



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll begin the daily routine. Before we get into the first item, the topic for late debate tonight, as submitted by the honourable member for Pictou East, is:

Therefore be it resolved that government act immediately to fulfill its election commitment of providing a doctor for every Nova Scotian.

The late debate, coming to you at the moment of interruption.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, with 4,010 signatures, from the Canadian Federation of Students, the operative clause being:

“WE THE UNDERSIGNED SUPPORT THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS’ CALL TO IMMEDIATELY DROP TUITION FEES TO 2011 LEVELS AND PETITION THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NOVA SCOTIA TO INTRODUCE A NEW FRAMEWORK THAT:

REDUCES TUITION AND ANCILLARY FEES ANNUALLY FOR ALL STUDENTS

CONVERTS EVERY STUDENT LOAN INTO A GRANT

INCREASES PER-STUDENT FUNDING LEVELS TO ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE”

Mr. Speaker, I have affixed my signature. Thank you.

And could I make an introduction, please? We have Ms. Michaela Sam from the Canadian Federation of Students in the west gallery and Mr. David Etherington as well. Thank you, and may the House please receive them. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: I’ll table the petition and give you permission for the introduction retroactively.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause which reads:

“We the undersigned respectively request that the proposed site plan of the Dartmouth South P-9 be amended. Specifically, relocate the access/egress of the bus loop from Milverton Road to Prince Arthur Road. This can be achieved by reducing the size of the proposed parking lot to accommodate the parking lot, parent drop-off and bus loop with access off of Prince Arthur Road.”

Mr. Speaker, I have affixed my signature to the document.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to Section 18 of the Auditor General Act, as Speaker, I’m pleased to table the following reports of the Auditor General: the Report of the Auditor

General to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, June 2015, and subsequent reports dated November 2015.

The reports are tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A great deal of Nova Scotia's economy is built upon our seacoast. Fishing, shipbuilding, biosciences, tourism, and our nation's East Coast Navy. We also have a long history of being a gateway for goods and services and immigrants entering North America. We call it our ocean advantage.

Et les gens, de l'est Canadien continuent de chercher des nouvelles avenues de développement économique liées aux océans.

Offshore energy development is among the most exciting ones to watch and is gaining momentum. Nova Scotia had Canada's first offshore oil project. We also had Canada's first and second offshore natural gas projects. Both continue today with the Sable Offshore Energy Project in Deep Panuke. The Stena IceMAX arrived last month and began Shell's billion dollar drilling program off the coast of Shelburne. BP started its offshore program last year with the largest seismic research initiative in Nova Scotia history. We expect BP to begin its exploratory drilling sometime in 2017. Last week, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board announced successful bids on two of Nova Scotia's offshore parcels with a spending commitment worth \$82 million.

Statoil is an internationally renowned oil and gas company from Norway that also has operations in more than 30 countries, including offshore Newfoundland and Labrador. In anticipation of and in response to this activity over the past three decades, we've seen an emergence of an experienced supply industry. The skills they have developed in ocean technology not only support the oil and gas sector, but also renewable energy projects like tidal. As we continue to promote the potential in our offshore, this support and service experience enhances our value proposition for developers from around the world.

Nous avons une chaîne d'approvisionnement des entreprises de renommée mondiale pour le secteur des technologies, océanologiques, et le potentiel de nos ressources extracôtières. Ces facteurs attirent l'intérêt et les investissements en Nouvelle-Écosse.

What also helps is data - in fact, geoscience data. Government's work over the past number of years created the Play Fairway Analysis. This work helped us understand our resources and was shared, free of charge, to industry. It played a key role in attracting Shell and BP's billion dollar exploration projects. Our government is building on that work with a four-year, \$12 million commitment for more geoscience research and marketing. We are

currently in year two of that four-year commitment. A point of interest to the members here is that a portion of this year's research covered the parcels that were bid on successfully by Statoil.

Mr. Speaker, success in the offshore can only be realized when done safely and responsibly. I can say from first-hand experience that the Atlantic Ocean is a harsh workplace and so it is a point of pride that Nova Scotia has had 25 years of safe offshore operations. Canada is recognized for having one of the strongest offshore safety and environmental protection regimes in the world. When companies come to work here, they do so under stringent rules that the regulator oversees and enforces, to ensure our good record continues.

Le fait d'avoir les règlements rigoureux en matière de sécurité et d'environnement est une partie importante de nos possibilités économiques extracôtières. Les entreprises qui viennent travailler ici savent qu'elles doivent respecter des règlements très stricts. Pour ces entreprises ça fait partie des affaires en Nouvelle-Écosse.

Mr. Speaker, our marine and fishing industries are part of our heritage and a significant part of our present-day economy. No one wants to see an incident in our offshore that would put our ocean's natural ecosystem or our fishery at risk. That's why regulations focus heavily on prevention and why governments, regulators and industry have gone to great lengths to learn from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 and have developed better methods and equipment to prevent accidents and respond to problems more quickly.

That's why we've changed legislation to increase financial liability requirements and better define who is responsible if an incident were to happen. That's why we will continue to protect the Georges Bank with federal-provincial legislation. That's why our government - and the governments that came before us - continually review, update and strengthen regulations to ensure we set the right conditions for the sector to succeed and coexist with other offshore interests.

Monsieur le Président, nous continuons de renforcer nos règles et nos règlements afin qu'ils soient très clairs pour le secteur, mais aussi pour rassurer nos communautés que nous souhaitons que les développements extracôtier se fassent de façon responsable.

Mr. Speaker, it's not enough to have the right rules in place and a regulator that does its job well, especially when there is so much at stake. Our success in the offshore also depends on a well-informed public and meaningful stakeholder engagement. The Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board and oil and gas companies must consult appropriately with communities, fishing groups, the Mi'kmaq and other stakeholders, sharing relevant information about their projects.

The rules are set and anything less is simply not good enough. Before the board issues a call for bids on offshore parcels, their experts conduct a strategic environmental assessment. This includes an extensive review of the area to understand any environmental sensitivities and where enhanced mitigation may be required to avoid any potential, significant, adverse effects.

During that time the public, the fishing industry and others have an opportunity to come forward with comments and any concerns. Should licence holders propose work of any kind, they must address these concerns and the project's specific environmental assessment. That process also includes a requirement for information sharing and consultation, which may very well result in extra conditions being placed on a company's approval to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board has ongoing contact with the fishing industry through its Fisheries Advisory Committee. This committee has representatives from various fishing groups, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Natural Resources Canada and the Nova Scotia Government via the Departments of Energy, and Fisheries and Aquaculture. A strong fishery and responsible offshore development can coexist and Mr. Speaker, it does already here in Nova Scotia and many other places around the world. Our energy resources belong to Nova Scotians, and our government's interest is in realizing the benefits for them.

Offshore exploration and development can create significant economic activity for our communities and for the ocean sector service and supply chain. If exploration is successful and market conditions are right, Nova Scotians will benefit from royalties in the future. That means improving public services and strengthening our province's economic future. Merci beaucoup.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister for providing a copy of his statement in advance.

Nova Scotia's offshore oil and gas industry has treated this province well. It has generated thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in royalty revenue for our province, and through it all the work has been done safely, protecting both workers and the environment. This is why the announcement by the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board of the successful bids on two of Nova Scotia's offshore parcels is exciting. In 2012 we saw a revitalization in the prospects of the offshore industry, with billions of dollars in bids from both Shell and BP.

Now, today or last week, we received news that another player, Statoil, will become a player in our offshore industry, and that is good news. It's a testament not just to our

province's natural resources, but to the strong reputation of Nova Scotia's offshore industry, and the reputation that it has for enabling safe and successful development.

A large part of that is the skills supply chain to the energy industry that already exists here in the province. Our companies here in Nova Scotia have decades of experience supporting oil and gas exploration and production, both here at home and abroad.

This supply chain has also proven itself to be versatile, because the same companies that support our offshore oil and gas activities, in many cases, also support or will support our tidal industry, where companies have used their expertise in assisting with the development of wind turbines already. Others will assist in the construction of the Maritime Link with Newfoundland and Labrador. The Play Fairway Analysis, commissioned in 2007 - I forget which government commissioned that, but I know it was a good one - helped to spur this revitalization in the offshore.

The staff at the Department of Energy have worked tirelessly to bring us where we are today, so it's encouraging to see that all recent governments have supported the development of our offshore industry and have supported the success of the Play Fairway Analysis. The current government is continuing to support the decision of the government of 2007 by investing further money in geoscience research and marketing.

Nova Scotia's offshore regulatory body, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board, is owed a great deal of credit for enabling the safe development of our offshore industry. I know that the board is consistently looking at best practices around the world and updating them to further minimize risks of an incident. Companies who wish to operate in Nova Scotia's offshore realize that they will be operating under strict regulations that are meant to protect both workers and the environment, and it's because of the work of this board that Nova Scotia is recognized as having one of the strictest regulatory regimes in the world. Every piece of work conducted offshore requires an environmental assessment to ensure that it will not negatively impact the environment. The board's website contains a vast amount of knowledge on the offshore industry and the ongoing projects. There are also opportunities for submissions from the public on each of these projects. Those are all good things.

The offshore oil and gas industry has benefited all Nova Scotians. Former Premier Hamm's campaign for fairness in 2001 helped create a great deal of that, ensuring Nova Scotia is the primary beneficiary of the province's offshore resources. The money generated from our offshore has helped to pay for our schools, our roads, and our health care system.

The industry has created thousands of jobs both directly and indirectly, and so as we're here today, I look forward to maybe a minister's statement tomorrow, that he'll give us the definition of high-volume hydraulic fracturing, or maybe one where he will lift the

ban on onshore shale gas development, which could maybe continue generating jobs. Those are things we look forward to in the future, Mr. Speaker.

But for today, I wish Statoil, Shell, and BP, much success and much safety as they search for resources off the coast of Nova Scotia. Thank you.

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: I would like to thank the minister for a copy of his statement.

The NDP is not opposed to offshore development. The NDP Government furthered the work of the previous government in establishing the geoscience data through the Play Fairway Analysis.

The minister correctly points out our ocean advantage - fishing, shipbuilding, tourism, and biosciences. It is this advantage that makes it so critical that we get the offshore development right. Drilling developments offshore are in close proximity to some of the most lucrative fishing grounds in the world.

If we want fishers to be on board with offshore oil and gas development, they need to be included in the regulatory process. The minister talks about consultation with fishing groups, but it is clear that this has not been done enough in order to comfort their concerns. Just a couple of days ago, Mr. Speaker, there was an article in *The Chronicle Herald* where a prominent fisher questioned the risk associated with the offshore drilling.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, they have placed a representative of the fishing community directly on the board and this means that that representative can vote to approve or reject a proposed plan. Perhaps the minister will consider this approach - if they ever get around to appointing a person on the board, because there has been a provincial vacancy now for over two years. I encourage the minister to appoint somebody in that place, and perhaps it could be a fisher or an environmentalist.

The board has assured us that they are always attempting to ensure the best practices are used offshore. There is concern, the new best practice for capping a well is a capping stack, and while there is no capping stack currently in Nova Scotia waters, I hope the government will work towards getting this technology closer to Nova Scotia or having one directly in our waters. The minister highlights the exceptional safety and environmental record offshore Nova Scotia, but we do know blowouts do happen and can happen offshore, and it could happen again.

There is growing concern over the use of Corexit as a dispersant in the aftermath of a blowout, so I encourage the minister to work with Environment Canada to ensure that

Corexit would provide a net environmental benefit over the actual oil spill. I'm not convinced it does, and not all the scientific research is convinced that it does either.

While there is much potential for economic spinoff benefit from the offshore development, we do know a lot of those benefits are dependent on the companies actually finding the oil or gas offshore. It is important not to unnecessarily risk proven gains for potential rewards. Our fishery has provided a sustainable livelihood to communities for generations and generations; therefore I encourage the minister to consider the importance that the operation go forward on the best timeline for our province and not just for the large oil companies.

The NDP will, Mr. Speaker, continue to call for the most up-to-date regulations because we do need to ensure that Nova Scotia succeeds at integration of ocean management.

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

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, on Friday, November 13th, we introduced an exciting initiative that will help young Nova Scotians live and work in the province. Experience Through Opportunity will make available more than 70 Public Service positions across the province that require very little to no experience. Experience Through Opportunity sets the conditions to hire young Nova Scotians. Every one of these jobs will make a difference.

We also announced that for each of the next five years, 5 per cent of new government hires will be young workers who will have little to no experience. In the new year we will create more co-op opportunities for university and high school students in the Public Service. We are excited about the possibilities this brings. Young people can breathe new life and ideas into an organization and their enthusiasm and energy can be infectious.

Mr. Speaker, this will help move our province forward. Most importantly is what this means to young Nova Scotians. For far too long young people have felt they have had to leave this province to find jobs, in particular many young people think it's difficult to land a government job, that any opening requires years and years of experience or that someone who is better qualified will apply and beat them out. They may not feel like there are opportunities here and our province hasn't always made it easy.

When we took office we wanted to change how young people see Nova Scotia and that's what Experience Through Opportunity is all about. We are removing barriers and creating opportunities for young Nova Scotians who want to begin a career in the Public Service. Yesterday afternoon we began advertising more than 70 Public Service positions across the province. This sends a message to our young workers that you can start and grow your career here. We want young Nova Scotians to know there are great opportunities in

their province, opportunities that are worth staying for and opportunities that are worth coming for.

Mr. Speaker, we are leading the way. Up until this government took office, there was a requirement that every job in government had to have a minimum of two years' experience; that requirement is gone. Government is leading by example and we urge others to follow. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for the advance notice of his statement and obviously the opportunity to talk about youth employment, which I know means a lot to all of us here in this Chamber.

Increasing participation of youth in the labour force was a key goal of the Ivany report. The goal was to lower the youth unemployment rate to the national average. Earlier this month we introduced a supplementary report to the One Nova Scotia report; we highlighted a youth employment strategy as a top priority. The health of our provincial economy and the renewal of communities hinges on the provincial government creating the right conditions for job creation.

While I commend the government for focusing the Public Service on hiring young people, there is so much more that has to be done. Government should prioritize the development of a youth employment strategy. It is critically important that more youth become attached to Nova Scotia's labour force and put down roots in our province. It's no secret that we have an aging population; it's unsustainable. The youth unemployment rate remains well above the national average. For October 2015 it was 17 per cent, compared to the national average of 13.3 per cent.

There has been no measurable progress on the Ivany goal by the Liberal Government. A youth employment strategy is important because it would curb one-off decisions by the government that go against the youth employment goal, decisions like the one that kneecapped the film industry. The film industry employs hundreds of young, creative people but now many of them are being forced to move away and that's a shame. We need more young, creative, inspiring minds who want to start businesses and make Nova Scotia their home.

Again, I'd like to commend the government for this one effort but it must be looked at in the broader context of what is happening in our province. We in the PC caucus are 100 per cent committed to the goals in the Ivany report and we want to see clear actions and accountability so that they are achieved. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, our caucus welcomes this statement from the minister, from the government. We need to do everything we can to encourage, support, and see the number of young people working and staying in Nova Scotia over the next number of years and decades. We have known for some time, especially in the Public Service Commission, that there is a high number of retirements coming in the future years and I think this is a great start to ensure that the door is open for recently new graduates who may not have that experience that would land them a job within the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the government cannot be complacent with this initiative only. The work that the government has done over the last two years has placed many barriers in front of young people here in Nova Scotia. We know the Ivany commission has specifically indicated the need to ensure that we see our young people here in Nova Scotia stay and have opportunities so that the economy could turn around, the economy can grow - and we've seen the government in two years give one of the largest tax increases to recently graduated students in our province and that's specifically the \$50 million Graduate Retention Rebate program that was pulled from the hands of those recently graduated students. We know that some of the students themselves would have rather seen that \$50 million be reinvested into things like reducing tuition in forgivable loans, in grants.

We know that we have a government that has just removed the cap on tuition and we're seeing, daily, the increases of tuition throughout the province in our institutions. How is that going to attract and recruit and, hopefully, entice young people to come to our province and stay in our province?

We know that the government needs to do more than just bring forward this initiative, they need to recognize that the policies that they put in place have an effect on our young people and the ability to keep them here in Nova Scotia. I hope the government recognizes that 70 jobs is great, but we're just hearing from many of the departments that there is potentially a hiring freeze on right within departments all across the government. So that's going to have an effect on new hires; that's going to have an effect on the number of new young people that can work in the Public Service Commission. So I hope they revisit the attempts over the last two years of changing policies within government.

If the government wants to continue, there are a number of things they can do to try to improve it. I know my predecessor, the member for Cape Breton Centre, introduced a bill, Bill No. 39, that would require any corporation, any business, any organization that receives funding or a contract through the government that a percentage of their hires should be new apprentices so that they can get the experience that they need. I hope the government is open to ideas not only from their government but from Opposition Parties, and from the general public that will, hopefully, improve the situation we see.

There is a record high of young people leaving our province over the last two years and we need to change that. I'm encouraged a little bit by this announcement, but the government has to do more. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: We'll now move to Government Notices of Motion.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 2451

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

Whereas a Christmas tree is a symbol of the joy and peace associated with the holiday season; and

Whereas Nova Scotia annually sends a beautiful Christmas tree to Boston in appreciation for the help that the people of Boston bestowed upon Halifax following the Halifax explosion; and

Whereas Andrea and Bill MacEachern of Lorne, Pictou County, donated a lovely white spruce and worked alongside several departments, agencies, and private contractors on the preparation, harvest, and shipping this tree to Boston;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House thank the tree donors and send wishes of kindness, peace, and goodwill to the people of Boston, and to people across the world.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. GLAVINE: I would like to direct the attention of the members to the east gallery where we have several distinguished guests today - some of the province's 1,400 paramedics. (Applause)

I would ask our guests to stand as I read their names and receive, as they already have, the warm welcome of the House, but further applause is well placed, indeed, and I sure hope I haven't omitted anybody here, Mr. Speaker: John Bignell, Darcy Delorey, Glenn Sentner, Carly Collings-Robertson, Jeffrey Britton, Darrell Bardua, Karl Kowalczyk, Colleen Cary, Kevin Carey, and Maureen Leslie.

