



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2015

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MAY 5, 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 will now begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, may I do an introduction before I read my resolution?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the presence in your gallery of Rear-Admiral John Newton, Commander of Maritime Forces Atlantic and Joint Task Force Atlantic. I would also like to recognize Lieutenant-Commander Ray Murray, Commanding Officer of the Stadacona Band, and members of the Stadacona Band who are here with us today in the east gallery.

Nova Scotians are proud that the Stadacona Band calls Halifax its home. It represents an important cultural link between the military and civilian communities in this province. Every member of this House recognizes the importance of the military in our country, but more importantly in this province, recognizes the unique relationship that communities from one end of this province to the other have with members of the military community. I would ask them to stand and receive a warm welcome from all members of the House. (Standing Ovation)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1776

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

Whereas this year marks the 75th Anniversary of the Stadacona Band of the Royal Canadian Navy; and

Whereas since its inception, the band has worked tirelessly to promote esprit de corps and morale within the Canadian Forces, presenting concerts and parades throughout our communities; and

Whereas the Stadacona Band has toured extensively throughout Canada, as well as representing our country overseas, and has been involved in the opening of the Legislature ceremonies for many years;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the Stadacona Band, its members past and present, for being such a vital part of the military traditions and cultural life of our province for over the past 75 years, and wish them well as they continue to be a source of pride for all Nova Scotians.

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.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction please?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, as you know, Nova Scotia Trails is the organization that acts as a collective voice for recreational trails in the province. The organization endeavours to create a positive climate that leads to responsible and sustainable development and use of our trails for the benefit of all people in the province.

Today, we are fortunate to have some officials from Nova Scotia Trails here with us in the Legislature in the east gallery, if they could please rise. I'd like to welcome Holly Woodill, president of Nova Scotia Trails; Don Connor, treasurer of Nova Scotia Trails; Vanda Jackson, executive director; Yvette d'Entremont, communications and office assistant; and Troy Nauffts. There may be a few others with the organization here today; I'm sorry if I missed anyone. I would be pleased if the Legislature would give our guests a warm welcome. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 1777

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Trails Federation has been the partner for the Trans Canada Trail in Nova Scotia since the project was initiated in 1992 to celebrate Canada's 125th year, and once fully connected the trail will stretch nearly 24,000 kilometres through every province and territory, linking Canadians in nearly 1,000 communities; and

Whereas to date nearly 17,000 kilometres of the trail is operational, which is 75 per cent of the proposed route; and

Whereas the Trans Canada Trail inspires active living, preserves green space, deepens awareness of Canada's history and culture, and creates a sustainable gift for future generations;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize the importance of the Nova Scotia Trails Federation in connecting the Trans Canada Trail here

in Nova Scotia, and support the goal of connecting the trail as a continuous route from coast to coast to coast, so it can serve as a truly national stage for celebrating Canada's 150th Anniversary of Confederation in 2017.

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 Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

RESOLUTION NO. 1778

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

Whereas each year thousands of Nova Scotia volunteers participate in the Nova Scotia Adopt-A-Highway program by cleaning litter from beside sections of our highways; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Adopt-A-Highway program continues to recognize the volunteer spirit of its participants who strive to keep our highways and environment clean and litter free; and

Whereas the Premier of Nova Scotia proclaimed May 4, 2015, as Adopt-A-Highway Day in the Province of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House show their appreciation of the hard and valuable work performed by Adopt-A-Highway volunteers on the 23rd Anniversary of this great program, and thank them for giving Nova Scotia's roadsides a much-needed Spring cleaning.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Oh, I skipped ahead, I didn't see you. With the unanimous consent of the House, we'll revert to the order of business, Introduction of Bills.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable House Leader for the New Democratic Party.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Today I'd like to draw the attention of the House to the west gallery where we have Anika Robert-Stahlbrand and her colleagues from the Canadian Federation of Students. I'm wondering if the House could give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 114 - Entitled an Act to Make Universities and Colleges Safer Places. (Hon. David Wilson)

Bill No. 115 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 155 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Executive Council Act, and Chapter 1 (1992 Supplement) of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The House of Assembly Act. (Hon. Jamie Baillie)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

CAMERON, SCOTT - TEACHING SUCCESS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure today to speak about a school teacher that has always put students first. Scott Cameron has taught in an elementary and secondary school environment during his career. He always believed that one can help students succeed by personalizing instruction to meet the needs of the learner.

Scott becomes very involved with his students taking them to events such as field trips, bowling, activity clubs, chaperoning school functions. He also has been actively involved as a coach for numerous school teams. In his classroom they celebrate even the smallest success. He'll often take pictures of his students throughout the school year at events, playing sports, or simply performing a task in his classroom. He creates a scrapbook of memories for his students and presents this gift to them in June. His philosophy is: I never leave a student behind and I use creative ways to have my students succeed. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax-Needham.

MCNEIL GOV'T.: VULNERABLE NOVA SCOTIANS - FUNDING CUTS

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the McNeil Government has abandoned vulnerable Nova Scotians. They have slashed funding to dozens of important community organizations like People First, Immigrant Settlement, and Integration Services, The Schizophrenia Society, and Eating Disorder Nova Scotia. Not only will this mean fewer dollars for programming it also means these groups will now need to put more time and energy into fundraising instead of frontline service. The McNeil Government has given carte blanche to university administrators, meaning students will be faced with unprecedented tuition and fee increases. This government has also refused to put any additional money into long-term care despite our aging population and out-dated care facilities.

It's shameful that the McNeil government is using our most vulnerable citizens to balance their books.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton-Richmond.

RCL BR. 150 (ARICHAT): LADIES AUX. - INSTALLATION

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the recently installed members of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 150 (Arichat) Ladies Auxiliary who were sworn in January 3, 2015. These officers include: sergeant-at-arms Lily Jane Boudreau; secretary Donna Babin; members-at-large Jeanette Jeffrey, Brenda Boudreau, Pauline Richard; Edwina LeBlanc, filling in for treasurer Eleanor Boudreau; past president

Winnie Bungay; second vice-president Gail Samson; first vice-president Vivian Short; and president Aurine Rachaud.

On behalf of everyone from our community please join me in thanking Branch 150 (Arichat) Ladies Auxiliary for their continued hard work and commitment. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES: WORKERS - RECOGNIZE

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the dedicated and tireless service of the men and women who work in correctional services during Correctional Services Week. Our correctional employees provide an essential service in work settings that are often challenging and demanding both mentally and physically. They put themselves in harm's way for the protection of our communities and our province. As a province we must do everything in our power to ensure that these workers have all the support they need and are able to work in an environment that is as safe as possible. I call on all members of the House to recognize the tremendous work of correctional service employees in Nova Scotia.

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

NAT. RES.: PROV. PARKS - R2D2 MACHINES

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I began this session several weeks ago talking about our provincial parks and I spoke about their old growth forest, hiking trails, beautiful views, and dedicated, informative employees. I also talked about new additions that will be greeting visitors when parks open in a few weeks. The R2D2 automated machines. While I would rather be greeted by a dedicated, informative employee I understand the Minister of Natural Resources is a big supporter of technology. I think he was too young to have seen the original Star Wars movie in the theatre but I can tell he is a fan, especially of robots.

I hope that we will have many visitors to our parks this season and hope the R2D2 machines are able to provide more information about firewood than the minister. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton-Richmond.

RCL BR. 43 (PORT HAWKESBURY): OFFICERS - INSTALLATION

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the recently installed officers of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 43 (Port Hawkesbury) who were

sworn in on January 9, 2015. These officers include Kay Britten, Raphael DeCoste, John MacLeod Langley, Junior Langley, Ronnie Beaton, Sylvester MacInnis, Lorrie MacAskill, Dan McQuarrie, Wayne Reynolds, Francis Bowman, Marguerite Howlett, president Gary Burns, and Beverly Arsenault.

On behalf of everyone from our community please join me in thanking the officers of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 43 for their continued hard work and commitment.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**BOUTILIER, DR. NICOLE - N.S. HEALTH AUTH. (NORTHERN ZONE):
MED. EX. DIR. - APPT.**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dr. Nicole Boutilier on her new position as the medical executive director for the Nova Scotia Health Authority's northern zone.

Dr. Boutilier hails from New Glasgow and is a graduate of Acadia and Dalhousie universities. She completed her residency training at the University of Calgary. Dr. Boutilier returned to Pictou County where she worked for several years as a family emergency room physician. Since 2008 she was the VP of Medicine at the Pictou County Health Authority, providing strategic and operational leadership. In 2014 Dr. Boutilier received her designation as a Canadian Certified Physician Executive. I wish Dr. Boutilier well in her new position with the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

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

COM. SERV. - MCNEIL GOV'T.: POVERTY - REPORTS

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, a recent report published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives titled *A Generation of Broken Promises: The 2014 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia* outlines a disturbing trend of child poverty in Cape Breton and across our province.

I know the Minister of Community Services believes that raising income assistance doesn't help in the root causes of poverty. That is clear because the McNeil Government froze income assistance rates for the second time in as many years. This means that many Nova Scotian families with children have to stretch their budgets even further to pay for basic necessities like food, shelter, and utilities.

The question is, while the McNeil Government is trying to figure out poverty, what are families supposed to live on?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto on an introduction.

MR. JOACHIM STROINK: I'd like to introduce behind me in the west gallery, from the Le Marchant St. Thomas School, Grade 4/5 Madam Chiasson and Grade 5 Madam Beaton's class. Most of all I'd be remiss if I did not introduce my daughter Anneke Stroink, who is over there. (Applause)

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

FREEMAN'S LITTLE NEW YORK (FAIRVIEW) - BAGLEY AUCTION

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate and recognize Freeman's Little New York in Fairview on hosting a very successful live auction in support of Amanda Bagley. Amanda is a former employee at Freeman's and a single mother who was severely injured during a house fire in Port Hawkesbury on April 3rd. She lost her nine year old son, Oaklee, in that fire. Our community came together and raised over \$9,000 at the auction held at Freeman's on April 17th. I was happy to be in attendance as it was a fantastic afternoon.

A special thank you goes out to Lisa Sullivan who worked tirelessly to put together an enormously successful event, as well as the entire team from Freeman's Fairview and all other locations for making this day happen. We can't bring back Amanda's little one but together the community's generous support has been able to at least ease her financial burden.

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

INTL. MIDWIFE DAY - MARK

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, today is International Midwife Day. This year's theme is Midwives for a Better Tomorrow. It reminds us of the critical role of midwives in creating a brighter future for mothers, babies, and families. In Nova Scotia we are fortunate to have dedicated and knowledgeable midwives who are part of the delivery of primary maternity care.

Since 2009 midwifery has given women and families a choice when it comes to low risk pregnancy and birth plans. Midwives have an important task in health counselling and education, not only for the woman but also within the family and community. Today I ask all members of the House to join me in marking International Midwife Day and celebrating the important work midwives do here in Nova Scotia.

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

SCREEN N.S. AWARDS - PARTICIPANTS/WINNERS

MS. LENORE ZANN: As a proud member of the film and creative sector I was honoured to attend the Inaugural Screen Nova Scotia Awards this past weekend, which included awards for animation for the very first time, and as someone who has voiced hundreds of cartoon characters, I wish to congratulate every single film maker and digital animator who was involved. Especially I want to congratulate the winners, including Mary-Colin Chisholm; Carol Sinclair, who is in the balcony today; Mike McLeod; Jonathan Torrens; Mr. D; Krebs; Bounty - Into the Hurricane; 28 Feet - Life on a Little Wooden Boat; and Brian Power, who won the Film Crew Excellence Award for his work in post-production and audio mixing.

Mr. Speaker, although there has been a dark cloud of uncertainty hanging over the industry for this past month, I'd say that Saturday's awards were a shining reminder that the many talented, creative, and passionate people in Nova Scotia will not be diminished, undermined, sidelined, or silenced. In fact, they are just beginning to really be heard. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

**ANTIGONISH KINSMEN MINOR & CHALLENGER BASEBALL
- REGISTRATION**

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as April comes to an end, youth across the province are beginning to spend more time outside. They are setting their sights on summer and sport. It's a great sight to see registration announcements in our local paper for soccer, softball, and now Challenger Baseball.

Mr. Speaker, Challenger Baseball is a program for children ages 4 to 18 years old with cognitive and/or physical needs. It started last year after being one of nine finalists in a nationwide Win4Kids grant program that was hosted by GoodLife Fitness Centres. Antigonish Challenger Baseball received 32 per cent of the vote and \$37,000 to go toward uniforms, equipment, and field rentals.

Now they are preparing for the 2015 season. Challenger Baseball is recruiting people interested in being a Challenger Baseball buddy, as players are partnered with a buddy who assists the children in all aspects of the game.

Mr. Speaker, registration for the Antigonish Kinsmen minor and Challenger Baseball began April 27th, with following registration sessions being held on April 28th, May 6th, and May 7th. I hope registration goes well and that they have a fantastic season. Thank you.

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

PARACHUTE CAN. SAFE KIDS WK. - ANL. (19th)

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the 19th Annual Parachute Canada Safe Kids Week. Safe Kids Week aims to raise awareness about the frequency and severity of preventable childhood injuries, which are the leading cause of death among Canadian children.

This year Parachute Canada Safe Kids Week's theme is to promote and raise awareness of cycling and road safety in communities across Canada. Head injuries are the number one cause of serious injury and death to kids on bikes. A properly-fitted and correctly-worn bike helmet can cut the risk of serious head injury by up to 80 per cent.

I call on all members of the House to commit themselves to ensuring that Nova Scotian children can live safe, active, and healthy lives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTIONS: GRANTS - CUTS

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked the start of Mental Health Week in Nova Scotia. In 2012, when I announced a new community grant program to help organizations that support people living with mental illness and addiction issues in the province, I saw it as the start of something, not the end.

The Mental Health and Addictions community grants were part of the previous government's Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, Together We Can, introduced by my colleague and friend from Halifax Needham. I dare say she saw that strategy as a beginning as well.

Now the McNeil Government is cutting these grants. The community grants for Mental Health and Addictions were reduced from \$1 million to \$600,000. There will be no calls for submissions in 2015-16. The McNeil Government needs to have some sense of compassion, Mr. Speaker, and revisit this decision. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

MATTHEWS, CLIFF: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Cliff Matthews, a beloved local running coach who recently passed away. Mr. Matthews was a common fixture at parks and trails around our city, training runners of all skill levels with what those who knew him say was an incomparable level of passion, enthusiasm, and devotion to this sport. He was generous with his time and energy. No matter the weather

or circumstances, Mr. Matthews would be out coaching his running students at favourite spots like Point Pleasant Park or the Halifax Commons.

Adored by our city's running community, Mr. Matthews' words of encouragement and advice helped turn many of his runners into elite marathoners, competing at some of the most noteworthy races in the world. Suffice to say his peers thought the world of him, not just as a coach but a dear friend.

I am proud to have had Mr. Matthews as such a notable member of our community, and would like to honour him sincerely for his long-standing contributions to the Halifax running culture. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

NETHERLANDS LIBERATION DAY (05/15) - CELEBRATE

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, May 5th is Liberation Day in the Netherlands, ending the occupation of their country by Nazi Germany in 1945. In 1990, the day was declared to be a national holiday when the liberation would be commemorated and celebrated every year.

The 1st Canadian Army were among the first Allied troops to liberate the Netherlands. In late 1944 my mother's family were liberated by the 1st Canadian Army. They lived on Walcheren, the last island to be taken to free the access to the Port of Antwerp. They endured three months of Canadian artillery shelling, the bombing of the dykes, and the flooding of their farm. The entire family survived. Taking Walcheren by the Canadian Army allowed vital supplies to reach the Allied armies and enabled the Spring 1945 offences, which concluded World War II in Holland and the Continent.

Today we remember those sacrifices and celebrate the free nation the Netherlands is today.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MCNEIL GOV'T. - BUS PASSES: INCOME ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS - ELIMINATION

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, in addition to freezing income assistance rates for the second year in a row, the McNeil Government has finally admitted they are denying bus passes to Nova Scotians on income assistance, including those with disabilities and, as the executive director of Metro Non-Profit Housing Carol Charlebois put it: "This is leading to a lot of people becoming kind of like prisoners in their own home."

The Department of Community Services is saying they are just following the manual. Is this the same archaic manual the minister referred to when she decided to take legal action against the Huntley family?

The McNeil Government has also eliminated traditional prenatal classes that educated new parents and gave them an opportunity to put questions to an experienced health care professional. Now parents have to wade through online resources, putting them at a great disadvantage. The McNeil Government's decisions are short-sighted and do nothing to help Nova Scotians who are most in need.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

N.S. FIRE FIGHTERS BURN TREATMENT SOC. - SUPPORT THANK

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Amherst Fire Department for once again hosting the annual Burn Treatment Curling Funspiel. Each year curlers from across the area converge on Amherst to raise money for the Nova Scotia Firefighters Burn Treatment Society. This year 24 teams took part in the two-day funspiel. The funspiel is an important event because it raises several thousand dollars to assist burn units at the VG, QEII Health Sciences Centre and the IWK Children's Hospital in Halifax. The funspiel is supported by local businesses, which allows the firefighters to donate 100 per cent of the money raised to help burn victims.

Approximately 60 adults and 40 children are treated annually by the province's two burn treatment centres. Teams of doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and support staff work around the clock to help patients recover. I am proud that we have such dedication by our Amherst Fire Department in their support of the Nova Scotia Fire Fighters Burn Treatment Society.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

HEMMINGS, JESSIE: NEW GLASGOW MUSIC FEST. - JR. CUP

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand today to congratulate my friend, Jessie Hemmings, for winning the Junior Cup at the New Glasgow Music Festival. The Junior Cup is awarded to the competitor 16 years and under who shows the most promise in musical ability after having competed in at least six classes – four of which must be in the same discipline. This trophy comes with a \$500 scholarship donated by the Fraser family in memory of their mother, Mary Tait Fraser.

Having known Jessie for a number of years and having had the pleasure of hearing him sing I can tell all members of this House that all the hours of practice and dedication have made Jessie a most deserving winner of this award. Thank you.

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

MCNEIL GOV'T.: NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS - FUNDING CUTS

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, Sue King-Darby is the chairman of the Colchester Anti-poverty Network. She is concerned about the McNeil Government's decision to eliminate the Community Counts website, which housed important information on community profiles and other local statistics. She worries without this invaluable resource we, and other non-profit organizations, will be at a loss as to where to find the kind of information we need quickly and efficiently.

The McNeil Government is causing significant harm to many non-profit organizations in our province by slashing funding and eliminating important resources to Community Counts, the CNIB, the Schizophrenia Society, the Canadian Mental Health Association and others, and it has also eliminated hundreds of civil servant jobs who were given pink slips, it has hurt post-secondary students who now face unprecedented tuition and fee increases over the next year, and seniors and their families by not allocating any additional money for long-term care. Where is the compassion that the people of Nova Scotia need from their government, Mr. Speaker?

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

SOUCIE, DR. JEAN: UNIVERSITÉ SAINTE-ANNE - HON. DEG.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, on May 9th, on the same day that Université Sainte-Anne's graduates receive their diplomas and start their careers, Dr. Jean Soucie will be awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Medical Science, recognizing his distinguished medical career. Originally from Belliveau Cove, Dr. Souci graduated from Université Sainte-Anne in 1965 before leaving to pursue his medical studies at Laval University and an internal medicine residency at McGill University.

Returning to the Maritimes, Dr. Soucie became an eminent internist and wore many other hats related to medicine. They included head of specialized medicine, head of medical staff, and both president and chairman of the New Brunswick Medical Society. He also spent two years on the board of governors at Université Sainte-Anne.

Recently retired, Dr. Soucie can now spend more time in Belliveau Cove, enjoying the sunsets on the bay and playing golf with the men that he met while they were all students at Université Sainte-Anne. Congratulations on a much-deserved honour, and enjoy your retirement.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**NORTHERN SUBWAY SELECTS:
PICTOU CO. FEMALE HOCKEY ASSOC. - CONGRATS.**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, Pictou County has become the cornerstone of female hockey in Nova Scotia. This year, 130 women were registered for the eight teams in the Pictou County Female Hockey Association. One success story in Pictou County female hockey was the play of the Northern Subway Selects in the Nova Scotia Female Midget Hockey League. At the league awards ceremony, Hilary Taylor of New Glasgow won the AA Munro Student Athletic Scholarship, Julia Scammell was named the top defensive person in the league, Taylor Perry was named to the first all-star team on defence, and Megan Stewart of Trenton was named to the all-star rookie team.

Congratulations to head coach Barry Wisener and sponsors Ray and Greg Burrows on the Northern Subway Selects' dynamite hockey season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

COMMUN. ACCESS PROG. (CAP) - FUNDING CUTS

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, one of the first programs the new Department of Business slashed funding for was the Community Access Program, also known as CAP. This came as a surprise to most of us, as several of the McNeil Government's Cabinet Ministers used to support funding for CAP sites - or so they said.

In 2012, the federal Conservative Government cut their portion of the funding for CAP sites. At the time, the now Minister of Labour and Advanced Education said, "The decision to stop funding this program will mean many low-income families will continue to be at an educational and economic disadvantage."

Now, for some reason, the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education doesn't support CAP sites. It is also evident that the McNeil Government's cuts to programs and services are actually hurting low-income families and putting them at a greater educational and economic disadvantage. Thank you.

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

SLAUNWHITE, LYNN: COMMUN. COMMITMENT/DEDICATION - THANKS

MR. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Lynn Slaunwhite of River Road, Terence Bay, for her dedication to her community. Lynn worked tirelessly to help organize the Friends of River Road, a group of neighbours and friends opposed to the development of Chebucto Terence Bay Wind Farm Ltd. on property near to their homes. Lynn very competently conducted extensive research and compiled an enormous amount

of information for presentation to the URB and the Department of Environment on behalf of Friends of River Road.

