormously important to our province.

The concern I have is that I'm just concerned about this, is this change - I recognize that putting a board in place is an important aspect of it, but is it really a significant enough change to drive the tourism economy to where we want to have it in 10 years? I would like to say that I think that Ivany goal is a daunting goal, and now in nine years. I would question if the bill is going far enough to drive that change. One of the things we know is we need to have targets and measurables and I think those focus our thinking. I know I've heard one member say, if you can't measure it nothing really happened; I've heard that comment before here.

I think that the Ivany goal should be part of this legislation - that is the target. In the bill there are a number of statements of what the goals are and they are all fine as they are. But to really focus our board, I would suggest that it could be improved by having very specific targets. Even if we take this as 10 years from now, well that's making the Ivany goal 11 years, but have incremental goals along the way so that we can check if we are getting there and can see whether we're doing the right things. I think to have the big goal 10 years away, everybody is well okay, we'll get there, but I think there should be

incremental goals in the thing too that we can evaluate. Are we meeting the goals we want to meet with tourism?

It is clear that tourism is extremely important to our economy. It's clear that vis-à-vis the U.S. dollar we are in a favourable time at the moment, where our currency is slightly lower than the U.S. We know that has always been a very significant factor for U.S. citizens, when they make their decisions on where to travel. We know that with events globally, Canada is still seen, I hope, as a safe place to travel for U.S. citizens. I think that we are at a time when there are huge opportunities in the United States for us to meet those goals and I think that needs to be a target of this agency. So those things, I think, are really important.

One of the statements I noticed in the bill was that the Tourism Agency could act on behalf of the government in such matters related to visitor information centres and the signature resorts as the minister directs. When I read that, I put a question mark there because I think it needs to be clearer - who is acting? As the minister directs, maybe that's clear enough, but I think it could be clearer who is really in charge of the visitor tourist information centres and the signature resorts.

I think that stuff needs to be spelled out more clearly. It's a bit of an ambiguous statement in the document that it may be one or it may be the other. I understand why sometimes ambiguity is something the government would like, but I would like to suggest that those things could be spelled out and could be clearer, where the authority for those important things, the signature resorts of the province and visitor information centres are. I think the bill would be improved if there was more clarity right from the beginning, who is looking after those things.

I know the move from a Tourism Agency to a Crown Corporation, I said as I noted before, that just triggers incidental expenses and maybe the minister can clarify this. Maybe that was necessary to have a private industry board in charge, but I question the necessity of that move, maybe a board, but as I said, maybe the minister will clarify that's the only way to actually have a private industry board in charge, to have a Crown Corporation.

I know that most Crown Corporations have a revenue component, so they're actually handling significant amounts of money and we want to put them a little bit at arm's length from political control. It is clear there is no revenue component or not much of one that I know of anyway in tourism, so that's taken out. It's clear that political control is important in tourism, I don't see any reason why not. If I think about the Crown Corporations I'm more familiar with, like the Liquor Corporation, it's clear that has a huge revenue component.

While we have oversight, as MLAs we don't want direct control. I see the logic of that for a Crown Corporation and one which I have had much more contact with, the Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board - we would not want as legislators to be involved in the decisions

that the Farm Loan Board made on a day-to-day basis. For my part, I would be very hesitant to recommend anything to the Farm Load Board. I realize that they have a tough job to do in making lending decisions.

You can see where the value of having a Crown Corporation is in regard to something like the Farm Loan Board or the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation. It's not as clear to me where the value is in this, other than that I do recognize the value of the board of industry. I question whether that could not have been accomplished in other ways, and maybe the minister could enlighten me on that point.

As I said, I'm concerned that while we are talking about the Ivany goals, we're in a situation where the actual budget for Tourism Nova Scotia is declining. In fact, if I just think about the number, it's declining by more than 10 per cent this year from the actual of last year. It's a significant decline.

I would like to ask the minister - and maybe he can reply in his comments - maybe there are elements to that decline that I don't understand, that still are positive for the tourism industry. I would certainly appreciate hearing his remarks on that particular point. It does seem that it is backward in an era when we know that there is always a slight amount of inflation in the cost of advertising, and all the things that need to be done to promote the province are so important. Especially in a year like this year, when clearly there is a lot to be done to promote the ferry in Yarmouth down into New England and into the United States.

It's a critical, critical time to see that good uptake on that ferry this summer, and at this moment, when that is so critical, right now we are changing from an agency to a Crown Corporation. I don't know in reality how big of a tumult that change causes. I know that any change triggers a certain amount of reorganization, and I guess that I question that change, in that it's such a critical year for - and probably right now, literally, is a very critical time for advertising the ferry in New England and down into the East Coast of the United States, right down into the south.

While those visitors are making those decisions right now, probably, of what they're doing this summer, we are in the middle of rejigging this agency into a Crown Corporation. I think that in that sense that's unfortunate timing, and maybe the minister can enlighten me on that point. Maybe it isn't that big an impact, where the agency was already fairly well independent of the government as an agency in any case, and if that's the case, then why make the change to a Crown Corporation?

Those are some of the things that I wonder about this bill right now. I know that in having read it, a fair bit of the bill relates to changes for the staff who are part of the allowing - I think generating a certain amount of comfort level that the staff of the Nova Scotia Tourism Agency will remain civil servants as they are transitioned into being staff of a Crown Corporation. I know that accounts for a fair bit of this bill. The real goals part

of it, or what the mandate is, is fairly thin. I know that the anticipation of the minister would be that the new board would establish that. As I said, going through that process would - as I said, I think it is sort of an unfortunate moment in time, in that we are in such a critical year for the ferry in Yarmouth. We need that ferry to be well used this summer, well taken up.

I know that every Nova Scotian wants to see that ferry succeed, and the reach into New England of the advertising for that. I realize that some of that advertising is being done through Nova Star, but I think that it's very important for our province that it succeeds, and to have this changeover right now - I hope that they can hit the ground running and make a good effort of it in the United States.

Certainly one of the things that we see in tourism in our area is that tourism is changing, and it is changing in many ways. One way is that it's about the experience. In the Annapolis Valley we've had the wine bus, which has been very successful, the winery. So one of the experiences is the food and the wine and that sort of thing. It's no longer just about the scenery; it's about what the experiences are. I know that the 10-member board understands that very well, I'm sure. I hope that in this new Tourism Nova Scotia, the tourism experience will be a key factor in how it's advertised and put forward.

I know that for myself, when we travel, my wife and I, we're looking online ourselves for what we want to find. We're going to TripAdvisor, we're looking at where to eat and we're sort of trying to gather that sort of information. I know that the electronic media will be a critical part of the future of tourism, of really feeding that information to the World Wide Web. Certainly, I know every tourism operator is doing their best to promote and feed their own information into the system and promote them.

I think it is critical that we as a province do that, too, and I think it's critical that Tourism Nova Scotia do that. I really didn't see that in the mandate. Maybe it's just sort of in there and I didn't read it; maybe the minister could enlighten me on that too. I believe that is a very, very important aspect of our tourism industry in the future. I would just ask that question.

To sort of summarize, the move towards having an industry board is - yes, we can see that, we can understand that. As I said, we are concerned about the sort of regional participation there. If one region was left out, I think that would be very detrimental to the board and to the province. We know there is sometimes conflict between regions for funding, so I think that is sort of an element we're looking for. I think we're looking for a little more clarity on the signature resorts and the visitor information centres. I know there has been some pushback from some areas about visitor information centres. There is still certainly a segment of the travelling population that would really want to have those visitor information centres there. It's quite clear.

We look forward to seeing what happens with this bill in Law Amendments Committee and what the presentations in Law Amendments Committee are. With those few words, I'll take my seat. Thank you.

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Madam Speaker, this is a very important topic certainly for all of Nova Scotia. In particular, I am proud of the Chester-St. Margaret's area and what tourism is all about to that area. As we know, we have the beautiful Peggy's Cove, the Hooked Rug Museum of North America, Ross Farm Museum - we have many tourism attractions along our beautiful coasts of Nova Scotia and in particular in the Peggy's Cove area. The whole aspect with respect to tourism and how that service is being provided in our province is very important to Nova Scotians and myself as a representative for an area where the economy is certainly positively affected by the tourism industry.

With respect to this particular legislation, there are several questions that have come to mind to me. Some of them are similar to my colleague speaking about Bill No. 109. The reason for the change from an agency to a corporation - and I don't want to make assumptions, but - I think it's probably on this train towards being more business-oriented and because we now have a new Department of Business in our province.

Once again, that brings me to the fact that with this legislation, what is the business plan? Where is the business plan? We talk about the importance of business, but it seems that every time a piece of legislation comes before us or there are recommendations being made, there isn't a business plan attached to that. As I've mentioned in this House a number of times, anyone who would be in the tourism industry and wanted to start up a tourism or related business and needed support from a bank to make it successful would need to have a very precise business plan to show what the expenses would be, what the revenues would be, and also the business plan talks about the mandate, the vision, where we're going with this - and of course we don't see this in Bill No. 109.

Once again, there seems to be a disconnect in terms of the legislation being brought forward to make a move, and I'm fearful of this once again after the fact that we have a recommendation, we have a concept - I'm not saying whether that concept is good or bad - but we just have this concept that the government is supporting a move towards a corporation rather than an agency, with tourism in our province.

The question is, where is the business plan? Where are the figures? Where is the documentation which supports making this move? What will the vision be of the corporation? I do know that through the Ivany report there are some pieces there, but that was not the complete plan for tourism in this province. There are many factors to tourism. It's far-reaching in our communities and it has a ripple effect, a positive ripple effect, throughout our economy. So I think it's very important in the leadership role that a government takes that when decisions are made that they're able to come forth and perhaps

the minister will do that today with more information. Perhaps there is a business plan that we will be able to see and also the new members of the corporation will be provided with - or is the business plan going to be created after the corporation is created?

I would think if you were going to make a move of this nature, where it will affect cost and employees, that there would be some type of strategy in place and some structure to what that move would look like. Once again my point is if the government has the desire to be more business oriented then they need to start taking action towards that way and to act in respect to a business when they're making these types of decisions.

One of the disconnects that boggles my mind, and probably the minds of many people in the province, is that we're making this move and we're talking about the significance of the tourism industry in the province - we're also talking about the goal of increasing the revenue that we make in the province, a very lofty goal which is good to have, something of that nature to work towards; however, once again, the huge disconnect is the fact that we've just gone through several weeks of gutting the film and television industry, the very industry that draws numbers and numbers of tourists to the Province of Nova Scotia.

I have many examples of the number of people who have come from around the world to see where Haven was shot. Those individuals and families probably would have never decided to come to the little Village of Chester, but they were drawn to Chester from being able to turn on their television sets anywhere in the world or to go on the Internet and see this Stephen King production of Haven and draw that interest to that.

We also know even with the Curse of Oak Island, the number of people who have been travelling to the province to see that. The problem is that we've had no strategy around Oak Island. Oak Island is known worldwide, in part for tourism. We've not taken the opportunities that have been presented to us. I will admit that every Party that sits in this House - there's a gem sitting there, there's an interest worldwide and, for whatever reason, we haven't appreciated what has been on our back doorstep.

The first thing that we have to do is protect it and to develop a strategy that the island could possibly someday become a heritage site for our province and how many people that attention will bring here to see the island where a production has been shot, and that whole interest in Oak Island goes back hundreds of years.