Joining them today are former provincial medical director Dr. Ed Cain; medical director Dr. Andrew Travers, who in many ways welcomes today - he has held the fort for many years; and Dr. Ron Stewart, a former Minister of Health and the person whose vision led to the current paramedic system on which we rely today.

Also, there's a couple of others, and for some reason their names are omitted here, but I do want to mention two staff, Ian Bower and Michelle MacDonald, who did high-quality and dedicated work to go through a whole revision of the Act that was introduced in 2005. I thank them for their work. Once again, it's great to have the paramedics here with us today. (Standing Ovation)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2452

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

Whereas Nova Scotia's 1,107 paramedics are highly-trained professionals who offer valuable care to communities across the province 365 days a year; and

Whereas on October 29th, Lieutenant Governor J.J. Grant presented the Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medal, a national honour instituted by Her Majesty the Queen, to 14 Nova Scotia paramedics who have dedicated themselves to caring for Nova Scotians, sometimes at great personal risk; and

Whereas the paramedics who received that honour were Bud Avery of Halifax; Timothy Bayers, Falmouth; Thomas Bird, Amherst; Tony Eden, Dartmouth; Jack Galley of Berwick; Perry Kaiser, Westville; John Lewis, Sydney; Michael Morton, Mill Village;

William Pero, Sydney Mines; Steve Pertus, Sydney; Brad Reid, Middleton; Earl Russell, Berwick; Dwayne Semple, Tatamagouche; and Keith Veinotte of Liscomb;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House congratulate these brave people and thank all paramedics for the contributions they provide to the communities they serve.

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. 2453

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

Whereas too many families are impacted by road crashes resulting in death or injury every year; and

Whereas distracted driving, impaired driving, speeding, and not wearing a seatbelt continue to be the main contributing factors in most road fatalities; and

Whereas the National Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims is being recognized across Canada to encourage all Canadians to make a commitment to drive more cautiously in the future from this day onward;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature pause for a moment to remember those killed or seriously injured in road crashes.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 123 - Entitled an Act Respecting the Practice of Paramedicine. (Hon. Leo Glavine)

Bill No. 124 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 12 of the Acts of 1993. The Social Workers Act. (Hon. Joanne Bernard)

Bill No. 125 - Entitled an Act Respecting the Dissolution of Zion United Baptist Church of Yarmouth. (Hon. Zach Churchill, as a private member)

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

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, may I do an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. ORRELL: In the gallery opposite today we have two students from Cape Breton University: Mr. Brandon Ellis, who is the CBU Students' Union president, and Mr. Brandon MacDonald, who is a student union council member. Both are here to take in Question Period and the proceedings this afternoon. I'd like the Legislature to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

GEORGE, ELDON: RETIREMENT - BEST WISHES

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: This week we learned that at 84 years young, Eldon George is taking down his shingle and closing his beloved Parrsboro Rock and Mineral Shop. His 67-year pursuit of Fundy fossils has resulted in a collection of over 1,500 items, including some rare dinosaur tracks.

While Eldon is looking to slow down, his life work will live on. The Fundy Geological Museum has acquired his collection and will assemble it in a new exhibit. His work will keep the museum busy for a long time cataloguing and investigating this lifetime of discovery.

In 2013 it was my pleasure to be on hand when Eldon received the Order of Nova Scotia for his fossil discoveries, for his community leadership, and for bringing the world's attention to Nova Scotia's geological heritage. I congratulate Eldon on his lifetime of achievement, and wish him health and happiness in his future pursuits.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

POLICY & PRIORITIES DEP. MIN. - UNFAIR TAX BREAKS

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, this summer it was revealed that the Premier's top deputy minister has avoided paying thousands in provincial income taxes at a time when the Liberal Government is eliminating tax breaks for new graduates and the screen industry.

As the top civil servant in the government, the Premier's Deputy Minister of Policy and Priorities should have to pay the same taxes as everyone else working in this province. This is a double standard that the Premier has not only allowed but failed to adequately address.

Mr. Speaker, the small business tax break is designed to help small business owners create more jobs for Nova Scotians, but in this case it is being used to increase the income of a single individual, an individual who is key to setting government policy.

Mr. Speaker, as such we ask the Premier to reconsider his position and ensure that members of his inner circle are not receiving any unfair tax breaks.

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

BENNETT, TROY - ATL. ACURA YOUTH APPRENTICES

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Troy Bennett, a lifelong resident of Fairview and the manager at Atlantic Acura, for providing great opportunities and being a role model to youth mechanic apprentices in Nova Scotia. Thank you for hosting the Premier, the member for Bedford, myself and many others on July 28th for the special celebration marking the anniversary of the Nova Scotia Youth Apprenticeship program.

Troy's positive attitude and outgoing personality helps create an encouraging work environment for many youth apprentices at Atlantic Acura. His employees speak about his

strong work ethic, his leadership by example, and his love of community, as just some of the many reasons why he is so respected and looked up to as a mentor.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I say thank you to Troy for all that he does.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MARTIN, BOB/SUTHERLAND, DALE - ROSALIND PROBER AWARD

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, Bob Martin and Dale Sutherland have made a difference for thousands of Nova Scotians. It has been noticed.

Beyond Borders, a national organization advancing the rights of children everywhere to be free from sexual abuse and exploitation, awarded Martin and Sutherland the Rosalind Prober Award for Advocacy. We know the story all too well in this Legislature for we were all part of it. Bob and Dale along with Alvin McInnis, Weldon Reynolds, Jeff Hadley, and Barry Sutherland, bravely offered their faces to change a law that restricted the ability for historical victims of abuse and assault to challenge their perpetrators in a civil court of law.

But, Mr. Speaker, their struggle did more than that. They opened up public discussion for people who had been sexually assaulted or abused. They gave a voice to people who suffer in silence. Their strength placed shame with the abuser and took power back for the survivor.

We must remember that each time a survivor speaks it is an emotional experience. May we in the Legislature truly listen to those who speak, and let us show our respect by taking action when there is something we can do to help.

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

ERDT - INTERNET SERV.: SOUTHWESTERN N.S. - PROVISION

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, residents of southwestern Nova Scotia are wondering when they will have reliable Internet service. I ask all MLAs to consider if the carefree information highway was to slip away on them. I'm not sure that government or the MLA offices could function in today's world, yet the current government is asking residents of southwestern Nova Scotia to live without what has become a basic service of business and everyday life.

In February 2014, the Economic and Rural Development Minister, who is now the Minister of Energy, said the Internet provider had until the end of the year to offer rural broadband service to isolated pockets of the province. Well, it's almost the end of 2015

and the residents of southwestern Nova Scotia are still without reliable service - another example of how this current government cannot be taken at their word.

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

LIVELY, BURTIS - LAKE ECHO CONTRIBUTIONS

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate and recognize Burtis Lively on his contribution to the community of Lake Echo. He and wife Elsie moved to Lake Echo in 1969 and raised their four children in the community. He formed his company Burtis Lively Masonry Limited in 1977. Bruce built the chimney for the Lake Echo Fire Department building in the early 1970s - he would work all day at his trade and build the chimney in the evenings, free of charge.

Burtis is 82 years of age now, retired from the masonry trade and still resides in Lake Echo. He practised his masonry trade for many years in Lake Echo and other communities. As a testament to his skill as a mason, his work is still standing and functioning well. I congratulate and applaud Burtis Lively on his achievements and contributions to the community of Lake Echo.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

FRASER, KRISTA - WELL WISHES

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, Krista Fraser served the people of Pictou County and beyond for 18 years in the Central Nova constituency office in New Glasgow. Krista volunteered with Peter MacKay's team in his first election, and Peter quickly saw that she was an invaluable asset and immediately hired her upon winning the Central Nova seat.

Krista has been an asset to not only Peter but to the constituents of Pictou County, always working hard on their behalf. Krista is a wealth of information whose common sense, compassion, and years of experience dealing with federal and local issues will set her apart wherever she goes. As she begins a new chapter, I wish her well and thank her for all she has done for Central Nova. Thank you.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, may I make another introduction please?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. ZANN: Thank you. I would like to draw everybody's attention to the west gallery where we have a couple more students from the Dalhousie Student Union. We have Sarah Trower, and we have Mr. John David Hutton, who is vice-president academic and external. Please welcome them to the House. (Applause)

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

ENVIRON.: CLIMATE CHANGE - SUPPORT

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, at the end of this month Paris will host the 21st United Nations Climate Change Conference. According to the UN, the purpose of this conference is to finally establish a binding and universal agreement on climate change. After 20 years of international negotiating, this would be historic and welcome news to the millions of us around the world who recognize that climate change is the single biggest challenge facing our planet.

Ahead of the Paris Conference and closer to home, vigils and marches are being planned in many Canadian towns and cities and with most taking place on November 29th. These demonstrations will show Canadians' deep desire for concrete action to be taken on tackling climate change. I encourage all Nova Scotians to take part in these local marches and join the chorus of voices around the world calling for change. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MACNEIL, SARAH - ATL. UNIV. SPORTS STUDENT - ATHLETE COMMUN. SERV. AWARD

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Sarah MacNeil of Albert Bridge for receiving this year's Atlantic University Sports Student-Athlete Community Service Award. Sarah plays forward with the Dalhousie Tigers Women's Hockey. The recreation management student is in her fourth season with the Tigers and serves as the team's assistant coach.

Sarah MacNeil also serves as a student-at-large board member for Recreation Nova Scotia. She is also the team spokesperson and organizer for Hockey Players 4 Kids, a two-month long reading competition at local elementary schools, among her other causes. She was also one of two winners of the 2015 Sun Life Financial/CIS Scholarship Award at Dalhousie.

It is with great pleasure that I congratulate Sarah MacNeil on her many achievements. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

KENT, PAUL/PELLEY, EMILY: COMMUN. IMPACT - CONGRATS.

MR. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, this evening I will have the opportunity to recognize two outstanding individuals who continue to make a positive impact in their respective communities in our province and in the world. Mr. Paul Kent is a well-known business and community leader who gives his time and expertise to many charitable foundations. Ms. Emily Pelley, a Ph.D. candidate at Dalhousie University, demonstrates her passion for social justice, through her research and involvement with community and organizations.

Mr. Kent and Ms. Pelley both demonstrate key humanitarian and Nova Scotian values, which include a respect for other human beings and a willingness to work together to find solutions to community problems. They exemplify what it means to be true humanitarians in the 21st Century and are strong advocates for many worthy causes. Let them be examples to all of us of how we can work to address the needs in the communities around us.

Once again on behalf of the Premier, our government, and all Nova Scotians, congratulations to the awarded recipients and thank you for your tremendous contributions.

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

CONST. ASSOC. (N.S.): THE BIG DIG IWK FUNDRAISING - CONGRATS.

HON. DIANA WHALEN: I rise today to congratulate the Construction Association of Nova Scotia - CANS - who helped organize an amazing fundraiser, the Big Dig, in support of the IWK Hospital Foundation. The Big Dig was held at the Cunard Centre on Saturday, November 14th. I had the opportunity to attend the gala event with more than 900 other people. Many were members of the construction industry who came together to support the care of children in our community.

This year the focus of the event was on the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at the IWK. Guests were moved by a video of a family's experience in the NICU. Many companies stepped up to sponsor for the event and it is interesting to note that the winner of the \$25,000 raffle reflected the spirit of giving by immediately donating \$10,000 back to the IWK.

In total the event raised \$327,000 for the IWK, the highest amount ever raised. Mr. Speaker, I would like everybody to join me in congratulating the organizers of the event and especially the CEO of the IWK Foundation, Jennifer Gillivan, and her team, for their continued wonderful efforts on behalf of all children at the IWK.

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

GEDDES, MARLEY - PENGROWTH-N.S. ENERGY SCHOLARSHIP

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, the Pengrowth-Nova Scotia Energy Scholarship is awarded to 16 students, eight enrolled in energy-related university programs and eight enrolled in trades and technology programs at the Nova Scotia Community College. Recipients of the scholarship program are chosen based on academic standing, community involvement, and interest in the Nova Scotia energy industry.

This past October, South Colchester Academy graduate Marley Geddes was one of the successful recipients of a one-time scholarship of \$2,500, to work toward her Advanced Diploma in Geographic Information Systems at the Nova Scotia Community College.

I would like to extend congratulations to Marley and wish her well in both her education and along her career path. Thank you.

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

**EECD: TUITION CAP REDUCTION/GRAD. RETENTION PROG. CUTS
- EFFECTS**

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, university students in Nova Scotia are paying the price for the Liberals' decision to throw away the university cap and cut the Graduate Retention program. We are already seeing the results of these short-sighted decisions with concerning reductions in enrolment.

Under this Liberal Government, university students are carrying the burden of university debt while the government allows university presidents to receive high salaries even after they retire. McNeil's Movers: moving the wealthy up and the students out. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

MACVICAR, ANN - BEDFORD CONTRIBUTIONS

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment today to tell you about an amazing woman who lives in Bedford. Her name is Ann MacVicar, and for the last 20 years she chaired the Scott Manor House and the Fort Sackville Foundation. Under Ann's guidance the foundation has unearthed and protected the history of Bedford, gathering it all together at Scott Manor House. That's the home of Joseph Scott, who arrived in Halifax with Governor Cornwallis back in 1749.

Ann has a very nice way with volunteers. It's no wonder the organization thrived under her leadership. At a recent event honouring her, people mentioned they would be

chatting with her and the next thing they knew, they had volunteered, but you didn't mind because, well, it was Ann who asked.

I like her because she has a good head on her shoulders and she's the kind of person you can go to for some advice. She's practical and she gets things done, plus she calls me "kid." That's probably a leftover from her days as a schoolteacher, but it makes me feel young.

I hold her in high esteem and I'm delighted to speak about her today. Ann MacVicar is the kind of person who makes you glad to live in Bedford.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

ANSEMS, FRED - ANNA. VALLEY GIANT VEGETABLE GROWERS COMP.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise today to remind members of this House of how critical and valued the agricultural community is to our province.

Farming is not all hard work. Some of it is simply fun. In pumpkin season, some of the growers in Nova Scotia put their skills to the test in attempting to grow the largest pumpkin possible. This year marks the 30th Anniversary of Nova Scotia's giant pumpkin weigh-off. I want to draw attention to the new Valley record set at this year's Annapolis Valley Giant Vegetable Growers competition.

Steam Mill resident Fred Ansems took the top prize and trophy for his pumpkin entry of 1,402 lbs. Congratulations to Fred and all those who worked so hard to make the pumpkin weigh-off a success.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West on an introduction.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I draw my colleagues' attention to the east gallery, where I'd like to introduce a young gentleman by the name of Andre Brideau, I would ask Andre to stand.

Andre is a graduate of Parkview Education Centre and presently a commerce student at Dalhousie University. He has engaged himself significantly as a young person in the governance not only of the province but of the country. I want to acknowledge and recognize Andre for his participation and future opportunities that are available to our young people. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

PRISONERS' JUSTICE DAY - ANNIV. (40th)

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, on every anniversary of the death of Edward Nalon in a segregation cell in the Millhaven Penitentiary on August 10, 1974, Canadians hold vigils to mark all prisoners' deaths. Many prisoners fast on that day, while others outside of prison meet and call for a more humane correctional system.

Since Mr. Nalon's death 41 years ago, we've become increasingly aware of the link between solitary confinement, deteriorating mental health, and suicides in prisons. Just this year, two women tragically lost their lives in the Nova Scotia facility in Truro. Far too often our prisons serve as a residence for the poor, addicted, and mentally ill.

To mark the 40th Anniversary of Prisoners' Justice Day, I urge the Minister of Justice to ensure all facilities in Nova Scotia are environments where rehabilitation comes first. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Members' Statements has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS**

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

PREM. - MENTAL ILLNESS: INVOLUNTARY TREATMENT

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, we learned of the desperate efforts of a Bedford family to get their 13-year-old son the help they needed at the IWK while dealing with a mental illness. We know he was turned away repeatedly until he made an attempt on his own life. Fortunately, he was eventually referred to the IWK Adolescent Intensive Services treatment program. But, Mr. Speaker, the boy refused to go, and under the law, his parents can't do anything about that.

I'd just like to ask the Premier, does he think it's appropriate that when a 13-year-old boy struggling with mental illness refuses the help he needs, his parents are helpless to get him the help that he needs?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, first of all let me say to the member opposite that I think every member of this House would recognize the challenges some families face and some of the circumstances around adolescent mental health.

If you see the changes that have been made in the system over the last number of years, it's responding to the challenges that show up. Sometimes they show up because of individual cases; other times you see them show up in almost every case. You respond to those and try to make the changes to make supports more accessible for families and for those who require those services.

I had the good fortune recently of being at the Garron Centre. The changes that have taken place there are remarkable to me, compared to what was there before. We'll continue to work with community and with families to make sure that the system is there to be able to respond to individual circumstances.

MR. BAILLIE: The problem in this case is the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act, which requires patients' consent to be treated, regardless of their age. Even a 13-year-old boy can refuse treatment, Mr. Speaker, even if his parents want him to get that treatment desperately. As Steve, the boy's father, said, "If you have a mentally challenged individual who is 13 years old who cannot make rational decisions, the legal guardian should be able to have the authority to help him get the help that he needs."

