



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2015

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2015

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Just before we get into the daily routine, a couple of housekeeping items.

The topic for late debate today, as submitted by the honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party, is:

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature acknowledge that the Premier does not think it matters to Nova Scotians that: (a) a mental health diagnosis was revealed by his closest adviser during a very public fight; nor that (b) a government job was offered to a Liberal Party insider without going through an open competition; nor that (c) a person's personal health information was revealed without that person's consent.

That is the late debate at the conclusion of the order of business today.

Also, just before we get into the daily routine, I want to take a couple of moments to address several points of order that were raised over the last few days, all of which I have taken under advisement with the commitment to report back.

SPEAKER'S RULING:

Re: Resolution of the House respecting production of a recording
(Pt. of order by Hon. A. Younger [Hansard p.5981, Nov. 20/15])

Subsequent events have made this a moot point.

The first was raised by the honourable member for Dartmouth East with respect to the resolution of the House respecting production of a recording. Subsequent events have made this a moot point and I do not need to address it further.

SPEAKER'S RULING:

Review recordings of proceedings of the House to see if the Premier had sworn during Question Period on Friday, November 20, 2015
(Pt. of order by Hon. M. MacDonald [Hansard p.6023, Nov. 20/15])

The Speaker reviewed the recording with the Chief Clerk and determined that the Premier had not sworn.

The second point of order was raised by the honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party, who asked that I review the recording of our proceedings to see if the honourable Premier had sworn during Question Period last Friday. I did, in fact, review the recording with the Chief Clerk and determined that the Premier had not sworn. I understand the Chief Clerk has already related this to the Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party, but I wanted to advise this House formally of my findings.

SPEAKER'S RULING:

Review former Speaker's ruling on using the name of the Premier in Statements by Members
(Pt. of order by Hon. David Wilson [Hansard p.6069, Nov. 24/15])

It is not acceptable to refer to a current government by the surname of the current Premier where it is not necessary to distinguish it from a different government. It is out of order to refer to members by name even if the member speaking is quoting from a document.

The most recent point of order raised yesterday by the honourable House Leader for the New Democratic Party, who took issue with my direction that the member for Chester-St. Margaret's not refer to "McNeil Government" in debate. He raised a ruling by my predecessor in this Chair, Speaker Parker, made on March 31, 2010. The Speaker had been presented with evidence that it had been the practice of the House to refer to governments using the surname of the Premier of the day, to distinguish between them, and he pointed to the examples of references to previous governments such as the Hamm

Government or the MacDonald Government. He held that it was quite acceptable to do this.

I agree with most of that Speaker's ruling, except the conclusion that it was acceptable to refer to a current government by the surname of the current Premier. I do not believe that to be acceptable, where it is not necessary to distinguish it from a different government. In the 59th General Assembly the government had two different Premiers: Mr. Hamm and Mr. MacDonald. Earlier examples of this included the 56th General Assembly, during which Premier Savage and Premier MacLellan were in charge of the Government of the day; and the 55th General Assembly, during which the office moved from Premier Buchanan, through Premier Cameron, through Premier Bacon.

It is out of order to refer to members by name; the authorities are clear on this. O'Brien and Bosc states on Page 614, "The Speaker will not allow a Member to refer to another Member by name even if the Member is quoting from a document such as a newspaper article." As the Chair once noted, a member cannot do indirectly what can be done directly.

I believe the more and more frequent references to the surname of the Premier that have been taking place recently are unparliamentary. They are not necessary to identify the government that is in power at this time. Members can simply refer to "the government" or even "the current government." There are lots of ways to identify the government that do not use the name of a member in debate. There is no need to use the current Premier's surname to distinguish the government from other governments, and it will not be permitted by this Chair.

We will now move on to the daily routine.

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Yesterday, prior to our time here in the House, members were notified - and I have a copy of the fax that we received - a notification of "absence of minister" from the House of Assembly. We were notified yesterday in advance of the House that Premier McNeil would be absent from the House, and that the Honourable Diana Whalen would be taking questions during Question Period on behalf of the Premier. I'm reading from the fax, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday during Question Period, the honourable member was not permitted to respond to questions directed to her on behalf of the Premier. I would ask you to look into this and make a ruling, please.

MR. SPEAKER: I will take that under advisement. I will take this opportunity to remind the honourable member again not to use names in this Chamber, please.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause being: We, the undersigned, urge all members of the House to pass Bill No. 111 unanimously. We also urge the Minister of Environment; the Premier, also the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs; the Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs, also the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage; and the Minister of Justice to support and pass Bill No. 111, an Act to Address Environmental Racism, in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, I have affixed my signature, and there are 504 signatures.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

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

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Committee on Private and Local Bills, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bill:

Bill No. 120 - Discontinuance of The Pictou County Farmers' Mutual Fire Insurance Company Act.

and the committee recommends this bill to the favourable consideration of the House, without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

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

MR. GORDON WILSON: I beg leave to table the 2015 Annual Report of the Standing Committee on Resources.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. DIANA WHALEN: In my capacity as the Attorney General, I beg leave to table the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia's Annual Report for the fiscal period ending March 31, 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 2505

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

Whereas today, November 25th, is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women; and

Whereas this December, we remember the 14 bright young women in Montreal who senselessly lost their lives at the hand of an anti-feminist gunman 26 years ago, simply because they were women; and

Whereas violence against women continues to be a global pandemic, violating human rights and knowing no geographic, socioeconomic, or cultural boundaries;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize that prevention of these terrible acts is possible with education, a strong criminal justice response, and valuable community support networks, and by challenging the culture of discrimination against women.

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. 133 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 293 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Motor Vehicle Act. (Hon. Geoff MacLellan)

Bill No. 134 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 260 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Liquor Control Act. (Hon. Mark Furey)

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs on an introduction.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring the attention of the House to, I believe it is the east gallery, where we have a constituent of mine, a former Mayor of the Town of Yarmouth, a current councillor, one of the best golfers the area has ever seen, whose father, Fraser Mooney, actually served in this House for well over a decade - Phil Mooney. So if the House could please give Councillor Mooney our thanks for being here. (Applause)

NOTICES OF MOTION**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

DAVIDSON, MARK - CAPE SPLIT TRAIL POSTAGE STAMP

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to deliver this statement on behalf of the honourable member for Kings North.

Today I rise to tell members about the recent recognition received by the Cape Split hiking trail located in Scots Bay. This trail is eight kilometres from its sandy access point to its majestic summit overlooking the Bay of Fundy.

The beauty of the trail has been featured on a Canadian postage stamp. Thanks to Port Williams resident, Mark Davidson, whose photographic image entry to the Weather Wonders contest, sponsored by the Weather Network and Canada Post, was selected as one of the ten winners.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Davidson on winning this contest and successfully promoting the Cape Split Trail. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

PREM. - LEADERSHIP EXAMPLE

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the Premier can't know everything that is said in every conversation. We all understand that, but the Premier is the one who sets the bar in his office and across government. It has become all too painfully obvious that the bar set by the Premier has been pretty low.

I want to remind the Premier, although he probably needs no reminding, that he has been forced to remove a Cabinet Minister, who abused his legislative privilege, once it became too politically risky to continue standing by him; he was forced to remove his director of communications after a domestic assault charge - although it's not clear that he was removed for long, now he is back on contract in the Liberal caucus office; and now the Premier has been forced to accept the resignation of his chief of staff.

It would appear that the Premier is only prepared to act when forced to. This is not the leadership or the example Nova Scotians expect or deserve.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

BOOTH, WESLEY - VOL. EFFORTS

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the remarkable volunteer efforts of Wesley Booth, a young Acadia University business graduate and founder of the Annapolis Valley Awesome Foundation. The Awesome Foundation is a global initiative that began in Boston in 2009. Mr. Booth spearheaded an Annapolis Valley version of this global initiative with the worthy purpose of bringing the community together to improve the local quality of life. Mr. Booth recruited volunteer trustees, so each donated money and then he presented \$1,000 to a community member or group with an awesome idea.

At its inaugural event in November 2014, the foundation supported a local day-long conference called Game Space for youth interested in designing computer games. On behalf of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, I would like to acknowledge and thank Mr. Wesley Booth and the Annapolis Valley Awesome Foundation for their entrepreneurial approach to community building. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services on an introduction.

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, if we could look to the east wing we have someone known to many of us, we have Emily Alford and we have her mom Krista and today we have Emily's friend Liam Grandy who is a Grade 5 student at Sackville Heights. Liam became interested in politics with the recent federal election and participating in the election in his school, so if we could have the warm welcome of the House, that would be great. (Applause)

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

**LE VILLAGE HISTORIQUE ACADIEN DE LA NOUVELLE-ÉCOSSE
- POST OFFICE ADDITION**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, Le Village historique acadien de la Nouvelle-Écosse, located in West Pubnico, has been open to the public since 1999, illustrating the way of life dating back to the 1800s. On June 11th opening celebrations were held for the newest addition, a working Post Office. Visitors can purchase a postcard and mail it from the location. The cancellation stamp is the Village logo. The restored building once housed a shoe shop and holds a number of artifacts displayed on site showing some of the tools of a cobbler.

Please join me in congratulating Le Village, its Director, Roger d'Entremont, and all of the employees, on this addition to the site and being awarded the 2015 Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**INTL. DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (11/25/15) - LEGISLATION ENSHRINE**

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, today marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Students across Nova Scotia are looking to the government to act on the issue of violence against women on our university and college campuses. In a recent nationwide survey conducted by the CBC released Monday, it was found that last year university and colleges of Nova Scotia had some of the highest rates of sexual assaults on campuses, out of the 78 universities and colleges across Canada.

We know the government has said the Criminal Code is enough but students disagree. They want all universities and colleges to develop a sexual assault policy with student input and have better resources available to victims of sexual violence 24 hours a day. Today, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, I urge the government to enshrine in legislation requirements that all Nova Scotia universities and colleges must develop sexual assault policies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

GATEWAY COMMUN. FOOD BANK (SACKVILLE) - RECOGNIZE

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: I would like to take this time to recognize the Gateway Community Food Bank located at 10 Beaver Bank Road in Sackville. This food bank is a registered member of Feed Nova Scotia. Gateway Community Food Bank serves more than 60 families every month with food and various household items needed. In September, at

the beginning of the school year, they assisted families by providing much-needed school supplies. As they are now in preparation for Christmas, they will be providing over 60 Christmas hampers for families in need, which include a turkey with all the trimmings plus stocking stuffers for the children. I would like to acknowledge all the volunteers who are so faithful throughout the year, giving unselfishly of their valuable time in trying to help families have a merry Christmas. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

KINGS NORTH FIRST RESPONDERS: VOL. WORK - THANK

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to deliver this message on behalf of the honourable member for Kings North. Today I want to thank first responders for the great volunteer work they do on behalf of all citizens of Kings North. Many days you can hear the sirens and see the lights of emergency vehicles as they respond to any number of incidents in our area. One such organization is the Canning Volunteer Fire Department led by Chief Rick Weisner and Deputy Chief Jeff Skaling. They respond to over 140 calls a year and they use specially trained members for rope and boat rescues.

Another such group is the Valley Search and Rescue. The 80 volunteer members are called out in all weather and at all times of day or night. I am grateful for both of these organizations for the great work they do and thank them for their countless hours of volunteer service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROCESS: NDP SUPPORT - GUARANTEE

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, over the past week I've heard from a number of Nova Scotia teachers about their disappointment with the Premier and this government's dismal approach to collective bargaining. A clear pattern is emerging and it is bad news for the workers in this province. From the moment the Liberals took office in 2013 they have been openly strong-arming workers and just as predicted, those tactics are now rearing their head at the bargaining table. Having witnessed Bill Nos. 30, 37, 1, and 100, it's no wonder people have been anticipating these strong-arm tactics would move to the bargaining table. I said this before, if the Premier continues to turn his back on workers, he's going to have a fight on his hands. Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, we are ready. The NDP will seize every opportunity to stand up for workers and their families to fight to return fairness to the collective bargaining process.

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

**LIONS CLUB OF CAN. CONVENTION:
EAST PASSAGE COW BAY LIONS CLUB - HOSTING**

MS. JOYCE TREEN: On May 22-24, 2015, the Lions Club of Canada held their 2015 convention at the Holiday Inn Harbourview in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. I was fortunate enough to be part of this important event, which brings awareness to the Lions and all that they do.

The weekend involved a jam-packed schedule, including flag raising, meetings, meet and greets, socials, and dinners. There were Lions from all over the Atlantic Provinces and Maine in attendance, and it was a great opportunity to showcase our city. I met many wonderful volunteers within the Lions organization. I know locally this service club is very involved in the community and fills so many of its needs.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Eastern Passage Cow Bay Lions Club on organizing and hosting this great event.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**INTL. DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (11/25/15)**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. A staggering one in three women have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. In Canada, too many girls and women are still victims of violence. Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16. On any given day in Canada, more than 3,300 women, along with their 3,000 children, are forced to sleep in an emergency shelter to escape domestic violence. Every night, about 200 women are turned away because the shelters are full.

Today is a day when we can speak with one voice to say that these statistics are not acceptable, and we must do everything we can to put an end to this terrible situation.

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

**INTL. DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (11/25/15) - PREVENTION**

MS. LENORE ZANN: Today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women - another great reason to wear orange. Violence against women is a consequence of discrimination against women and is a testament to persisting inequalities. More than one in three of us either have experienced, or will experience,

violence in our lifetime. Indigenous women in Canada are seven times more likely to die from violence. More than half of women with disabilities have been victims of physical violence.

Mr. Speaker, violence against women is more than just a women's issue; it's actually a human rights issue. Gender-based violence is not inevitable. We can prevent it by addressing factors that contribute to violence like poverty, education, addictions, and mental health supports, and by creating policies that respond to the needs of survivors.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Whitney Pier.

**BRITTEN, DR. ALLEN J.: SCIENCE ATL. HALL OF FAME -
INDUCTION**

MR. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'm honoured to stand today and congratulate Dr. Allen J. Britten, professor of chemistry, who has been honoured for his varied and substantial contributions to Science Atlantic, and was inducted into the Science Atlantic Hall of Fame for 2015, as an outstanding member, on Friday, November 21st.

Dr. Britten was Cape Breton University's representative on Science Atlantic from 2004 to 2011, where he served on their executive, finance, and nominating committees. Dr. Britten is a vibrant and articulate educator who, for the past two decades, has devoted his talents in science and education to high school and university students across Atlantic Canada and, in particular, Nova Scotia. He is well respected nationally and internationally for his contributions to the development of science in Cape Breton Island and in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Please join me in honouring and congratulating Dr. Britten on this accomplishment.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

BOS, IAN: IAN'S WALK 2015 - APPLAUD

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Ian Bos walked coast to coast for a cause, a walk for end-of-life care. The walk was inspired by the palliative care in New Glasgow that was available for his dad at the end of life. Ian wants everyone to have access to that extraordinary level of care. Inspiring others along the way, Ian is now pondering a career change to something hands-on and palliative care-related.

I applaud and thank my friend Ian on his walk, and wish him continued success in all of his future endeavours. One by one, we can make a difference. Thank you.

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

RANDELL, JOE: DAL. - HON. DEGREE

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Joseph David Randell, resident of Wellington and a neighbour of mine, on recently receiving an honorary degree from Dalhousie University. Mr. Randell has been recognized as one of the most successful and influential figures in Canadian aviation and an innovative contributor to the economy and community of Atlantic Canada.

Joe's career in aviation spans 40 years, and he is currently the president and chief executive officer of Chorus Aviation Incorporated and its subsidiary Jazz Aviation. His Halifax-based company contributes to the local and regional economy by employing approximately 4,200 people. His partnership with the Dalhousie Faculty of Engineering has helped increase the expertise and reputation of the Dalhousie Industrial Engineering Department and trained generations of engineers.

I would like to extend congratulations to Dr. Joe Randell on the receipt of this distinguished honour. Thank you.

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

DENSMORE, EVAN & NICK: KATIE BELLE - LAUNCH

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, on October 27th, history both came to life and was made in Stewiacke. Cameron Shipyards Incorporated launched the *Katie Belle*, a 76-foot-long, 60-ton schooner, into the Stewiacke River. This marked the first time in nearly 100 years that a boat has entered the river in Stewiacke.

It was Dan Densmore's dream to launch a schooner on the Stewiacke River, but it was his grandsons who brought the dream to life. Inspired and taught by their grandfather, the *Katie Belle* was built by cousins Evan and Nick Densmore and named in honour of their late great-grandmother. Hundreds looked on to witness as the boat hit the water for her maiden voyage. She is currently in Parrsboro having the mast, sails, and rigging installed.

I ask that members join me in extending congratulations to Evan and Nick on this tremendous accomplishment and for realizing a dream. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

**INTL. DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (11/25/15) - JUSTICE SYSTEM**

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, violence against women is one of our province's most pressing justice issues. The Canadian Women's Foundation states that 83

per cent of all police-reported domestic assaults are against women. However, we know that women experiencing violence do not report all instances of abuse to police, and perpetrators of violence are not held responsible.

According to the Canadian Department of Justice, each year Canadians collectively spend \$7.4 billion to deal with the aftermath of spousal violence. This figure includes immediate costs, such as emergency room visits, and future costs, such as loss of income.

Today, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, I urge the Minister of Justice to find solutions to gaps within the justice system where survivors of violence are falling through.

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

DIGBY REG. HS: O2 PROG. - COMMEND

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the efforts of the Options and Opportunities class of Digby Regional High School in helping to clean the environment. The O2 program provides at-risk students a more hands-on learning experience and requires that students volunteer in their community.

As part of this second requirement, the students set off last June to clean up an illegal dump site on Brier Island. With the help of Waste Check representatives, Ms. Geraldine Amirault's O2 class picked up and sorted some 6,000 pounds of garbage that were then trucked to the appropriate disposal facility. For this effort, Ms. Amirault's class was inducted into the Waste Check's Club 300. Club 300 recognizes groups, organizations, or individuals that are doing their part to meet Waste Check's goal to reduce the solid waste disposal rate to no more than 300 kilograms per person by the year 2015.

