



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

Published by Order of the Legislature by Hansard Reporting Services and printed by the Queen's Printer.

Available on INTERNET at <http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/>

Second Session

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS:	
LAE: NSCC - Rept. to the Commun. (2015), Hon. K. Regan.....	6564
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS:	
Energy - World Energy Cities Partnership, Hon. M. Samson	6564
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 2624, Intl. Day of Persons with Disabilities (12/03/15) - Inclusion/Empowerment, Hon. J. Bernard	6567
Vote - Affirmative.....	6568
Res. 2625, Hfx. Explosion (1917): Boston Assistance - Thank, Hon. Z. Churchill	6568
Vote - Affirmative.....	6568

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:

No. 145, Supporting People with Disabilities Act, Mr. L. Harrison	6569
--	------

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:

Estabrooks, Bill: Estabrooks Community Hall-Naming - Congrats., Mr. I. Rankin	6569
Intl. Day of Persons with Disabilities (12/03/15) - Inclusion: Employers - Recognition, Mr. E. Orrell	6569
Grant, Justin: Death of - Tribute, Hon. M. MacDonald	6570
St. F.X. - X-Ring Day, Hon. R. Delorey	6570
Gunning, Dave: CD Release - Congrats., Ms. K. MacFarlane	6571
UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Support, Hon. David Wilson	6571
Hartling, Corey: Research - Thank, Hon. P. Dunn	6572
Energy - Petroleum Bd.: Vacancies - Fill, Hon. S. Belliveau	6572
Rowe, Glenn Gregory - Lt.-Gov.'s Award, Hon. L. Glavine	6572
École secondaire de Par-en-Bas: Jr. Volleyball Teams - Silver Medal, Hon. C. d'Entremont	6573
Intl. Day of Persons with Disabilities (12/03/15) - Inclusive Solutions, Ms. M. Mancini	6573
Lt.-Gov.'s Award: Bedford Schools - Recipients, Hon. K. Regan	6574
Mem. HS - Options & Opportunities Prog., Mr. E. Orrell	6574
Persons with Disabilities: Accessibility Policies - Strengthen, Ms. L. Zann	6574
Walker, Greg/Gallant, David - World Dragon Boat Championships, Hon. J. Bernard	6575
Sanford, Jason - Fast-Pitch Softball Career, Ms. K. MacFarlane	6575
Prem.: Pub. Sector Workers - Treatment, Hon. D. Peterson-Rafuse	6576
MacDonald, Ronnie - Commun. Contributions, Mr. D. Wilton	6576
Roper, Helen - Trenton Mid. Sch.: Custodian - Thank, Hon. P. Dunn	6576

Gov't. (N.S.): Christmas Spirit - Embrace, Hon. S. Belliveau	6577
Leslie, Megan: WWF Can. - Position, Mr. B. Maguire	6577
Nichol, Jean: Autism Work - Recognize, Mr. T. Houston.....	6578
Intl. Day of Persons with Disabilities - Inclusiveness, Ms. M. Mancini.....	6578
Raymaker, Ashley - E. Coast Lice Ladies, Ms. M. Miller.....	6579
New Germany RHS Girls Soccer Team - NSSAF Championships, Ms. S. Lohnes-Croft.....	6579
Day of Remembrance & Action (12/06/15) - Solidarity, Ms. L. Zann.....	6580
Ingonish RCMP - New Detachment, Ms. P. Eyking.....	6580
Com. Serv. - Housing Strategy: NDP - Creation, Hon. D. Peterson-Rafuse.....	6580
Gates, Paul - Commun. Contribution, Mr. K. Irving.....	6581
Pittman, Bryson: Camp Connect - Congrats., Mr. S. Gough.....	6582
So. Woodside Sch.: Irving Oil Ltd. - Contributions Recognize, Mr. J. Treen.....	6582
Intl. Day of Persons with Disabilities - Inclusion/Access/Empowerment, Hon. J. Baillie	6583
<i>Fundy Rose</i> Ferry: Name - Details, Mr. Gordon Wilson.....	6583
Rajab, Aly: Entrepreneurship - Commend, Hon. L. Diab	6584
Clarke, Tiffany/Buy Nothing Proj. - Acknowledge, Hon. T. Ince	6584
Sable Island Pub. Meeting: Organizers - Thank, Hon. L. Kousoulis.....	6584
Italy Cross Middlewood & Dist. FD: Vols. - Thank, Hon. M. Furey.....	6585
El-cid, Anthony - Fashion Show, Ms. P. Arab	6585
Wynn, Megan - 4-H Awards, Hon. K. Casey	6585
Caughey, Cst. John Robert - N.S. Policing Long-Serv. Award (15 Yrs.), Hon. R. Delorey.....	6586
Kelly, Heather: Death of - Tribute, Hon. K. Regan.....	6586

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:

No. 1064, Dep. Prem.: NSTU - Contract Negotiations, Hon. J. Baillie	6587
No. 1065, PSC - NSGEU: Ultimatum - Min. Confirm, Hon. M. MacDonald	6588
No. 1066, Health & Wellness - Fam. Support Prog.: Autism - Include, Hon. J. Baillie	6590
No. 1067, Fin. - Min.: Union Discussions - Legislation, Hon. M. MacDonald	6591
No. 1068, EECD - Contract Negotiations: Items - Removal, Hon. P. Dunn.....	6592
No. 1069, EECD: Contract Negotiations - Package, Hon. P. Dunn.....	6593
No. 1070, EECD: Contract Negotiations - Educ. Reform, Ms. L. Zann.....	6594
No. 1071, Com. Serv.: Constituent - Min. Meet, Mr. L. Harrison	6595
No. 1072, EECD: Paths2Learning - Application Process, Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	6595
No. 1073, Com. Serv.: Commun. Home Action Group - Rept. Cards, Ms. M. Mancini	6596
No. 1074, Health & Wellness: Mental Health Serv. (Pictou Co.) - Treatment Locations, Ms. K. MacFarlane.....	6597
No. 1075, Health & Wellness: Aberdeen Hosp. Short-Stay Unit - Budget, Mr. T. Houston.....	6598
No. 1076, Com. Serv.: Brunswick St. Non-Profit - Subsidy, Ms. M. Mancini.....	6599
No. 1077, Bus. - Tourism: VIC Operators - Nova Scotian, Hon. A. MacLeod	6600
No. 1078, TIR - Infrastructure: Fed. Funding - N.S./C.B. Allocations, Mr. E. Orrell.....	6601
No. 1079, Com. Serv. - Seniors: Home Repairs - Wait Times, Hon. D. Peterson-Rafuse.....	6603

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS:

HOUSE RESOLVED INTO CW ON BILLS AT 2:50 P.M.	6604
HOUSE RECONVENED AT 3:10 P.M.....	6604
CW REPORTS.....	6604

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:

No. 141, Electricity Plan Implementation (2015) Act	
Hon. M. Samson	6605
Mr. T. Houston.....	6610
Hon. D. Peterson-Rafuse.....	6617
Mr. I. Rankin.....	6624
Hon. J. Baillie	6626
Mr. J. Lohr	6632
Hon. M. MacDonald	6637
Mr. C. d'Entremont.....	6639
Hon. A. MacLeod	6643
Hon. M. Samson	6644
Vote - Affirmative.....	6647

ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Fri., Dec. 4th at 9:00 a.m.6648

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3):

Res. 2626, Langley, Cassidy: Big Swim - Fundraising, Hon. K. Casey	6649
Res. 2627, LeBlanc, Shawna & Travis: Daughter - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	6649
Res. 2628, Malone, Jody/Shand, Donovan: Daughter - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	6650
Res. 2629, Atwood, Tamara/Ruff, Todd: Son - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	6650
Res. 2630, Doucette, Tanya & Jeremy: Son - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	6651
Res. 2631, Swim, Katrina & Aaron: Son - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	6651
Res. 2632, Warner, Donald R. & Carol A. - Anniv. (50 th), Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	6652
Res. 2633, Greene, Gary C. & Linda M. - Anniv. (50 th), Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	6652
Res. 2634, d'Entremont, Melford J. & Pauline M. - Anniv. (60 th), Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	6653
Res. 2635, Brown, Loretta - Birthday (100 th), Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	6653
Res. 2636, d'Entremont, Jeanne C. - Birthday (100 th), Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	6654
Res. 2637, Pothier, Carole - Birthday (75 th), Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	6654
Res. 2638, d'Entremont, Melford J. - Birthday (90 th), Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	6655
Res. 2639, Murphy, Marilyn - East. Shore: Betterment - Thank, The Speaker	6655

Res. 2640, Lewis, Allan - East. Shore: Betterment - Thank, The Speaker	6656
Res. 2641, Nolet, Diane - East. Shore: Betterment - Thank, The Speaker	6656
Res. 2642, Philpitt, Harry - East. Shore: Betterment - Thank, The Speaker	6657
Res. 2643, Marks, Helen - East. Shore: Betterment - Thank, The Speaker	6657
Res. 2644, Young, Mike - East. Shore: Betterment - Thank, The Speaker	6658
Res. 2645, Van Dyke, Stanley - East. Shore: Betterment - Thank, The Speaker	6658
Res. 2646, Arnold, Robert - East. Shore: Betterment - Thank, The Speaker	6659
Res. 2647, Newcombe, Pearl - East. Shore: Betterment - Thank, The Speaker	6659
Res. 2648, Myers, Darren - East. Shore: Betterment - Thank, The Speaker	6660
Res. 2649, Stevens, Frank - East. Shore: Betterment - Thank, The Speaker	6660
Res. 2650, Brown, Diana - East. Shore: Betterment - Thank, The Speaker	6661
Res. 2651, Russell, Don - East. Shore: Betterment - Thank, The Speaker	6661
Res. 2652, Stevens, Theresa - East. Shore: Betterment - Thank, The Speaker	6662
Res. 2653, Ingonish RCMP - Detachment: Opening - Congrats., The Speaker	6662
Res. 2654, Reeves, Mary Grace - Birthday (100 th), The Speaker	6663



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2015

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. REGAN: I would draw the members' attention to the east gallery. We have with us today Nova Scotia Community College President Don Bureaux, who is committed to the development of learners across this province. I'm delighted to have him here with us today and I would ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I hereby beg leave to table the Nova Scotia Community College's 2015 Report to the Community.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: I rise today to congratulate Halifax Mayor Mike Savage on his appointment as president of the World Energy Cities Partnership. Halifax has been a member since 2001. Our province's capital city is one of 20 world energy capitals that collaborate to grow our global energy economy. The World Energy Cities Partnership is a prestigious international organization that allows cities like Halifax to expand business opportunities, share ideas on investment attraction and urban development, and develop partnerships with other world energy cities.

Dans le cadre du partenariat, nous échangeons des renseignements et des stratégies pour garantir la croissance responsable continuée de l'industrie de l'énergie en toutes ces formes.

The timing for Mayor Savage's appointment really couldn't be better, Mr. Speaker. This is an exciting point in Nova Scotia's energy story: Shell is drilling its first well, part of a billion-dollar offshore exploration program; BP will continue its own billion-dollar exploration program, with drilling expected in 2017; and in November of this year the Norwegian company, Statoil, made an \$82-million commitment to explore two parcels in our offshore.

We are also making progress on the safe and responsible development of our marine renewable energy resources. The Bay of Fundy, in particular, has tremendous potential, not only as a clean energy generator but also as an export-ready industry. Nova Scotia is poised to make history as the first in the world to deploy a grid-connected tidal array, or series of tidal turbines, right in the Bay of Fundy.

In November government released its electricity plan, which includes \$1.5 million in funding to support continued innovation in our electricity mix. In part, we're looking at

solar technology and how we can harness the sun's energy to generate clean, renewable electricity; we're also looking at storage and energy management.

M. le président, aucun autre gouvernement au Canada - et très peu d'autres dans le monde - n'a fait autant de chemin aussi rapidement pour réduire son empreinte carbone. La Nouvelle-Écosse a fait des progrès considérables dans l'augmentation de la portion d'énergies renouvelables qu'elle utilise pour la production d'électricité et pour réduire les gaz à l'effet de serre.

It is for these reasons, and others, that Nova Scotia is welcome in the World Energy Cities Partnership.

Being part of this organization keeps Halifax, and our province, on the world stage with many of the most established energy capitals in the world - cities like Houston, Texas; Stavanger, Norway; and Aberdeen, Scotland.

Nova Scotia continues to have a strong partnership with Aberdeen, known as the energy capital of Europe - this relationship dates back 20 years; in fact, Mr. Speaker, it was Premier John Savage, Mayor Savage's father, who signed a memorandum of understanding between Nova Scotia and Aberdeen to collaborate on research, training, and energy-related technology. Clearly, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree in the Savage family.

Just a month ago, we hosted an incoming delegation from the Aberdeen area. The group collaborated with local businesses and visited the Bay of Fundy to witness first-hand the power of our tides and potential for tidal energy development. This was just the latest in a series of visits between our province and Scotland.

En fait, de compagnies de la Nouvelle-Écosse se rendent à Aberdeen, et vice versa, chaque année pour explorer des débouchés liés à la mise en valeur de l'énergie marémotrice et aussi du pétrole et du gaz.

We have a special relationship with another world energy city as well: Houston, Texas. Houston is the host of the Offshore Technology Conference, the largest oil and gas trade show worldwide. The OTC brings together more than 90,000 professionals from more than 120 countries and, this year, more than 25 Nova Scotia companies attended to make connections and grow their business.

Nous allons continuer de miser sur la position d'Halifax à titre de Ville mondiale de l'énergie lors d'importantes rencontres de l'industrie, comme l'Offshore Technology Conference.

Mayor Savage is an exceptional leader and a true champion for Nova Scotia. I'd like to ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Mayor Savage on this prestigious appointment, and support his mission as president of the World Energy Cities

Partnership to promote and represent Halifax, and our province, on the energy world stage.
Merci.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: I first of all want to thank the minister for providing us with a copy of his remarks in advance, and I also want to congratulate and echo his congratulations to Mayor Savage for his appointment to this board.

There is a lot of potential in energy development in our province, whether you look at wind developments that started, in most cases, the wind farm in Pubnico and then has gone further across the province on green energy in that respect. Over the decades we've seen the benefits of developing those resources, whether it be offshore, whether it be onshore, whether it be wind, whether it be tidal, et cetera. I mean, this is the third government - the fourth government really - to be governed under EGSPA. The idea of a strong economy builds from a strong environment, and like I said, it's taken from John Hamm's days to today, which made us a leader in green energy in the world.

As Shell and BP move forward with operations offshore, companies here in Halifax and throughout the province will see much-needed increases in business opportunities. Mayor Savage's appointment to this international organization further cements the city as an energy hub because, as we know, if exploration is happening in the Shelburne Basin, or if tidal is being developed in the Bay of Fundy, of course it's Halifax that benefits with that expertise.

As legislators we must capitalize on these opportunities to create jobs. There's a bill today, on the ledger, before the Legislature to move forward with tidal development. This is one example of enabling industry. We should do the same with other opportunities like onshore shale gas development.

I know that Mayor Savage has been very much engaged in promoting our energy industry, both at home and abroad. Whether in Scotland, promoting our tidal resources, or OTC in Houston, one of the premier energy conferences in the world, Mayor Savage has been an able ambassador. I hope that he continues with all the luck.

We thank him and wish him the best in this new position that he has. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity to rise in my place on behalf of the NDP caucus to congratulate Mayor Mike Savage on his appointment as president of the World Energy Cities Partnership, a very

important, I think, recognition for the work that Mayor Savage has done and the champion that he is for our city and, indeed, for our province.

I think as the minister indicated in his statement the energy field offers great promise for the prosperity of our province, and it's something that we all share in common here across the political spectrum in terms of our interest in seeing this sector grow and our province prosper as a result. And particularly, I think, in the green energy opportunities, we're all very aware - especially since the Climate Change Conference is happening in Paris - that climate change is not something that is going to happen, it's happening now.

We all have a great responsibility to look for ways to address what is a very serious challenge for our planet - and living in a cold climate like we do here in our province, we have had a reliance on fossil fuels, but it's so good to know that in many aspects we are doing things that will make us leaders in harnessing the tides of the Bay of Fundy and looking for better ways to use the solar energy.