We agree with that, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to ask the Premier if he agrees with that. If so, will he review the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act and see to it that changes are made to allow parents to get their kids the help that they need?

THE PREMIER: I thank the honourable member for the question. As I said at the beginning in the first question, Mr. Speaker, we're always looking at public policy and how we can improve it so that it responds to the needs of individual families. I know the department will be looking at this particular circumstance and what has been highlighted based, not just by this case - if it's showing up in other places and if there needs to be changes to public policy, the government of any political stripe would try to respond to the needs of its citizens.

MR. BAILLIE: That is all well and good in a general sense, but here is a very specific action that the government can take that doesn't cost any money that could actually see young children like this young boy get the help that they need when their parents want them to have it. I encourage the Premier to take a look at that Act and make those changes.

Of course the problem is more than just this one story. As Steve, the father, himself said, "We are a family in crisis . . . There is a problem in the system, it has to be rectified and I have no option except to speak out."

I commend Steve, the father in this case, for speaking out. I'll ask the Premier if he'll listen to the voices of Steve and all the other parents out there who need help and call a public inquiry into the state of mental health services in the province.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I too want to applaud the family for speaking out. It's a very challenging time. It's painful when families have loved ones that they're trying to respond to and then having to have that displayed in front of all us is challenging but courageous at the same time on behalf of those families.

As I said to the honourable member in my first two questions, the minister and our partners across this province will continue to work and will continue to look at public policy. Is it working? Is it responding to what's happening in families and in communities across this province? If not, we'll make the adjustments.

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

AG REPT. (11/18/15) - UNIVERSITY FUNDING

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General tabled a report today; Chapter 4 of that report focuses on funding to universities. The report highlights that universities are on a track to run a structural deficit of \$50 million by 2018-19, something we've heard the minister say in the past. This government is attempting to deal with that deficit by allowing tuition to rise. Meanwhile, university executives are continuing to earn more and more.

My question for the Premier is, why is the government allowing university executives to collect increasingly excessive salaries while students are being asked to pay more and more than ever before?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that the premise of the question is absolutely inaccurate and wrong. If you go back, before this House was Bill No. 100 which actually brought in accountability and sustainability to post-secondary education, which I want to remind the honourable member she voted against. It is for this very thing, accountability.

When they were in government, they allowed universities to continue to do as they wished. We want to know how they are spending the money. This accountability piece will provide the proper reporting mechanism. We can look at it, make sure it's being spent in the right way for students, Mr. Speaker, and ensure that we continue to have the high-quality, post-secondary education that we have affordable in this province as we go forward.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, reporting that administrators are making these excessive salaries does little to do anything to contain those salaries. Just a few days ago, we learned that the former President of St. F.X. was able to collect \$1.2 million for administrative leave that he was not able to take during his term as president. Combine this with the structural deficit facing universities and it is evident there is a problem.

However, the government's plan to address the system involves lifting the tuition cap restricting collective bargaining of unionized employees and no mention of escalating university executives' salaries.

My question to the Premier is simple: Will the Premier commit to capping the salaries of university administrators?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I also want to remind the honourable member that it was her Party that was in power when that contract was signed that she is referring to. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, this government will do at university levels the same way as the P to 12 education - we will always put students first.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, our government put a cap on tuition for students. We know that universities in Nova Scotia are depending more and more on students from outside the province to maintain enrolment numbers; in fact over one-third of students at our universities come from other provinces. However, the removal of the tuition cap for an indefinite amount of time on out-of-province students could put enrolment numbers at risk.

My question for the Premier is, what is being done to ensure the lifting of the tuition cap does not force an overall decline in enrolment, which would further increase the likelihood of an ongoing structural deficit at the universities?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I also want to thank those thousands of students - tens of thousands of students - from across Canada, and really across the world, who recognize the high quality of post-secondary education that is offered in the Province of Nova Scotia, at every institution we have.

I also want to remind the honourable member that those institutions rely on those foreign students and other sons and daughters of Canadian citizens to come to this province. They know full well that they have to be competitive in this global marketplace in order to continue to attract those bright young people who, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, we've just added some great public policy that will allow them to remain here in Nova Scotia.

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

AG REPT. (11/18/15) - BUS. CONTINUITY PLANNING

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Nova Scotians need to know they can rely on crucial government programs and services even in the case of an emergency. But we learned from the Auditor General's Report today that the

Premier has assigned no one in government to take responsibility for business continuity planning; in other words, making sure that critical services in corrections, housing or emergency management is officially assigned responsibility for this very important task.

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the Premier, why was no one in his government assigned to ensure that services are available to Nova Scotians on a constant basis?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question and I want to ensure him that we had identified this issue before and it falls under the responsibility of Minister Kousoulis.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, in fact, the Auditor General reported that although Department of Internal Services has taken on an informal responsibility for this process, no one actually has been given the authority to make sure that government services, important and critical ones, are available, despite emergencies that we may face.

Although the department has informally taken on that responsibility and done things like developing templates for use by others, it turns out that departments are not required to use them. In fact, some departments, on their own, are spending time and money developing alternatives to the ones that were informally provided by the Department of Internal Services.

It's ultimately the Premier's office that is responsible for these cross-department initiatives. I'd like to ask him, why is he taking such a haphazard approach to something as important as emergency planning across government?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Auditor General for the work that he does. I want to thank Minister Kousoulis for the work that he is doing on behalf of all government. (Interruption) Sorry Mr. Speaker, I obviously got some attention over there. It would be helpful for democracy if the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party could at least ask a simple question that would somehow move the debate along.

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

LAE: NSCAD TUITION INCREASE - MIN. PREVENT

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. When the minister was in Opposition, she was quoted as saying that she didn't know if economists would think that raising tuition would be anything other than a disaster. I'll table that. Last night a meeting was held at NSCAD outlining a 37 per cent tuition increase, which would make NSCAD the most expensive fine art school in the country. My question for the minister is, what is she prepared to do to prevent a 37 per cent increase in tuition at NSCAD, which in her own words a few years ago, would be nothing short of a recipe for disaster?

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. It is interesting how much we learn when we're in government, isn't it? I would like to point out, for the honourable member's information, that students at NSCAD have in fact, in the past, been able to take free courses so they would pay for four courses and they could take a fifth and sixth free of charge. We think it reasonable that our universities be able to charge similar amounts for similar courses. We certainly understand and sympathize with students that any change in tuition can be difficult and that's why we have one of the best student assistance programs in the country.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we have one of the best student assistance programs in the country because we made it so when we were in government. Back in 2011, before the minister knew what she knows now, she called tuition increases a recipe for disaster. Today she calls a 37 per cent increase reasonable. We're watching tuition rise all across this province and students will be hurt by this. My question for the minister is, while cost after cost is piling up on the backs of Nova Scotia students, what is she prepared to do for the student population so they don't have to wear this exorbitant debt load?

MS. REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As I indicated earlier we do understand that any increase in tuition can be difficult for students and their families and that's why we have one of the best student assistance programs in the country. We have a \$1,300 bursary that goes to every undergraduate student who is studying here in Nova Scotia. We have loan forgiveness; we have 0 per cent interest.

What's interesting is that suddenly the NDP is concerned about students. When they were in government, they slashed \$35 million from universities, and now they're shocked? Mr. Speaker, now they're shocked - oh my goodness, they can't believe that universities can't balance their budgets. That's why they can't.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

LAE: AG REPT. - UNIVERSITY ACCOUNTABILITY

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. Earlier this year the minister uncapped tuition rates, and we do already see tuition increases happening all across the province. I guess reasonable or not is not the question for today. The question for today is, just this morning the Auditor General's Report found that the department is not holding universities accountable for the funding provided. We have uncapped tuition rates and more money for the universities from the students, yet the department is not holding the universities accountable.

So my question today is, why is this government asking students and their families to pay more when they don't even know if the financial performance of the universities is effective or efficient?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for his question. I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that we do know what the financial position of the universities is. Unfortunately, there was not regular accounting in the past. That's one of the things that concerned me when I came in and I was minister.

As a result of that, we brought in the Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act, which will give us, students, and taxpayers a better idea of what's going on at universities. I'm sure right now that particular member is sitting there and wishing that he had voted for that particular bill.

MR. HOUSTON: Actually, Mr. Speaker, a little history lesson might be effective here. The tuition rates were uncapped and then this bill came in. We'll see how this bill performs, but the reality is that this government's first move was to turn to the pockets of students and ask them and their families to pay more. They were willing to do that instead of holding universities accountable. We've already seen the Graduate Retention Rebate taken away, and uncapped tuitions. Where does it end?

The question today for the minister: does this government plan to also address the \$50 million potential deficit that we've heard talked about today? The Auditor General expressed his concerns about it. Does this government intend to turn to students and their families to pay that \$50 million potential deficit as well? Is that their first move on that one?

MS. REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for his question. He is in error. Tuitions are not uncapped. That seems to be a myth that he likes to keep repeating, and it's not true. They are not uncapped. Read the information and you'll understand that, number one.

Number two, the Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act gives us a better idea of when a university is getting in trouble. There is no doubt - and I was very clear about this in February - our universities are heading into an unsustainable position. If he has any suggestions I'm happy to hear them, but I'll tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, that he should've voted for the Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act, because that will give us a better picture when they're getting into (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

EECD - AG REPT.: OVERSIGHT - ADEQUACY

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, this morning's Auditor General's Report contained many things to make parents with school-aged children concerned. The Auditor General found that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is not providing adequate oversight and monitoring of educational services delivered by school boards. The department has not established educational performance standards or

performance targets for provincial assessments, in that there is no clearly defined accountability relationship between the school boards and the department.

My question, Mr. Speaker: parents expect the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to provide oversight of the education their children receive. Why has this accountability been ignored?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I would like to remind everyone in the House that the audit that has just been completed and reported on by the Auditor General is one that I called for as the minister to ensure that we were clear on roles and responsibilities and that elected board members were clear on their roles and responsibilities. I maintain that the effectiveness of education in our classrooms depends on the relationship between the classroom teacher and the students there.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is ultimately responsible for the education results of all students in the province, but it is not actively monitoring or acting on these results. Parents want and deserve to know how their children are doing in relationship to other children across the province.

My question is, how can parents be sure their children are getting the education they need to succeed and compete if the department doesn't actively monitor or act on education results?

MS. CASEY: To the member opposite and to others who are listening - it's important to know that one of the priorities that we set when we formed government was education. The second thing that we did was we listened to what teachers and parents told us when we did our minister's panel.

One of the things that they made very clear to us was the importance of understanding what their students were asked to learn and what the results of those assessments were. That takes place on a regular basis, daily assessments by teachers, system-wide assessments, and also the provincial assessments. That information is based on the program and curriculum, and it is shared with parents, and they certainly appreciate that.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: N.S. HEALTH AUTH. - DEFICIT

HON. DAVID WILSON: My question today is for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Yesterday, we asked the Premier about the Nova Scotia Health Authority's deficit and planned cuts to deal with this deficit. The Premier didn't know what was going on, Mr. Speaker, but I would hope - I would hope - that the Department of Health and Wellness is in constant contact with the new health authority. I would like to ask the minister . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: You don't mean that about me.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I do mean it, Mr. Speaker. How far into deficit has the new health board fallen?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I thank the honourable member for the question. One of the very early initiatives was to have a very, very strong communication process between the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority. I know that when the health authority came into existence, it obviously had to pick up the deficits that were there from the previous nine districts which were, in fact, there year after year after year, and under the previous government, bailed out by the Department of Health. That will not happen under this government.

MR. WILSON: I don't think the minister heard me. I asked him about this year's budget. We know from that answer that Nova Scotians should be concerned. There are going to be widespread cuts across health care because he is not living up to the responsibility of being the Minister of Health and Wellness. In the Nova Scotia Health Authority's meeting minutes from June (Interruptions) People need to be quiet to listen to the question, Mr. Speaker.

The Chief Financial Officer stated that he had been meeting with staff across the province to deliver the message, which I assume came from the Minister of Health and Wellness, that the board is serious about meeting their targets to reduce the deficit. I'd like to ask the minister again, what targets have the Department of Health and Wellness given to the health authority, and what reductions are we going to see in the future?

MR. GLAVINE: What I'm pleased about today is the strong direction that board chairman Steven Parker is giving to the health authority, monitoring what is taking place in terms of their directives right across the province. We know that there is tremendous duplication - redundancy - in the system. That's what the directive is talking about. I anticipate that we will see a balanced budget come the end of 2015-16.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

PSC - NEW GRADS: JOB PROG. - PROV. DISTRIBUTION

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of the Public Service Commission. The minister stood today and referred to an

announcement that he made last week and indeed gave a bit more detail today on how that would work.

I would ask the minister, of those 70 jobs for our youth and new graduates he is referring to, is there a policy or process in place along with that that speaks to how they will be divvied up throughout the province?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. The positions are from one end of the province to the other. I would also like to add that when I scanned the positions last week, there were approximately five or six that were in the member's general area of Wolfville and the Valley.

While I have the opportunity, if anyone at home would like to see where these positions are listed, the 70 positions with very little to no work experience are at makeithere.novascotia.ca, and all positions in the Public Service are posted on careerbeacon.com. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister, although a little geography lesson maybe later about where Wolfville and my constituency are but that said, not that far away.

Can the minister clarify how many of those Public Service jobs actually exist throughout the Valley, maybe including Windsor as part of the Valley and down through at least the eastern part of that and potentially how many could end up in that area, or if there is a specific number?

MR. KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I don't have the exact number but I can ask the department to pull together how many of our Public Service positions are in those areas and provide them to the member. Thank you.

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

**COM. SERV. - FOSTER PARENTS (C.B.):
FUTURE ADOPTION - JEOPARDY CONFIRM**

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Services. Today we heard about a foster parent in Cape Breton who struggled with the department's decision not to allow her to adopt one of her foster children. After posting her experience on social media, she received a call from the Department of Community Services in which she felt the finalizing of another adoption was being threatened.

The question is, is there a policy that would result in the future adoption of another foster child, because of that situation? Would that put in jeopardy the adoption of another foster child?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Thank you for the question. When I travel the province and I meet with various foster parents and I've said, and I've been on record, in my opinion foster parents are the greatest human resource that the Province of Nova Scotia has.

Foster parents go through a very strenuous assessment phase; they must adhere to all kinds of policies and procedures that go around the care of children, and they all provide a safe and stable environment for children in care.

I won't speak to specifics of any case but the policies and the processes for adoption and permanent care are there in place and they are available to every foster parent who is in the system right now.

MR. HARRISON: Thank you, I rest my case.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

EECD: SCHOOLS - EMERG. DRILLS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Today the Auditor General revealed that not all schools are conducting emergency drills as required, and this is a concern. The safety of our schools and school staff should be a top priority, but today we learned that some schools are falling short.

Mr. Speaker, my question is, will the minister commit today to meeting with the appropriate school board members and school principals of the six schools that failed to comply?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you to the member. I would agree, I think everyone in this House would agree that the safety of our students and staff in our buildings is a number-one priority every day of every month of every year.

To recognize the national fire code standards is something that we automatically do and we expect principals in the schools to adhere to those standards, to conduct the fire drills and evacuation drills as per those standards.

When it was brought to our attention that some had not, we immediately met with the superintendents. That has already happened and I can assure you that that will be monitored more closely, not only by the principal and the superintendent, but by the department.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the firefighters we have spoken to are very concerned. It is very important that students and staff know how to get out of their school in an

emergency and are worried this may be just the tip of the iceberg. We certainly do not want to witness a tragedy in the province. My question to the minister is, will the minister commit to a full review of the 2014-15 fire drill record in every school in Nova Scotia and make those findings public so parents can see how their schools measure up?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important and most of us here would recognize - and I'm sure the member would, in his previous life as a school teacher and principal - that the relationship that exists between the local fire departments and the school is strong, it is important, and the students in the schools recognize, understand and appreciate the role of the firefighters in the community. When they come into the schools to do education programs they have a captive audience and we will continue to work with the fire departments and with the parents and students to make sure, as I said, that every student and every staff member is safe all of the time when they are in those buildings.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - GAMBLING DATA: UPDATE - OMISSION

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. In the October 2015 Mental Health and Addictions Strategy progress update, one objective seems to have disappeared from the minister's radar and that is to collect and monitor alcohol, drug and gaming data. This is odd because in the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy update in 2013, collecting gambling data was shown to be implemented, but now in the minister's progress update this objective is blank. I wonder if the minister can explain why in his update it does not include collecting gambling data which was included in previous updates?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much and I thank the former Health and Wellness Minister for that important question. The data has been collected, the report is still being put together. One of the areas, of course, that we all know from previous reports is that there needs to be that whole validity check on certain sample sizes, so that is currently being put together. I am pretty certain it could be before Christmas, but January at the latest when that full report will be released to the public.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer. The minister will know that the Auditor General, in his June Report, found the department does not monitor gambling treatment and does not know whether prevention and treatment services result in reducing gambling-related harms. Without the collection and monitoring of gambling data it is hard to be able to know if you have the right prevention and treatment services in place. I want to ask the minister, when will he be making this information available so that we can get on with developing the important treatment programs that are needed for people with gambling addictions?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that important question on providing Nova Scotians with information on what the trends are. The data has been collected, it will obviously be released, but more importantly at the same time, we will take the monies that were in the foundation when it was collapsed and we'll be identifying a number of research and support programs that that money can be used for. In the past it had a very restrictive clause around how that money can be used. We need to loosen that up so that these monies can get out in support of Nova Scotians who need treatment and who need long-term support.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

BUS.: FILM IND. - INCENTIVE STRUCTURE

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Business. In the months since the government's ill-conceived axing of the Film Tax Credit, we have learned that many of the dire warnings advanced by the industry have come true. Production has fallen under the new system and skilled and vibrant workers and taxpayers are leaving for work elsewhere. Money is left on the table and it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract investment to Nova Scotia because of an incentive fund that is unworkable.