So we don't have to reinvent the wheel, we have it here in the province and for whatever reason we seem to be skipping over it. It is just like when I was a kid and I used to go to Gram's and I would throw the rocks and try to skip them on the ocean, it seems like we've been doing that a lot, unfortunately, in our province. We are not connecting the dots of what we have available in one area of the province to the other and we're not realizing that we have global opportunities here and that we can draw from tourism opportunities from around the world if we do it right, if we do it in a strategic manner, and

if we do it with a business plan. I hope that the new corporation will be given the tools and support to do that.

One of the questions I would have is, if the corporation had an interest in the public and the community came to the corporation and presented to them, for example, the opportunities that exist there around Oak Island and also the surrounding area. There are so many shipwrecks off our coast it's unbelievable. In Mahone Bay, itself, there's an island for every day of the year, there are 365 islands in Mahone Bay that are sitting there ripe for tourists to be able to experience. Although we do have private islands, we do have some that are owned by the province, but even the opportunity to take a boat ride out around those islands and diving is a huge ecotourism opportunity that we're not looking at and that's one that can be tied into Oak Island, to come and see Oak Island because it becomes a heritage site and in turn, you have all this other spinoff business, like the diving of the shipwrecks in the local area.

We know that *The Teazer* burned in Mahone Bay and that's something that I had a great interest in over the years, believe it or not. When you need to do something you go big or stay home, and one year I was coordinating what we call Chester Old Home Week and we thought we would do the burning of *The Teazer*. So luckily for me my Dad and a couple of the old fishers at home decided that they had a boat that they would actually fix up and build and we took it off of Chester and it was a night that we were having all of these events in the community around the yacht club and what we did was we burned the boat - blew it up, actually - and it was the burning of *The Teazer*.

If you are creative there is lots you can do and that's why the creative economy is so vital to how we express ourselves and how we promote ourselves through tourism. That is why it has been quite a shock that a decision would have been made so quickly, with such little research on the film industry and cut them off at the knees. We know that there was somewhat of a deal made, and I call it "somewhat of a deal" because of the fact it was a "take it or leave it" deal. We should actually be investing in this industry, so that's a big disconnect for myself and I'm sure it's a big disconnect for many Nova Scotians, especially those who have been affected by the film and television industry, whether you worked directly in the industry or you've been able to be a business person selling support services to the industry.

The huge disconnect is the province, the government is talking about tourism and the importance of tourism in the press releases, it talks about how fabulous it will be to have this corporation to focus on tourism opportunities in the province, yet just over the last several weeks we took one of our greatest opportunities, the film and television industry and we almost devastated it. The rebound will take years because we know with that type of industry, there's a lot of lead time in planning productions. It's not the type of industry that you can stop one day and start it up the next day. It takes time, and there is going to be great losses that took place over the last several weeks. That is a huge disconnect. On one hand, how do we have a new Department of Business that's talking

about tourism and that we have to take it on a business angle and we need to go that way - and there is no problem with the philosophy behind business. As we know, there are numerous, very, very successful businesses whether they are small, medium, or large because they have followed the philosophy of business.

There's no issue with that fact, if the minister and government views that it's going to be more advantageous as a corporation rather than an agency. I'd like to hear the minister's thoughts behind that, but if that's the route that is felt will be more successful and we have the industry people right at the table and they're going to follow a business model, that very well can be a recipe for success because of it being a business model. The disconnect, again, is why would we do that and not before-hand have supported the industry that draws so many people to Nova Scotia to see, for example, where *The Book of Negroes* was filmed, where even back in 1996 - and I know that there are some backbenchers who are probably too young to even remember this - it wasn't the greatest movie in the world but the Sandra Bullock movie that was done in the Chester area, *Two if By Sea*. I still remember when that was done and where that was filmed that many years ago.

That's the thing about the film and the television industry - even when a movie is not all that successful, people tend to remember, and the very successful ones are remembered for a very long time. As my colleague said, people travel differently in today's world and because of the advantages of having the Internet and being able to look on the Internet and actually see visuals or see a movie that you've already seen years ago and re-familiarize yourself with that movie and you say well, I'm going to go to Chester - I mean, look at the beautiful scenery in the background in this movie. I'd like to visit Chester, so I'm going to plan a family vacation.

I received a letter from a family in Ontario who came to Chester just to see where Haven was shot and they enjoyed it so much and they enjoyed the hospitality that was shown to them from the people in Chester-St. Margaret's that they have planned a trip again this August. Now, whether they will fulfill that trip, because Haven will not be there because of the gutting of the Film Tax Credit - along with another \$12 million production that was on the plate - they're certainly going to probably think twice because the excitement is seeing something that you see on television or the Internet and you want to be a part of it, and you become a part of it when you visit that.

If the minister could address why such a disconnect when these two industries really go hand in hand. Tourism with the creative industry, that's what we're all about. We promote our culture; we promote our heritage. We promote who we are in our uniqueness - and what better way to promote it but through the film and television industry.

You can buy as many expensive ads as you want in a magazine or a newspaper or a printed publication, but it can't stand up to somebody turning on their television in their home in Sweden or Australia, or in Norway, and seeing a film that was produced here in

our province. You cannot pay for what it costs in terms of what you get in return on a marketing and public relations aspect. If you're going to be successful in business, what do you think that the big businesses do? Not just tourism businesses. If you look at IBM, if you look at Facebook, if you look at Google, all of those businesses work on people looking at them and getting excited and experiencing what they have to offer - what you experience through Facebook, what you experience - it's about the experience.

That's what the film and television industry does. It provides an experience. That's what tourism does. It sells an experience. That is why I still have such a big question mark, Madam Speaker, of why we went through two or three weeks of what we've gone through when we're now talking about how important this tourism corporation will be, and we've just taken away many, many opportunities from those people who will be sitting around that table. So they're going to have to fill the gaps in many areas, and it's going to take a long time to fill those gaps, there's no question.

The other comment I would also like to ask is - and this would be in a business plan, if it existed - what is the connection between the corporation and the other government departments, in terms of tourism, and how is that going to be laid out? When I say "the connection," there are several things that I'm talking about. I'm talking about the communication - is there a communication strategy that has been developed for this corporation? I would say that the external communication of how they promote Nova Scotia is exactly what this corporation, this board, will be looking at.

However, is there an existing internal communication strategy that will be provided to the new board members to tell them and inform them how they're going to link up with other departments in the government, to be able to voice their concerns or their recommendations to those departments? For example, when you look at Peggy's Cove, in my constituency, it's an icon for our province. But many people do not know, Madam Speaker, that if you come to Halifax, the only way you can get to Peggy's Cove is either through a tour or if you take a taxi yourself.

We do not have any public transportation to Peggy's Cove. It's very difficult to believe, when we have this icon that draws thousands and thousands of people worldwide to Peggy's Cove. But if you flew into the Halifax airport and you decided to come to Halifax for a family visit, or if you were coming here to do business on a conference, the only way you could get to Peggy's Cove is to have it planned out before-hand, because there's no transportation means.

My question to the minister is, how is that going to connect? What is the internal communication connection and the flow of information to the other departments? We need to be working on that very issue. We have no public transportation to Peggy's Cove. The number of people who would take that opportunity, if there was public transportation to get to Peggy's Cove, would certainly increase the opportunities in that very small community, in terms of their tourism.

Now we do know there are many, many tourists who go there, but there are opportunities to all the other little communities that are dotted along our coast to Peggy's Cove, but there's no way to get there, unless you are on a planned bus tour or you are taking a taxi.

That's just an example. There are many other examples, that there will need to be internal relationships between this board and other government departments.

I'm wondering - that would actually be, if we have a business plan, that should be identified in a business plan. How does that work? How does the internal communication work? Who do they speak to? Who do they get their issue on the table to have being discussed with government? The tie-in to government, Madam Speaker, will be the fact that government has the decision-making abilities to make those things happen.

If they don't have that ability and know who to go to in the different departments, that board will find themselves out wailing on their own - excuse the ocean pun, but wailing on their own - because they won't have that connect. Once again, that would be addressed in a business plan, so it's critical there is - and hopefully there is - a business plan at this point.

The other questions I'd like to pose to the minister are with respect to the members themselves. I think my colleague addressed this a little bit, like - who will be on the new board? How will they be appointed? I see in the legislation, there is talk of the word being "elected" to the board. How is that election process? Is that going to be done by region within Nova Scotia, so out in the area that I represent, or the entire South Shore? Does that mean that somebody would have to be elected or that would be the process to get on the board - through an election process? I understand also that the only way that you are able to be elected is if you're approved by the minister to even put your name forward to be elected. It would be of value if the minister would be able to explain to us how that process will work.

I also noticed too that there is no limitation on the years that somebody sits on the board. I think, up front, that is very important too. I know it's very nice to have people who are seasoned and have knowledge, but it's also very important that on any of these kinds of boards, there is opportunity for new people to come on to the board. Those usually need to be staggered so you still have some seasoned members on your board and you also have some new members coming on your board. I'm not seeing that in the legislation at all of how that works out, because right now, there is no time frame or limit for anybody to sit on that board.

Also, when we talked about the importance of tourism, there have been issues with respect to the closure of tourist information centres. Will the board be the ones that now will be in charge of that, deciding which communities have or do not have tourist information centres? I guess this new board would be in control of the budget. As my

colleague said, that has been cut, so there will be some challenges there in terms of the budget amount.

What are the budget ramifications for the board? Do they have all power in making those decisions? Are they voted on at the board level, and then they must go back to the minister for the minister's approval? Or does it go back to Cabinet for Cabinet approval? How will that work? If the minister could cover that for us, that would be greatly appreciated.

We also know that there have been some issues around the travel guide and the fact that we often assume that we do have a new society, a new world of technology, but we cannot forget that there are people who still do not use a computer. We are one of the oldest populations in Canada. There are two types of tourism marketing that we need to address: the external marketing when we're looking at outside of our province - I guess you would say three. You would have your national marketing, where you want to draw attention from other provinces and other Canadians to visit Nova Scotia. You would have your international marketing that I spoke about, where you're promoting Nova Scotia around the world on a global basis. But you also have internal marketing and tourism; that is, if somebody travels 100 kilometres, often you can define that as the person being a tourist. If I get in my vehicle and travel to Kentville for the Apple Blossom Festival, I could be considered a tourist because I would be spending money there when I go for the day.

The question is in terms of having available information. If we're closing some of these tourist information centres, if we're making it much more difficult to get a travel guide - I realize there is a cost factor to those travel guides, and I think that one of the ministers said they felt that they weren't being utilized to the level - that there were always many left over.

I don't think the decision to make them more difficult to get or the cost to send them out to an individual - I think maybe the decision just needed to be to reduce the numbers that were being printed and see if that worked, and that they were all utilized by the end of the summer. There are a number of people who, when they travel, really like to have the tourist information guide as a hard copy. Even when you utilize the Internet, it's often nice to have a hard copy with you as you travel.

There are a number of questions that we have. One of my last questions is with respect to the employees. I understand from reading the legislation that the employees will flow over into the new corporation, which is good news. I'm wondering, what are the plans for the future with those employees? Will there be any job losses whatsoever? We already saw what happened in Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, so I'm sure that because of the atmosphere and the recent past history of employees working for this government, there's probably a nervousness around that. Is the minister able to guarantee and confirm that there will not be any job losses in this transition?