Halifax, I believe, is one of the solar city sites in the country, so I do look forward to the work that Mayor Savage will do - perhaps he'll need an assistant sometimes to accompany him to Aberdeen. I've been there several times, it's a lovely city and I'd be pleased to take notes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 2624

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

Whereas each year on December 3rd we take the lead from the United Nations in recognizing it as International Day of Persons with Disabilities; and

Whereas this year's theme focuses on inclusion empowerment for people of all abilities; and

Whereas through commemorating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we aim to increase awareness of the benefits of integrating persons with disabilities in every aspect of life;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in committing to make Nova Scotia a more welcoming and inclusive province.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 2625

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

Whereas when the Halifax Explosion devastated the area in 1917, the City of Boston was quick to provide medical personnel and supplies; and

Whereas for many years now Nova Scotia has provided a tree to Boston, as a symbol of our gratitude and our great relationship with the people of that city; and

Whereas this year's tree lighting will take place on the Boston Common this evening at a ceremony hosted by Mayor Martin J. Walsh and the Premier, attracting about 30,000 people and is broadcast live on the ABC television affiliate in Boston;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly thank the City of Boston for coming to our aid so many years ago and celebrate this proud tradition that shows we will always remember the kindness shown to us by our American neighbours.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for 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.

We'll now move on to Introduction of Bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 145 - Entitled an Act to Support People with Disabilities. (Mr. Larry Harrison)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

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

**ESTABROOKS, BILL:
ESTABROOKS COMMUNITY HALL-NAMING - CONGRATS**

MR. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the huge community honour bestowed upon my predecessor Bill Estabrooks, who served as MLA for Timberlea-Prospect from 1998 until his retirement in 2013. Bill also served as Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal from 2009 to 2012. Bill spent much of life as a teacher and school administrator. He was always well respected by his colleagues and students who particularly appreciated Bill's ability to relate to whatever was happening in their lives.

At a well-attended public ceremony held in Lewis Lake this past September, a new sign was unveiled proclaiming Estabrooks Community Hall, complete with the logo of the former minister's beloved Boston Bruins. The community gathered to pay tribute to Bill for his years of dedication to the area, not only as a much loved teacher or as a well-respected politician but also for his years of dedication to community as a volunteer with numerous organizations.

I would like the members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Bill on this well-deserved community recognition and wish him and the Boston Bruins all the very best for the future.

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

**INTL. DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (12/03/15)
- INCLUSION: EMPLOYERS - RECOGNITION**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: He had us till then, Mr. Speaker. (Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, December 3rd is International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This year's theme is inclusion matters and is a day to recognize those who help empower people

with disabilities. Earlier this week, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor recognized employers who are committed to hiring, retaining, and furthering the careers of persons with disabilities.

The employers recognized have “instituted and promoted best practices toward the employment, independence and service to persons with disabilities.” Those employers are Athol Forestry Cooperative in Amherst, Boston Pizza in Sydney, Canadian Tire in Bridgewater, RBC in Halifax, Nova Scotia Fisherman skincare products in New Minas, Giant Tiger in Port Hawkesbury, McDonalds Restaurant in Windsor, and the Family Centre in Digby.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

GRANT, JUSTIN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about a local hero who inspired everyone who knew him, Justin Grant. Justin was well known within the Halifax TV and film community, working as a camera operator on many local projects including This Hour Has 22 Minutes and Swearnet.

Justin always had a positive attitude and a spirit of fun. The president of the Halifax Scooter Council, Justin could often be seen cruising around on his scooter or his 1966 Spitfire.

In 2013 he was diagnosed with ALS, but he didn't let that get him down. He went to Vegas and he flew the Grand Canyon. Justin's final work will be screened at the Bluenose-Ability Film Festival at 2:00 p.m. tomorrow at the Keshen Goodman Library.

Justin Grant will be remembered for his free spirit, and members of this Legislature extend our condolences to Justin's family and friends.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

ST. F.X. - X-RING DAY

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as a member of the St. F.X. alumni, I have to say that today is a very important day. As many of my colleagues know by the number of X-rings in the Legislature, December 3rd is the Feast of Saint Francis Xavier. It is also known as “X-ring day” at St. F.X. University.

This afternoon, senior students will file into the Keating Centre one by one to receive their X-rings. For anyone who has driven around the Town of Antigonish, you get a small sense of how important this day is for students. Countdowns to X-ring can be seen

in many windows, updated daily, all counting down to December 3rd each and every year. The countdown has become part of the X-ring tradition.

The X-ring is one of the most recognizable rings in the world, and for St. F.X. graduates and alumni, it's a symbol of academic achievement as well as the strong bonds and lifelong friendships created at university. I know from personal experience how special December 3rd is, and the memories created on this day.

I would ask that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating all of those students who are receiving their X-rings today in Antigonish.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

GUNNING, DAVE: CD RELEASE - CONGRATS.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and congratulate Dave Gunning on the release of his 11th CD, entitled *Lift*. The CD features a combination of songs written by Dave and others that were written with Dave's friends and peers in the music industry. Dave also produced the CD, keeping the sound quality rich and reflective of his live sound, with the songs containing fewer than four instruments.

Dave will soon be completing a tour that has taken him to Ontario, British Columbia, California, Virginia, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania before returning to Nova Scotia for a show at the deCoste Centre. Dave is a wonderful musical ambassador for Pictou and Nova Scotia, and I am happy to congratulate him on his latest success.

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

UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES - SUPPORT

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Nova Scotia needs to become a more accessible and inclusive province. Today provides all of us here in the Chamber the opportunity to reflect on the responsibilities we have as lawmakers.

We should remember the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The disabilities community came together to produce that document. The goal was Nothing About Us Without Us, and the goal was met.

The NDP caucus supports the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We must all work together to promote a better understanding of disability issues and we must all work together to ensure the human rights of people with disabilities are protected.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HARTLING, COREY: RESEARCH - THANK

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, Pictou County's statistics wizard, Corey Hartling, has dedicated his time, energy, and expertise during the past few decades to researching the statistical side of sports in Pictou County. His hobby provides reams of numbers that provide a deeper and clearer picture of how athletes and teams performed during their era.

This very knowledgeable sports-loving resident from Pictou County has been involved in the extensive research into sports. His passion for research has also allowed him to complete numerous family trees in precise detail, for not only families in Pictou County but others throughout Nova Scotia.

The Pictou County Sports Heritage Hall of Fame and countless families salute Corey Hartling for his generosity and kindness. Hartling's research is exclusive and very special to all recipients

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

ENERGY - PETROLEUM BD.: VACANCIES - FILL

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Question Period the Minister of Energy addresses a question about offshore exploration in the Shelburne Basin. On two occasions the minister referred to the experts on the petroleum board, who he said would handle and address concerns related to capping stacks and the use of dispersants.

Mr. Speaker, groups like the Clean Ocean Action Committee and fishers in general have publically raised serious questions about these issues. Just last week the petroleum board received a petition with signatures of over 230,000 concerned citizens. Mr. Speaker, the minister should use his political power to fill the vacant seats on the petroleum board with experts from the fishing industry to address these concerns.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

ROWE, GLENN GREGORY - LT.-GOV.'S AWARD

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the Lieutenant Governor's Award is given to students who demonstrate excellence in their academic studies, have contributed to their communities through leadership, or a participatory role in the life of their school.

Glenn Gregory Rowe is one of these students to receive the award. Glenn is a very dedicated student being involved in many different fields of interest within his school. Glenn is a valued member of the West Kings soccer, badminton, volleyball and basketball

teams; holds the position of broadcast co-executive on the student council; and is assistant coach of the girl's senior varsity Team. Glenn is also a vital member of his community holding numerous leadership positions within his church.

Glenn's dedication to his community and school are what has made him such an exemplary recipient for the Lieutenant Governor's Award.

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

**ÉCOLE SECONDAIRE DE PAR-EN-BAS:
JR. VOLLEYBALL TEAMS - SILVER MEDAL**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the junior boys and junior girls volleyball teams from École secondaire de Pars-en-Bas, in Tusket, advanced to the regionals after winning their district titles last week.

The junior boys Tier 2 B team won three straight games in the district challenge, allowing them to move on to the regionals in Berwick on December 1st taking silver. The junior girls Tier 2 B1 team won first place in their division to advance to the regionals being held in the Valley December 3rd along with the junior A team who also won the districts.

Involvement in sports is very important to the development of minds and bodies of these young athletes, and I wish to congratulate École secondaire de Pars-en-Bas, the coaches and participants on both these teams, and the parents, for their continual support.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

**INTL. DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (12/03/15)
- INCLUSIVE SOLUTIONS**

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia face economic challenges for no apparent reason at all. According to the Halifax Housing Needs Assessment 27.2 per cent of individuals with disabilities living in the HRM earn below \$29,500 a year. This means that individuals living with disabilities in Dartmouth and across the HRM face every day struggles to maintain safe and affordable shelter, get enough healthy food to eat, and be involved within their communities. Even with these economic obstacles Nova Scotians with varying abilities add so much value to our province. Today on International Day of Persons with Disabilities, I urge this government to be innovative in finding inclusive solutions.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

LT.-GOV.'S AWARD: BEDFORD SCHOOLS - RECIPIENTS

HON. KELLY REGAN: Each year our Lieutenant Governor visits schools across this province to present the Lieutenant Governor's Award. This honour recognizes Grade 11 students from across Nova Scotia, not just for their academic achievement but also for their leadership in and service to their schools and communities.

I'd like to congratulate the students who attend school in Bedford who received this award in May: from Charles P. Allen School, Meaghan Brown and Patrick Neatt; from École secondaire du Sommet, Taline Selman and Zachary Wallot-Beale. I am delighted to see such exemplary students in our Bedford community and I'd like to congratulate them on receiving this honour. I know we'll be hearing much more about them in the future.

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

MEM. HS - OPTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES PROG.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the students and staff of the Memorial High School Options and Opportunities Program. They decided to give the North Sydney Food Bank and exterior facelift. The team of students performed a minor miracle with their efforts even building garbage containers and wooden planters for a community garden.

It's a true honour to have the opportunity to say thank you to all those who volunteered their time with this great project. The North Sydney Food Bank benefited from the efforts of the O2 program but the lesson learned by the students who gave back to the community was priceless.

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

**PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:
ACCESSIBILITY POLICIES - STRENGTHEN**

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, on this day we show our support for the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. We recognize how far we have come in developing inclusive policies and commit to continuing this work today and every other day of the year. Persons with disabilities are our family members, our friends, our colleagues, our equals. We recognize their talents and abilities, their positive contributions to the world around us.

I hope that all members of this House will make a joint commitment to better understanding the experience of persons with disabilities so that we can all work together

to strengthen policies and practices of accessibility as part of inclusive and sustainable development.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**WALKER, GREG/GALLANT, DAVID
- WORLD DRAGON BOAT CHAMPIONSHIPS**

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, this past summer, Welland, Ontario played host to the World Dragon Boat Racing Championships. Teams from Australia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, Sweden, the U.S., and of course Canada, all took part in the challenge. Two paddlers from Dartmouth helped Canada dominate at this competition. Greg Walker and David Gallant both race with their home team, the Dragon Beasts, right here on beautiful Lake Banook and Lake Micmac. The Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association has a community of over 500 paddlers who use their facilities.

Greg raced as part of the Canadian Senior Men's C team, winning seven gold medals, one silver and one bronze. At age 62, he was a sole Maritime member on his team. David raced with the Senior A team and their crew was made up of paddlers in their 40s. They dominated their class, winning every single event, earning 12 gold medals for Mr. Gallant in total.

Both Mr. Walker and Mr. Gallant acknowledge that it was the invaluable support of their own Dartmouth teammates which encouraged them to train hard and make the national teams. I ask my honourable colleagues to join me in congratulating both Mr. Greg Walker and Mr. David Gallant on their remarkable achievements.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

SANFORD, JASON - FAST-PITCH SOFTBALL CAREER

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, Durham, Pictou West, Pictou County native Jason Sanford continued an impressive fast-pitch softball career with a gold medal performance at the Pan American Games in Toronto. What made this gold medal so special was that it was the first time since 2003 that men's softball was played at the Pan Am Games. Canada has now won eight consecutive gold medals.

Jason Sanford has had an outstanding career that has taken him around the world. He was named to the 2007 Canadian Championship All Star Team. The veteran defence catcher earned a gold medal as a member of Team Canada at the 2012 Pan American Championship in Colombia, played in the 2013 ISF Men's World Championship in New Zealand, and in the 2014 Pan American Championship in Argentina.

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

PREM.: PUB. SECTOR WORKERS - TREATMENT

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, public servants play a vital role in our province. They provide Nova Scotians with high quality services and do so with a commitment to integrity and fairness. Public servants go to work every day with a desire and a dedication to serve the public good.

In a September 25, 2015 open letter to Canada's public servants, Canada's new Prime Minister wrote, "I believe that in order to have a public service that is valued by Canadians, and a source of pride for its members, it must be valued by its government. That begins with - and necessitates - respecting the labour rights of public servants . . ."

It was a strong message that must have made our current Premier more than just a little bit uncomfortable as he has proven time and time again he has no respect for our public sector workers and thinks he's above the labour laws in our province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

MACDONALD, RONNIE - COMMUN. CONTRIBUTIONS

MR. DAVID WILTON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mr. Ronnie MacDonald for his commitment to bettering our community. Mr. MacDonald retired from the Public Works Department of the CBRM and has worked tirelessly for our community in a volunteer capacity ever since. Since his retirement, Ronnie has been co-chair of the 100th Anniversary Committee for the Town of New Waterford, sat on boards for the New Waterford District Community Centre, the New Waterford Sports Hall of Fame, and the Horsemen's Association, just to name a few. With his spare time, he has a column in the Cape Breton Post on the history of our community.

I would like to take this time to congratulate Ronnie MacDonald on his community-minded spirit.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

ROPER, HELEN - TRENTON MID. SCH.: CUSTODIAN - THANK

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, school custodians provide educational support by keeping school buildings clean and in good working condition. They work behind the scenes to ensure that the facility is safe, sanitary, comfortable, and conducive to teaching and learning. Custodial employees have numerous responsibilities within a school setting.

Helen Roper is one of the custodial employees at Trenton Middle School. Helen sets the bar extremely high for her colleagues. She is one of the most dependable, honest, hard-working employees in the Celtic family. Helen's pleasant personality is one of the

many reasons why all staff members and students are happy to see her in their school environment.

Trenton Middle School is very fortunate to have this wonderful, trustworthy, reliable custodian on its staff.

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

GOV'T. (N.S.): CHRISTMAS SPIRIT - EMBRACE

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Two years into this Liberal Government mandate, I think we are all feeling older. Even the Premier has said he's not getting younger.

In these two years the government has lost a director of communications, a Cabinet Minister, and a chief of staff. It seems all the members of this government want for Christmas is job security.

Mr. Speaker, Santa knows - he knows when you are sleeping at the wheel; he knows when you're not awake. I can confirm that the Liberal Government has made the naughty list two years in a row.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this government to embrace the spirit of Christmas to ensure that it's not a lump of coal in the stockings of all Liberal MLAs this Christmas.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, I would seek the unanimous consent of the House to revert to the order of business, Government Notices of Motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

I hear a No.

We'll continue with Members' Statements.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

LESLIE, MEGAN: WWF CAN. - POSITION

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic has the floor.

MR. MAGUIRE: I'd like to take a moment to congratulate a former legal aid advocate, a strong community advocate, and a strong voice for our communities in Halifax Atlantic, former MP and community champion Megan Leslie on her new position as a senior consultant on ocean governance with World Wildlife Fund Canada. My experience with Megan has always been a positive one. Her energy and experience will serve the WWF well.

Congratulations, Megan, for all you've done and will do - best of luck at the World Wildlife Fund.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

NICHOL, JEAN: AUTISM WORK - RECOGNIZE

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jean Nichol and her work with autism.

Jean resides in Pictou East and recently received the community award in Vancouver at the ANCA awards for developing a program called The Eating Game. A retired special needs teacher, Jean developed the game that covers a wide range of eating challenges. The Eating Game is a resource to support and encourage making healthy food choices and is available online.

A great support person to autism, she is dedicated to helping children and families deal with this challenging disorder. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate and thank Jean for her dedication.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

INTL. DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES - INCLUSIVENESS

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. It is my pleasure to rise in my place to honour those individuals in our communities who live with varying abilities and who add so much to our economy, social fabric, and cultural makeup.