I hope that through such projects the students realize the importance of volunteering in their community and of caring for the environment. I'm sure the people of Brier Island appreciate the fact that this eyesore has been removed from their community. Thank you.

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

HALEY ST. ADULT SERV. CTR.: PELLET PRODUCTION - RECOGNIZE

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Haley Street Adult Services Centre for their new program of producing wood pellets to be sold in the community. The centre is a vocational training facility for adults with disabilities, with the philosophy of reusing and keeping things from going into the landfill.

It is a true honour to have this opportunity to acknowledge the Haley Street Centre for their insight and for starting manufacturing, creating jobs, raising revenue, and giving members of the centre a feeling of pride in helping their community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**INTL. DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:
PREVENTION GOV'T. FOCUS**

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, every year on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, we are reminded how every day women and girls experience violence in their lives. Women across Nova Scotia and Canada are abused in their homes, harassed on the streets, and bullied on the Internet. For women living in rural Nova Scotia we know that often finding the help they need becomes more and more challenging.

This year's international theme is prevention, and I urge the government to focus their attention to preventing violence against women and girls living in rural Nova Scotia, and across our province. Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue to all members of this House and I know we all want to see this issue end once and for all, thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

**ST. ANTONIOS ANTIOCHIAN CHRISTIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
- INAUGURAL LITURGY**

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to attend the celebration liturgy at Saint Antonio's Antiochian Christian Orthodox Church in Halifax on Sunday, November 15, 2015.

While some churches are closing, this parish celebrated moving into a much larger church building, the old Saint Matthias Church on Chebucto Road. The Lebanese parish led by Father Maximos Saikali is bursting at the seams with parishioners, which includes many young families, and a larger location was needed.

Metropolitan Ephraim of Tripoli, Lebanon, was invited to preside over the inaugural liturgy together with other local clergy, and many dignitaries were present to participate and offer their congratulations. Extensive renovations have fused the original Gothic design with Byzantine features. Vestiges of the former Saint Matthias Anglican history, such as family sponsored stain glass, now over 100 years old, remain and compliment the new Byzantine iconography.

On behalf of the House of Assembly, I'd like to congratulate Father Maximos, Parish Council, and the whole community of St. Antonio's on this important milestone of growth and vision, and wish them continued success. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**NATL. ADDICTIONS AWARENESS WK. (11/15 - 11/21/15)
- SCH. VISITS**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, November 15th to 21st was National Addictions Awareness Week. This year's theme, Addiction Matters, drew attention to substance abuse as a chronic health issue that impacts individuals, families, and communities across Canada.

Ashlie Cormier, a Prevention and Health Promotion Specialist with Addictions Services for Pictou County, revealed how Mental Health and Addictions works to address the many harms of substance abuse, and brings hope to the lives of those with substance use disorders. Unfortunately, she feels that our society still associates shame with addiction and that is often the main barrier to people seeking help. Visits to high schools and the Nova Scotia Community College, Pictou Campus, help to bring awareness to students about addiction and the services and support available. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

CREATIVE SECTOR - GOV'T. DESTABILIZATION

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia has a long history of going down the road to work. Is that why the Liberal Government continues to send work out of the province - tradition?

The Liberal Government continues to destabilize the creative sector, first with the elimination of the Film Tax Credit, and now with the awarding of the Nova Scotia Tourism contract to a Toronto company. Extreme Group held the previous three-year contract. The Halifax company was forced to lay off eight people in the wake of losing this bid. Now these jobs are on Bay Street.

Mr. Speaker, this is a major step backward for Nova Scotia's creative industry. Thank you.

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

**MELROSE, MS. JAYME: COMMON ROOTS URBAN FARM
- PHOTOVOICE PROJ.**

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Partners for Care on their initiative the Common Roots Urban Farm. Partners for Care has been a notable organization in my community for quite some time, but recently Jayme Melrose of the Urban Farm spearheaded a photo-voice project so participants of the Common Roots could speak to its significance.

Participants were asked to express through photographs the impact the farm has had on their lives and what it means to them going forward. Our government's Cultural and Youth Activities Program helped fund the project, and it would suffice to say it was hit. I am proud to have Partners for Care and Jayme Melrose as members of our community and our city. The project re-encouraged the notion that arts and culture are a fundamental part of our city's growth, and helps to shape the wellness and identity of our province, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

C.B. BANTAM AA FEMALE MINERS - HOCKEY SILVER MEDAL

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Cape Breton Bantam AA Female Miners on winning the silver medal at the 2015 Subway Cup. The Cape Bantam AA Female Miners are a regional female hockey team based out of Glace Bay, but they come from Cape Breton County, New Waterford, Glace Bay, Sydney and North Sydney and district minor hockey associations.

The head coach is Phillip O'Neill. There are 15 players and two goal tenders on the team who are 13 and 14 years old. The third annual Subway Cup Female Hockey Tournament was hosted by the Pictou County Subway Selects from October 30 to November 1, 2015.

It is my great pleasure to congratulate the Cape Breton Bantam AA Female Miners on this great achievement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

NAT. RES.: WOOD PELLETS - SUPPLY

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, last year we witnessed a lack of response to the firewood shortage by the current Acting Minister of Natural Resources. This summer we also witnessed, for the first time in Nova Scotia's history, a fuel shortage which this same minister is reviewing. Now, with winter coming on, many Nova Scotians are wondering if there will be a shortage of wood pellets. While there are companies

producing wood pellets in Nova Scotia, much of their product is being shipped overseas to European markets.

I encourage the Acting Minister of Natural Resources to be open and transparent about the supply of wood pellets in Nova Scotia, so that Nova Scotians looking for answers will not be left out in the cold during the winter months. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**NICKERSON, BILL:
DUTCH-CDN. FRIENDSHIP GARDEN (BRIDGEWATER) - THANK**

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of joining community members recently in the planting of the Dutch-Canadian Friendship Garden at Veterans' Memorial Park in Bridgewater. In recognition of the 70th Anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands, 140 communities across Canada were honoured to receive tulip bulbs to create symbolic gardens from coast to coast.

An impressive contingent of community, both young and aging, turned out to take part in the planting, and we all look forward to seeing the results this Spring. I would like to thank Bill Nickerson for initiating the project in Bridgewater, as well as all who came out to participate, as this was truly a community event. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MCDANIEL, WILLIAM: SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, William McDaniel of Brook Village graduated from high school just four years ago, yet his story is an inspiration for young people to work hard and follow their dreams.

After high school, William was accepted at Sheridan College for a three-year Technical Production for Theatre and Live Events program. He was promptly hired by CAST Software Limited to work with a new product which is quickly becoming the industry standard in the entertainment world.

William has been able to combine his interests in technical production and travel. He spent most of last summer in Florida with the Disney on Ice Frozen show and the Marvel Universe live show. He has also been to Dubai for an awards ceremony; to London to train people on the software; and, last we heard, he was going to China for work on a Nike basketball shoot.

Let us congratulate William McDaniel on his success.

MR. SPEAKER: I'd like to take the opportunity to make a quick introduction of my own, if I may. In the west gallery we have just been joined by my sister-in-law Katherine MacAulay and my niece Sophia MacAulay (Applause) Sophia is a big fan of the government, so we're pleased to have her here today.

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

PREM.: PROBLEMS - AWARENESS

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is telling Nova Scotians it does not matter that as our province's Leader he allowed a senior staff member, found guilty of domestic assault and still on probation, to be rehired by the Liberal caucus office. The Premier seems to believe Nova Scotians do not care that the head of their province continually states he did not know about many significant details surrounding the issues between his now former chief of staff and the member for Dartmouth East.

Nova Scotians want to know who is actually running the province. Obviously it cannot be the Premier because he continually says he does not know anything that goes on. Nova Scotians do care because they thought they voted for a Premier who knows something. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

CIOE 97.5: VOLS. - LAUNCH THANK

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate a terrific community radio station, CIOE 97.5.

The Cobequid Radio Society launched this not-for-profit community radio station in May of this year. CIOE serves the communities of Bedford, Sackville, Beaver Bank, Fall River, Wellington, Hammonds Plains, Mount Uniacke, Timberlea, Clayton Park, and Rockingham and surrounding areas. CIOE embraces and focuses on each community, its news events, activities, local artists, and minor sports.

The station was the dream of the late Owen Davis, I think that's why they call it CIOE, after Owen. Bedford's Jim Robson and Sackville's Al Hollingsworth worked for over four years to bring this station from dream to reality. I'm delighted to see my former boss Ian Morrison and other well-known names like Jerry Lawrence and Alex Vaughn joining in on air.

We're lucky to have volunteers dedicated to this community-building station, and I want to thank them for this successful launch.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

**INTL. DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN (11/25/15): PREVENTION - CO-OPERATION**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Violence against women is a very serious issue that continues to affect too many women and families.

The statistics alone are startling. In July, Halifax Regional Police issued a statement noting that women in Nova Scotia are 45 times more likely to be killed by a spouse or intimate partner than they are by a stranger. Violence against women and girls is not acceptable. It's not inevitable, either. Prevention is possible and essential.

As we commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, we should all make ending violence against women and girls a priority. By working together, we can build a province where women and girls can live free from violence. Thank you.

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

MINORITY COMMUNITIES: COMMITMENT - MAINTAIN

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, it is a sad truth that over much of our province's history, minority communities have had limited political power and, as a result, limited political influence. This often meant that racial or socioeconomic groups had no voice in provincial or municipal decision-making and, sadly, some communities were taken advantage of, with land being seized for highways, bridges, landfills, or other developments without appropriate consultation or compensation.

While times have changed and these practices are no longer acceptable, I still feel we need to take things a step farther and make consultation mandatory. No future government should be able to take us backward or undo the strides we've made. As legislators, we need to maintain our commitment to listen to all Nova Scotians before decisions are made, and value all voices equally.

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

**PAHLKE, ARIELLA/SPOONER, MELINDA
- SHORELINES ART PROJ.**

MR. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize documentary filmmaker Ariella Pahlke of Terence Bay and visual artist Melinda Spooner of Prospect for their ambitious community art project Shorelines.

From February to June 2015, community members from the Prospect Road area participated in the community art project Shorelines, which connected people of all ages with multi-disciplinary artists to explore their surroundings through art-making. By bringing together artists with community members and local organizations, Shorelines focused on the intrinsic value of rural seaside places and the role of the arts in creating authentic connections between their communities, their culture, and their surroundings.

Some of the activities offered through the Shorelines project included Native drumming, videography, sound recording, forest hikes, stained glass work, hiking, blacksmithing, kayaking, and exploring the marine environment. The culmination of this project was an art exhibit and a forest walk.

I would like the members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in commending Melinda and Ariella for sharing their passion and creativity with others, and wish them all the very best for the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

BENOIT, ED - GOOD SAMARITAN

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, members' statements are a great opportunity for MLAs to sing the praises of unsung heroes in our communities. Today I'm pleased to commend one such hero, and that's Ed Benoit. Mr. Benoit is a taxi driver who picked up Newfoundlander Nicole Slade at the Stanfield International Airport on Monday. He quickly realized that she was hurt from a pre-flight fall and took her to the emergency room.

That is a story of a Good Samaritan, but Mr. Benoit did not stop there. He went into the hospital with Ms. Slade, held her coat and purse, and waited while Ms. Slade had X-rays and treatment for a fracture. He then drove her to the hotel. Today, I ask all MLAs to join me in saluting Ed Benoit, an everyday hero who made a real difference.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

TIR MIN.: MOTOR VEHICLE ACT AMENDMENTS - THANK

MS. MARGARET MILLER: Earlier today I distributed some MADD pins on all the desks. I really thank all the members for displaying their support of MADD Canada.

As a mother I never thought I'd be burying my child. It changed me; it changed the direction of my life. Life became about righting wrongs and making a difference in my province and country. It became about making Bruce's life still matter.

Today our TIR Minister tabled a bill with amendments to the Motor Vehicle Act. It will follow the bill last year that was passed in this House unanimously. It's one more step in the battle to keep our families and our children safe and alive. I ask all members of this House to thank the minister for his positive actions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

CAMERON, SARAH-DAWN - FERNWEH APPAREL

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and congratulate Sarah-Dawn Cameron on opening a small business on Water Street, in Pictou, in June 2015. Sarah-Dawn was backpacking across parts of Europe when she learned of a German word, fernweh, meaning to have a longing to be in far off place. Travelling in Europe had a profound effect on how Sarah-Dawn views the world. She opened Fernweh Apparel where she sells clothing that she personally designs with a theme of wanderlust and desire for world travel. The store also features the work of local photographers.

Mr. Speaker, once again I am pleased to recognize Sarah-Dawn for her entrepreneurial spirit and wish her much success. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING: GOV'T. - ACCOUNTABILITY

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, teachers across Nova Scotia are writing and calling their MLAs to say they feel browbeaten by this government. They are saying that for a government that boasts of being the most open and transparent in history, teachers are experiencing something altogether different. They are experiencing a government that is closed-off and dictatorial.

Collective bargaining and union contracts are agreements that should be negotiated at the bargaining table by the union and the employer, free from political interference. In that light, we'll respect that democratic process that is scheduled to finish for teachers on December 1st.

I can assure this House that our small NDP caucus will hold this government accountable for the larger issues of how this government treats its employees. We will continue to raise the impact wage freezes and concession bargaining will have on current employees and future generations. To teachers, and in fact to all public employees dealing with the current government, we hear your frustration.

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

SMITH, REENY: CASINO N.S. ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate and recognize Reeny Smith of North Preston on her recent achievement of being named Casino Nova Scotia's new artist in residence. She received \$20,000 to develop her career and to showcase her talents in Halifax's Sydney casinos, as well as other international music events through Music Nova Scotia.

Reeny has achieved many other awards for her musical talent such as the Portia White Award for Excellence in Vocal Performance and a scholarship from the Nova Scotia Talent Trust. She has studied piano in the Conservatory of Music and also with Halifax-based pianist Paul Simmons.

Reeny played piano since the age of five and honed her musical skills performing with her family in the local church, St. Thomas Baptist Church. She comes from a deep musical tradition as her father and grandfather, Wallace Smith Senior and Junior, are performing members or former members of the Gospel Heirs.

I congratulate and applaud Reeny on her achievements and for the enrichment of our lives through musical talents.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**JOHNSON, NICOLE: PAN AMERICAN GAMES
- ATHLETIC THERAPY**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge a participant in the 2015 Pan American Games who is not an athlete but an athletic therapist and an all-round great person. Nicole Johnson got her chance to join Canada's Sports Medicine Group from a conference she attended two years ago. A speaker at the conference encouraged people with a sports medicine background to apply to join the Pan Am team and the rest is history.

Looking forward, Nicole would certainly welcome the chance to attend the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio and on behalf of the residents of Pictou East, I certainly hope that she has that opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

PREM.: PLAN - SUPPORT

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, on October 8, 2013, Nova Scotians voted for change. They supported a platform and set of ideas that would take our province in a different direction. Over two years later, the people of our province can be proud of our accomplishments so far and for our efforts to lay the foundation for the work ahead.

Our province has a leader who is up to the challenges and the decision-making at a pivotal time in our history. We are doing good things in reshaping the future of Nova Scotia.

My family, friends, caucus and Party family and thousands of Nova Scotians are in full support of the Premier and his plan. As for me, I will stand behind the MLA for Annapolis until the day the good people of Glace Bay decide that this is no longer my place.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of our government, our leader and my friend. (Applause)

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

LAFARGE - RRFB ENVIRON. BUS. OF YR. (2013)

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, on September 29, 1965, with 500 people in attendance, then-Premier Robert Stanfield performed a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a state-of-the-art cement plant in Brookfield. A half-century later, Lafarge has celebrated their golden anniversary.

Attracted to the rich limestone deposits in the area, the creation of the plant has offered many economic and community benefits. Over their 50 years of operation, they have employed more than 1,000 people and currently employ 70.

The company strives to achieve high standards in environmental and safety practices. In 2013, Lafarge was recognized as RRFB's Environmental Business of the Year for their efforts in industrial ecology. The cements they make today make 25 per cent less carbon dioxide than they did when the plant began.

Their safety record is currently six years without a lost-time accident. Congratulations to Lafarge on achieving and celebrating this incredible milestone. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

SMITH, NICOLE - WILSON FUEL SCHOLARSHIP

HON. KAREN CASEY: Wilson Fuel is proud to support its employees, their children and their grandchildren as they further their post-secondary education at university or community college. The Wilson Family Scholarship is awarded yearly to those who have achieved success at school or a trade and are involved with their communities through volunteering, sport, or the arts.

Nicole Smith, from Great Village, Colchester North, graduated from CEC in 2015 and is attending Acadia University, majoring in business and administration. Nicole successfully balanced a busy schedule of work, scholastic studies, and extracurricular activities. She also worked part time at Wilson's in Great Village for two years while maintaining an honours average, playing sports, and volunteering in her community.

Nicole was a deserving recipient of a \$3,000 Wilson Family Scholarship.

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

BAILEY, FRED & VELVA: CHICO - ADOPTION

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to thank Fred and Velva Bailey, who adopted Chico, a pit bull that was owned by Shawn Curtis Jack.

Mr. Jack was a homeless man who was severely beaten in North Sydney last year. Still hospitalized, Mr. Jack is unable to walk, feed himself, or even swallow water. Chico was severely traumatized by this event.

It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to commend Fred and Velva for opening their lives and home to Chico, who now has a well-deserved life with this new loving family.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

RUSSELL, BURTON: MAR. SPORT HALL OF FAME - INDUCTION

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, there are few members of the community with such knowledge of sports as Burton Russell, who in the summer of 2015 was inducted into the Maritime Sport Hall of Fame.

Mr. Russell has spent many years as a coach, mentor, sports author, and participant in many sports-related functions. Prior to becoming the well-known coach he is today, Mr. Russell attended KCA and Acadia University prior to attending Dalhousie. For the last 25 years of his career, Mr. Russell taught English and coached sports at Kings County Academy.

Along with being a well-known coach, Mr. Russell is also an accomplished author, having written 11 books of Maritime sports history. He's also official statistician of the Nova Scotia Senior Baseball League.