Despite these efforts, the Chebucto Terence Bay Wind Farm is now being developed. Lynn has magnanimously given her time to sit on the Community Liaison Committee as a representative of Friends of River Road to stay abreast of the development and to ensure that there is an open line of communication between the developer and the community.

I would like the members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in thanking Lynn for her commitment and dedication to the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

PICTOU CO. C OF C/PULSE PICTOU CO. - PARTNERSHIP

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Pictou County Chamber of Commerce and Pulse Pictou County for joining forces in an effort to tackle some of the issues facing Pictou County. Pulse represents a network of young people who want to develop on a professional level. The Chamber has many contacts within the business community and has many professional resources. Together, they have a common goal of developing the next generation of business leaders. They plan to explore mentoring opportunities in the community and form a small pilot project based on their findings.

I wish Pulse Pictou County and the Pictou County Chamber of Commerce much success with their partnership. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MCNEIL GOV'T.: MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTIONS STRATEGY - ABANDONMENT

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, this is Mental Health Week. I keep thinking back three years ago in May 2012, when the previous government released the province's first Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, called Together We Can. One of the key components of the strategy was to provide funding to community agencies and peer support groups to help fund Nova Scotians living with mental illness and addictions.

Now the McNeil Government has cut these grants for mental health and addictions work by 40 per cent overall. These organizations support Nova Scotians with a variety of mental health issues, such as eating disorders and schizophrenia. They also support the mental health needs of the Aboriginal, immigrant, and LGBTI communities.

Why has the McNeil Government abandoned the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy? Why are they making things up as they go along?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**HARBOUR HOUSE (LUN.)/STAFF:
COMMITMENT/COMPASSION - THANK**

HON. MARK FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to share a few words about a local shelter in Bridgewater that has been helping women and children escape violent home situations since 1987.

With a compassionate and caring team, Harbour House is a symbol of calm and safety. This haven helps women through counselling, provides temporary housing, and acts as a facilitator, directing women to programs that are available to them.

Harbour House has helped many women and children over its nearly 30 years in operation. Once they leave, it doesn't necessarily mean the relationship with Harbour House is over. There are ongoing support groups for those who have gone out on their own, as well as school programs geared toward educating our impressionable youth about healthy relationships and bullying, just to name a few.

I'd like to thank Harbour House and the staff for their commitment and compassion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

BUCHANAN, CARL (BUCKY): COMMUN. COMMITMENT - THANK

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to congratulate Mr. Carl (Bucky) Buchanan of Mira, as he is being inducted into the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association Hall of Fame on June 9th. Bucky's name is synonymous with the growth and development of local post-secondary school sports, as it is with legacies of the 1987 Canada Winter Games and the time he served as president and CEO. Buckie is also nationally recognized as an accomplished and innovative coach, organizer, and administrator.

Carl (Bucky) Buchanan has previously been awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal and has been inducted into both the Cape Breton Sports Hall of Fame and the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame. Bucky is now retired but continues to stay active in the local sporting community as an adviser and consultant.

I stand here today to thank Carl (Bucky) Buchanan on behalf of the residents of Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg for all he has done and all he continues to do for his community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ANDERSON, TOM/FAM. - COMMUN. CONTRIBUTIONS

HON. LENA DIAB: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to congratulate a constituent of Halifax Armdale, Tom Anderson, on recently receiving a very important industry award. Tom is co-owner of Anderson Brown Company Insurance, which received the Brokerage of the Year Award from the Insurance Brokers Association of Nova Scotia. His wife, Connie, and children Mark and Haley all work at ABC Insurance, making it truly a family enterprise. The Brokerage of the Year Award is one of the awards presented by IBANS during April, which was Insurance Broker Month in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Anderson was also the recipient of the Dr. Elizabeth A. Chard Award, which was presented at the Special Olympics Festival Dinner 2015. This award recognizes the volunteer dedication of Tom to the Special Olympics Nova Scotia Board of Directors as co-chair of the festival and at the Winter and Summer Provincial Games.

I extend congratulations to the Anderson family for their outstanding professional achievements and acknowledge their important social contributions in the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

SCREEN N.S. AWARD CEREMONY: NOMINEES/AWARD RECIPIENTS - WORK RECOGNIZE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize the tremendous work of the nominees and award recipients at the inaugural Screen Nova Scotia Award ceremony, held this weekend.

Mary-Colin Chisolm won best female actor for her role in *Cast No Shadow*. Mike McLeod was best male actor for his role in the TV series *Forgive Me*. Carol Sinclair was best supporting female actor for her role in the TV series *Sex and Violence*. Brian Power won the Film Crew Excellence Award.

Relative Happiness, shot in Hubbards, won the award for Best Feature Film, and *Mr. D*, helmed by Michael Volpe, won Best TV Series.

At a time when the industry feels so imperilled, it is great to see them celebrate excellence. Today I call on all members of the House to congratulate all of the award winners and nominees.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

COOLEN, MATTHEW - ATHLETIC ACCOMPLISHMENT

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Halifax West High School student Matthew Coolen on his outstanding athletic achievement at the Athletics Canada Hershey Canadian Indoor Open in Montreal. Matthew won the gold medal in 60-metre hurdles at this event with a personal best time of 8.14 seconds and is now ranked number one in Canada in the men's junior indoor 60-metre hurdles. Matthew will next compete this summer in the outdoor national competition in Edmonton, and depending on the results of this competition, Matthew could potentially go on to represent Canada at the Junior Pan Am Games in August.

Please join me in wishing Matthew the best of luck in his training and preparation for an exciting Spring and summer of competition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

RIBAHI, LENO - BIRD SEED DONATION

MS. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Leno Ribahi is the owner of Leno's Stop Shop at Elmsdale. For 25 years he has called this community his home and believes it to be the best community in the world - and I agree. He is well-known for his support of local organizations, groups, and events.

On Thursday, April 9th, when there was so much snow on the ground, Leno's young son, Omar, found some dead birds in their yard and when he asked his parents if there was anything they could do, Leno said yes. On Friday, April 10th, Leno purchased \$4,000 worth of wild bird mix and cracked corn. On Saturday, the 11th, he gave it away by the bagful out of the back of a cube van parked at his store parking lot. The word spread quickly and by early Saturday afternoon they were out of bird seed.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to Leno's generosity, the birds in the community are singing his praises. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

**CAMBRIDGE, DUKE & DUCHESS:
PRINCESS CHARLOTTE - BIRTH CONGRATS.**

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, for someone who was born in Weymouth, England, with the majority of my biological family calling the U.K. home, this weekend was a great weekend and one that made international headlines. I'd like to take a moment to congratulate the Duke of Duchess of Cambridge on the birth of their beautiful baby girl, Princess Charlotte. To say that young Princess Charlotte will live an interesting life is an understatement. A lot of us here are parents and we can appreciate what a newborn child can do for the human soul.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I encourage all members to join me in congratulating the birth of Her Royal Highness Princess Charlotte of Cambridge, the newest member of the Royal Family, and every child born this weekend in the Province of Nova Scotia. Thank you.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring everybody's attention to the west gallery, where we have a very special guest today. She is an amazing actor, writer, director, producer, and she is a new winner of an award at the Screen Nova Scotia Awards on the weekend. Her name is Carol Sinclair and would she please stand to receive the applause of the House. (Applause)

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

DUBINSKY, LEON - MARCH OF THE LIVING CAN. AWARD

MS. PAM EYKING: Mr. Speaker, on April 19th the Holocaust Memorial observance was held in Sydney. This observance has always featured one particular song, written by Englishtown composer Leon Dubinsky, called We Rise Again. He wrote the lyrics in 1985 and the song became a hit when it was released by The Rankin Family in 1993. Dubinsky has played We Rise Again at every one of the 15 Holocaust Memorial Services held in Temple Sons of Israel Synagogue. This year Dubinsky was presented with the March of the Living Canada Award. The March of the Living is an educational program that brings high school students from all over the world to Poland in order to study the history of the Holocaust and to explore the roots of prejudice, intolerance, and hate, in the Nazi-controlled concentration camps.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Mr. Dubinsky on his award, and thank him for creating this beautiful, meaningful song. I know it is familiar to many and I hope that next time you hear it that you will pause for a moment to consider its significance. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Environment on an introduction.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the members' attention to the east gallery. We've talked before in the House about the sacrifices made by families of those of us sitting in the Legislature, but here today is a family of the support team behind us as well. In the east gallery is my executive assistant, Trevor, his wife Jennifer and their recent addition to the family, young Wesley, who is about a month old now. So if everyone could give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

HIMMELMAN, ANDREW: SUMMER TEACHING - BELIZE

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, as someone who has worked in the education system for many years, I have seen first-hand the benefit of learning outside the traditional classroom. Bluenose Academy educator Andrew Himmelman is set to experience that first-hand this summer when he travels to South America. Andrew is working on his master's course at St. Francis Xavier University, and instead of doing a traditional course in the classroom, he's instead teaching students in Belize.

It's a wonderful option offered by one of our province's universities and it will undoubtedly make Mr. Himmelman an even better educator. Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and all members join me in wishing Andrew a safe and educational trip in an effort to better himself and his students both locally and elsewhere.

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

AUTISM OUTREACH EVENT

MS. JOYCE TREEN: Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, April 16th, an autism outreach event was held to reach out to those in the community who need resources, support, and someone to share their struggles with. There were moms, EPAs, and individuals from Autism Nova Scotia in attendance, and everyone was passionate and ready to work together to support each other. They discussed the need for a local outreach group and resources to help parents and caregivers. With our government investing \$1 million to expand services for early intensive behavioural intervention for preschoolers with autism, this will bring more help to our early learners. It is my hope that this outreach event will grow and help people get the support they need. Thank you.

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

CDN. CHARTER OF RIGHTS & FREEDOMS - ANNIV. (33rd)

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: Mr. Speaker, April 17th marked the 33rd Anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Enacted in 1984, it effectively replaced the Bill of Rights of 1960. The most visible and recognized part of the Canadian Constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights of individuals by enshrining those rights and certain limits to them in the highest law of the land. The Charter has been key in expanding the rights of minorities and transforming the nature of criminal investigations and prosecutions, ensuring the individual's right to have their issues heard before the Supreme Court of Canada.

Under the Charter, the will of Parliament and the Legislatures is held to judicial scrutiny. It applies to anyone in Canada, citizen or newcomer, and forms part of our Constitution, making it difficult for future governments to decrease or limit the rights and freedoms we currently enjoy. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**MAJESTA TREES OF KNOWLEDGE CONTEST:
NEW MINAS ELEM. SCH. - TOP-10 FINALIST**

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, New Minas Elementary School is a community with heart. They have recently been chosen as a top-10 finalist in the Majesta Trees of Knowledge contest and are in the running to win a \$20,000 outdoor classroom that would be constructed in the green space behind the school.

New Minas Elementary is an award-winning green school. Their innovative proposal for their outdoor space includes an orchard, classroom, interpretive trails, a riparian zone classroom beside the stream, and a small group study area.

On behalf of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, I would like to congratulate the Green Team and the staff, students, and parents of the New Minas Elementary School for their teamwork and dedication in designing a project that would be a great benefit not only to the students of the school, but also to the wider community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**GEORGES P. VANIER VIPERS
- NSSAF JR. PROV. BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIPS**

MR. BILL HORNE: I'm very happy today to stand and offer my congratulations to the Georges P. Vanier Vipers on winning the NSSAF Junior Provincial Badminton Championship. Georges P. Vanier has a long-standing, strong badminton history, and this year was no exception. Along with winning the Nova Scotia provincial team banner,

Georges P. Vanier students also won individual provincial championships in two categories: Rory White in boys singles, and Nicke Gravel and Isabella Boulton in mixed doubles.

The continued success in this sport of badminton for the school is encouraged and enhanced by the hard-working physical education teachers, Norris Boudreau and Sean Hanlon, who offer many opportunities for the students of Georges P. Vanier to participate, excel, and sometimes find their passion in physical fitness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

DENNIS MACKENZIE BALL TOURNAMENT - DOVER

MR. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, every Thanksgiving weekend for the past 25 years, there has been a ball tournament held in memory of a resident from Dover. The Dennis MacKenzie Ball Tournament started in 1990, after a tragic event that occurred in Canso at a teen dance. Dennis Mackenzie died, and ever since that devastating day his family and friends have missed him greatly and were determined to find a way to honour him.

Dennis had numerous friends involved in the process of making this event possible. A few main people involved in making this event achievable are Kevin Dixon, Danny Haines, Roddie Snow, and Kevin MacDonald. They started this ball tournament when they were just young men and have followed through with it ever since. A.J. Taylor, from Canso, has also been involved with all of the scheduling for this tournament, so we give great thanks to him as well.

There are many dedicated individuals in the community of Dover, who keep the spirit of Dennis alive and well. Participating in this tournament is their way of celebrating his life. I am tremendously honoured to have such charitable and devoted people in my constituency. Thank you all who have kept Dennis' memory thriving, I'm certain he would be extremely pleased at the outcome.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

DEMOCRATIC PROCESS: P.E.I. ELECTION - VOTER TURNOUT

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to speak about the democratic process, as was demonstrated last night in Prince Edward Island. Not just the turnout which clearly this side of the House has some interest and happiness with, but the real celebration and results last night that occurred is actually the voter turnout which all members of the public of Prince Edward Island should be proud of. They had a very

good turnout, over 80 per cent of voter turnout which is a great vote of confidence in the democracy in the area.

I hope that all the other elections taking place, coming up, that the public takes heed and takes the lead from Prince Edward Island and gets out and votes and participates in our democracy.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

LEADERSHIP BREAKFAST (6th ANL.)

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the 6th Annual Leadership Breakfast held on April 17, 2015, at St. Agnes Parish in Halifax. This important event organized by the St. Agnes Parish Activities Committee helps connect people who are interested in both faith and leadership. This year, Mayor Mike Savage spoke on faith in politics.

I was happy to attend this encouraging event and would like to recognize Father Paul Morris for giving the welcome address; Ann Cortellacci-Kulczycki for the prayer; Consul Wadih Fares for his introduction of the guest speaker; Mayor Savage for his heartening personal reflections; and Valerie Bobyk for being the master of ceremonies.

The leadership breakfast strives to promote a healthy and thriving democracy by emphasizing reflective leadership. Reflective leadership embraces the values of conscience, courage, compassion, diversity, integrity, spiritual engagement, and community. Congratulations to the Parish of St. Agnes for organizing this relevant and wonderful event.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

BEDFORD VOL. OF YR. AWARDS COMM. - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to take a moment today to congratulate the Bedford Volunteer of the Year Awards Committee and its sponsor, Bedford Business Association, on another successful celebration.

Bedford has been recognizing its volunteers since the 1980s. Many outstanding people and organizations have been honoured since that time, and the main award winners then go on to represent our community at HRM and provincial volunteer events.

The Bedford Volunteer Awards Committee members are all dedicated volunteers in their own right. Congratulations go out to committee members - Shirley Jerram, Don Ambler, Margaret Embree, Kathy Mahar, Edna Cooke, Art Mosher, Catherine Cantwell,

and Bill Doane - for their work on this terrific event. It's always inspirational and humbling when we hear of all the wonderful things our residents volunteer to do each year.

Bedford is truly a better place to live in because of the people who serve their fellow residents, and I wish to thank the committee and the sponsors for recognizing them.

MR. SPEAKER: Barring no more Statements by Members, the House will recess until 2:00 p.m., when we will resume with Question Period.

[1:59 p.m. The House recessed.]

[2:00 p.m. The House reconvened.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM. - PROV. COURTHOUSE STAFF: SAFETY PLANS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday we were all alarmed to hear that the front-counter staff at the Amherst Justice Centre were sent to the hospital suffering from nausea, dizziness, and burning throats, after the arrival of a suspicious package. Today we have learned that courthouses in Kentville, Truro, Bridgewater, and the law courts here in Halifax, have also been closed after receiving similar packages. I'd like to ask the Premier, what steps is the government taking to ensure the safety of Nova Scotians who work in our provincial court houses?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to thank all those Nova Scotians who work in our courthouses delivering and making sure to keep our communities safe. In this instance, which is troubling, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing some other events today. It is in the capable hands of law enforcement agencies in those respective communities and they are moving forward to ensure that the men and women who work in those facilities are safe and to ensure that we get to the bottom of what has taken place.

MR. BAILLIE: All Nova Scotians are worried today about the arrival of multiple packages at multiple courthouses. Sadly this follows a similar incident in Manitoba less than a month ago.

Mr. Speaker, a police bulletin went out from Manitoba to all the courthouses in the country to make them aware at that time. I would like to ask the Premier, what steps did the government take to ensure the safety of our courthouses, after the bulletin came from Manitoba?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I will refer that to the Minister of Justice.

HON. LENA DIAB: Indeed safety of all our staff and all our public is our priority in our court houses. When we were alerted about a month ago that a suspicious package was delivered in Manitoba, we informed all our courthouses in the province here. Again this was a month ago that package in Manitoba was investigated and we learned that there were no toxic substances. We received a similar looking package yesterday in Amherst. We have advised our police and they are investigating that. Again, packages were received today in other courthouses and at this point we are taking the lead from our police partners and they are investigating those packages.

MR. BAILLIE: Indeed Nova Scotians are alarmed at the situation where multiple courthouses have now received suspicious packages. Our thoughts, of course, are first and foremost with the people who work in those courthouses, Mr. Speaker, but it is now an issue that has caused concern for not only users of the courthouses but all Nova Scotians who want to know they are safe.

I'd like to ask the Premier, what message does his government have for Nova Scotians who are worried about what's going on in our courthouses?

THE PREMIER: I want reassure all Nova Scotians that steps and protocols that have been in place have worked well when it has come to these suspicious packages and I want to reassure all of them that our communities across this province are safe, with the men and women in uniform who serve day in and day out, night and day, to protect us at every step and this instance will be no different.

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

PREM. - FILM TAX CREDIT: CHANGES - CONTINUATION EXPLAIN

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, today in Law Amendments Committee, Nova Scotians are again voicing their concerns about the McNeil Government's changes to the Film Tax Credit. In fact, Bill Niven, a renowned producer of Northeast Films, the company that produced *The Book of Negroes* here in our province, says he's already lost a major project and that the current changes to the credit will kill our screen industry. He is calling on the government to put all changes on hold until a full economic impact assessment can be done.

My question to the Premier is, why does he continue to move forward with change that could damage a vital industry with serious consequences for our province?

THE PREMIER: Again, I want to thank Screen Nova Scotia for working with our government, Mr. Speaker, to find what was a common ground, a solution that would work for taxpayers as well as work for the industry. We are looking forward to the new program being rolled out next year.

As all members of this House would know, in this current budget there is \$24 million there. The industry will operate under the same rules they operated under last year, and we are looking forward to broadening the benefit that once stood at 50 to 65 per cent of the labour cost - I think even industry knew that was too much. We now have a credit that is 25 per cent and is spread out across more opportunities so all the Nova Scotian spend will be recognized. We believe that's the right thing for the industry and as well for taxpayers.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, while the McNeil Government has failed to analyze the impact of these changes for Nova Scotia, other provinces apparently have not. Manitoba recently strengthened and extended its film tax credit, making it the most attractive place in Canada. According to a May 2nd *Winnipeg Free Press* publication, that province is expecting a very busy year because Nova Scotia in fact has rescinded its credit.

My question to the Premier is, why has he placed Nova Scotia at a competitive disadvantage to other provinces such as Manitoba when it comes to attracting jobs and investment in this important industry?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you and to all Nova Scotians that \$10 million is not something to be sneezed at. This is a competitive fund. We're seeing changes across all provincial jurisdictions.

Unlike the Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party, people here come for more than just having governments throw money at them. If throwing money at a company is what brings them to this province, we would be booming after the exercise that Party did in the last four years.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, that's a great insult to the indigenous filmmaking industry in this province that is at risk now because of the recklessness of that Premier, that Finance and Treasury Board Minister, and that government.

It's clear from the presentations in Law Amendments Committee today that no deal was ever reached with the film industry. The government has imposed a half-baked plan that nobody has confidence in, leaving 2,700 Nova Scotians and their families on tenterhooks.

My question to the Premier is, why won't the Premier even consider suspending the July 1st deadline that he has imposed without consultation, without information, and without consideration of this industry?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we have a tax credit that was at 50 to 65 cents on the dollar. Even the industry knew that was too generous. The fact of the matter is that we've worked in consultation with Screen Nova Scotia to provide what we believe is a fairer program, one that will be fair to the industry and one that is fair to taxpayers.

The benefit will be more than just labour. We'll be able to look at hotels that are rented in this province and buys that are taking place on Nova Scotia goods and products. Why would the Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party be opposed to the fact that when we spend precious public money, we get as much benefit across the spectrum as we possibly can for all Nova Scotians?

We're hearing from people to move forward. July 1st is the deadline when we will have approved all the applications that will fall under the \$24 million deal that is in place today, and we'll go forward in a new direction.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - EA: MACQUARRIE FILE - MIN. INVESTIGATE

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, last week we learned that a respected and outspoken gynecologist felt that a member of the minister's staff made a clumsy attempt at intimidating her. It was dismissed at the time, even laughed off. Today in the media scrum, we heard that the minister has not addressed it yet.

My question to the minister is, what will the minister do to get to the bottom of this uncomfortable situation?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I thank the honourable member for the question. What I can convey to him is that my EA in no way attempted any intimidation or any comment. That is not even his nature. What he does is keep a file on current articles from newspapers all over Nova Scotia.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, in a text exchange between Dr. Robyn MacQuarrie and the minister's EA, the physician was accused of either being dishonest or being a spokesperson for other dishonest physicians. At a time when several OB/GYNs are retiring, leaving, or threatening to leave the province, this attitude towards them will not make them feel valued or wanted. I can tell you, it's no laughing matter.