According to the Nova Scotia Disabled Persons Commission, 59 per cent of adults with disabilities are in our province's labour force compared to 80 per cent of adults without disabilities. Women with disabilities face even greater obstacles when attempting to contribute to our economy.

Mr. Speaker, today is a day for everyone in this Chamber, and across our province, to think about how we can create an inclusive, prosperous province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

RAYMAKER, ASHLEY - E. COAST LICE LADIES

MS. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk a little bit about Ashley Raymaker of East Hants, Nova Scotia. She is the founder/owner/operator of the East Coast Lice Ladies, a business since June 2014.

Serving the Metro and East Hants area, Ashley is a positive, upbeat woman who has a sense of humour and a passion to relieve individuals of uncertainty, paranoia and the stigma associated with head lice. The lice ladies provide on-site, friendly, safe screening, treatment, combing and a compassionate ear, and educational services to help prevent re-infestation for families, schools, caregivers, pharmacies, camps and community organizations. They also teach coping strategies and address misconceptions, offer free advice over the phone, and will host information sessions with parents and groups. Privacy and confidentiality is guaranteed; they always beat their competitors pricing.

Mr. Speaker, if your head is itching after listening to this, chances are it's your subconscious, but the nice, lice ladies can tell you for sure.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

NEW GERMANY RHS GIRLS SOCCER TEAM - NSSAF CHAMPIONSHIPS

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the New Germany Royal High School junior high girls soccer team. The fourth straight season and four out of six years that the Saints have captured the Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation Junior Girls Western Regional Championships.

The team has been coached by a parent volunteer and this program has proven that hard work and commitment pays off in the long run. When you work together as a team, anything is achievable.

Sports and other group activities help each of our youths and teach them valuable lessons about life. This is a moment and a season that these youths will never forget. It is something that will forever bond them and help mould them into fine young adults.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you all to join me here today in congratulating these young students on their success and in their drive for number five.

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

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE & ACTION (12/06/15) - SOLIDARITY

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, on December 6th across the country, we will mark the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. On this day in 1989, 14 young women in Montreal were murdered because they were women.

As we reflect on this terrible loss we must never forget that many women continue to live and die in the shadow of violence. I join my colleagues across the country in a declaration of our commitment to end violence against women. Living free of violence is a right, not a privilege.

On December 6th the Day of Remembrance and Action, I urge all members of the Legislature and the public, both female and male, to stand in solidarity with one another and confront violence against women.

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

INGONISH RCMP - NEW DETACHMENT

MS. PAM EYKING: Mr. Speaker, the Ingonish Detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police provides a vital service to the communities of Victoria County, protecting 5,000 residents, businesses, and 400,000 vacationers, in one of Nova Scotia's most beautiful regions.

The detachment is the oldest in Atlantic Canada and today makes its historic move to a modern, state of the art detachment headquarters on the Cabot Trail. Today my community has come out to celebrate the official opening of the new facility with its many upgrades.

I ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating the RCMP, the provincial police force, and the community of Ingonish and surrounding area on the opening of their new detachment.

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

COM. SERV. - HOUSING STRATEGY: NDP - CREATION

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Community Services has accused previous governments of holding on to millions in deferred federal housing contributions, instead of spending the money on immediate housing needs. The minister should be aware that those dollars have been accumulating over many successive government administrations, dating as far back as the Liberal Government in 1998, or is this something else the minister believes she does not need to know about? That means those funds have seen the Liberal and Progressive Conservative Governments of John

Savage, Russell MacLellan, John Hamm and Rodney MacDonald come and go with no action.

The minister is well aware that it took the province's first NDP Government to finally earmark those dollars for the creation of Nova Scotia's first Housing Strategy. The minister needs to check her department's very own briefing notes and she needs to get her facts right.

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

MR. KEITH IRVING: I'd like to make an introduction and call the attention of the House to the east gallery. Today I was joined with my colleague, the member for Kings North to speak with a group from Horton High School. They're here today to learn about politics and our system and a little bit about heckling. They're the Grade 11 and 12 political science class, led by Brad Richard and Michael Squires. Shane Spicer, their bus driver, is also in attendance here, so I'd like them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

GATES, PAUL - COMMUN. CONTRIBUTION

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a constituent who has dedicated himself to community service and safety. As a board member and chair of the Kings Crime Prevention Association for 25 years, Mr. Paul Gates of New Minas has made a significant contribution to the safety and well-being of our communities. He received a Leadership in Crime Prevention Award from the Minister of Justice, and there is a Paul Gates Youth Room at the Louis Millet Centre in honour of his work.

When the horrific RCMP tragedy occurred in Moncton, Mr. Gates helped raise \$15,000 for the families of the slain officers. This year he has spearheaded a new program, Focus and Drive, to protect children by posting signs against distracted driving in school zones.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, I would like to commend and thank Mr. Paul Gates for his dedication to protecting our children, youth, and communities.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on an introduction.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: I would like to introduce to the House Ms. Angie O'Connell, who is visiting us today. She is, among other things, most importantly a mom to Jaden and Hunter, a mother who looks after a child with autism spectrum disorder, which

is, as you would know, Mr. Speaker, and as all members know, a very tough job. She's here today, and I think we should give her a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

PITTMAN, BRYSON: CAMP CONNECT - CONGRATS.

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to congratulate Bryson Pittman. Bryson is a 13-year-old Sackville resident who at the age of 10 was in a fire accident that left him with second- and third-degree burns on his arms and legs. He became a camper at Camp Connect, which is a summer camp for young burn victims.

Camp Connect is one of the many camps across North America affiliated with the IAFF's International Burn Camp program, which offers one youngster and one counsellor an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington each year. More important than the trip was the chance to give these young burn survivors an environment where they could socialize with other kids across Canada and the United States.

Congratulations to Bryson Pittman of Sackville for this amazing opportunity and representation from the Maritimes.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre on an introduction.

MR. DAVID WILTON: With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make an introduction. Seated in the west gallery, I'd like to introduce my better half, Shirley Leadbeater, who's here from Cape Breton, and Mary Woodman, who was an instrumental part of my election during my by-election. Welcome, everyone.

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

**SO. WOODSIDE SCH.: IRVING OIL LTD.
- CONTRIBUTIONS RECOGNIZE**

MS. JOYCE TREEN: I would like to take the time to recognize Irving Oil Ltd. for all it has done for South Woodside Elementary. In September they installed a basketball court that has been steadily enjoyed by the school and the community as a whole. They also purchased a basketball for every student in the school. During the school year they have hosted a pizza day every Friday for all the students and staff, as well as buying fresh fruit for the entire school every Wednesday. Between November and January they plan to take every student to a Mooseheads hockey game, and the students and staff are looking forward to this outing.

Thank you to Irving Oil for being a good neighbour to the community of South Woodside. You truly have gone above and beyond to give back to this great community.

MR. SPEAKER: I'd just like to remind all members that whoever has the floor, keep the chatter down. We're trying to listen here.

The honourable member for Cumberland South.

INTL. DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES - INCLUSION/ACCESS/EMPOWERMENT

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, today we mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities is intended to promote an understanding of disability issues and to mobilize support for the dignity, rights, and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from integrating persons with disabilities into every aspect of life.

The theme for 2015 is "Inclusion matters: access and empowerment for people of all abilities." There is a greater percentage of people in Canada than anywhere else. It is all of our responsibilities to break down barriers and provide supports, to help those Nova Scotians achieve their goals.

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

FUNDY ROSE FERRY: NAME - DETAILS

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, before the arrival of the new Digby-Saint John ferry, Canadians were asked to help name it. The *Fundy Rose* is a combination of the name of the bay the ferry traverses and the given name of a former slave from Virginia. At the age of 10, Rose Fortune escaped to Annapolis Royal with her family, as part of the Black Loyalists' migration during the American Revolution. In 1825 she started a business transporting luggage from the docks to the town's hotels and homes. Later on she would expand her role to keep order and safeguarding the properties on the wharves.

At a time when visible minorities and women were seldom involved in commerce, and even less involved in policing, Ms. Fortune took the lead in both and is now considered our unofficial female police officer. I commend the choice of the *Fundy Rose*, which honours both the bay that has had such a huge role in the lives of the people from the area and the groundbreaker who arrived on its shores so long ago.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

RAJAB, ALY: ENTREPRENEURSHIP - COMMEND

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend the hard-working local entrepreneur whose leadership and innovative contribution is making Nova Scotia an English-language training destination, bringing to our region thousands of international students. Aly Rajab, a resident of Armdale, bought an existing language school and turned this floundering business into a spectacular four-campus business success story. Mr. Rajab, president and CEO of the Canadian Language Learning College was the recipient of the 2008 Halifax Chamber of Commerce, Small Business of the Year: Gold award.

In 2013, Aly created the Premier Agency Business Awards to recognize international education agencies for achieving the highest standards of ethics in the industry. I was pleased to have participated in the 2015 PABA gala in Halifax and to see the positive impact that Mr. Rajab's vision is having locally and internationally.

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

CLARKE, TIFFANY/BUY NOTHING PROJ. - ACKNOWLEDGE

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, with the holidays soon upon us I would like to acknowledge the charitable works of the Buy Nothing project chapter in Cole Harbour-Portland Valley. This past August I had the chance to meet Tiffany Clarke, who heads the local chapter. I can attest that Ms. Clarke's drive to make the lives of those who need an extra helping hand better by any means possible. The group has assisted folks who need school supplies for children, and they are currently brainstorming initiatives for the Christmas season. Ms. Clarke and her fellow chapter members are a motivated group that has been dedicated in helping to build a strong connection to the Cole Harbour-Portland Valley community.

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

SABLE ISLAND PUB. MEETING: ORGANIZERS - THANK

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I recently attended the ninth annual Sable Island public meeting and wanted to thank the organizers. The meeting was held at Saint Mary's University, organized by Green Horse Society and the Ecology Action Centre. It was a packed house. There were four guest speakers, all notable in their fields of expertise. They spoke on a range of topics and provided highlights from 2014 until now.

I want to especially thank Zoe Lucas for inviting me to the event and for always keeping me updated on Sable Island. Ms. Lucas is a naturalist noted for her decades of research on the island. She was also one the guest speakers who provided a comprehensive review of the island's operations to everyone. I look forward to attending the next public meeting in the future and hearing further updates.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

ITALY CROSS MIDDLEWOOD & DIST. FD: VOLS. - THANK

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, the group of volunteers that make up the Italy Cross Middlewood and District Fire Department are a determined group. Built a mere two years ago, the new Italy Cross Middlewood and District Fire Department was built with the help of several funding sources, fundraising, and a mortgage.

The volunteers of this department have spent the last two years putting on breakfasts, suppers, penny auctions, and variety shows - just to name a few of their efforts. On November 22nd, I was pleased to attend their mortgage burning party. This a great example of a community coming together in a big way.

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the volunteers of the Italy Cross Middlewood and District Fire Department on a job well done, and to thank them all for their continued contribution to their communities.

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

EL-CID, ANTHONY - FASHION SHOW

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a very talented and fashion-forward resident of Clayton Park, by the name of Anthony El-cid. Anthony is a graduate of NSCAD University and is the founder of his own line of haute couture and ready-to-wear fashion.

On November 21st, Anthony showcased his Spring-Summer 2016 Collection in a fashion show during Atlantic Fashion Week. This launch was very well-attended and the reviews were glowing. Anthony received a special shout-out for his fashion line in *The Coast*, while another article described his collection as a hair-raising moment of Fashion Week.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this House of Assembly, through you, join me in congratulating Anthony El-cid, for his fantastic work in the fashion industry and for giving us residents of Clayton Park some serious bragging rights. Let me assure you, Anthony El-cid is a name to remember and watch for.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

WYNN, MEGAN - 4-H AWARDS

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, Megan Wynn from Crowes Mills, Colchester North and a member of the Onslow-Belmont 4-H Club, will be one of six youths

from Canada to participate in the European Young Breeders School in Battice, Belgium. This opportunity resulted from a 4-H event in Truro last year, where she received Grand Champion Dairy Individual at an EastGen Showcase.

There will be hundreds of students from all over the world attending the European Young Breeders School which was created in 1999 to teach young breeders to know their cattle better, optimize selection, and prepare them for shows. Megan is confident in her good animal skills and finds they serve her well when she's working with animals in competition.

Among her other awards, Megan was selected to participate as a member of Team Nova Scotia at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto in November 2014. Megan is currently attending Dalhousie Agricultural Campus in Bible Hill, where she is studying pre-veterinarian medicine.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

**CAUGHEY, CST. JOHN ROBERT
- N.S. POLICING LONG-SERV. AWARD (15 YRS.)**

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, on November 2, 2015, Constable John Robert Caughey was honoured at the Nova Scotia Policing Long-Service Awards. Constable Caughey has been in the RCMP for 15 years as a member of the Antigonish RCMP Detachment. He is an invaluable member of the Antigonish community.

For having served 15 years with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, this award is very much deserved. Constable Caughey has helped Nova Scotians and Canadians live safe, healthy, and vibrant lives.

I ask that the members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Constable Caughey on receiving the Long-Service Award from the Attorney General and Minister of Justice. I would also like to thank him for his years of service, dedication, and leadership in Antigonish.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

KELLY, HEATHER: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to take a moment today to talk about a constituent who recently left us. Not long ago I rose in this House to congratulate Heather Kelly on being named Bedford's 2015 Volunteer of the Year. Heather has been integral to so many activities in Bedford for so many years.

She was a mover and shaker at the Fort Sackville Foundation, where she organized the annual Georgian Tea, coordinated the Antiques Road Show, chaired the student art exhibit, and interviewed residents to gather oral histories. The Scouts, historical societies, recreation and community organizations, health charities, St. Nicholas Church, Bedford Ringette, and the City of Halifax all benefited from Heather's committed efforts.

When I last spoke about Heather, I noted that she spread joy wherever she went, so my condolences go out to her family and friends. She was a delightful woman, she left her mark on our community, and she will be missed. Thank you.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

DEP. PREM.: NSTU - CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Deputy Premier. Two days ago, teachers rejected overwhelmingly the deal made between the government and the NSTU executive. Yesterday, the government issued an ultimatum to the public servant union which, today, they have withdrawn, having their bluff called.

Nova Scotians are right to wonder what the plan is, if there is a plan, because it's hard to see what the plan is at this point. I'd like to ask the Deputy Premier to clear things up for us in the House and tell us and all Nova Scotians, what is the plan going forward for these contract negotiations?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. At this point in time, Mr. Speaker, I think the important thing for everyone to know is that we expect that the agreement that was reached at the bargaining table, which was hammered out in good faith on both parties' part, would be taken back by our partners to their union membership for a vote. That's our hope there.

MR. BAILLIE: Yesterday it was urgent have an answer to that very question by nine o'clock this morning; today, they are hopeful that sometime in the future that might happen. No wonder people are wondering what the plan is.

Parents are wondering what's going to go on with their schools; people who rely on public services are wondering what's going to go on with public services - these are the most basic things the government is responsible for looking after.

What does the Deputy Premier have to say to all those Nova Scotians who are worried about all the uncertainty that the government has created?

MS. WHALEN: Again, I appreciate the question on this important issue, which we do acknowledge is very important to everyone in Nova Scotia.

The message that is important to know is that we are taking our time. We are examining our options. We are encouraging our partners to take this hard-fought agreement, which was arrived at, at the bargaining table, which was arrived at in good faith with our partners, that they take it to the union membership who have a right to see it and to vote on it.

MR. BAILLIE: There may be two parties at these tables - the NSTU executive and the government, or the public sector union and the government - but what's important to the people of Nova Scotia, parents who are worried about their schools and people who rely on public services, is whether the government is making this up day by day as they go along. No wonder - yesterday they issued an ultimatum that they needed an answer urgently; today they don't have any rush at all to find out what's going on.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give the Deputy Premier one more chance to tell Nova Scotians, what is the plan to settle these outstanding matters?

MS. WHALEN: I think the Leader of the Opposition knows that these things take time, that they resolve themselves with good faith and with hard work. That's exactly what we're doing - we're taking our time, moving forward and examining our options.

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

PSC - NSGEU: ULTIMATUM - MIN. CONFIRM

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: My question is for the Minister of the Public Service Commission.