Mr. Russell is an individual who helps promote a healthier province through his dedication in coaching many athletes throughout his years.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

SPORTSHACK 2015: VOLTA - HOST CONGRATS.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, Halifax Volta is this year's Halifax host for SportsHack 2015 from November 27th to 29th.

SportsHack is the largest sports-related hackathon in North America. Hackers in Halifax, Toronto and Vancouver will compete in developing innovative sports-related software over three days. At the end of the hackathon, regional finalists from the three cities will advance to the national round.

Nova Scotia has a great deal of computer science expertise, thanks to our educational institutes and the support of organizations like Volta. I wish everyone all the best in their weekend of hacking. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, that just about does it for members' statements.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM.: PERSONAL SERV. CONTRACTS - PRIVATE HIRING

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Nova Scotians are still surprised to know that the chief of staff to the Premier offered a job to the wife of a Liberal MLA, but perhaps today they know why. At the Public Accounts Committee this morning, the Liberal member for Cumberland North said that all of the Parties - whether they be in government or Opposition - have people in their offices who are on the government payroll, who are engaged in personal services contracts and who are probably offered their positions in a similar fashion, in a private conversation. I'll table that for the House.

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Premier; is it, in fact, as common that his government hands out personal services contracts in private conversations as the member for Cumberland North said this morning?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question and I want to tell all members of this House, no one was offered a job by any members of my staff from that tape. The way that that member is communicating with the member for Dartmouth East, he should fully understand considering they exchanged tapes often, apparently.

Let me tell you, Mr. McVicar handed in his resignation yesterday because of information that was released from my office. He did the honourable thing, he did what the people of Nova Scotia would expect. He's an honourable man who deserves to be respected in this House.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, and for today, of course, the honourable thing is for the Premier to answer the questions that are asked of him. The fact of the matter is, when the Premier heard the recording where his chief of staff offered a job to the wife of a Liberal MLA, he was concerned enough about it to hand it over to the RCMP. The fact is, there are rules about offering professional services contracts, including that people have to be on a standing offer list, they have to submit proposals and departments have to do work plans in order to select from that list. I'll table all of that for the benefit of the House.

The Premier said he was fine with everything his chief of staff did up until the day before yesterday which included the conversation in question. So I will ask the Premier, is he really okay with personal services contracts being offered in private by members of his staff?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again I want to remind all members of this House there was no contract offered. Again, I want to remind all members of this House that the reasons that the letter that came into our possession - which was apparently dropped off by some imaginary person in this House who had a piece of audio tape - suggested in that letter that a member of the RCMP was involved in something in this case. We just simply turned it over to the RCMP and they will do with it as they see fit.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, we have the Premier saying that he's okay with these job offers going on behind closed doors and we have the member for Cumberland North saying it's actually quite commonplace in the Liberal Government. That is surprising news to all Nova Scotians who expect their procurement rules to be followed. I would like to ask the Premier, just how many professional services contracts has his government put out since they came to office?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member again for the question. No matter how many times he repeats it, I'm going to tell the members of this House there was no contract offered to anyone.

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

PREM.: MED. INFO. RELEASE - COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the Premier's Office released the personal health information of a former Liberal Cabinet Minister in an attempt to discredit him. This was not done in the heat of the moment in a scrum - this was done in a series of interviews for all Nova Scotia's major media outlets. This was not done

once or twice, but instead on at least five separate occasions. Clearly this breach was not an isolated mistake, but a communications strategy.

My question for the Premier is, why was releasing the personal health information of the member for Dartmouth East, without consent, a key communications strategy on Monday?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Let me clear up for all members of this House, there was no communications strategy in releasing that information. Mr. McVicar had released that information, he recognized it was wrong. He did the honourable thing, he resigned from his position as the chief of staff. While I was away, the honourable member across the hall accused me of swearing in this House; Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for clearing it up. Perhaps the honourable member might want to stand up and apologize.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, given the anticipation around Kirby McVicar's media availability on Monday, clearly his talking points were not developed in isolation. In at least five different interviews, Kirby McVicar disclosed an individual's private health information without consent. He did it with CBC; he did it with *The Chronicle Herald*; he did it with the Canadian Press; he did it with allNovaScotia.com; and he did it in a joint interview with Global and CTV.

Some non-communication strategy, Mr. Speaker - the Premier's communications director confirmed for the media during one of those stories, the health information. My question for the Premier is, who in his office was involved in drafting Kirby McVicar's talking points on Monday?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. She may need talking points, but I want to tell you Mr. McVicar did the interviews. I asked him the question: "Who gave you that advice?" and he said "It was my decision and my decision alone." And he did the honourable thing, Mr. Speaker, he handed in his resignation.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. McVicar is an honourable person. It is unfortunate that other people wouldn't recognize when they make a mistake and apologize for it.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, every major media outlet in Nova Scotia wanted to speak to Kirby McVicar on Monday afternoon. Clearly talking points were prepared in advance, talking points that were repeated over and over, and over and over again. Surely some thought and preparation went into developing the communication strategy, because whatever Mr. McVicar said, the Premier would have to respond to - and I doubt that he wanted to be caught off-guard in Ottawa in front of the national press gallery.

So my question to the Premier is, why did he allow his chief of staff to disclose the personal health information of the member for Dartmouth East in numerous media interviews on Monday?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again I want to tell the honourable member Mr. McVicar did the interviews; Mr. McVicar released information.

He does recognize it there, and I want to tell you I was in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, people were talking to me about the Paris Conference, they were talking to me about refugees. I had an opportunity to talk to the Prime Minister about health issues in our province. When I was in Ottawa, people were focused on growing this country and they were proud to have a Nova Scotia Government there who was prepared to grow the Province of Nova Scotia as part of the federation.

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

PREM. - CHIEF OF STAFF: INTERVIEWS - AVAILABILITY

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier can go to Ottawa and talk about these things as much as he wants, but it doesn't change the fact he is still responsible for what happens in his own office here at home. I ask the Premier, did he direct his chief of staff to make himself available to the media for those interviews the day before yesterday?

THE PREMIER: If the honourable member who asks questions would actually listen to the answer, Mr. Speaker, what we said for weeks now as this has gone on - when the full tape came out, Mr. McVicar would make himself available. He should know. He received the tape, I think, even before your office, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when the full tape came out, Mr. McVicar did what he said he was going to do and he made himself available. (Interruptions)

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

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, we have no problem listening to the answer - we are listening for an answer and we're still waiting to hear one to the questions. That's the issue.

The Premier said his chief of staff would be available for interviews. Was he himself involved in preparing his chief of staff for the storyline he would use that day?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I was in Ottawa meeting with the new national Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and meeting with the Prime Minister, talking about the things that matter to communities and families across this province. What we said from the

very beginning is when the tape was released and given to your possession, Mr. McVicar would be available to speak to the media, and he made himself available.

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

PREM. - STAFF: ACTIONS - AWARENESS

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Yesterday for the second time in three weeks, the Premier lost a high-ranking and senior member of the Liberal team. Mr. Speaker, there is a pattern with this Premier. First the Premier's director of communications was charged with assault, but the Premier said he didn't know. Then his Energy Minister invokes privilege so he doesn't have to testify in court, and the Premier didn't know. And then his chief of staff offers a job to the wife of the Liberal MLA, and the Premier didn't know.

My question for the Premier is, why is it he never knows about what people in his office are doing in his name and on his behalf?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member. I know what people are doing; they are providing good government to the people of the Province of Nova Scotia. There are 70 new positions made available, with no requirement, for young Nova Scotians to stay at home.

Mr. Speaker, we have improved the opportunity for apprenticeships here in this province. Those are all positive things. Finally Nova Scotians have a government that is focused on the things that matter to the kitchen tables across this province, not what the former government was doing.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, on two separate occasions in the past three weeks the Premier has been asked by the Opposition to remove a senior member of the Liberal team due to misconduct. On both occasions the Premier first attempted to defend the actions of these individuals and stated that they had his full confidence. He defended the member for Dartmouth East's decision not to appear in court, and he defended what Kirby McVicar was saying on that recording.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the Premier is this, why does he constantly put his political interests ahead of the public interest by defending behaviour that is inappropriate and indefensible?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I really appreciate the question. The member for Dartmouth East is no longer a member of this Cabinet or this caucus, due the fact that he misled not only us, in my view he misrepresented what the Clerk of this House told him. When I found that out, we removed him not only from this Cabinet but from this caucus. It's what Nova Scotians wanted us to do.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell all members of this House that Mr. McVicar handed in his resignation yesterday because of what happened yesterday, in terms of information that was released regarding a member of this House. He did the honourable thing. Perhaps saying I'm sorry isn't so hard for the member across the hall.

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

PREM. - MCVICAR'S RECORDS: RCMP REQUESTS - CONFIRM

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, we know that the RCMP are looking into the discussions that took place between Mr. McVicar and the member for Dartmouth East. I'd like to ask the Premier, has the RCMP asked for any of Mr. McVicar's records from the Premier's office?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the fact that what the member just said - I don't know if that's accurate or not. I can tell you that what we have handed over to the RCMP was an anonymous letter that was dropped off at this House. It suggested inside that that a member of that force had provided advice to the member for Dartmouth East; along with that, there was a tape.

To my recollection, all the RCMP have said is that they've opened a file, Mr. Speaker. There's no suggestion that Mr. McVicar is even under investigation and the member opposite should be careful about what he is suggesting.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, was the cellphone of the chief of staff wiped last night, in accordance with government policy?

THE PREMIER: I thank the honourable member for the question. All the protocols that would apply to any member who would be relieved from public service would have applied.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, what steps has the Premier taken to ensure that all the records of Mr. McVicar - his text messages, his cellphone records, his emails, particularly those between him and the member for Dartmouth East - are preserved in the event that the RCMP wishes to follow up on the complaint that he laid?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. All the protocols that would be in place to protect information are there. Again I want to tell all members of this House that the Leader of the Official Opposition has no idea whether or not Mr. McVicar is under investigation by the RCMP. He is just simply trying to drive up the rhetoric on behalf of a political reason.

It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that some people try to gain traction by working on the sadness of other people. It is absolutely pathetic, in my view. (Applause)

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I am so reminded of the words of the late, great Margaret Thatcher who said, I love it when they are attacking us because it means they've lost all legitimate arguments of their own. That is a perfect example right there. (Applause) (Interruption)

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

MR. BAILLIE: They don't realize that the joke is on them. We're just trying to get straight answers here.

Here is a simple question: how much severance is Mr. McVicar going to get?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it is with the Executive Council. Whatever the contract would have said will be followed through on.

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

PREM. - REGISTRIES: UNSUSTAINABILITY - EXPLAIN

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The three registries here in our province bring in well over \$100 million a year to the Government of Nova Scotia. Given the financial challenges facing the province, I can think of a few words to describe the registries, such as "profitable" or "indispensable." However, during an emergency debate on privatizing the registries, the Minister of Service Nova Scotia said explicitly, "The registries are not sustainable."

The minister's description seems to defy the law of economics. My question to the Premier is, can you explain how the profit-producing registries are "unsustainable"?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to first of all thank the minister for the tremendous work he has been doing on behalf of all Nova Scotians and government.

What has taken place, what we have said to the people, we were looking at those registries to find out if there is a way to deliver those services that is more cost-effective to the people of Nova Scotia.

We don't know if there is. I'm not certain there is. There has been no move to privatize it at all. We're looking at it. We've made no indication that it'll be privatized. The only government that I can remember in more recent times that has privatized jobs out of the Public Service has been the NDP, when they did SAP.

MS. MACDONALD: That crowd across the way, they don't remember the culture of the government that lost power October 19th. I'm reminded a lot of that culture.

Despite the fact that the registries are money makers, the Minister of Service Nova Scotia insisted in the emergency debate that “. . . we need to change course with the Land, Motor Vehicle, and Joint Stock Registries.” According to the minister, they needed to be more efficient and effective. However, stakeholders that we’ve consulted with say that the cost of doing business has as much as tripled in jurisdictions where the Land Registry, for example, has been privatized.

I want to ask the Premier, could you explain to stakeholders how privatizing the registries elsewhere has made them more efficient and effective and better for business?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Too bad she didn’t do some research when she was actually in government making decisions. We might have had better decisions in the last four years when they were in power, but I do appreciate the fact that she’s willing to share what she knows now.

We are now out engaging organizations to look at that service delivery. Let me assure all members of this House and Nova Scotians that if the service standard doesn’t stay where it is or if there is not a substantial saving to the people of the Province of Nova Scotia, we’re going to continue to move forward. But there has been no decision made at all - no decision whatsoever - to privatize any jobs in the province.

If I was to listen to the New Democratic Party, their only option is the status quo on everything. It’s not sustainable in this province. It’s why Nova Scotians booted them out of office.

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

PREM.: STAFF - SECRECY

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier’s responsible for what happens in his office. Every time something goes wrong, he says that he was kept in the dark about it. He was kept in the dark when his chief of staff made a job offer to the wife of a Liberal MLA; he was kept in the dark as much as two days ago about what Mr. McVicar would say to the media when he went out to speak about his side of the story.

Does the Premier really think it’s okay for his staff to keep him in the dark about such important matters?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for his question. I want to thank all members of the staff. I want to thank all people who participate in the Public Service in this province, working not only in this caucus and in this government but throughout both Opposition Parties, as well as in the government services proper. They do what they believe is in the best interests of Nova Scotians each and every day, and I’m very proud of the work this government has been doing.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, as recently as two minutes ago the Premier was still in the dark about how much severance Mr. McVicar is going to get. Probably someone in his office is working that out, but he accepted that resignation yesterday and Nova Scotians want to know how much that resignation is going to cost them.

What does it say about the Premier's office when he doesn't have answers to simple questions like how much money is owed to his chief of staff now that he has resigned?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for his question. As I said to you earlier in this House, the contract will be fulfilled. It is now going through the proper channels.

I can assure the honourable member that Mr. McVicar is not entitled to a year's severance, like he was when he was chief of staff.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on a new question.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY - EFFECTIVENESS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier can do whatever he wants to try to avoid answering the questions but he can't make up stuff. He cannot make up stuff; that is simply not true. I very proudly went on to my next job at the credit union with no severance whatsoever. It's a matter of public record, you can't make it up.

Mr. Speaker, I'd actually like to ask a question now about our mental health system. It is in crisis, we're halfway through the mental health five-year strategy. Last week the Minister of Health and Wellness said that although there are lots of problems in the mental health system, the idea of a strategy is to give it time.

We're three years in to the five-year strategy and families are in crisis. We've brought many examples here to this House for the government to see. Why do Nova Scotian families have to wait longer to see that the mental health strategy of the government is not working and get the help they need?

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

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what I know and what members of this House and Nova Scotians know and we hear from many people is that there has been a pattern of strong improvement in mental health delivery across Nova Scotia. We know we are building capacity. Nova Scotians are able to get care in their communities at a higher level than ever before and we will continue that path in implementing the strategy Together We

Can. We know it has great merit and we're only a little over halfway through the strength of the 33 recommendations.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, that answer will be of little comfort to the people of Pictou County who saw their mental health unit close and have been told in some cases to go to Yarmouth to get the services they need. People like Fran Morrison - who lost her son, who died by suicide - who came to this House to say that her family did not get the help they needed at that tragic time will not be comforted by that answer.

Mr. Speaker, the system is in crisis, families are not getting the help they need. Will the Premier now call a public inquiry into the state of our mental health services so we can get on with the job of actually fixing these problems for today's families?

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

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I've had an update, in fact, just at the end of last week on the situation in Pictou. We know that in 13 weeks there were seven people who required in-patient assistance. They all got placed, they were in hospital for a few days and back home in the community. We know that the emergency room and the team that provides mental health in that area, along with the mental health clinic, in fact, are doing very strong work for the people of Pictou County.

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

SNS - REGISTRIES: PRIVATIZATION - CONSULTANTS

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Service Nova Scotia. During emergency debate on privatizing the registries the Minister of Service Nova Scotia said, "The need for stakeholder engagement would be premature until, first and foremost, we've made a decision." It sounds like a textbook definition of meaningless consultation.

Furthermore, the minister said that consultation with stakeholders would be a significant waste of government time and experts that will be drawn in to support the work. I'll table that later on.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, who are these experts that have been brought in to support the work of the government and how much are they being paid?

HON. MARK FUREY: It's interesting how my colleague across the floor uses segments of comments. The discussion has been much broader than that, and I know my colleague from across the floor wouldn't understand that, but here's the reality, Mr. Speaker: we are exploring options and opportunities for the Province of Nova Scotia. Nova

Scotians have asked us to do that, and we'll continue to work in the best interests of Nova Scotians.

MR. BELLIVEAU: I only have roughly 45 seconds to get my time in here. I can speak for 20 minutes, if you allow me, Mr. Speaker.

During the emergency debate on privatizing the registry, the Minister of Service Nova Scotia said, "The need for stakeholder engagement would be premature . . ." - we'll make a decision. Excuse me, I've got the wrong - Mr. Speaker, I can talk for 45 minutes if you want me to.

MR. SPEAKER: Now you've got 15 seconds.

MR. BELLIVEAU: The government uses the words "open" and "transparent" at every opportunity, despite their actions to the contrary. I'll go to the question, Mr. Speaker. My question to the minister is, in this case, will he commit to providing Opposition Parties with a plan option of keeping the registries 100 per cent . . .

MR. FUREY: I think it's appropriate to share with my colleague, because obviously he missed the work that has been going on for a number of months. The alternative service delivery work that's being undertaken at Service Nova Scotia has been one of the most open, transparent processes within government in a long time. We've engaged industry, internal government support has been provided, and we've engaged the unions and representatives of the employees of government.

Here's the difference, Mr. Speaker: when that government contracted SAP, they did it without an RFP, and they did it within the confines of the Premier's office. That's the difference between a credible government and a non-credible government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

EECD: PD DAYS - PLANS

HON. PAT DUNN: In January the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development told Nova Scotians she wanted to move the eight annual teacher professional development days for teachers outside of the school year. She said one of the concerns that parents have is that they find it disruptive when students are off on in-service days. I'll table that, Mr. Speaker. At the time, the minister's plans were welcomed by parents.