Will the minister explain what action he will be taking in his office to repair relations with the province's OB/GYNs?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I've spoken with the head of the obstetricians/gynecologists for the province. They realize that we are in a difficult time with the master agreement currently going on. What I can tell the member opposite, as I said last Friday, I'm prepared to meet with Dr. MacQuarrie or any doctor in Nova Scotia. Thank you.

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

PREM.: SOC. ASSISTANCE BUS PASSES - ELIMINATION

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, Carol Charlebois is executive director of the Metro Non-Profit Housing Association and she told CBC this morning that the decision of the Minister of Community Services to cut the bus passes to people who have been receiving them for years is leading to a lot of people becoming kind of prisoners in their own homes. Last week, we heard from Nova Scotians on social assistance who live with cerebral palsy, schizophrenia, and other medical conditions who have lost their bus passes.

Now that these folks are receiving a few bus tickets for medical appointments only, does the Premier agree with the minister's decision to take away bus passes from the most vulnerable Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to inform all members of the House that there's been no policy change made by this government. The policy that is being used today goes back to 2001. That government had an opportunity to change that policy; they did not. What's happening, I'm assuming, is that the caseworker and the client are having - which goes on across this province each and every day - caseworkers talk to the clients about the needs that they require.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the fact that we didn't take away bus passes from people with disabilities and with mental health disorders on income assistance.

Not long ago, the minister cited departmental policy as the reason they were suing Joellan Huntley's family. We're beginning to see a pattern here - a pattern of a government that's going after the most vulnerable people in order to balance the budget and hiding behind archaic policy in the department. So my question to the Premier is, why has his government decided to clamp down on government policy no matter if it hurts the most vulnerable people or not?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the question of the Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party couldn't be more ridiculous if she tried to make it that way. The fact of the matter is we made no changes - we've made no changes. Caseworkers are working with

their clients. Is the Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party suggesting that the Premier should get involved and be involved with every one of those cases - to divide between the relationship between the highly professional men and women who work on front-line services for the most vulnerable citizens of our province? Is that what she's suggesting?

Is she suggesting that every time, it should become a political football so that she can come in this House and work against those hard-working Nova Scotians who are out there working on behalf of all of us from one community to the other? And one other thing we didn't do, Mr. Speaker - we didn't mess around with the amount of payments in one year to the other to balance the books from the fiscal strain under her leadership.

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

PREM. - FILM IND.: DEADLINE (07/15) - EXTEND

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. As if we didn't need any more evidence that the government made a big mistake when it cut the film industry and 2,700 jobs that go with it, we've had presenter after presenter here at Province House today telling their stories about how their jobs continue to be at risk and how they continue to lose important projects that would add to our economy.

One thing they made clear for certain is that they reject the suggestion by the government that they have reached any deal with regard to the changes to the Film Tax Credit. There is no deal; jobs continue to be at risk. I ask the Premier, in light of the fact that this is still a problem, will he agree now to finally extend the arbitrary July 1st deadline to allow for those jobs to be saved?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank Screen Nova Scotia for working with government to help us with a program that works for them. We laid out a proposal that they said didn't work for the industry. We went and engaged industry, they came to us, and we found what we believe and they believe is a compromise that is common ground for both sides. It's fair to taxpayers, and it's fair to the industry.

This is exciting. We're now going to be recognizing all Nova Scotian content in the film industry, not just labour. How could anyone in this House be opposed to the fact that we are recognizing all Nova Scotian content - hotel rooms, food, clothing, labour? All of the things that Nova Scotians are putting into those films will be recognized in that tax credit.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, we may agree it's exciting, but it's exciting for all the wrong reasons as thousands of Nova Scotians continue to try to tell the government, here in the House today and outside, that they made a big mistake that put their jobs at risk. The Premier may want to thank them, but here's what they are saying: Mary-Colin Chisholm, a member of Screen Nova Scotia, was here today, and she said it's clear that the

government doesn't understand the impact of the changes they have made. In fact, it's the "equivalent of burning every tree in Nova Scotia and telling forestry to carry on."

Will the Premier now acknowledge that they made a mistake and extend the deadline until it is fixed so that those jobs can be saved?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're very grateful for Screen Nova Scotia and the co-operation they provided, working with government to help us formulate a policy that they said works well for them. We're encouraged by that. We're encouraged by the fact that now we have a rebate, a program that will be recognizing all the Nova Scotia content that's being used in the productions. That's a good thing for Nova Scotians, and we're encouraged. We're going to continue to work with the industry to make sure we continue to have a thriving film industry in this province.

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

PREM.: QUALIFIED PROJS. - CONSIDER

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier may believe all that, but the very people that work in the film industry know better. They know they have no deal. They know they are still held back from growing to be all they can be and bringing all the jobs they can bring to our province. They can't even get the answer to a simple question like whether their fund is now capped or not capped. It goes right to the heart of whether they continue to operate in Nova Scotia or not. We're either going to have a first-come, first-serve system or we're going to support projects that bring jobs to the province.

I would like to ask the Premier, will he assure the film industry today that no good project that qualifies and comes to the Department of Finance and Treasury Board will be turned down?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. We're encouraged. We're looking forward to working with Screen Nova Scotia and the industry. We're looking forward to working with those producers. We told them - we continue to have a dialogue as the fund gets rolled out. We're looking forward to that. We see opportunities for how we can continue to improve and enhance the opportunities for Nova Scotia. Screen Nova Scotia is willing to participate in those conversations.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier may be encouraged, but we've heard time and time again from the industry that they are discouraged and actually are forced to look at moving their business somewhere else, and the jobs that go with it. Mary-Colin Chisholm said today in Law Amendments Committee that the industry has lost all trust in a government that campaigned on supporting the Film Tax Credit through 2020 and then gutted it as soon as they had a chance.

Will the Premier, if he truly wants to solve this, at least apologize to the film industry for promising to do one thing and then doing the opposite in this budget?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to remind that member and all members of this House that we extended that credit to 2020 last session. We have now brought in a fund that we believe will be better for the industry and provide a broader-based opportunity for all Nova Scotian companies. We'll recognize all of the commitments by Nova Scotia of those industries and under the same program we're seeing Alberta begin to move forward. This will see our province move forward and recognize all of the Nova Scotia spend.

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

PREM.: HOME CARE CHANGES - CONSULTATION

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, six months ago the McNeil Government announced their plans to open up all home care contracts in the province to competitive bidding, which would include private, for-profit providers. This is causing a lot of concern among patients, their families, and health care workers.

Despite this, government has made no effort to consult with these groups about what could be a very significant change to home care services.

My question for the Premier is, for a government that says it likes to consult on everything, why isn't the McNeil Government consulting Nova Scotians about this very important change to home care in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the Minister of Health and Wellness to respond.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: What I want to convey to the member opposite and to all Nova Scotians is that yes, there will be likely some change in the delivery of the home care model. We know that it isn't on a sustainable path now. In the budget of 2014-15, we put \$30 million and that got used very, very quickly.

We have to follow the advice of the Auditor General in 1996, 2002, and 2008 to do an RFP. It's not about privatization; it's about all those who currently deliver. Not-for-profit and for-profit companies will all be part of that process. What I can assure as well is that every person currently working in home care will have a job.

MS. MACDONALD: I want to thank the Minister of Health and Wellness for the answer. Home care is certainly a very, very important part of our health care system. Last night, more than 100 people attended a public meeting here in Halifax to talk about their fears and the stress this proposed change is causing them.

Government was invited to participate in this session and five others that have been organized around the province recently, but the government has declined to participate in those sessions. I'll ask the minister of Health and Wellness, why hasn't his department agreed to participate in these public sessions around the province so they could hear first-hand from the concerns that people have with respect to the proposed changes in home care?

MR. GLAVINE: I can tell the member opposite that members of the department have been at those meetings. I met with home care workers and CUPE representatives when I was in Cape Breton this weekend. I've had representation at my constituency office and also I do have the opportunity, having been invited, to make rounds with a few of our home care workers in the Valley, which I will certainly take advantage of.

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

TIR - *BLUENOSE II*: COMPLETION - TIME FRAME

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of TIR. Two weeks ago, I asked the minister about the remaining budget for the *Bluenose II* and whether the project will be completed on time and on budget. It's not on time, of course; \$617,252 remain to complete the *Bluenose II*. The consultants hired as project managers have already billed the government \$1.6 million and continue to charge their hourly rate of \$120. So my question is pretty simple, will the *Bluenose II* be completed within the budget that remains?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: As was identified by the AG's Report on the *Bluenose II*, I think it's very clear what the expenditures have been on the *Bluenose II*. It's very public information.

If you look at Michael Pickup's report, it really identifies the symptoms of the problem that started way back in 2008 when this project was launched - the rush to get it into matched federal funding to make sure that we associated ourselves with federal funding as opposed to doing it properly the first time. There were a number of fumbles and things that should have been done better. We get that point. We know what the budget numbers are. We're working very closely with the community and the group, who really want to turn the *Bluenose II* into a positive story. We're going to get there.

MR. MACLEOD: I've got to say, that's the first time that I've gotten an answer from that minister that I don't quite understand - but it was close, it was close. The minister also said that he's looking forward to the Spring, when Nova Scotians can get a real good look at the *Bluenose II* to see what's happening. Well, believe it or not, Spring has arrived and Nova Scotians want to know. The big question is when will the *Bluenose II* set sail?

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, we've established a very specific process for what has to be done; there are about 18 outstanding issues and a lot of those have to do with certifications for the American Bureau of Shipping and Transport Canada - there is no rushing those things. The community group, the stakeholders, the Lunenburg Shipping Alliance, the shipbuilders who built this vessel, they are working on these details. We have a number of different stakeholders who have been involved from the beginning working on that list and when that list is done, and only when that list is done, the boat will be certified and ready for sail.

We understand the pressure and we understand the politics around the *Bluenose II*. It will be a good story. We all look forward, on all sides of the House, to the vessel being back in the water so we can share in the majesty of the *Bluenose II* once again. We're only going to do that when it's done right and our department and our government will make sure we follow every step, every recommendation, and make sure everything is in place, checks and balances, and we'll get this right. We all want to see the *Bluenose II* sail this summer.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

JUSTICE: CELL FIRE - IGNITION DETAILS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. This week is Corrections Services Week, and we recognize people working in places like Burnside. Issues continue to arise at the Burnside jail, yet the minister continues to refuse to order an independent review. Last Friday we learned that an inmate set his cell on fire. That inmate, as well as some staff and other offenders suffered smoke inhalation.

My question is, what exactly did this offender use to set his cell on fire and why did he have that item in his possession?

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question that has been asked a number of times. I am pleased to say that the government has been very proactive on this file, with improving staff and offender safety at the facility - we have invested \$4 million to renovate and introduce direct supervision at that facility; and \$2 million for additional security upgrades; and \$150,000 for new protective gear.

With respect to the incident that he's speaking about, despite our best efforts contraband always gets in. In this particular instance, apparently it was a match.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my colleague just asked me how much they spent on matches.

In all seriousness, I'm going to table an article that was brought to my attention. If it's true, some of the activity at the jail is downright revolting; if it is not, it should be refuted by the department.

Another incident on March 10th, a fight between two cellmates, sent one offender to hospital. He returned to the correctional facility not until April 27th. According to a major incident update, an internal review was to be conducted and I think the minister had answered that question previously. I know the review that came out was only a page long.

Is the minister going to at least complete an internal review, an overall comprehensive review of what has been happening at the jail? We know there have been so many incidents happening over many years now. Will the minister complete a comprehensive, at least internal review and, if she can't share it publicly, perhaps she could at least share it in confidence with the Opposition?

MS. DIAB: Mr. Speaker, any time an incident happens there is always an internal review. We do have the most open disclosure policy. We post, whenever it meets the policy, all information on the website. We have new recruitment practices that we initiated in the last year and a half. Staff has been working very diligently to ensure that we have sufficient relief complement and we are holding stiff competitions.

Not only are we investing millions of dollars, that I just said, to introduce a direct supervision model which will let us see all of the offenders on a 24/7 basis, we've also introduced video court on a permanent basis effective April 1, 2015, along with our justice partners, that will also decrease the incidents from happening. We have new recruitment practices, physical fitness, security features, all background checks are done with all of our staff; in fact, this morning I was very pleased to say that I attended an awards ceremony where many of our Correctional Services officers . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Time allotted for the minister's answer has expired.

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: HOME CARE SERV. - PRIVATIZATION

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, Debbie Townsend has been a district community nurse with the VON for 17 years and is deeply concerned about the quality of care for patients in home care, if home care services are privatized.

When Ontario began competitive bidding in home care, the Auditor General there commented that this process was inequitable, insufficient and ineffectively managed, having direct negative consequences on patient care. I would like to ask the minister, why is the minister putting patient care at risk by privatizing home care services?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the member opposite and all those who currently deliver home support or nursing care to Nova Scotians, we regard the high quality of their care. However, we know there are certainly inefficiencies in the system, well-documented by the Auditor General, that we think with little or no interruption to the system, much like we've done with the restructuring of health - we won't be using the Ontario model. We'll find a Nova Scotia solution and that's what we will have in place in 2016.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, Debbie is passionate about her patients and also about her role as a front-line worker. She has been supported and encouraged by her employer to advance her education and professional development. However, Debbie is worried about the next generation of home care workers and the amount of support they will receive.

When Ontario introduced a similar privatization model, it drove hard-working home care workers out of the industry. Now about 57 per cent of the home care workers leave the Ontario model of home care after just one year. Can the minister outline how privatization of home care services will attract and retain these much-needed workers?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we have the highest regard for those who deliver nursing at home, also the home support workers. We know that costs and quality can be part of the same coin and that's what we are working towards, as we do make some changes. We have no desire to copy or to emulate the Ontario model. I think we will have something very different when you consider that there are four million in Toronto alone to look after.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

TIR - NOVA STAR FUNDING: ACCOUNTABILITY WEBSITE - POSTING

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. According to a February 4th government press release, the government will post funding provided to the *Nova Star* ferry on its accountability website at the beginning of each month and I'll table that.

The government announced another \$2.1 million for the ferry but the accountability website only includes February and March while April's transaction is missing - I just tabled that.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, can Nova Scotians expect April's and the funding for future months to be posted on the accountability website so that Nova Scotians can easily find exactly how their tax dollars are being spent on the *Nova Star* ferry?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Thank you, member, for the question. My colleague, the Minister of Municipal Affairs has the accountability website under his department so we can follow-up with respect to what is posted there.

My understanding was that because of the transfer to Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, it would be posted on the TIR website and I do have the chronology of the Yarmouth ferry in totality. It's posted on our website now. I'll table this for the viewing of the House: April 9, 2015, Yarmouth ferry transferred to TIR; April 30, Nova Star must hit financial projections, which was the topic last week; May 1, 2015, \$2.1 million disbursed to Nova Star. I'll table that; it's on the TIR website on the Quick Link.

MR. LOHR: Thank you for the minister's answer. Mr. Speaker, the *Portland Press Herald* has reported that Nova Star ferry will leave Charleston, South Carolina, and will arrive in Yarmouth on May 15th before sailing for Portland and inspections by the U.S. Coast Guard. The *Press Herald* also reported that the ferry will take on a crew of 120 people.

Nova Scotia taxpayers have invested tens of millions of dollars into the service, far more than residents of any other jurisdiction. My question for the minister is this, of the 120-person crew of the ferry, how many are Nova Scotians?

MR. MACLELLAN: I also will reference that article. The article states that Nova Star Cruises also plans to buy more of its provisions such as fuel and food in Nova Scotia, rather than Portland, to fulfill a commitment to the provincial government. Dennis Bailey, spokesman for Nova Star says, "We are committed to buying all of our provisions in Nova Scotia, providing we can."

The point of that article and the point of this conversation is, with an investment of this importance for the people of Nova Scotia and the economy of our province, we're going to ask and request that every single dollar being spent in Nova Scotia, to circulate in our own economy and support this endeavour from our side of the arrangement, is done. That's something we'll follow up with. Of course, we'll bring that to Governor LePage in June when we travel there to meet with him. Every single part of this service that can be done in Nova Scotia should do so, and that's a point that we'll stress from here and all the way through this entire relationship.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: RFD BUDGET - CUTS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Health and Wellness. A few months ago the Minister of Health and Wellness wrote in his local column that Nova Scotians need to be responsible for their health. Just about everybody will agree with that principle. If the minister believes that Nova Scotians should

be responsible for their health and wellness, is it true that he cut the RFD budget virtually in half, when we know how important that this program is to all the rinks, ball fields, trail groups, and others across this province, and how those dollars help to leverage other dollars at the federal level and from other organizations throughout the country?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the member opposite is that that was written 17 months ago actually, not just a few months ago; it was 17 months. I'm pleased that Nova Scotians are responding to do quite a bit more to look after their health. I realize that government has to be very much part of that process and having facilities is indeed a big part of that. We know that the 99 projects that were proposed to government, some are in different stages of development; some don't even have their permits yet. We're actually looking at each and every one of them and still with a plan to get as many completed in this fiscal year as possible.

We're actually doing a review since there are some that are absolutely ready to go and they need to go forward this year.

MR. MACMASTER: Well, knowing how popular that program is I am really surprised the government targeted that. Not only that, they've also taken away the Healthy Living Tax Credit. The minister's own words go against his decision to cut funding to these programs. There are groups - Hike Nova Scotia, Recreation Facility Association of Nova Scotia, and Recreation Nova Scotia - that have all written to the minister and the government expressing their concern. Will the minister reconsider the decision to make these cuts to the RFD program, because they are the very programs that help Nova Scotians improve their health, and ultimately, isn't that what saving money in health care is all about?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that reminder that facilities are indeed part of improving the health of Nova Scotians. We're going to work within the larger health budget to get as many of those projects completed this year, but by everybody showing a little bit of strength and fiscal health right now, I look forward to the day when our government will be able to make real announcements on what the future can look like to improve health in Nova Scotia.

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

LAE: C.B. POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS - TUITION CAP REMOVAL

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. Thanks to the McNeil Government, post-secondary students attending Cape Breton University will see a tuition increase by more than 20 per cent over the next four years. Add to that a new technology fee and facility renewal fee, take away the \$50 million Graduate Retention Rebate, and what you get is a raw deal for Cape Breton University students. I would like to ask the minister, how does removing the tuition cap

and allowing fees to rise make life more affordable for Cape Breton post-secondary students?

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable member for the question. There is no doubt that any time students hear about a tuition increase it's difficult for them and I sympathize with their concerns. However, what I've been clear about over the last number of months is that in short order, a many million dollar gap, up to \$50 million, is going to open up between the money that universities receive and what they need to continue their operations. Like all institutions, Cape Breton University is working to handle that gap and this is how they have chosen to do it.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Well, a one-time lifting of the cap, morphed into a multi-year increase of tuition for Cape Breton University students. Cape Breton University also says it plans to cut 5 per cent to 10 per cent of its staff and faculty, which means more job losses for Islanders and likely fewer and shorter programs for students. This means more students will have to move away from the Island to complete their studies, which also adds to the cost of their education.

I would like to ask the minister, why is the McNeil Government allowing the cost of post-secondary education in Cape Breton to skyrocket and making it harder for post-secondary students in Cape Breton to get their education close to home and on the Island?

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I find it quite interesting that the honourable member would actually ask students to absorb an increase of over 20 per cent in one single year, because that's the logical extension of his argument - number one. Number two, remember - \$35 million in cuts to universities under that government, under the NDP. This is exactly what happens when the chickens come home to roost. They cut funding to universities and now they're saying, oh my gosh, I can't believe it - universities don't have enough money. Surprise! (Applause)

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

TIR - *MV MINER*: CONTRACTOR - OBSTACLES

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that my question could live up to the applause, but I'll give it my best shot. My question through you is for the Minister of TIR. As we know, the cleanup for the *MV Miner* and Scaterie Island was supposed to be completed by the end of April. We also know the deadline has just passed and there are still portions of the ship and the camp set up on Scaterie.

My question to the minister is, could the minister explain what were some of the obstacles the contractor faced which caused the deadline to be missed? Is the minister aware of the final cost of the cleanup?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I know the member has been to the Scaterie before. I think he can put together a list of what the challenges have been in the middle of the North Atlantic. It's a tough weather climate; it's very challenging terrain. I'll quickly say that R.J. MacIsaac of Antigonish did a world-class job on this project - incredible for the challenges that were out there, and I know the member appreciates that.

Obviously, the key date for us is the lobster season, which is mid-May. We're working with the local community and the local fishers who represent the industry to talk about what happens once the vessel is gone. It should be gone from the water. We'll scan the debris field in the next couple of weeks to make sure there's nothing left in the water, and then it becomes the logistics of moving by way of barge equipment, scrap metal, and machinery. The project is complicated, but we have a world-class organization that will get us there.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for that answer. He's right when he says the local community is really concerned about the lobster season. It's supposed to open up on May 15th to get the best lobsters of anywhere in Nova Scotia. The final phase of the cleanup, which will involve the use of a barge, is coming fast and the people are worried. I guess the biggest question on the minds of a lot of people in the community is pretty simple: are we going to be given any assurance that the barging of the final materials off the island will not affect the fishing season in Main-à-Dieu this year?

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member, all those who live in Main-à-Dieu and surrounding areas who are impacted by the fishery, and the community as a whole as it relates to the environment and the health and safety that from the beginning, we had stated - when we put this tender together, when we met with R.J. MacIsaac - the number-one priority was the fishing season and the fishing industry.

For us, as we get closer to that date, this will be about accommodating the fishery. They will drive the bus in terms of what decisions are made, what corridors and lanes are open to get from the Scaterie to the mainland.

At the end of the day, the focus is on the fishery. The other parts of it we'll figure out, but we're not going to impact that industry one iota. That's our focus and we'll keep that commitment to the people of Main-à-Dieu. Thank you.