I've thrown quite a few questions to the minister. Hopefully he will be able to answer those for us. If not, I know this minister, and he does take his position very seriously. I know that if he's not able to answer them this afternoon in his reply, he will certainly - I do know, and I'm very confident he will come to me with those answers and we will have a general discussion around that.

In closing, I do want to wish the minister the best of luck on making these changes. I hope he does understand my concern around the business-planning aspect and some of the questions that I've put forth. I know that his intentions are good, and that he wants to make this work for all of Nova Scotia. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: I won't speak too long. I just have a couple of things. (Interruptions) I don't think I could ever go an hour in here, but I do want to take the opportunity to express how valuable the tourism industry is to me and to my constituency. Ever since I was a little girl, 12 years old, playing the bagpipes down at the ferry coming from Prince Edward Island - that's around where I live. I worked at the Keltic Lodge, and through my teenage years saw the value of the tourism industry, because it supported myself as a teenager in the summer months.

Which brings me to a great concern right now. We all are aware of the closing of the visitor information centre in Pictou, as well as Digby. We've gone from eight to six. It's been clearly stated by Patrick Sullivan that over the next six to ten years we'll be phasing out all visitor information centres in Nova Scotia, because more people are using online capabilities to plan their trips. I get that. I know we're evolving, and I understand that transition. I'm still a firm believer, though, that there is a necessary opportunity to have face-to-face connection. There is a market out there that needs that face-to-face connection.

With regard to the VIC in Pictou, a number of weeks ago we had the opportunity, the mayors of Pictou County and myself, to speak to Patrick Sullivan and a few of his colleagues with regard to the closure of the VIC and losing 12 good-paying jobs in rural Nova Scotia. We accepted that they would not reverse their decision, but it was clearly stated at that meeting as well that he was reassuring us that if we collectively came together as a county and worked together at presenting a proposal, we could operate the building, which is only 14 years old - it's a beautiful building - and TIR would clearly look after the maintenance of the building. We would just have to worry about staffing.

We spent hours - I worked with CAO Lisa MacDonald from New Glasgow and put a really good presentation together. We heard last Friday that they are willing to give us \$3,000. I'm really, really disappointed in that. We've been swiped away over a couple-hundred-thousand-dollar budget to operate that VIC. I mean, that's really insult to injury to offer \$3,000 to a VIC that is centred around a gateway to the province.

This is a big concern of mine as well as the fact that - speaking of summer students - we know that a number of months ago, it had briefly been put out there that \$290,000 was going to be given to all the MLAs so they could hire a summer student. Well, there was a lot of squawking about that and it was changed. I remember speaking to the then-Minister of ERDT - what would happen with that \$290,000? It was that it would go back into probably creating more jobs for summer students.

I hope that's the case, because right now, what we're experiencing in Pictou is that we have lost a VIC of 12 good-paying jobs and we've also lost the ability of hiring the number of students that we're usually used to. I'm hoping that we can get a little bit more assistance in getting a few more summer students to try to fill that role that has been taken away.

I wanted to express that on behalf of a number of my constituents because Pictou and surrounding areas definitely rely on the tourism industry. I believe my colleagues brought up some concerns and brought up things that I'm not so concerned about because I knew the answers to anyway, but what I do want to point out is that the Nova Scotia Tourism Agency on their website, as of today, it's all old information. It still has that they're connected with ERDT. I'm just suggesting that that may want to be updated considering that this piece of legislation is actually dated for April 1st.

I think that's a big concern because when we go onto that website, it states what the Nova Scotia Tourism Agency's mandate is and it expresses how they already have a strategy. What I guess I'm concerned about - if we're making them into a corporation and they say that they will create this new strategy, well, they already had a strategy. Is that strategy going to change?

As of right now, what their strategy is - they point out three things. They point out why tourism matters, they point out the challenge, and they say that under the challenge, Nova Scotia is faced with a number of barriers to industry growth, including the lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities. I think this is a great opportunity to get that off there and clarify now that there will be specific roles and responsibilities and moving forward so that we can see the Ivany goals come to fruition, which is taking a \$2 billion industry to a \$4 billion industry.

On that note, I just wanted to say a few words with regard to my constituency. I hope that everyone in this Chamber will take an opportunity this summer to come to Pictou.

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

The honourable Minister of Business.

HON. MARK FUREY: I want to thank my colleagues for their extensive inquiries and questions around what we believe is a high-potential industry and sector for Nova

Scotia to grow. There are many components of my colleagues' comments that I certainly agree with. It's music to my ears to hear my colleagues talk about the need for a marketing component specific to our ability to promote tourism and promote Nova Scotia. I'll pass a few general comments and I'll get into some of the specifics that my colleagues have asked specifically about.

Madam Speaker, it's no secret that Nova Scotia has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in rural economic development, and tourism is one of those sectors. It's also no secret that we've had the worst performing economy in Canada for 20-plus years and that presents Nova Scotia with a challenge and I believe the Ivany report highlighted that and basically said the system is broken, it's not producing on its potential, and that there is need for significant change. The creation of the Department of Business and the creation of the Crown Corporation for Tourism is a reflection of that change that was documented and highlighted within the Ivany report and on many occasions referred in this Legislature by all Parties as a vision forward.

If we understand that concept that what we've been doing has not worked, then we can all appreciate the need for change. The objective within the Ivany report, I believe it's number 14 of the economic development goals, is as my colleagues have identified, to double the revenues of tourism from \$2 to \$4 billion over the next 10 years. That is a very challenging goal but those who have been involved in the discussions and those on the One Nova Scotia Commission who have a deep understanding of not only the challenges within Nova Scotia but the opportunities within Nova Scotia believe that to be an achievable goal. The objective is to work towards that for the benefit of every community and certainly not isolate any one community.

I'll speak to my colleagues' questions in the order that they've been presented and I think in answering those of my colleague from Kings North, I will at the same time answer some of the questions from my colleagues from Chester-St. Margaret's and Pictou West.

There was some discussion or maybe some inherent concern about regional representation and I had the good fortune to meet with the board this past week and was impressed with the regional representation on the board, all the way from Yarmouth through to Cape Breton and those areas in between and that obviously would be a concern to government as well to ensure the geography in Nova Scotia is well represented so that they are not only familiar with the circumstances of regional components of the province but they also understand collective objectives and I can tell you I was quite impressed.

The other area that was referenced by all of my colleagues was the budget and the reference that the new budget in Tourism Nova Scotia is less than the previous budget of the former agency. Well, this is a reflection of the need to change the model of how we deliver tourism and how we benefit from tourism in the province. So there is a significant change in strategy. That's absolutely necessary if we are to achieve the \$4 billion mark that the One Nova Scotia report has identified and believe to be achievable.

We believe that the board, a separate entity from government, with its makeup and experience in the tourism sector, both business and tourism, will be significant players, as my colleagues have referenced, to the leadership that's necessary to drive tourism in Nova Scotia. My colleague mentioned the Bay of Fundy and there was some reference to some of the other marketing campaigns that our neighbouring provinces use. I think my colleague is quite right in that when you look at New Brunswick that they would claim to have ownership of the Bay of Fundy when, in fact, we do have the highest tides on the Nova Scotia coast.

The need, and to the member's point, is there has to be a shift in marketing, and marketing will be an important part of the strategy going forward. So the reduction in a budget is simply, Madam Speaker, to identify the opportunity and need to change the strategy, that the strategy will have a different lens - and I'll speak to that momentarily about the role technology will play in that, and how that in itself will drive efficiencies and rationalize and support the budget that has been identified for the new Crown Corporation.

There was reference as well to some of the Newfoundland and Labrador ads. I was out to the Saltscapes Expo this past weekend, on Friday night. If anyone in the Legislature had the opportunity to visit there, it was an extremely remarkable show - a presentation of Atlantic Canada and the opportunities to drive regional tourism, where we all become benefactors. So it's not isolating the South Shore from Cape Breton, it is about the collective objectives of regions in the province and the role we can play in Atlantic Canada to drive Atlantic Canada as a destination.

I'll use an example that Mayor Pam Mood uses when she speaks publicly. When she promotes her town through her All Hands on Deck initiative, she talks about southwestern Nova Scotia, she talks about the culture and history of the French shore and the Acadians, and she talks about the culture and history of the fishing community through the Barrington Municipality, the largest exporter of fresh lobsters anywhere in Canada. When you come up the South Shore she talks about the quality of the beaches and she talks about the entities or the assets of multiple communities in promoting her town.

She promotes it as a region, Madam Speaker, and the concept there simply is with the use of technology - and I think my colleagues referenced that - how easy it is on a global scale to sit down, not on your computer anymore but on your laptop or your mobile device, and plan your trip - and I'll expand on that in a few moments.

My point here, and I think my colleagues agree, and I will remind them as we go forward of their comments today, how important it is that we market Nova Scotia through a strong, strategic plan. I can assure my colleagues that that is a significant component of the new strategy of the new Crown Corporation and how they will lead tourism in Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, I mentioned it earlier, because I must say I am a little confused with some of the comments of my colleagues questioning a Crown Corporation, about how important it is to be independent of government, and I'll say this and I'll repeat it into the future and I challenge and encourage my colleagues to use the same phrase as we pursue these goals, we cannot operate - let me rephrase it - we have to operate at the speed of business, not the speed of government. (Applause) Now think about that, it's absolutely essential that a Crown Corporation be distant from government and that the Crown Corporation represent the industry that it is intended and expected to lead.

I know that as my colleagues get to know the representation and the membership on the tourism board, they will value and appreciate how important it is for government to get out of the way and let business drive business - let sector-specific leaders drive those sectors. In these circumstances, that is the model that has been created. It's a model that we believe will achieve the goals set out in the Ivany report.

I've had a number of discussions this week with many of those board members and I have the utmost confidence in their participation and their leadership. There's one single reason why: each and every one of them has an interest and an investment in the tourism sector. It's important for them that the industry survive and thrive, so their objectives are in the best interests of the very industry they're engaged in. I believe that brings value not only to the separation from government, but to the key roles and responsibilities that they will have going forward.

My colleague, the member for Kings North, asked about who was acting and suggested that there was some convenient ambiguity around the creation of the Crown Corporation and government's role. I've had the opportunity to speak with a number of the CEOs of the Crown Corporations where I have responsibility. One of the clear messages that I've shared very early is that this minister will not interfere in the business of that Crown Corporation. When I say that - they are separate from government. Yes, we'll allot them their budget, but they have a clear responsibility to administer that, to develop and implement strategic plans and business plans over periods of time that will help us achieve the goal. There should be no confusion about the separation of that Crown Corporation and the responsibilities that are delegated to the Chairs or the CEOs of the Crown Corporation and the delegation of authority and responsibility to the Chair and members of the board.

I don't want to elaborate on it too much, but because there were a number of comments shared around a private industry board being in charge - as legislators we should not be involved, and I couldn't agree with that more. I think my earlier comments really speak to that, that there has to be that independence. There is certainly an accountability to government through the outcomes and the measurements, but the intent of Tourism Nova Scotia is to allow those individuals to lead that initiative in pursuit of our objectives.