My question to the minister is, does the minister remain committed to her plans to move professional development days for teachers outside of the school year?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you to the member opposite. Of course, professional development for teachers is a very important part of their work. They certainly

need and want to be in-serviced so that they can be current, they can have best practices, and they can make sure that what they're delivering and how they're delivering is going to assist students' learning in the classroom. We are committed to professional development for teachers.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, moving PD days outside of the school year is just one of the many suggestions parents have raised with the minister via her panel on education. The minister has led parents to believe their concerns would be taken seriously going forward.

My question is, what assurances can the minister offer parents that their concerns, as outlined in the minister's panel on education, continue to be reflected in how she manages the education system in Nova Scotia?

MS. CASEY: As the member should know, and I believe he would know, the action plan that we have put forward is a five-year plan. There are 117 actions in that. Eight of those were identified as requiring either co-operation or negotiation with the Teachers Union. I am very confident that the teachers and the membership in the Teachers Union will be supportive and work with us in a co-operative manner, to make sure that they are better prepared to be teaching in the classroom.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre on a new question.

EECD - TEACHERS: TENTATIVE CONTRACT - DETAILS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, many of the eight items the minister referenced in media interviews yesterday relate directly to student performances and outcomes, yet they are not contained in the tentative agreement. My question is, were student outcomes sacrificed in the name of financial expediency in the teachers' agreement.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, as the member would know and I expect he would have heard, I'm not prepared to speak to the details in the agreement. We have a tentative agreement with the Teachers Union. It has been recommended to the membership that they accept that. There will be a ratification vote on that but I do want to, for the interests of all members of this House and for the member opposite, table the eight items out of 117 that will require that co-operation because I think it's important that we are moving forward; we will implement the action plan, and we will get the co-operation of teachers, and I will table that.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development admitted that there were eight actions in her action plan that were not addressed in her tentative deal. Union leadership recently indicated to members that those eight actions were significant clawbacks. My question to the minister is, on which of these

items that the union finds problematic does the minister believe she will achieve co-operation?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of confidence, admiration, and respect for every teacher in the Province of Nova Scotia. I'm a member of that profession and so is the member opposite who is asking the question. I think together we recognize the importance of working with our teachers in the best interests of the teaching and learning environment of the classroom. As minister I'm prepared to do that and I believe teachers are prepared to do that with me.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

**JUSTICE - PARKS, VERONICA/STRICKLAND-MURPHY, CAMILLE:
DEATHS INQUIRY**

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, as we are all aware, two women tragically lost their lives inside the Nova Institution for Women in Truro earlier this year: Veronica Park died on April 24th and Camille Strickland-Murphy on July 28th. According to CBC, inmate deaths in federal prisons in Nova Scotia are the highest they have been, at least in the past five years, and I will table that. The Minister of Justice and her department have said that any inquiry into these deaths would have to come from Ottawa, that she does not have the authority, and I'll table that as well. However, the Fatality Investigations Act does grant her the authority. Can the minister explain why she has not called for an inquiry into the deaths of Veronica Parks and Camille Strickland-Murphy?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I do thank the member opposite for the question today. This certainly is a very sad situation and I want to first say that as a government, and I know on behalf of the people of Nova Scotia, it's very concerning and our concern goes to the families as well. I want to remind the member as well that this is a federal institution, the Nova Institution in Truro, and upon hearing of the deaths, we have reached out to our counterparts and we've been assured that there is a process in place to investigate those deaths and we're waiting for the outcome of that.

MS. MANCINI: Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the process that the minister refers to will take a very long time and in Nova Scotia there is a way to expedite that matter, I do believe, and it would allow the families to have answers in a much faster time frame. In a letter sent to the chief medical examiner on October 10th from Kim Pate, the executive director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies writes: The reality of both of these women appears to have been inadequately assessed or assisted by provincial health authorities, further obligates you in your office to exercise your discretion and authority. I will table that.

Given that there are so many unanswered questions surrounding the deaths of these women, will the minister commit to investigating these deaths and providing the public with the information?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is a very concerning issue, of course, and all of us are wanting to have answers to the questions. I do want to respect the process that the federal government has in place. They operate many institutions across the country and we do work collaboratively on various issues with the federal government. We'd like to see their process. What I would commit to is finding out more about the time frame to see what sort of length of time we'll have to wait for an answer. Thank you.

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

BUS. - VISITOR INFO. CTRS.: CLOSURES - CONFIRM

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Business. We all know how important tourism is to the Province of Nova Scotia. The provincial tourism industry generates \$2.34 billion in revenue each year. The Ivany report encourages growth in this important industry and Nova Scotians to be able to realize that goal. My question to the minister is, is it true that your government is closing the visitor information centres in Yarmouth, Port Hastings, and Amherst - yes or no?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague. As my colleague has identified, there is an objective to enhance tourism in Nova Scotia, and the objective is to double revenues over the next 10 years. Tourism Nova Scotia is committed to effecting change, they've engaged multiple stakeholders in multiple discussions around the options and opportunities going forward. We continue with that dialogue with each and every community across the province and each and every one of the 51 VICs that represent the best interests of Nova Scotia in the tourism sector.

MR. MACLEOD: It appears that even when this government says they want to get back to real business they don't want to give real answers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the question was very simple: are you or are you not going to close the VIC centres in Amherst, Port Hastings, and Yarmouth - yes or no?

MR. FUREY: As I indicated to my colleague, there are ongoing discussions with many communities across the province, including stakeholders who represent the tourism industry. We will continue with those discussions and that dialogue, and when there's a decision made, Mr. Speaker, we will communicate it to all colleagues in the House.

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

ENERGY: OFFSHORE PETROLEUM BD. - VACANCIES

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the approval of Shell's plan to do exploratory drilling in the Shelburne Basin has been a lightning rod for political discussion. Many Nova Scotians are concerned that provincial interests are not being represented in the decision-making process. Meanwhile, the Liberal Government has expressed its faith in the Offshore Petroleum Board.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Energy is, if provincial interests are to be represented by the Offshore Petroleum Board, why has the Minister of Energy left one of two provincial seats vacant for two years now?

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, when we first arrived in government there was no chairman for the Offshore Petroleum Board because the previous government had failed to fill that position; in fact, there was a lack of provincial representation for a significant part of their mandate.

But on the question regarding the offshore permits that were given to Shell, I'll point out to the honourable colleague - she may have missed this back then - but January 20, 2012, it starts off with "The return of one of the world's top five oil and gas companies to Nova Scotia's offshore will create good jobs and generate hundreds of millions of dollars of investment, Premier Darrell Dexter said today, Jan. 20." So if you're wondering who's responsible for the permits for that work, it was your government.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, for a government that's always talking about going forward they look backwards quite a bit - and, also, we never did say that we did not support the oil and gas industry. We are simply asking about a representative that they've had two years to get on this board.

There is a concern that the consultation process has not addressed the concerns of the environmentalists or the fisheries groups when it comes to the offshore drilling. In Newfoundland and Labrador the government has appointed members with environment and fisheries backgrounds to their board, and they are part of the decision-making process.

So my question to the Minister of Energy is, when will they appoint someone from outside the oil and gas industry, who has an environmental or a fisheries background, so that these groups can be involved in the collaborative decision-making process?

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of the process that has been established through the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board. Before they even select offshore parcels, there's a consultation process that takes place where the public has an opportunity to make presentations. Throughout this process as well, there has been opportunity and there will continue to be more opportunity for consultation to take place,

so that representatives from all industries, as well as any Nova Scotian who has an interest, will be able to make presentations on that.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member again, when we arrived in government there was no chairman for that Offshore Petroleum Board because her government had failed to fill that position for a significant period of time.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: BARRINGTON DIALYSIS GROUP - UPDATE

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

As you know, and I thank the minister for coming down to Barrington Passage a number of months ago to talk to the Barrington dialysis group interested in bringing dialysis closer to their community. Many loved ones have to travel over 100 kilometres in order to access this life-saving procedure. In a lot of cases, as winter is approaching, it gets more and more difficult to get there because of road conditions.

My first question to the minister is, is there an update to the Barrington dialysis group so we know what the next steps are going to be?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows from his time as Health Minister, this is a provincial program, the renal dialysis program. The Barrington group will be contacted directly by the department with the requirements to put in place any satellite location, whether it be Barrington or any other community across Nova Scotia.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I do thank the minister for that answer. I know he was going to keep his hand on it, so I hope he keeps his hand on it to make sure that the process does go through.

My supplementary to this one is: winter is coming. We know that we are not going to have a dialysis unit this winter, and maybe not even next winter. I'm just wondering if there's going to be some help to those who need to transport themselves from, let's say, the Cape Island, Barrington, and Shelburne areas to get to Yarmouth in order to get this life-saving treatment.

I know the transportation association has been asking for some extra funding. I'm just wondering, could the minister look into that possibility to maybe help provide some transportation help while we're still working out the final details on dialysis for Shelburne County?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I didn't quite anticipate his second question, because I wanted to tell him that in January the community of Barrington and other areas looking at satellite dialysis will know the outcome of the work that is currently being done. I will provide information as soon as I get it, in terms of anything around transportation.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS:
PICTOU CO. MENTAL HEALTH SERV. - IMPROVEMENTS**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Health and Wellness. I was listening intently when the Minister of Health and Wellness was talking about the pattern of stronger mental health services across the province, and of course I want to thank all the wonderful health care workers we do have in this province for the work they do. The minister went on to say that communities are getting better service - I think "better service than ever" might have been his words, but I don't want to put too many words in his mouth.

My question today is, when can the people of Pictou County expect improved mental health services? I don't want to say "when can we expect you to restore it to what it was," because we know that deadline has passed, but I would ask the minister today, when can the people of Pictou County expect to see their share of improved mental health services?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the member opposite - and he can talk to some of the clinicians themselves in Pictou - and this House is that Pictou is served with some of the best clinicians we have in the province, who are developing some of the most advanced and progressive delivery of mental health services for Pictou County.

I had a review of that last week. I am very, very encouraged by the work that is going on there.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate that response from the minister, because I believe that there is an expanded role for other clinicians and psychologists and social workers. All these people can contribute to be part of the solution, so I am happy to hear that is happening.

In Pictou County there's a real need for psychiatrists as well. There have been 14 psychiatrists in Pictou County in 14 years. So my question for the minister is, has the minister or anyone from his department talked to any of the psychiatrists around the province to ask them under what circumstances they would be willing to go to work in the county? It might help identify some of the root causes of why we're seeing such a turnover of psychiatrists. I'd be interested to hear the minister comment specifically on that, please.

MR. GLAVINE: What I can convey to the member is that I have met with the lead psychiatrist for the province, Dr. Courey, and also Dr. Vienneau from Pictou county. What I can convey to you and all people of Pictou County is that under the leadership of Dr. Vienneau, the best service possible in any part of Nova Scotia will come under her leadership.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: VG FLOODS - UPDATE

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Last Tuesday during Question Period, I asked the minister when we would see regular comprehensive updates on the impact of the VG floods as promised on October 8th. The minister answered that an update would be given that Thursday, and I'll table the Hansard for that. But Thursday came and went with no update on how services have been impacted.

I'd like to give the minister another chance. When will the minister provide us with a comprehensive update that includes everything from the number of patients who have had their surgeries postponed to the result of the air quality testing being done at the VG site now?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: What I can convey to the member opposite is that we are giving that update requirement to the Nova Scotia Health Authority. They are monitoring the work that is going on there. We, in fact, are not too far away from releasing the plan. We've had a couple of people who are on the team of planning the rebuild. So we've had to wait a little bit longer for them to be in place to give us those final details.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the minister has indicated on a number of occasions that he would be giving an update. Now he's kicking it to the new health authority. All we want to know, and I think Nova Scotians want to know, is what impact that flood had on the services provided at the VG.

The VG ICU was the designated place for all Ebola and high-risk infectious disease patients to be placed in the event of an outbreak. Can the minister advise the House if the personal protection equipment was damaged in the flood and where high-risk patients will be looked after in the event of an outbreak?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, with the situation of the flood and the moisture in the air, some of the equipment will have to be replaced. We're now being told other pieces of equipment will not be covered by insurance because of the flood. I will get for the member opposite the exact update on what equipment may need to be replaced or to go into service uninsured.

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

BUS.: DIST. TOURISM ASSOCIATIONS - FUNDING CUTS

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: My question, through you, again will be to the Minister of Business. Mr. Speaker, putting local tourism ventures at risk contradicts the goals of the Ivany report. Many rural areas rely on the tourism industry to keep them afloat and are constantly looking for new ways to attract visitors to our beautiful province.

My question for the minister is simply this, is it true that this current government is no longer going to be funding district tourism associations?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I've spoken publicly in the past and recently in a previous question. Obviously the Government of Nova Scotia supports tourism, and our objective to double tourism revenues over the next 10 years is a key objective of the government. We will continue to work with our tourism stakeholders in each and every community across the province and, more specifically, the 51 municipal tourist bureaus that exist to allow travellers to Nova Scotia to experience the beauty and coastlines and assets that we as a province offer.

MR. MACLEOD: The question is quite simple - is this government going to continue to support the tourism initiatives that are taking place across this province as they have in the past? Tourism is very important to our communities. It's important to our areas. It's important to our economy. It's local jobs in rural Nova Scotia. Is the minister going to support those jobs?

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I just want to be able to clarify - the Minister of Energy repeated several times that the Chair of the Petroleum Board position was not filled by the NDP, and I think it's important for Nova Scotians to know the true facts, and those facts are . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, that is not a point of order. That is a disagreement of facts.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: 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 New Democratic Party.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 132.

Bill No. 132 - Financial Accountability Officer Act.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in my place and speak to this bill, an Act to Establish a Financial Accountability Officer for Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, this is a piece of legislation that would allow for the creation of an office where some independent analysis could be done before a government enters into substantial deals or agreements that will have far-reaching consequences, long-lasting economic implications for the province. I think that all Parties in this House would agree that there is merit in having such an office established.

All Parties that have been in government have complained about the issues that they inherit from past financial arrangements by previous governments where the implications were far-reaching and perhaps not well understood. I think that it's incumbent on all of us to find ways to improve the way government does business, Mr. Speaker, and certainly beyond a four-year electoral cycle. Having a Financial Accountability Officer would do just that, by looking at the long-term implications of certain decisions.

There are many things that come to mind, Mr. Speaker. We have in Nova Scotia an Auditor General's Office. The Auditor General is an Officer of this Legislature; this Financial Accountability Officer would also be a member of this Legislature. The Auditor General does performance audits and financial audits, looking back at decisions that have been taken and money that has already been spent or allocated, or called for.

We've seen a whole host of issues. We've seen the Auditor General's audit on P3 schools. We've seen his audit on *Bluenose II*, and we've seen his audit on the Industrial Expansion Fund. We've seen his audits on any number of issues but, with all due respect to the great work that the Auditor General does, quite often it's too late after the fact to look at the kinds of things that could've been done to protect the financial interest and the public interest in these arrangements.

It's not good enough, Mr. Speaker, to look back. I think we need to have better foresight before we move forward. In particular, I think about the kinds of initiatives that this government has announced, that it would be very helpful to have an officer like this

who could provide greater financial analysis, accountability, and transparency for the public.

This government is embarking on the possibility of outsourcing the registries; we talked about that in Question Period today. Those registries have generated a billion dollars over a 10-year period and many people are very concerned about the loss of the revenue, the potential of losing revenue from these registries, that our province so desperately needs and at a 40-year or 50-year contract, what that could mean.

Imagine if we had a Financial Accountability Officer in place, that is an initiative that this office could look at and could independently and objectively analyze and present their analysis to the public. This officer would not have the power to make government do something differently; that's not the purpose of this. This office is simply to provide good information, good analysis - arm's-length information and analysis - and help us look forward.

You know this office, for example, could look at the massive work to redevelop the Income Assistance program in the Department of Community Services and the investment that is being made there and whether or not that is going to generate the kind of benefits and what the cost of that will be and what the benefits of that might be.

There are other initiatives that we've heard government members talk about. We've heard them talk about the possibility of replacing the Centennial Building with a P3 model, or any model actually, even a public model could be examined by this Financial Accountability Officer. When the government eventually announces its plan they could look at that plan, they could do the analysis on that plan, they could help us understand the strengths and the weaknesses of a plan.

Actually for a minister, this would be a very useful tool. I know, as a former minister, it would have been very useful to have had some independent financial analysis from time to time on projects that even within the government department, perhaps senior officials were the proponents for. Sometimes they become very close to those projects, perhaps cheerleaders for those projects that aren't necessarily going to be in the long-term public interest financially of the province. I think we need to have greater checks and balances for these kinds of big, significant initiatives of government that could cost us quite a bit.

Now Nova Scotia would not be the first province to adopt a financial accountability officer, Mr. Speaker. The House of Commons has had a parliamentary budget officer to support Parliament in exercising its oversight in the stewardship of public funds since 2006. Most people would remember Kevin Page, the parliamentary budget officer, and the tremendous job Mr. Page did on behalf of the people of Canada and the kinds of work he did around the CF-18 contracts. Really those are multi-billion dollar contracts. He pointed out some of the problems in the way the Harper Government was going about procuring

and spending a huge amount of public money without the evidence, without the financial documentation, without the business case behind them.

In 2013 the Ontario Government created a financial accountability officer there who is able to do independent analysis for all members of their Assembly with respect to the state of the province's finances, including looking at the Ontario budget as well as the impact of economic trends. Now, in Ontario that office recently has written quite a harsh report with respect to the Liberal Government's intention to privatize Hydro One. I think that report laid out in some financial detail how the people of Ontario will be financially disadvantaged in perpetuity with the privatization of Hydro One.

This does not stop the Government of Ontario, for example, from continuing with that process but it gives the public an independent analysis, arms-length from government, and arm's-length from Opposition Parties so that they can feel that they have some objective information and some expertise that has gone into that information to help them make the decision.

The Ontario budget is \$128.8 billion budget and this office is budgeted at \$3.4 million for its full operation. That's 0.0024 per cent of the total Ontario budget. So, in the Province of Nova Scotia with a \$10 billion budget, if we were to use the same ratio, then an office for a financial accountability officer in our province could be done at a very modest \$250,000 a year for staffing, office space, phones, computers, and those kinds of things.