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

BUS.: INTERNET SERV. - SOUTHWESTERN N.S.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I started this session off asking a question of the Minister of ERDT about Internet service in southwestern Nova Scotia; I now get to ask a question of the new Minister of Business on Internet service in Nova Scotia, more specifically in the southwest. We know the people through Woods

Harbour and East Pubnico areas into Cape Island have terrible Internet service and are asking for some help. I was wondering if the minister has been briefed on this issue and whether he can provide us with some insight.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I too have experienced similar circumstances in my constituency that my colleague has referenced. I've had some discussions in the department around Internet service and Internet service providers. We're taking steps as we speak to provide some clarity to that file, and at the first opportunity I will certainly share those outcomes with my colleague and all members of the Legislature.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: If I can provide any help on that one I'd be more than happy to do it, to get you to talk to the people in my constituency, and the constituency of Yarmouth, and I also think Queens-Shelburne, who are experiencing these problems of connection speeds of less than 1 megabit per second. They can't do the things that the rest of us can do with Internet service; they can't even do remittances, if you are a business trying to do some kind of e-commerce or you're trying to connect to even the government's own servers to try to remit things.

I think there's an opportunity here that the minister can be swift in trying to talk to the proponent, which is Eastlink Internet Service, to try to find a better way to provide Internet service. I hope the minister can get through his briefing book and provide some kind of assurance to the people of southwestern Nova Scotia.

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I can assure my colleague that this is topical, not only in my new role in the new Department of Business but one of the more frequent complaints that I receive in my community. I want to assure my colleague that it is top of the list for me, from a constituency perspective. At the first opportunity I will share our progress with all my colleagues in the Legislature.

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

PREM. - HR COMM.: CEO APPTS. - BUDGETS

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Since being elected, we've heard the McNeil Government repeatedly claim to be open and transparent with Nova Scotians. Yesterday, when this government had an opportunity, it used its majority to deny greater accountability for our agencies, boards and commissions.

I want to ask the Premier, can he tell us how many millions of taxpayers' dollars the CEOs he is appointing to government agencies are responsible for overseeing?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the honourable member is talking about. I know there has been a bill brought forward by her colleague that is before this

House, I believe it is heading towards Law Amendments Committee, but I'm not sure what the Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party is talking about.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the Premier. Yesterday I brought forward a resolution that would see the heads of ABCs when they are hired, the deputy ministers and the various business entities, come before the Human Resources Committee. Last year the Waterfront Development Corporation oversaw more than \$30 million in public funds; NSBI managed a portfolio of financial assets last year of \$110 million - these are not small sums of money.

Now, with this year's budget, the McNeil Government has moved the bulk of the responsibility for tourism, venture capital, and economic development to Crown Corporations. So I want the Premier to explain, why doesn't he think adopting greater public accountability for these agencies at the top is in the public interest?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we do believe it's in the public interest. The honourable member is intentionally clouding the water. She knows what she is referring to was brought forward. We didn't deny it, we just said we wouldn't give waiver. Is she afraid to have a debate on the conversation?

It's what we're talking about. We're not opposed to those agencies. Her colleague sitting next to her has a bill before this House that we are moving through. Hopefully it will get through Law Amendments Committee and come back to have another conversation about it. But to suggest that from doing a resolution in this House is absolutely unfair to this place, and it's unfair to Nova Scotians to continue to mislead it the way she was.

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

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Premier. There has been (Interruption) Actually, it's a good question.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll hear it tomorrow. The time allotted for Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers has expired.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think it's long been the tradition of this House that to accuse a member of intentionally clouding the issue is inappropriate and unparliamentary, and as well to say that a member is deliberately misleading the House. I would like you to look into those comments by the Premier and provide us with a ruling please.

MR. SPEAKER: I will take that under advisement and come back to the House.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 113.

Bill No. 113 - Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition Commission Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I move second reading of Bill No. 113, the Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition Commission Act. This bill is being put in place to make a fully accountable organization at the Provincial Exhibition in Truro. It's due to recommendations that were put forward by an internal audit we had of the facility over some time. I look forward to the debate here today to get the views of our honourable members across the floor so that we can move this very important bill forward. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise and say a few words about the Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition Commission Bill. I guess the first thing I would say is that I know that nearly a year ago, we were told there would be an audit forthcoming and we would receive quarterly information. We really waited most of the year to have that. I believe that audit is available now; I still have not yet seen it. I know that in the bill, it says that the Provincial Exhibition will give quarterly reports to the minister, and I think that's a good move. I hope that those quarterly reports will be in a more timely fashion than the quarterly reports that we have seen so far. We haven't seen them at all.

As far as the bill goes, I noticed in reading the Act that is repealed - I believe from 1996 - it stated very clearly that the new board could borrow. In this bill, if it's in here, it's a little bit more murky that the board can borrow. It's a little bit unclear. I hope the minister will address that and show me where in the bill it specifically states the new board will have the power to borrow.

That brings a question of the debts of the commission as it is now. I understand that it's about \$600,000. All of our members in the House hope, of course, that we will have a

very functioning, viable Provincial Exhibition. We realize how important that is to the Town of Truro and to the province and to agriculture in the province that the Provincial Exhibition do well. We're all certainly hoping that it will do well.

I recognize that primarily, the changes from the old Act to the new bill are in accountability to the minister and reporting to the minister. We like that. We think that is a good move that there is more accountability built into this bill than the previous Act.

The business plan and the model and whether the Provincial Exhibition will be successful in the future, of course, can't be determined in a bill before the House. That is the critical question. I do hope that this new board, going forward, will be able to achieve all of those things in its mandate to be more successful than the previous board was for whatever reason. I realize that the minister is building into the Act this accountability, which I believe is a good thing too.

I guess the other final comment I would make on that is there is a concern about - maybe this won't be an issue immediately - the succession of the board. I realize that in the bill, the makeup of the board is very clearly defined by the bill, but the succession of the board is up to the board. I probably would have liked to have seen a little bit more ministerial control in the selection and succession of new board members in that board simply because it's very easy - and I'm not saying this would happen, but it could happen - that a board member might select their friend to be on the board and in that way, in the future, the board member may not necessarily be the best representative possible.

I would have liked to have seen a little bit more ministerial control in the selection of that board, but other than that and those comments about our hopes for the commission, with those words I will take my seat. Thank you.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise to my feet today as well to talk about the bill respecting the Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition Commission. Being the MLA for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River, obviously I'm well aware of the history behind this bill. It goes back many, many generations, in fact. One of the very first things that was brought to my attention when I was the new MLA there, were problems that the community perceived with the way the board was behaving and the way things were being done at the Provincial Exhibition, and also on the grounds for the rest of the year when the Provincial Exhibition was not on.

I know there was a lot of discrepancy between the horse owners and horsemen and women and the farming community. There were many times where there were disagreements between board members who seemed to come to an impasse, who were unable to come to an agreement.

Finally I looked into the situation because people were saying that nobody knew where the money was going. There seemed to be a veil between where the money was going, what it was being spent on, who was getting the jobs that were needed for, for instance, the buying of the hay, the cleaning of the fields, the combing of the racetrack, when there were tickets that were being sold to different events where the money actually went, even ticket sales at the races where sometimes there were people who were putting money down and perhaps the money didn't end up going in the purse. These were all major questions. People wanted answers and they wanted something to be done.

As the MLA, I managed to do an amendment to the bill - I think it was our last year in government or just before - to try to break up the board and to make it more open for other members of the community to become members of that board. One of the problems that people saw was that the board members were themselves choosing other board members to replace themselves. Therefore, they felt it was self-defeating for anybody to try to get on the board because unless they were a friend or a colleague of somebody already on the board, it was impossible to get on it.

I'm not sure if the new bill actually is going to help with that since in fact it perpetuates that system. I think things have moved ahead in a very good way. I'm glad that the minister has stepped in and given an ultimatum and that the Farm Loan Board took the loan and said we're going to take this property until somebody who is more open and transparent can actually run the show.

The minister did put in place a small group of people that I know personally, one in particular, Mr. Bruce Kennedy, who is a very honest and ethical human being. In fact, some people had said that part of the reason why the rules were created the way they were along the way was to keep him out because he did have questions. At one point in time as a village commissioner for the Village of Bible Hill, he had ordered an audit that was then very quickly buried and disappeared and nobody ever really did find out what that audit said.

For many years he was asking for an audit. I'm glad to see that we are going to have the results from an audit very shortly. That particular piece of land is a large tract of land. It's right in the middle of Bible Hill, which is right between Bible Hill and Truro, so it's worth a lot of money. It's a very valuable piece of land and many things can be done with it. Of course, our horse racing industry, our harness racing industry, is still a viable piece of Truro-Bible Hill right now. It's a lot harder to make money doing that particular sport.

I know people don't go to the races as much as they used to in the 1950s and the 1960s, but as somebody who grew up in Australia, where horse racing is still very popular, I did get to go to the horse races every Saturday with my family. I remember getting dressed up and wearing little gloves and little hats and my mother always wearing a hat. I remember all the women dressing up and wearing fancy bonnets, and at intermission there was always

a beautiful dress-up where all these different women would go down the runway and show off all their hats, and people would be given a prize, and things like this.

I know that it can be successful, and I know that it can be fun. I think I've mentioned in this House before that when somebody is addicted to some kind of gaming, the fact of the matter is that the quicker they can get their kick, the better for them, which is why you see a lot of people with slot machines constantly pulling the lever of the slot machine and constantly putting money in. The fact of the matter is that when it comes to addictions, it doesn't really matter whether they win or lose. It's the anticipation. It sets off a chain reaction inside them, and it's a chemical reaction whereby they are constantly on edge and their adrenaline is pumping. So in a way, it doesn't matter whether they win or lose. They just want to constantly have this feeling.

Now in the horse racing industry, it's not quite like that. There's lots of time in between the races. There's lots of social time - people get to talk, people get to watch the horses walk by, you get to talk about the jockeys, you get to talk about the owners, there's a lot of information on the program, and they're beautiful. Horses are beautiful; they're beautiful creatures. For myself and my family, we find it very enjoyable to go to the horse races and have a table and watch. You don't have to spend a lot of money - \$2 for a bet, and you might make \$6 back, or sometimes you might make more.

It is part of our tradition, and that racetrack is very old. It's over 100 years old, and when there was a time when the former board was threatening to close it down overnight a few years ago - a couple of years ago now - it threw everybody into a panic. It threw the horse owners into a panic, and it threw the community into a panic, because all of those people who had spent their blood and guts and life and money on this industry suddenly were being told that they were useless and there was no use for them.

Many of those people don't have pensions. They have never done anything else in their lives. Many of them are in their 60s, and a lot of these jockeys and the trainers have never done anything else. It was really sad - and also for the farmers who give the hay, the saddle makers, and all of this.

At that time, I felt it was imperative for me as the MLA to jump out of the starting gate, as it were, and say no, not on my life, over my dead body will this happen. We started in motion a time where there was a timeout. We went public with it. We talked to all the newspapers and television programs, and between myself and the horsemen and -women, we said, look, we want more time, we need to buy more time. We wanted the board to back off and give them time to try to come up with a solution.

This was when I was able to put my amendment into action, and we bought some time. So it is still there: the horse races are still going on, the people are still living their lives, and we still have our provincial exhibition every year.

I commend the Minister of Agriculture for helping us to continue what we started. I believe in the community, and I believe in the people who are involved at the helm of it, and the people who are now prepared to put their own personal money into making this a viable and exciting place. If they can't do it, nobody can. The best thing we can do is give them the chance to try. Thank you, and with that I'll take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my two colleagues for their comments. I agree with the comments they made. It appears that we are going to appoint the board the way we used to. There is a caveat down further in the bill that whoever is the minister of the day can dismiss the board, so we have effective control over the board if the board does decide to do what they did before - hire friends, relatives who aren't qualified. We are also going to really tighten down on the regulations around that and other things that we have, to make sure that doesn't happen again.

We're very concerned about this. This is an extremely important asset to the province and to the local community, as has already been indicated, and we know that. I think it's a lifestyle for many people and I think that lifestyle needs to be preserved. I think that's part of our history and culture in the province and anything to change that I think would be a step backward.

I look forward for this bill to move through the process and give us enough time to get a proper board appointed and set the criteria down. As well through the bill, we'll put other things in regulation to make sure we have that control and indeed, at the same time, allow the board to do their business and make sure the operation is profitable, long term, so we can take that profit that we get and turn it back into the facility to improve the ever-aging buildings there.

So with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 113.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 113. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Minister of Environment on an introduction.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, we often recognize people in the Legislature, so I'd like to direct the members' attention to the east gallery. There we have

a member of the public, a former executive director in the Department of Environment, Darlene Fenton, recently retired. I don't know if that was because of her minister or not, but she's here today observing the proceedings. I will ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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. 89.

Bill No. 89 - Boat Harbour Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Internal Services.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 89, the Boat Harbour Act be now read for a third time and do pass.

I would like to thank all those who spoke at the Law Amendments Committee on April 27th. Representing Northern Pulp were Terri Fraser and John Roberts; from the Clean the Mill group, David Gunning and Stirling MacLean. Chief Andrea Paul spoke on behalf of Pictou Landing's First Nations, and the Band's lawyer, Brian Hebert spoke as a private citizen.

At the bill briefing, Chief Paul spoke emotionally and eloquently about the impact that Boat Harbour has had on her community. The Chief has only known Boat Harbour as a holding place for toxic chemicals emanating from the paper mill. The Elders remember a different Boat Harbour, where the community hunted and fished and lived in peace with nature. Chief Paul committed to having the treatment plant closed and Boat Harbour restored within the lifetime of the Elders. Sadly, five of those Elders have passed on in the last year.

Previous governments talked about closing down the treatment facility; by all accounts it was supposed to be closed long before now, but those governments failed to take action necessary to make that happen. By enshrining January 31, 2020 into law, we are taking the first concrete action to close Boat Harbour and to make it a place that the community can once again enjoy.

This bill is about closing the Boat Harbour Effluent Treatment Plant, it is not about what the mill will do with its wastewater after that closure. That will be determined in discussions with the mill. Terri Fraser said that Northern Pulp has a long-term commitment to be part of the county's and the province's economy. Finding a better way to deal with the mill's effluent is an important part of that long-term commitment.

I look forward to closing remarks from other members today.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to this bill. This is a bill that we support; we've said we support this bill. We've also raised concerns over the process, the lack of consultations, and I've tried to stress to the government the importance of establishing a timeline to show that they understand that closing Boat Harbour really does involve more than just turning off one valve and opening another one.

The minister spoke of the history of broken promises here and we don't want this to be another broken promise; we want this bill to succeed. We absolutely all want that, but that's going to require a thoughtful plan and it's going to require a thoughtful process to make sure that that happens.

We tried to present an opportunity to address some of the concerns. We tried to present an opportunity to enhance the bill and the government decided that that wasn't necessary at that time, so with all due respect from the Opposition side, we have to respect that.

I do support this bill. I sincerely hope this bill succeeds and I will do my part to make sure it does. With those few words I'll take my seat, thank you.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: I, too, am pleased to rise on Bill No. 89. I think we've heard from everyone involved that this is definitely an issue that is very sensitive on all sides. I hope as the government moves forward and this piece of legislation passes that the government reminds themselves of that and that it is a very sensitive issue that needs to ensure that consultation and open dialog happens every step of the way.

The last things we need, Mr. Speaker, is any kind of secrecy or the inability for organizations, groups, individuals who are affected by Boat Harbour to feel that they are not part of the process as this moves forward. As my colleague said, I think we all want to see the day when Boat Harbour is cleaned up and that the affected areas are no longer an issue for the community and for the province.

There have been a lot of people who have worked extremely hard over the last number of years to get to this point and I do want to wish the government all the success as they move forward with this and we'll continue to play our part in a role in ensuring that that voices of everyone, no matter what side of the argument they are on, are heard and that everybody is treated how they should be, with respect. We are supportive of Bill No. 89 and we look forward to the implementation of what is contained within this piece of legislation.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: As I stood in my place before to speak about this bill, I made it quite clear that I'm very, very pleased and thrilled and support this bill.

We all know that this glorious area in Pictou County was once an estuary where it was of vital importance to the Mi'kmaq people. We know that those individuals, the Elders from Pictou Landing, at one time would dip baskets into the water there and would collect, would pull the baskets out and it would be filled with smelts, and trout, and it was a source of life and food and of medicine and of play for them, even for the people beyond those borders. I remember my grandparents often going over there and telling me stories how they would go over and have picnics. Any time anyone would come and visit them they would go over there.

It was a crown jewel, it once was a crown jewel in the once bustling tourist trade along the North Shore. In 1925 it was shortlisted to be a national park.

Mr. Speaker, we are very excited this is going to go through. I do want to point out that I am concerned about how we will get to 2020 without a plan. I only raise this because we all know that we have witnessed what took place with regard to the Sydney tar ponds. I think that was Canada's biggest environmental disaster, and we have seen how it finally came to a resolve, but it actually took three attempts and hundreds of millions of dollars extra. In short, the closure and remediation of Boat Harbour is going to require a clear plan. It will have to have a clear plan that will define roles and responsibilities of all project partners, and implementing the necessary procedures to see it come to fruition.

I know the minister speaks of last week, stated that this is - let's just focus on the bill and knowing that this is just the step forward to cleaning Boat Harbour, and I totally agree. I just hope that there will be a plan put in place and that we will also hear what those plans are and the roles and responsibilities involved, so we can take comfort and reassurance in going back to our constituents and letting them know that there is a plan in place, that yes, it is going to be cleaned up, closed in 2020 and yes, all stakeholders involved, from Northern Pulp to anyone involved in seeing this happen, are just consulted with.

Boat Harbour was once Pictou County's ocean playground and it welcomed people from all over the world to embrace its beauty. I just want to let the minister know, and his government and those involved, that I look forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure this ocean playground is brought back as close to its original state as possible, so we can all enjoy it once again. Thank you so much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity once again to say a few words on Bill No. 89, the Boat Harbour Act. It was mentioned before that the status quo is certainly not acceptable. I'm going to thank the minister for taking charge of this, and I wish him all the success.

It's a very complicated procedure, Mr. Speaker, it's a monumental task to tackle, and again I'm pleased that the government is tackling this issue. I hope that the government has the experts available to do this, a plan and process in place, or at least they are working on it as we speak, just to make sure that everything works out for all the people involved.

So saying those few words, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my place.

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

The honourable Minister of Internal Services.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, just some closing comments, and I'd like to table a quote from Dave Gunning and the Clean the Mill group.

"We would like to offer our sincere congratulations for Bill No. 89, The Boat Harbour Act. The issue is receiving more and more attention each day, with three documentaries currently in the works, a lot of public awareness and many groups following every step closely. This Government will be remembered well for making the first positive and proactive steps in 48 years. Now we need all government officials and all parties to stand up and be held accountable for the protection of the Health and Wellness of the people of Pictou County. Again, thank you, Dave Gunning of the Clean the Mill group."

Mr. Speaker, it's evident that we're all on the same page in this House in terms of cleaning up the mill. Just to add some clarification, the future of Northern Pulp is Northern Pulp's decision, not this government's. Northern Pulp will have to make decisions in terms of what its future investment will be as a corporate citizen in the Province of Nova Scotia. Where we have a role to play is that we will have discussions with the mill when they approach us, and in those discussions we will look at what their investment is for a new

waste water treatment facility plan and how we will partner with them to ensure their longevity in the province. Again, that will be up to the mill to decide.

One thing I can state is the closing of the Boat Harbour effluent treatment facility happens in January 2020. This is four and a half years away from today. That gives us, and the mill, a lot of time to put a new waste water treatment facility in place. If the mill was not operating by chance we would be cleaning up the Boat Harbour area in a much sooner time frame than four and a half years.

Our government made a commitment on June 2014 to shut down the flow of effluent treatment into Boat Harbour and that was approximately one year ago, and I'm happy this bill addresses that commitment we made to Pictou First Nation lands. With that I close debate on Bill No. 89.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 89. 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. 100.

Bill No. 100 - Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my honourable colleague, the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, I move that Bill No. 100 be now read a third time and do pass.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak for a few moments on this bill.

We have mixed views on what the government is trying to accomplish here. The bill really has three main parts: one addresses the accountability of our universities for the over \$300 million they receive from the taxpayers every year, and of course we're in favour of driving more accountability through the system; it has a big section on the revitalization plan, and I will talk about that in a moment - we have growing concerns about what the

government is attempting to do there; and then there is the third section on outcome agreements that the government foresees, and I do want to say a few words on that.

Mr. Speaker, the accountability section of the bill basically provides that universities must have common reporting standards, I mean financial reporting standards. They must report their results in a common format to the Department of Labour and Advanced Education and so on. It's such common sense and so much work has been done over the years on various memoranda of understanding to get to a common reporting platform that I can't help but point out that although we agree with that objective in the bill which is improved accountability, it really doesn't require an Act of the Legislature.

The minister has it within her power, and her department already has it within their jurisdiction to require standardized reporting from our universities. In fact, I can't really see why we've come this far with 12 years of multi-year memoranda of understanding with our universities and at this point suddenly discover that there should be standardized financial reporting - and the reason is that the MOUs have already required it. The university CFOs over the years did a lot of work on building a standardized reporting format for our universities to report the results to the government. In other words, all of that is already there.

For the government to present the accountability section of this bill as something new when all that's needed to make that happen is already in place makes us wonder if this is more about appearing to do something as opposed to actually doing something. After a year and a half in government we should be well past the point where anyone would be satisfied that the government just wants to look like they're taking action when, in fact, they're not taking any action that's new or different.

I am pretty sure that when the Ivany report was presented it said, be bold, it did not mean just look to be bold, just bring in bills that do things that are already in place anyway. That's not bold at all - it's the opposite.

With regard to the bulk of the bill, which is the revitalization plan, we've already expressed concerns in this Chamber that that massive section of the bill will actually never get triggered. The government has washed its hands of actually overseeing our universities anyway by leaving it up to the sole discretion of the boards of governors of our universities to decide totally on their own if they want to trigger a revitalization plan or not. Common sense tells us that they would be very reluctant to do that knowing the effect it would have on future enrolment, either from their current student body or from prospective students who are looking to go to a Nova Scotia university, or even by alumni and donors who support financially our universities. For a board of governors to put up their hands and say, we're in real trouble, would have a devastating impact on their revenue base that comes from the tuition that their students pay and on their donor base that they rely on their alumni for.