My question for the minister is, how many film workers is the minister prepared to lose to other provinces before developing a workable incentive structure that will bring investment, economic activity, and jobs back in this province?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. I'm not sure where my colleague has been in the last number of months but there has been significant attention not only to the film industry, but to the success of the film industry. We've had a number of discussions with the film industry and we know we have the same objective.

Certainly we've listened to what the industry has said to us and the most important message we received from them is that it was absolutely necessary to change the discussion around the film industry itself and its viability in the Province of Nova Scotia. We've worked with the industry, and we've attempted in working with them to restore the confidence in the industry so that our domestic and international partners will see the same.

MR. LOHR: I would like to thank the minister for that answer, but I wonder if we're talking about the same industry. We've heard that, in fact, the production numbers have dropped off and the fund, the new fund, has not been fully subscribed, it's fairly significantly undersubscribed. The policy, what we're hearing from the industry is that this policy is not working.

This is my question, does the minister consider a policy change that has forced many taxpaying Nova Scotians to move away for work or find themselves on social assistance a meaningful solution to Nova Scotia's economic problems?

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, the industry has told us clearly that the new Film and Television Production Incentive Fund is working. I want to reference articles from the media on July 19th - and I'll table these - where a prominent international producer has encouraging words about Nova Scotia's future as a film production centre. He went on to say, "My feeling is the new incentive scheme is very workable and can go a long way towards helping film and television shows coming to Nova Scotia."

The chairman of Screen Nova Scotia indicated that "We're not looking to have the fund returned . . . We're trying to move forward." And he went on to say that "We need to address the lack of business confidence . . . I think we can do this in partnership with government . . . But it requires both parties to work together . . ."

This government has done that. Last week we announced significant program funding for the film industry, and they're very supportive of those efforts.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

TOURISM: DDB MARKETING STRATEGY - OUTCOMES

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister responsible for Tourism Nova Scotia.

With annual revenues of over \$2 billion and plans to double that figure, the tourism industry truly is an economic generator for our province. With an Ontario company now at the helm of a \$6 million annual marketing budget, can the minister please explain how the government will gauge annually the outcomes of DDB's marketing strategy for Nova Scotia?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. The marketing service contract that has been recently awarded is a direct result of recommendations of the Ivany report to change the way we do business. For us in the department, we have an objective to double tourism revenues up to 2024. We believe through a very fair, transparent process, we have the best in class to support Tourism Nova Scotia's efforts in that regard.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, DEANS markets four counties, 12 municipalities, and they have an amazing track record of marketing these areas; however, with having \$60,000 of core funding cut from their budget, marketing will now be limited. Will the minister support DEANS in implementing a marketing levy, much like other jurisdictions in Nova Scotia, to help DEANS continue their marketing efforts?

MR. FUREY: I thank my colleague for the question. Tourism Nova Scotia will continue to work with our regional partners in identifying new opportunities and options to advance the tourism industry. But I want to repeat what I said earlier - we have an ambitious goal to double tourism revenues in the province by 2024. The focus, Mr. Speaker, is on attracting new first-time visitors and aligning resources against marketing activities to increase visitations to the province. That's the objective of the tourism strategy, and we'll continue to work with our local partners to achieve those objectives.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: LUN. CEC - TIME FRAME

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. On June 4th the minister told *The Chronicle Herald*, "We will by August have a very definitive statement on how the (collaborative emergency centre) will proceed for Lunenburg." I will table that.

My question is, what was that very definitive statement by the Minister of Health and Wellness in August on the Lunenburg Collaborative Emergency Centre?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: That statement was that the provincial health authority was carrying out their clinical services review, and what services and how they will be delivered in the future is what is being addressed for all of our CECs that are in existence and those that will be developed. They all have different requirements. We've now tasked the provincial health authority with providing communities with that plan, and that is their mandate.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: But that wasn't the answer because the question at that time was directly about the Lunenburg Emergency Centre being collaborative. So I hope that I get more of a specific answer this time.

I'm pleased that the CECs are on the way, but I'm disappointed that the Liberal Government has taken so long to get the process on the go in Lunenburg, and the ER was even closed last evening. Not having made any tangible progress in two years is just unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, when will the Lunenburg Collaborative Emergency Centre open? I have another document to table.

MR. GLAVINE: We all know that as these centres develop, it depends on the clinical teams as to what level of support they will give a collaborative practice. It's not just a matter, as the health authority is discovering, of going in and establishing it and setting it up. It has to be done in concert with the medical community, with the doctors and

the nurses and those support teams, in order to make it work. That's the work that's currently going on with the health authority.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: DART. GEN. HOSP. - ORTHOPAEDIC CTR.

HON. ANDREW YOUNGER: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. In April I joined him to announce the long-awaited start of construction at Dartmouth General Hospital, and I applaud him for being part of pushing that important project forward.

As part of the tour, the minister and health authority representatives spoke to the media about the Dartmouth General becoming a centre of excellence for orthopedics in the province, something they said would alleviate the pressure in Halifax and would locate a significant percentage of the orthopaedic work in the new operating facilities in Dartmouth. Is this still the minister's intention?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I thank the member for the question. I'm certainly pleased with the work and the plan that's going on at Dartmouth General with the third and fourth floors well under revision. We'll be starting on the fifth floor, a surgical theatre, as soon as that final design is in.

It will really be up to the health authority to say what centre of excellence. We all know the tremendous orthopedic need. We also know that Dartmouth General is fortunate to have an outstanding orthopedic team, and that certainly could be one of those considerations that the health authority will give strong support to.

MR. YOUNGER: It sounds a bit like what was a certainty is now a maybe. On the day of the announcement - I'll table two news articles from the day. One article from Metro News says, "The Dartmouth General is hoping to continue its success in orthopedics and become a centre for excellence in the area that medical professionals across the country would look to."

In Global News from the same day:

"What is planned for, about 50 beds on the fifth floor is now absolutely needed and part of a provincial plan that will fit in very well with looking out over the next 10-20 years. Once the renovations are complete, there are big plans for the hospital to become a specialized centre. The hospital would become the orthopedic centre"

Mr. Speaker, I will table those articles. I'm just wondering, why are we backing off that now?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, before we had the Nova Scotia Health Authority, it was certainly much easier for government to say this is exactly what will be done. We know we are now looking at all services from a provincial perspective. The health authority has done the clinical services review, they know very well the tremendous need for orthopaedic work, we have a long wait-list. I think we'll have to wait for the Nova Scotia Health Authority to make the final determination, but certainly the need is very strong.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - NORTHSIDE GEN. HOSP.: STEPS - REPAIR

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is also to the Minister of Health and Wellness. In February 2015, the steps at the front doors of the Northside General Hospital were closed, secondary to crumbling infrastructure. The people of the Northside were told that these steps would be fixed and the front doors would be open when the weather broke. We're almost into another weather season and there's no construction yet, so can the minister assure the people of the Northside that their steps will be fixed this year?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, it may sound some days like a little bit of a push off to the health authority, but indeed operations, and that's why we see every day a strengthening of services and standards across the province. What I'll tell the honourable member, since it is one of those urgent and safety areas, before the day is out I will be speaking to the health authority to move this project forward.

MR. ORRELL: Thank you, Mr. Minister. There was also supposed to be a plan in place for the ER and the lab at Northside General, but now it's mid-November and we don't have any plan yet. Can the minister update the concerned citizens of the Northside what the plans are for the emergency room and the lab at the Northside General?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I know that we've had teams at Northside working with the medical community there, doctors, nurses and others, to make sure there is an adequate service that will be provided, getting collaborative practices going so that primary care is looked after. Primary care is essential to reduce the burden and demands on an emergency room. The people of North Sydney and greater Cape Breton are fortunate to have an outstanding ER at Northside General.

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

TIR - NOVA STAR: BILLS - N.S. VENDORS LIST

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Yesterday in Question Period, the minister indicated that he had yet to receive a complaint concerning non-payment by Nova Star

Cruises to Nova Scotian suppliers. In today's *Chronicle Herald* article, we learned that Nova Star Cruises owes over \$200,000 to various Nova Scotia companies. My question is, previously the minister stated that the department reviews Nova Star Cruises' expenses - can the minister table a list of Nova Scotian vendors who are owed this money?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: No, Mr. Speaker, I can't, we don't have that list, as I said yesterday and what I said is absolutely accurate. What we looked at with respect to the cash flows for the Nova Star entity was about the general line items that spoke to the health of their service and their ability to continue under the confines and constraints of the \$13 million deal we had on the table. I don't have that list, I haven't been approached. Everything that I said yesterday is true and accurate and again, we're going to get this right and work together with Bay Ferries for 2016.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I encourage the member to get the list. In fact, if he doesn't pay the piper (Interruptions)

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 119.

Bill No. 119 - Mental Health System Public Inquiry (2015) Act.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I am so very pleased to rise today and speak to this bill. It is a very important bill. It is actually a bill that can provide real help to real Nova Scotians who every day are suffering because they have a family member who is mentally ill, or they are mentally ill, or they just want to see that people who are suffering from mental illness get the help they need in this province.

I know that the government itself has a bill before the House for debate later in this session, actually, to strengthen the ability of public inquiries to do their job. That is a good thing, because it means we all recognize that when there is an issue in our province that is so overwhelming and so strong and so demanding of attention, it needs the highest authority that we can give to that issue - that we have a strong Public Inquiries Act to make that happen.

Mr. Speaker, I know that in Opposition the Liberals and we, the PCs, actually agreed on the need for a public inquiry into the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children. I believe that since the election all three Parties have come together in support of a public inquiry into the past of the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children. There is an issue that a public inquiry is now going to be used to settle - a long-standing, big, historical problem in this province - and allow those who were former residents to seek justice, to tell their stories, to talk about things that need to be aired in public that have not been aired in public so they can have closure, and so that this province can not only close the file on a horrible historical incident that occurred here but also learn whatever lessons need to be learned systemically and take whatever actions need to be taken systemically, to ensure it never happens again. That is a good use of a public inquiry. The government is making use of a public inquiry in that case.

We agree that that is appropriate, Mr. Speaker. It's an area of agreement between the government and the Opposition. We all look forward to the day when that inquiry gets underway and does its work and does it strongly and makes recommendations back that we can then take action on in this House and throughout the province to finally close that awful chapter in our province's history. Mr. Speaker, I say that because we have a point of agreement on when public inquiries can be used.

I say to you and to all members of this House that I absolutely fundamentally believe that we have another issue in our province, perhaps one of the greatest health challenges of the 21st Century, right before us. That is mental health - the preservation of the population's mental health, the ability to get early intervention and diagnosis of mental illness where it occurs, to make sure that all Nova Scotians - young, old, people in the police services or others - get the help they need. It is an urgent issue of our time. It is an issue that is overwhelming the government's ability to deal with it. It's overwhelming our health care system. It's overwhelming one of the best hospitals in the world, which is the IWK. It's overwhelming rural health delivery systems. It is crying out for a complete reset, which only a public inquiry can allow to happen.

The reason we have this bill before the House is quite simple. One might ask if that is so - there is already a Public Inquiry Act, so why not just call the public inquiry, bring in the families who have their stories to tell, much like is going to happen with the public inquiry into the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children? Why not bring in the experts, why not bring in the providers of health services and look at the entire system under the current Act?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I wish that was happening. And we've called on the Premier to make that call, as it is in his power to do, and we will continue to bring examples to this House of why we believe that's necessary to compel the government to call that public inquiry. But the reason we're here today with this bill, which calls the public inquiry into the state of our mental health service as an act of law, is because we do not yet have agreement on this one between the government and the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, there are the government members who through their spokesperson, the Premier and the Minister of Health and Wellness, say there's no need, that there is no crisis in mental health service delivery, but we would disagree on this side of the House; we see it every day. We see it in our travels around the province; we see it from people that we hear from since we've started this great cause. We know, from story after story after story, from family after family after family, that there is a crisis in our system, and that the only way to deal with a crisis as overwhelming as this is to call a public inquiry with all the powers that it has, in order to reset the system so it can make sure those families get the help that they need.

I hope that through this bill, through our continuing call on the government, they will come to a point of agreement on this public inquiry just as we did on the Home for Colored Children, so that the families in Nova Scotia, who are dealing with mental illness, get the help that they need. It's really as simple as that, Mr. Speaker.

Just today we brought to this House the story of a family in Bedford, a mum and a dad with a 13-year-old boy, who suffers from mental illness, who has been a danger to himself and to others in his neighborhood, who presented himself through his mum and dad to the IWK and was turned away because he was not yet at a level of violence and danger that they could admit him, because it has become so tough to access services that they would literally have to be at a point of physical crisis in order to get into the mental health unit at the IWK. Mr. Speaker, that is a problem. That is a problem.

This story was reported on the CBC; this 13-year-old boy was sent home over and over until he finally reached a point where he talked openly about taking his own life. We can't have that. We can't leave a 13-year-old child undiagnosed and untreated until he reaches that point of crisis; that's why we need a public inquiry.

Then finally he is admitted and there is a treatment identified for that 13-year-old boy, but he declines, he refuses, as the current law allows him to do. Despite the desperate efforts of his dad, whose name is Steve, to get this child the help he needed, he didn't get it, Mr. Speaker.

So we brought to this House today a very practical step that can be taken, which is to change the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act, in order to make sure that for children, their parents can make sure that they get the help that they need. Mr. Speaker, it's

practical, it's affordable, and most importantly it gets 13-year-olds, young people like that child's age, the help they need, and I really hope the government takes up that cause.

The sad thing though, Mr. Speaker, is that's just one story, and that one fix may help that one child and that one family, but it's one of thousands and thousands and that's why we need a public inquiry. This is that great issue where statistics and human stories come together.

The Canadian Mental Health Association tells us that 200,000 Nova Scotians will face mental illness at some point in their lives. In a province of our size, that means every family. That means in every family at some point they will face mental illness. That means in every family there is a caregiver, a mum or a dad, or a grandma or a granddad who is trying to look after a struggling family member who has become mentally ill. These people, the volunteers that they are, without training, just out of love for their family member, they are going to do all they can. We all know that.

We can't rely on those caregivers for years and years to look after their child or their granddad and then leave them on a wait-list for two years to get into the mental health system. We can't leave people undiagnosed until they get to the point of crisis. We can't leave teenage daughters or sons suffering from depression in school without the help that they need, until they reach the point where suicide becomes an option for them in their own minds. We can't let that happen. We can't leave families in rural areas, where access to service is even harder to get, without the treatment they need.

I mentioned this story before in this House, Mr. Speaker. In my own constituency in Parrsboro, this all started when the parents of a young girl named Courtney Brown showed up in my constituency office one day, on a Monday. They had lost Courtney two days before; she died by suicide. She was mentally ill; she suffered from depression. She had been looking for help from a psychologist for a long time and the wait-list goes on and on, particularly in rural areas, and her story reached its tragic end before she got the help that she needed.

You can imagine the anguish of those parents; you can imagine the anger of those parents who will always wonder how it might have turned better if Courtney Brown had received the help she needed and the diagnosis that she cried out for, and the treatment that could have been available to her. That is why we need a public inquiry into the state of mental health service delivery.

I'm sure that everyone in this House knows that there are hundreds, if not thousands of Nova Scotians who work in our health care system as health professionals - psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, doctors - and they are all doing their best. There are others - police officers, front-line health workers like paramedics who are called to scenes and households where it becomes obvious that it is a mental illness that is at the heart of the call, who truly are the first to respond when mental illness presents itself in the homes.

We know that there are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of volunteers who work or volunteer at a variety of health charities - the Schizophrenia Society, the Mental Health Association. There is a long list and we should applaud them all; we should thank them all. The vast majority of them are doing the best they can.

They themselves tell us that the system is overwhelmed, that they can't help everybody, the wait-lists are too long, that the resources are too low and as a result too many families, too many individuals fall through the cracks. There have been countless stories about Nova Scotians who are mentally ill showing up at an emergency room and being sent away. There have been too many stories about our peace officers, our paramedics and others who have post-traumatic stress disorders that go untreated.

We bring these stories to this House in the sincere hope that it will lead to a public inquiry so that they can all get the help that they need. This is a human story. The economic story of course is that if Nova Scotians get the help that they need early enough in their illness, they have a great chance to return to productive society, reach their full potential, and help us build up the economy of this great province. That is the payback for getting this right.

But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, it is a moral issue. It is a moral issue because we cannot leave Nova Scotians with mental illness behind because we couldn't get our act together as a province to get them the help they need. That's why we need a public inquiry. Thank you.

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

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I'm certainly pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this very, very important issue that is before us today in the House. It's good to see that there are many members who are participating in the debate, who are here to hear what each Party - but more importantly each of us as MLAs - has to say about this issue.

Yes, as Minister of Health and Wellness, I certainly take full responsibility for the development of our policy and our program as it relates to mental health and also the wellness of Nova Scotians, which I have been speaking about and know that wellness in fact is that antidote, that counter effort to making sure that that whole concept of wellness broadens in our society, broadens in our population.

Wellness includes physical health, mental health, spiritual health, good social development - all of these areas. We are starting to talk about that, not just myself as minister but many people in the health care field, and we now see that under the leadership of Janet Knox, the CEO of the Provincial Health Authority.

I have to give kudos to the new provincial board. When they took a look at Dr. Strang's report about many of the social indicators and the area around wellness in our

province, they wanted this to become one of their major efforts over the next number of years and have developed a three-phase program that has started now across the province. The wellness of our population has all of those four components, so we need to continue to advance, as I said, that counter effort towards people who develop mental illness.