The timing of the creation of the Crown Corporation. I won't spend a lot of time on this, but there has been criticism that there has been inaction on the recommendations of

the Ivany report. There has been a tremendous amount of work done behind the scenes in pursuit of these objectives. I think I said yesterday that there's no perfect time in any of the decisions that we make, but when you've established a model and the opportunity awaits us and the challenge is before us as the Ivany report has laid out, then obviously we implement at a time that is most appropriate. That may not be seen by everyone in this Legislature, but the timing of the creation of this Crown Corporation, I believe, is the right timing with the right people to drive those agendas in pursuit of those objectives.

The question was asked, why make the change? I think that's a very simple answer. Government should not be in the business of business. The suggestion has been and the discussions I've had with many business leaders over many years is the frustrations of government's involvement in business. Whether it's red tape or bureaucracy or the pace of government, there's a need for government to get out of the way. The simple answer as to why we would make the change is just that: we have to let business run at the speed of business. We believe in these circumstances those individuals have the skill sets and the ability and the experience to drive that.

There's some discussion around the Nova Scotia experience. There has been multimillions of dollars spent on tourism in the past, but the statistics show us that if you take the last 10 years, there has been a decline in tourism experience in Nova Scotia. This last year saw the most significant increase in rooms utilized and tourism within the province. I don't have the specific numbers, but I'll certainly access those for my colleagues.

This past year saw the single largest increase in 10 years in tourism in the province. That's a good sign, because there are a number of other things falling in place that will complement that. The creation of this board, to the point of timing, could not be better timing.

The other thing that has come up when we talk about the experience is the money that is expended internally within the province. Marketing should drive the experience of coming to Nova Scotia for that first experience, but we spent \$10 million in the past environment to move visitors around the province. That's not money well spent.

We want to drive the first experience. We want those from other provinces and those good friends south of the border to experience Nova Scotia for the first time, and for they themselves to be ambassadors speaking to the experience they had. When you combine that with the access to technology and the ability for any one of us to go online - and I think my colleague said it himself, that he and his spouse went online to plan their trip. That is the shift in the industry.

When we talk about the VICs - I know they are an important piece of the community, and I know how important they are for summer employment opportunity, as my colleague, the member for Pictou West identified, but we cannot continue to do it as

we have done it in the past. The outcomes speak for themselves. There has to be a shift. So that \$10 million that we spent in the past, moving visitors around Nova Scotia, can be better utilized in marketing Nova Scotia as a first experience in other parts of the country.

There are statistics that clearly demonstrate the monies expended in those regions of the country and the return on that investment. The most significant expenditure and the most significant return on that investment was in the New England community. I've spoken about it in the past, sitting down to watch the Boston Red Sox, and behind home plate is the Nova Scotia flag and logo and the website. That has attracted a significant amount of attention, and it has attracted a significant amount of visitors. It's a small component, but it's such a critical component to our objective.

The use of things such as TripAdvisor and other social media components are also valuable in our ability to drive tourism in the province. So quite simply, there is a need to shift the strategy. There is a need to change past practices in order to achieve that objective.

There was some discussion around the creation of a business plan or a strategic plan. That is and will continue to be the responsibility of the new Crown Corporation. It's not for me as a minister. We know what the objective is; we want to double that experience in numbers, \$2 billion to \$4 billion. The Crown Corporation will lead that exercise and they will implement that strategy with a focus on achieving that objective.

I think I've spoken already to the leadership role. We see that in the strength of the board. I have full confidence in the board members. They will lead, and most importantly, as I mentioned earlier, they are representative of the industry itself.

My colleague from Chester-St. Margaret's, when she spoke, made a comment that we don't have to reinvent the wheel. I would suggest that we do have to reinvent the wheel. The old wheel didn't work. It hadn't worked. There is a need to shift the strategy so that we implement steps that allow us to achieve those goals. My colleague also mentioned the need to do it in a strategic manner; I couldn't agree more.

One of the comments also spoke about other government departments. Well, the whole idea behind the Department of Business is to align other government departments because to my colleague's point, they haven't been aligned in the past. She would know that as a previous minister. The objective of the new Department of Business, where the Crown Corporation falls for purposes of oversight, is about aligning the objectives of all departments with that fundamental focus on the strategy that is in place to drive the economy, particularly rural Nova Scotia, of those high-potential sectors that will see a change that my colleague would anticipate and hope for.

It's not restricted to the tourism sector. We believe that municipal governments will play a key role in rural economic development. That is why we moved the regional economic networks, the new RENs, to the Department of Municipal Affairs - so that we

create a relationship with our municipalities and that in those communities where RENs are represented and NSBI - Nova Scotia Business Inc. - resources are available as a touch point for business development in those communities, that the municipalities play a key role in the discussions, the engagements, the strategies, the objectives, and the outcomes.

There was much discussion around the digital world and I just want to take a moment to speak to that. There was a comment made that tourism sells an experience. That is so true, and technology is going to be a key part of that. I think all of my colleagues who spoke realized that. I think on that point, we agreed on the very examples that they used specific to the use of technology.

I just want to be sure that I don't miss any point that my colleagues presented. The makeup of the board, to my colleague's point, is really an important question. I've had discussions as recently as this morning as to how I envision that. The chair of the board agrees to the mechanism that my colleague from Chester-St. Margaret's identified, that the board should be representative of regions, that the board should identify periods of time, and that those periods of time facilitate turnover but continuity. A three-, two-, and one-year appointment, I think, as my colleague suggested, is consistent with the discussions that have been had and that will be reflected in the representation of the board. It addresses, I believe, the points that my colleague mentioned, the process itself, the rotation, and the continuity. I want to assure my colleague that those are objectives that we agree on and we believe will be most valuable to the board itself.

There was some discussion around internal and external marketing and I think I've spoken to the external marketing piece and how important that is, and I can assure my colleagues that that will be a priority focus of the new board. But when we talk about the internal marketing and we talk about the VICs and the importance to the communities and the reduction of two VICs, Madam Speaker, I also want to remind members of the Legislature that there are over 50 additional municipal VICs across the province, and in some cases, we've had duplication.

We can debate whether they serve the same role or different roles and how important the location of those particular facilities is, but I go back to what I said earlier about that \$10 million expenditure internally. It's our belief that that money is best expended in marketing the province, getting Nova Scotians here for the experience that my colleagues have suggested, and allowing that process, their experience, and their role as ambassadors in speaking about their experience, to drive the numbers and the visitors that will come back for subsequent experiences. That internal/external marketing piece we believe is important, with a greater focus on the external marketing.

There were some comments around the tourist information guide, the *Doers & Dreamers*. Madam Speaker, I can go to any one of our visitor information centres and there are boxes, sealed boxes, of last year's *Doers & Dreamers Guide* sitting in storage waiting to be returned. There is a role for the *Doers & Dreamers Guide* and that will continue, but

we cannot lose sight of the technology and, as my colleagues have referenced, the use of mobile devices to source and plan their travel, and each and every one of us do that through multiple means of the Internet.

My colleague from Chester-St. Margaret's also asked, Madam Speaker, about the transition of employees. I don't have the exact number but I believe the number is somewhere in the 98, 100 area and those employees have been transitioned into the new Tourism Nova Scotia Crown Corporation. There is a significant role for each and every one of them in that environment, and it's important that we recognize that to develop those strategies, and to drive that objective it still requires people in key roles to advance those objectives in an effort to reach the objective.

I do recognize the importance of the employee work group that my colleague brings forward and I know many of these points, but that one in particular will be a focal point in Law Amendments.

You know, Madam Speaker, you learn something new every day and I didn't realize that my colleague from Pictou West has experience with the bagpipes. I think what a great opportunity to encourage my colleague to come into the Legislature at the first opportunity and play a tune for us on the pipes. (Applause)

Madam Speaker, there is nothing that warms my heart more than mass pipes and drums, but I'd certainly value the input of our colleague at the first opportunity. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd remind all members of the House to please keep the noise levels down. The honourable Minister of Business has the floor.

MR. FUREY: Madam Speaker, I want to speak very quickly to the comments from my colleague for Pictou West around the phase-out she referenced, the future phase-out of VICs. That work and those decisions will be entrusted to the new Tourism Nova Scotia Board and an employee group and the leadership there. I do want to remind, again, that there are 50 municipal VICs and what roles those VICs collectively will play in the future of our tourism industry certainly will be important going forward.

My colleague also asked about summer student employment and I think my colleague is aware that the responsibility is now transferred to my colleague, the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. There have been a number of questions around where some of these programs have gone and we've been able to facilitate and respond appropriately.

Madam Speaker, I will conclude my comments. I know I have a tendency to carry on but I guess that's the police officer coming out in me: making sure that I respond to

every note and question that is advanced. I've probably missed a couple of things that I know are probably important to my colleagues, so I could start over. (Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, with that I move second reading of Bill No. 109.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 109. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, in my 17 years, I think it's the first time I've seen a minister filibuster his own bill. (Laughter) He's very passionate about the piece of legislation; needless to say, it was refreshing to see.

Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 108.

Bill No. 108 - Financial Measures (2015) Act.

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

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House this afternoon to move second reading of the Financial Measures (2015) Act. The FMA puts into law the tax changes included in the 2015-16 budget.

This is the part of the budget process that puts our proposed budget measures into legal effect - routine, but very important to the operation of government. Governments and especially Finance Ministers have a responsibility to Nova Scotians to ensure their hard-earned tax dollars are spent carefully and wisely. Facing a difficult financial and economic picture, we responded with a tough but fair budget. Our budget respects those dollars while protecting the things that matter most to Nova Scotians, like health care and education.

The Financial Measures (2015) Act updates several pieces of legislation to put into force the thoughtful, strategic decisions that were made. There are four pieces to the legislation: amendments for tax changes, changes related to economic development restructuring, amendments for user fee increases, and changes to the role of provincial judges to improve efficiency.

We are proposing a number of tax changes this year. We will reduce the non-eligible Dividend Tax Credit to close a loophole in our tax system. Now Nova Scotians

pay the same amount of tax on dividends as they would on salary. We are not the first province to do this, it is just good tax policy.

Good policy includes putting in place tax instruments that encourage beneficial behaviour and eliminating those that do not do so. The Healthy Living Tax Credit was not efficient at encouraging low-income families to register their children in sports and healthy activity. Only 5 per cent of all taxpayers used it and one-quarter of those earned more than \$90,000 a year.

A Digital Animation Tax Credit has been added, and as you already know, the Film Industry Tax Credit will become a Film and Television Production Incentive Fund. This reflects the outcome of the government's discussions with the film industry. The fund is forecast to be \$10 million in next year's budget, 2016-17. Our conversations with the industry were productive. We listened and as a result we've made changes that respond to the needs of the industry, providing them with a better, more timely way to access provincial support. At the same time, we've remained true to our budget and the four-year fiscal plan it presents. We were told during those discussions that animation is different from film, and that the new fund for film and television was not a good fit, but the existing Digital Media Tax Credit is a good fit, so animation will now have access to a dedicated stream of support under the Digital Media Tax Credit.

These changes, along with others under the Financial Measures (2015) Bill, mean that Nova Scotia Business Inc. will now have the tools they need to support the industry, ensure continuity of film and creative business operations, and provide greater accountability to government overall. The Financial Measures (2015) Bill also amends the Nova Scotia Business Incorporated Act, the Innovation Corporation Act, and the Civil Service Collective Bargaining Act. All of these changes are as a result of the transition from the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism to the new Department of Business. It also repeals the Film and Creative Industries Nova Scotia Act and transfers assets and liabilities to NSBI.