Yesterday, after Nova Scotia's civil service union said they'd delay their ratification vote on the government's most recent offer, the government took the unprecedented step of writing to the union demanding that it complete a ratification vote by December 7th - and I'll table that letter.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister should know, the decision on whether to hold a ratification vote is entirely up to the union and its membership. So my question to the minister is this, why did he issue what can only be seen as an ultimatum that a vote be held by December 7th?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: In answer to the member opposite's question, I think it's very important to recognize that everything is moving forward. The agreement that the union has, that our partners have, was arrived at with them at the bargaining table, and we intend to look at options as we go forward. But we are strongly encouraging them to look at the agreement that they have in place and to take that agreement to their members as the plan was since they accepted it, since a tentative agreement was arrived at the bargaining table.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, this Liberal Government has failed over and over to respect labour laws and workers' rights - with Bill No.1, when the government attempted to dictate which union health workers belong to without giving them a vote; the Minister of Health and Wellness attempted to fire an independent arbitrator three or four times when his decisions weren't to the minister's taste, and now it is dictating that a union hold a ratification vote by a fixed time or else.

So, my question to the Minister of the Public Service Commission is this, why does he think the government continues to pick fights and act as if it's above the law in labour relations?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, our government has reached a tentative agreement with NSGEU. We'd like to encourage the union to hold a vote. I will address some things that are different between this government and the NDP Government. The NDP Government is the only government in the last decade that has taken away the right to vote from anyone in a union.

I'd also like to state that this government has reinstated the Premier's Award of Excellence, which under the NDP Government was only the Award of Excellence, because the Premier didn't think that he could go and speak to the Public Service because they were beneath him. That was the NDP Government, Mr. Speaker, not our government.

MS. MACDONALD: Well, the minister makes stuff up all the time in this House, and it's good to see him get on his feet and not just heckle from the other side, and attempt to answer a question.

Mr. Speaker, the letter that was sent to the union representing civil servants yesterday also contained a not-so-subtle threat. As the letter states, "If ratification is delayed, suspended or deferred in any manner we will consider our options including withdrawal of the offer of November 13, 2015."

So, my question to the Minister of the Public Service Commission is, what are all of the options that the government is considering?

MR. KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, we are considering all of the options available to us at this point. I'd also like to point out that the NDP, although they're accusing me of

lying, you can't sit there and make things up and say that the Premier under the NDP was supporting the Public Service. There was no Premier's Award of Excellence, they cancelled that, and Premier Dexter also didn't even find fit to go to the Long Service Awards.

MR. SPEAKER: I do want to remind the honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party that inferring that any minister is "making things up" is unparliamentary.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - FAM. SUPPORT PROG.: AUTISM - INCLUDE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Autism spectrum disorder is a serious illness that affects many Nova Scotia children and the families, the moms and dads who care for them, and yet it is not covered as a disorder by the Direct Family Support program. Mr. Speaker, Angie O'Connell is one such mom, who I introduced earlier, her family and others are often pushed to the brink of crisis without the help that they need from this program, which is available to many others.

I'd like to ask the Deputy Premier if the government will commit to making Nova Scotia children with autism spectrum disorder eligible for this important helpful program?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: That is a good question from the member opposite, I would say that autism is very important. The first bill that I introduced in the House as a private member was about autism and services to address that at a time when the Progressive Conservative Government was in and there were no services whatsoever for autistic children, but I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness to answer this question.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: What I can say is that since arriving here at Province House with the Premier, the member for Clayton Park West, we have all together, and governments, we have actually sat with previous governments to look at adding to autism and we're now at the \$10 million mark of investing in autism programs. And yes there is always more to look at, and we certainly can do that in the next months leading up to the budget.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, thank you Mr. Speaker, I got two answers for the price of one. Neither one was a direct commitment, I certainly appreciate their willingness to look at this, but the fact of the matter is that there are families today that are really struggling with autism. They need help now. The minister has listed money that has been spent, but really, they need help now to get by. We ask a lot of moms and dads in this situation who literally face burnout, loss of employment, and other things that are difficult to get by with, because they want to look after their kids.

There is an existing program, the family support program, that's available to other people who are in similar circumstances dealing with different illnesses. Will the minister explain why we can't extend that same help using the same budget allotment so that families with autism spectrum disorder can also get help?

MR. GLAVINE: I'm pleased to say that there are a large number of services now that we provide to parents and to children directly. We have one of the best EIBI programs that can match any in the country in terms of the percentage of children who are able to engage in that program. I know this is a special other program that can assist parents, and during budget preparation we'll certainly take a look.

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

FIN. - MIN.: UNION DISCUSSIONS - LEGISLATION

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. We know the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board had multiple meetings with the heads of unions in Nova Scotia over the last number of months. Last night we heard the president of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union indicate that the only reason they had recommended their tentative agreement to their membership was because they felt threatened, that legislation was hanging over their heads.

My question to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is this, during meetings that were held with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, was there ever any indication from yourself to the union that legislation would be brought forward?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for the question. I had meetings with representatives from multiple unions and associations representing employees in the public sector - which includes the NSGEU and the Teachers Union - all at one table at the same time, so they're all well aware of the discussions that took place. Mr. Speaker, at no time did I make any such threat. In fact, the nature of those discussions was how we can look forward to identifying challenges with the current labour relations process in Nova Scotia and how we can look to improve it going forward.

MS. MACDONALD: I know that the minister spoke about a new approach to collective bargaining in those meetings. Last night on CTV, Steve Murphy asked the Teachers Union president quite bluntly what exactly she meant when she said a threat was hanging over her head. "Who threatened you?" he asked. The president's response was equally blunt. The Teachers Union president replied that it was a high-level government official.

So I want to ask the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, did the Deputy Minister of Finance and Treasury Board personally issue a legislative ultimatum to the Teachers Union, away from the bargaining table?

MR. DELOREY: I thank the member for the question. The premise of the question is probably best directed to the leader of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, because I can't comment or speak on whom she felt threatened by, if she did feel that way.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

EECD - CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS: ITEMS - REMOVAL

HON. PAT DUNN: My questions are for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Some of the eight items that were taken off the table by the government in negotiations with teachers were measures that would have helped both teachers and students. Examples of items taken off the table are: creation of a robust system for teacher performance management, strengthening the process for addressing poor teacher performance, and linking teacher assignment directly to credentials and experience. I'll table that.

My question is, why were important measures such as this taken off the table?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you for the question. It gives me an opportunity to perhaps share some information that the member may not be aware of.

When the negotiating process takes place during the collective bargaining process, both sides put an asking package on the table. They sit down and they look at negotiating back and forth. There is always some give and take on both sides. It was finalized by the two parties at the table that what would go forward to the teachers for ratification, which was supported by the union leadership and provincial executive, did not include the items of which the member speaks.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, few would argue with the measures I just mentioned. In fact, they were tabled by thousands of Nova Scotians. Not only would these measures help students by supporting top-quality instruction and learning environments, they would also help to give teachers new tools for improvement and ensuring best practices are followed.

My question to the minister is, will the minister put action plan items such as teacher performance back on the table going forward?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, we have worked with teachers for the last two years since we became government, and in Opposition, we worked with teachers for four years. During those four years, when the other folks were in government, teachers kept asking for things that that particular government was cutting. They asked for Reading Recovery to be

restored, and we have done that. They asked for class sizes to be capped, and we have done that. They asked for math mentors to be reinstated, and we have done that. They asked for \$65 million which was cut from the classrooms to be reinvested, and we have done that.

One important part of that package that teachers rejected was the establishment of a joint committee between the union and the government which would sit down and look at the very issues that were identified in the action plan that needed co-operation or negotiation. Teachers rejected that joint committee, which would have allowed that to take place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

EECD: CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS - PACKAGE

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the vote reflected the frustration of teachers that are working in the working conditions in the schools. Yesterday, when asked what the status of the eight items from the action plan rejected by teachers was, the minister said she expected they would move forward in the future with co-operation from teachers. Teachers rejected these items to the point the minister took them off the bargaining table.

My question to the minister is, after receiving an overwhelming “no” from teachers on these issues, how does the minister expect to now have these items realized through co-operation?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I’m not sure what part of my previous answer the member doesn’t understand, but those items were not in the package and they were not rejected by teachers.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the minister told reporters that the eight items are still there. They are still issues that were identified when the action plan was put together. They still remain. She went on to say, we are not allowing those eight items to prevent us from moving forward with the action plan.

My question to the minister is, do those eight items still remain or have they been removed in order to move forward with the rest of the action plan?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the action plan was printed. It was distributed. It was accepted in January of this past year. There are 117 actions in that plan and it is a five-year plan. The eight of which the member speaks, on Page 17, are still there and we will continue to move forward.

We are encouraged by the co-operation that teachers have given us in doing what they asked us to do, which was streamline the outcome so it would be more manageable and focus on math and literacy, which was the focus. We brought teachers in to work on

code of conduct, homework policy, and student attendance. Teachers have been very co-operative in working with us to try to improve the teaching and learning conditions in the classroom.

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

EECD: CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS - EDUC. REFORM

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development as well. In negotiating with the NSTEU the minister, who is also chairman of Treasury and Policy Board, seems to know exactly what outcome the province is looking for on the financial side; however when it comes to education reform the minister seems a little less certain. Teachers are saying that the minister's education reforms have missed the mark, class sizes are still too large, and the minister herself was willing to trade education reform components of the deal for wage restraint.

So my question for the minister is, if she has been working as closely with teachers as she claims, why were their concerns not identified and included in the offer made by the government?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Oh brother. Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. First, a correction. I stand to make sure this correction is made - it is the NSTU not the NSTEU. NSTU would be the union that represents teachers in the province, and it was with the NSTU that we were negotiating and, as I've said here, there were many items put on the table in the collective bargaining process, both sides give, both sides take away, and during that process there were three items that were left, those went out to the membership and the membership rejected them.

MS. ZANN: Well you know, there seems to be a lot of low blows here going on in the House lately, and I find that when the government is upset about something they try to take a personal pot shot, but of course it's the NSTU, my parents both belonged to it their whole lives.

Mr. Speaker, while the minister continues to talk about the work she's doing it is clear that teachers are dissatisfied with this government's attempt at education reform, and pushing them around. Yesterday an editorial in *The Chronicle Herald* said that as the grassroots revolt against the deal has been made clear, there is much discontent among teachers about their working conditions - and I will actually table that, Mr. Speaker.

So, my question for the minister is this, what new steps is she willing to take to improve working conditions for the teachers in the classroom?

MS. CASEY: I guess I should probably repeat what we have tried to do since we took office in October 2013 - it was to clean up the mess that we received from that crowd over there, and I will repeat this, Mr. Speaker (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, the honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has the floor. (Interruptions)

MS. CASEY: Are you done?

The things, Mr. Speaker, we have reinstated, which are designed to improve student learning and teaching environment in the classroom were things that were cut by the previous government. They were the Reading Recovery program, they were the math mentors, they were capping the class sizes, they were putting teachers' series of outcomes into a more manageable document - \$65 million directly back into the classrooms, and that's what this government is all about, not cutting and slashing.

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

COM. SERV.: CONSTITUENT - MIN. MEET

MR. LARRY HARRISON: My question is going to be for the Minister of Community Services.

Earlier today we introduced a lady who has two boys with autism - she's in the balcony now. The boys are seven and 14, but they fall outside the criteria for the current programs. So, my question is, would the minister be willing to meet with Angie while she is here, just to get a feel for what the bill is saying that I introduced earlier?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Absolutely. I'm sorry, I must have missed the introduction of the bill. I must have been outside but, absolutely, I meet with families all the time, throughout the province, who are living with the challenges that come with autism and other challenging situations, so absolutely.

MR. HARRISON: I agree the only way to get the good information is to talk to the people who are actually living it, so I want to thank you and, hopefully, you will find a few minutes before Angie leaves. Thank you very much.

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

EECD: PATHS2LEARNING - APPLICATION PROCESS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, that caught me off guard I thought there was another question there.

Earlier this week parents from Paths2Learning came to the Legislature because they're worried that their school will be forced to close and their children will not be able to access the services they need. The minister said that the school is in the application process to become a special education school. My question to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is, can she say when the process will be complete and when the parents will know if Paths2Learning will be able to survive past this February?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I do want to commend the owner and those teachers who are working with the Paths2Learning. It is providing an opportunity for parents to have programming for their students, which they believe will be more effective and help those students overcome some of the challenges that they have.

As you know, in this province we have three schools which we call designated special education schools. They are schools where we, as a government, pay tuition support for students who are attending those. This application that has come in is to be designated as a special education school. Initially the application came in. There was a need for more follow-up financial reporting. I understand that that has been received by the department and it will be processed as quickly as possible.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that answer. As most of us know, parents of children at Paths2Learning say the school is making real positive improvements in the lives of their children. They are worried about what will happen to their children if that school is closed for a time, even if it's a short time or even worse, for good. So my question for the minister is, will the minister consider providing funding for Paths2Learning to help the school keep the doors open, maybe until the decision is made, if that is going to take a little longer than the department would expect?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, I think we agree that any services and any supports that can help students overcome a challenge and become more effective in their learning is something that we would all support and I will make a commitment that I will go back to the department to see where that application is in the process and I would be happy to share that with the member.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

COM. SERV.: COMMUN. HOME ACTION GROUP - REPT. CARDS

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, today, on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Community Home Action Group released their report card on the progress over the past two years on the government commitment to transform services for Nova Scotians with disabilities. The report card is a culmination of a province-wide survey of service users, service providers, experts, and families and the results are quite troubling. More than 80 per cent of the respondents said the government had made poor progress on

reducing reliance on institutions, increasing employment opportunities, and decreasing wait-lists, and I will table that. Why are the results of the CHAG report cards so poor?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I completely understand, after working with many families and meeting with them across the province, the urgency of the road map and the transformation. I have made it clear, since coming into office two years ago, that this would be at least a decade long process. I commend my predecessor for her commitment to the road map and bringing it forward. I know it was adopted by our government and we are committed to this transformation. It's not going at the pace that perhaps families would like but there is progress and I have been very strongly committed to making sure that any reduced reliance on larger facilities in this province is done so into the community in a very caring, compassionate, and safe way.

MS. MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, for two years the minister and her department have had the opportunity to lead the way on transforming services but those working on the ground see no progress at all - 90 per cent of the respondents believe that the government has displayed poor progress on providing community-based housing, a key recommendation made to government. One service provider stated: I work in a large facility which supports over 100 individuals. There have been no efforts to promote or support new placements in the community by DCS. As a service provider, we submitted a cost-neutral proposal to DCS to open a new four-bed community home and that was rejected. Why has the minister rejected cost neutral housing options for individuals with disabilities?

MS. BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, meeting the needs of these families - and with each individual person who is in our program, those challenges are unique to the person, to that family. What I am pleased to report is that since April 1st up until October 15th of this year, 136 people have moved into the community, off the wait-list. That's through the tremendous work of both my staff and community partners within the province.

This is a very extraordinary important transformation of a system that, quite frankly, has been compounded with issues over the last couple of decades. It's going to take time. We are committed to that, but we will do it safely. We will do it responsibly.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: MENTAL HEALTH SERV. (PICTOU CO.)
- TREATMENT LOCATIONS**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. I'm curious to know if the minister agrees that there are residents of Pictou County who have to travel as far as Yarmouth - five hours away and away from loved ones - to receive mental health services.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I am aware of that situation. Once the short-term psychiatric unit closed at the Aberdeen, then other facilities became options. In some cases, they actually chose another community where they had relatives and family members.

MS. MACFARLANE: Just for the record, a number of my constituents didn't have a choice and were immediately sent to Yarmouth.

Depression is a serious mental illness that affects many men, women, seniors, and teens, especially during the holiday season. Overall findings suggest that clinicians in both psychiatric and primary care settings anticipate an increase in treating individuals with depression leading up to and including the Christmas season.

With the mental health unit in Pictou County being closed since August, and knowing many with mental illnesses are currently being transferred as far as Yarmouth, is the minister confident that proper and necessary measures have been put in place at the Aberdeen Hospital to deal with unfortunate increases of mental health issues during the holiday season? If so, what are those extra measures?

MR. GLAVINE: The latest report that I got, which was about two weeks ago from Dr. Courey, indicated that those who were experiencing some kind of mental health issue, some type of psychiatric trauma, were being received through the emergency department and were given the appropriate psychiatrist, psychologist, or psychiatric nurse team that are available 24/7 in Pictou.