I give full measure to the previous government, which brought forward the strategy Together We Can. These were 33 recommendations that came forward and have been going through a process of development. As I've looked at the years 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15, we see now the checkmarks that have been able to be put by some of the recommendations, but more importantly the expansion on the 33 that says we have added x-number of clinical people to the delivery of Together We Can. That's why this is a living initiative that, yes, we talked about a five-year rollout of the 33 recommendations.

On August 15th - maybe lost during the barbecue season and the short summer that we seem to have - we gave an update on the strategy and gave an account of where we are. We didn't feel that we had the monies in the department to print a glossy brochure, which I know had been done before. But it is on the website, and I think it outlines very well a good number of initiatives through the course of a four-year period, in particular the last couple of years.

One of the big developments that has taken place as a result of Together We Can - and I highlighted the adolescent component of this the other day. I remember getting up to speak here in the House but what I found very, very troubling as a former educator was that we had between 900 and 1,000 adolescents waiting to be assessed. You know we have dropped that by many hundreds. I don't have the exact number but I know that having to wait 60 days is too long - but we're talking about non-urgent.

Overall in the province when we look at all those on wait-lists, we have reduced the wait-list time across Nova Scotia by 50 per cent since the Together We Can strategy came in. That in itself is a wonderful achievement. There are now actually areas of the province that have no wait-lists, there are a few areas that actually have no wait-lists and I think that again is a great accomplishment by some teams in some areas.

I want to depart for a moment and speak about the great work that does go on at the IWK. You know, look, that's the role of the Opposition, to highlight a case perhaps where the care was not as a family was hoping it would unfold. That will happen from time to time.

When I take a look as minister and as I did for many years, have a visit to the IWK and when I take a look at what happens there day in and day out, 365 days of the year and to have now what is in no other community of North America - the Garron Centre is state of the art. It's a lead, physical place for those who come in in trauma. The program that is being delivered was lauded by Dr. Jana Davidson from B.C.'s Sick Children's. When she came in and took a look and added 14 more recommendations for adolescent mental health

in the province, she said you have a number of lead initiatives in the country taking place with adolescent mental health. That was a confirmation that we are doing a great amount of strong work each and every day.

It is actually upsetting to the IWK staff when the Leader of the Official Opposition puts out a press release and he is calling on the Liberal Government to reconsider its plan to reduce the number of psychiatrists for children and adolescents when, in fact, that is an erroneous statement and as Dr. Ruth Carter and as Tracy Kitch will attest, there has been no reduction, there will be no reduction in psychiatrists at the IWK. It is very important that we are honest with Nova Scotians on all occasions.

Can there be somebody on a sabbatical? Absolutely, those positions are there, they are being filled, those psychiatrists are at work so that's the reality check that we need.

One of the big developments in the province that is making a difference is community-based mental health care. I was at the Spryfield Medical Centre just this morning and again I would say for anybody here in the House, because we do have the entire province represented here, any community that is looking at a community health centre and you want to see a state-of-the-art, collaborative model with the Dalhousie Medical School and a delivery right there, every day in the Spryfield community - mental health and addictions services. There is a great model to take a look at there. It is open and available to citizens and it is that community-based mental health care, not just looking at the hubs. We have to see what is going on and what we can extend and develop further across the province and that's what we have to take a look at and that's where we are.

I applaud the new provincial health authority and what they are taking on in terms of continuing under the leadership of Dr. Courey and her work and the teams that will be continuing to assess what our needs are. I am certainly encouraged when, in our collaborative medical practices right across the province - we have some in all zones and they continue to develop and there are a number of communities where it's happening right now. This year we will have 50 GPs and family practitioners that will have that module on mental illness and mental health care for their patients. It gives them the insights to be able to make that first diagnosis, that first indication that they have a patient who will need to go on to receive additional help. So that's what we have in our collaborative practices.

Also, in some collaborative practices there will be a mental health clinician as part of the team and I believe that for the future that really is where we will need to have them, when doctors identify a patient. Any GP or family practitioner will tell you that many of the physical symptoms that patients present with really are more attached to mental health issues. If they could be dealt with there before they become more serious then that's what we need in the community, collaborative models that embrace mental health in a full manner.

In the last few days one of the areas that received a great deal of acknowledgement in our province - because this is not in all provinces and all areas of the country - is the mobile crisis team and how the mobile crisis team gets to the home, gets in the community setting to deal with a trauma that is taking place. We need to acknowledge teams like that that intervene and very often it is at very critical moments. We know that they have that narrative, that story that talks about good outcomes, a positive way of dealing with critical incidents. We need to acknowledge that kind of work that we have going on in our province.

There are a couple of areas that I think are starting to clearly demonstrate the kind of further attention that we will need to be given by our clinical teams and first of all it is seniors' mental health. Seniors' mental health, as Dr. David Pilon recently explained to me and especially for those who leave home and go into a nursing home and that kind of anxiety and elements of depression. They are leaving the home, the place where they have been for 70, 80 or perhaps 90 years and that causes them great adjustment difficulties and the importance of meeting it in the very early days in which they go to nursing homes. Also, with seniors we think that everything is set and everything is fine with seniors, but very often that is not the case and it's a growing area that we're going to need to give attention to through mental health services across the province.

One of the areas I was pleased that the Leader of the Official Opposition brought forward in terms of mental health is the growing demand to support PTSD victims and their needs. We see, again, services being delivered, the individuals, psychologists, psychiatrists are working to deal with as much as possible. In the community where I live and represent, Greenwood, and its association with the military community, the military community is responding in very significant ways to deal with those who have been in war zones and the impact it makes on them.

I just want to finish off with one very clear statement and that is what Starr Dobson said very recently on CBC - that yes, the mental health of Nova Scotia has had many deficiencies, it has been bad, but it has never been as good as it is right now.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have an opportunity to rise in my place and speak on Bill No. 119, which has been brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition and the PC caucus.

You know, this is a really fundamentally important issue to so many people in our province, and the Leader of the Opposition began by drawing attention to this horrendous story that we've seen in the news recently about the family in the Bedford area who have a young boy and they've had so much difficulty getting treatment for him. My heart goes out to that family and I know probably all members of this House are very concerned about that family and that young boy.

When I saw that story it caused me to think about a number of things including the fact I think we really need to have a conversation in this province about emergency health care and emergency rooms. People present in emergency departments every day with all kinds of symptoms, and when people present with heart attacks and with strokes, with broken bones, with burns, with these kinds of physical problems, severe stomach pain, our system has a lot of diagnostic tools and specialists and specialty services available that they can mobilize fairly quickly to deal with these issues. But our emergency rooms, and I was speaking to my colleague, a former paramedic here on my right, and we were talking about how emergency departments just don't have the necessary tools for when people present and they have depression and anxiety and psychosis, and if somebody is extraordinarily psychotic, that's pretty easy to identify but if it's a psychosis that's not as pronounced, it can be very difficult.

So we really need to find and we need to talk to our clinician community, talk about what are the best paths to get treatment in these circumstances, especially in the evenings and on weekends when your family doctor is not available and walk-in clinics are certainly not the appropriate or the suitable venue to present yourself or with a family member. There is something missing in our system; this is definitely a hole in the health care system that we need to talk about and we need to collaborate with a lot of different kinds of clinicians and providers to find good solutions.

I listened with great interest to what the Minister of Health and Wellness had to say and I'm really glad that the minister acknowledged the good work of the staff at the IWK. We all acknowledge the good work of the staff at the IWK. I'm particularly happy that the Minister of Health and Wellness acknowledged the good work of the staff at the IWK, and the fact that wait times have decreased significantly for assessments and being seen at the IWK. That minister fought me tooth and nail when I stood behind the IWK when they changed the way that they did business - some members here will remember that - for this very reason, that wait times were unacceptable and they did need to be reduced. But never for one moment did any of us think - I certainly didn't - that those changes would be the last changes you would have to make, and that that would go far enough. There are so many other things that need to be done.

The minister made reference to the mental health strategy, and many of the innovations and the good things that are happening as a result of that strategy, Together We Can - a strategy that I was very proud to oversee and introduce. But this Minister of Health and Wellness has cut funding to many of the amazing mental health organizations that were part of that mental health strategy. There have been a total of \$4 million in cuts at the community level in mental health services. You cannot stand in your place in this House and talk about all the good things you're doing and not acknowledge the harm you're doing when you cut organizations like the Schizophrenia Society of Nova Scotia, Eating Disorders Nova Scotia, HomeBridge Youth Society, and St. George's Youthnet Society.

Mental health and addictions services themselves have only seen a small increase in their budget for mental health and addiction programs - an extra \$285,000 over the entire province, for an entire year. It's very discouraging, I have to tell you, because I know - and I think probably I know as well as anyone the absolute pressures that there are on people in our society today. It causes me great concern when I hear that kids younger and younger and younger are experiencing anxiety, and that is the case.

One of the really important things that is in the mental health strategy is actually providing GPs, family doctors, with more training and more opportunity to intervene and be good clinicians on the mental health side. But I think we then also have to change the way we pay doctors, if they're going to be seeing people with mental health disorders, because that's not something where you just run in and out in 10- or 15-minute time frames. It's not the same as having an earache or a rash or getting a flu shot. These things require a longer period of time for our family doctors to be able to talk with a patient, and probably see them on a more frequent basis.

We have a full range of clinicians, psychologists, and social workers. We have peer support counsellors now. Nova Scotia is a leader in this, in having people who have experienced mental health disorders, who have lived with or are living with a mental illness, or who have recovered from a mental illness, be certified peer support trainers and counsellors. They can be the greatest source of support for someone who is going through the mental health system. We are leaders in this in our country, and that's something I'm very, very proud of.

We need to do things like expanding the Mobile Crisis Response Team. That team started out of a Health Canada grant from the North End Community Health Centre in my constituency in the north end of Halifax. It now serves pretty much all of HRM. It once was a crisis response program that was only available at certain times on certain days. Now it's a 24/7 crisis service, but it only works here in the metro area. Other parts of the province are without these services. We really do need to expand many of our community-based services.

We need to change and have more innovation around alternatives to emergency rooms as the place that people with mental health disorders go in a crisis. We have a province-wide crisis line, but I don't know to what extent the government is actually monitoring the effectiveness of that line. The Auditor General has been critical of other crisis lines, the gambling and the addictions crisis line that the government has. So that is something that we certainly need to have a look at.

I think the Leader of the Official Opposition quite properly brought up the concern that the Physician Resource Plan for the province actually recommended a reduction in the number of child psychiatrists. The subsequent report that was done after the Rehtaeh Parsons situation, from the professor from UBC, indicated that in fact the Physician

Resource Plan recommendation should be reversed and that investment needed to be made in expanding child psychiatry in the province.

I support that recommendation. I think it's very important that we have an adequate number of child psychiatrists in the province. Particularly, as I said, the number of younger and younger children who are experiencing anxiety and depression is really quite concerning; it's quite alarming. We all know that the earlier you intervene - early psychosis intervention - the greater the possibility of assisting people so that they do not have to go through their lives experiencing mental illness, recurring psychosis, becoming psychotic over and over again in kind of a cyclical fashion.

Many people in our province are concerned about this issue, and many families are impacted by this issue. This government has not only not done enough on this issue, but the kinds of reductions in funding to many of the community agencies that provide supports not only to people who have mental health diagnoses, but to their families - on Friday I went to the luncheon that the Schizophrenic Association had as part of their annual conference. It just troubles me to no end, Mr. Speaker, that an organization that was getting a measly \$60,000 to support the programs that they do from one end of this province to another for families who are living with a family member who has a diagnosis of schizophrenia have been cut. Their \$60,000 was cut by \$23 or \$24 million. This makes a tremendous impact on a small not-for-profit organization.

I remember very well when that organization was unable to provide the programs that they provide to family members and they were unable to provide it because they didn't have that small, little bit of money and what a difference it makes.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that is money that is very well spent. If you're a family member and you have someone in your family who has schizophrenia and you have no idea how this will impact that person and how you can be helpful then these programs really do help people recover and cope with illness. Thank you.

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

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this bill. Access to mental health care services is extremely important and I want to even go beyond the word "mental" and include emotional; mental and emotional care is really needed in this province. Nova Scotians from one end of this province to another are struggling to receive the health care that they need and this is in every area of health care.

As people begin to better understand the signs and symptoms of mental illness, more and more Nova Scotians are now trying to face the struggles and seek the help that they need. For someone struggling, seeking help can be an incredibly brave thing to do. When someone reaches a crisis point or their struggle begins to overwhelm loved ones and

themselves, or they don't have a support system in place, they need the health care system to be available.

Unfortunately, in my former life as clergyman, I have had to be a part of many situations in which there was a suicide, in fact, too many. Most of them were young people, there have been some adults as well. I remember back to a friend of mine in Fredericton, who didn't lose his business, but his business took a big hit and he had to lay off some people and he just didn't like the idea of doing that and he struggled and struggled. When I moved to Brookfield I went back to the Fredericton area to camp for three weeks and in that three-week period I met Lewis a number of times. He seemed to be his former self, he was happy, he was active and then I went back to Brookfield and within a day he committed suicide. He already knew what he wanted to do because that was the only option that was available to him at the time.

Another friend of ours, their son committed suicide because he lost a girlfriend and that loss was such that he took a gun to his head. These are very tough situations and these are only the ones that we know about. There are so many other people who are really struggling with mental and emotional illness.

This is not a new problem in Nova Scotia, for sure, but as people have found the courage to speak up, I think we're finally seeing the cost in not doing what we should be doing. For so long so many people suffered in silence and now we have a great number of Nova Scotians trying to put a light on the situation in this province. They are telling us that the system is in, well, some are accepting the word "crisis", some are not, I'm not going to elaborate on that. All I am saying is that people are desperately trying to seek help for themselves or their loved ones and the health care system at this point in time is not able to meet all of the needs.

There are so many talented and caring people working in our health care system every day and I'm certainly not going to take away from the credentials, from the care that doctors and nurses at the IWK and many other facilities give to us because they are very, very dedicated. But there are not enough of them, and that's the problem.

We don't have the resources available to deliver the quantity of care that is needed. We have the people to deliver the quality care that is needed but there are gaps. What I am saying is that a public inquiry into our mental health care delivery in this province will help us identify the things that are working and the things that are not working. We need to shed light on these issues and then we need to try and fix them. We cannot possibly know whether piecemeal solutions will improve the system, if we don't know exactly what is going wrong for us.

Over the years, a great deal of research has been done on our mental health care services. We need to build on this research and analyze what works and what doesn't work. We are in a time of loss right now. We have lost revenue, people are losing their jobs,

social services are being cut back; people are under a great deal of pressure - not enough resources, especially in the rural areas, to handle this kind of stress.

Stress is one catalyst for mental illness and emotional illness because people just don't know how to handle the feelings they have when they start losing things. Policies that worked well a decade ago may not be as relevant today as they were 10 years ago. We need to ensure that best practices are implemented from one area of this province to another. All protocols, all policies, all legislation needs to be reviewed to ensure that we have the most appropriate means to reflect on and to administer care to these people.

The allocation of both financial and human resources must be reviewed to develop a system where we are getting the best possible service with what we have available. I am certainly not going to argue that we don't have good things available, we do. We do have some great programs but these great programs cannot at this stage go far enough to meet the needs of this province. I think that by thoroughly reviewing all aspects of mental health care programming in the province, it's a way in which we can identify exactly what is missing.

From there, there are next steps and there are improvements. They can be made in a way in which we will look very responsible for the care in this province. There are changing needs of our population, there is no question. As I said before, people are having a hard time making their adjustments. I've come to the conclusion now that when someone calls my office for some difficulty they have, I try in the worst cases to go and actually see where they live, how they live, and how they are reacting to their circumstance. That's the only way I can get a real feel for what they need.

A report by the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis showed that in Nova Scotia we spend \$653 million each year on direct mental health services. That's more than six times what was allotted in this year's budget.

The only way to prevent such a devastating drain on our health care dollars is to find out what's missing and then try to find a way to deliver. I've been talking to many people in Community Services, and they are indicating that there are many changes taking place. They're very optimistic that these changes are going to help our system. It needed to be redone. The government has taken that in hand, and I'm hoping that all the changes are going to be to the benefit of Nova Scotia.

With the education, I'm glad that there's early intervention in the schools now to help children with difficulties in dealing with their situation.

The government is never going to get ahead of this issue if we continue to be as we are now. We need to change. We always need to change. If we don't, we won't meet the needs of the present generation.

There are many organizations out there that are caring for people struggling with mental illness, and as a result, many of these individuals do not have to seek the care of our hospitals and health care systems, because these organizations are great. A lot of them are peer organizations in which people have gone through the same thing and can get together and talk about ways of dealing with things. These organizations, I know, are saving the province a great deal of money.

By going forward with a public inquiry, we can not only seek the professional feedback necessary to solve the problems but get feedback from individuals who've had the experience. We can give Nova Scotians peace of mind that this will be done in an open and transparent way, independent of any direct government or political influence.

The fact of the matter is, we may not like what we find out. We may realize that it will require a lot of work to improve the systems the way we need to improve the systems.

Again, I want to say that things are being done. Things are being done by very good, competent, and caring people. We just need more, because this province is losing so many things. Individuals feel it, and we have to give them the means to find out what they will need to cope with that change in their life. I really hope that we do find out what this province needs, and that when we do, we implement some changes to make it the way we want it to be. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Madam Speaker, I do want to echo my colleague's comments that there are many good things that are being done, but I don't think that should detract us from trying to do better. We can always try to do better. Particularly in the area of mental and emotional health services, we have to do better, because the cost to people is too high, and the cost to our economic productivity is too high. I think if you go around and you talk to business owners, they'll tell you about instances in their own business where people are off work because of illnesses, the impact on the family, on the whole economy. It's too great to not do better.