The government may want to look like they are giving universities a tool, but for the government itself to wash its hands of oversight of our universities and provide a tool that will rarely, if ever, be used is not actually increasing the accountability of our universities.

Again, this bill contains some pretty serious labour provisions, both for the faculty associations and other collectively organized groups in our universities and for the management of our universities. Quite frankly, we have lost all faith in the government to actually legislate in this area. We saw the actions that they wanted to take with our health authorities and they got stopped in their tracks when it turned out that they were legislating in an area that was beyond their power to legislate. They actually had to completely rewrite their Health labour bill and bring it back in a much-reduced form.

Here we go again. The government says that they have the authority to make the labour changes in this bill that they brought forward, just like they said it with the Health labour bill, but we can no longer take them at their word that that is the case. We've learned from experience with the debate over their health labour changes that they don't know what they're doing, that when they say they have legislative authority that sometimes they don't. At a year and a half in, we're well past the point where the government should know what it's doing in this area, and they don't know what they're doing here.

If our experience with the Health bill was not bad enough, the government, on its own, brought to the Law Amendments Committee - on the very first day, in the very first minutes of the Law Amendments Committee meeting - 24 amendments of their own, mostly in this area itself, to their own bill. Now with the Health bill, they actually forced it through, and then when it didn't work because it wasn't appropriate, they had to bring in a second bill that actually repealed most of the first bill. It was a do-over; it was a mulligan; it was a complete rewrite.

That was bad enough, considering the expense in legal fees, consulting fees, and arbitrator's fees that it caused, but now the mulligan is actually being called before the bill even gets to this point in the Legislature. Within a week of introducing Bill No. 100, the government had already called a mulligan with 24 amendments to their own bill.

I know that mulligan is a golf term. It usually implies that you've taken a shot and you need to take it over, or you wish to. Now we have a whole new definition of Liberal mulligans in this House where they called a mulligan before they even get to the first tee, because this bill hasn't even become law yet and they've already called a mulligan with 24 amendments within the first minutes of the Law Amendments part of the bill process.

The fact of the matter is that the appropriate . . .

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Is this your mulligan, Jamie? Your do-over?

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my eyesight is good but I can't quite read the fine print that being held up on the other side. But I can tell you something, what happens when (Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

MR. BAILLIE: I know that truth is painful for the Government House Leader, but I would like to continue with my point. I hope for his sake that he's a better golfer than he is a legislator because for all the mulligans that he has called in this House, he would have to be a pretty bad golfer indeed if he had the same record on the golf course.

Here's what should happen. Here's what should happen when a government brings in a bill that they realize within days is a bad bill: they should withdraw it. They should withdraw it instead of trying to patch it up on the fly, particularly a bill that involves \$300 million of taxpayer money. Instead, they are forcing this bill along with 24 Band-Aids taped all over it and that is no way to make law in this Chamber. I can tell you even now, when we've asked to see an amended copy of the bill so we can assure ourselves that the amendments do what they say, it's not possible to be produced. I hope that for the Nova Scotians who are watching, they realize what a mess has been now made of this bill by the government itself.

Just a few more comments on the last section of the bill, on outcome agreements that the government foresees with our universities. It basically enables the government to direct our universities to develop and deliver programs that are consistent with our province's economic needs and our labour force needs. Now, on the surface, there is no problem with that. Again, I say for a government that already provides over \$300 million for our universities, it is hard to believe they don't already have the ability to influence where the universities go with all the tax dollars that they get.

Of course, to tell universities that they have to follow the government's plan for economic growth implies the government actually has a plan for economic growth and what we know in this case is the government has no plan. They had a chance with their budget which raises a lot of taxes and fees - in fact, 1,400 of them - and cut some of our most needy programs, some small little cuts with big social impact, but nothing to actually create the conditions for economic growth and new jobs.

How can a government say we want to give ourselves the power to make sure that you are following our economic plan when they have no economic plan to begin with? That is a concern that we have. I know that there are others who came to this House, who asked some pretty good questions about the principle of academic freedom and whether the government would tell our universities which courses to offer and which courses not to offer. Instead of dictating those things, why not work with them on ensuring that our universities are pointed in the direction that we need Nova Scotia to go. That's not what

this bill says. What started out, on the surface, as a bill that we looked at and thought well, we agree on increased accountability and we want to see our universities working to the betterment of Nova Scotia economically and socially, has turned into another mess by this government.

For those reasons we have growing concerns about this bill and this government's ability to even legislate appropriately in these areas and so with those remarks on the record I will now take my place and thank you very much.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity to rise in my place and speak on this bill, Bill No. 100, an Act Respecting Accountability and Sustainability of Universities. I want to start by saying that probably the only thing that I like about this bill is the title. I like the title. I like the idea of an Act respecting accountability and sustainability, but this bill has very little to do with improved accountability and sustainability in our university sector.

I have to say, I've been in this House for a while. I've seen some really fine pieces of legislation come through this House of Assembly over the years, I've seen some kind of mediocre kind of bills come through, and I've seen the occasional piece of really bad legislation. Mr. Speaker, this has to be, in my view, probably the worst piece of legislation I've ever seen come forward in this Legislature. Now that's something, I suppose, to have put on you. (Interruptions) I hear the member for Halifax Atlantic. He apparently loves this piece of legislation, but I bet you that a lot of people in his constituency will not love this legislation.

This bill is a flawed bill. It was flawed when it was introduced, it was flawed when it was amended by the government members on the Law Amendments Committee, and it, no doubt, will be flawed when it passes through this House of Assembly because the majority McNeil Government will use their big majority to pass a piece of legislation that is bad legislation and that is flawed, flawed, flawed, and that will do nothing to improve the accountability of our universities or their sustainability. I'm very, very concerned about this legislation.

Now, I've talked in here before about this - one of the nice things about living in a democracy like we have is that even when the government has a big, honking majority, they don't get all of the power. One of the things that they don't get is they don't get to keep people from speaking truth to power around the things that the government is doing. We saw a lot of people come over in the Red Room to the Law Amendments Committee to do just that - to talk about this bill and to talk about the problems with this bill.

One of the things that I took great note of was who came, but also who didn't come. We did not hear from one university president or from one chair of a board of governors

for any of the universities that supposedly are going to be made more accountable and more sustainable as a result of this bill. I'm troubled by that. I'm very troubled by that.

I think here we have a bill about greater accountability and sustainability, and the members of this Legislature had no opportunity to speak to and hear from the very people who will be required to trigger the provisions of this bill to put universities on a path to restructuring, for example, potential merging, the revitalization - I think they call it - plans, and we have no idea under what circumstances the boards of governors or the university presidents envision using these extraordinary powers in this bill.

I ask myself, Mr. Speaker, why is that? Why didn't we hear from many of these people? Did they not know about Bill No. 100? Did they know about it, but they don't really care about Bill No. 100? Do they have no opinion on Bill No. 100? I really don't know because they didn't come. It's ironic isn't it? It's an accountability bill for universities in terms of how they are managed, how they're operated, how they make known their financial and other circumstances to the government that funds them. Yet this group of people were completely absent from the process of making this bill into legislation. It's peculiar to say the least; very peculiar. I don't know what to make of this.

As Nova Scotians we put about \$370 million annually into our universities - and I notice the minister of post-secondary education talked today about the reason why they're doing tuition increases to students. She said that tuition increases for students, for example, was because the universities have this terrible financial problem that developed under the NDP Government who cut funding to the universities. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to correct the record around that. The former government signed an MOU with the universities that saw a decrease in their funding over a three-year period of approximately \$35 million, I think, or maybe \$40 . . .

HON. DIANA WHALEN: That sounds right.

MS. MACDONALD: I hear the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board saying it sounds right. Then besides that MOU, a \$25 million innovation fund was put on the table for the universities to have access to, in order to offset that reduction in the MOU. But guess what, Mr. Speaker? There were very few innovative ideas that were brought forward from the university sector.

MS. WHALEN: That's true.

MS. MACDONALD: And the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board says that's true. It was a big shock to me sitting at the Cabinet Table, I have to tell you. Here we have a sector that we perceive to be on the cutting edge of any of the sectors that we have - and it needs to be - and that didn't happen. I think there were a couple of projects that ultimately did get the \$25 million, it was expended.

I have empathy for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. We have a problem in the financial sustainability of this sector. I don't think there is a member in this House who isn't aware of that. There have been multiple studies and all you have to do is go look at the Public Accounts. I don't know if people realize that this sector, in terms of funding, grew at a faster rate than the health care sector in the years previous to the Dexter Government. There has been a lot of money invested in this sector, with very little accountability and very little change. I recognize the pressures on that government because those were pressures that were faced by governments of both of the Parties on this side in the House.

Absolutely, the status quo is not an option. Something needs to be done, but with all due respect, Bill No. 100 is not what needs to be done. Bill No. 100, as I said in second reading, does not hold accountable the senior administration in the university sector; it simply does not. What it does is it passes the responsibility on to the cleaning staff, to the electricians, to the library assistants, to the instructors, to the TAs, to the clerical and administration people in the payroll department and the HR department.

What this bill does is it takes away the hard-earned rights of those workers to bargain with the senior administration and the boards of governors for fair wages and fair working conditions. It tips the balance in collective bargaining towards the employers and the administrators and the senior managers and the presidents of the universities and all of the vice-presidents - and there are lots of them; they have grown exponentially in the last number of years. This bill tackles none of that.

There are universities that are facing financial challenges because previous boards and previous senior administrations have made really bad decisions, and now the government is going to permit a process that will make the average person in those universities pay the price for those bad decisions. It doesn't seem fair, but then this is a government that has no sense of fairness, we see that.

We see that with the way they have taken the grants to community groups and small organizations like the Alzheimer's Society and the Eating Disorder Support Group and the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Association for Community Living. You know, chump change, \$11,000 reductions in people's budgets, but for those organizations it's very significant money and big impacts.

We look at other provisions of this bill beyond the provisions that erode the collective bargaining rights of the people who work in these institutions. People like to think that the people who work in these institutions are kind of like fat-cat professors. I heard a CBC call-in show on Sunday where somebody talked about how they could go on the website and they could look and see what university faculty made, and they were saying that people were making six-figure salaries.

This is true for many of our academic institutions. Look at Dalhousie, for example the medical school - all of the doctors, the specialties that teach at the medical school, those folks are making - as they should, if we're going to be competitive. These are people who teach our next generation of physicians. They are people who are conducting active research programs for new drugs, new treatments, and all kinds of things to prevent and intervene with disease.

Additionally, you have people who have to carry some administrative burdens inside those programs. Again, if you look at Dalhousie, they have a lot of the so-called professional schools: dentistry, law, medicine - all of the faculty of health professions - and social work, which I'm proud to have been associated with for quite a long number of years. But you can go outside Dalhousie and look at faculties across the province, and some of the cutting-edge research that faculty members are doing. Cape Breton University has some of the finest researchers in North America - and in fact, probably internationally - around the whole question of child poverty. St. F.X. has extraordinary research going on, and Acadia - it's a competitive world.

The salaries for these folks have to reflect bringing people and keeping people in our universities, to make sure that we have strong research programs, that we have strong teaching programs, and that we have people who are publishing and contributing to our knowledge. We're a knowledge-based society now. Knowledge is a commodity. The people who work in these areas need to have their pay and benefits reflect that.

But for every academic, for every faculty member in one of these institutions, there are probably three or four non-academic, non-faculty jobs. They are the people who take care of the physical plant, people who do the daily cleaning and, beyond the daily cleaning, do all the maintenance, the electrical, the plumbing - all of the work that needs to be done to keep facilities that are heavily, heavily used in a good state of repair.

This is a piece of legislation that takes those folks - it's not the faculty rights that are being suspended. It's everyone. It's the people who clean the carpets, who clean the washrooms. I can assure you that these people are not high-wage workers. Their wages and benefits would probably surprise people here, because they're quite modest. They're nowhere close to what the senior administration are earning in these settings.

This is a bill that definitely tramples their rights. Not only are those provisions that allow a university to suspend collective bargaining when they're going into a financial revitalization, it's something that management has in their back pocket at any stage in collective bargaining, revitalization or not, it's ultimately the threat that this government has given.

There's another part of this bill that I haven't spoken to that has been brought to my attention by people who work in the university sector, and that is the slippery slope of this government's intrusion into setting priorities for teaching research and other focuses

in the academic setting. People are very concerned that the people who set the research agenda are the people who are the trained experts.

I have to say the more I looked at these provisions in the bill, the more I started to think of our federal government and the problems that the Harper Government has created for the scientific community, in terms of scientific research. We have seen scientists in some of our national research centres and some of our centres of research excellence across the country actually protest. I mean it's a group of people who you never see man a picket line, but they have in the last number of years, from time to time, for the very reason that the federal government has engaged in a kind of battle for control over what science is pursued and is seen to be legitimate. There are provisions in this bill that do precisely the same thing.

Academic researchers are really concerned about that, and the puny little amendments that the government brought forward on the particular provision were hardly worth it. I went through this bill line by line with the government's amendments and I want to tell you about this amendment that the government brought into the bill and what it says.

The government's amendment says that in preparing a revitalization plan that meets the requirements of Subsection (1), a university may consider academic freedom of the university and faculty - may - a university may consider. That's pretty shocking - they may. That provision should say: a university shall consider academic freedom. Government has no business telling universities what to research.

Now a smart government would have program incentives that would support particular kinds of research. You want to do research into cancer and you want to specifically do it into prostate cancer, then let's work with the academic community and say, this is a priority for government and we're going to make some funds available to people who research in that area. We've seen this, we've seen it with MS not so long ago. Government wanted research done around liberation therapy and the medical community were essentially saying, umm, that's not really a priority for us in the MS research community. We've been going in this direction for a long time and we think that's more promising.

So government set up a research program. They didn't impose it, they didn't entrench it in a piece of legislation, they didn't say if you are in financial difficulty and you are going to do a revitalization plan, we're going to kind of suspend academic freedom and part of that revitalization plan might be the government telling the university that your research programs now are going to reflect the following kinds of research. That's what this bill does - it gives that potential and that capacity.

Now somebody would say a government would never do that - then don't put it in the bill. If these are provisions that you have no intention of ever using, don't put them in the bill - they shouldn't be here; they should be removed from this bill.

This bill is flawed from beginning to end, after the title. It's a lovely title, but it's a bill that as soon as you get into the provisions of this bill, this bill is flawed. And they are not just minor flaws, they are significant and serious flaws that go to the heart of how a university should function. They do not in any way, shape, or form hold senior administration accountable. They make people who haven't the power to make the decisions around the financial sustainability of an institution, the ones who are responsible and who will bear the brunt of those decisions, and they set up a process that would allow the government to intrude into areas of academic freedom that are simply unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, those are the comments I have on this bill. I'm sure we will hear more about this bill in the coming weeks and months. Thank you.

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

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, again it's a pleasure to rise to speak a little bit on Bill No. 100, the Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act.

You know, accountability is something that affects all Nova Scotians in all aspects of our life. All businesses are held accountable, all families are held accountable, and there's no reason that universities shouldn't be held accountable as well.

When we talk of accountability we want to make sure that the money is there for our children to learn, to grow and to represent each of the universities in each of the areas in a way that when they come out of school they move forward with their life and they make sure that our province continues to be on the map when it comes to universities.

Mr. Speaker, we spend a huge amount of money on our university system. That's money that I think is well spent, but we have to make sure that the result at the end of the day is a labour force, a workforce, a research group, that can do what's needed to keep our province moving forward.

The significant cost growth we've seen with our universities in the last number of years is a concern to all Nova Scotians, not just us in this Chamber. I've had numerous calls over the last little while about reining in the spending of universities. That's partially true that we should rein in spending, but if we're going to continue to grow and offer the programs to make this province move forward, we have to make sure that we're spending that money wisely and make sure that money is spent on training that will allow our young people to stay here in the province to contribute to our economy.

It's important that we also consider how the cost growth of universities is passed on to our students. We know that over the last little while, we've had some changes to the Financial Measures (2015) Bill that will allow universities a one-shot deal to take the cap off their tuition. We've heard CBU, for example, plans on raising their tuition rates by over 20 per cent over the next four years.

When I heard a one-time cap off the tuition, I thought next year would be 5 per cent, 3 per cent, 10 per cent, whatever, but could only happen next year. I've been told since then that as long as the plan is put in place for over the next number of years, that can happen. CBU is planning on 5 per cent in each of the next four years. That is a one-time cap, but it's kind of deceiving.

When we talk about taxpayer investment, we have to realize that people are concerned about how their money is spent, so accountability is a good thing. In this bill, it says that the universities are all going to do a reporting system. We don't know what's in the reporting system yet. We hope that in that reporting system, it's financially, it's what programs that we are able to see are working, what programs we see are not working, so that we can fine-tune each of those programs to make sure that the education an individual is getting is an education that is going to be useful to them when they hit the public life, the private sector, or whatever they go to work in.

We want to make sure we see the details of this bill. We see the details in the accountability. If it's open and transparent, then we will know that. Ultimately, the minister has the say in what goes into this type of bill and what goes into this type of legislation. But in the old Universities Assistance Act, the minister also had the authority to prescribe the terms and conditions upon which a grant may be made. This really doesn't change much of that; it puts it in a different context.

When we looked at this bill at first, it looked like a good bill, but after looking at it for a little while, looking at some other parts of it and hearing from individuals, maybe not that much so. We have within our democratic system a Law Amendments Committee where people who will be affected by this bill can come in and express their concerns. We as Opposition Parties can express our concerns, but in a majority government, we know that they can pass this bill without having us on side. The Law Amendments Committee allows the people who are affected by this, people who are taxpayers, to come in and voice their concerns. They can hear from more than just the Opposition Parties to see what they feel about a specific piece of legislation.

What did we hear? We heard this is probably not a great bill. We heard questions about who would be involved in the revitalization process. We heard about court challenges in other jurisdictions. The concerns we hear we would like to see addressed before this bill becomes law.

The concern we have is an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed revitalization plans on students. Nowhere in the bill does it say what the makeup of the committee would be when a university gets to that revitalization process. Will it include students? Will it include professors? Will it include funding people? Will it include donors to the universities?

We heard of this; we heard it loud and clear. And before the bill was even debated in the Law Amendments Committee, we had a bunch of amendments brought forward. We've heard from people that this legislation, as presented, was an attack on some of the labour rights, an attack on workers' rights. We also heard that it was going to affect the academic freedom of a university. We want to make sure that universities can provide the education that is necessary for our province to move forward.

We have a great education system, Primary to Grade 12 education system that prepares people to go to university. We have a great university system, I think its 10 universities in our province that provide first-class, quality education. I was fortunate to be the recipient of one of those educations that allowed me to stay in this province and to work here and be a productive member of society. We want to make sure that the universities have the freedom to offer these types of programs so that when necessary the education for an individual as needed in this province will be there.

We also heard talk of court challenges in other jurisdictions in the country, challenges that when we spoke on a Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal bill in the Fall, they wouldn't put part of this stuff in a Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal bill because it may not stand up to a court challenge - and we hear the same thing about this bill, but we're going ahead with it anyway. We hear concerns from labour that it can take away some of their rights and freedoms. I'm not comfortable to hear this may cause some great unrest within our university system, especially if it may not stand up to a court challenge.

When we hear this stuff I'd like to see the government step back, listen to the concerns, and make sure that when this bill is presented it is strong, it is clear, and it is a bill that will allow just what it is proposed to do, for universities to be accountable for the education they provide and with the money that they spend that the taxpayers put into the university system.

The bill is a fairly large bill, a fairly long bill, but most of the bill is all about the revitalization process. I asked the question in a bill briefing: Is this bill put forward to try to get some of the universities to merge so that we can decrease the number of universities and maybe have less which would hopefully then, which I think would probably cost less, but where is that freedom? Where is that ability of universities to provide the programs that they are famous for? Saint Mary's is famous for business programs; Dalhousie is famous for medical programs and Kings College is famous for its journalism programs. If those universities are merged because of sometimes financial instability, where does that autonomy go - do they lose that, is it gobbled up in some of the larger universities if that becomes a problem?

They say that the legislation is intended to help the universities identify signs of financial trouble before the problems get too big. Well, I'm hoping that those problems would be there long before it got to a revitalization process that the government could work

with the universities to try and change the path, to see if it can be headed off at the pass, I guess, so to say, so that this stuff could be nipped in the bud to make sure the university doesn't get to that stage. The bill itself, three-quarters of the bill is about the revitalization process, almost like it's an undetermined fact that a university is going to get to that stage. We're told this is a piece of legislation, this part of the legislation is never going to be used or hopefully will never be used - so why is it such a large part of the bill and not the accountability part? We haven't seen what they are going to have to be accountable for. Is it salaries at the universities? Is it tuition that the students pay? Is it accountability of senior administration? I'm hoping that when the reporting comes in, that's what it's reporting on.

That's where people believe that there may be some hidden agenda on labour rights. I've heard from professors and from some people outside this province that that challenge, when it came through, was just designed to do that. My concern with the bill is to make sure it's presented in a way that it's workable, it's good for the students, it's good for the staff, it's good for the universities, and it's also good for the taxpayer.

We have great potential in this province. We have bright students, bright individuals, individuals who are going to be future leaders in our province, individuals who may sit in this very Chamber to decide the future of their children and the children after them. We want to make sure that when a bill like this comes forward, it's presented in a manner that makes sure accountability is number one, that the money that's spent on our universities is to educate our brightest, and to make sure that we can move forward as a group so that our province strives and we can put people in this province to work with an education that is quality - we know it's there.