Only seven patients have needed short-term psychiatric care since the unit closed. They spent three to five days in a unit and have returned home.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: ABERDEEN HOSP. SHORT-STAY UNIT - BUDGET

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Sadly, there will be an increase over the holiday period; that's just the way things go. The member's question was, what additional measures have been put in place to fix that issue? We didn't hear an answer to that today, but what we do know is that Pictou County at the Aberdeen Hospital did have a short stay unit for a number of years. There obviously would have been a funding amount associated with the operation of that unit.

My question today for the minister is, what was the annual budget of the short stay unit at the Aberdeen Hospital while it was in operation?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: That's obviously a very specific answer that I will get for the member. I know that in hearing directly from a psychiatrist who is working in the Pictou area, they have started a unique service doing home visitation to deal with people who are

dealing with mental health issues, acute, or in some cases supporting those who have been diagnosed with psychosis and need that kind of regular follow-up.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the closure of the unit was meant to be a temporary closure, and all the indications are - and the concern of the community as well - that it won't be temporary. When I hear things like "only seven people have needed services," it concerns me, because many more people than that require those services. If they're not coming forward, that is an issue as well, because they don't feel they are there.

We know there was a cost to running that short-stay unit. We don't know what it is. We can probably agree it is more than \$1 million a year, I would say, just in round numbers, without access to everything.

My question is, where is that money going? Is it in these new services the minister is talking about, or has it been shovelled off to another area of the Department of Health and Wellness?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we know now that we're dealing with a provincial health authority budget. The money is there currently to run services, and recruitment is going on. From the people who are actively involved with psychiatric care in Pictou, I have the absolute assurance that the service today is better than it was 12 months ago.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

COM. SERV.: BRUNSWICK ST. NON-PROFIT - SUBSIDY

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Community Services about the cancellation of the subsidy provided to Brunswick Street Non-Profit. In her response she stated, "Let me make it crystal clear, this government did not cut any subsidy, it expires when a mortgage is paid off . . ."

According to Jeanette Lockyer, the woman responsible for the housing group's finances, this is not true. Ms. Lockyer says that she received an email from Housing Nova Scotia informing her that even though the mortgage remains due, the subsidy would be cancelled three days before that was to take place. I will table that.

Can the minister explain why her department made the decision to cancel the subsidy?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me start by saying I empathize with the tenants in this situation, who clearly are caught between housing programs, subsidies, and the sustainability of the non-profit which owns the housing units. With Brunswick Street, the mortgage was paid off and the subsidy did expire. They are

actually in arrears, quite frankly, to Housing Nova Scotia. The subsidy did expire. We did not cancel it.

Generally with non-profits, when their mortgage is paid off and their subsidy expires with that mortgage, the payments that they would make as a mortgage are passed along to the tenants so that they can have subsidized rent. That is generally how it works in a well-run non-profit organization. It's unfortunate that this situation has played out like this between the housing association and their board of directors.

MS. MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, in an email sent from the minister's department, it clearly states that the subsidy was cancelled and that the mortgage remains due and payable. I will table that.

Housing Nova Scotia and the minister have the authority to extend subsidies for groups like Brunswick Street Non-Profit. However, it seems that Housing Nova Scotia is unwilling to make such arrangements. Jeanette Lockyer says that without receiving monthly subsidies, there are many residents that can no longer afford to live in their homes. Because of this subsidy cancellation, 80-year-old Shirley Joyce and others are facing eviction in 12 days and are looking to the minister.

What is the minister prepared to do to ensure that the residents of Brunswick Street Non-Profit are not kicked out of their homes?

MS. BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, I have committed publicly, both on the floor and outside of the House when I actually met with the tenants, that if they are displaced we will be working with them in terms of a rent supplement. But Housing Nova Scotia and my staff have been working with the non-profit organization to try to mitigate that so people aren't displaced. At the end of the day, whoever is living there will have the option to participate, if they qualify, in the rent supplement program. I've committed to that. Quite frankly, they deserve to know that their affordable housing is going to continue.

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

BUS. - TOURISM: VIC OPERATORS - NOVA SCOTIAN

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question will be to the Minister of Business but I would like to acknowledge that he did provide me with a list of the board members of the NSBI, including the newest member, 24 hours old, as he acknowledged he would in the House and I appreciate that.

My question today is more about tourism. Ensuring that tourists have access to information is extremely important for the tourism operators around the province. Visitor Information Centres are a critical link in that chain of sharing the beauty of our province and giving visitors a great experience. Visitors can speak to real people about their

communities, about good places to eat, and suggest locations for them to go to see the unique local sights. VICs saw visitors of over 400,000 contacts last year. My question to the minister is, does the minister believe that Nova Scotians are the best people to showcase our beautiful province?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, we all have a responsibility to showcase our province, whether we do it internally within the province or whether we do it externally with Nova Scotians residing across the country and quite literally around the world. We have an objective to double tourism revenue over the next 10 years, we have a strategy and plan in place to achieve that and we will continue to do so in the best interest of all Nova Scotians.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, that was a nice answer but it doesn't directly respond to the question that was asked. Even the Premier understands how important personal contact is. In a release from his office he identified that talking about tourism destinations when he goes to Boston is part of what he is going to be doing.

We have, in this province, a world-class tourism industry. The natural beauty, the artisans, the musicians, the welcoming accommodations, and a world-class reputation for hospitality make this a truly beautiful place to visit. If visitors aren't able to get information about local events, businesses, or attractions, they won't be able to see the beauty and wonder of Nova Scotia.

The question really is, if the minister is unwilling to provide our tourism operators with the resource like VICs to attract visitors, what will he do to replace the over 400,000 visitor contacts that were made last year at VICs?

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more with some of the criteria that my colleague has identified. Nova Scotia is a tourist attraction. We have a responsibility to double the tourism revenues over the next 10 years and we plan on doing that. Times have changed, and we as Nova Scotians have to change. International travellers, domestic travellers are using the Internet to source their travel plans. We're seeing a decrease in the use of local facilities, we're seeing a significant increase in the use of technology to plan travel. There are 51 municipal VICs in Nova Scotia that will continue to provide that point of contact in 51 municipalities across this province.

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

TIR - INFRASTRUCTURE: FED. FUNDING - N.S./C.B. ALLOCATIONS

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. We all know that infrastructure is a very important issue here in our province. Lately the discussion of the need for twinned

highways and other projects and how we will pay for these highways and these needed upgrades has been in the forefront.

With the federal government promising \$53 billion over the next 10 years for infrastructure renewal, my question to the minister is, will the minister commit to seeing that some of this money will be spent in Nova Scotia and Cape Breton where they are shovel-ready?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. It is an important one. I'm very humbled and privileged to have the opportunity to lead the discussions with respect to infrastructure as it relates to this beautiful province. I've spoken with Minister Sohi with Infrastructure, Mr. Garneau with Transport, they've laid out some of the criteria and what's in place now with respect to Building Canada.

The \$53 million is actually new money pledged by the current federal government on top of the \$47 million that existed under the previous government. When you take in totality all of the commitments by the new federal government, we're well over \$100 billion for the country over the next 10 years, which is significant. Right now we're at about \$425 million of that, we'll get to much more than that as time goes on but I can assure the member and all members of this House and all Nova Scotians we will have a plan in place for our infrastructure needs and our priorities. When the federal government comes calling, Nova Scotia will be ready.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday it was announced that the MP for Cape Breton-Canso has been appointed as the Parliamentary Secretary for the federal Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, and I congratulate him on that. My question to the minister is, will the minister help engage the new secretary in helping develop projects and move projects along in Cape Breton, and will he match the money that the federal government will put into play if the municipality will match it as well?

MR. MACLELLAN: Certainly I join the member in congratulating a good friend of mine, Rodger Cuzner. He is a tremendous ambassador for the Island and for our province, as he's done a number of years in Ottawa, 15 now in total, and Antigonish to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

Mr. Speaker, these priorities are a focus for us with the MPs from home, with the MPs from across the province, the 11 MPs we have here as part of the government caucus. We've got to get this right. We will prioritize our roads, our hospitals, our schools for tomorrow's leaders and we'll have a plan in place. I can assure the member and all members of this House again, Nova Scotia will have a proper plan that recognizes our needs, identifies the limited fiscal envelope that we have, but we'll work with our federal partners and we'll put the best plan in place for the future generation of our province, for the important infrastructure that we have.

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

COM. SERV. - SENIORS: HOME REPAIRS - WAIT TIMES

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Community Services. Two seniors in the Chester St. Margaret's district are experiencing issues with Housing Nova Scotia. Mr. Allan Coolen needs repair work done to his basement to prevent leaks and it is currently on the home repair waiting list. He has been told by Housing Nova Scotia that it could be a year or more until his name is up. He is very worried that further flooding could ruin his home and leave him homeless.

Mrs. Elaine Hatt needs a new roof for her home. Contractors have told Elaine that her roof will not likely make it through this winter in its current state. She has applied with Housing Nova Scotia for repairs and right now is waiting on the waiting list to get on a waiting list.

My question to the minister is, can the minister explain why seniors have to wait for over a year for home repairs?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Thank you to the member for the question; the Emergency Repair Program is a very well-utilized program. Many seniors from across the province take advantage of the wonderful relationships that they've made with their housing offices, where they can come in and make their home safe and apply for repairs that they normally couldn't. It is well utilized.

We're hoping with the federal government, that we may be able to open up some dialogue there on funneling more funding into that program to help alleviate some of those issues around the wait-list, particularly around seniors and their housing repairs.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, according to Housing Nova Scotia's financial accountability reports from the past two years, the minister has consistently underspent in the area of housing renovation. Two years ago \$2 million remained and last year, \$3.4 million were not spent.

So Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain why she has chosen not to spend this money on housing renovations when the wait-list is over a year and seniors are suffering?

MS. BERNARD: I know from speaking to many folks around the province that one of the issues with many of the seniors that have applied for this program is that there are not local contractors that are willing to do the work. What that has done has resulted in the wait-list getting bigger, because there haven't been contractors in smaller communities able to do the work through Housing Nova Scotia.

It's something that we are challenged with every day, it's something that we work with community partners and the seniors that apply to our programs, so that they can have the work done on their houses for health and safety reasons.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker...

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Government Motions.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Bills.

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

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

[3:10 p.m. CW on Bills rose and the House reconvened. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Kevin Murphy, resumed the Chair.]

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

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

Bill No. 128 - Labour Standards Code.

Bill No. 129 - Securities Act.

Bill No. 130 - Community of Sackville Landfill Compensation Act.

Bill No. 135 - Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation (Nova Scotia) Act.

Bill No. 136 - Motor Vehicle Act.

without amendments, and

Bill No. 112 - Children and Family Services Act.

Bill No. 131 - Maintenance and Custody Act.

Bill No. 133 - Motor Vehicle Act.

which were reported with certain amendments by the Committee on Law Amendments to the Committee of the Whole, without further amendments, and the chairman has been instructed to recommend these bills to the favourable consideration of the House.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Private and Local Bills for Second Reading - sorry, let's change that.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 141.

Bill No. 141 - Electricity Plan Implementation (2015) Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 141 be now read a second time.

Today I'm pleased to introduce legislation that puts into action many of the key elements of our 25-year electricity plan. The generation and transmission infrastructure, information systems and regulatory framework that come together to ensure the lights come on at the flip of a switch are complex and need to continue to evolve and adapt to the

world around us. That world is seeing new and rapidly changing technologies, commodity prices set for the global marketplace, climate change, and a demand for cleaner, greener sources of energy. These and other factors mean that changes will happen within our electricity system whether we are ready for them or not.

Infrastructure projects, broad-based technology investments, and policy shifts in the electricity sector all require a long-term vision and often years of thoughtful and well-informed planning. That is why we began a consultation process in 2014 that set the stage for the next 25 years.

The Electricity System Review hosted conversations about electricity all over this province involving homeowners, community leaders, business owners, electricity producers, innovators, academics and advocates, research papers from technical experts, and position statements from special interest groups. In all, we gathered input from over 1,300 Nova Scotians.

While we heard a lot of opinions and unique perspectives, four themes became clear: Nova Scotians want more accountability from Nova Scotia Power; predictable and stable power rates; innovation, but not at any cost; and competition within the electricity marketplace.

Une plus grande reddition des comptes de Nova Scotia Power; des tarifs d'électricité prévisibles; de l'innovation, mais pas à tout prix; et de la concurrence sur le marché de l'électricité - ces thèmes forment la base de notre plan en matière de électricité.

Mr. Speaker, our plan is about creating an electricity system that works better for Nova Scotians. This legislation paves the way for changes that will happen to create a more accountable, cleaner, and more innovative electricity future over the next 25 years.

Let me go through some of the key elements this bill is addressing. First, this legislation will help us achieve more accountability and greater transparency for Nova Scotians. We all know electricity is vital to our everyday lives. Nova Scotians expect the lights to stay on, and if they go off they need to be back on within a reasonable period of time, but there have been times that they haven't and that's a problem.

Without measurable standards in place, Nova Scotians have felt there has been no accountability and therefore no recourse. With this legislation, the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board will set fair and clear performance standards for Nova Scotia Power for reliability and storm response. Rest assured, Mr. Speaker, the board is not working from a black slate. They will draw on existing industry standards and experiences, and best practices from other North American jurisdictions, and bring forward standards appropriate for the realities of Nova Scotia conditions because there's nothing quite like a nor'easter hitting Baccaro Point, the Cobequid Pass, or the Canso Causeway. Once appropriate

standards are in place, Nova Scotia Power will be expected to report on their performance each year on a set time frame.

La Commission des services publics et d'examen établira des normes de rendement pour Nova Scotia Power et imposera des pénalités pouvant se lever à un million de dollars si ces normes ne sont pas respectées. L'entreprise doit faire rapport sur son rendement en matière de fiabilité et de ces interventions pendant les tempêtes, et peut-être aussi de son service à la clientèle. De plus, ce sera des actionnaires et non les contribuables qui seront responsables des pénalités.

For the first time, the Utility and Review Board will have the authority to order Nova Scotia Power to pay administrative penalties when the company fails to achieve their set standards. Nova Scotia Power must also create a plan to improve its service and come into compliance. Mr. Speaker, \$1 million is a meaningful amount of money, and it's \$1 million more than the penalty we have now, which currently sits at zero. I'm certain Nova Scotia Power shareholders will not be pleased if they have to pay a fine. Nova Scotians should know that our legislation mandates that any penalties paid, which will come from shareholders, will be used to reduce fuel costs, a direct savings passed on to consumers.

This legislation will also help us establish the predictable and stable power rates that Nova Scotians have been asking for. With the average cost of electricity up 70 per cent over the past decade, it's been tough for homeowners to budget month to month and tough for the private sector to plan ahead. We saw jumps of 9, 10, or 11 per cent in some years.

Lorsque les tarifs de l'électricité augmentent en flèche, par exemple, de 9, 10, ou 11 pour cent année après année, les gens ont de la difficulté à établir un budget. Mais ils ont aussi de la difficulté à faire confiance au système pour lequel ils payent.

That trend is not sustainable, and it's no longer necessary, Mr. Speaker. Our government is taking a number of steps to create more predictability and stability through a three-year rate stability period. This means Nova Scotians will know upfront what their power rates will be in 2017, 2018, and 2019. That makes it easier for families to plan ahead, and industries and businesses can make long-term investment decisions with power rates set to the end of the decade.

La Commission des services publics et d'examen tiendra des audiences pour évaluer et confirmer les plans de Nova Scotia Power visant à établir des tarifs de l'électricité et des coûts de carburant qui sont prévisibles et stables. Ainsi, les Néo-Écossais sauront à l'avance quels seront les tarifs de l'électricité en 2017, 2018, et 2019. Ils ne verront pas d'augmentation en flèche lorsque ces tarifs auront été établis.

Mr. Speaker, we expect Nova Scotia Power to do everything it can to manage costs inside the company. That's what Nova Scotians expect, too. The company says it's working hard to avoid a change to its general rate for non-fuel costs. Now with legislation in hand,

Nova Scotia Power can complete its analysis and will have until April 30, 2016, to file an application if they need it. After that, the rate will be fixed for the rate stability period.

Efficiency funding is important to Nova Scotians, but it's also a cost that Nova Scotia Power must account for. The timing of the current agreement is misaligned with our stability plan. That's the reason why our legislation set an additional year of efficiency funding. The capped amount of \$34 million was chosen because it's the average amount of the recently set three-year funding plan.