In Pictou County - and I do think that Pictou County is a good example of why this inquiry is so badly needed - we had a service. We had a short-stay unit there that was taken away. You'll hear all kinds of reasons why that was taken away, whether it was because of a staffing shortage or because it wasn't effective, I think wasn't needed. There were all kinds of things. We hear all kinds of reasons why that service is no longer there.

Not to dispute or debate any of those reasons today, I would make a simple point that if any of those are true, and you need to find a better way to deliver services, then you find that better way to deliver services and then you do it. You don't just cancel the unit, close the unit, pull the rug away and tell people that we're going to temporarily close that unit.

We need to find out what the root of the issue is here, the real cause. You can do that through an inquiry where people can speak frankly and openly. In Pictou County we had 14 psychiatrists in 14 years. To me that's a symptom of a problem with a system.

I think when you go into an inquiry, you'll start to uncover those problems and those real issues. Then you can fix them and then you can provide the services to Nova Scotians that they deserve, particularly in the area of mental health.

I would just add my voice to all the others, the thousands of others who are saying yes, we do provide services; yes, the people who work in this field work hard and they do admirable work; but yes, we can do better. We'll only know how to do better if we try to do an honest assessment and really look at the things that need to be fixed. I do think a public inquiry would help us get there. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 32.

Bill No. 32 - Economic Growth Goals Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to rise and speak in support of the Economic Growth Goals Bill. It's not a new bill in this particular session, it has been on the order paper for over a year now actually. It is a direct result of the Ivany report and is one of the recommendations of the Ivany report that has been ignored by the government and has also not been taken up by the OneNS coalition.

It is an outstanding opportunity for us to actually move forward together, all sides in this House, and get something done. That's why I am calling it again today on our side of the House, because there are times in this House where a bill has been brought forward to set some great goals for our province and all Parties have voted in favour and moved forward to get them done. I am pointing, for example, to the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act of 2007 which, although it was an initiative of the Progressive Conservative Government of the time, did receive all-Party support and was passed unanimously. Meaning everyone in this Chamber, regardless of which side of the House they sit on, had ownership over the goals in that report.

Do you know what, Madam Speaker? Since then this province has done a pretty good job at implementing the goals that were set in that report. I say that because the great challenge we face economically today, in 2015, is that there is so little happening to kick-start our economy on the growth side. There have been lots of cuts to things, but really, I don't believe anyone came here for that purpose alone. We want to see things grow. We

want to see jobs and opportunities for Nova Scotians, regardless of where they live in the province.

Unfortunately the news is not good on the economic side, Madam Speaker. Just this past few weeks we've seen two significant plant closures in the Valley with hundreds of people now losing their jobs. We've seen other closures in other parts of the province. Every time the economic statistics get updated, our growth has been less than the time before.

Madam Speaker, hopefully, at some point we can all come together in support of taking action on the growth side so we're not just talking about cuts in this House all the time. You know, when I look back at the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act, one of the great things about it is it actually balanced the need to protect our environment and the need to cut emissions, the need to do our bit on climate change, and it balanced them, very appropriately, with the equal need to grow our economy and create jobs. The results, certainly on the environment side, have been pretty good.

Since 2007, that bill, which all Parties supported, set the goal of increasing renewable energy to 18.5 per cent of our total electricity output - we're now at 25 per cent and rising. That's what can happen when we put goals in law and all support them. Ultimately, we're going to see that go up to 40 per cent with Muskrat Falls. On greenhouse gas emissions into our atmosphere, something that all Nova Scotians care very greatly about, the goal was that there be a 10 per cent reduction from 1990 levels - that was set in 2007. Today, those emissions have been cut by 18.5 per cent. We're well on our way to meeting and exceeding that goal. Even on things like garbage disposal, our rate of garbage disposal as a province has dropped by half since 2007.

These are goals, and really the credit belongs to all Nova Scotians for helping achieve them. But they are examples of what can happen when we bring goals to this Chamber and we all get behind them.

That is what the Ivany report authors asked us to do. That's why they said enact their goals in law. That's why we again and again bring this bill to do just that to this Chamber. One of the main points I want to make is just how important it is that our environmental goals and our economic goals go together. I know that the Premier will be off to a First Ministers' meeting next week where they are going to talk about climate change and how we can work together as a country at achieving real targets for climate change.

We absolutely support the need for this country, all of us, to do our bit in the world, to put in place goals on greenhouse gas emissions and other things that will halt the rate of climate change. I do say that I am very proud of the efforts that Nova Scotia has already made over the past eight years in that regard and truly hope that our Premier brings that

message to the First Ministers' meeting - that Nova Scotia has carried a heavy load already in this area.

We are prepared to do our part, but in Nova Scotia, at least we're not starting from zero. We have done a lot and these results show it and they flowed out of an Act of this Legislature that all Parties got behind. By the way, Nova Scotia has done a lot in this area while developing our natural resources, particularly offshore, while protecting our economy and making sure that we don't trip it up at the same time as we move forward on meaningful environmental action, and that's absolutely what we need to do including starting next week at that First Ministers' meeting.

Our offshore, there has been continued activity and the Minister of Energy spoke about it in this Chamber today, that we have world-class companies like Shell exploring offshore. That's being done in the context of protecting our environment, in the context of strong regulations, in the context of showing our country and the world that Nova Scotia is advancing its economy, it's developing its offshore resources and putting in place meaningful environmental targets at the same time. That's what we need to do in the future. As long as our economy is as weak as it is, as long as thousands of young Nova Scotians move away because there are no jobs, we have to make sure that we protect our environment and develop our resources and create those jobs. That is happening with the offshore and it can happen with onshore gas development as well - that is where the government is falling short.

We're about to talk about climate change, but they've banned any opportunity for jobs in onshore gas development. I raise this in this Fall session because it was over a year ago that the government brought in its ban on onshore gas development. They created this phrase on high-volume hydraulic fracturing that they said they would define as a first step toward development. We are over a year later and there is still no definition.

What that unfortunately tells us all, Madam Speaker, is the government has no intention of even looking at whether we can do with our onshore resources what we are doing successfully with our offshore resources, which is marry up our environmental goals and our economic development goals, whether we can successfully harvest the jobs, potential, royalties and revenues that would come from onshore development and protect the environment just as we're doing with our offshore.

And that is too bad because it is so important to get it right because we know this from offshore, that the dollars and royalties that flow to the province pay for those hospitals, those schools, those doctors, those mental health units, and those paved roads. That's how we develop our province.

That is why we are all so hopeful that Shell will actually make a big discovery and then develop it. That's why we were all so glad that 20 years ago the government of that day put in place strong environmental regulations in the offshore so that companies like

ExxonMobil and like Encana could develop the Sable Project and the Deep Panuke Project so that those royalties, which are flowing, can help pay for the services that Nova Scotians rely on today. That is my point: that we have to protect Nova Scotia jobs while we advance our environmental interests. It is crucial, particularly while our economy is so weak.

I don't want our Premier or our representatives to go to Paris or to the First Ministers' Conference all dewy-eyed about environmental goals unless they've learned the lesson that we need to match them up with our desire to develop our resources responsibly and sustainably and create jobs. That is the most important message that can come out of today's debate and there are examples.

In Parrsboro there is a great example as the In-Stream Tidal Generation Project moves forward that it is clean, green, renewable and full of power. We want to see that develop and then jobs locally and provincially flow with it. The Energy East pipeline is another example. Now that the other pipelines like Keystone are not going to happen, we have a renewed interest in moving Alberta resources east, and I know that pipeline is only scheduled to go to Saint John, but there will be jobs and opportunity there and it is cleaner and it is safer than rail and it is an opportunity to develop resources here.

I happen to believe we should continue to push for an extension into Nova Scotia, where we have ports to do exporting that are directly on the ocean, that will not involve supertankers in the Bay of Fundy, as another way to meet our environmental goals and protect that pristine Bay of Fundy and benefit from the oil that would come through that pipeline.

Madam Speaker, we have important discussions about climate change to come. As Progressive Conservatives we are very supportive of finding the right mechanisms to achieve the targets that are set for our country. We will do what we have always done, which is make sure that they are set in the way that protects our ability to create jobs in this province.

We will insist that our expectations are set in the context of the efforts that Nova Scotians have already made in a province which was very dependent on coal and traditional fuel sources for electricity, in a province that still is largely rural where people need to drive great distances for the everyday things of life, whether it is to work, to go to the grocery store, to look after their grandmother. It is a place where more than half of our homes are heated by oil, where hydro, gas and other options are still in their infancy, and it is a place that has not had the massive manufacturing infusion that came before the world got serious about climate change, yet still this province has set in law important environmental goals that we are achieving and exceeding.

We should all feel proud of that, Madam Speaker, it proves what can happen when we all come together and set goals in this Chamber and then set out to achieve them. It is an important addition to the work of the Ivany report and even to the OneNS Coalition that

is left undone. I truly hope that we can have an informed, adult debate about this because I know that sometimes these debates descend into partisanship and attacks.

That should not be the case today, Madam Speaker, on something as important as whether we're going to set goals to grow our economy and create jobs and keep our young people at home.

Immigration is one thing that we all support strongly, helping refugees come here and be safe is something we all support strongly, but when the number of young Nova Scotians leaving every year is 10 times the number of immigrants we could ever hope to bring in, we need to get serious about growing the economy and creating jobs to keep our young people home and to make sure that the immigrants and refugees that come here have meaningful work to do. That's why this bill is so important. Thank you very much for your time.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill No. 32, the Opposition's panacea, if you will, for the economy of Nova Scotia, the member for Cumberland South's single-handed attempt to save the economy of Nova Scotia.

I'm glad to hear of his reference to the OneNS report and that he still has that close in his mind, because I certainly remember the enthusiasm that he met the report with even before it was released. He came out and he was perfectly clear at that time that it was the government's responsibility - that they must implement all the recommendations of the report.

Well, I think he was taken a bit aback, Madam Speaker, when he was actually given some direct responsibility for participating in those solutions, as a co-chair of the OneNS coalition, the group that was charged with implementing the recommendations of the Ivany report.

So how did that member deal with the responsibility given to him by the government? Well, I was quite surprised to hear of his recent criticisms of the work (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Cumberland North has the floor.

MR. FARRELL: The member in his remarks indicated he hoped that this debate wouldn't devolve into one of partisanship, but I can't think of any other way to characterize his actions as a result of his participation in the OneNS Coalition and the criticism of the work of the very action group that he was tasked to lead.

The government made the member for Cumberland South a co-leader of a group of respected, responsible, capable Nova Scotians. We trusted him to be able to work with his fellow Nova Scotians to implement solutions to move our economy forward. This is a responsibility that as a Leader of a recognized Party in this province, he should have welcomed, he should have thrown himself into this wholeheartedly. Instead, he came out ahead of his fellow Nova Scotians and his fellow commission members and he threw them under the bus, Madam Speaker, before they even had a chance to share their recommendations with Nova Scotians.

I might not have the OneNS report memorized quite as well as my friend across the floor does but I'm pretty sure there's something in there about us working together, about not trying to use important economic issues as political tools. I guess this is how you achieve the levels of approval that that Leader and his Party enjoy with Nova Scotians today.

I'm having difficulty, Madam Speaker, understanding where the Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia is coming from with respect to any economic issues, and how they can reconcile their differing positions on the economy of Nova Scotia, and how we're going to right this ship. On the one hand, you have the MLA for Pictou East calling for extreme fiscal austerity and how we need to stop adding to the debt. On the other hand, we also know that the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Progressive Conservatives have indicated that they're going to cut over \$935 million in one year to try and balance the books immediately. How are they going to provide for these tax cuts and the credits that they've already committed to during their representations in the House, Madam Speaker?

What about the Progressive Conservative plan to reduce government revenues by \$650 million in one year? Where is that going to come from, and how is the economy going to survive cuts of that magnitude?

The Leader of the Official Opposition is playing so fast and loose with his financial theories and promises that I can't keep track of what tax credits he's going to keep, which ones he's going to cut, and as these things are changing, we've got (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. The member for Cumberland North has the floor.

MR. FARRELL: On the one hand, the Official Opposition is demanding that the government be responsible with taxpayers' money and that they hold the line on spending, while on the other hand, they keep promising more in tax credits and continued program spending.

A bill like Bill No. 32 does nothing to solve the riddle of the economy of Nova Scotia. It's filled with vague promises that would require miles and miles of red tape before it could ever be implemented in Nova Scotia.

In contrast, our government is taking direct action to implement the strategies laid out in the One Nova Scotia report. We aren't studying the studies. We're taking action. Our government has updated the regulations of Nova Scotia Business Incorporated to reduce red tape and increase accountability to taxpayers. Our Premier has gone out and collaborated with the Premiers of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick and adopted a Premiers' Charter of Principles. This makes it clear that regulation will never be a first resort. Regulation will only be adopted when compelling evidence and consultation show it's the only effective way to solve a serious problem.

The Premiers' Charter of Principles establishes that legislation and regulations adopted in each province should be similar, if not identical, to those in the other provinces, making it easier to do business across those borders. In September 2014, the Premier traveled to Tianjin, China, where he highlighted Nova Scotia's leadership in clean energy to delegates at a new leaders' conference of the World Economic Forum.

In Nova Scotia, more than 400 newly-certified journeypersons have joined the ranks of Nova Scotia's highly-respected trades professions. Our government is helping entrepreneurs and businesses find opportunities to sell goods and services to the public sector at events like the annual Reverse Trade Show, recently hosted by government on October 27th at Pier 21.

I want the members of the Opposition who don't understand the value of a plane ticket to travel the world, to seek out new markets for Nova Scotia products and Nova Scotia innovation. Our government and our Premier are working within our borders and outside of our borders to develop our new economy. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. The member for Cumberland North has the floor.

MR. FARRELL: The provincial government and our Mi'kmaq First Nations have signed an agreement to launch a long-term treaty education initiative. Provincial government and Mi'kmaq leaders will work together to develop specific treaty education programs and services for the education system, the provincial civil service, and the broader public. Our government has successfully negotiated an increase of 300 immigration nominations for the two new express entry streams, nearly doubling the province's total nomination allocations for 2015.

Through a new global business accelerator program, Madam Speaker, 26 companies will receive help to export their products from Nova Scotia around the world. The One Nova Scotia report is subtitled An Urgent Call to Action For Nova Scotians. What I've outlined for you today is a number of actions that have been taken by our government under the leadership of our Premier to take action on the issues that are facing Nova Scotia today, to directly help our young people to become members of respected trades and not to pass legislation that will place miles of red tape in front of the need to develop the economy

of our province. That, Madam Speaker, is how you implement an action plan on our economy.

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: I'm so pleased that the member just stood there and talked about all the benefits the Liberal Government reaped from the hard work of the NDP. (Interruptions) That's right. After they get over themselves, let me explain. The Ivany report - where did that come from? The NDP. Where did all the environmental and climate change come from in terms of meeting higher goals? The NDP were involved in that. Churchill Falls - the NDP. There's a whole list, Madam Speaker, that would take me the rest of the afternoon to explain to the Liberals (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. I know that it's getting a little late in the day. I remind all members to please restrain yourselves a little.

The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's has the floor.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know that they laugh, and it is good that they laugh at themselves, in terms of standing in the House and talking about things as if they came from them. Nova Scotians know that it did not come from them. Thank you very much for noticing all the work that we did in government.

The Premier has been quoted saying that you can't legislate prosperity, but for some reason this Liberal Government can legislate austerity. That's what they've been doing. That has been their agenda. It hasn't been creating jobs; it's been a hands-off approach.

For those who were not on this side when their members were sitting in Opposition, I can remember the number of times that they stood up in the House and said we need economic targets to reach. There have to be numbers there - over and over and over again.

Well, this Liberal Government doesn't have one target, one number, to reach. It's all pie-in-the-sky perception. "We're going to get here." "We're going to accomplish this." But there's no discussion of what that number is to reach. You know why that is? It's because when you put numbers and targets, it's called accountability, and that is something that this government just cannot live with, accountability. To be able to put hard-core numbers down so Nova Scotians know what goals are going to be reached and what numbers. Then when you have those hard numbers, people can ask the questions, how come you didn't reach those numbers? But when you say things like, "Oh, we're going to be the best province in the world," what does that mean?

That's the reason why we say this Liberal Government is all about perception. I know that the members on this side representing the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP - I'm mentioning the particular Parties that are here - are not criticizing those who

were involved in the Ivany report or OneNS Coalition. They know that these people who have put in and dedicated their time and effort have put a lot of heartfelt work into that project.

But it's the government that is not taking the leadership. It's the government that's creating this perception without any numbers. It's the government that wants it to look like it's a story that this province is trying to move forward. It is kind of sad to see how hard people throughout Nova Scotia are working toward the Ivany report, yet the government truly doesn't take it serious. They do not take it serious, because if they did - and I will challenge them, put some numbers around it, the same thing as what you talked about in Opposition, put some numbers around it, okay? Once you put some numbers around it then we'll have a true conversation about the goals being reached.

The NDP did take it very seriously. In fact in October 2014, the Acting Leader of the NDP introduced a bill and that bill was the first step in establishing measurable goals, something that unfortunately this government does not understand what it means. This particular bill had 10 years of targets and talked about population and economic growth with targets. For example, it talked about how the province should endeavour to average a net gain of 1,000 working-aged persons per year. There's a target. Do you have a target? Do the Liberals have a target around that?

The province should attempt to increase the total annual exports by 50 per cent. Another question - where's the target? Is there a target there? And so we set these lofty goals so we have something to work toward and that's exactly what the NDP Government did - it set those goals. You can see that with respect to Churchill Falls; you can see it with respect to the climate and reaching our goals with renewable energy and creating COMFIT. (Interruption) Well, I'm sorry, it wasn't the Liberal Government.