It's a small price to pay - \$250,000 - to give the people of Nova Scotia, to give the members of Executive Council, to give all members of this Legislature, high quality, independent, arm's-length analysis and information on the best use of public resources. We need to hold ourselves to the highest standard and find those mechanisms that can improve the public accounts and public accounting in this province. I believe that this legislation could in fact do that.

Imagine if we had had such an office in place before, for example, the Colchester Hospital was built. That was a hospital that Cabinet at the time were given financial information that it was going to cost \$104 million - totally unrealistic. The real cost of that hospital was closer to \$190 million. I dare say, and I don't fault the members of the Cabinet who were at the table making that decision at that time; none of the men and women in that room would ever have built a hospital. How on earth would they ever know? They are very reliant on those senior officials and all of those processes that are in place to get that hospital built.

I hear and see the Minister of TIR paying very close attention to this because that member is going to have the weight of building a hospital on his shoulders because the Auditor General said that there's more expertise in TIR than there is in the Department of Health and Wellness and that's the case. However, this would give the Minister of TIR the

assurance. It would give him backup, it would give him cover. It would give him the additional information to know that what is being developed in his department realistically reflects the work that needs to be done, and doing it in the best way and getting value for dollar. I submit that we cannot afford not to put a financial accountability officer in place in the Province of Nova Scotia. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, the member for Halifax Needham, a former Finance Minister herself, has introduced the bill. That's rich. The NDP had a full term in government where they could have pursued this initiative. They avoided it, but they were unable to avoid the accountability of Nova Scotians.

It's ironic they bring this bill forward, because when they came to government, there was legislation called balanced budget legislation, which they actually eliminated. Let's talk about how incredible this is coming from the NDP - the NDP, who lacked any ounce of financial accountability while in office.

The Jobs Fund - it was the NDP . . .

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Is it a good idea or not?

MR. KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, if the member for Halifax Needham would like to speak, she had her chance for 50 minutes. After I'm done she can get up and speak. I would appreciate her not interrupting.

It was the NDP who took a Cabinet-controlled slush fund, the Industrial Expansion Fund, and blocked the Auditor General from examining it. How is that accountable to the Auditor General? He was forced to issue a non-opinion, which is one of the most damning sanctions an auditor can give.

The NDP took this Cabinet-controlled slush fund, which the Auditor General publicly stated was entirely unaccountable under the NDP, and they created the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund. New name, yes, still a Cabinet-controlled slush fund, but this time the NDP used it to funnel hundreds of millions of dollars in corporate welfare out the door. The Auditor General examined that this was over \$800 million.

Speaking of financial accountability, it was the NDP who tabled a budget in this House which had a \$27 million gap in it again. The Auditor General was the only one that pointed out the NDP was doing something fishy with the finances. The NDP were the ones who presented a budget that they knew was inaccurate. Financial accountability, indeed. There are controls in place. It's called GAAP accounting. The NDP never followed it.

P3s - on their website the NDP called this a bill “to protect [the] public from privatization and P3 contracts.” Let’s talk about the NDP’s own support for P3 projects. It was the NDP that closed the deal and championed the Nova Centre here in Halifax - a P3 project. The Acting Leader of the NDP supported it at the time. Now she seems to have had a change of heart and thinks Nova Scotians need to be protected from her own Party’s decisions.

Projects and communities across this province rely on partnerships between public money and private money. Hockey rinks and community centres that Nova Scotians use on a daily basis would often never be built without these partnerships. Let’s be clear: the NDP entered into these partnerships when they were in government. It seems that the NDP would rather that these community centres never be built. P3 initiatives are common in Nova Scotia and involve all three levels of government. At the provincial level they are carefully reviewed and analyzed before being implemented. The member for Halifax Needham, the former Finance Minister, knows that, but she told the media the other day that she’s just here to play politics.

Privatization - the NDP talk a big game when it comes to what they call privatization, but we know it’s nothing but talk. In fact, under her watch, when she was the former Finance Minister, the member for Halifax Needham was the one that privatized SAP services of government. SAP was not only privatized, it was privatized without a request for proposals.

The member for Halifax Needham seems to forget that it was she who privatized the NSGEU jobs and sent them to IBM. It was that Party and that member, while she was in her former role as Health and Wellness Minister, that supported Scotia Surgery. Her words ring hollow today. That member and what is left of her caucus either has a short or a selective memory. This bill rings hollow in the face of the Party’s actions when they were in power. Again, as the member for Halifax Needham told the media the other day, she is just here to play politics.

Mr. Speaker, it’s funny that Party is talking about accountability. In their short term in government they added over \$3 billion in debt to the Province of Nova Scotia. In four years out of over 150 years, they are responsible for 25 per cent of the debt. They ruled for 2 per cent to 3 per cent of the time this province has been in existence and they are responsible for 25 per cent of the debt.

As I stated earlier, we have standards; it’s called GAAP accounting. That Party seems to not want to follow it. We saw this many times. When it came into power in 2010, they pushed \$300 million to the previous government. How they did it was they pushed all payments to universities to the previous government.

How can you do that? If they were a private corporation, they would be thrown in jail, much like Enron executives were. In 2012 they also moved payments from two

universities from 2013. Why did they do that? To bring in a fictitious, balanced budget before going to the polls. Again, if they followed GAAP accounting none of this would happen.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said, there is a group accountable in government and it's called the voters; the voters vote for an Executive Council for a government to govern this province. Why the NDP don't want to do their job and come in here and have legitimate discussions on the floor, all they want to do is talk about soap operas and everything else. Why don't they want to come in here and have legitimate discussions? Why? Because they don't even understand the damage they've done to this province. Thank you. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East. (Interruptions) Order, please, the honourable member for Pictou East has the floor. (Interruptions) Order, please. Order.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Well as wildly entertaining as that was, Mr. Speaker, we still don't know what the government thinks about this bill. We know what they think about the NDP and it wasn't entirely flattering, I might say, but apparently they don't have an opinion on this bill. Maybe there was another issue they were dealing with over the last couple of days that didn't allow them the opportunity to focus on this bill. I won't keep the members of this House in suspense - I will tell the members that I do support this bill and I support it for a couple of very important reasons.

The member for Halifax Needham referenced a couple of them. This is a bill that when you strip through all the rhetoric about P3s, which are more of a symptom than the actual issue here, this bill will create a provincial financial accountability officer and that officer will evaluate and assess the long-term impact of government decisions.

Now Mr. Speaker, I can't see how anyone in this House would disagree with that. That's an important role and I think it's very important. We can maybe have a discussion about how we structure that but that doesn't change the fact that the role is necessary and would be useful.

The accountability officer would be an independent body and would report directly to the House of Assembly, similar to the Auditor General. That's a good thing, Mr. Speaker. You don't want your accountability officer worried about whether they're going to lose their job or not and that's all we're talking about here. They could look at projects through - you want to call it a sober second thought or another perspective - and provide some information back to this House.

The member for Halifax Needham mentioned a specific example where the accountability officer could provide another set of eyes for a certain minister. I think she

was referencing the Minister of TIR in one instance but that could be a very valid thing that this officer could do.

I think what we've seen though, Mr. Speaker, if you cut right through everything and listen to the non-response that we heard, it's because when you start to talk about accountability - whether it be in the context of a Financial Accountability Officer or whether it be in the sense of straight-up accountability for members - we see the way this government reacts: very offensive, very derogatory, and nothing about whether or not they are actually interested in being held accountable. I think that's really what we just witnessed there with the prepared notes that the minister was reading from somebody - one of the remaining ones in their staff.

Accountability is important; all governments should want to be accountable. We have seen over the last couple of years Nova Scotians have watched as \$40- plus million, \$41 million plus, of taxpayers' money has paid for what has now been a failed ferry experiment, I guess, this time - we're going to try again with somebody else. But \$41 million paid to an operator that owes money to companies in two countries.

I wouldn't call that a success and I think when you look back to how that evolved, how that evolved was that you had an NDP Government, and I don't remember if it was in the minister's speaker notes to refer to that particular example, he certainly had his share of other ones, but the NDP Government dabbled with the ferry thing at first. The new Liberal Government, the current government came in and said that deal was terrible, but not to worry, I saved the day. I think it was a press conference right on the wharf down in Yarmouth. Well, apparently the day wasn't saved. Here we are again, two years later and here we go.

What does that have to do with a Financial Accountability Officer? Well, if we were actually making government decisions based on business cases and we had a business case and we presented that to a Financial Accountability Officer qualified to assess and opine on that business case, well maybe we can cut a few of these mistakes off at the pass. That's all this bill is trying to do; that's the only point of this bill.

To see a member from the government, from the Executive Council, stand up and not even be willing to acknowledge that and say whether he agrees with that or disagrees with that and instead go off on a completely other topic - I did find it entertaining, I do give that, but it has to be more about than entertainment in this Chamber. This is something that is important; we should be talking about it. I can't see how anyone can say that's a bad idea. I can't see anyone that would say having someone to look at the business case and assess it is a bad idea. It would be helpful to ministers. I was expecting that the government would stand and say it is more red tape, another layer of red tape. That's what I was expecting, but I don't think their analysis went that deep just yet, and that's a shame.

If we look at the recent history of this province, for anyone to say we don't need an officer who would be responsible for accountability and actually helpful to the governing Party, a helpful set of eyes to look at an analysis and make suggestions to mistakes before they are made - anyone who wouldn't stand and say we would like that, we would welcome that guidance, well, I think that speaks for itself. I think that speaks to itself about an attitude, and we're seeing that attitude manifest itself in many ways. It's clearly on display here today for all Nova Scotians to see.

If we look at a very recent example here with the awarding of the tourism contract. One of the reasons that that is important is because Nova Scotians are asking how is that good for the province to award a tourism contract to a company from Ontario? Maybe the government has a very good explanation for that. Maybe they have analysis, but we haven't seen it. They haven't produced it; they won't speak to it. So that leaves us to believe that they don't have it.

Mr. Speaker, I think if we had a Financial Accountability Officer, that is a person who could say, I've seen how this works, and I do think it's a good thing for the province. I do think it advances the province. That would be helpful to people. People would be comforted by that. Right now there is no comfort. People have questions about why that's happening.

I myself have many questions about that, Mr. Speaker. I don't know who did that analysis. I don't understand all of the moving parts, the metrics they were looking at, but one of them should be - does it make sense for the province? That extends beyond just a price point. These are the things that the Financial Accountability Officer could be looking at.

I would be completely disappointed in myself if I stood today and didn't speak about the most glaring example, in my short time in this House, of where a Financial Accountability Officer might have been helpful and might have saved a lot of people in this province some heartache. Of course, Mr. Speaker, I speak of the film industry. What happened there was the decision was made to cancel the credit and that decision was made based on somebody's assessment that \$25 million was too much, could not be afforded, was the richest in the country, etc. Whatever the talking points said, they were read.

Just a little bit of scratching down in that when people started to ask \$25 million, was there any return to the province from that, was there any benefit - those are not questions that had been considered and certainly hadn't been answered. A Financial Accountability Officer could be helping, and he or she would look at the business case and, again, be that second voice that says, okay, well I understand your objectives here. Have you thought about this? What's the possible impact to the province? Is it good for the province?

Maybe we wouldn't be seeing these types of mistakes get to a point of political brinkmanship where people feel obligated to stand and defend their decisions for so long until it's obvious that they're indefensible. Maybe we wouldn't get there. Maybe we could head that off at the pass. We see this so often in different issues that happen.

We all need to be accountable with taxpayer money. Every member in this House is accountable, every month, for their own expenses and everything else that goes with this job. We all need to be accountable. If you are a minister, then you have another layer of accountability, and you should be open to that scrutiny. These are the types of things that I think were the spirit of the member's introduction of this bill.

We have a government that loves to talk, loves to say, don't look at this. Look over here. Don't look at these issues that are coming out of the Premier's Office. Look over here. The "look over here" right now is, we are trying to run the business of this province, we will not be distracted by this noise. The very first opportunity where that minister has a chance to get up and speak about the business of this House, what did he do with his time? I don't know if you recall, Mr. Speaker, but I'll refresh your memory - he went on a diatribe about the former NDP Government when they were in power. He's not interested in talking about the business before this House. I think that's a shame and the people will see that for what it is. He wants to accuse another member of playing politics? Well, Mr. Speaker, I submit exhibit A to you, what that actually means, and we saw it in real time here.

The reality is that this is a productive piece of legislation, and I think there are details with it to be worked out, no question, no question we would have to work out some details on where the Financial Accountability Officer is used, and comes into play and how that happens, because ministers should be able to run their departments, Mr. Speaker, there's no question about that, but there will be points in time where this role would be helpful, and to not even acknowledge that for one second is a disservice to the people of this province. Again it speaks to a culture that we're seeing develop, and that culture is picking up momentum, Mr. Speaker, with every round of applause that the members give each other over there.

So, I support this piece of legislation and I hope that in time the government will take this idea, repackage it as their own, in whichever way they see fit, and bring it back to this House and pass it forward, because that is something that I think could be a benefit to this province. When they do that, Mr. Speaker, when they have the courage to repackage this and bring it back to proclaim it their own idea, I will be on my feet saying this is a good idea, because this is a good idea. We do see sometimes good ideas are taken, and by simple execution risks are destroyed, we do see that from time to time, but this is a good idea. This province of all the provinces, with our \$15 billion worth of debt and our aging population, people leaving, all the issues that Nova Scotians we see face every day - this is definitely a province that could benefit from a Financial Accountability Officer, and I rethink to rethink their outrageous response to it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Just before we move on to the next member, I want to provide a comment on the previous member's comments. The honourable Minister of the Public Service Commission did infer that the previous government, if in private business, would be thrown in jail, and that is certainly unparliamentary, inferring that any government is engaged in nefarious activities of a criminal nature. So, I just want to make note of that.

The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I want to have the opportunity to talk about Bill No. 132, an Act to Establish a Financial Accountability Officer. I just want to echo the previous speaker, the member for Pictou East, who talked about a layer of accountability as I was preparing my notes here. To me I don't know any politician, and this is my personal view - any politician who has any political DNA in their body, in their makeup, who should not support this bill, because this certainly puts down a layer of accountability - and I heard a few chuckles over from the governing Party, and I want to get into my notes here, because this is not a laughing matter. This is something that is very serious and I think when you're standing here talking about spending taxpayers' money you should be accountable, and you should have a process in place to be accountable and show how we can protect that.

So, I'll continue on. Mr. Speaker, to reduce the financial risk a government institution can find it, certainly, challenging balancing their budget for example, or complying with accounting and legal requirements. Preparing accurate and updated financial statements and implementing systems to controlling, add greatly to the challenges of electoral cycles. We see this over and over, that governments of the day are making decisions and this will be making the public and taxpayers pay for these bills further down the road. They're just talking about the short-term vision, which will make it attractive that these decisions are certainly beneficial in the short-term, and this is what we want to talk about. It may look good in the short-term, but as we go into some of this debate, we'll see how it's going to have a negative effect on our province and on the taxpayers and the youth in the future.

Accountability means responsibility for one's actions. I have laid that out, and I have made reference to paying the piper. I think that catches people's attention, because if you are not responsible for your actions, you will literally pay the piper. I make reference to that because there is a piper in Shelburne County who is waiting to be paid. So there is a double - there is some play on words, and I'll get into that later on in this speech.

Government often signs deals that last longer than the particular government. This is something that I think the previous speaker was talking about. When you lay out these short-sighted visions and decisions of making the decision to push these payments further down the road, it's certainly for a short-term gain. This fuels public sentiment that those who signed those deals cannot be truly held accountable years after the fact. While Auditor

General Reports may provide vindication for those who thought the deal would be good or bad, these reports are retrospective in nature.

With the AG's Report there is something missing in terms of accountability. The Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario have acted to have independent economic analyses before decisions are made. I ask the question, Mr. Speaker, is Nova Scotia going to be a leader among these other governments and jurisdictions? The old saying is that hindsight is 20/20. If only Nova Scotia could have had this type of independent analysis before the privatization of Nova Scotia Power or before the bundling of over 30 P3 schools' contracts. I bet if you asked every Nova Scotian today, if I had the magic wand, Mr. Speaker, and I said to every Nova Scotian, do you want to have this person in place right now to authorize and have some protection over the independent protection of your taxpayers and about privatizing Nova Scotia Power, I can hear them all say yes.

We cannot afford not to have this Financial Accountability Officer, and I can assure you that is something that is a necessity. It is something that will benefit all Nova Scotians. There's a number of examples that really trouble me, and the example I'm going to point to, Mr. Speaker, is the possibility of privatizing our registries such as the Motor Vehicles, Land Registry, and Joint Stocks.

I think it's certainly important to point out that these registries serve the public interest, the profitability of the business for the government, and they provide good Public Service jobs. I want to emphasize that, because I made this several times in other speeches: a job in rural Nova Scotia, you can do the multiplication factor of anywhere from five to ten.

Ten jobs in rural Nova Scotia, you do the multiplication table. I know that there's a hub of cranes in the skylines of this city, but there are people who live in rural Nova Scotia, and those jobs are valuable. Those registries provide jobs in rural Nova Scotia. Over the last decade, motor vehicle registration alone has brought in a revenue stream of over \$1 billion. I am going to repeat that: \$1 billion with a "B." A number of those jobs are in rural Nova Scotia, as I pointed out.

The government has raised most fees at the registries by 3 per cent and committed to closing 13 Land Registries across our province. The Kentville Land Registry Office will close on November 30th. That makes it the ninth to close this year, and guess where they are - a lot of them are in rural Nova Scotia. The losses of these jobs are certainly taking and having a cumulative effect on Nova Scotia. I've talked about that, and I hope I get the chance to speak on that later on, because the cumulative effect of this government, Mr. Speaker, is having a negative impact on Nova Scotia. Yet even with the fee increases and office closures, the government is still claiming the registries are unsustainable.