This legislation recognizes there will be fewer rate hearings and more time between rate hearings. It sets out specific and clear direction and leverages every opportunity to keep rates low. On the fuel side, Nova Scotia Power must also submit a three-year fuel stability plan that demonstrates how they will reduce volatility. Our increased access to fixed cost renewable sources will certainly help. The plan must forecast an account for the ups and downs of fuel costs over the stability period. The approach taken here will reduce volatility and result in more stable rates for Nova Scotians. This legislation specifically mandates the inclusion of Maritime Link costs and it redirects any over-earnings to be used to reduce fuel costs for ratepayers.

Another item worth mentioning here today is the tax benefit that we now know is associated with South Canoe and Sable Wind Projects. Existing federal tax rules create a significant tax benefit for the interest owner so when the choice is between the ratepayers and Emera shareholders, our government chooses Nova Scotia ratepayers. This legislation directs that this tax benefit be used to reduce fuel costs for ratepayers. The fuel plan will set the amount customers will pay to cover fuel costs in each of those years. Any plans brought forward by Nova Scotia Power will be reviewed, challenged, and validated by the Utility and Review Board's public hearing process. Nova Scotians will see for themselves how the utility is forecasting its costs and rates to the end of the decade.

The Community Feed-in Tariff program, also known as COMFIT, helped this province reach the 2015 renewable target. We now have 25 per cent of our electricity generated from renewable sources and a more diverse energy mix than before and Nova Scotians should be proud of that. No other jurisdiction in Canada, and few in the world, have moved so far so quickly to reduce their carbon footprint. But it came with a premium price. Transitioning to renewables is more expensive up front and Nova Scotians have been very clear with us, they want a greener electricity system but not at any cost. The COMFIT program has already exceeded its goals and in August we felt it was important to protect ratepayers by closing the program to new entrants.

This legislation formally winds down COMFIT and enshrines timelines for previously approved projects to connect to the grid in order to qualify for the preferred rate under power. Nova Scotia's commitment to continuing to increase renewables as part of our energy mix stands firm. We learned a lot about running this type of program, lessons that will be incorporated into next generation programming for electricity innovation. Over

the next 20 years, we expect to see major shifts in technology and electricity systems. Based on forecasted demand, we don't need new large-scale generation for some time but we do need to figure out how to continue to work toward our lower carbon future.

Nous voulons une diversité de sources de carburons. Il est donc temps de nous pencher sur d'autres sources renouvelables.

For the rest of this decade we'll build the knowledge and Nova Scotia experience to be adaptable to future changes. The electricity plan commits \$1.5 million over the next three years to support pilot projects to research technologies related to electricity use and management, storage, solar electricity, and tidal energy.

L'innovation en matière de l'électricité est une partie importante de notre politique de 25 ans en matière de l'électricité. Nous allons dépenser 1,5 millions de dollars au cours des trois prochaines années pour appuyer des projets liés à l'utilisation et la gestion de l'électricité, au stockage, à l'électricité solaire, et à l'énergie marémotrice.

We will focus on testing, monitoring, and learning. Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a letter I received a couple of days ago supporting our innovation agenda. QUEST, which stands for Quality Urban Energy Systems of Tomorrow, is a non-profit organization that conducts research, engagement, and advocacy to advance smart energy communities in Canada. In their letter, they say,

“The ability to harness smart data generated by smart sensors and the tools needed to render that data useful, including making it public to facilitate innovation, will better position Nova Scotia to reduce costs, harness local economic development and generate new jobs and export opportunities.”

Mr. Speaker, this legislation enables the development of detailed regulations that will set program limits, rates, and data collection obligations for new and existing participants in our innovation programs. These programs will be designed with input from stakeholders over the coming months. They will be relatively small and will have firm caps on capacity, output, and cost, but we expect them to be rich with data and learning. This legislation expands the role of the procurement administrator to include our new innovation programs in marine renewable energy to ensure there is an independent and competitive selection process when needed.

It's clear that our electricity system is in transition. Nova Scotia Power no longer has the monopoly it once had. (Applause) About ten years ago Nova Scotia Power's share of electricity generation was around 95 per cent; today that's down to 75 per cent, and it will fall to about 60 per cent by 2020.

Whereas our past was about coal, our future is about regional electricity and more local renewable electricity. La production d'électricité par Nova Scotia Power est plus faible aujourd'hui, et continue de diminuer à raison de l'utilisation accrue des sources d'énergie renouvelables. L'entreprise n'a plus le monopole qu'ils avaient auparavant.

We'll be working with our partners to the West and the north of us and taking advantage of becoming part of a regional electricity loop so that we can have access to cleaner, more secure, and competitively priced electricity. We are reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and increasing access to renewable electricity - solar, tidal, and wind. Later, in 2016, renewable electricity providers will be able to sell directly to Nova Scotia businesses and homeowners through the Renewable to Retail program. That option had never before been available for consumers who wish to go greener faster.

The electricity plan sets a strong vision for our electricity future. It reflects what we heard from Nova Scotians who want more accountability, stable and predictable power rates, and more competition and innovation in our electricity system. This legislation addresses all of those priorities.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to move second reading of Bill No. 141. Merci.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to this important bill. Energy is something that we all should be concerned about, and it's something that everyone worries about - how much they have to spend on their electricity. Any time we have legislation before this Chamber that tries to address that, it's a good thing. We tried to look at this piece of legislation in that vein.

I think when we look at where we're going with the price of energy and energy consumption and stuff, it's good to take a little look back in history to the campaign. It was a big issue in the campaign in 2013. It was something that Nova Scotians were concerned about, and certainly I was hearing on the doorsteps, and I'm sure all members here and many of the candidates that didn't have the privilege of coming here would've heard about as well.

We know at the time that the Liberal platform was one that Nova Scotians subscribed to, obviously - they won a majority government. We have to applaud them for that, but when we look at what it was that drew Nova Scotians, I'm sure there were a number of factors, but certainly part of it would've been their platform on energy. Nova Scotians believed they were going to get what the Liberal Government told them they were going to give them. If you give us a mandate, this is what we will do in the energy spectrum; this is what we will do.

So I think it's useful to go and look at what it is that people believed they were going to get. It's interesting - I remember one time I stood in this House talking about the budgets, and the then-Minister of Finance and Treasury Board had a promise that this government would reduce departmental spending by 5 per cent. At that time the budget for departmental spending went up and I saw a disconnect between how I was interpreting things and how the minister was. I asked a simple question in this House one day, I said, you had a target to reduce departmental spending by 5 per cent, did you achieve it? The answer was, absolutely, we did.

Just as an example, let's say the expenses were \$100, in my mind a 5 per cent reduction would be down to \$95, but actually the expenses at the time weren't \$100, they were like \$103, so I said, wow, how could we be that far off that you think you reduced expenses by 5 per cent and I actually think they went up? The minister said, well, if not for the actions that I took, they would have been higher than \$103, in that example. It shows you sometimes how people look at things and they talk in cross purposes. I think that's the kind of creative analysis we are hearing on the energy file.

If you go around and you speak to Nova Scotians and you say, the Liberals campaigned on - break the monopoly, we're going to break the monopoly. If you ask the minister, he just clearly said, he did break the monopoly, he believes he broke the monopoly, but to me that is the 5 per cent reduction in expenses. If you talk to the average Nova Scotian and say, has the monopoly been broken? Are you able to purchase your power from somebody other than Nova Scotia Power? Maybe those people in those communities, like in Berwick and Antigonish, where they already had their own source of energy, their own supplier, maybe for those people they could hold a straight face and say, yes, I can purchase from somebody other than Nova Scotia Power.

I know myself at my house I can't purchase power from anyone but Nova Scotia Power. For me the monopoly has not been broken. (Interruptions) I hear the minister say that in due time that will, but we will (Interruptions) Next year? We'll see. But that was the big cornerstone of their thing, and I'm looking at their platform and all Nova Scotians could probably find it out. It says, number one - high, big bullet point - Break Nova Scotia's monopoly. Despite what we're hearing, I'm just not sure, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that is what has happened.

The next thing that we saw was a big bullet point - Make Nova Scotia Power pay for the Efficiency Tax. This is again our expense analogy, right, did we cut them by 5 per cent or did we not? Because if you ask who's paying the Efficiency Tax, it's us, so that is still being paid by ratepayers so that's the first one, not so much the second one.

The third thing we're going to do, and these are not my words, this is the now government's words at the time, what they were going to do, and the third big bullet point was stop asking Nova Scotians to fund Nova Scotia Power's profits. That's a pretty bold statement in so many ways because, obviously, Nova Scotians are customers of Nova

Scotia Power, so we're always going to be paying them. Really, if you dig down a little bit in the fine print, they would say that they have urged the Utility and Review Board to refuse Nova Scotia Power's guaranteed return on investment of more than 9 per cent annually and reduce the rates of return.

It's time to tell Nova Scotia Power to look inward for their own savings and that was the proclamation at the time. Of course, what we're talking about is the guaranteed rate of return here. Back then, the Liberals of old, the campaigning Liberals, not such a big fan of the guaranteed rate of return. They didn't think that Nova Scotians should be funding Nova Scotia Power's profits, they didn't think that. In fact, they were going to ask Nova Scotians to stop funding Nova Scotia Power's profits. Flash forward to today, guaranteed rate of return is still there. Now, again, we might be down to the five per cent reduction because I'm sure we're probably going to hear, well, no, it's not guaranteed anymore because of a fine which could factor into the equation. We're going to spend some time here today to talk about that but before we do, I do want to talk about what this guaranteed rate of return means.

Basically, I've looked across other jurisdictions, it's how rates are calculated and some of these things and basically, what a guaranteed rate of return is that - I was reading from the Alberta's proposed regulation initiative and they're putting forward some performance-based regulations and they did a little hand-out with a question and answer and the question in there is: how is performance-based regulation different from what we have now? That's the question the people there were asking. In this hand-out here, we'll talk about it a bit, but it says right now - this is in Alberta but it is relevant here - right now utility rates are set by adding up the expenses of utility in providing utility service, plus a predetermined rate of return for the utility company. The overall amount is then paid by ratepayers. So if you add up the expenses, you add a profit margin on, that's how the rate is calculated.

Well, what we're talking about is the profit margin that is added on and I refer to it as a guaranteed rate of return. I know the good people at Nova Scotia Power don't like that description of what happens. They wouldn't call it a guaranteed rate of return, Mr. Speaker, and I take their point on that, but I do believe it is, in essence. We can haggle over some words on it but in essence, that's what it is. It's a guaranteed rate of return and it opens up all of those discussions about, wouldn't it be nice to have a guaranteed rate of return on your investment portfolio or if you were business owner, it would be nice. We would all like that. That guaranteed rate of return probably had a time and a place but I would say to you and the members of this House and to Nova Scotians, that time and place has come and gone. It's now time that we can look to other methods.

A hybrid of a guaranteed rate of return and a standards-based, are we starting to inch the needle along? Possibly. Do we need to do more? Definitely. I would like to see, and I think Nova Scotians deserve it, to actually move to some of the things in their

platform so I'm here today to hold them to account on what they said they were going to do and I'm going to look at what they are doing, compared to it.

I want to talk about the million-dollar fine. I listened and I've heard it before, I've heard it's one of the main talking points that the government would say, oh, the Opposition says a million dollars is not enough but I believe \$1 million is a meaningful amount and I believe shareholders would be very upset, because of the phraseology with the company paying it. There are a couple of problems with that argument because all amounts are always relative.

To me, yes, \$1 million is a big amount. To a company like Nova Scotia Power, less than one per cent of their earnings, maybe not as big as it is to me; to IBM or GE or somebody, even less significant. We have to look at these things in relative terms. The issue that I have with the \$1 million fine - Nova Scotia Power made, I think, about \$125 million last year, so it's less than one per cent. Is that enough of an incentive to them or not? It becomes a many pronged question.

I think there is a possibility - and I'd like the minister and the government to consider this - that if you're talking about \$1 million fine per year, well you could easily have a situation where there's a massive power outage that could put them in breach of these standards. We're going to talk about the standards, which are pretty loosely defined whenever they come, but you could have a power outage. Maybe the standards would say that power has to be restored in three days, and maybe what we're really looking at from the utility's perspective might be like a 10-day restoration project - but to restore it in 10 days might cost \$800,000, and to restore it in three days might cost \$1.5 million.

That's a case where they would say, the \$1 million is better for our shareholders, and they could absolutely make a case to their shareholders that we did the financially prudent thing. These are the types of decisions that businesses make when faced with fines. They have all of the information. They don't make it on isolated facts - they look at all of the information and say, what's best for my company?

I think the Alberta regulations were looking at a per-day penalty, so I think the fact that we are talking about a maximum penalty per year is very problematic, especially if we think about the calendar year. We could easily have a winter storm in January that might trigger the \$1 million fine. Well, if you've triggered that \$1 million administrative penalty in January, how concerned are you going to be about the standards in February? How concerned are you going to be about the standards in March? How concerned are you going to be about the standards in April?

I could go on all the way to December with the months of the year, but I think the point would remain the same, that if you (Interruptions) My colleague is questioning whether I could go on with all the months of the year. I think the point is that when you start to talk in terms of per year, you open yourself up pretty significantly.

I can't stress enough that the fine structure has to be well thought out, and it has to be meaningful. I don't think that the "it's a \$1 million fine" sound bite is comforting. Then the second part of the sound bite, of course, is that it is always delivered to rounds of applause from the members who happen to be sitting in here, and is that the fine will reduce rates. It will go to the rate holders.

If we look at the number of customers in this province - I did some back-of-the-envelope, and I said, if they got a fine, and as a ratepayer of Nova Scotia, I'm going to benefit from that - I tried to calculate what my benefit would be. Depending on what was in the flyers that week, I might be able to get a candy bar and a soda pop at the local drugstore. It would be less than a couple of bucks per customer. It's completely *de minimis*.

It's nice to stand up and say it's \$1 million and it's going to ratepayers, but I question whether it is motivating. I question whether it's motivating particularly in the context of it's once per year. If it was once per occurrence or per day or something like this, then maybe you have something, but I don't know that the \$1 million fulfills the promise - if we can still call those types of statements that politicians campaigning make - I don't know if we can call them "promises" or not, but I certainly don't believe that \$1 million fulfills the campaign statement that said that the McNeil Liberals would stop asking Nova Scotians to fund Nova Scotia Power's profits. I don't know that this bill does that. It kind of would bring us to three strikes on their energy file statements, and that's my concern with that.

I believe it is time for Nova Scotia Power to start to earn their money, like every other company in Nova Scotia - I was going to say in the world - but every other company in Nova Scotia, because there will be others in the world that have guaranteed rates of return, but in Nova Scotia I don't know that there are. And the way companies earn their money is by delivering a good service to their customers.

When the power is on, and you flick your light and the lights come on that's a good service. When you flick your light switch and the lights don't come on, not so much a good service, and there are reasons that happens, obviously with our geographic location and our climate, but when it happens there has to be a little bit of extra motivation for it to be rectified.

The minister used the words that when the power goes out it needs to be back on in a certain period of time. I think "in a certain period of time" is the key phrase because we all know the power will go out, but we all want to know that it will be back on in a certain period of time. I know myself, just where I live - I think it was back in 2008 - we had our power out for about 10 days, and after that we got a generator wired in. I don't think I've lost power for more than a couple hours now, Mr. Speaker, but obviously not everyone has that option available to them.

So the point is when the power goes out it needs to be back on in a certain period of time, and it's the certain period of time that we're talking about today because we have to have clear standards that define that certain period of time, clear standards that define the reliability factor that we as customers are entitled to. So how are we going to do that? How are we going to define the standards that Nova Scotia Power will live by and that we will be entitled to?

Well, Mr. Speaker, in the history of governments past and probably future, we're not going to do it. We're going to ask somebody else to do it so we can point the finger at them when things don't work out, and this is something that we see happen quite a bit. Oftentimes if you ask a question about a health issue - well, that's the health boards, not us, and with respect to these standards, I do think the government needs to take some responsibility in how they are set. For all the respect that I have for the URB and the members that they have there, it's a little unfair to drop this just on them, because if the government wants to take all the credit then they should take some of the risk of establishing them.