It is nice to try to work together, but when one side, the government side, continually claims that it's from them and they're working on this and that, rather than working together - this whole idea about transparency and collaborating together has not taken place once within the last couple of years of this particular government, and people in the public are seeing that.

You talk about economic development and we had one of the best film and television industries in this province that this government came in and gutted. I was absolutely shocked today when the Minister of Business stood in this House and said those within the film and television industry are happy.

I just received an email this afternoon from a person who used to work for Haven and I met her the very day in Chester that Haven was packing up and leaving. (Interruptions) Listen, I come from Chester; I know the people who were in Haven. With regard to Haven, it was not cancelled, they were finishing up (Interruptions) Let me explain - see, Madam Speaker, they don't want to listen because they don't want to hear what the

truth is. Haven was finishing off their final production and they had plans to come back and do more series after a year - and I've talked to the production people. I can get the information, I'll tell you, I can get the information. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I will remind the honourable member to please address her comments to the Chair.

The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's has the floor.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Madam Speaker, I can get that information for this House and that is no problem, because what I'm speaking about was the truth. They had actually planned to return to Nova Scotia and because of the film and television cuts that went out the window.

What about the \$20 million production that we heard about in our Economic Development Committee meeting recently that was lost, \$14 million to come to the Province of Nova Scotia? The very people that the Business Minister is saying are happy are the very people who said at that committee meeting that there needs to be more flexibility in the \$10 million; that it shouldn't be capped. But the Premier will not publicly say that. In discussions with Cabinet Ministers they say, oh it's not capped - I challenge the government to publicly tell everybody in the industry it's not capped.

The other part of the conversation at that meeting was the fact that Nova Scotia is no longer competitive. We have lost thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in a clean, green industry that other provinces are doing everything possible to grow. Now is that following the Ivany report, the very report that said what Nova Scotia needs to do now is to expand on the opportunities and the resources that we already have?

That was the film industry for sure - a youth driven industry, a clean industry. We had it in our pockets and this Liberal Government dropped the ball and let something as important as that go from Nova Scotia. Even for governments coming in after this Liberal Government, it will take years to rebuild and invite people back to Nova Scotia to make this their home again under the industry.

There is actual data around this. There were two major infrastructure businesses that support the film industry that left in August. Those businesses even said publicly that it was due to the aftermath of the gutting of the film and television industry. It was PS Production Services and SIM Digital, so there were two companies. We also had at the economic meeting a lady who is an international consultant. She goes to the major events that attract film production in the province, and she said for the first time in years they came back with nothing - zero, zilch, nothing.

Those are what you call hard-core numbers. That is what people are looking for from this government with their economic development. They're looking for numbers that

can show that they're actually taking leadership in terms of the economy. There are many things that have affected our economy - just within these two years that this government has been in - by making very bad decisions.

We talked today about our youth and our university students who are really struggling under the burden of the cost to go to university. This government cozied up to the university students during the election and threw them out in the cold as soon as they got inside this House of legislation. They threw them out cold and took away the bit that they had in terms of the Graduate Retention Program and then turned around and lifted the cap. That's another one of the very poor decisions to grow our economy.

We know - we know that. There's a message on television almost every night, and it's the McNeil's Movers commercial. It's brilliant. It's absolutely brilliant. They go through the list of what this government has done to date. In just two years a commercial is running talking about the McNeil Movers, and we hear that every day.

This particular government loves to speak about all of the things that are on the perception side. It looks like we're doing this well, and we're doing that well, but when it comes down to the push and shove, and we try to get numbers out of them in terms of the economy and jobs - what are this government's job targets? Let's look at that. The fact is once they got on that side, Madam Speaker, all of a sudden it's not the government's responsibility; it's a hands-off approach. The businesses are responsible for hiring people.

We're not going to give them money that you see we give. But we'll set up another system and we'll have other agencies that are arm's length from us filtering that money into those corporations. That's exactly what's going on. People know this. The public knows this. They are very smart in terms of knowing what the Liberal Government is doing.

It is important that my colleagues in the NDP caucus and my colleagues next to me from the Progressive Conservatives keep this government accountable and bring forward a bill like Bill No. 32. That's why there's so much uproar on the Liberal side - they know they have no targets to reach. They don't have any idea of how to do it or how to reach those. They know that many of their decisions to date have actually attacked the economy in Nova Scotia - especially rural Nova Scotia, where youth are moving out, where we've lost hundreds to thousands of people in the film industry, and the list continues on.

Madam Speaker, this is a good bill, and the reason why the government will not support it is because they are scared of being accountable. They are scared of setting the bar too high for themselves and setting numbers to help Nova Scotia reach those goals through the One Nova Scotia Coalition. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Madam Speaker, I don't know if I can actually follow that - anyway. Usually I am very pleased to speak to bills, but in fact, I'm a little bit disappointed to be speaking to this bill. In reality, that is because when the Ivany report came out, one of the recommendations in the report was that the goals in the report be enshrined in legislation. After a number of months, it became clear that the Liberal Government had no intention of doing that. In fact, our Party put forward this bill.

I know the member for Cumberland North has kind of suggested that we did some creative writing here, but in reality, this bill stems directly out of the Ivany report itself. It really does not represent any creative writing on our part, but simply lifting out of the Ivany report the goals that were listed in the Ivany report.

Point 2 in the bill says, "The purpose of this Act is to enshrine in law the goals for the transformation of the economy of the Province as set out in the 2014 report of the Nova Commission on Building Our New Economy." That report came out in 2014. We put this bill in in 2015, Madam Speaker. In fact, there was a year - virtually a year, maybe not quite a year of time - when the Liberal Government had the opportunity to put these same goals into legislation. This was recommended in the Ivany report, and the goals are directly out of the Ivany report. They don't represent any particular creative writing on the part of my Party.

What is the value of putting something into goals? I think most people realize that in the world of all the self-help literature that is out there, making goals is considered a very important thing to do. There's a saying that if you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there. Without goals, any road will do.

I recently had the opportunity to talk to a young lady - she seemed young to me - she said she had worked for three successive governments. In other words, she had worked in the civil service for the Progressive Conservative Government and the NDP Government, and now is working for the Liberal Government. I said, what was your best moment working for government? She actually said it was working on the EGSPA, originally on the EGSPA goals. That was a moment when this Legislature enshrined goals into the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act.

That was done under the Progressive Conservative Government, two governments ago, and the NDP Government, as my colleague to the left said, carried that forward. Enshrining goals into legislation, I believe, is one way of ensuring that as governments change, these goals will get carried forward.

Unfortunately, as we know in this House, many times Opposition bills do not go forward - sometimes they do, but often they do not. That's why I say I am kind of disappointed that we are the Party speaking to this. There have been few reports in this province that have garnered as much attention from the public as the Ivany report. The reason that it garnered that attention, I believe, is because in a way it said what everybody

sensed: what we were doing couldn't continue. It wasn't sustainable, we need to make changes and because of that the public had a certain amount of expectation. Unfortunately, if the Liberal Government had chosen to enshrine those goals immediately, we would not be speaking to this bill. This would be in legislation now - it should have been.

They do set lofty goals for us and I know it would carry forward with whatever government, whatever there is in the next 10 years - there will probably be two governments working on those goals - so I'm very disappointed that we are actually talking about these goals. It seems to me - and I know my colleague referenced the film industry - that really, up to now we've just been sort of treading water or going backwards. I was very disappointed when last November a bill was brought forward saying that the Film Tax Credit would remain as it was for five years and then in April to see the program completely change. So far, what we've seen of the economic development program of this government is our main export is film workers. We're sending them out to Sudbury, as we learned in the Economic Development Committee recently.

We have a \$10 million fund with only \$1.5 million subscribed at this moment, with only six more projects in the queue likely not to be subscribed any more than 25 per cent. It has been called a collapse in the film industry. Last year in 2014 - the Fall of 2014 to the Fall of 2015 - we have approximately 25 per cent of the people working now than we had last year in 2014. That is according to IATSE - the international association of film workers. So there are many issues with this. We have daunting challenges in this province. I know that you guys all know that.

Recently I was meeting with one of the senior staff in the Department of Community Services about the Joellan Huntley insurance issues and what I didn't know is that we have 5,200 people in this province who are really being looked after - and looked after well - by the Department of Community Services in long-term disabilities, and that's a \$300 million bill. I'm doing the math in my head right away and I said so that's about \$60,000 per person, and the lady that I was meeting with said well, actually, some people cost much more than that. Then she said - and I almost fell off my chair - we have 1,000 people on the waiting list - 1,000 people on the waiting list. I thought, oh my goodness, we have to get this economy going because where are we going to pay for that? How are we going to pay for another 1,000 people on the waiting list and 5,200 people are costing us \$300 million? We have a serious job to do as a Legislature; we need to say yes to new opportunities.

My colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition was talking about onshore gas development and I was recently in the Resources Committee and we had Shell talking about the safety measures in place for offshore gas development. What I was impressed with was the immense challenges of working that deepwater. I asked Ms. Pagan, the leader of Shell, about the difference between onshore and offshore. She didn't really drill into it too deeply, but clearly with onshore gas development you don't have the same types of

challenges that you do in a couple thousand metres of water offshore - or a couple thousand feet of water, whatever it is. So there are clearly opportunities.

We have economic challenges in the Annapolis Valley. We've recently seen two plant closures in the Annapolis Valley and my fellow farmers are distraught over the loss of processing in the Valley, on the Valley floor. Over a number of years we've seen a number of processing plants close, and agriculture needs these - we need to have these types of processing facilities to be functioning and operational.

I have a friend in the Valley - and I don't know if this is directly related - who believes that if we don't have a natural gas pipeline to the Valley we will become a backwater economically. In other words, the future is in low-cost energy sources and actually, if you look at the two carrot plants in the province, that is a factor. The carrot plant that will be operational does have natural gas supply, so these types of things are daunting challenges for us as a Legislature to meet, and we cannot say no to new opportunities. We have to find a way to do it that is environmentally sustainable and will go forward.

These goals that are in this Ivany report, now in this bill, are all things that we need to have enshrined in legislation I believe. We need to have concrete goals to go forward with. I realize it has a little bit in the moment of this debate, but let this whole thing get lost in the political moment, I think, is to miss the point.

Ivany himself said that. The Ivany report said that these goals should be enshrined in legislation. It also said that this sort of needed to be dealt with firstly at the political level, and I want to quote something from the report here from the preamble. It says: "The first area identified is political leadership" - the first area identified is political leadership, but we need to have political leadership, and this was the direct thing that Ivany wanted us to do, this report wanted us to put these goals into legislation. Even that we have not been able to achieve. How hard is that to put this into legislation?

There are so many good goals in here and, to be truthful, when I read these goals I think these are daunting goals, there are immense challenges here, and I don't want to minimize the challenges of reaching these goals. Some of them should be more doable than others. Retaining an annual average of 10 per cent of the foreign students graduating from Nova Scotia's universities and community colleges; that should be a doable goal. And many of these students come from many places in the world that they would love to settle here; that should be a doable goal.

Some of the things about generating 4,000 new business start-ups per year, a 50 per cent increase over the current ten-year average - that is a daunting goal, and I believe that we need to have a new spirit of entrepreneurship to do that.

There's talk about red tape, and my colleague from Cumberland North mentioned red tape. In 2014 Nova Scotia received a C- and, in 2015, a D-. Looking at provinces we are the second worst province with red tape. I can take you to Kings County and show you a new construction site where there's a mobile trailer, a trailer on wheels that is a food trailer. I can't remember which way it was, but the provincial food inspector and the municipal food inspector disagreed - one thought that was mobile and one thought it was stationary. So they ended up having to build right next to this mobile food trailer, an actual bricks and mortar washroom facility, because it was not considered mobile by one of those two inspectors.

So we have conflicting inspectors, which resulted in thousands and thousands of dollars to this business. I think my colleague for Kings South would know where that business is. I'm sure he does; it's in his constituency. So this sort of red tape issue - we've got a long way to go with red tape and it needs to be dealt with. I know there were goals about red tape reduction.

There's a lot to go with First Nations and African Nova Scotians in employment in our economy, and the overall employment in our economy, these goals, we need to find a way to meet these challenges, and no one Party is going to do this, no one government is going to do this, these are ten-year goals. So, I just think that it's important, and I know that as an Opposition bill it has very little chance of passing, but I think that's really unfortunate, and I think that you as a government ought to take a look at this bill and consider that maybe it should be supported, because this is not, as I said, creative writing on the part of our caucus, this is pulled right out of this Ivany report.

There are goals for the value of exports. Last night some of you would have attended a reception put on by one of our industries, and...

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please, I would remind the honourable member to please address the Chair, and not to the opposite side of the House please.

MR. LOHR: My apologies, Madam Speaker.

Displacement of imports is equally important and we need to see industries go forward. We saw the craft brewing industry and it was the federal government of Harper that changed excise tax laws that allowed that craft brewing industry to expand. If you were there last night, you would have heard that story.

However, they are taxed at a rate approximately double the rate that the wine industry is in the province. They're asking for lower taxes. One of the things that we need to do to have industry go forward, industries like that, is to find ways to lower these taxes and to have them go forward. That's something that's waiting to be done and something that they were promised would be done in the past, these types of things.

I guess what I would like to say is that I think that you as a government need to really think - Madam Speaker, sorry; this Liberal Government needs to reconsider its position on this bill and think about the value of passing this bill as it is. Like I said, it's not our creative writing, this is the Ivany report. In the last 15 or 20 years, I can't remember a report having more public interest, more public sentiment for it, and wanting to see us as a Legislature make this work.

These goals will survive. I think this Liberal Government will likely survive. The next government will carry on for the next 10 years. I recognize that they are very daunting goals, and maybe that's the reason why the government does not want to pass these goals and put them into legislation. However, I think that goals are necessary. I know that in the world of business, we have goals; it's something that is important to do.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: It is a pleasure to rise and speak to this bill, again. I do remember when the Ivany commission was struck and was travelling around the province.

It was a different time for me, Madam Speaker; it was a former life. I was actually in business, and I remember when the chamber called and invited me to go and speak with this committee that was travelling the province. Well, you maybe can imagine what I thought about going to speak to a political committee struck up to travel the province. I had a hundred other things to do that day, and going to speak to a committee about politics and stuff like that was certainly not towards the top of my list. But I went. Ray Ivany was there, and a few of the other commissioners were there. I remember the faces around the table that day, some very prominent business people from Pictou county, very busy people.

We had an excellent afternoon, actually. In fact, that afternoon was so good - there was an open meeting that evening for the public where anyone in the public could have gone and addressed the panel - that I went back that evening, Madam Speaker. I listened to some of the comments there. It struck me that this committee was doing important work. It was doing very important work, and I could see the momentum building as they went around.

Ultimately, they came out with their report. I remember the morning that the report came out. I went down, and there were a lot of people there. There was a lot of excitement around this committee's report. The reason was because it was a good committee that did good work and made good recommendations. They made some recommendations and they set some goals that are difficult to achieve, but we all accepted them.

Now what has happened since then is that we've seen the government try to pick and choose which of the recommendations, which goals, they wanted to pursue. For people

in the Chamber who play sports, they might be familiar with the term spot picker. Well, this is a government that is spot picking.

This is exactly what the Ivany commission did not want to happen. In fact, one of the things that they said was that the way to initiate a different type of politics on economic development would be to establish an all-Party committee of the Legislature to put into legislation the new goals and targets for economic and population growth. The Ivany commission actually wanted these goals in legislation.

The reason that we haven't seen them put into legislation is because they're hard. It's because they're hard. The government doesn't want to be held accountable. They want to pick certain ones and say, we can do that, let's run with that one; let's talk about that one. These ones over here, well we don't really know what to do there, so let's do another review on that one, and we'll talk about that one later.

This is the type of governing that gets provinces into problems because when you see - ministers will often say well that's not me, that's the - the Premier himself will stand up and say that's private enterprise. They've got to sort that one out, I can't do anything about that, or that's the board. I think we heard today - that's the health board, you know, I'd love to do something. It's called hiding.

What we really need is people to stand up and say that's a high bar for me to get over but I'm going to try to get over it. That's really all we're doing with this bill is trying to give the government an opportunity - and future governments, too - to be held accountable to reaching these goals instead of spot picking. Spot picking is getting us nowhere, Madam Speaker. We need to have a comprehensive plan to reach all these goals.

What I think the Ivany commission feared might happen is actually happening. At the time the Ivany commission - Ivany's name may have been invoked more times in this Legislature than anyone else. It would be a good question for Hansard to check. Everyone would talk about the Ivany commission report and the excitement around the coffee shops and people who you wouldn't believe were talking about this.

That has gone and I guess on one hand that's a success for the government. They wanted all that talk kind of tampered down because they don't like expectations. I would just say I think Nova Scotians can learn a lot about what they've seen this government do with this particular bill and it's obvious . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, time has elapsed today for debate.

The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. That concludes the Opposition business today so I will call on the Deputy House Leader to call the hours for tomorrow and our business.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am happy in my current role. I will call the hours of the House tomorrow to meet between 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. At that time we will call Government Business, Public Bills for Second Reading, Bill Nos. 122, 123 and 124; Private and Local Bills, No. 125; and Committee of the Whole House, Bill No. 117.