We want to make sure that that doesn't deteriorate because of financial pressure. There are too many variables here; there are too many things we don't know. I hope that the government will step back, that they will listen, over the summer, to what people are having to say to make sure that we present this bill in a manner that's good for the province, good for the universities and that's great for our students. With that Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I won't say I'm glad to be standing up trying to debate Bill No. 100 because I'm not. I won't mince any words here - I think this piece of legislation is clearly flawed and it needs to be scrapped. It needs to have the government recognize the implications of such a bill. Often through the process of debates on legislation, you have the government introduce a piece of legislation and you then have the Opposition Parties speak on it and often try to bring out some of the negative things with the legislation and they debate against it and they vote against it. To be very clear, we do not support Bill No. 100 and we will be voting against it.

We have seen more than just the Opposition Parties being vocal on Bill No. 100. We have seen from a group of individuals and associations, many - and I believe I may have said this in second reading - many of these groups that I don't recall in the history that I've been in this Legislature that we hear from often, maybe one of them, maybe two of them, but not all of them.

We're hearing from the Dalhousie Faculty Association; we're hearing from the Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers; we're hearing from CUPE, of course, that represents some of the workers in the university system; we've heard from the Canadian Association of University Teachers, or CAUT. Many of those groups I had to become familiar with because as Labour and Advanced Education Critic, new to that portfolio, many of these groups haven't had much interaction when it comes to legislation, over the almost 12 years since I've been here.

When I start to see groups come forward that I haven't heard from, I pay attention and I listen and I try to gauge what their concerns are. As MLAs, as elected officials, as a caucus, that's what we base our decisions on - how we move forward with either supporting or not supporting a piece of legislation. I have to say that with Bill No. 100, we're hearing from these groups and we're hearing the implications and the issues that I think will rear their heads if and when this bill passes and then if the revitalization mechanism or plan is triggered in one of our institutions here in Nova Scotia.

There are a number of institutions that are finding it challenging financially, and we understand that completely, but bringing in legislation that handcuffs or limits the ability of everyone who may be affected by a university that is going through financial troubles is a negative thing. What I mean is that this legislation, if passed, really gives the power, the control, to the administration of the college or of the university, who might be the reason why they are in financial difficulties - I'm not saying 100 per cent, but most likely the decisions they make have created the environment where they may find themselves in financial difficulties.

What will happen is they will have the control of trying to come up with a revitalization plan that would hopefully support the continuation of that university and the ability for them to continue to educate young people of all ages. The key people in these universities who should be at the table, especially in times of financial crisis or the need for a revitalization plan, are those teachers, those professors, those support workers who work every single day and are very proud of the institutions that they work under and work in.

When you meet someone who is from Acadia, they are very proud to be from Acadia. If they are from Dalhousie or Saint Mary's or any of the degree-granting institutions, they are very proud of being from that university or that institution. We know the X-ring is prominently displayed around the globe. Even here in the Legislature, we see

it shine from time to time, Mr. Speaker, because people are proud to come from that university.

So are the workers, the part-time instructors, the professors, and the people who come to our province to go to these institutions. They are proud to go to those institutions. I think they should be part of any revitalization plan that that institution may have to take because of financial difficulties. That's one reason why I think this is clearly flawed legislation, and the need to scrap it - let's look at something different as we move forward.

The second indicator, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that when Bill No. 100 passed through the process of the introduction and second reading and went to the Law Amendments Committee, prior to the number of presenters who were registered - and I think they started calling the day, or maybe the second day, that this piece of legislation was introduced, to ask when they could get on a list to present at the Law Amendments Committee. Before that even started, the government came forward with a stack of amendments. More than 20 amendments were brought to the committee before a presenter even presented their issue. It's not that anybody is against amendments - I think that's how you improve legislation - but it's the manner in which those amendments were delivered. No consultation, not with the Opposition, not with those who are affected by it. We heard that was a theme and a constant theme from some of the presenters.

I have to say, some of them - they made sure the committee had a copy of their presentation. One of those was David Robinson, who submitted his written response. He's the executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers. In his fourth paragraph, he described why he felt Bill No. 100 was something that he could not, and his association could not, support.

I'll table this after my speech - I know it's been tabled, but I'll table it later on. He indicated that the CAUT is disappointed that Bill No. 100 was introduced without any consultation with the academic staff association in Nova Scotia. One quote from Mr. Robinson's submission:

The quick introduction and rapid passage of this bill, including the limited and last-minute opportunities to appear at committee and make representations, are undemocratic.

That should be concerning. Here we have a group of individuals - or an executive director who represents a number of individuals - who are university teachers who are educating our young people, who are educated themselves, who understand the process that goes through the Legislature with a bill. When they talk about the fact that they're very disappointed on the lack of consultation and the fact that they feel this passage and the introduction of this bill was done quite quickly, the government should be concerned with that. Nova Scotians should be concerned with that.

I've said this on a number of pieces of legislation, that when government gets themselves in trouble is when they do not do the consultation. I know that fully. It's an important component as a minister. When your department pitches an idea or pitches a piece of legislation to you as minister, and then you of course pitch that to your Cabinet and to your caucus that this is an avenue we must go down, these are changes that we need to bring forward - and I'm not sure exactly how the process worked. Was it the staff within the Department of Labour and Advanced Education who brought this forward to the minister or was it the minister who brought it to her staff, or did the caucus or the other Cabinet Ministers or Treasury Board or the Party itself think about this legislation before it being introduced, that this is what they wanted to see happen.

The most important component when you go through that process - and I know for myself, being a former minister, that when proposed legislation came to me and I read through it and they were looking for my approval, one of the first things I asked was, what kind of consultation did you do? I understand completely that you cannot consult with every single person who might be implicated, but you would think an association that oversees and supports university teachers might be a group of people you should consult with.

Maybe they could have been able to give some guidance to the government at the time that would have allowed the government to bring forward Bill No. 100 in a form that would have been acceptable to the hundreds, if not thousands, of representatives that the CAUT represent, or that the hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals that CUPE represents or the hundreds - I don't know if they are into the thousands at Dalhousie facility, it might be over 1,000 (Interruption) 900 individuals, faculty members, or the hundreds if not thousands of workers who fall under the Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers. If they had done that consultation, maybe Bill No. 100 wouldn't be in the position it is now, having Opposition members, a number of us, stand up and say we can't support this legislation, the government should think of redoing it.

I hear from across the way that we can support it but we won't support it. I can guarantee you on that and don't put any wagers on me changing my vote on this. I don't think I'm going to support this and I think I have the support of my caucus.

My point was, Madam Speaker, the fact that when you make a substantial change to policy or a piece of legislation - and Bill No. 100 is substantial and there are a number of reasons why and I'll get into that in a few minutes, I mean the effects of that are going to be felt by thousands of Nova Scotians, many of whom work directly with the universities across our province.

My criticism of the government is that there is a process that should take place, that the consultation should have happened in an appropriate manner, I believe. It's not just me saying that, as I said, Mr. Robinson from CAUT had mentioned that, and I know a number of presenters indicated the same thing.

I understand fully that the government has a majority but I don't feel that that allows the majority to circumvent a legislative process that is meant and is here to hopefully allow for legislation to go through the process, to come out at the end in the very best possible way. So if changes are needed, they should happen. If amendments are needed, they should happen but they should happen in a way that allows it for input.

To have almost two dozen amendments dropped on the desks of two of our members at Law Amendments Committee - for the presenters who were ready to present, they had no clue what they were. There was no real explanation on the pages that we saw, and I saw them, and often you do need to explain what the amendments mean because sometimes it's just a change in clause or change in a word or a number or a letter that really has an effect on what the actual intent of the bill is.

I feel it's not the appropriate way to get a piece of legislation through this House, by just saying - you know what? We have a majority. This bill is going to pass. The government can take two roads now: they can maybe listen to not only the Opposition but many, many other presenters and say whoa, let's just back off here. Let's do a little bit more consultation. They can leave this piece of legislation on the books until the next session and clearly get that engagement happening that should have taken place before it was introduced, which we know didn't. Maybe then I could support a piece of legislation that might change, might look different, might be a better piece of legislation at the end of our process that we go through every time a piece of legislation is tabled in this House.

I think everybody would agree that having the universities be accountable to Nova Scotians and to government - but more importantly to Nova Scotians, the taxpayers - is completely supported by all Parties. They receive hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers every single year and I think there should be a level of accountability there. I'm 100 per cent supportive of that idea.

In this piece of legislation it goes far beyond just saying there is accountability that's going to happen. It goes against, I think, the rights of many of those thousands of people I talked about. I think people forget that there are thousands of people employed in our universities across the province, and that's direct jobs. Think about the indirect jobs with all of the students who rent apartments, who buy groceries, who go to the movies, who once in a while maybe go to a restaurant or drinking establishment. There are a lot of people who rely on the - I think we're at 10 degree-granting institutions in our province from one end of this province to the other . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Eleven.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Eleven, maybe. Eleven.

So there are thousands, if not tens of thousands of people who rely on our system that we have and the ability for the nearly 60,000 students who come to Nova Scotia for

post-secondary education - 60,000. Not all of them are Nova Scotians, many of them come from outside. Think of the impact that those 60,000 people have with the wallet and the money they bring to get educated here. So it goes far beyond just the staff and the people who work to provide the care.

The other area and the other group of people who also made comments at the Law Amendments Committee, who felt that they were not consulted, were the students themselves. That pride I talked about of people who wear the X-ring - I don't think for one minute that if they were asked how can they help the alumni if they found themselves in financial difficulties that they wouldn't be willing to be at the table somewhere and make suggestions and help the faculty and the administration change that course, and hopefully allow for the university to continue. You don't just need the X-ring, you just need to have someone who has gone to one of these institutions here in our province - and they're around the globe - I think would be willing to help out.

I don't think any of us here want to see our university system and our universities fail here in Nova Scotia. We have a great reputation around the world about our universities and I think the ability to be able to give a good education, here, in Nova Scotia, follows those students wherever they go and wherever they end up in life. We know a huge number of students are international students now, so it's not just a thing where we're trying to attract people from P.E.I., New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and across the country, we have international students.

I remember reading in *The Chronicle Herald* - I think it was last week - about a young entrepreneur at CBU. An international student who opened up a café at CBU, I believe, and is being educated there, but not only is he getting an education, he brought his wife with him and they just recently had a newborn. Now he started not only one business with the café, but he also has another business that helps international students find accommodations, apartments and that for when they come to Sydney and go to CBU.

So I think the opportunity to hold universities accountable should be there and should be supported, but when we get into the sections like Clause 8 and further, where it really goes after, I think, the rights of the workers and those who support delivering that education, it also forgets about the students who could also be part of that. They were here just as much as those who might be a professor, a teacher, or support staff in the universities.

It's not the first time I talked about the rights of workers here in the province. We know under Bill 1, that was a draconian-type of legislation that would have never - and I'm confident in saying this - stood up with a Charter challenge. That's again not just me saying that as an Opposition member. It's the Supreme Court of Canada stating the fact that jurisdictions - provinces, territories - cannot impose restrictions and take away the rights of workers in their jurisdiction. I don't have it with me right here, but it was a five-to-two decision that recognized the rights of workers in our country. The jurisdiction lost the

ability to allow for a draconian piece of legislation that passed their House. I believe one was from the Province of Saskatchewan.

Bill No. 1 was very similar. Through the process of the Legislature and of course Mr. Dorsey, the arbitrator, being appointed, it became very clear to government - wait a minute, we need to stop. We need to re-evaluate. We need to scrap Bill No. 1. Well, the sections in Bill No. 100 are eerily similar to what we saw in Bill No. 1. It directly attacks the rights of those who have organized, for one, at the university, but those who are working there, who are proud to be working there, who are proud to be part of that institution - Bill No. 100 rips their rights away.

We have a proud history in Nova Scotia of ensuring that rights for workers are enshrined in legislation. We've had workers in our province who have ultimately paid the ultimate sacrifice with their lives fighting for those rights. We're in a position today because of those people and because of individuals recognizing the importance of having rights in our province and in our country.

I have to say with Bill No. 100, I don't have the confidence the minister has. I know that she's been on media and through a direct question from myself that she did consult with lawyers and that Bill No. 100 is okay and we're going to go forward. I don't have that confidence in the government's position on that. I foresee the organizations, unfortunately, that are going to be impacted by this if it's passed having to go down the road that we've already seen across our country, that we've already had a decision on. It's going to happen with Bill No. 100. I know that that is not what I would like to see. I don't think it's what the government would like to see.

I think the role of government is to protect the rights that Nova Scotians have. When we see bills like Bill No. 1 and the other ones that followed, and then Bill No. 100, I think the government forgot what the role is. They lost their way, I think. I know, out of the thousands of people whom I described from the CAUT, from CUPE, from the Dal faculty, from ANSUT - some of those thousands of people supported the government and allowed the government to have the privilege and honour to be governing in our province.

I have to say, I'm sure they're questioning that right now. It's eerily similar to those in the film industry, the thousands who - some of them also helped the government get to the position they're in and now they're questioning that. We heard it in Law Amendments Committee. That's just not me saying this; we heard it in Law Amendments Committee on a number of occasions that they regretted it.

What the government is going to have to do - the Cabinet, they're a strong component - I was in Cabinet - you have to have a strong team, you have to stick together to make good decisions. But you have other members of the government who are not in Cabinet and they themselves will also have to be accountable, just as Cabinet. After this bill passes to those thousands of people who maybe marked off one of their names on a

ballot in the last election, you have to remind yourself of that every time you vote for something, every time you introduce something, and every time you propose something on the floor of this Legislature, we're accountable to the people who put us here and not one person is more important than any other.

It's interesting, I recall my Leader - and I use this often now - that during an election, every single person in this province has the equal ability to vote someone in. It doesn't matter if I'm a millionaire, I only have one vote. It doesn't matter if I'm less fortunate and I'm in a minimum wage job, I have one vote. You can't forget that. I hope that if the government continues on this path that those thousands of people get engaged and realize and recognize that they can make a difference down the road.

There are serious issues about Bill No. 100, and of course one is it forbids the signing of a new collective agreement and it takes away the right to strike if the university decides to restructure and it undermines a university's academic autonomy. We've heard that over and over again. These individuals who may impact the finances of a university could be called upon to try to fix that. I would think if a university is going through a restructuring plan and they're able to show that the finances of that university are in trouble, that's when you would want to be able to go to the bargaining table. That's when you would want to engage with what is the biggest component - well, it is in government so I would assume it's in universities too - which is wages and benefits. With this we see the potential that that will not happen.

I mentioned it earlier about the possibility of a legal challenge to this, and the unfortunate thing is if you look at the last number of them that happened across Canada, it doesn't happen overnight. This is a long, drawn-out process and it keeps a certain level of uncertainty with that organization, and for Bill No. 100 I'll use an example of a university.

We need to be competitive here in Nova Scotia, our universities. We're competing to get those 60,000 individuals every year to come to our universities to be educated. I perceive that if this cloud of uncertainty happens with a court challenge, for example, that maybe a student will make a decision to go somewhere else. There is a heck of a lot of choices out there. Having a daughter who is just about to enter Grade 12 and has come home with a stack of pamphlets from different universities, we're competing - not only just in the province but over the jurisdiction. I don't want my daughter leaving the province. I don't know if I'll have a say in it, but I guess it depends on how much money she wants me to help her with.

I am concerned that we are in a very competitive market worldwide. I don't have the numbers in front of me, but I know the international student number has continued to increase over the last number of years and I know the universities have turned to the international students to help with some of the financial challenges they have with running the universities.

My fear is if there is this long, drawn-out legal challenge that may take place, it might be easier for someone to move and look somewhere else to get their education. That's not what we want. We need those 60,000 students to come to Nova Scotia, to be educated, hopefully put down roots here and stay here. We know the issue of out-migration and the draw of the West over the last number of years on our young people, especially our educated young people.

We need to keep them here. Nobody argues that and I think that it's even in the Ivany report that we need to attract individuals. We need to attract new immigrants and as I indicated earlier that young gentleman who opened up a business in CBU has indicated that he's looking to be a permanent resident here and he wants his family to stay here and he loves Cape Breton. It was quoted right there in *The Chronicle Herald*.

I think with Bill No. 100 those opportunities may be less into the future if there's an uncertainty out there amongst our universities and the challenges there. Again, I know it has been called upon by a few members, I think it's time that the government recognizes this, puts the brakes on, does the proper consultation, brings back meaningful amendments that won't be looked upon as not improving the legislation by many, many people.

As I said, you don't have to take my word for it, I hope that the government members - and they can go back and review some of the submissions, because not all members are sitting in the Law Amendments Committee. There are eight members in the chair at a time, so only eight of us in this Chamber, at a time, were able to listen to the submissions and the presentations. I know some people stand behind and listen but they're not there the whole time. Legally, I guess maybe, is it legally? I don't know. The rules state there should only be nine people at the table from our caucuses.

There are periods when members miss a good point that was raised by one of the presenters and I encourage members to go back like I have, to read through submissions like from David Robinson from CAUT who talks at length, and hits so many good points, and was respectful in doing so. He came to the committee, presented his remarks, was available for questions, and then moved on.

I hope government members across the way realize that just because you weren't sitting in the room at the time, there was a lot of information and a lot of concerns that were expressed through the process of Law Amendments and I hope that the government members know that and look at maybe pulling this back and bringing it back in a better form.

Ultimately that is really what should happen. A piece of legislation comes to the floor, there are suggestions made from Opposition, from the general public. We have a process that allows the public to come into this historic Chamber, the oldest Legislature in the country, to give advice, to support a piece of legislation or not support it, make an amendment or suggest an amendment.

What I don't recall are too many presenters that said this is bang on; this is the best piece of legislation that the government brought forward and giddy-up and let's get this through and get it done. I didn't hear that and I read through many of the presentations. I received an update from our caucus members on that committee and we did not hear that. I don't even know if there were any presenters that spoke in favour of this. That should tell you something. It should tell the government something.

You have a major piece of legislation that deals with accountability, and accountability for hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' dollars, and not one person comes to the Law Amendments Committee and says A-okay, a good job, this is good, this is exactly what we need. That concerns me because I've been here a long time and people tend to come on both sides of the argument, but that's pretty rare these days - it's going to go the way of the dodo bird, I guess, when it comes to individuals supporting legislation.

Did the government think that maybe they should get some people out to talk on this who support it? I don't know if they sent out an email or a tweet or anything like that that says listen, we're getting hit hard on Bill No. 100, there's a lot of opposition to it, and we need people who want to stand up for this, who support this, to come to Law Amendments Committee. I didn't see that happen, Madam Speaker, and that's unfortunate.

I hope that, in closing now - I know they want more speakers - that the government reconsiders this and really evaluates if this is the best piece of legislation to deal with accountability that the government could bring forward and pass, Madam Speaker. So with those few words, I thank you for your time.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill No. 100. This is an important bill; we all know how important our universities are to us as Nova Scotians, to us as a province. In many ways it's how we identify ourselves, the quality of our post-secondary institutions, so this is a very important bill.

I'm going to take a few minutes today and speak to a few concerns I have about this bill and about how those concerns might unfold over time. I was struck by a gentleman at Law Amendments Committee, Pierre Stevens was his name. He talked about the fact that you wouldn't have a law that said no speeding and then not identify the speed limit. If you are going to identify a law and say you can't speed then you should necessarily say what the speed limit should be.

It was an interesting point he made and he made it in the context of the definition of a significant operating deficiency. This is an important definition in this bill because it's really the crux of the whole bill; it's really what this bill is all about. This bill in many ways is about accountability and in many ways it's about longevity and all of that kind of gets triggered or hinges on the definition of the significant operating deficiency.

Mr. Stevens pointed out some problems with the definition in this bill as it stands before us today. He said quite simply that the definition is too loose. You know, when you look at the definition I tend to agree with him for a number of reasons. In the language of the bill as it stands here, significant operating deficiency is one that can reasonably be expected to threaten the ability of the university to continue as a going concern under the existing financial framework.

There are a couple of tests in there: Is it a significant annual operating deficit; or is there a pattern of operating deficits over a five-year period? It all comes back to, do you have a significant operating deficiency or not? The test, Madam Speaker, in this bill is, is it a situation that can reasonably be expected to threaten the ability of the university to continue?

With that in mind, if you think about how our universities are financed, and we have a situation here where the government provides a significant amount of the funding to the universities. Well, what happens when the government makes a decision to decrease that funding? The government could itself trigger significant operating deficiencies just by a decision made on the floor of this Chamber. You come into a bit of a circle there, but when you look at the framework for a crisis - again, that was Pierre Stevens's word, I think. I don't want to quote him out of context, but I think he was talking about - the framework for a crisis actually exists within this bill.

There was somebody else, another presenter, Bruce Greenfield - he said that this is the type of bill that is an "invitation to mismanagement". Why would he say that? I believe he was saying that because if you get into a significant operating deficiency, it triggers some elements of this bill. Specifically, it triggers this revitalization plan.

In looking at the revitalization plan - so if you have a significant operating deficiency, then you trigger this university revitalization plan - I'm looking at Clause 12 here and elements of, what must the revitalization plan include? Well, the revitalization plan must include "goals and objectives for . . . turning research into business opportunities . . ." It must include "a plan for the effective exchange of knowledge and innovation with the private sector . . ." So when you get into a significant operating deficiency, you're kind of giving up your intellectual property objectives or the freedom of intellectual property, and that's something we should be very careful of.

Debbie Martin made a point at Law Amendments Committee to this which was obviously something that I hadn't considered. She does a lot of research on Aboriginal communities and that's her kind of field of expertise. She asked the committee, could I think of any type of Aboriginal research that the private sector would be really interested in? Would there be any type of Aboriginal research that a university would seek to turn into a business opportunity? Obviously, the purpose of those questions was to highlight the point that that's research that probably wouldn't be done. It's necessary research that's part

of our culture and part of our communities that's being done now, but it just wouldn't be done.