So let's talk about how we can establish standards - I hear the minister say "that are appropriate for this climate," I think those were his words. I can't remember if he said that in French or English, but he definitely said that he was looking for standards that were appropriate for our climate. So from what I understand, and I look forward to some more information on this, there are some industry standards out there, and Nova Scotia Power itself - I don't think Nova Scotia Power is afraid of standards. They operate in many jurisdictions where they're already subject to performance standards so they're not afraid of them, but they just want to know what they are.

I know that I've talked to business people before from different jurisdictions on this file, in this portfolio and others, and if you ask them what they want from their governments, it's always predictability. They don't like surprises from governments. So in terms of the standards and how the standards will be set, I think you can look to other jurisdictions, and somebody explained to me that those standards from other jurisdictions would be finessed for our area, for Nova Scotia, so it's in the finessing that the fun will be had.

I think what we need to do is - it's not good enough, it won't be good enough to have standards that are a joke. We need some serious standards, so when we're finessing standards from other jurisdictions we need to be mindful of that. We heard that Nova Scotia Power will report on standards and how they've achieved those standards each year - what are the standards going to be? What is the reporting going to be against them?

I want to talk first off about the reporting. I think if you have Nova Scotia Power submitting an annual report on how they've done against the standards, that will be a useful, interesting annual report, let's call it, but what's more important is that you have some

reporting requirements in there so that everyone knows when there's a breach - not necessarily just in an annual report, but when something happens, people know.

I think that's particularly important given the fact that the fine is per year. The administrative penalty, fine - whatever you want to call it - is per year. The reporting around when there's a breach is important so that people know what's happening.

But then you're only reporting on the standards. How are we going to develop the standards? What I am looking forward to hearing from the government is the categories of standards. What are the kind of buckets of things they're going to be judged on? Is it just uptime? What are the buckets that need to be reviewed?

Mr. Speaker, I guess when you come right down to it, the concern will be how important does Nova Scotia Power view these standards as being? I know they're a company that certainly would take pride in the service that they deliver. There will be that component to it. But thinking that \$1 million per year is going to be what completely drives them, I don't know if that's going to do it. If we're asking them to kind of abide by them, we need to be mindful of those types of things.

On the issue of rate stability, the way that power rates are calculated, there are many moving parts to the calculation of the rate. There are many different times when the rate can be adjusted or when Nova Scotia Power can bill for additional items. The base rate is one element to that. What we'll need to be mindful of when we pat ourselves on the back saying that we will achieve rate stability for a certain period of time, we need to be conscious of whether we are talking about all the different moving parts, or are there some components within the rate that will be free to move during that period of time? If there are, then it wouldn't be a rate freeze in totality.

Before the Utility and Review Board develops the standards - I'm guessing it will be before they develop the standards - there will be another rate application. I'm mindful of the fact that - what will they be budgeting for? If they're not aware of what the standards might be, then they're going to have to try to budget for some of that stuff in the rate, and we need to be careful of that. For the period of rate stability that we're talking about, I oftentimes remember the argument against freezing power rates was, well, when the freeze comes off, there's amounts to be recouped, and you have to pay the piper at some point. That will be a risk with this strategy as well.

If I would say, there are many moving parts to this bill that is before us today. The quantum of the rate is a moving part. What the standards are going to be is a moving part, and what the rate will be during the period where there is rate stability, it's a moving part. They are all moving parts, and I think that all of those moving parts should be - my message to people would be, let's wait and see how this works before we declare victory. We know what the objectives of this government were when they were campaigning on the energy

file. I have my own opinion on whether they've met those objectives, so we'll wait and see how they do with their objectives on this bill against that track record.

With those few words, I will take my seat.

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak about this very important electricity plan. I do agree with the fact that it is good for government to look at our electricity systems, our energy system and our renewable resources, and have discussions about that and develop plans for the now and for the future. It can be very challenging in the transitional stages from getting off fossil fuels to go toward renewable energy. It's like anything - normally you have to make an investment up front, and the costs will be a little higher for Nova Scotians in order to make that transition and to ensure that there are energy options available to them.

So that's a good thing, that we do have a plan. The unfortunate part is that it is a very thin plan. We have seen since the plan has been made public that there have been people who have weighed in on the plan, and even from non-partisan interests, people have said that this legislation is thin and it is an insignificant bill. The Nova Scotia consumer advocate hit the nail on the head when he did call it a real thin plan. Nova Scotians realize that the Liberals did talk strong during their election in 2013, and obviously from this very thin plan we knew, and we're seeing, that it was just talk.

I know that the whole issue around the cost of electricity can be very complicated, and how the rates are set and what does the URB do, and how they influence those rates - so it can be confusing. But I'm going to try to provide the clear, simple facts around electricity in the Province of Nova Scotia, and a little bit on the history and why we are where we are today, and why we have seen a fluctuation in electricity prices over the years, and why we've seen an increase, and why we've seen a levelling out of the electricity prices.

It's quite simple: there's no magic wand, and that's the part the Liberal Government inform people, as if they had some kind of magical electricity wand that they suddenly fluttered around and that everything is going to be great and they've taken care of Nova Scotia Power, which is still a monopoly in our province.

Let's look at the history. The fact that Nova Scotia Power is a private corporation is the major issue here and it doesn't change today because of this electricity bill. They are a corporation and they run as a corporation. In fact, I know that often the Progressive Conservatives moved toward the privatization and have taken the brunt of the blame from Nova Scotians, but it was, in fact, the Liberal Government that put the death seal on electricity prices in Nova Scotia because they are the ones who passed the legislation that

approved that Nova Scotia Power could be a corporation with shareholders and that made a very different picture in the picture frame.

Once you have established a shareholder connection through a corporation, then the whole idea of a public service that is concerned about the fluctuation in prices and to try to provide a public electricity plan, where a government has the control over what the end costs will be to the consumer and can also make decisions based on what's best for the consumers - what's the best investment for our public electricity company? To ensure that our consumers are getting the best price with the challenges that take place when the price of oil rises very high, well over \$100 a barrel, because that is the major factor that causes our electricity rates to go up.

That was certainly a challenge when we had the mandate to govern Nova Scotia. That's why you saw those many increases because if you look at what was taking place in the world oil markets at that time, the price of a barrel of oil was extremely high and kept on going up and up. That was what was causing the cost to go up because you have a private corporation that has an obligation to their shareholders, and their shareholders are shareholders in order to make profits and to make money for their own interests. That's the reason anybody makes investments and picks different companies and watches the stock markets. It's usually not just to have a little bit of fun because sometimes it's not fun if your stocks are losing. It is all about investing in a company that has the ability to bring back higher returns and increase those returns over the years for you and hopefully you can pass those stocks along to your family members or cash them in when you need to do so.

So that is the basis for why Nova Scotians have been trapped and punished on their electricity bills for so many generations. It has nothing to do with the government of the day, it has nothing to do with that, it's all about the world economy and the price of oil, because of the fact that for Nova Scotia Power, basically, the majority of the power that is provided is through the use of fossil fuels. What are fossil fuels? Well, it's oil.

Since this government has been given the mandate to govern Nova Scotia, we have seen the price of oil drop significantly. We have seen what has happened out West and the challenges in Alberta and in British Columbia that they are facing, especially in Alberta, where the jobs now are declining because the fact is there is not as much work because there is not a call for the oil. The companies are not making the profits they used to make. So I want to be very clear that it has nothing to do with the government of the day.

The members from the Liberal Party can point fingers as much as they want and make up these stories, but these are facts that economists know around the world. And now that we're in a world of technology, it doesn't take long to even Google it and find out that that's the correct information. So, Mr. Speaker, the whole idea of breaking a monopoly was offered to the people of Nova Scotia in the perception that this was going to happen right away, even though that Party knew that that was not possible, because they have no control over the oil costs.

Now, during our mandate we realized that we really needed to bite the bullet in the sense of starting to look at setting targets that were higher for renewable energy, that that was one way to ensure that a government was looking beyond its four-year or five-year political cycle and are concerned about our future generations. Therefore, it was very important for us to have those hard discussions about renewable energy.

So looking at the electricity plan and the electricity bill and you're tying into the fact that renewable energy is a critical part of this plan, well, the NDP took a great step towards the future by setting one of the highest targets in all of Canada. In fact, the NDP did receive an award in Copenhagen for their commitment and for that very plan. So the process was started.

Over the years, Mr. Speaker, people do see things change. I mean when we talk about climate change, even five years ago people were still wondering if that was a reality, and you had scientists on both sides fighting that it was real and others fighting and saying that it was not real.

I want to make sure that we put this electricity plan into perspective so that the public understand and know that there is no magic wand, and the fact that the prices of electricity are based on our world economy and the cost of oil. It's a very good thing to start moving off of that, because we don't know what's going to happen; you know, none of us have a crystal ball to know what's going to happen 5, 10, or 15 years down the road. So I think it's our obligation as politicians to make sure that we support government that is moving in that direction and we bring forth our suggestions with regard to how we move off of fossil fuels.

We're seeing that there are major changes made now throughout provinces in Canada. We're seeing that in Alberta, where we're very proud that we have an NDP Government, that is taking huge strides in a place where the oil companies live and breathe for that money each and every day, but the oil companies and the power companies are starting to realize that the public knowledge is growing so much and the public pressure, and often as human beings we find it easier to understand things when we actually see something occur. Most of us in Nova Scotia have seen the rising tides, the major storms that we're dealing with - the warm weather. You know, I'm sure 20 years ago we wouldn't be able to have the windows open in the House here because of the fact that it would be so cold out.

AN HON. MEMBER: And flooding.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: So, there's obviously - and flooding, as my colleague has said. So we're seeing it now, and sometimes that's what it takes for us as human beings to come together collectively to start making more noise and to start putting the pressure on government to make a change.

It's very important that people have the facts, and one of things in the plan talks about predictability. It's very difficult for predictability when you're reliant on fossil fuels, because of the oil prices. What this electricity plan does - it really should be called a political electricity plan because it's set up in such a way that the prices are stabilized because we know right now that the cost of oil is at least half of what it was even four or five years ago. What's going to happen - and Nova Scotians deserve to have this piece of knowledge - in fact what's going to happen is that this bill makes it look like we're going to have stable prices due to the fact that right now we do know that the price of oil is very low. Now, what if it suddenly takes a spike - something happens in the world and it takes a spike? Well this piece of legislation will ensure that for three years in the political cycle that it will stay relatively stable, but then the floodgates open because after that it's legislated by law that Nova Scotia Power gets a guaranteed rate of return.

What that means is after the political cycle that the Liberal Government hopes to get through, to be able to say they broke the monopoly and kept electricity prices stable, then Nova Scotia Power has every legal right to go the URB and to request an increase in rates. Those rates could rise significantly - not a little bit, but significantly. Now, I don't know how most people feel, but for my family I would rather be able to stretch out the cost of electricity and if I had to pay a little bit more now knowing that five years down the road I'm going to have to pay three times as much, I would pick the option of making sure that I pay a little bit now so I don't have to suffer in the future.

This very thing that is being planned under the electricity plan can be related very similar to what happened in the U.S. with the mortgage market.

We all know that not that many years ago that there was a housing bust in the U.S. Devastating. Do you know why that occurred? It was because they did not have the stringent regulations for mortgages as they do here in Canada, and the banks were allowed to offer extremely low mortgage rates to people who really did not have the financial means to pay higher rates. So they were able to get in and buy a home at a lower rate because they could afford it. But the sorry part of the whole story was that most of those homebuyers did not realize, were not truly knowledgeable on the fact that after a certain number of years there would be a lift on those rates and that the mortgage companies could legally increase people's mortgages by huge amounts.

That's exactly what happened. Those consumers could no longer afford to pay for their homes. Many homes in the U.S. were just left abandoned. People had to walk out of their homes and close the doors because they could not afford to pay the mortgage. Well, that is what's going to happen in Nova Scotia if people are not made aware by people in Opposition like myself - don't count on that the fact that this electricity plan is going to keep your rates low for years and years - it's not going to do that, because there would be a spike.

I know what the government is hoping for. The government is hoping that, from all of the work the NDP did in terms of renewable resources and with Churchill Falls, that is going to come into effect. We always said, when we were on the government side of the House, that that particular project would bring stability to the electricity rates for at least 35 years, so that is the hope for the future. I don't think that it's fair for Nova Scotians to have to survive on just hope and a short-term plan for a long-term gain for a government.

I think it's very important that the right information gets out there and that we talk about the fact that there is a great possibility of increases in electricity rates down the road, and that each and every one of us are going to experience it. As we often speak about in this House, we have a very aging population in Nova Scotia and seniors are on a very strict, rigid income that doesn't change. So what are we setting these people up for in terms of their electricity rates?

I would also like to talk about the whole idea of this breaking of a monopoly. It sounds good, and honestly, whoever the PR person for the Liberals was, I have to give them credit for that line, because it sounded good to Nova Scotians, right? (Interruptions) My colleague next to me says he's looking for work - the same person - but it was a brilliant slogan. People were given hope, and they thought that was the Party that would be able to provide them with hope. When the Party got in, they're scrambling to be able to make sure that at least the perception - not the reality, but the perception - is there that they broke the monopoly.

It is difficult to break a monopoly when you have a monopoly running your electricity that owns the grid, and we said that from day one. When the Liberals were in Opposition they were even referencing Hydro-Québec. That was one of the first things that was held out as a carrot, that maybe Hydro-Québec, we could bring them in and they would be able to break the monopoly. Well, Hydro-Québec would have to use the grid, unless they built their own, and in today's world, the cost of building a grid would very much outweigh their interest of even coming here to Nova Scotia.

So today, nothing has changed. We have a monopoly that owns the grid, and then when we're talking about renewable resources - and yes, I will give the government credit for the fact that now other companies have the opportunity to be part of bringing those renewable resources in, but the part that they're forgetting is the fact that those other companies still have to use Nova Scotia Power's grid. There is no way that there is a corporation in this world that is going to lower the cost of utilizing that grid to compete with themselves when they own the grid.

That is just a fact, and that is why the slogan of breaking the monopoly and the whole idea that people were going to suddenly be able to save money on their electricity bills has proven to all of us that it was just a slogan, because that's the reality. You can't change all those other factors. It doesn't matter how wonderful you think you are as a

government, you can't change those factors. The only thing you can change is the perception.

The perception of breaking the monopoly to get elected was the first step, and now the second step is the perception that we have broken it, because we're allowing others to be able to access renewable resources and bring them forward - but they don't finish the sentence to say, but they will have to access their companies through Nova Scotia Power, which owns the grid. That's the part that never gets mentioned at the end of the sentence - that is an impossibility.

What I've heard the slogan change to now is that we're going to provide more options. It's going to be a little bit more expensive, so we're preparing the public that if you want to be green and clean, you will need to pay a little bit more for that. But what we're going to do for you, we're not going to do it overnight, so we're going to stretch it out and we're going to move it a long time. So the public, you need to be patient.

Even though only two years ago, we said we are the champions of breaking the monopoly and giving the impression to Nova Scotians that as soon as this government got in, when they turned on their light switch, electricity costs were going to drop significantly. We know that that would not happen, did not happen, and is not going to happen.

So now we're preparing people by saying that we'll have stability for several years. But again, we're not finishing the rest of that sentence, which means that after those several years, there is no guarantee that the costs will not go up extremely high and that the taxpayers will not have to have the burden of that cost. I don't think that as a Nova Scotian I take any comfort in that because that's coming from the same Party that actually gave Nova Scotia Power the power to have shareholders and privatize and put all of us in this position in the first place and hasn't been able to change that.

When we talk about accountability, yes I will agree that it is good that there are some charges there to Nova Scotia Power, but \$1 million to Nova Scotia Power is not a great deal of money, if you look at it in the entire picture of what companies have to pay when they break the law, whether it is environmental laws or other laws, there are penalties that are in the millions and millions. So \$1 million for an "oopsie" is really not much out of the pockets of the shareholders; they're not even going to see a dent in their returns.

Once again, we're dealing with that perception. I would say that maybe we should be calling the plan the Electricity Perception Plan; perhaps that's a better name.

When we talk about the renewable energy plan, we also see that the commitment in terms of dollars is very low. We're talking about \$500,000 a year out of a provincial budget of billions and billions and billions. There has been \$20 million to RBC, and they just recorded profits of \$10 billion - \$20 million for \$10 billion profit. But we're only putting \$500,000 into the renewable energy plan?