The government - now this is what I heard, I mentioned this before - is viewing IT systems as a cost rather than an investment and this is the one that really irritates me. They are talking about it is too costly to make upgrades for IT systems. Now, I want to stop here, and I made this example before, imagine the homeowner saying, well, I spent a number of years in my home and I'm not - hey, we can go on a vacation or I can go on a golf vacation, which is something I enjoy. I'm not going to spend money on renovating my home or preparing it for the cold weather. I'm not going to spend any money on upgrading my fishing enterprise. I'm going to go away and spend my money, carefree.

I don't think that is going to be responsible, or if I had a farm and I'm not going to upgrade it, this is the excuse that this present government is bringing to this floor by saying these registries are not important and we cannot financially sustain these and have these upgrades. That is ridiculous. That is an excuse that needs to go back to the Premier's Office and I know that there are other things in front of the Premier's Office right now that we have to deal with, but please get a better excuse than saying we do not have the money to upgrade these systems. It's going over like a lead balloon, I can assure you, in the homes of Nova Scotians.

In other jurisdictions where privatization has taken place, the expense has been one of increased costs and certainly the downgrades of these services. Stakeholders such as surveyors, realtors and appraisers have informed us that - and they have met with us - the cost of doing business has as much as tripled - I repeat, tripled - in other counterparts and in other jurisdictions across Canada.

Now this is factual information that comes to this floor and you have a debate on it and I would think you would hear some response from the government. None of the things that we've mentioned here in the last 15 minutes with a response, they just say no, we got a majority and have a nice day and we'll see you at the next election. Guess what? We will see you at the next election and guess what, those realtors, those surveyors and those appraisers are going to have a decision in the outcome of the next election. It is the wrong course.

In fact, the appraisers are concerned about the viability of this industry as a whole, should the government approve privatization. There are only 200 appraisers in the whole province and the concern is that many of them will move or retire, due to the increased costs of doing business.

Now the government in other jurisdictions who have privatized have received up-front cash from the successful bidder and this is where I'm going to set my little platform here. This is all about creative book work and I know we have a number of accountants in this Chamber and I'm going to suggest to you that this is no more than creative book work by this present government. They are going to take and they're going to spend the money, and they're going to push it down the road for the next generations to pay off.

I'm going to show you where, what I've mentioned before, that if you have an officer in place, an independent economic oversight for financial accounting officer in place, I'm going to point out a couple of examples. One is *Nova Star*; \$40 million. There are a number of people who support that and there are a number of people who will have questions about that.

There are number of people who will raise the point about the MV Miner, over \$12 million to clean that up. People will support that and people will have questions about that. When you have a financial (Interruptions) Mr. Speaker, I wish the members opposite would listen because this is the most important part of this debate here. It's important that those decisions and the financial benefits would be scrutinized by independent economic oversight, the Financial Accountability Officer. There is the key right there.

Those questions are raised by the residents of Nova Scotia and they need to be addressed. This is why I'm saying, if you have any political DNA in you, you would recognize the importance of this particular Act. That's why we're here. We're here to protect all the taxpayers' money. And to just give that out and say no, we're not going to hold you accountable I would say is wrong.

You're going to see that later on here as we go into this debate. Some of these privatization P3 contracts are going to 30 or 50 years. The long-term consequences are something that, again, I don't want to leave for my grandchildren, that we made a decision here today and aren't accountable for it. This is why we need independent economic oversight, and this is why we need a Financial Accountability Officer. What we're doing is creative bookwork; we're doing it for the short term; and we're doing it for the electoral cycle of every four years - let's do everything good. Let's push all the expense down the road and put off those bills - for our grandchildren.

It's not working. It's not working and I'm going to tell you why. You had a number of millions of dollars to spend on *Nova Star*. This Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal said to the public that we are going to have a report card, and we're going to oversee the budget of that money that goes to *Nova Star*, and we're going to review it on a monthly basis. This was said some months ago, Mr. Speaker.

Guess what? The report card hasn't been produced. Guess what? There has been \$200,000 that is left owing to vendors across Nova Scotia. Guess what? If we had this individual in place, an independent economic oversight financial officer in place, he would pick up on that and we wouldn't be here asking questions about why individuals are not being paid. That's \$200,000 of a \$40-million contract. Just go and have your fun. Yeah, we're going to put a report card in there. Where is the report card, Mr. Speaker? Where is the report card? The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal hasn't introduced the report card, and now, if you do not endorse this, it's time to pay the piper. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 111.

Bill No. 111 - Environmental Racism Prevention Act

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw everybody's attention to the west gallery, where we have members from the ENRICH Project. The ENRICH Project has been very influential in this bill. They are the Environmental Noxiousness, Racial Inequities and Community Health Project, and I'd like them all to stand. Lynn Jones is here with them, and I'd like to thank her specifically for helping with this bill, and also Ingrid Waldron, who could not be here today. Thank you and welcome to the House. (Applause)

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: First of all, I would like to acknowledge all of the hard work that went into creating this bill. Dr. Ingrid Waldron was, in particular, one of these people who came to me with this idea a couple of years ago because she was frustrated and didn't know how to get the idea of environmental racism on the map and on the floor of the Legislature. So I suggested doing a Private Member's Bill about this important issue. We also spoke with Meinhard Doelle, professor at the Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie; Michelle Williams, also a professor of law; and Constance MacIntosh as well.

These people helped me to create the idea of what needed to be done to address what we feel is an important and ongoing issue in Nova Scotia, and not just Nova Scotia but really right across Canada in, in fact, North America. I proposed that a bill about environmental racism be created to address the disproportionate distribution of toxic waste facilities and other environmentally hazardous activities near Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities throughout Nova Scotia, as well as the impact of these activities on the health and socioeconomic well-being of the communities.

Environmental racism refers to the disproportionate location of toxic waste facilities, dumps, and landfills and other environmentally hazardous activities close to low-income, racialized communities relative to other communities.

These environmental hazards and activities include the landfills, incinerators, sewage treatment plants, refineries, oil and gas extraction, fracking, and any other human activities with significant air emissions, significant water emissions, effluent, or other significant impacts on human populations and the ecosystems that they rely upon.

Environmental racism also refers to the lack of democratic engagement of these communities in decision-making processes related to the location of these environmentally hazardous activities. Environmental racism impacts low-income, racialized communities in two main ways.

First, it disproportionately exposes them to a number of health risks, and second, it makes their communities less desirable to live in and consequently impacts the socioeconomic well-being of residents and their community. The disproportionate location of these toxic facilities and other environmental hazards does create impacts on these communities in the following ways: they produce higher levels of water, air, and soil contamination. These environmental hazards also affect the socioeconomic outcomes for them. For example, environmental hazards negatively affect property values, local employment opportunities, land value, the standard of living, and demographic patterns, all of which further disadvantage low-income communities with already-faltering economic bases.

Demographic patterns are also affected, and they further compromise the socioeconomic well-being of these communities, including the out-migration of residents - in particular, young residents, due to the lack of employment and economic opportunities.

These contaminants and toxins also create disproportionate health risks and poorer health outcomes in these communities relative to other communities. These inequities include higher rates of cancer, upper respiratory disease, congenital anomalies, growth retardation, fetal anomalies, cardiovascular disease, skin diseases, Down syndrome, and other allergies. Environmental health inequity across racial dimensions is well demonstrated in research and shows that racialized communities are exposed to greater health risks compared to non-racial communities, and that's because they're likely to be clustered around these waste disposal sites and other environmental hazards.

In addition, the potential direct negative effects of pollution and contaminants on well-being, health, and other concerns are associated with living so near to these hazards and are often appraised by residents as being very stressful, and therefore may also represent a chronic psychological stressor. It has been reported that those who live closer to industrial activity perceive greater neighbourhood disorder and a feeling of personal powerlessness, which in turn may account for greater symptoms of psychological distress in these neighbourhoods.

Employment levels and household incomes are closely related to environmental racism, and inversely, increases in neighbourhood and household income level are more strongly associated with declining hazard levels in Black neighbourhoods and households than in white neighbourhoods and households. For instance, in 2006, the median income for individuals in Preston was \$19,576 a year, compared with the median of \$24,000 for Nova Scotia. Families in Preston had a median income of \$45,927 compared with the median of \$55,412 for regular Nova Scotia.

In 2011 the employment rate for Preston residents aged 15 and over was 50.4 per cent and the unemployment rate was 12.3 per cent. In Nova Scotia the employment rate for residents aged 15 and over was 56.8 per cent and the unemployment rate was 10 per cent. In 1991 the first National People of Colour Environmental Leadership Summit took place and participants established that environmental racism generally lowers property values. Toxins are disproportionately concentrated in low-income communities with limited access to resources.

Some studies have hypothesized that hazardous industries suppress land values, making the land and property more affordable to those of lower status. They argue that as hazardous waste facility placement drives down the local property values, housing becomes increasingly occupied by households of lower socioeconomic status.

Numerous studies have documented evidence suggesting environmental risk impacts out-migration among counties and neighbourhoods. Environmental quality is a critical factor in explaining short-run, inter-regional migration and moreover, selective migration is a phenomenon exacerbating environmental inequities whereas market forces lead to lowered property values, populations with a higher socioeconomic status move out, while lower income populations remain.

Currently the laws are inadequate for recognizing and directly addressing the problem of environmental racism in Nova Scotia. While Nova Scotia's Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act acknowledges indigenous concepts of environmental health, it does not implement them or require the use of environmental justice lens.

The lack of explicit regulations for addressing environmental racism suggest that the issue has not yet been acknowledged as a significant factor in how environmental impact assessments are conducted in decision-making processes related to the location of toxic facilities and other environmental hazards and in the development of environmental policies and law, the lack of formal and transparent decision-making policies and best practice guidelines for decision-making related to the location, mitigation and monitoring decisions, regulation, evaluation and remediation of industries which produce toxic waste or pollution in Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities.

Nova Scotia's environments, citizen engagement, and the community consultation process have not been sufficiently explicit, transparent or accessible to Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotia communities. I do hear this all the time, Madam Speaker.

There are many things that need to change. First of all, I'd like to acknowledge the Minister of Environment for his work with the First Nations people of Pictou Landing First Nations. I think it's commendable that he and his government are trying to address the wrongs that have been done there in the past.

We need to also look at ways that grassroots, community-based organizations can also be involved. We need to look at how such legislation can have some teeth, built-in mechanisms to ensure that community-defined best practices around the siting of facilities and, more holistically, the conditions and types of facilities invested in and supported by governments going forward and private industry generally in the province and the community engagement process prior to the siting. We need to determine what should happen if such processes are violated by developers and we need to see if there is a potential enshrining of something into law that can hold institutions' feet to the fire, if preventive regenerative steps can be taken.

Addressing environmental racism in Nova Scotia involves some of the following activities: increased awareness and attention to environmental racism by government, initiatives that bring attention to an acceptance of environmental racism in the general public, recognition of aboriginal treaty rights when addressing environmental racism, incorporation of an environmental racism lens framework into Nova Scotia's environmental laws.

An environmental racism lens framework in Nova Scotia must acknowledge, validate and address the problem of environmental racism in Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotia communities. Therefore, like the disproportionate distribution of toxic facilities and other environmentally hazardous activities near to these communities, they must also seek to dismantle structural and institutional procedural mechanisms that create disproportionate exposure of disadvantaged communities to environmental hazards.

Environmental justice refers to the fair and equitable treatment and meaningful involvement of all people in the development and implementation of environmental regulations and policies, regardless of race, colour, national origin or income.

Environmental justice has two components: (1) distributive spatial justice; and (2) procedural justice. The first is concerned primarily with the inequitable distribution of health risks and health outcomes associated with environmental hazards. The second focuses on historical, structural, and institutional mechanisms that create, perpetuate, and sustain the inequitable distribution of environmental hazards in racialized communities. Procedural justice is also concerned with the application of uniform and non-discriminatory toxic waste management regulatory practices, evaluation, criteria, and enforcement.

Madam Speaker, there are several communities around the province that are affected now by environmental racism; the Pictou Landing First Nation is a very good example, and when that particular location was chosen as a place to place Northern Pulp and Boat Harbour, it was said that the developer told the powers that be at the time, oh it won't affect anybody, just a small band of Indians. Well, that for me is the perfect example of environmental racism.

Eskasoni is less than five kilometres from a recycling centre and people are concerned about the drinking water, they're concerned about eating fish from nearby streams and waters, because of possible contamination.

Acadia First Nation in Yarmouth, they already have high rates of certain illnesses in the community, including cancer, allergies, and asthma. Diesel fluid dumped into the area on the Yarmouth reserve, there's arsenic in the water from the Gold River reserve. The Yarmouth reserve was built on an old dump, resulting in contaminated soil and patchy grass, and a junk yard that was used as a dumping ground for car parts has existed under the reserve for 60 years.

Indian Brook has two waste dumps within a few kilometres. They used to have the best water for miles around, but no one likes to drink it now. That change came in 2012 when the community's water table was contaminated by digging at the nearby Nova Scotia Sand and Gravel pit. The community was issued a "do not drink" advisory, and the Department of Indian Affairs began shipping water into the community, but the root cause of the problem, the pit, located in the community's backyard was never addressed.

Millbrook is located in the same area as Cherry Brook, Lake Loon and the Prestons, and there was a dump built right in the centre of these areas.

Lincolnvile is less than two kilometres from a waste dump and people there feel that their health risks have been very much hurt by more cancers relating to the water that has leaked out from that particular dump. The compounds, heavy metals and other chemicals that were disposed of at the site, the nearby drinking water is a serious concern.

Also, Beechville is very close to a waste dump, and as I said, Lake Loon and Cherry Brook and North Preston and Eskasoni. The participants who've taken part in some of the activities that ENRICH has been involved with have cited high rates of certain illnesses in the community including cancer, diabetes, heart disease, asthma, and skin problems. Shelburne and Birchtown have two waste sites within a few kilometres, and these are just some of the places around the province where this is an example, Madam Speaker.

So I would very much hope that the government would consider this bill, which is basically to put together a committee of eight members to go around the province and do their own digging, do their own research and consult with community members who may have been affected, and then to come back with their presentation to the government about what should be done in order to address this issue, and make sure it does not continue to happen in the future.

I know that the eyes of North America are watching us today, because this is the first bill of its kind, so whether we get it squashed today, or whether it goes forward, we will continue to keep up the fight to bring this awareness to environmental racism. I want to say thank you to all and to the government for listening today. Thank you.

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

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for her comments on this bill for us here today. What I want to focus my comments on here with respect to this bill, is you know, it starts out - the very first clause of this bill actually says, "This Act may be cited as the Environmental Racism Prevention Act." Thus I want to focus my comments on the actions and the activities that the Province of Nova Scotia does with regard to the prevention of dealing with environmental issues anywhere in the Province of Nova Scotia.

The Environment Act lays out the framework for which decisions made by the technical experts within the Department of Environment and, indeed, in some cases by the Minister of Environment, where certain decisions and approvals require the minister to sign off on, so I'll just talk a bit about what that process is when decisions are being made and the approach taken by the Province of Nova Scotia through its Department of Environment, as dictated under the Environment Act.

A very significant or vital piece that comes into play is that there are activities and designation regulations. That is a set of regulations that identify various types of activities that may take place in the Province of Nova Scotia that have an environmental impact. Through these regulations, the various activities or thresholds, that is pollutant thresholds that are established that would trigger the need for a review by the department and a formal application to be submitted so that a review could take place by the department before an activity could even take place in the Province of Nova Scotia.

The first step in the province is that, again, there is a list of activities if there is an individual or an organization planning to pursue a particular activity that may result in the release of pollutants, be they air or water or even land-based soil pollutants. The first step is to get in touch with the department, and if they're not aware themselves they can review the list of activities and what those thresholds are. If it exceeds the allowable limits - and I'll make a brief aside to that, in many circumstances those allowable limits that are established in the Province of Nova Scotia in many, if not most instances, those limits are actually, in many cases, established by national or international guidelines.

A particular point of reference for many of our thresholds is the CCME or the Canadian Council of Ministries of Environment that have done extensive research to establish these thresholds, particularly around air, water and, again, soil-based pollutants. Madam Speaker, these thresholds, if potentially exceeded in a proposed activity, then an application would be submitted with the Department of Environment and the engineers and various technical staff with the expertise, as well as the stipulated guidelines and thresholds, again, established based on national and international in many cases, research that has identified these thresholds is reviewed and that activity is cross-referenced.

The focal point in many cases in the review, one of the focal points is that the approach taken to conduct an activity that may result in pollution in any form is to ensure that appropriate mitigation activities or actions are taken to minimize and ensure that any pollutants, bring any pollution down within those acceptable levels.

Madam Speaker, there are two different approaches there that maybe require applications. Many activities require industrial approvals, which is what many people consider their operating approval that is to conduct ongoing operational activities that result in pollutants. That particular activity is one that is reviewed, and decisions are made by the very capable staff within the Department of Environment, with necessary expertise based on information and standards established.

There is another level, though, and certain activities for the province require a further level of review. That would be an application for an environmental assessment. Again, there are guidelines that stipulate, based on the proposed activity, whether it may require the environmental assessment process or an industrial approval.

When an activity goes through the environmental assessment process, Madam Speaker, a detailed application with lots of research and modelling gets submitted to the department. Technical staff review and provide some recommendations to the minister, but at the environmental assessment level the decision rests with the minister at that point in time. Even when an activity goes through the environmental assessment process, the operations tend to still require, in most if not all circumstances, an industrial approval as well, so it actually goes through two assessments at that time, resulting in terms and conditions that are designed to minimize environmental impact.

I would like to assure all members of the public and certainly members of this Legislature, having had the opportunity, almost two years as Minister of Environment in the Province of Nova Scotia, one of the first things that stood out to me as I met the employees working in the department is that unlike many other careers - not all - I'm not aware of too many people who get involved in working in the environment field who don't have a passion for that area of work.

The people who do work in the Department of Environment have a passion for ensuring the integrity of the environment in Nova Scotia. It is their job, Madam Speaker, and they take it very seriously, to ensure that, when they review applications that come in, they do so with the utmost professional integrity and do so with the guidance of extensive research and guidelines for the parameters that they are using to help inform their decision-making, so both professional education and broad standards that were established, as I've mentioned previously, nationally and internationally.