The Department of Business will function as a central agency, similar to the Office of Planning and Priorities. It will align the work of various departments, agencies, Crown Corporations, and others around a common growth agenda. The mandate of the department is very focused, but its work will have a broad reach. The new department is expected to be highly nimble and responsive to the ever-changing economy and business environment. Staff will also need to be flexible and to adapt their work as the circumstances and needs change. We're looking forward to great outcomes from this excellent team.

Taxes are one tool of government to fund important programs and services that Nova Scotians depend on. User fees are another. The cost of living was the basis for user fee increases, some of which went into effect on April 1st, and others which will become effective on July 1st.

Evaluating government programs to ensure that they serve Nova Scotians well and efficiently is vital, and we have done that in this year's budget. In fact, we have now made it a permanent part of how government operates. Under program review we found a way to improve service delivery in matters dealt with by Justices of the Peace. This is a round-the-clock service, and there was opportunity to transfer part of it to other existing employees.

Changes in the Financial Measures (2015) Bill will see matters arising before the Dartmouth Justice of the Peace Centre during regular workday hours being dealt with by Provincial Court judges and staff Justices of the Peace. This is a vital service. It includes emergency protection orders and warrants. The 24/7 nature of the service remains unchanged, but the cost of that service can now be reduced.

When I met with Nova Scotians leading up to this budget, the message I heard was very clear. Changes need to be made, and they need to be made right away. I'm pleased with where we are in this budget. Despite the challenges, this budget shows real progress: more efficient government, more appropriate program expenditures, and better-targeted support for business and economic growth.

As Finance and Treasury Board Minister, I have a responsibility to Nova Scotians to ensure that their hard-earned tax dollars are spent wisely. This budget, through the Financial Measures (2015) Bill, changes the way government spends those dollars. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise tonight and to speak to this bill. This budget is really no different than any other budget that people may prepare, in the sense that it's about what government thinks will happen, what government wants to happen, and what the government - as they stand before us today - says will happen.

Most people know that the reality is different than the budget. Things change over the course of time, and most people will be familiar with ups and downs and budgets and movements from actuals because things don't always unfold the way you want them to unfold.

It's important to remember the context of this budget and it's important to remember that context in lots of things that happen in this Legislature. We have seen a number of bills go through here that maybe don't happen at the end of the day or are changed. That's kind of a normal process in the Legislature.

I know I can remember one of the first bills that was repealed with the new government was what would have been a reduction in the HST. I don't want to debate that

today, but I only raise that point to say that things change. In the recent history we've seen a bill go through the Legislature in November that spoke to the Film Tax Credit and that changed with this budget.

So this is a budget, it is estimates of what may happen. It's obviously subject to change and we will see what happens with those estimates over the fullness of time. There are things that aren't estimates, there are things that are known. If the budget and how the budget unfolds is an unknown, there are things, as we sit here today, that are known.

We hear often in the House talking about the situation of the province. In preparation for today I was looking at some of the labour force numbers. I've got some numbers here on the labour force shrinkage over the last four years. These numbers are from March 2011 to March 2015: Annapolis Valley, 3,700 fewer in the labour force; Cape Breton, 5,500 fewer; North Shore, 5,700 fewer; southern region, 3,500 fewer.

You know it's interesting in that time, Madam Speaker, to notice that Halifax was the only region to gain in the labour force. Over the last four years Halifax gained 6,200. But the reality for most of Nova Scotia is that times are not good. So for us when we are in the Legislature and we talk about the things that are before us in our constituency or before us in our department or before us as a government, things are not good in the province. Things are not good in rural Nova Scotia. We're losing jobs, our labour force is shrinking. People turn to the government and they say, what will you do? People ask me that all the time, Madam Speaker, what would you do differently?

People are looking for guidance from their government. They want to know that there is a plan to grow the economy, to create jobs, to make life better. They want to know what government is doing to make life better for Nova Scotians. In some things sometimes that's a small thing that the government can do and sometime it's a monumental task that is before us. But it doesn't matter in the eyes of the ordinary Nova Scotian, they want to say, what is the government going to do to make life better for me? What will the government do to make life better for Nova Scotians?

When we look at the budget and we consider all the unknowns around a budget and what may happen or how things may unfold or how we want them to unfold, we do know there are things that are falling out from the budget immediately. We know that things have happened right away, so if the budget is about what might happen or what might not happen, we do know that it does have very real implications immediately and causes things to happen.

I'd like to go through some of the knowns - there are many unknowns, but I would like to speak to some of the knowns. If we break the budget down and we look at the revenue side, we do know that there's an expectation that Nova Scotians will pay more tax revenue over to the government over the next few years; we can see that in the numbers. Tax revenue is increasing and we can see that for the next three years out or whatever. That

will be an estimate of what's going to happen to the tax revenue. It will come out of some models that somebody has somewhere. Some very smart people have probably created a bunch of models to say this is what will happen to the tax revenue of the province and those models suggest that the tax revenue will increase. The reality is, that means Nova Scotians will pay more taxes.

There are two ways that can happen, that can cause Nova Scotians to pay more taxes - there's probably three ways. One, they can earn more money. They can definitely earn more money and pay over more tax revenue; that's a definite. We could have more Nova Scotians. We could have more people paying into the pool. Those are the good parts of revenue increases. I think every member in this House would welcome that. I would welcome it for my friends, for my family, for my constituents, and for Nova Scotians to pay more tax because they made more money. I certainly am a big proponent that we need more Nova Scotians. Both of those are good things.

I always remember when I was a young CA. It might have been the member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville's father, who I used to work with, that taught me this trick. He used to say when people would come in to have their taxes done and they would complain about their tax bill, he'd say, well, we can make your taxes less; we'll just charge you more in fees. That was never the answer to their questions.

People would love to feel that they're going to make more money. Everyone wants to feel optimistic about tomorrow and that next year's going to be better than this year. They have their own personal budgets that they hope show that they're going to make more money, but I'm not getting that sense walking around the community and talking to people. People aren't overly optimistic about their own financial prospects. I wonder if the tax revenue increase is coming from the assumption that people will make more money because I would be concerned about that.

I heard the Minister of Internal Services say, well gee, tax revenue goes up because of inflation. Tell that to the people whose salaries are frozen or who are making less money or are unemployed. The percentage of inflation doesn't mean a lot to those people because they don't feel the value of having more money. They don't have more money to spend. This is not an issue of inflation; this is an issue of people earning money and paying their taxes, and they either pay more taxes because they made more money or because there are more Nova Scotians to pay into the pool.

I don't know how either of those things are going to happen. I hope they do. I hope the revenue projections come to fruition. But when I'm looking at the budget and seeing, even for this year, a \$157 million increase in expected revenue, I ask myself, why is that? Is it because the economy is growing? Is it because people's financial situations are better? What is it that's driving those increases in tax revenue?

Well, that brings me to the third point. The first point was we make more; we pay more. The second point was we have more Nova Scotians. There's also a third way you can increase your tax revenue. The third way is you get more money from the existing people. You have tax increases. That's the third way that you can get more tax revenue from people.

We did see some tax increases in this budget. We did see a change to the dividend tax credit that will generate more money for the government from the same tax base, from the same people that made the same amount of money last year are going to pay more tax this year. We can describe it how we want, I'm only saying how we can generate our tax revenues and that is by changing the tax system.

There are people who will pay more in taxes this year than they did last year because of a change in this budget. That will be to the tune of \$30 million. I'm sure those people will be asking themselves, can the government do a better job with this \$30 million than I can? I'm sure they will be asking that.

We did see another tax increase in the budget and that's the concept of bracket creep. Bracket creep is not a new concept that's discussed in this House, but it's exactly what the minister was referring to when he talked about inflation. I describe it as getting more tax revenue from the same people who earn the same amount of money. They're going to pay more taxes this year. That's a tax increase, that's the third way you can increase your tax revenues is you can get more money from the same people.

Now, Nova Scotians pay a lot in taxes. We're amongst the highest taxed citizens. We're paying our fair share of taxes. The government needs more, they look to the people and say you have to give us more, we have a couple of ideas on how you can do that. You can pay us more in taxes because we're going to change the tax structure, but we have another plan as well - we're going to charge you more in fees. We have 1,400 fees that were increased this year. What does that do? What's the net result of that?

It gives you more revenue in the government coffers and there's a flip side to that. It makes the lives of Nova Scotians harder and we've seen a lot of fee increases have very real impacts. The bottom line, you can cut through it all, the government is saying we need more money from you and this is the way we're going to get it. We're going to increase your taxes and we're going to charge you more fees and that's where the revenue increases come from.

The question that I ask is where's the real plan to grow the economy to get us back to the first way you get more revenue which is that people make more money. I don't see that plan. It's harder for Nova Scotians to live this year than it was last year. That's the simple reality. Then we look at some of the other tax changes that have been made, there hasn't been much discussion in this House about the Film Tax Credit change.

That is a change that happened and I wonder when I ask myself the questions about how do we grow the economy and how do we create jobs and how do we get us back to our revenue base being higher, I just don't know that step one on the plan should be to change something like the Film Tax Credit which makes it harder for an industry to grow, harder for an industry to create jobs. To do that and say we're going to fix it now that people complained, I have a hard time with that. I have a hard time with the lack of understanding because it speaks in my mind to a mindset that says we can get more money from Nova Scotians, we can get more money from Nova Scotians in taxes, we can get more from them in fees, we can get more from them this way. In my mind, that's not where they should be looking first to Nova Scotians to pay more.

I think the Film Tax Credit is an example of, to no fault of the minister, there are complete staffs of people, complete departments of people who need to be conscious of the real impact of these decisions before they are made, not after they are made. That's a concern to me.

Then I think of the fuel rebate for the mining industry; that's a change to the tax system. It was a promise that was made that would be a change this year that would help the miners, would help create jobs in rural Nova Scotia; change was made. I don't think Nova Scotians have the patience for messaging coming out of Province House; we didn't understand it was this bad so we can't do what we told you we were going to do.

I don't think that's fair to Nova Scotians and I particularly don't think it's fair to make those changes without a full discussion on the front. We're talking about the revenue of the province and we're talking about the future of the province and how does government fund its operations. My goal would be that the economy is growing, steps are taken to grow the economy and it comes naturally from that.

We can argue about how we grow the economy and some people might say, well, the economy will grow if we tax people more. I don't subscribe to that school of thought, I don't think that if you take more away from citizens in taxes and fees that that's going to help the economy grow. I think that's a fool's game. The pool of money available to government is limited; that's not open for debate, Madam Speaker.

I went through the numbers on the next few years. We have projections over the next two to three years of \$500 million more in tax revenue, maybe it was \$700 million over three years, I'm not sure, it was a big number. I'm trying to reconcile that with the comments of Ray Ivany who sees weakening tax revenues, who sees the government sees increases in tax revenues and Ivany sees weakening tax revenues.