Those are the types of risks that we can fall into when we start to go down the path of determining the purpose of a university or what a university should be doing. These are risks when we say that the government of the day - whatever day that happens to be, whatever government that happens to be - is going to dictate the terms of the revitalization plan in terms of making sure that the universities are doing things that meet that government's objectives. That's a dangerous thing particularly when you consider that it can be triggered by the government itself to begin with. That's a concern of mine with this bill.

Somebody might say, well, is it reasonable? Is it possible that that may happen? Is it reasonable that we may have a university that triggers a revitalization plan because they had a significant operating deficiency? Would they do that? Could the government do that? Could it happen?

Just in Question Period today, the point was hit home to me that it is very reasonable and it could happen. The minister referred to in Question Period today that in short order a many-million-dollar gap, up to \$50 million, is going to open up between the money that the universities receive and what they need to continue their operations.

When you think about that statement, that a many-million-dollar gap could open up in short order, up to \$50 million - that's a pretty significant amount of money. To me, that sounds like if that were to come true, if that \$50-million gap did open up, then we're going to have the risk of some significant operating deficiencies. With that in mind, we should shine a light strongly and brightly on the revitalization plan and make sure we're happy with how that might unfold, with what might happen to our universities.

That's a concern that I have. There is great potential in universities creating quality research, and I don't think anybody in this Chamber wants to see that potential diminished. That's a potential we want to reach. I don't know that there's a role for government to be reaching into that system and dictating where that research should be going. I think that's something that's better left to minds more creative than many of the members in this Chamber.

Those are my concerns with this bill, and with those concerns stated, it would be my suggestion that this bill be tabled and some consultation take place over the summer months to see if we can make this bill better. There is a lot of room for improvement in this bill, and I think that's an effort that's worthwhile. I would encourage the government to do that, to table this bill, to go talk to the people and make it better.

With those concerns stated and with those few words, I will take my seat.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to also rise to say a few words about Bill No. 100. It's very clear that universities are extraordinarily important to our province, and as my colleague was speaking, I wondered about the economic impact.

Clearly the government, we as a province put money into the universities, and I wonder about the economic impact of that money. When you think about all the students who come to our province from other parts of Canada, and international students, the money spent in the province, I wonder about the direct economic impact of even the large amounts of money that I know we put into the university system as a government.

I would suspect we get a tremendous amount of economic benefit out of that, not to mention the benefit to the lives of students of the education, and that sort of improvement in what could be called human capital in our province, the benefit of that interaction with the international students who come to Nova Scotia - and some stay, and I know that is a renewed focus. The Ivany report suggested that, and I know Ray Ivany has said that, suggesting that we need to do a much better job of getting international students to stay here.

The impact of the universities on the communities they are in - I know I can say that if you were to go to Wolfville, where Acadia University is housed - which I am most familiar with - in the middle of the summer, Wolfville is a very quiet little town, but then around September 10th it sure is a different place. The economic impact of that university is huge in the community of Wolfville and, I would suggest, in the Annapolis Valley.

For those reasons, anything to do with the universities is extraordinarily important. I know much has been said about the fact that we clearly have more universities than we need in the province, but I would say that is just a tremendously good, fortunate position to be in, that we have these institutions that draw in students from other parts of the country and the world and benefit our province so much.

I believe we need healthy, thriving universities that can continue to have their identity and continue to do all the great things that they do, engage students and provide all the training and learning that they do. I hope that is really, at the end of the day, the goal of everybody in this House, that we see these universities thrive and prosper.

Clearly we live in a time when one of the great challenges for the universities is the demographics of our country. We have a declining - and this is a challenge, of course, for our educational system at every level. I understand in the educational system in the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board that every year we graduate about one or two classes of students - 60 or 80 students - more than come in in Primary. So every year there is a declining need for the infrastructure that is already in place.

It presents tremendous challenges and I know that has been a factor in the university funding scenario, the declining demographics. Obviously the way the universities have gotten around that is to become very good at getting international students in, so it's an important part of the question.

This idea of revitalization of the university through this bill - there are a few things that trouble me about it. As you may realize, universities have what is called a bicameral system of government, and that means they have a senate and a board of governors. This bill is really directed at the board of governors, and the senate is not mentioned in the bill at all. I really question that.

If you go to the website for Acadia University, if you go to the website for Dalhousie University and you type in Dalhousie University Senate, you will find a very large website outlining all the activities of that senate. If you go to the Acadia University Senate, again you'll find a very large website outlining all the activities of that senate. You can do the same for the board of governors, you can find the activities of the board of governors.

The universities have this sort of dual form of government where the board of governors deals with the financial aspects of the university and the senate deals with the educational questions and maybe would deal with professors' tenure, all sorts of things, you can easily see it. But the senate isn't in this document and maybe when the document was written, the idea was that the unionized professors are primarily running that senate, maybe it was felt that it was captured in that way.

I think if that's the case that it's a big mistake and I think the senate is a clear player in this, certainly in the restructuring of the university. If this bill is triggered by a university and there is going to be restructuring, the senate needs to be actively involved and is clearly part of that university community and it's clearly very missing in this document, in this bill.

Another group that is very clearly missing in the bill is the alumni. It's easy to think, well, the alumni are out of the university and they no longer have a role to play, but I think the universities would tell you different. The universities themselves are very active in engaging their alumni. They are a key funder for the universities. Obviously the alumni of a university have a very important role to play in the university through the donations they make and their goodwill and their interest in the university, and in a huge number of cases sending their own children to those universities again.

The alumni are not mentioned in here at all either. I don't think it's as significant as the senate being missing, but I do believe it is significant that the alumni are missing. So who I see in this document are the unions themselves and the students. I think it misses a significant part of university life that those two other groups are not present in the revitalization plan and miss tremendous resources that are there for the university to draw

on those two other groups to do a revitalization plan. In that sense I think this document is very lacking.

I really question the significant operating deficiency in Clause 2. It says, “a significant annual operating deficit or significant cash flow deficiency in at least one year during the five-year period . . .” So one year of an operating deficiency will allow the university to trigger this restructuring and it seems a fairly low standard. I know my colleagues have questioned whether a university would do so. Clearly it would send a very negative signal to the world at large, but in reality, it is a very low bar to cross, to have one year of an operating deficit for a university to trigger this restructuring.

Clearly, it is sort of meant to be - we can see it as possibly simply a tool in the bargaining process as my colleagues to the left have said. And so I question that low standard there, for just a one-year deficit will trigger this. I think that’s too low a standard for this type of huge restructuring of the university and opening up the whole thing. I think that’s just way too low a standard. It needs to be more significant than a one-year deficit. There are lots of ways that a one-year deficit can be triggered. Even if you want to - I know in a business sense, a one-year deficit can be triggered fairly easily on a farm. I suspect it’s the case in universities too. You just incur some unusual costs, and you’ve got a one-year deficit and there you are. You can trigger this. I would question that.

I know my colleague talked about the fact that the revitalization plan was talking about the difference between pure and applied science, the idea that the university’s efforts would be directed towards business. I can tell you that in my business life, in fact, we’ve had very successful partnerships with two different universities that were very key for our business life. The universities, in reality, do that now. For our Farmer John’s Herbs business, we had a very key interaction with Dalhousie University - the Canadian Institute of Fisheries Technology - which was really kind of foundational to building our business in a quality manner with quality recipes and quality products. It was very good for me.

On the other hand, the idea that a university would not be able to engage in pure science is really kind of - I really question that. I know, looking through Law Amendments Committee, one of the presentations that I read was an example where a U.S. professor at a university wanted to do a study on a checklist for operating room procedures. It was a million-dollar study and he couldn’t get any companies to fund it because there was no way to monetize a checklist.

But in fact, they did do the study and did produce a checklist, and now it’s used all over the United States and presumably Canada. If you have surgery, there would have been a checklist of things and it has apparently saved absolutely billions of dollars because it reduces infections. Just by doing that little bit of pure science which no company wanted, a certain university in the United States was able to save our health care system across North America billions of dollars, and certainly individuals who were undergoing surgery immensely less grief or infections post-surgery.

The idea that the restructuring would dictate that the university was going to solely focus on business study, even though I can tell you in my own business life, it has been enormously beneficial, it's clear that a lot of things in our world are due to a pure science more so than applied science. I would question that part of this bill.

I want to sort of recapitulate. I don't want to say too many words about it, but I think that it's important for us to realize how important these universities are to our economy. I think that in the province, it's important to realize how important the university's identity and reputation are to the university. You may realize that universities will spend a fair bit on sports programs. A university that is able to win a national championship in football, basketball, hockey, or whatever sport, the prestige associated with that is considered to be worth the expense simply because the reputation of the university is enhanced.

More students will maybe come to the advertising and more students will apply to go to the university - and enrolment is such a key factor in the university business cycle that these things are super important and for that reason for a university to engage in this financial restructuring, the liability they would incur to their reputation is such that I question whether they would - I'm sure that they would not do it lightly, but on the other hand it is important for us to realize how important the reputations of these universities are to successfully attracting students.

Clearly there is a partnership in the province between government and universities. It enormously benefits our province in many ways. I'm sure that if we were really to look at it, much like the film industry, we might discover that every dollar going into the university is generating x number of dollars into the general economy, very valuable.

I think that part of this issue with the universities and not being sustainable is the funding formulas and I would just wonder to what extent we need to look at that. I know that we are in a very tight budget era, and money is tight everywhere, but I do believe the universities are a good investment of our money, so I would like to make that point.

Also to recapitulate I think that it is such a terrific investment for us to invest in the lives of young people and I think that we are on the cusp of figuring out how to really keep these university students who want to stay here, here. There is a lot of talk about that and my guess is, my hope is, in the next three or four years we are going to figure out how to do that and I hope we do. We need successful, healthy, dynamic universities that are free to engage in the kinds of study that are both pure and applied studies.

I believe this bill should be amended to include the senate of the universities. I think the revitalization plan should be amended to recognize the general basic governance level, governance of a university that's bicameral governance of board of governors and of senate. I think that the alumni need to be a partner, if there is going to be a restructuring

plan, the alumni deserve to be a partner in that, to have an active role. I think that in any case they do anyway; often alumni are on the board of governors.

The alumni as an association has a key role in the finance of the university and to do anything that would hurt that relationship of the alumni to the university would be detrimental to the university. I think that they are a key factor.

With those few words, Madam Speaker, I would take my seat. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: It's my pleasure to stand and speak to this one for a few moments. It wasn't my intention to speak but I just wanted to add my voice to the speakers today, because quite honestly I did have the opportunity, a number of days ago when this did come before Law Amendments Committee, to sit and listen, to listen attentively to those presenters.

Madam Speaker, what I found was a lot of questions, a lot of uncertainty in regard to this bill. It almost feels in a way that we were a little bit duped on this one when we were fully explained the scope of the bill, exactly what it was supposed to be, what it was supposed to do, and how it was going to be doing it, because when you look at the accountability side of things, I mean we can certainly agree with government that anything to do with accountability is a good thing.

We need to be able to understand what's happening in our university system so that they can truly respond to requests from government and that government, who represents the taxpayers, is able to understand where those dollars and cents are going.

So the accountability side of things is extremely important and taxpayers expect the government to know how universities and the provincial institutions are spending the money and as the minister said in her press release, accountability should not be left to chance, it is disturbing that the government feels a law is necessary, Madam Speaker, to make them accountable for the responsibilities they already have.

We find that the majority of this bill gives government powers that it already possesses, so it's more of a restatement of power than it is of creating new legislation to create better accountability.

Again, we see government taking a second chance on things, taking their mulligan because of legislation they failed to consult and do their homework on in the first place. What we heard from the Law Amendments Committee process which, of course, is a process that is open to anyone to come make presentations, we heard there wasn't any consultation with professors, other employees of the university system, and therefore there's a lot of uncertainty in what some of these clauses and actions actually meant.

Unfortunately, this is the case with this bill, the government brought more than 20 amendments to this bill just a few days after it was introduced - 20 amendments. I mean some of them are sequential amendments, but, again, bringing a bill in, fixing it and hoping that no one is going to notice that there's a huge change in the intent of the bill. Quite honestly, it would be very difficult for us to understand what the full intent of even the changes are because of the way the process here works sometimes that we can't actually get a full bill redone in such a short period of time.

So that shows to me that the bill wasn't well thought out in the beginning, to have amendments from government on their own bill so quickly after it was introduced is always a troubling indicator of a bad bill. Now the government wants to sort of run this bill through quickly, even though they know there is probably some more consultation to be done. I would think that they would be having some second thoughts that maybe they should be holding it up a little bit and doing a little more consultation - and why not?

The Minister of Community Services has a bill before this House in second reading right now, Bill No. 112, The Children and Family Services Act. When it was introduced she rightly said we were going to consult over the summer and debate it in the Fall. Well why can't we just let this one sit here while the minister goes out and does some more consultation to make sure that we're all comfortable with the bill as it goes forward. But I don't think that we're going to be doing that, we sort of have to accept it for face value that you know, of course, the bill is everything that they want it to be.

The other thing that I did find troubling, and I know the member for Halifax Needham brought this up as well, is that with all the presentations that we did receive on Bill No. 100, there was not one university president, there was not one representative of a board of governors, of which there are a whole bunch of members of the boards of governors of our universities, of the huge number of universities that we do have in this province.

I would say that this bill would need six more months of study and maybe come back in the Fall and talk about it again. The minister should take the summer, just like her seatmate, the Minister of Community Services is doing on her bill, to do the homework and to bring a well-vetted bill back to the House in the Fall. My full congratulations to the Minister of Community Services that she is going in the right direction, but in Labour and Advanced Education, maybe not so much.

With those short words, I move that Bill No. 100 be amended by deleting the words after the word "that" and substituting the following: Therefore Bill No. 100, the Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act, be not now read for a third time, but that the order be discharged and the bill be recommitted to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills for the purpose of reconsidering Clause 5 to Clause 18.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is a motion for an amendment to Bill No. 100.

[5:30 p.m. The House recessed.]

[5:35 p.m. The House reconvened.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The motion is in order and the motion is that Bill No. 100 be amended by deleting all the words after the word “that” and substituting the following:

Therefore, Bill No. 100, the Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act, be not now read a third time but that the order be discharged and the bill be recommitted to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills for the purpose of reconsidering Clause 5 to Clause 18.

We will now commence debate on the motion to recommit the bill.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the reason for the recommitment is probably the uncertainty that is surrounding this bill on the side of the students, on the side of the university, on the side of the labour portion of the bill. When you have so many people come through the Law Amendments Committee to talk about the problems and concerns with a bill, I think it's a good reason to step back and hear what has to be said about it, to have a deeper consultation.

We know that the Minister of Community Services introduced a bill that we thought was a good bill, but she's going to take the time over the summer to consult with people. Not that we think that that should be the way it's done - we think it should be consulted on first and then done. But the fact is that she's doing that to make sure she gets that bill right - a very important bill, Mr. Speaker.

We think that this bill in front of us, Bill No. 100, should have the same procedure done to it, so that when it comes back in the Fall, all concerns, all problems with the bill - perceived or real - will be addressed and will be ironclad as far as any court challenges may go, as far as any concerns may go. Then and only then can everybody who is involved in this situation, who will be affected by this bill, be able to come forward and state their concerns and even help the government put some amendments to the bill that would make sense to them, would make sense to students, which will make sense to the university and allow them to continue to provide education to our citizens, to our students, to make them finish their university degree and go right to work in our province.

When we look at this again, they may say this isn't so bad, but when you have so many people coming to the Law Amendments Committee and discussing this bill in the light that they discussed it - court challenges, labour unrest, citizens' and students' concerns - this is too big a bill to get wrong. It's too big a bill to have go through and have problems

that down the road may have things happen like universities having to go through a revitalization, a restructuring program.

What about the donors to that university who put money into scholarship funds? What about the students who want to go to that university who are concerned about the possible unrest or the possibility of the tuition increases or the possibility of a program not being offered because the freedom of that university to provide that program is not there?

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to see the bill go back, like I said, and the committal, to make sure that when students decide to go to a particular university in this province, it's the university they are going to stay at, obtain their full degree there, be able to come out of school and say, I am a proud graduate of CBU or Dalhousie or Saint Mary's or wherever.

If halfway through a degree something like a restructuring program happens and people have to leave and continue their education somewhere else - out of province, other places in the province - what does that look like for that university and for that degree? We don't want people, employers, to come out and say that there's a question on that degree because, or there's a problem with that degree because. If that happens, the value of that education or the reputation of that university could be affected.

We know universities are out there fighting for every dollar they can get from government and we know from the budget that they are able to take the one-time cap off and raise their tuition fees. They're fighting for that dollar but they're also fighting for students, quality students who want to come to this university or want to come to our province and get that valued education here.

An education today speaks volumes when a student comes out of school and is trying to secure work; the specialties they can receive in our universities in our province are amazing. They go from theatre degrees to medical degrees and to have that option (Interruption) Yeah, the member for Pictou Centre says we used to have theatre. I'm confident that the government will see the error of their ways and make sure we have a film industry here so that a person can take a theatre degree and go to work in our province.

We want to make sure that choice for students is there. If this bill is not corrected, according to what we've heard in Law Amendments, if the bill has flaws in it, there is a possibility of things like court challenges and if it gets tied up or caught in legal challenges, what happens to the value of that education? Does that education get continued? Does the person who is in that program continue on in that university? Or, do they have to move to another university to make sure the education they have and they're getting is a quality one. Some universities don't take some of the courses from other universities. They don't qualify for that university so they may have to take other courses over.

I will say I think this committal is a good idea. We've seen it on other bills in this Legislature. We've seen it on a health care bill and, we've seen it on a Community Services

bill. We saw with the merger of the district health authorities into one and the problems that labour had with that and the arbitration failed and we ended up with the same result after spending \$200,000 to get there. If we step back and we listen to the people involved - the students, the professors, the university presidents, the donors, the citizens - and we put it all together, let's hope that we can put this bill on paper and see that bill comes back in a way that there will be no questions about how it's going to take place, what's going to happen, if there are concerns about anything in the bill.

When we hear concerns coming from the Law Amendments Committee, it makes us want to step back and revisit the bill and hopefully change the bill so that it comes back in a stronger form and there are no concerns or questions about what the bill contains and how everything goes forward if something does happen.

We want to make sure our students get a quality education and to get a quality education we need quality universities. Accountability - we're all for it. When accountability comes to a university, accountability comes with an ability of the university to provide quality programming. With quality programming come quality students; we graduate quality students which puts quality people in our workforce and quality people to stay here in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Let's step back, hit the pause button, go back, revisit it and come up with a bill that's stronger, ironclad, that will make sure our university education, our university system is good here in the province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity to rise and speak to the motion that has been moved by my colleague for Argyle-Barrington. This motion is really to send Bill No. 100 back to the Committee of the Whole for reconsideration of Clauses 5 - 18.

I'm not sure that I agree with the details of the motion, but I do agree with the spirit of what the member is attempting to do. I understand that what the member is saying is that this bill is seriously flawed. It has significant problems in it and there are many unanswered questions about it, and so we really need to step back and take the time to have a better appreciation of these clauses. I do understand what the member is saying. I totally agree this bill is really flawed, but I'm not sure that this motion will actually deal with all of the flaws in the bill.

Let me start with what is proposed by the member and why I could support reconsideration of these particular clauses. By and large, the member has referred to Clauses 5 to 18, inclusive. Those are the provisions of Bill No. 100 that establish this process for universities to trigger a process for revitalization plans where they would submit a notice to the minister, and then they'd submit a notice to their unionized workforce

where they would have some kind of a financial audit, and then they would provide some financial forecasting in terms of the problems that might be faced by the university.

The workforce, through their democratically-constituted organizations that we call trade unions, would be given 30 days to receive the financial information and provide their own financial information. Then there are certain provisions here that would allow the minister extensions, and of course, we go on to the provision that would see the suspension of collective bargaining, the suspension of sitting down with the workforce and their democratically-elected representatives to talk about what the financial information means and what the way forward might be.

These provisions in this motion essentially would gut the bill. There would be very little left in the bill. The provisions that the member wants removed, I totally agree with. They should be removed; they should never have been here in the first place. I said that this bill was flawed. It was flawed when it was introduced. It was flawed when the minister raced into the Law Amendments Committee 10 minutes before it convened to hear from presenters with a sheet of proposed amendments that were pretty much unintelligible in the form they were provided for.

The Chairman of the Law Amendments Committee, interestingly enough, that morning indicated that there had been a media briefing - that these amendments had been provided to the media and there had been a media briefing - but when members of the media who were in the room were asked about that, they had no knowledge of any media briefing. To the best of my knowledge the minister went on the radio and said she was going to make some changes to make the bill better. Really, the changes that have been made are quite minor in many respects and they really don't improve on what was, is, and it is probably going to be a very bad piece of legislation.

As I said earlier, one of the nice things about living in a democracy is that there are certain things even a government with a big majority can't get away with or can't control. They can't get away with bringing flawed legislation into this Chamber and not having it challenged as long as there are Opposition members who see fit to do that. That is a really important function of the Opposition, to look at government legislation and give voice to the weaknesses and the problems that exist in the legislation.

One of the other, I think, truly fantastic things about our democracy and, in particular, Nova Scotia's democracy, our representative democracy, is that we have this Law Amendments Committee process - and it's going on right now. We have presenters on another piece of flawed government legislation over in the Red Room, presenting on the Financial Measures Bill and talking about the terrible risk this government is taking with the changes they're making to the Film Tax Credit, the terrible risk their taking with the livelihoods of 2,700 people and their families in the province. I would say that here is another piece of legislation that has the potential, the opposite potential of what the government wishes to achieve.

I don't think it's rocket science that most employers want harmony in their workplace with their workforce. A harmonious workforce is a much more productive workforce that is prepared to go the extra mile, to really care about the work that they're asked to do. The textbooks, the HR textbooks, the business school case studies are full of examples that demonstrate the truth in that idea that harmony in the workplace will get you much further than disharmony.