There is an extensive process that takes place within the Province of Nova Scotia, starting with the Environment Act and regulations stemming from it, that ensures that qualified individuals do review and make recommendations and/or decisions to ensure that

any activities that may result in pollutants - be they air, water, or land/soil-based - are given the utmost scrutiny, and that any approvals often come with extensive lists of terms and conditions stipulating what the thresholds are and what mitigating actions need to be taken to minimize the risk of exceedances of any terms and conditions that are established.

Following those approvals, should an operation commence within the Province of Nova Scotia, an operation which results in pollution through its conduct, there is an extensive process for both ongoing reviews. In many cases these approvals came with a set of terms and conditions, ongoing reporting requirements that ensure that the department receives information to keep on top of the operations and how they are performing in relation to the terms and conditions that had been established.

In the event that an operator with an approval from the Department of Environment is operating in violation of the terms and conditions, Madam Speaker, there is an extensive process for compliance review investigation and action, and in some cases those actions are stipulated within terms and conditions and in some cases they are broad departmental policies that apply, but the Act does provide guidelines and specifications around the nature of penalties and punitive action that can be brought forward, in the case that the Act or approvals are violated.

These consist of, in many cases, you can have what are known as summary offence tickets, Madam Speaker, which have some limits into the size of the financial penalty that can be applied through a summary offence ticket, but the advantage is that those summary offence tickets can be issued immediately, so there is some expediency in issuing such a form of financial penalty. But in the event where the Act allows for larger financial penalties it does provide for the option of a long-form prosecution, which essentially is passing the case over to the Justice and Prosecutors Office to move forward for the Crown Prosecutors to pursue through the courts. The courts then would make the decision as to what the actual penalty, up to the maximum indicated in the Environment Act.

So that, Madam Speaker, I hope is a bit of a lesson for the members of the public and my colleagues here in the Legislature, so they can understand at a high level what the process is, what the Government of Nova Scotia, through its Department of Environment, does, as the Act rightly notes around the prevention. These actions and these processes are designed to limit and prevent excessive pollution within the Province of Nova Scotia.

So further to that and in my last moments, Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River, through her comments acknowledging the work of this government, in particular with the Pictou Landing First Nation, on Boat Harbour. I'd like to acknowledge the work of my colleague the Minister of Internal Services for bringing forward the Boat Harbour Act, and all members of the Legislature who voted in favour and supported that legislation, historic legislation that demonstrates that this government is not just focused on preventing environmental racism,

that indeed we're taking concrete action in order to address the situations that we see, that have had historical context to them.

So again, Madam Speaker, with those comments I guess I'll take my seat and allow debate to continue.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Madam Speaker, it brings me great pleasure to stand in my place and speak on Bill No. 111, Environmental Racism Prevention Act. I want to thank my colleagues for speaking, but I personally want to congratulate the member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River for introducing this most important bill last Spring.

The member is very passionate about our environment, like myself, and we share many similar ideologies for a healthy, clean, and safe environment. The bill is definitely long overdue for discussion and is absolutely worthy of discussion today, and I am truly honoured to be able to contribute to this conversation.

Although environmental racism is not defined actually in the bill, environmental racism or environmental justice are terms we often hear and read about, especially in the last decade. In fact, my daughter who's in Grade 12, is discussing it in her sociology class right now. We had a great discussion the other day, and I learned a lot from her. I'm happy to see that it is being spoken about in the high schools, at least that I am aware of.

My first experience with the term was in the early 1990s, during a visit to Pennsylvania, where a dear friend of mine lives and I often visit. At that time, the community next to her community was dealing with hydraulic fracturing where a number of wells had gone bad. Residents in this small community had to evacuate, unfortunately, due to their water being contaminated. Now, thank goodness for technology. Things have improved. But at that time in the early 1990s I think Pennsylvania was the state that had more wells drilled than any other state in the U.S., so with no doubt there were a number that were contaminated.

What we have to realize is that environmental racism remains a reality for all people, and has been for generations, really. I stress, though - all people.

The proposed bill to address environmental racism in Nova Scotia is a colossal step in addressing the disproportionate human health and environmental effects of our past and present, and really our future. This is such an important issue, and we can't continue to keep the blinders on. We have to recognize the connection between race, socioeconomic status, and environmental risk, which in my opinion means everyone, because everyone matters.

This is why I do believe this bill could go a step further in addressing that everyone matters, regardless of who they are or where they live. We have to be in this together. Obviously we were not in this together in the past, and that embarrasses me as a Nova Scotian; I'm actually ashamed. But we're in it together now and we can do better together.

Strengthening this bill is something that I would be in favour of. We all have the right to be safe and to live in a healthy environment. I'm pretty sure it's actually a Charter right of ours.

The truth is that environmentally-harmful activities have taken place in certain communities more than others, and this was not fair. In some cases we have seen justice served, and unfortunately, in other cases we have not. I believe we have to look at our past as a guidepost and not a hitching post, and move together and somehow collectively come together to strengthen this bill.

I realize that the Department of Environment will support and perhaps even maybe argue that there is already an environmental impact assessment process, as we heard the minister just relay a bit of information about that process and how well their website describes how everything works in that process.

As well, indigenous communities have a separate consultation process written right into policy in that Act. So there is some protection there. I'm not saying that the policy is always effective - in fact, I know that it's not - but I am aware that it exists. I look at it as a bottom line that government needs to have a robust regulatory framework that includes provisions that will ensure the people affected by projects are heard. They need their voices heard. If we do that, we will level the playing field for all marginalized communities, regardless of race.

The concept of the bill is of great value, but I fear it may have missed the broader point of including everyone. This is an important issue to me as we move forward as an inclusive society. Our approach needs to be unified, especially with regards to a bill like this.

The issue of people having projects with serious environmental impacts directly in their backyards, with no real voice, is not necessarily really about race as much as it is about power. This is just, obviously, in my opinion. Power is a dangerous weapon, as we all know. It's about pushing things through upon marginalized communities, regardless of race. Collectively, all of us here in this Chamber can change this. So I do ask that the member who introduced the bill consider these thoughts and perhaps make amendments to the bill to enhance it, make it more attractive and meaningful for all Nova Scotians.

I myself live in the town of Pictou. Every second or third day, I wake up with brown water. I get up at 5:00 a.m., and I turn my tap on. If it's brown, I have to let my water run for an hour to two hours before I can take a shower. I live directly within - well, I can swim

to Northern Pulp. Every day, I am breathing in air. Now the precipitator was installed, and I have to admit, it seems to be working really well. But I lived there for years and years. It plays very heavy on my heart that I have no idea what the long-term impacts will be on my children. I just hope that I will not have to witness that.

In closing, once again, I want to say bravo to the member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River for introducing a bill I consider to be of great importance. I know it has to move forward.

Just on a final note, I'll leave you with this: everyone's truth is relative; it's personal to them. The only right that is required is one that feels true to you. For me, this particular bill, with some improvement, will help speak the truth about environmental racism and environmental justice in the past and for the future.

With that short speech, thank you so much for letting me speak.

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Madam Speaker, environmental racism is the placement of low-income or minority communities in proximity of environmentally hazardous or degraded environments, such as toxic waste, pollution, and urban decay.

In Nova Scotia, a disproportionate number of African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq communities are in close proximity to landfills, incinerators, sewer treatment plants, and other toxic industries. Residents in communities such as Lincolnville, the Prestons, Cherry Brook, Acadia First Nation, Membertou, and Eskasoni worry about what this does to their health and to their family's health and generations to come. Environmental racism is unfortunately a reality in our province.

Over the years, Madam Speaker, the voices of those who have been impacted by environmental racism are coming together now to be stronger. In the past, it's been very difficult to get their voice heard, but I am pleased to know that now in our province there are people who understand the significance of this. Unfortunately, as we've seen so far today, our Liberal Government does not understand.

There is research that shows that residents who live near environmental hazards have many different issues, health-wise, and also psychological distress. Let's put any one of us in those positions. If we were living near a landfill site or a toxic waste, what would we be thinking about each and every day that we get up and we want to go outdoors and breathe fresh air and it's not there. Is that not a right? So many of those who are privileged take it for granted each and every day and there are many people in this House, including myself, who are privileged, who have come from communities where environmental racism would be a word that we would not even understand. So it's our duty to put ourselves in others' positions and what they've had to deal with over years.

It is our duty. That's why Nova Scotians vote us to come into this House to make changes to their lives, positive change, and we have Nova Scotians who are asking for a support of this bill. This Bill No. 111 is not complicated. It's a starting step going forward to bring public consultation and bring the voices of those who have research and understanding. They know they can't wipe out the very bad, nasty past. But they do know that as Nova Scotians and human beings they need to step to the plate and they need to be able to fight this battle together with those who have been marginalized over the years.

That's what Bill No. 111 will do. It will start a very important process and I'm very honoured and pleased that my colleague has worked with many in our communities here to make this happen.

This bill will bring those communities together and they will be able to discuss and advise and collaborate on how we go forward - how do we make the lives of those in these communities a bit better? What do we have to do in our leadership role? What does government need to do at all levels, from the municipal level, the provincial, and the federal level? And it's time, it's time that this takes place and there is a large and a huge, enormous public willingness now in our province to have this bill passed. Individuals such as Ingrid Waldron, Dalhousie University Assistant Professor School of Nursing, have been spearheading a project called The ENRICH Project. The ENRICH Project is a collaborative community-based project investigating the cause and effect of toxic industries situated near Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities.

So why are we not getting together as Opposition and as government to follow in the steps of the ENRICH Project? It's coming from the grass roots level. Is that not what we always say is why we have been voted into this place of honour? It's from the grass roots level, we go door to door during an election and we knock on the doors of many people. Has anyone in this House knocked on the door of anyone living in one of these communities that was mentioned today and talked to them about the life that they're living and the worry because of the fact that somebody put a landfill near their community or near their home?

We have another individual who has been speaking out for those who feel marginalized and feel fearful to speak out. That is Lynn Jones, a vibrant, inspirational advocate who stands up and is the voice for many, many people who feel that they are not being heard and they're fearful if they do say anything.

There is really absolutely no reason whatsoever that this government cannot support the passing of the bill. The only reason would be a lack of collaboration and not wanting to pass a bill that has come from the Opposition side of the House; it would be a political reason. If this bill doesn't get passed in this sitting, it's plain and simple to Nova Scotians that it is a political reason.

The Minister of Environment stood in this House and he never talked once about the lives of people. He never talked about cancer, that people we know get cancer from environmental effects. He didn't talk about toxic water. He didn't talk about the psychological distress, feeling that you cannot do anything; nobody is listening. I've got no other place to move. I can't afford to go to another community; I can't afford to go anywhere else and I don't want to go because this is my family's homeland, my family's heritage. Why should I have to move because some decision-maker at some level of government thought that a toxic-waste site or a landfill site was fine by my home or my community? He never once talked about being a human being and the effects of that. It was all about regulations.

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, if those regulations that the minister talked about today were effective, why do we have this issue in the first place? They can't be very effective. It has taken years, and I know what the Liberal Government likes to do, they like to stand in the House and point the finger at everybody else; it was their problem in the past. I will tell you, that Party was in government in the past so they're part of the history. It doesn't matter how long ago because this environmental racism issue has been around for decades. (Interruptions) So there they go again, why don't you do something? Well, do you know why? Because things change as you go along.

As you know in government there's going to be a day, Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's has the floor.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is going to be a day when they're going to be sitting somewhere else in this House, if not even not in the House, and somebody is going to say, why didn't you do that when you were in? There are hundreds of things that need to be changed every day being in government so stop pointing the finger at the past, look forward to the future. You ran to become government to do things.

We are presenting a bill, a very simple bill. Is it proper to point the finger at others? Do you think it's okay that the members feel it's fine to say, well you didn't do it? So does that mean it never gets done? There are thousands of things, look over the history. This government is not the only government in the history of Nova Scotia . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's has the floor.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, for some reason the members of the present government think that they are the first government that ever existed in the history of Nova Scotia and that they're the first to have done anything. There

have been many governments that have done lots of good work. Stop pointing the finger and do the job that you knocked on people's doors and asked for their support.

We have a bill that is very easy to understand. What this bill is, is just asking to, number one, recognize that there is environmental racism that has occurred in this province. Is that so hard to recognize? Is that hard to recognize? We've seen it, we know it's there, we know the communities. ENRICH Project has done a great deal of work around this and I wonder if the minister or any member over on that side has met with anybody on that committee because there is a lot. So we have one member out of what, 30 or 31, who have met, okay.

The fact is that this is not a hard bill, it's just asking for a starting point, Mr. Speaker. It's asking just let's get together, let's collaborate, something that this government said over and over during their election time they were going to be the most transparent, the most collaborative. Well they don't collaborate with the Opposition and they're not even collaborating with the community because I know that the minister has received hundreds and hundreds of emails on this particular bill.

Pay attention - hundreds and hundreds of emails from people who live in marginalized communities, who are breathing dirty air every day, who can't hang out their wash to dry because of the issue with the toxins in the air and the dirt in the air. Is it so much to ask, when people are crying out and asking for help, they are asking, can we come together at the table in a restorative approach and let's look at - we can't erase the past but we can start drawing a better future.

It's hard to believe that the minister stood up in this House and all he talked about was regulations, not one bit about the human aspect and what people are dealing with and that we have hundreds, if not thousands, of people in Nova Scotia who are begging this government to pass a very simple bill that will be the starting process to change the lives and the history of many Nova Scotians this government says they support.

If they support marginalized individuals and if they support our African Nova Scotian communities and the Mi'kmaq communities, they will certainly put aside their political partisanship and they will pass this bill in this Fall sitting, Bill No. 111, the Environmental Racism Prevention Act. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise to speak to this important bill. I will start off by offering a tip of the hat to the minister for speaking to this bill in person, himself, for the full allotted time - and he actually talked about the bill. That was a good thing; that was a step up from what we had seen previously.

I think what this bill is, is an opportunity for the government to show empathy - and that's the opportunity that this government was presented with today, an opportunity to show empathy. I think when governments are provided that opportunity, they should at least acknowledge it and, where they can, they should accept that opportunity and work with it.

I admire the spirit of this bill and I thank the member for bringing it forward. I also thank the, I don't know, hundreds of people who emailed me about this bill and I certainly endeavoured to respond to all of them, certainly as many of them as I could. I tried to ask them questions about how they would see, practically, this bill moving forward in terms of the mandate of the board. That's where I was trying to challenge them on the practicalities of making this happen and I got some very insightful responses back for which I am appreciative. I'm always appreciative when people come to this House to see us talk about their bill, so I thank them for that.

You know the government of the day, no matter which government it is, has a responsibility to the people. They try to fulfill that responsibility to the people through appropriate processes. I think today we heard the minister talk about the processes that are in place. He was pretty clear, at least my interpretation of his comments was that he thinks those processes are fine, and what I would say to the minister is, how are the processes working for the people? That's the question that I would ask, so in the spirit of this bill this government has a chance to ask itself that question: how are the processes that are in place working for the people?

I would suggest to you that any person, any elected official, any government that stands in their place and says the processes are fine, we can't improve them, is a fool. What I was hoping to hear today, I think the best I thought we might hear today was a government saying, thank you for bringing this forward. This won't work as it has been brought forward, but we respect the work that has been done, the work of ENRICH, the work of the member, and we are going to try to sit down with them, and speak with them, and try to work with them to see how we can improve the processes. That was the best I thought we could hear today.

We didn't hear the best today, Mr. Speaker. What we heard instead was, we heard from a minister who believes he already has the best, so therefore doesn't need to spend time talking to the people of the province, and that's the opportunity that has been missed today, because clearly this is an issue that merits discussion.

There will be many points of view on how the province should proceed, what the province should be looking at doing, and how they can change things; all of those points of view have value. So I would think that the minimum - and we may see this. I say to the member that I'm optimistic that we may see this now in the ensuing days or months that there is a reach-out, and somebody from the government side says I understand what you're trying to do, I accept what you're trying to do, and I want to work with you.

That's something that is easily doable. It is an investment of time, but it's an illustration of empathy, and I would just encourage the members opposite to reflect on that a little bit, to step away from the political partisanship of the Opposition putting in a bill - we can't pass that bill because it's from the Opposition, and all the types of traditions that hold this province back. I would encourage them to step back from that and say, there is something here that merits discussion, and let's speak together about how we can try to improve the situations that we face. I think that would be a good outcome.

I applaud the member for bringing this forward. I hope you get somewhere with it, because it's an issue that warrants discussion, and I applaud the citizens of Nova Scotia who supported the member and reached out to all of us, numerous times. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, I guess that's our time today for this bill. That concludes business for the Opposition, so I'll turn it over to the Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the House do now rise to sit tomorrow between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. At that time we'll call Government Business, Committee of the Whole House on Bills: Bill Nos. 120, 122, 123, 124, and 126; Bills for Second Reading: Bill Nos. 133, 134, 130, and 131 - not necessarily in that order; and such other government business as may arise.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now rise.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again tomorrow, Thursday, November 26th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

We've reached the moment of interruption. The Adjournment motion was submitted by the member for Halifax Needham. It reads:

“Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature acknowledge that the Premier does not think it matters to Nova Scotians that: (a) a mental health diagnosis was revealed by his closest adviser during a very public fight; nor that (b) a government job was offered to a Liberal Party insider without going through an open competition; nor that (c) a person's personal health information was revealed without that person's consent.”

ADJOURNMENT**MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)**

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

**PREM: PERSONAL INFO. RELEASE/PRIVATE JOB OFFERS
- PUBLIC ATTITUDE**

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place in this late debate this evening to discuss a matter that continues, I think, to trouble many Nova Scotians, notwithstanding the Premier's assertion that these matters are not important to the people of Nova Scotia.

First off, I would say that it is the people of Nova Scotia who will determine what matters are important to them, not any member of this Chamber. My experience would suggest that the people of the province are astute. They pay attention to what goes on in a Premier's Office, and they do pay attention to the tone that is set by the Premier in his office and right across government.