We can't sustain these types of tax increases every year, we can't sustain these fee increases every year because people are looking at the value proposition that Nova Scotia offers to them. Every family is making that decision, is it worth my while to stay here? Nova Scotians love Nova Scotia and they try to stay and they want to stay, but the reality

is that Nova Scotia is not the only place and if you can't make a good living here and you can't have a net pay of after taxes and fees that you can raise your family in what you consider to be a comfortable lifestyle, then you're going to look at the value propositions from other places. That all feeds into the issues that we've seen. So that's the revenue side of the equation and I do have some concerns over the projections and I do have some of the concerns over the mindset of how we're going to fund government, how we are going to pay for operations.

When I look at the expense side of the equation I know governments talked for a long time about the tough choices that had to be made and I certainly respect that, but tough choices do have to be made. The first things I ask myself about those tough choices are, how will they impact the lives of Nova Scotians and who will they impact? When you make tough choices, oftentimes it's how you make them that really sends the message. I know I've talked to a lot of the people I grew up with, friends of mine, about what's happening in government. They're working inside government and they're wondering to themselves - the morale is quite low. The morale is quite low and a lot of it is, I think, around the messaging of things.

When you see the changes that have to be made and you accept that - and most Nova Scotians accept that whether they're in the civil service or not - and then you see how they're made, you ask yourself about the messaging and you ask yourself about what value is placed on people when these things happen.

If we think about the very real immediate impact of the budget, we know there were layoffs on Budget Day, we know that people lost their jobs and we all, in this House, are sympathetic to what that does to the family. Everyone in this House is sympathetic to that and can understand the emotions that will go around that, but there are a lot of things that happened leading up to this that I think they could have played out a little differently just in terms of the morale.

I received an email from a person I know and respect. I received it while I was giving my Budget Reply on Budget Day and this person said to me: "I received an email as soon as the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board got up on the floor to let me know that a project we've been working on has had its funding reduced by \$6,000 for this year."

That email was perfectly timed with the minister's speech for, I'm sure, reasons quite clear to the government - but he said "as soon as the minister got up speaking I received an email that said our project funding was reduced by \$6,000." But here's the kicker - the person says: "This is challenging because it was a three-year project with a three-year budget, and I had already budgeted for this year."

There is a serious communications issue in my mind when something like that happens, when a person has an expectation of a deal with the government for a three-year

project and nobody reaches out to them to talk to them except to send them an email when the budget is being delivered that the deal is broken, the deal is gone.

I don't disagree about controlling the spending of the government, and I don't know - I make no comment on this particular project. Chances are it was a good project, maybe it was a project that the government had different ideas about, I don't know. But I do have an issue with the messaging; I do have an issue that nobody reached out to this person and told them, other than to give this fait accompli message in the middle of the minister's Budget Speech that the funding was gone for that project. I think that's unfair and there are better ways to do that.

I know that when we talk about the Department of Community Services and the consolidations of some of the regions - the northern region, the eastern region consolidation - again, it's going to have an impact on Nova Scotians. It's going to impact the level of service to Nova Scotians, because if you're in my region and you need to depend on something coming out of Sydney, as much as there are wonderful people who live in Sydney it's a little far from my area, and it will mean that smaller rural communities are going to lose.

I'm going to talk a little bit about some of those things that happen from this budget and the very real impact on very real Nova Scotians. A lot of the budget is unknown, but there are some things that are known. There are some things that happen right away.

I've heard from long-term care facilities that their allocation has been cut. Their allocation has been cut in half, in some cases, and 103 of the 143 long-term care facilities are not getting cost-of-living increases. That's a real theme through the budget, and we can call that for what it is. A failure to get a cost-of-living increase, failure to keep pace with inflation, is a cut. That's the only way you can describe that.

So we know that the long-term care facilities are experiencing cuts. We try to reconcile that with the aging population and all the needs of many seniors, the needs of people who need the government at this time, and there are cuts. There are cuts to them there.

We also know that the community grants for mental health and addictions were reduced from \$1 million to \$600,000. *The Chronicle Herald* wrote about this, and we've heard this discussed in the House. I know that my colleagues in the NDP have raised a number of these issues, and I echo their concerns. I echo their concerns because these are organizations, in many cases, where we see a growing need. They are seeing a growing need for all kinds of reasons, particularly the mental health. There's a high demand. There are a lot of people that are struggling. There are a lot of people that are struggling to cope with life for a number of reasons.

So when I see that community grants for mental health and addictions were reduced from \$1 million to \$600,000, I think about the organizations that hits. *The Chronicle Herald* mentioned a bunch of them. They include organizations for people with AIDS, people with eating disorders, schizophrenia, Alzheimer's, as well as immigrants, lesbian and gay, people in rural areas, people like the folks that Hope Blooms supports, and young people that are at risk. We're having to cut funding to these types of organizations, to people who need the support of the government, and we're cutting those organizations from \$1 million, which - I have to be honest, \$1 million to begin with, on a close to \$10 billion budget, this is what we had allocated for that to begin with? It doesn't sound like it was enough to begin with, and that's getting cut down to \$600,000.

You always have the expression of balancing the budget on the backs of Nova Scotians. That's the expression that I always hear. It's not just Nova Scotia. It's everywhere. You always hear about the efforts to balance the budget on the backs of Nova Scotians, on the backs of citizens. When you think of these types of cuts, in the context of some of the areas where government has spent money - I raised a question. That's \$1 million to \$600,000; that's \$400,000. I raised that question in the House about a department that had over \$200,000 in courier fees. Think about that for a minute. You have a department that has \$200,000 in courier fees. You have a liquor commission that's planning a \$140,000 party. You have \$40,000 renovations. You put all these things into context and you add them all together, and oddly enough, that's \$400,000. That's an odd coincidence of mathematics, I think, but it's a \$400,000 reduction in services that Nova Scotians need that are in demand.

We look at the priorities of where that may have been used and it's disappointing. We looked at the Community Services grants. Now, there was a big reduction in this budget in reductions to discretionary grants for nine community organizations, including the Canadian Mental Health Association's Nova Scotia Division, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Deafness Advocacy Association Nova Scotia, Feed Nova Scotia, HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development, the Nova Scotia Association for Community Living, the Nova Scotia Council for the Family, People First Nova Scotia, the Youth Voices of Nova Scotia Society - reductions in discretionary grants to these types of organizations. In fact, by 2016-17, five of those groups will have their funding reduced to zero.

You think about those groups and the services that they are providing to Nova Scotians and you tell me which five of those we don't need. These are the types of decisions that we see being made. And I ask, for what? What will happen to that money that doesn't go to those organizations? What will happen?

The CNIB said the loss of \$152,000 in funding would mean cuts to services that help people learn to travel safely within their community. It will mean cuts to services that help people be independent at home after losing their vision. I'm sure those services were important to Nova Scotians. I'm sure they're important to those people who rely on them.

So I ask myself, on the balance of things that are important and the balance of priorities, which priorities outweighed these?

We can talk about the students. At one time, there were tens of millions of dollars - I think it was \$40 million or \$50 million - provided to students through the Graduate Retention Rebate. Now that's gone. There were different ideas about what happened or what may happen to that money, or maybe a different plan would come about that would help students. I haven't seen that money restored anywhere. I wonder what the plan was when we heard that the Graduate Retention Rebate was not working and it wasn't a good use of taxpayers' money, but that something else would be done to help students. I don't think students expected that the something else that would be done to help them would be removing the tuition cap from the universities. I don't think that's what they had in mind.

Students are feeling worse off under the McNeil Liberals. Now, it has been a few years since I was a student, so I can't put myself in their shoes, but I do have kids who are coming through the education system and who will probably be in university before I know it. The students that I am talking to are feeling worse off and the community organizations are feeling worse off, and I ask myself, are we on a good path in the face of Nova Scotians looking at the value proposition of living here? I ask myself, why are they feeling worse off?

We know that with universities being allowed to do one-time adjustments to raise tuitions as much as they desire, we will see that, we will see that. Universities are talking about raising their tuitions. At the same time we see that the budget will cut \$3.2 million from the Nova Scotia University Student Bursary Program. Tuitions going up, bursaries going down; taxes going up, services going down; and Nova Scotians are looking at the value proposition of living in the province. I don't think the messaging is working too well.

We've seen other cuts have a real impact and the cut at the Gaelic department is one that I heard about a lot in my area, I heard a lot about that; the staff was reduced by 40 per cent. That's one that I've heard about and people feel that they're less well served.

I talked about the mining fuel tax rebate, and we've also had mining incentive grants that have been cut by \$150,000. What's the message we're sending to industry? What's the message we're sending to people that care about their heritage? I don't think it's a good message.

Now, let's talk about rural Nova Scotia. What is happening to rural Nova Scotia? In the Budget Address, I believe it was, somewhere in the budget documents, we talked about the best way to prosperity for rural Nova Scotia being through the development of natural resources, and I agree with that. I certainly agree with that, and since the budget we've seen some movement on the lobster levy, lobster tax, or whatever you want to call it, we've seen some movement there, we've seen some movement on the aquaculture. I

personally think that some of the areas of aquaculture, like some of the shellfish stuff, are tremendous growth opportunities for this province.

Our natural resources are particularly important in rural Nova Scotia so I'd like to see the plan to help grow that, to stimulate that, to make people feel good about what's happening in rural Nova Scotia and maybe that plan will start to develop with some of these recent bills that have been introduced here. But I will say, as I stand here today, that I'm hearing from people in rural Nova Scotia, in many of the communities that we come from, that are worried about the level of services they are receiving, and they have a right to be concerned about it; they have a right to be worried about the level of service they will receive living in rural Nova Scotia, and I'm worried too. I'm worried too.

We talked about the visitor information centres, we talked about different things that have happened and the impact that they have on rural Nova Scotia and it's not good. It's just not good. John DeMont had an interesting opinion piece, or column in *The Chronicle Herald*, and he had a couple phrases that really stuck out, really kind of leaped off the page to me. He talked about the economics of rural Nova Scotia, and he talked about the need for making tough decisions around funding the services in rural Nova Scotia. He said - John DeMont's words - "Private businesses don't go where people aren't."

You set up business where there are customers. It's kind of the number one rule. He said, "Private businesses don't go where people aren't. Increasingly cash-strapped governments feel the same way."

If you think about that, that's a profound statement. Private businesses don't go where people aren't, and now we have governments making decisions that send a message to rural Nova Scotia that they're not coming there either - sending the message to rural Nova Scotia about the level of service they should expect to receive.

Decisions around schools, decisions around busing kids, decisions around where they can receive medical treatment, with the changes to the insurance for certain specialties of doctors - it's driving them out of rural Nova Scotia. These are all decisions that are made not with the goal - I know the goal is not to hurt rural Nova Scotia, but these decisions that are made in isolation have a cumulative effect of decimating rural Nova Scotia. That's not something that I think the government should be playing a role in.

How do we make these decisions on the things we do? I believe that there are probably still inefficiencies within the \$10 billion organization that is government. I'm sure that in an organization that size there will always be room for improvement. I'm sure that there are inefficiencies that exist today, but looking at John DeMont's comments, he said, "Sooner or later, even the most cost-effective government runs out of inefficiencies to cut."

It is certainly a true statement. I don't think we're there quite yet; I'm sure the minister will find some inefficiencies to clean up. I have great faith that there are some to

find, and I think the minister will find them. But sooner or later, well, there will be less and less. The ideas will be less and less. (Interruption) My colleague for Inverness said that maybe they're harder to find when you're in government than they are when you're in Opposition, and he brought a little smile to my face with his comments there. I'm sure that's the case. It certainly feels that way.