This bill sets up relations inside universities that could lead to a significant imbalance and a lack of harmony between administration and those who aren't in administrative positions - and there are a lot of them. I've lived through, as a student, a university strike. I was a student of social work at Dalhousie when the cleaners went on strike. I don't know if there are any members of this Legislature who remember that, but I remember it very well.

The president of our university at the time was a former Liberal Premier, Dr. Henry Hicks. The president and the board of governors at Dalhousie had made a decision to contract out the work of the cleaners at Dal. That wasn't yesterday, it has been quite a few years since I was a student, so we're going back to probably - I would have to say that would have been in 1977. This is quite a number of years ago.

I remember very well my fellow students. We were a very small school, a very small program inside Dalhousie - the Maritime School of Social Work. I think there were 50 students maybe, maximum, in the whole class over two years. It was a two-year program.

The students in the program, we all knew the cleaning staff really well. They were like part of the student body; they were like part of our family. They did way more than clean for us as students to keep our student lounge clean, to keep the classrooms clean, to keep the common areas clean, to keep the washroom facilities clean, to keep the snow and ice removed from around our buildings during the winter months.

These were men and women who took a real interest in who we were as young people, where we came from, and what we were interested in in terms of maybe a field of social work practice. Some of us would have been interested in child welfare. Others of us would have been interested in perhaps mental health and addictions. Other people would have been interested in hospital social work, working with families around grief, death and dying, and palliative care.

These people who worked - not just the cleaning staff, but the people who worked in the front office - they were the people who would be there for us if you got into some kind of financial crisis. Your student loan hadn't come through or something like that - you went to these mostly women who work in these particular occupations, and they would very painstakingly take you through the process of what you needed to do, who you needed to talk to and get things sorted out.

These are the people who I see when I look at this bill. I see all of the working people in our nine universities that this bill targets. There's no other way to characterize the provisions of this bill that take away the rights of those people - the cleaners, the maintenance people, the tradespeople, the administrative support people, the instructors, the teaching assistants.

I've said to people, you know, you need to understand that universities are like icebergs. We see an iceberg and we know that the greatest portion of that iceberg is under the ocean and you can't see it. Well, you look at a university and you think professors, faculty. But what you don't see are literally - in this province - the thousands of men and women who support those faculty and who support the students. You know this bill will affect people in student services, people who offer counselling in student services, to students who come into a university who are deaf and hard of hearing, who have maybe many different kinds of disabilities that need to be accommodated, students who are away from their guardians, their families for the first time, and for some students that can be quite an adjustment.

These people did not cause the financial challenges of our university system, so why are we making them the focal point of this bill and taking away their democratic rights as a means to deal with the financial challenges? I have not had an answer to that question. I have asked that question right from the introduction of this bill, and nobody has been able to answer that question, and I'm waiting. My ears are open and I'm waiting for somebody to stand up and tell me why those people are the people that this bill targets.

Why is it that this government wants to tip the balance of power away from those people, those workers, those men and women, those moms and dads, when they go to the bargaining table to look for decent pay, decent benefits, and some job security? - because that's really all collective bargaining is about.

Now I've heard - I haven't heard it first-hand, but it has been reported that members of the government, the minister perhaps, has said that there are provisions in this bill that will never be used. So why are they here? I haven't heard an answer to that one either. If there are provisions in the bill that aren't needed, why are they here? They shouldn't be in the bill, but they are.

The member for Argyle-Barrington quite rightly has identified a very significant piece of this bill that is objectionable, that is flawed, for which we've received no answers and for which we're rightly concerned, but so have literally the many, many, many people who have come to the Law Amendments Committee and have made really very considered representation on this bill.

Not one person came in front of the Law Amendments Committee to support this bill - not one. Not one, yet the government is charging ahead, using their majority to move

forward a flawed bill that seemingly has no public support. This doesn't make any sense, but then a lot of things that this government has done hasn't made a lot of sense.

I also have concerns about other sections of this bill, and I have spoken about that already, but I'll take an opportunity to speak about it again, in case people might not have been paying attention.

Beyond the earlier sections we do have some sections in this bill about outcome agreements. The amendment would leave those outcome agreement provisions in place - and just to be absolutely, crystal clear, I actually think it would be a really good thing to have some outcome measurements, targets, objectives, whatever we want to call them, for our universities. I think that's a great idea. I don't know why they have to be put in this piece of legislation when, in fact, it seems to me the place they belong is in the MOU that the government signs with the universities.

The MOU is not a sheet of paper - one page with, we're going to give you \$378 million and everybody signs it and then there's nothing else in it. The MOU has government's expectations, thoroughly discussed with the universities and understood the impact of what implementing those expectations will be. The previous government's MOU expected that universities would cap their tuition at no higher than 3 per cent of the national average. That was in the MOU.

Everything in this section here, Sections now renumbered 19 to 25, properly belong in the MOU, which is a legal and binding contract between the Province of Nova Scotia and the universities who are party to that contract. That it's even in this bill, that the outcomes section is in this bill, that's kind of cover for what this bill really is about.

What this bill really seems to be about the revitalization plans and the tampering with the collective bargaining rights of the men and women who work in these universities, and the injection of the government into the academic affairs of a university.

I think government has a responsibility to inject itself into the finances of a university and I think the government has a responsibility to know how public money is being accounted for and spent in the universities and I think government needs to be concerned about the sustainability of the nine great institutions we have in the province. But I don't think by law government should be injecting itself into the academic decisions of the university in terms of what research is done, in terms of the priorities of a university's research. It's a very dangerous slippery slope that this government is on and those provisions are in this bill that would allow this government to do precisely that.

I think because people have watched this government now for, well, it's halfway through the government's mandate - the second budget - and they've seen this particular session, they've seen the profound lack of consultation, of consideration, of understanding. This is a government that doesn't like to make decisions based on data. They ignore data.

They ignore economic impact assessments in the film industry or they don't want up-to-date information. They get rid of Community Counts, the tiny little data unit inside government. Gosh, we wouldn't want to be making decisions based on good information and good data. It probably doesn't fit their plan.

As I said, this bill is flawed from beginning to end. The motion that is on the floor will allow some of, I suppose, the most egregious parts of the bill to be reconsidered. But for myself, I think this entire bill should be withdrawn and the government should go back to the drawing board and go through a proper consultation process and engage and involve all of the parties that constitute a university community.

Students have a primary interest. They are young. They are idealistic. I know that sometimes ideals dominate looking at the facts, but how will people ever learn if they are not involved and engaged and provided with information? I think that's a really critical thing that needs to happen.

The various associations, unions and also staff associations - if I'm not wrong, there are groups of people who work in our universities who aren't in management positions and they are not in unions either, but they do have an association of some kind. I don't know if the bill even envisions these folks, but they do exist and they would have a lot to say about how you would deal with a financial crisis in your organization or the financial stability and sustainability of your organization.

You know, I think what the government missed here was that middle step. They've jumped to extreme measures without giving people who work in these organizations - our institutions, our universities - the opportunity to really understand what the financial situation is in some of these universities and what the challenges are. So much of that has been invisible to the average person in those organizations. This government does a great disservice to those people by assuming they couldn't understand, they wouldn't understand, they would be unwilling to work with the administration and the board of governors to arrive at solutions. That's not my experience in our universities, not my experience at all.

I said on second reading, when NSCAD was in real financial difficulty, running deficits that saw them eat up all of the grant money that came to them through the MOU and really they were barely making it from paycheque to paycheque for their employees - the unions at NSCAD put collective bargaining on hold and they worked with the administration that was in there. They may not have liked, and I'm sure they didn't - I know they didn't like all of the decisions that were taken, but they did not abuse their capability of going on strike, of forcing that school into a closure. After all, why would any group ever do that? Their interest, their long-term interest is in a university that is healthy.

This bill makes no sense; it makes no sense, and I think the minister and the government are asking for problems down the road. They're not solving problems, they're

creating problems, just like they did with Bill No. 1. It's somewhat unbelievable that they don't seem to have learned anything from that fiasco. They are intent on just driving forward, creating chaos in another part of our province that is a really significant part of our province.

I have no way of understanding why this is happening, what they have against the working people in those important sectors of our province who have good paying jobs. That isn't something that we should be envious of, that isn't something that we should be attacking, that is something we need to support because I can tell you we can be a low-waged terrible labour relations kind of province or we can really work hard to get people steering in the same direction. This doesn't get people steering in the same direction, this is a divisive bill - this is a bill that divides people inside some of our most important provincial institutions.

We have a commission, the One Nova Scotia Commission, tasked with the job of bringing Nova Scotians together, we're going to all get along, we're all going to have a good attitude, a better attitude, and then we have a government that does stuff like this. It's kind of hard to have a good attitude, Mr. Speaker, it's kind of hard to all get along and join hands and sing Kumbaya.

What is this? This is the fourth really terrible piece of anti-worker legislation we've seen from the McNeil Government, and people are very surprised, they're quite surprised, they did not see this coming. When they looked at the Liberal platform, much like the Film Tax Credit folks, they didn't see the asterisk. The footnotes didn't get attached. The people are seeing it now.

The government does have an opportunity with the motion that's on the floor to take this bill back to the Committee of the Whole House for reconsideration. Although I have reservations that this is a bill that has any potential to be salvaged - as I said, the only thing I really like about this bill is the title, an Act Respecting Accountability and Sustainability of Universities.

My preference is that we build, maybe together, a true bill that would give us accountability and sustainability in our universities, because as it now stands, Bill No. 100 is not it. Thank you.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in support of the motion that my colleague, the member for Argyle-Barrington, has put to recommit this bill. I do also want to say that I appreciate that the Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party has spoken on behalf of her caucus in favour of the motion to recommit, and appropriately so.

What started out, with the title at least, as a positive idea to improve accountability has turned into another disaster of a bill, hence the need to recommit it to the processes of this House to get it right. Here is the bigger picture that the motion to recommit really is painting, and I want to take a few minutes to make this clear.

Here we have a government that the story of their whole first year in office was that they needed to study the problems that the province faces. They needed to consult far and wide before making any decisions. They needed to engage Nova Scotians as if they got elected to office and then suddenly discovered there were issues that needed leadership in our province. Quite frankly, Nova Scotians were frustrated by the end of that first year that what they thought was a chance for a change of direction and a step forward for our province had turned into one glorious year of studying and consulting and engaging and town halls.

But during that whole time, the government's defence was, we are going to move, and when we move, we will get it right because we took the time to consult and talk and engage and have town hall meetings and Kumbaya sessions. Nova Scotians said, when are you going to act? The government said, you just wait until we do, because we'll have consulted with everybody and we'll get it right. That was the story of year one.

You know what? We went through that year one, whether it was the Ivany report or any other thing the government chose to sit on its hands and think about and contemplate and study, and we got to the end of year one. And then we got into year two and they started to bring legislation before this House. Having studied it all to death, you would think they would have gotten it right, but instead they got it all wrong after all that studying. What was the point? This bill is just the latest example.

We're frustrated here in Opposition, too, on behalf of Nova Scotians. That's why we're putting the motion forward to recommit one of these bad bills. Whether it was the Limitation of Actions Bill - which the government brought to this House leaving behind a whole generation of victims of past sexual abuse, telling them that they had done all their studies and that there was nothing they could do for them, only to find out that they could have done a lot for them like many other provinces do. When confronted with the evidence that they had acted wrongly, rather than stop and fix it, they decided to pass a bad bill anyway and then wait six months until another session and then bring in the fix-it bill. That is no way to run a province.

It was the same with the tobacco bill, where they brought a bill in to ban many flavours of tobacco - not menthol originally, despite the damage that it can do as a flavour. Then they realized that they had made a mistake, but rather than fix it or recommit it or withdraw it, they insisted on using their majority to pass what they knew at the time was a bad bill anyway, and then wait months and months and months before they addressed it, while thousands of young Nova Scotians were subjected to flavoured tobacco that's targeted at our youngest citizens.

If that wasn't enough, we had the labour bills - Bill No. 1, Bill No. 100 - which they assured us would pass muster, that they were valid bills which would lead to an efficient reorganization of our health care system. They appointed an arbiter to sort it all out, and then they basically dictated to that arbiter what he had to do, and when he wouldn't do it, their entire health reform collapsed because they got it wrong.

After a year of consultation and study and analysis: wrong on limitation of actions, wrong on tobacco, wrong on the labour bill, and when we got to the budget, which had been the subject of a glorious road show by the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board engaging Nova Scotians all over the place, following up a year of engagement on the Ivany commission, following up on all the other town halls that they had - what happened? They messed up the entire film industry because they didn't understand how that business worked, and 2,700 jobs and \$150 million of economic value are at risk because they got it wrong.

Only when 3,000 people from the film business showed up outside our doors to make the point did the government say, well, maybe we'll try to talk to them now, after it's done, and see if we can't put that genie back in the bottle. But it was too late. Another example.

Now what do we have? Bill No. 100 - the fifth example of a bill starting to take an action and then quickly veering off course in the wrong direction. At least they recognize it earlier now, because they tried 24 amendments in the Law Amendments Committee to try to fix the bill. Somewhere in the Legislative Counsel Office someone is trying to paste those 24 amendments on to the original bill as we speak, to make some sense of what they have done.

As the member for Northside-Westmount pointed out, it's not just the members of the Opposition that are trying to figure out what on earth is going on now. The students at our universities, the faculty that work there, the researchers that do important innovative research to move our province forward, and all Nova Scotians are scratching their heads, wondering how they could possibly, for a fifth time, bring a piece of legislation to this House that so quickly fell apart. The minister can stand in her place and say oh, no, our department has done its work, we have done our jurisdictional scan and this bill will work - well, after five times, you'll have to forgive us for being a little skeptical.

That is why we're not going to sit here and watch another bad bill flow through the House on the word of the government that this time, not like the previous four times, maybe, it might work. The only logical conclusion, when faced with that kind of incompetence, is to recommit the bill back through the process and get it right before it ever comes to the main Chamber for a final reading again.

That is why I support the motion by the member next to me to recommit the bill: because once again, we have a piece of legislation that came here not ready for prime time,

not ready to become law, not ready to do any of the positive things that we would like to see happen. I hope that instead of using their majority to pass a bill through the House all the way through into law, that they know needed 24 amendments just a few days ago, the government will do the right thing and recommit the bill until it is ready to become the law of the Province of Nova Scotia in good form for once. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: If there are no more speakers, the motion is that Bill No. 100 be amended by deleting all the words after the word “that” and substituting the following:

Therefore Bill No. 100, the Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act be now read a third time but that the order be discharged and the bill be recommitted to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills for the purpose of reconsidering Clause 5 to Clause 18.

Would all those in favour of the motion (Interruption)

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[6:30 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

Are the Whips satisfied?

The Clerks will ask that all members remain silent until the end of the vote and members, when your name is called, please stand with a Yea or a Nay.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[6:40 p.m.]

YEAS

NAYS

Mr. MacLeod

Ms. Bernard

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River will not be eligible to vote. Please continue.

Mr. MacMaster
Mr. Baillie

Ms. Regan
Ms. Whalen

Mr. d'Entremont	Mr. Glavine
Mr. David Wilson	Mr. MacLellan
Ms. MacDonald	Ms. Diab
Mr. Belliveau	Mr. Furey
Ms. Peterson-Rafuse	Mr. Horne
Mr. Orrell	Mr. Hines
Ms. MacFarlane	

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island will not be eligible to vote. Please continue.

Mr. Houston	Ms. Arab
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MR. SPEAKER: Can the honourable member for Halifax Chebucto please stand with his vote?

Mr. Harrison	Mr. Stroink
Mr. Lohr	Mr. Delorey
	Mr. Ince
	Mr. Farrell
	Mr. Gordon Wilson
	Mr. Rankin
	Ms. Miller
	Mr. Maguire
	Ms. Eyking
	Ms. Lohnes-Croft
	Ms. Treen
	Mr. Gough
	Mr. Jessome
	Mr. Irving

THE CLERK: For, 13. Against, 24.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is defeated. We will now continue with third reading of Bill No. 100.

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

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Since tabling this bill, Bill No. 100, an Act Respecting Accountability and Sustainability of Universities, I've heard from many Nova Scotians. Many welcomed more accountability and cost control, others had concerns. We heard

similar feedback right here in the House, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciated the respectful, thoughtful debate we were able to have and that's what the legislative process is all about.

I'm pleased we were able to make changes to the bill to accommodate some of the concerns raised without changing the intent, and Mr. Speaker, we did hear from representatives of some of the unions who urged the members opposite to vote for the amendments that we brought in because they thought it improved the bill, and that's exactly what we were looking for. I believe the Universities Accountability and Sustainability bill will go a long way toward keeping universities here and healthy into the future.

The reality is this, Mr. Speaker: universities across the country are struggling to rein in costs and balance budgets. Our university system here in Nova Scotia is facing an annual deficit of tens of millions of dollars in just two years' time, and some universities are struggling with serious budget shortfalls and they've had to come to government for help in the past.

I'd like to recap what this bill is all about, Mr. Speaker. It has two main parts. First it requires the universities to be more accountable. Now we know that over the last number of years governments have had to give two universities over \$20 million above and beyond their agreed upon funding grant. That's not fair to taxpayers and it's not fair to the other eight universities that manage their bottom lines. We believe requiring universities to be more accountable to government will help prevent these kinds of situations.

The second part of the bill, Mr. Speaker, gives universities in significant financial trouble a process so they can restructure. Basically this bill offers an early warning system and a tool of last resort. There were two aspects of the bill that attracted the most attention and arguably the most concern but I think there's been some misinformation.

First I'll touch on the issue of academic freedom and research, Mr. Speaker. Professors, faculty unions, and others have suggested this bill is heavy-handed, that it allows government to be too prescriptive about the research done on university campuses, whether through the development of outcome agreements or through a revitalization plan. I want to assure all members of this House that it is not the intent of this government or this bill to dictate research goals. We are simply asking for universities to consider not only what would help the university and research community but also what would help the province and contribute to its social and economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that not all research is going to support the province's goals, nor should it. Universities conduct plenty of valuable research that has no direct connection to provincial priorities, but that certainly doesn't diminish its value or relevancy and any outcomes developed in terms of research that would be done in direct consultation with universities.

You could actually argue that government already directs some of the research done at universities simply because governments of all stripes choose research priorities. It happens already throughout the country and this government did it recently when we funded graduate scholarships. To be eligible for these scholarships graduate students must be researching an area related to one of Nova Scotia's nine priority sectors, including marine technology, aerospace and defence, and resources, to name a few. I don't see this as heavy-handed, I see it as getting good value for taxpayers' investment in research that will benefit our province and its citizens.

The other area of the bill that raised questions was the section that dealt with the extension of collective bargaining. I want to be clear because I know there's a lot of misinformation out there - the option to extend collective bargaining can only be used if a university can show it is at risk of financial collapse; this would be independently verified by a third party. Negotiations can continue while the planning process is underway. The option to strike, or lockout, or finalize an agreement is back on the table once the revitalization plan has been finalized and the minister makes a decision on whether the grant will be provided.

Let's be honest - if a university is on its last legs financially, a strike or a lockout could be what puts it under. This process gives the entire university community, unions, staff and students, time to focus on the plan and work together to get the university back on track.

I want members of the House to think about the other options open to a university on the brink. What I can tell you is that option isn't pretty. There would be no protection for students and limited protection for staff or faculty. The university, in fact, would have to enter the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, or the CCAA. In this process the courts and creditors would decide on the plan. If they can't agree, the university goes into receivership where assets are sold and creditors are paid first.

What we are proposing keeps the process out of the courts and in the hands of the university community. Students keep going to class, people keep working while they come up with a plan to turn things around, without having to incur the high fees and court costs associated with the CCAA or the bankruptcy process.

Mr. Speaker, I will finish today by saying that the government values Nova Scotia's 10 universities; they're important to our province, our culture and our economy. The Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act will help ensure our universities are here well into the future.

I move we now close debate on Bill No. 100.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 100. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

A recorded vote is being called for.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[6:53 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

We'll try this once again. Is the Official Opposition Whip satisfied? Is the New Democratic Party Whip satisfied? Is the Government Whip satisfied?

I would ask that all members remain in their seats in absolute silence until the vote is completed. When your name is called, please stand, simply state Yea or Nay, resume your seat, and wait for the vote to conclude.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[6:56 p.m.]

YEAS

Ms. Bernard
Ms. Regan
Mr. Samson
Ms. Whalen
Mr. Glavine
Mr. MacLellan
Ms. Diab
Mr. Furey
Mr. Horne
Mr. Hines
Mr. Stroink
Ms. Arab
Mr. Delorey
Mr. Kousoulis
Mr. Ince
Mr. Farrell
Mr. Gordon Wilson
Mr. Rankin
Ms. Miller
Mr. Maguire
Ms. Eyking

NAYS

Mr. MacLeod
Mr. MacMaster
Mr. Baillie
Mr. d'Entremont
Mr. David Wilson
Ms. MacDonald
Mr. Belliveau
Ms. Zann
Ms. Peterson-Rafuse
Mr. Orrell
Ms. MacFarlane
Mr. Houston
Mr. Harrison
Mr. Lohr

Ms. Lohnes-Croft
Ms. Treen
Mr. Gough
Mr. Jessome
Mr. Irving

THE CLERK: For, 26. Against, 14.

MR. SPEAKER: 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, that concludes the government's business for today. Tomorrow being Opposition Day, I will now call upon the House Leader for the Official Opposition to give us the business. The hours will be from 1:00 p.m. until 5:30 p.m.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I almost got to call extended hours there. After the daily routine and Question Period, we will be calling three bills, possibly - maybe just two, but I'll call three in case: Bill No. 115, the Transparency in Expenses Act; Bill No. 81, the Public Utilities Act; and Bill No. 41, the Lyme Disease Strategy Act. I move that we do rise to meet again tomorrow between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to rise to meet again tomorrow 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.

[The House rose at 7:00 p.m.]

[Tabled resolutions will be done upon completion.]