With that I move that the House do now rise to meet tomorrow between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again on November 19th - tomorrow - between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

We have now reached the moment of interruption. The Adjournment motion was submitted by the honourable member for Pictou East. It reads:

“Therefore be it resolved that the government act immediately to fulfill its election commitment of providing a doctor for every Nova Scotian.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT: ELECTION COMMITMENT - FULFILL

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Madam Speaker, I am a little disappointed that I have to get up and speak on this resolution but it is a very important issue that is facing many

members of this House of Assembly and certainly many people in the Province of Nova Scotia. During the election campaign the current government saw fit in their platform to say that they would provide a doctor for every Nova Scotian but I believe the members of this House can tell you that that's not happening and it hasn't been happening for a while. What we're finding out is that there are many Nova Scotians who cannot find a family doctor.

On top of that we know that in the next 10 years 800 to 900 physicians in the Province of Nova Scotia will need to be replaced, on top of the areas that don't have any doctors now.

We have one doctor who gave up her practice in Sydney that had 3,000 patients. When those patients go to try and find a new doctor, they run up against a stone wall. They call doctor after doctor after doctor, and the answer is all the same: we're not taking any new patients. There's no need for you to leave your name, because we're not taking any patients. You can call back later if you want - but Madam Speaker, they tell them the answer will be the same.

Now if by chance somebody gets a doctor who's actually taking new patients, you have to be interviewed, for the most part. The doctor wants you to come in, bring your file, and let them talk to you about your health issues, where you are, how you feel, and what it is that you need in a doctor.

Let's take it one step farther. What about the person who already is suffering from a disease, and their doctor decides to leave the community? What about the lady who lives in Coxheath who has to have a regular mammogram because of a cancer scare? If you don't have a regular physician, who does the follow-up for you to make sure that that procedure is taking place on a regular basis? Or where do the reports go when you have the tests done? Who looks at them and compares them to the tests that have been done in the past? That is a big worry for that individual.

What about the lady who has liver disease and lives on Alexandra Street? She's looking for a doctor to monitor her condition. Her doctor leaves town, and what happens? Her files get lost. She doesn't have a place to transfer them to, but they get lost. When she finally finds them, there's a fee to transfer her medical records, her information, to a new physician - if there is one to be had. It wasn't her who left. It wasn't her who deserted the doctor; the doctor left her. What do we do for that individual? How does that person monitor the problems that they have? What about the man on the Meadows Road who has bone cancer, and his doctor has left town as well?

When the people of the Province of Nova Scotia and in the rural areas of Nova Scotia saw the goal put forward by this government, a goal of a doctor for every Nova Scotian, they took heart. I can honestly stand here before you, Madam Speaker, and tell you that the single biggest issue that came through my constituency this year was people

wondering, how can I get a family doctor? Some of them were healthy people who only go to see a doctor once or twice a year, but they can't find that someone to see.

Do you know what they're thinking about, Madam Speaker? Do you know what they are dreaming about doing? They're thinking about moving away, finding out where other members of their family are and moving there in the hopes that they'll be able to get a doctor.

We have an individual who almost a year ago now - it's over a year ago - moved to Marion Bridge. She lives there, works there, and is an active member of the community, and travels to Halifax on a regular basis to see a doctor, because she can't get a physician in her own community.

I can tell you from personal experience, Madam Speaker, that those individuals who are in the medical system - the nurses, the doctors, the LPNs, all of the professionals in the system - are very dedicated to what they do. I've had the experience of needing their help, and I'm very proud to say that, because of the great help that they gave me, I'm able to stand here today and speak to you about the issue.

But the real issue for the people we represent is getting more help for them. We have a university that turns out doctors, but controls the residency program. We've had, in the not-too-distant past, three people who had invested in Cape Breton, who had family there, who had built a home there, who had gotten their education, and they could not get a residency on the Island of Cape Breton. They could not, because of the way this system works.

When people call and they say to you, how and what do I do to get a doctor - it must be an issue that more than just my office is dealing with. It must be an issue that many people in this room are dealing with. We have young people - I know three young people from our community who have gone to the U.S., to the Caribbean, so that they can become doctors, because they couldn't get in here. One of our members, his daughter is in the Caribbean studying medicine. This weekend another one of our members will be interviewed at Dalhousie to get into the program. We do not seem to take the time to put an emphasis on the local people who want to be doctors who need to be here.

When people say to me, what are you going to do for me - I need a doctor, how can I get a doctor? The Liberals promised us a doctor - I think this is one of the promises that the government would like to be able to keep. I don't doubt that for one second, but for us to stand here in this room and sit in this room and not think that this is an issue that has a direct impact on the people who put their faith in us to represent them in this House, well, we need to think about that.

What is the solution? There are people who are much more learned than I on this issue, and they still haven't found a solution. One of the things that people have brought to

me is, what about more nurse practitioners, people who can actually help identify issues and problems that they are having and maybe be able to direct them somewhere?

We have these clinics, and if you go to the clinic, they can't or won't write a prescription for you and they can't follow up with procedures. That makes it very, very difficult for an individual. As I said yesterday in this House, and I'll say again to you, the walk-in clinic that is located at the HealthPark in Sydney, yesterday - Monday - it actually had people sitting on the floor looking to talk to a doctor to address their issues. If this province has a crisis, the crisis is individuals. The men and women of our communities cannot find a doctor, and we need this government to live up to the commitment of a doctor for every Nova Scotian. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Official Opposition for bringing this late debate topic forward to discuss. It is an extremely important one. We all know - I would hope we would all know - how important Nova Scotians feel our health care is, and how important an issue it is to them as we go out and try to seek their support throughout an election, especially throughout an election campaign. The resolution that was brought forward indicates that the government should act immediately to fulfill its election commitment of providing a doctor for every Nova Scotian. That's exactly what it had said under the Liberal platform. I would assume that all the members on the government side would remember their platform from 2013.

I had a look at that with special interest in the health care commitments. Being the former Minister of Health and Wellness, being a former health care provider myself, it's definitely an area that concerns me that all political Parties need to ensure in their platforms that they are addressing, or going to address, the issues that we hear from the taxpayers and from the constituents, and that one stood out when I read that in the platform. I can't remember which page - I had a copy of the Liberal Platform in the previous session. I'll make sure I put it in my desk for this session because I believe more of these issues will come up.

The Liberals, Madam Speaker, made a number of promises to Nova Scotians during that election, and Nova Scotians believed them. They believed them, Madam Speaker, because of course one indication of that is the number of Liberal MLAs that were elected to this Legislature. I believe the reason for that is that people looked at platforms. They looked at the Liberal platform and they believed the Premier. They believed the Minister of Health and Wellness who was an MLA and the Liberal critic at the time when they talked about the health commitments that were in their platform, and the one especially that revolved around making sure that every Nova Scotian had a doctor.

I'm very fortunate Madam Speaker, my family is very, very fortunate; I do consider ourselves fortunate that we do have a family doctor, that we have access to a family

physician clinic that has a number of family physicians in it, so if our family doctor is not available, we can see another physician. I believe there are six or eight physicians who are all at the office that we attend to get medical treatment through a GP or through the health care providers they have there. But there are so many Nova Scotians who do not have a family doctor. I know my colleague, my friend from Cape Breton indicated there are a number, if not thousands of Cape Bretoners who have no doctor, and my colleague from down in the Shelburne area, I know that there are thousands of residents down in his area that have no doctor.

So when you see that and you experience that, and you see a platform that says we're going to get you that doctor, then I would think that that weighs on your decision when you go and enter the ballot box, and we have seen nothing, zero - actually, we have seen the contrary - in trying to get a doctor for every Nova Scotian, over the last two years, from this current government. If anything, they have driven doctors out of this province, Madam Speaker.

We know that one of the issues we saw last Spring, leading into the budget, was the way the government treated our obstetricians, and the deal and the contract that they had with the government at the time to cover the cost of their insurance. The current government, Madam Speaker, your government, pulled that contract, ripped it up and said you're on your own; you have to cover that cost.

We see a shortage today of obstetricians throughout Nova Scotia. We have seen a 60 per cent increase at the Valley Regional Hospital under the current government, Madam Speaker, on the surgical wait times to see gynecologists. Does that help with getting a doctor for every Nova Scotian? I don't think so.

Collective agreements being negotiated with medical residents - more recent, Madam Speaker. We know the approach the current government took with those individuals. They didn't want to negotiate. These are individuals, men and women who are prime for the picking - if you can say that term - to entice them and recruit them to stay in Nova Scotia, so that maybe someday we will have a doctor for every Nova Scotian, but what did the government do? Push them away and I have to tell you, I mean the residency program is a national program, and if they know they're being treated badly in Nova Scotia, they're going to choose another placement. They're going to go to Vancouver, they're going to go out West, Ontario, Quebec, wherever. They're going to say avoid Nova Scotia.

I don't know if the Premier and the minister understand those are the ramifications of having a heavy-handed approach to negotiations when they came to the government trying to improve the environment that they work in and learn in. I have to tell you, being a paramedic, the sheer number of hours that residents put in, I mean we're getting off very cheaply by having those experienced health care providers providing care in our tertiary care hospitals and throughout Nova Scotia, Madam Speaker.

One of the other areas of course, and it was mentioned earlier, is Cape Breton. We know that at one point there were at least 13 doctors in Cape Breton who will be retiring or are retiring within the next 18 months - 13. Imagine how many people will be affected if those physicians aren't back-filled, if we cannot find physicians to go to Cape Breton and cover off the sheer number of physicians that may be retiring over the next year or year and a half.

I'm trying to paint a picture of how important commitments are. We know in the last campaign how the Liberal Government challenged our government and our Party on commitments made, Madam Speaker. I should hope they hold themselves to the same standard. I have to tell you that I will remind the Premier and the Minister of Health and Wellness, your government, Madam Speaker, whenever the next election is, about the commitments you made, the commitments you kept and the commitments you broke because it's important for Nova Scotians to have that information, to look at what did the government do to improve health care services, what did the government do to live up to their commitments?

We know this one is nowhere near to be completed and there's no indication from the government, from the Minister of Health and Wellness on what his plan is. We talked about a piece of legislation earlier around mental health and the Physician Resource Plan. It actually indicates that we should be reducing the number of psychiatrists in the province. It's in there, but what we need, and we know that within especially mental health that's furthest from where we need to go, that's not the road we need to go down. We need to continue to invest in mental health.

If any area in health care needs some attention, it's within mental health - not to take away from cardiac and those surgeries that are important or the care that we get is not important but mental health has been neglected. We were going down the right path. Earlier today the Minister of Health and Wellness indicated that because of Together We Can, the mental health and addiction strategy, when that was presented, that we see now improvements on the wait times for mental health for young people.

Are we where we should be? No. We need to do better and government needs to do better, and the actions they have taken over the last two years, and I'm fearful over the actions they are going to need to take because of information we received more recently around trying to come within their budget and the deficits that are out there within the district health authorities and certain departments, that we're going to see more cuts and we'll be even further and the government will be even further from living up to one of their main commitments in health care - to provide a doctor for every Nova Scotian.

The government needs to take responsibility when they make commitments like this. They need to tell Nova Scotians what they are going to do to achieve that goal. I hope within the next 10 minutes or so that a government representative will be on their feet and

will talk and tell us exactly how they're going to achieve one of the main goals and commitments they made; that is, to get a doctor for every Nova Scotian.

I look forward to the government doing that, I will support them in doing that, and hopefully they will achieve some success on that commitment, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

MR. GORDON WILSON: I could almost use a doctor here today. I do have a family doctor, by the way.

I would like to thank the Opposition for bringing this forward. Also I am encouraged to hear the members opposite speak, especially the previous Minister of Health and Wellness.

I want to say that this isn't a new problem. I'm a bit surprised in a way that we are framing it sort of as a new problem. This is something that has been going on for a long time and I'd like to also state right off the bat that two years ago we did commit to providing a family doctor for every Nova Scotian and I firmly believe with the hard work of our minister that we will succeed and we will achieve that goal. It isn't going to happen tomorrow.

There are a lot of moving parts to this, and just to start off, I'd also like to note that as everybody probably knows, we have more doctors per capita than any other province in Canada. We have disproportionately more doctors in rural Nova Scotia than anywhere else also. We spend more on health care per person than any other province, so there is something definitely wrong when you have more doctors and you spend more money and you still have an acuity and you still have some of the worst health indicators in the country. We have some of the worst problems with youth and diabetes, obesity, we have an aging demographic and the problems are only going to get worse. So there is something wrong with the system and it wasn't too long ago, actually it was April 1st of this year, that I believe we started charting our path towards fixing what we have as a very broken health care system. Let's just start by framing it that way.

It was interesting to hear the comments from across the floor. There were a lot of things that certainly were not pointed out and they've asked me to, and I take great pleasure in pointing out what we've started to put in place. What wasn't mentioned right off the bat was the fact that in January 2014 we appointed a physician recruitment and retention team - first time in the province. That in itself speaks to what we're going to try to do in this province, what we are going to do in this province. Recruitment, I would also like to speak briefly on. I would look at it from my experience as more of an art than a science. Certainly it's more than just a simple appointing of a group of people to do something. My time goes back eight years before I was elected, when I was with the Municipality of Digby and I

saw a municipal unit struggle with incentive programs. I saw a municipal unit struggle with a committee that was doing doctor recruiting, they hired recruiters and for eight years - we're going back 10 years ago now, so again, this isn't a new problem - I saw a municipal unit compete against other municipal units and virtually not get an awful lot of support from the province.

I lived that first-hand, I watched and I saw all the municipal councillors, actually even question themselves if it was their responsibility as municipal government to do that and I still think we see that going on. The fact that we have a recruitment and retention action team I think is a big step. Also in January 2015, I'm very, very proud of the fact that our government announced a new tuition relief program that will pay \$120,000 in tuition for new medical graduates. There is an excellent step toward fixing the problem. Young doctors relocating from outside the province will work in underserved communities for five years. To add to that, if these doctors are outside a community with a regional hospital they receive an additional \$30,000.

I hope that some people are understanding that these are incentives. These are things to try to fix the problem that I'm very proud that our government has brought forward. These are going to serve areas that are outside of Bridgewater, Yarmouth, Kentville, Truro, Amherst, New Glasgow, Antigonish, and Sydney. So in those areas, doctors get an extra \$30,000 because we know that rural Nova Scotia is underserved. This will also help encourage new physicians just starting out to set down roots in small communities that need them the most. Great success through our rural residency program in southwestern Nova Scotia and the Annapolis Valley are also good examples. These sites allow medical residents to experience a lifestyle that may not be otherwise imagined. Today's young physicians want to practice differently and I think that everybody understands that, they want not to be the old small-town rural doctors of generations ago. I have a good example of one of those in my riding, a Dr. Westby, just retired. He was still doing house calls, if you can imagine that.

They want to know that they are working with a team. That's why I'm extremely proud also to note that this government - and I'm going to give some credit to the previous government that invested \$600,000 in a health clinic in my riding. I must say that they weren't the principal shareholder in that, the health foundation there, they provided I believe \$1.6 million towards that project, so if it wasn't for that health foundation, that would not have happened.

In saying that, I would like to note that I am also very proud that what was done in Digby was also done in Shelburne, by our government - not by the previous government, by our government. We announced \$1.65 million towards a new medical facility in Shelburne that was ignored by the previous government. I'm very proud that our minister went down there and showed that community that we are committed to collaborative health care in the Province of Nova Scotia.

These Collaborative Emergency Centres don't just have a family doctor; they will have access to professional health care people such as nurse practitioners, family practice nurses, dietitians, physiotherapists, and anybody else that the community might need. This type of practice helps make practising in a small community more attractive to new physicians who knew they weren't going to be able to work when their patients weren't covered. It also means better care for Nova Scotians.

Another important step that we have taken is to update the provincial nursing strategy and to align the nursing education across the province. You failed to mention that one also. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Clare-Digby has the floor.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Under our new strategy we will devote funds to allow experienced nurses time to mentor new nurses. We will increase the number of specialty programs to train nurses in areas where they are needed, in areas like operating rooms, critical care, and mental health and addictions. We will target co-op placement funding for student nurses to go to geographic areas where they are most needed.

It's also important to note that we've amended the Hospital Act to allow nurse practitioners to discharge patients from hospitals. These amendments will also allow registered nurses to access, treat, and release some patients in emergency departments and Collaborative Emergency Centres. The Nova Scotia Health Authority is now working with sites across the province to make this a reality. It is an important change for everyone - doctors, nurses, and patients. It means nurses and nurse practitioners will be able to do the work that they have been educated and licensed to do.

In the final few minutes that I have here, I've outlined very quickly - 10 minutes doesn't do it justice - a lot of key things that this government has brought forward and in six months these people across the floor expect us to turn around the number of doctors that we have in this province - in six months. I don't know where that magic wand came from, Madam Speaker, but I think what we have done here in six months is more than the combined efforts that I have seen from the previous governments in the last 10 years.

I would also like to finish up by thanking the Minister of Health and Wellness (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Order. The honourable member for Clare-Digby has the floor.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Thank you. Obviously, these were all points that were missed by the other side of the House. I would like to say that I have the utmost confidence

in one of the most outstanding ministers that we have, the Minister of Health and Wellness, in his ability to bring forward these changes to our province. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: I would wish to thank all members of the House (Interuptions) Order. We can sit here all night. Order. I wish to thank all members of the House who participated in this nice quiet debate this evening.

The House stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

[The House rose at 5:25 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 2454**

By: Ms. Pam Eyking (Victoria-The Lakes)

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

Whereas Duma and Mag Bernard, of Eskasoni, were recently awarded the 2015 Family Values Award by the Nova Scotia Stake of the Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and

Whereas this award is awarded to those who are ordinary people, but go to extraordinary lengths to make sure their children grow up to be contributing members of our community; and

Whereas Mr. Bernard spearheads the group Parents Against Drugs;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly congratulate Mr. and Mrs. Bernard on their award, and thank them for their ongoing dedication to their community and their ongoing enthusiasm for service.