What we need to do is we have to go back to where we started. The Minister of Business made some very good comments when he was discussing his bill, about the need of government to get out of the way, the need for government to transform itself, to operate at the speed of business as opposed to the speed of government. These are things that I certainly agree with.

But there is a role for government to play in building the economy. It's not as simple as saying, well, that's the job of business, because when business is shackled by the things the government controls, like taxes and regulations and all these types of things, there's a role for the government to play in cleaning that up. I'm sure the government is working on that. That is the way, when you can start to remove those shackles then you can start to see good things happen, and when you start to see good things happen you will get your tax revenue increase.

A tax revenue increase, we're not at a stage where anyone in this House has the benefit of just saying I have a good idea, let's increase taxes. That has been tried for many successive governments before us, and I'm sure even Premiers that I am affiliated with through my Party have certainly tried that as well. But those days are over and we can't just put a number down on a piece of paper and say this is what it will be. We need to make that happen and I want to see that happen, but in the meantime we have to do a good job at the things the government should be doing a good job at - education.

I see this government's dedication to education and I appreciate that. That will pay off for us. We can always have disagreements about what is the best way to move that along and there won't ever be a shortage of opinions about that. I will never be short for an opinion on that myself, but the investment in education is extremely important and I'm happy to see that happen.

I'm not so happy to see the cuts from areas that provide services to Nova Scotians who are vulnerable and making cuts to areas that provide services to Nova Scotians who, in some cases, can't advocate for themselves, in some cases are afraid to advocate for themselves, and in some cases don't know how to advocate for themselves. That's not a good thing. Those are the people whom we need to be looking out for and providing the services that they need.

I, certainly as an MLA from a rural area, can go and visit some of my constituents who maybe haven't been to town in a month, maybe can only get to town when a distant relative comes to visit them for some reason from somewhere else, and in many ways are

disconnected with the things that we would consider to be just an everyday thing. It's those people who, when they need a service and it's gone, it's unfortunate.

So I'll go back to the moral fabric of a government and the priorities of a government and making tough decisions inside the context of the necessary human element. When those tough decisions are being made and have been made, it's looking those people in the eye and saying this is the reason I made this decision and this is the way it is. Nova Scotians will understand that and they will accept that, but they will find it hard to accept when they receive an email after the fact and people working in the government who are being told you are laid off or you are terminated but you can go and compete against your friends for a job because they have all been laid off and terminated, too.

These types of things are very damaging to the morale of Nova Scotians and it's not a good way for a government to act and it's not a way that I would act. I wouldn't treat people like that.

When you see that and you balance that across the areas that were cut, then you have to ask, why? That's the question that I'm asking. Why? Is \$400,000 from the community grants for mental health and addictions, is cutting the discretionary grants for the organizations, is taking the bus pass away from Paul Chiasson where we really need to look to find efficiencies? Have we run out of areas to find efficiencies so much so that these are the areas where we want to look? Those are the questions that I have about this budget.

With those questions in mind, I wonder how Nova Scotians will look at the value proposition of this province and how Nova Scotians can move ahead and feel good about living here and bringing companies here and growing companies and hiring people and having more taxpayers. I just wonder how all those things reconcile.

I don't think these types of concerns are lost on the minister. I don't think that for one second. I know there are tough decisions and I know the minister has lamented these decisions. I sincerely know that and I believe that. But I know that there will be many people that didn't lose much sleep over these, or as much as the minister did, and I think that's the shame of what happens in an organization of 10,000 people, I guess.

But I say all those things, and I'm optimistic about Nova Scotia. I believe in this province. It's a place that I did analyze the value proposition of. It's a place that I made a decision to move to and to raise my family in. It's a place that I want my family to be able to live in as my children get older. We can have all these things.

We can always do better in governments. There will be governments for all time. There will never be a time where they can dust their hands and say that's it, we're done. We can always do better and I'm here to be part of that process.

My comments on this budget are in that spirit. There will be more budgets and I hope that the budgets can improve over time, just like we all can improve over time, myself included. With those few words, I will take my seat.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, I know the time is drawing to a conclusion. I think, with the agreement of the Deputy Government House Leader, I would like to move that we adjourn the debate for another day. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn the debate on Bill No. 108. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Madam Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. I would turn it over to the House Leader for the NDP to set Opposition business and hours for tomorrow.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable House Leader for the New Democratic Party.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Madam Speaker, tomorrow, as Opposition Day, after daily routine, we will be calling Private Members' Public Bills for Second Reading. We will be calling Bill No. 72, the Fair Drug Pricing Act, and Bill No. 99, the Continuing-care Accountability Act.

I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, April 29th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again on April 29th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

[The House rose at 6:46 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1608**

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 Thomas Wilson has been nominated by the Windsor and District Lions Club, where he has been a member for the past 16 years and currently serves on the board of directors; and

Whereas Tom helps with the community breakfasts and he is also a Lion Toastmaster and he has been recognized as the Lion of the Year for the years 2013-2014;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1609

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 Robert Fletcher has been nominated by the Dykeland Lodge seniors' home, where he has been volunteering for nearly three years; and

Whereas Robert brings much joy to the residents and helps the recreation staff with his volunteering, earning him both the bronze-level and silver-level Duke of Edinburgh Awards;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1610

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 Jessie Bryan has been nominated by Windsor Recreation, where she has volunteered for the past two summers; and

Whereas Jessie has volunteered with the day camps, where she has helped the children participate in crafts, sports, swimming, and the day-to-day operations, also volunteering at the Windsor Elms Village visiting with residents and at Ski Martock helping the children learn to snowboard;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1611

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 Ernie Smith has been nominated by the Windsor-West Hants Pumpkin Festival, where he and his team come in after the Pumpkin Regatta is over to help remove the pumpkins from Lake Pisiquid; and

Whereas Ernie and his crew come with a boom truck to lift the pumpkins out of the lake and provide a container truck to transport the pumpkins for composting;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1612

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 Blackwood has been nominated by Windsor Recreation, where she began as a junior leader when she was in middle school; and

Whereas Spencer has been involved as a lifeguard, swimming instructor, and assisting in the art sampler program, and she is a nationally-ranked archer, where she volunteers with the Glooscap Archery Club, teaching archery to the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1613

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 Shaylin Johnson has been nominated by the Girl Guides of Canada, Hants District, where she has been a member of the Girl Guides of Canada since the age of five; and

Whereas Shaylin has been involved in various projects involving the local community as well as internationally; she has earned the Lady Baden-Powell Challenge, the highest award in the Guide Program; she will be receiving the Canada Cord, the highest achievement of a Pathfinder; Shaylin is also involved in the 4-H program; she is a Junior SPCA president; and is involved in many West Hants Middle School activities;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1614

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 Maaike Niet has been nominated by the Girl Guides of Canada, Hants District, where she has been a volunteer leader with the Windsor Forks Guides and Pathfinders groups; and

Whereas Maaike has volunteered in many areas of Guiding at the district level, at the area level, and at the provincial level, and she is also involved in Quest, a provincial Pathfinder event where she is a volunteer Beaver leader with Scouts Canada, and a member of the Karate Club;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1615

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 Chambers has been nominated by the Windsor Volleyball Association, where she has been an active participant; and

Whereas Kim has been involved with the Windsor Volleyball Association and the West Hants Wizards Volleyball Club for five years and has held the position of secretary on the board of directors for the past two years, and in addition Kim has also acted as team manager and has helped numerous players with fundraising;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1616

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 Carol Dahr has been nominated by the Windsor Gliders Club, where she has been a volunteer for a number of years; and

Whereas Carol is a member of the executive, currently acting as chair, overseeing the finances and looking after the stats for the Windsor Gliders Club bowling league, and she is also active with the Hants Zone Senior Games as a member of the organizing committee and she is a steward for Vaughan's United Church, and in addition Carol helps with fundraising for the local fire hall and Leminster/Vaughan's Hospital Auxiliary;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1617

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 Laura Maddox has been nominated by the Windsor Elementary School, where she has volunteered for the past seven years; and

Whereas Laura has volunteered with the school's breakfast program, Home and School, class trips, and the Band Parents Association, and she has also volunteered as treasurer and been a leader with the Scouts for the past six years, and for the past three years she has helped coach soccer and she has been an organizer with the Windsor Curling Club;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1618

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas Emmanuelle Abi Daoud, Joelle Atie, Chanel Bahliss, Miguel Bou Nassif, Andrea Chater, Christopher Chater, George Chedrawy, Leonardo Chedrawy, Dominic Daaboul, Najib El Chater, Charbel Ghanem, Charbel Hoyeck, Alexandra Jarmash, Isabella Jennes, Elisa Jreige, Maria Jreige, Gizelle Jubeili, Pierre Khoury, Alexandre Laba, Kassandra Maatouk, Peter Meneem, Alexander Mensour, Mathew Matti, Angelina Metlej, and Johana Ramia are celebrating their First Communion on Saturday, May 2, 2015; and

Whereas the children dedicated long hours, with the help of their parents and teachers, to attend classes every Saturday morning; and

Whereas the children will accept the bread and wine as the body and blood of Jesus Christ and are encouraged to attend Mass every Sunday to receive Communion;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the 2015 Our Lady of Lebanon Parish First Communion Class, and wish them continued success in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1619

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas on March 24, 2015, the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce hosted its Annual General Meeting with an election to fill positions on the board; and

Whereas Joe Metlege was re-elected to serve as a member of the board; and

Whereas Joe's experience, dedication, and professionalism, will positively impact the capabilities of the board;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly commend Mr. Metlege for his willingness to serve, and congratulate him on this re-election.

RESOLUTION NO. 1620

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas on March 24, 2015, the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce hosted its Annual General Meeting with an election to fill positions on the board; and

Whereas Jamil Hage was re-elected to serve as a member of the board; and

Whereas Jamil's experience, dedication, and professionalism, will positively impact the capabilities of the board;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly commend Mr. Hage for his willingness to serve, and congratulate him on this re-election.

RESOLUTION NO. 1621

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas on March 24, 2015, the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce hosted its Annual General Meeting with an election to fill positions on the board; and

Whereas Peter Zed was re-elected to serve as a member of the board; and

Whereas Peter's experience, dedication, and professionalism, will positively impact the capabilities of the board;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly commend Mr. Zed for his willingness to serve, and congratulate him on this re-election.

RESOLUTION NO. 1622

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas on March 24, 2015, the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce hosted its Annual General Meeting with an election to fill positions on the board; and

Whereas Norman Nahas was re-elected to serve as a member of the board and will serve a second term as president of the executive; and

Whereas Norman's experience, dedication, and professionalism, will positively impact the capabilities of the board;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly commend Mr. Nahas for his willingness to serve, and congratulate him on this re-election.

RESOLUTION NO. 1623

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas on March 24, 2015, the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual general meeting with an election to fill positions on the board; and

Whereas Andrew Nahas was re-elected to serve as member of the board and will also serve as secretary on the executive; and

Whereas Andrew's experience, dedication, and professionalism will positively impact the capabilities of the board;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend Mr. Nahas for his willingness to serve and congratulate him on this re-election.