The people of Nova Scotia are not fools. They get it when jobs are offered to Liberal insiders. They get it when medical information is released without the consent of a person. They get it when the Premier has a pattern in his province. They see the pattern of people having to leave (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, I believe I have the floor. There will be ample time for the MLA for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island to stand on his feet and participate in this debate, I'm sure. But right now, he can listen and show some respect for the processes of this House.

As I indicated, we've seen a pattern out of the Premier's Office that is disturbing, frankly. It's a very disturbing pattern. In little more than two and a half or three weeks now, we have seen a member of Cabinet leave the Cabinet and the Liberal caucus, and we now have the chief of staff of the Premier's Office gone as well.

We still have no understanding of what it was that the Premier knew and when he knew it. The Premier continually maintains that he learns about all of these things after the fact. He's always very apologetic. He feels bad when he learns certain things. But that's not good enough. We all know that that's not good enough. To have offered to hold out the possibility of a personal services contract paid through the public purse to an insider is not acceptable.

Think about all of the people in this province, in the film industry, who have lost their jobs. I have people in my constituency who, as a result of this government's recklessness, have seen their families split up. They have had to leave the province. Mum

is here taking care of the kids and dad is someplace or mum has gone someplace and dad is here looking after the children.

This is not a hyperbole, it is happening. Many, many people have left and many, many people remain here trying to hold the fort and hope that eventually there will be some activity in that industry and when they see something happening like they've seen in the Premier's office recently, it troubles them and it calls into question not only the judgement of those who are most directly implicated but it calls into question the Premier himself, his oversight of his office, the standards he sets, the behavior he expects.

Earlier today I read a statement during the members statements and I said I understand, we all understand, the Premier doesn't know about every conversation that takes place, it's not possible; it's simply not possible, I get that. He's not present at every conversation that takes place, I get that. That's a reasonable position. You can never know everything but that's why you have to set the bar. That's why you have to set the parameters and make the expectations and what we have seen.

We have seen the kinds of culture and approaches that characterized, really, the Harper Government: take no prisoners, circle the wagons, defend the indefensible for as long as it is politically possible and when it becomes politically risky, then you're gone. Then, you say well really, Nova Scotians don't care about this. We have now seen the Director of Communications in the Premier's office charged with a domestic assault, brought back on a contract in the caucus office; the Premier kept in the dark for days around that, if we take him at his word, and I do. I do take the Premier at his word. Then we see the Premier unaware that privilege was going to be used.

Surely the Premier needs to come into this House or come into some arena and first of all, just really come clean about everything. Today in Question Period I asked about the communications plan, the talking points. I've been here long enough to know that you don't throw your chief of staff out in front of the media, knowing that you, the Premier will be asked about what he is going to say to the media. There would have been discussions about that. There would have been a plan. There would have been talking points.

If you look at the coverage from five different news outlets, the coverage is consistent. The talking points were consistent: PTSD, brain tumor. This was a consistent message that was part of the messaging and that is very disturbing. That is very disturbing.

There is not one member in this Chamber that doesn't have medical health information about the people that we meet and we are representing and we surround ourselves with. People come to us on a regular basis and ask us for assistance either with their circumstances or with the circumstances of a family member or loved one. They do that on a regular basis and it's a very, very serious matter.

The Premier has not apologized for what occurred, he hasn't explained what he is doing now to ensure that it never happens again. He hasn't indicated whether he has talked to the members of his Cabinet and his caucus about how to prevent a similar breach from every occurring again. These are serious matters. This is not unimportant; these issues are not insignificant. These are issues that matter, and they matter to the people of Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

MR. JOACHIM STROINK: Mr. Speaker, mental illness is a growing problem across Canada, touching one in five Canadians. Even if you aren't living with a mental illness it is possible your friend, your neighbour, or your family member, may be. As a MLA, I have sat with people in my community facing their struggles, and worked with them to get the support they need.

At this point I'd like to share a little story of a friend. My friend, whom I have had 100 per cent full permission to share his story, we went back and forth so I want to be very clear. My friend, who is a police officer, when he was in office his crisis was at the forefront. He had access to his gun and he took it with him and sat in his car. After a long time holding his gun, he finally called for help. This was a couple of months ago.

Members of his department, whom he loves and trusts, immediately came to his aid within minutes. He met with two of his senior members, they contacted the EPA coordinator, who is an employee, and family assistance group, and they also called his union. At this point he was taken to the QEII for assessment, where he received the most incredible support. He was released that night and taken to his parents' house with his EPA coordinator.

The next day he was taken back for a follow-up and I happened to see him that day and he looked like hell. We talked briefly and he told me in passing that he held his gun to his head for a long time. During that time he received calls of support from his management and members alike. He was set up for counselling and he remained at work for a few months.

The organization maintained contact and supported him throughout the process to ensure that he would not be alone. Once he was healthy, they brought him back. He tells the story that the QEII was incredible. His organization has been completely supportive.

My friend has been a member of the police force for over 10 years and has seen and dealt with some severe trauma. This is a cumulative effect, this is called PTSD. On the day of his crisis it was a personal issue, but it was his organization and the blue line of family who got him through it. That is why it is most important to focus now on timely access to service rather than a mental health inquiry using up important resources.

Some in the mental health community have also suggested inquiry is not the best use of resources. I know that with each individual and their family, mental illness has a tremendous impact, as it has on my friend. Also now there are many people who are receiving the help they need, like my friend.

In the past two years our government has increased mental health funding to \$17 million. The DHW will spend over \$270 million on mental health and addictions in this fiscal year alone. Money isn't everything, though, we are lucky to have dedicated mental health professionals and community advocates who have helped my friend.

In mid-October the minister spent some time with the passionate people involved in the Together We Can strategy. The strategy now is in its fourth year and has produced some great results - reduced wait times, involved patients in their own care through this choice and partnership approach. Patients and family make an appointment to discuss their goals and develop a plan, rather than going on a wait-list for services. There's also the mental health crisis line, and in the Halifax area, the mobile crisis team.

We want to support people to avoid getting to a crisis point, like my friend. We've trained up to 50 family doctors and offered group one-on-one sessions for families.

I would like to expand a little bit on those families, because this weekend we had a great opportunity, an event called the Christmas Tree lighting for Nova Scotia mental health. During that wonderful event, they announced an incredible new camp called Camp Brave at Brigadoon. This camp is going to support families and kids who have lost family members to suicide, or whose family members are going through mental illness, and to create that support.

We've introduced for the first time ever a sexual violence strategy, and put an additional \$500,000 in funding to transition houses and women's centres and second-stage housing. This, again, will help Nova Scotians who need support during difficult periods. Can we do more? One hundred per cent.

Let me talk about a new one that we're talking about right now, which is called the EDI. The EDI is the early development instrument, where every Primary student will be assessed to deal with non-visual disabilities. Where I'm going with this is that this year alone 26.8 per cent of the students who were tested were vulnerable in one area. This recognition at a young age is potentially saving 26.8 per cent of Nova Scotians from getting a mental illness. Taking the time at an early age to deal with these non-visual disabilities will help kids in the future get stronger with their confidence, get stronger with their disabilities, and not fall into mental illness.

The minister intends to visit some of the most important sites offering mental health treatment and community supports. We will learn from the successes and find ways to improve. The NSHA and IWK are responsible for providing safe and accessible mental

health services. Government will continue to provide them resources to offer these services, and we expect ongoing evaluation of the ways services are offered.

Members opposite have expressed their disappointment that the Aberdeen short-stay unit has not been reopened. We are disappointed too. The NSHA told us that it was a temporary closure, and we expect NSHA to recruit the professionals they need to reopen this facility. I am encouraged that there are new mental health supports available in Pictou County.

There are new temporary mental nursing positions at the Aberdeen being hired to help support patients who arrive in the emergency department in crisis. Again, we expect the NSHA to continue to step up recruiting efforts to support this facility.

I want to go back to my comments earlier about addressing the kids at a young age to ensure that they do not get mental illness. The SchoolsPlus program is one of these examples, with 25 sites and 185 schools. The Department of Health and Wellness and health clinicians participate in this process to help these kids.

I also want to talk a little bit about the go-to training for teachers that was driven by Dr. Stan Kutcher and Dr. John LeBlanc. These are all tools to prevent kids from getting a mental illness, and helping them get the support at a young age so that they can succeed within society. Mental health literacy in the middle schools is a new program for teachers, to teach teachers how to identify kids with mental illness. I guess this is what I'm trying to get at: if we start to take the time at a young age to help these people deal with their issues of mental illness, then we can create a society where maybe mental illness will drop.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I kind of want to go back to my friend, my friend who has PTSD. The only way that he succeeded in getting that gun away from his head was the love and support from his community, the love and support that he got from the QEII during that assessment, and that love and support of his friends and his community brought him home that night to hold his son. If we didn't have those tools in place, I might have lost a friend.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I take my seat. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: I do thank the member for sharing that story with us. It's an important story, and we should all hear stories like that. That is a citizen who got support from his community. We heard talk about the good initiatives that the government is doing.

But the subject of this late debate, and I think it ties in nicely - because the thing that didn't happen to that person is, nobody went on the news and told them about the struggles that he was facing. That is this late debate tonight. There's a good news story -

the good news story of the helpfulness of the services provided by the QEII is a good news story for the QEII.

If we want to talk about services offered, if that happened to somebody in another area of the province who didn't have access to the QEII, the concern is, would the outcome be the same? That's the concern. When we talk about a crisis in mental health, that's what we're talking about. I thank the member for driving home the point about access to the services at the QEII as opposed to getting in a car or getting in a cab or hoping your family member can drive you to Truro or Yarmouth or something like that. Those are the tragedies, Mr. Speaker.

That's the issue of other debates in this House. Tonight the issue for debate is brought forward by the NDP that all members of this Legislature acknowledge that the Premier does not think it matters to Nova Scotians that a mental health diagnosis was revealed by his closest adviser. I think the members of this House know that needs to matter to us. It can't happen. There has been talk about that.

The other part of that is that the members of this House acknowledge that the Premier does not think it matters to Nova Scotians that a government job was offered to a Liberal Party insider, without going through open competition. That is the part that troubles me the most because it's not clear to me that the members opposite acknowledge that this is an issue; in fact, quite the opposite - everything but that. Even as I stand here now, despite probably everyone hearing auditory evidence in the form of a tape, which we may want to admit exists or may not want to admit exists - it's there - and reading about it numerous times, there was certainly a job offer made.

Anyone who wants to dispute that needs to look in the mirror and ask themselves what their real purpose is, because if their real purpose is to try and deny and protect as opposed to advancing the interests of the province, then that's the issue that we have before us today, and that's the subject of this late debate.

I'm happy to speak about that because I am particularly personally troubled by what I heard on that tape. Every Nova Scotian should be. Anguish might be too strong of a word, but my disappointment over what happened is only magnified when I hear the members brush it away and say, did it happen? I don't know. Was there a job offer? It didn't happen.

There are lots of adjectives that I could use, Mr. Speaker, to describe those types of responses that I hear, but I'm going to go with astonishing. It astonishes me that the members opposite have that little respect for the taxpayers of this province that they would try and convince them that this didn't happen.

Now this morning we heard the Party's position on this particular situation, Mr. Speaker. There are a couple of spins on it, that in the interests of time I hope to get to. Let's suffice it to say that each one of those spins only tells Nova Scotians, it only magnifies

what Nova Scotians feel about the people who report to this Chamber for work, it only magnifies about how people feel about Nova Scotians.

You can hear the choruses ringing out across the province - I guess it's who you know, I guess that's how you get a job; it depends on who you know, whose back you scratch. That's what we've seen. I want to be clear, there was a job offer made on that tape and the job offer was not - because we did have one spin that it was a caucus job. It was a job offer, but it was a caucus job; another spin is no job offer.

So let's deal with the caucus office job offer spin. The now former chief of staff said he would consult with a deputy minister about a personal services contract. Now, Mr. Speaker, there are no deputy ministers in caucus offices - there is a deputy minister in my house, that's me because the minister holds more authority, being my wife - but in the caucus office there are no deputy ministers. Deputy ministers oversee government hiring so when somebody is going to consult with a deputy minister (Interruption) I appreciate the former Justice Minister's take on this, which is obviously something she doesn't want to hear. But deputy ministers oversee government hiring, so this was not a caucus office job offer, this was something a little different than that.

The fact that we get to hear it on the recording is shocking; it's shocking to Nova Scotians. The subject of this late debate is not just about little lapses - the thing that bothers me is this, everything about this is systematic and planned and orchestrated. That's the thing that really kind of really worries me. We all know that jobs should be handed out on merit and they should be handed out to people who can fulfill the responsibility of that job based on their experience.

Why do we hand out jobs on merit, Mr. Speaker? Because it's 2015 - that's why we hand jobs out on merit and through competitions and regulated processes. That's what Nova Scotians expect from their government - they expect that if they apply for a job they have an equal opportunity to get it, based not on who they are and who they know, but what they can bring to the table. That's what they would have expected in this case, but a tape recording shows otherwise in this case.

I know the Premier was very big on apologies this afternoon, he was very anxious for certain apologies. You know for all the rhetoric during Question Period, I haven't actually heard an apology from the one person who should be giving one - and that's the former chief of staff because he let down not just the members of his own caucus but certainly he let down all Nova Scotians with what we heard. He can resign, but he should also publicly say that he is sorry to Nova Scotians. If we want to have apologies, that's what he should do.

In terms of the spins that the government is putting forward, Mr. Speaker, I think one of the most egregious glimpses into the culture of this government came this morning at the Public Accounts Committee. Just this morning, after everything that has transpired,

the member for Cumberland North suggested that personal services contracts are routinely given out, based on private conversations - no big deal. He actually believes his own messaging so much that he just thought well, isn't that what everyone does? That speaks to me of the culture. That's speaks to me of the culture of this government that goes right to the very top.

I think it's a good resolution that the member put forward and I would encourage the members to take it seriously and to apologize to the people of the province for what has transpired here. I think that would go long way because we need to build some trust back up. They have an opportunity to restore some credibility and I hope they take it, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

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

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

[The House rose at 5:16 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 2506**

By: Hon. Lena M. Diab (Immigration)

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

Whereas Jinyu Sheng of Armdale is an oceanographer at Dalhousie university where he researches local marine conditions and teaches graduate students; and

Whereas Mr. Sheng is one of the Halifax Chinese Language School's founding members and current principal; and

Whereas the Halifax Chinese Language School offers Mandarin and math lessons and is always a participant in cultural events such as Chinese New Year parties, summer camps and ping pong tournaments;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Sheng for his valuable contribution to local education and culture and wish him future success.

RESOLUTION NO. 2507

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas "A new baby is like the beginning of all things – wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities," author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on July 5, 2015, Ashley Thorbourne and Allain d'Entremont welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ashley and Allain on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 2508

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas “A new baby is like the beginning of all things – wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities,” author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on June 21, 2015, Caitlyn Messenger and Dustin Goodwin welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Caitlyn and Dustin on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 2509

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas “A new baby is like the beginning of all things – wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities,” author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on September 1, 2015, Kimberlee-Ann McCall welcomed her daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kimberlee-Ann on this miraculous event in her life and wish her many more happy years as a parent.

RESOLUTION NO. 2510

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas "A new baby is like the beginning of all things – wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities," author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on September 7, 2015, Melinda Doucet and Jeremy Muise welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Melinda and Jeremy on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 2511

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas "A new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities," author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on June 24, 2015, Melissa Muise and Kaitlin Banks welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Melissa and Kaitlin on this miraculous event in their lives, and wish them many more happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 2512

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas "A new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities," author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on September 3, 2015, Miranda and Stephen Acker welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Miranda and Stephen on this miraculous event in their lives, and wish them many more happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 2513

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas "A new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities," author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on May 29, 2015, Samantha and Jeremy Kelusky welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Samantha and Jeremy on this miraculous event in their lives, and wish them many more happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 2514

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas "A new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities," author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on June 22, 2015, Teri-Lynn and Aaron LeBlanc welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Teri-Lynn and Aaron on this miraculous event in their lives, and wish them many more happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 2515

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas "A new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities," author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on May 31, 2015, Shalena Guier and Nick Doucet welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Shalena and Nick on this miraculous event in their lives, and wish them many more happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 2516

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas "A new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities," as quoted by author Eda J. LeShan; and

Whereas on September 2, 2015, Paula and Mark Hatfield welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Paula and Mark on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 2517

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas "A new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities," as quoted by author Eda J. LeShan; and

Whereas on July 2, 2015, Natalie Pothier and Troy Morton welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Natalie and Troy on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 2518

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas "A new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities," as quoted by author Eda J. LeShan; and

Whereas on August 24, 2015, Chelsea Atkinson and Cody Cunningham welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Chelsea and Cody on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 2519

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas "A new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities," as quoted by author Eda J. LeShan; and

Whereas on May 21, 2015, Candice and Scott Muise welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Candice and Scott on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 2520

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas "A new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities," as quoted by author Eda J. LeShan; and

Whereas on August 11, 2015, Candace and Jacques Surette welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Candace and Jacques on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 2521

By: Hon. Leo Glavine (Health and Wellness)

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

Whereas the House recognizes Mr. Brian Graves on his successful efforts in ensuring that Aylesford be recognized as the Cranberry Capital of Nova Scotia due to its large number of cranberry farmers; and

Whereas the office of Communities, Culture and Heritage is thanked for their work in aiding Mr. Graves in his endeavours; and

Whereas Aylesford will be known from this point on as the Cranberry Capital of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Brian Graves for his work in naming Aylesford the Cranberry Capital of Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 2522

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Education and Early Childhood Development)

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

Whereas knowledge and creativity in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) are celebrated as being integral to the successful development of students and their critical-thinking, problem-solving, and creativity skills; and

Whereas STEAM is recognized and promoted around the world as key to building a strong economy and is being integrated as part of an innovative curriculum in the public school system under Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education; and

Whereas more than 135 students from Grade 4 to Grade 8 across the province participated in the first invitational STEAM Olympics on November 7th at Saint Mary's University in Halifax to explore multi-disciplinary hands-on, minds-on investigations and challenges;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize the importance of promoting and supporting science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics in our public education system through the implementation of Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education to ensure a prosperous future for our students and economy.