RESOLUTION NO. 1624

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas on March 24, 2015, the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual general meeting with an election to fill positions on the board; and

Whereas Milad Saikali was elected as a new board member and will also serve as treasurer on the executive; and

Whereas Milad's experience, dedication, and professionalism will positively impact the capabilities of the board;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend Mr. Saikali for his willingness to serve and congratulate him on this election.

RESOLUTION NO. 1625

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas on March 24, 2015, the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual general meeting with an election to fill positions on the board; and

Whereas Norm Mensour was newly elected to the board; and

Whereas Norm's experience, dedication, and professionalism will positively impact the capabilities of the board;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend Mr. Mensour for his willingness to serve and congratulate him on this re-election.

RESOLUTION NO. 1626

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas on March 24, 2015, the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual general meeting with an election to fill positions on the board; and

Whereas Tony Ramia was newly elected to the board; and

Whereas Tony's experience, dedication, and professionalism will positively impact the capabilities of the board;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend Mr. Ramia for his willingness to serve and congratulate him on this election.

RESOLUTION NO. 1627

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas on March 24, 2015, the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual general meeting with an election to fill positions on the board; and

Whereas Monique Fares was elected to the board; and

Whereas Monique's experience, dedication, and professionalism will positively impact the capabilities of the board;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend Ms. Fares for her willingness to serve and congratulate her on this election.

RESOLUTION NO. 1628

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas on March 24, 2015, the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual general meeting with an election to fill positions on the board; and

Whereas Justin Scully is an existing board member who will continue to serve for the next year; and

Whereas Justin's experience, dedication, and professionalism will positively impact the capabilities of the board;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend Mr. Scully for his willingness to serve and congratulate him on this re-election.

RESOLUTION NO. 1629

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas on March 24, 2015, the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual general meeting with an election to fill positions on the board; and

Whereas Joe Bassil is an existing board member who will continue to serve in that capacity, and who was also elected as the vice-president on the executive; and

Whereas Joe's experience, dedication, and professionalism will positively impact the capabilities of the board;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend Mr. Bassil for his willingness to serve and congratulate him on this re-election.

RESOLUTION NO. 1630

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas on March 24, 2015, the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual general meeting with an election to fill positions on the board; and

Whereas Jacob JeBailey is an existing board member who will continue to serve for the next year; and

Whereas Jacob's experience, dedication, and professionalism will positively impact the capabilities of the board;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend Mr. JeBailey for his willingness to serve and congratulate him on this re-election.

RESOLUTION NO. 1631

By: Hon. David A. Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas the Beaver Bank Station is located in the historical Hallisey House at 991 Windgate Drive in Beaver Bank; and

Whereas since its construction in 1856 this heritage building has served as a train station, an inn, a tavern, a private residence, a mini golf course, and a restaurant; and

Whereas current owners Joyce McCully, Alan Whitlam, and David Smith opened the Beaver Bank Station in summer 2014, offering patrons family-friendly dining and entertainment;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate the Beaver Bank Station on their opening and extend wishes for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1632

By: Hon. David A. Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Sackville was served by Satellite Taxi cab driver Derek Bezanson, known as “Uncle,” for over 30 years; and

Whereas Derek’s sisters, Nikki Bezanson and Tami Cleveland, have paid tribute to their late brother by opening Uncle’s Café & Deli, featuring hearty, home-cooked food; and

Whereas Uncle’s Café is located at 400 Sackville Drive and opened for business on February 26, 2015;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature welcome Uncle’s Café & Deli to the Lower Sackville community and wish Nikki Bezanson and Tami Cleveland future success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1633

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Sackville once again has a family-friendly pub in the community; and

Whereas Purdy's Pub & Grill is owned by Sackville native Jackie Purdy, who returned home after 15 years in Moncton; and

Whereas Purdy's Pub & Grill opened at 552 Sackville Drive on January 8, 2015, offering family dining, live entertainment, and catering;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Jackie Purdy on the opening of Purdy's Pub & Grill with best wishes for future success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1634

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Nova Scotia has a proud history of hosting the first Canada Summer Games in 1969 and, most recently, the Canada Winter Games in 2011; and

Whereas the 2015 Winter Games were held in Prince George, British Columbia, from February 13th to March 1st; and

Whereas five Lower Sackville residents were among the participants representing Nova Scotia, including 15-year-old Nick Cullen as a member of the Team Nova Scotia hockey team;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature acknowledge Lower Sackville's Nick Cullen for his participation on Team Nova Scotia at the 2015 Winter Games and wish him future success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1635

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Nova Scotia has a proud history of hosting the first Canada Summer Games in 1969 and, most recently, the Canada Winter Games in 2011; and

Whereas the 2015 Winter Games were held in Prince George, British Columbia, from February 13th to March 1st; and

Whereas five Lower Sackville residents were among the participants representing Nova Scotia, including 17-year-old Kyle Robichaud as a member of the Team Nova Scotia archery team;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature acknowledge Lower Sackville's Kyle Robichaud for his participation on Team Nova Scotia at the 2015 Winter Games and wish him future success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1636

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Nova Scotia has a proud history of hosting the first Canada Summer Games in 1969 and, most recently, the Canada Winter Games in 2011; and

Whereas the 2015 Winter Games were held in Prince George, British Columbia, from February 13th to March 1st; and

Whereas five Lower Sackville residents were among the participants representing Nova Scotia, including 20-year-old Kevin Stadnyk as a member of the Team Nova Scotia badminton team;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature acknowledge Lower Sackville's Kevin Stadnyk for his participation on Team Nova Scotia at the 2015 Winter Games and wish him future success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1637

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Nova Scotia has a proud history of hosting the first Canada Summer Games in 1969 and, most recently, the Canada Winter Games in 2011; and

Whereas the 2015 Winter Games were held in Prince George, British Columbia, from February 13th to March 1st; and

Whereas five Lower Sackville residents were among the participants representing Nova Scotia, including 18-year-old Sarah Newman as a member of the Team Nova Scotia badminton team;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature acknowledge Lower Sackville's Sarah Newman for her participation on Team Nova Scotia at the 2015 Winter Games and wish her future success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1638

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Nova Scotia has a proud history of hosting the first Canada Summer Games in 1969 and, most recently, the Canada Winter Games in 2011; and

Whereas the 2015 Winter Games were held in Prince George, British Columbia, from February 13th to March 1st; and

Whereas five Lower Sackville residents were among the participants representing Nova Scotia, including 18-year-old Maddy Faulkner as a member of the Team Nova Scotia gymnastics team;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia Legislature acknowledge Lower Sackville's Maddy Faulkner for her participation on Team Nova Scotia at the 2015 Winter Games and wish her future success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1639

By: Hon. Maureen MacDonald (Acting Leader of the NDP)

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

Whereas Ann Wallace was a schoolteacher in rural Nova Scotia for 37 years; and

Whereas Ann Wallace has had a lifelong interest in collecting and preserving the memories of Nova Scotia communities; and

Whereas Ann Wallace has written seven self-published books on the histories of small rural communities in Guysborough and Antigonish Counties;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly thank Ann Wallace for her dedication to teaching us all about Nova Scotia history and recognize her hard work and dedication.

RESOLUTION NO. 1640

By: Hon. Maureen MacDonald (Acting Leader of the NDP)

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

Whereas Patricia Neves has worked in early childhood education and administration in Halifax for almost 30 years; and

Whereas Patricia Neves has had a particular focus on ensuring that early childhood programming is inclusive for children of all needs levels; and

Whereas Patricia Neves has recently been named the new director of the Halifax Developmental Centre for Early Learning, a grassroots organization serving children, youth, and adults with intellectual disabilities and their families;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Patricia Neves on her new position as director of the Halifax Developmental Centre for Early Learning and thank her for her dedication to inclusion and early childhood education in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1641

By: Hon. Maureen MacDonald (Acting Leader of the NDP)

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

Whereas Corey Adams is a talented jazz and blues vocalist and musician from the North End of Halifax; and

Whereas Corey Adams has been active in the African Nova Scotia music scene, performing and promoting music for many years; and

Whereas Corey Adams won the ALI Music Pioneer Award at the 2015 African Nova Scotia Music Association Award Show;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Corey Adams on receiving the 2015 ANSMA ALI Music Pioneer Award and thank him for his commitment to music in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1642

By: Hon. Keith Colwell (Fisheries and Aquaculture)

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

Whereas the fish and seafood industry, which is the largest commodity group in Nova Scotia, with exports totalling \$1.26 billion last year, is successful because of the tenacity, talent, and dedication of many hard-working people; and

Whereas Nellie Baker-Stevens, coordinator of the Eastern Shore Fisherman's Protection Association, has demonstrated her commitment through her work in this industry, helping to implement the lobster v-notch program on the north shore, a program that ensures the sustainability of the lobster population; and

Whereas Ms. Baker-Stevens is a tremendous example of an active leader in this integral industry who understands the important role fishermen have in the local community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Nellie Baker-Stevens for her achievements and contributions to the Nova Scotia fish and seafood industry, thank her for the positive impact she has indisputably had in her community, and wish her continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1643

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 on July 9, 2015, Brigadier-General Carl Turenne will assume command of 5th Canadian Division which is one of the six major formations that report to army headquarters in Ottawa, and its current area strength is approximately 7,000 personnel comprising about 2,400 regular, 3,100 reserve, 700 Canadian rangers, and 700 civilian personnel; and

Whereas the 5th Canadian Division is responsible for all army regular and reserve force elements in the four Atlantic Provinces and its mission is to generate and maintain,

at designated states of readiness, combat ready, multi-purpose land forces to meet Canada's defence objectives, both at home and abroad; and

Whereas the outgoing Brigadier-General, Nicolas Eldaoud, will be taking over as the chief of staff for the Chief of Military Personnel, which is the organization that provides direction and guidance to the Canadian Forces on all military personnel management matters and is accountable for the effective management of the Canadian Forces personnel system;

Therefore be it resolved that this House thank Brigadier-General Eldaoud for his service to 5th Canadian Division and wish him every success in his new role, and welcome Brigadier-General Turenne to Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1644

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 on April 23, 2015, Colonel Peter Allan will assume command of 12 Wing Shearwater which has been a home for Canada's air squadrons for the past 80 years, providing continuous service longer than any other Canadian military air base; and

Whereas the outgoing commander, Colonel Lise Bourgon, was the only female wing commander in Canada and was the first female wing commander of 12 Wing Shearwater, which comprises close to 1,000 regular force members and over 200 reservists and civilian employees; and

Whereas Colonel Bourgon will be deployed to Kuwait as the Joint Task Force Commander for Operation Impact, the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) contribution to the Middle East Stabilization Force, the multinational coalition, where she will hold the rank of Brigadier-General;

Therefore be it resolved that this House thank Colonel Bourgon for her service to 12 Wing Shearwater and wish her success in her new posting, and welcome Colonel Allan to Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1645

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Justice)

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

Whereas the Spryfield and District Business Commission helps to organize events and programs enjoyed by residents of Armdale and Atlantic; and

Whereas I was pleased to participate in their biggest event of the year, the annual Spryfield Santa Claus Parade and also to attend their popular lobster dinner, a reception and networking event; and

Whereas the commission helps people in the community engage with free professional development courses such as training in social media, and in communication and leadership in the workplace;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend the Spryfield and District Business Commission on the social and economic value they bring to the area.