Then in these cuts we have seen at the grassroots level, where it really hurts with small groups, money being cut. The theory behind that is that often those smaller groups, the seniors' groups, those who are more marginalized, who do not have the same ability or voice, they won't be pounding the pavement, so to speak, around the House because they have more difficulty to come together in a collective manner, for example seniors.

As I talked about today with respect to housing repairs, we have seniors waiting on a list to get on another list, which is mindboggling when money was not spent two years in a row. One year it was \$2 million or something, and the other one it was \$3-something million that was left sitting there while we have seniors who are in desperate, dire need to have repairs done to their home. We have to put things in perspective, Mr. Speaker, so when you look at \$500,000 a year, it is only really a drop in the renewable energy bucket so to speak.

As I said, I will not take away from the government that they at least have put a plan together, although very thin and much on perception. I think what will happen is people will realize - I know that once people have an opportunity to reflect on the plan and once people have an opportunity to start thinking about the fact that things change in the world and the cost of oil can certainly turn around and go up, but as we know it's our job in Opposition to make sure that people have all the facts. We always have disputes in this House and I know you, yourself, Mr. Speaker, will say well that's just a difference in opinion.

Well, this is not just differencing in opinion, this is actual facts and the fact is that this plan is, like I said, it's an electricity political plan that we can be able to knock on doors in the next election, if we're on the Liberal side and say, hey, your rates haven't gone up, we've stabilized it, but I would encourage all those members to make sure that they finish their sentence to say that, well it might be stabilized for three years, but unfortunately, you're going to find out, or your children will find out that the cost of electricity could skyrocket, because of the fact that Nova Scotia Power has the ability under government regulations and law to request the URB for the difference in what it costs and what they might have lost in terms of increase.

They've got a safety net, and that is something that the government does not talk about at all. Over on this side they yelled and screamed about Nova Scotia Power and how they would take Nova Scotia Power down, and that Nova Scotia Power was a terrible company because of the cost of electricity, something should be done. Well, I think it's so different when they get on the other side and right now what's happening is that there's certainly no desire to take the big punches. All it is right now is let's make sure we create a plan that sounds good and has got some good slogans, but the real truth will only come out in a number of years after the next election, thank you.

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

HON. MARK FUREY: I draw your attention to the east gallery. I'd like to introduce Mayor David Walker from the town of Bridgewater. David is an avid and passionate member of our municipal government with a specific interest in the area of policing and has provided outstanding leadership to our community over many years as both mayor and councillor. So, I would ask my colleagues to provide a warm welcome to Mayor Walker. (Applause)

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

MR. IAIN RANKIN: I rise to say a few words on this bill, and I'm not sure if I can be quite as concise and on point as the last two speakers, but I'll try my best.

I would just like to provide some juxtaposition with my time that I'm going to speak here comparing some of the positions of the Opposition Parties, the members opposite, the members adjacent to me tonight. I do believe that the issue with power overall in a macro level in the province has to do with the lack of scale we have in our market and also the lack of diversification, which has been spoken about a little bit.

For decades we all know that we have relied on fossil fuels, first oil and then coal, over the last number of decades. So, transitioning to renewable is something that I think we can all agree to, it's just how fast you do that and what's affordable to ratepayers and taxpayers.

This plan is definitely more about balance and accountability and predictability over the next 25 years and I want to commend the minister for bringing this type of plan forward, particularly because it's based on 1,300 submissions and consultation with the people. So when you're against this plan, you're basically against what came out of these consultations. When the members speak against what these people consulted - I hear it a lot in the House and in Law Amendments Committee and in Question Period, you have to get out and consult more, but what happens when you don't like what the people have to say? When we consulted, we're putting into action what people are actually asking for. I think that's important. I certainly consult as much as I can on all the issues. I've held numerous town halls on lots of topics, and I think it's important that we actually listen to what the people are asking for around the province.

The former NDP Government started the COMFIT program. That was an aggressive program that looked to renewable energies. Just a couple of comments on what I saw as some of the drawbacks to the way that program was implemented - I know that there was a strong focus on wind. Again, going back to my point about diversification, I think it's important that when you're doing things, you have to have a good mix in the market. When you focus entirely on wind - I read a lot of reports that we're kind of getting to the precipice of where we can take advantage of wind power. Particularly going into the winter months, when we can't take advantage of that as much, there's a fast switch into utilization of coal, and when you do that, that spark-up of emissions is actually hurting. If

we had a better mix, if we had some natural gas in the mix, if we had solar, you wouldn't see that big jump in emissions in that period.

When I spent time in Ottawa for a commercial development company, the Ontario Feed-in Tariff Program had a big component for solar energy. The company that I was director of operations for invested heavily in solar energy on the rooftops. I was really surprised that Nova Scotia didn't include solar as part of their COMFIT, because after Ontario, the capacity is there. Nova Scotia actually has the second-most capacity for solar energy after Ontario in the whole country. I think if we had a better mix, we would have been able to utilize sources at different periods of time. You know, it's not always windy, it's not always sunny, but we can have a good mix. So that was one issue with the COMFIT.

The other issue was this definition of "community," which was never defined in a way that people thought that they could contribute. What does "community" mean? Does it mean the street that the windmills are going up on? Does it mean the subdivision? Does it mean the whole municipality? There was a lot of consternation in some of the communities, including a community close to where I represent. I think that a plan is great to have, but it's all about the planning. I think it was Eisenhower that said that. That's why this bill is good, because even embedded in the bill - it's the Electricity Plan Implementation Act, so you have the details of how it's going to be implemented over a 25-year span.

So those details are important. I like the fact that tidal stays within the scope of what we're trying to achieve. The member for Clare-Digby spoke about the points of why that's important for our province, particularly the rural areas. We can take advantage of manufacturing, exports - there are a lot of things that we can exploit. If we're trying to invest in renewables, why not invest in something that would be perceived and what we can use as a comparative advantage in the future? It's very expensive now, we know that, but if we're going to invest some money from the taxpayers, I think it should be targeted at those areas where we know we can maximize benefits for Nova Scotia in terms relative to the other provinces and what their comparative advantages are.

In terms of scale, I know we're going toward looking at a Maritime kind of grid so we can share, and I think that is important too. That's going to be good to talk about.

The Official Opposition - the plan from their platform was an arbitrary five-year freeze. That's not even a new plan. That's not a new plan to their Party. I could recall in the early 1980s - hard to believe that I can recall, but we know that it was the Buchanan Government that froze power rates, and that subsidized cost embedded into the historic debt. It's still in the debt, and this is the plan that they want to do again. You freeze rates, that's just going to prolong the inevitable. Everybody talks about the selling off of Nova Scotia Power, which was a big deal. They sold Nova Scotia Power, but people need to understand what led to that. Why did they sell Nova Scotia Power? It's because they froze

rates arbitrarily, and they had to do something with the massive debt that was built up over that time.

From 1978, I think there was about \$1.7 billion of debt; when they left government, it was over \$8 billion. You think about that - 100 years after Confederation, we were sitting at \$1.5 billion of debt, and a decade past that it went to \$8 billion. Just think about that.

I've always believed in the concept of user-pay, and that's what we're trying to achieve here. We're trying to achieve the balance of investing in the renewable energies with a plan that will provide ratepayers with an ability to pay for something that's within their means.

I know there was a lot of talk of the end of the monopoly, and there's some disagreement whether or not that occurred. But you can't argue with the fact that 25 per cent of electricity now does not come from Nova Scotia Power, and that's going to continue to increase. By definition, if you have one-quarter of the power not going through Nova Scotia Power, that's not a monopoly, whether you like it or not. It's not a quick short-term solution, and if it was, somebody else would have done it. But it is a long-term solution because you know that renewable energy prices will go down; as more R & D goes into them the price of solar and the price of wind will go down.

Why give Nova Scotia Power the ultimate authority to use that through their transmission grid? What we're doing is we're allowing sole proprietors, communities, and municipalities to use that, so 10 or 20 years down the road you'll see a decrease in green energy costs. I think that's smart, I think it's prudent, and I think that this plan provides balance that the people are asking for.

The \$1 million that was spoken about, I think if the Opposition saw \$10 million or \$100 million, they would be saying the same thing right now: not enough.

I won't take too much more time, but I would say in the final analysis, let's let the ratepayers and the taxpayers decide after our four years, when you see power rates controlled, probably increase less than 5 per cent. Juxtapose that with the prior government, which let it go up 30 per cent over four years. Let's let the people see what plan they like.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: I want to thank the previous speaker for his remarks. His recollection of the 1970s and 1980s is a little sketchy, I think, but I appreciate that he tried to reach back that far. I'm sure power rates were a big debate in kindergarten when he was there, Mr. Speaker.

But I am very pleased to get up and speak to the bill brought forward by the minister responsible for freezing power rates. I've got to admit, when I saw this bill and I saw that

the government is proposing to freeze power rates, I actually got a little excited. I thought, what a great idea; I hope it's for real.

Then I remembered some of the things that the minister responsible for freezing power rates used to say about freezing power rates. I don't know what changed, but it wasn't that long ago that the minister was against freezing power rates and made those points here in this Chamber.

For example, on May 8, 2015, this same Minister of Energy said that freezing power rates is an act of fiction, yet a few months later he brings in a bill that he says is going to freeze power rates. Mr. Speaker, in fact that same minister in that same Spring session said that anyone who wants to freeze power rates was playing a little bit on the movie Frozen, and they could be compared to Elsa from the movie.

Obviously, the minister did not like the idea of freezing power rates. That's fine. (Interruption) Yes, well I understand that's one of his favourite movies, the movie Frozen - it's a good movie, but to come to this House and to actually compare freezing power rates to a cartoon character and then turn around and actually bring a bill to this House to freeze power rates is a little cartoonish itself, I would say. Kind of like Thumper in the movie Bambi - the rabbit with the big feet who wanted to tap the ice, I'm sure you remember this, Mr. Speaker, and confirm it was frozen, that's what the minister wants, to be like Thumper in the movie Bambi, I guess. It's a little cartoonish, I know, but so is coming here and making fun of freezing power rates and then coming in with a bill to freeze power rates.

The Liberal member who just spoke said he doesn't agree with arbitrary five-year plans to freeze power rates, and yet here we have bill with an arbitrary plan to freeze them for three years. What is the difference? I'll tell you what the difference is, the difference is not really a freeze. I mean, we've been talking about cartoon characters in this House: Elsa from the movie Frozen, Thumper from the movie Bambi, But really for the minister over there, the minister responsible for freezing power rates, perhaps it's more appropriate to compare this to a Popsicle, to that Mr. Freeze. Except, Mr. Speaker, because he's a Liberal, people would think it should be a red Popsicle. But I would argue that he's a red Popsicle because he should be embarrassed to bring this bill in and call it a rate freeze, when in fact there is no freeze at all.

If the minister truly was like Thumper in the movie Bambi, when he tapped the ice to see if it was frozen it would be cracked. If he truly was Elsa from the movie Frozen, he would find that nothing was frozen; in fact, it's thawing very rapidly, because this bill actually doesn't freeze power rates at all - it doesn't. It allows the power company to get another kick at the can to raise rates, and over a three-year period they may get one application, but they can make one application that raises rates three times. He's not Mr. Freeze at all; he's Mr. Antifreeze, because there is no freeze. There's no freeze. There's no freeze.

Mr. Speaker, I know people are laughing, but it's not really funny to try to bring in a bill to claim a three-year rate freeze, having ridiculed rate freezes in the past, and then, when Nova Scotians actually look at what the bill does, it includes a rate increase. We'll see as early as the next few months how much that increase is going to be. It may be 1 per cent, 2 per cent, 3 per cent; it might have an increase for 2017 and another one for 2018 and another one for 2019 - those are all possibilities because the bill doesn't freeze rates.

You know, no matter what the power company does, Mr. Speaker, whether they apply for an increase or not, it really is not the point today, because the bill allows it, and because the bill allows it, it is not a freeze. In fact, it allows increases in two different ways. One is through an increase in the general rate, and we'll see - and nobody has a crystal ball, but because the bill allows it, we'll see in March 2016 what happens with the general power rate, but it is not frozen. And the fuel adjustment, although it will be averaged out, is not frozen either, it is still there.

Mr. Speaker, that is very interesting, because there is a very clear difference in the approach to fuel cost, which is the largest part of our power rates, between the Liberal Government and us in the PC Official Opposition. We actually believe there should be no fuel adjustment mechanism; the risk of fuel costs going up should be borne entirely by the power company itself, where the expertise resides in predicting or hedging, or estimating what future fuel costs are going to be. If they get it wrong that's their problem.

The government believes that the risk of those fuel charges should still reside on the backs of the Nova Scotia ratepayer, that person who is not in a position to make guesses, or estimates, or hedge the fuel costs; 100 per cent of the risk of fuel cost continues to lie on the backs of the average ratepayer and that is not right.

The government's solution is not to put that risk of higher fuel costs back on the utility, it is to smooth it out over three years, well, that is not a freeze. They're inviting Nova Scotia Power to provide a fuel estimate in what hedging strategies they might use, but all of the costs that entails, and hedging is expensive, will be borne by Nova Scotia Power ratepayers.

I know the minister will get up at some point, the minister responsible for freezing power rates, and he will say, well, the Utility and Review Board will review the reasonableness of Nova Scotia Power's fuel costs. Millions of dollars will be spent reviewing those estimates; millions of dollars will be spent on consultants that come in to review them on behalf of the power company, on behalf of the government, on behalf of the Utility and Review Board and all of those costs end up back on our power rates as well. That's why I truly believe it is much fairer, and cheaper, and simpler to just put the risks associated with fuel costs on the back of the power company itself, just like any other business that burns fuel, any other car that burns fuel - you own it, you burn it, you pay for it, but not under this government.

So will there be a general rate increase? We will see. The bill allows it, there is no freeze. There is no stability. Will there be a fuel cost increase? They've already said that yes, there will be and our power rates will be going up. There is no freeze.

I am particularly interested in this idea that somehow the guaranteed profit of the power company is no more. As I travel the province, and I'm sure as many members here do, and they talk to Nova Scotians about their power bills, whether they are a big manufacturing plant, or whether they are a typical Nova Scotia family on a fixed income, struggling to pay the bills while their power bill is there at the top of the pile, they all raise this guaranteed profit. They all raise it because they know that they pay it and they know that the target rate of 9.25 per cent is a very high target rate, they know that. What they also know is that the Liberal Party, while campaigning, in their platform, promised to get rid of it, when they said, "Stop asking Nova Scotians to fund Nova Scotia Power's profits."

We are two years in and the government has rolled out its electricity plan. They consulted widely. I'm sure they heard that people are bothered by that guaranteed profit and yet it's still in, it is still there. The power company will continue to earn a guaranteed rate of return of 9.25 per cent. I know the minister is saying, well, we are going to penalize them by up to a million dollars a year, maximum. That is less than 1 per cent of the total guaranteed profit of Nova Scotia Power.

If that is the best they can do, that tap on the wrist, the most they can do in one year is \$1 million against a profit of \$130 million a year guaranteed, no wonder we're talking about cartoon characters because Nova Scotians will see that for what it is, which is meaningless to that guaranteed profit.

The fact of the matter is we already hold the power company responsible for meeting some pretty important international standards. So even if the penalty was some different number, there's really nothing new in what the government has brought forward. Yet, they are hanging their hat on this tiny little penalty, to say that they have somehow infringed on the guaranteed profit of Nova Scotia Power. Mr. Speaker, they have not, and they promised that they would. They promised we, as Nova Scotians, would stop funding the profits of Nova Scotia Power, but we're going to continue to fund those profits, the current amount out of all of our pockets, guaranteed, is \$130 million.

In the absolute worst case scenario for the power company, that amount would be \$129 million. That is hardly the relief from that guaranteed profit that Nova Scotians thought they were buying into in the last election. It is not fair to say that the guaranteed profit has been in any way impinged when that is the entire government effort to try to keep that promise. That is a broken promise.

The government also made promises about the efficiency fee. They campaigned against it. They specifically said, and I'll quote from that same platform that they ran on, and I will table it - I'm going to quote from it a bit more because they made a lot of promises

about electricity prices, and this bill kind of confirms that they're not going to achieve any of them. But this one was very specific: Make Nova Scotia Power pay the efficiency fee.

Well, we already know, before this bill came in, that that is not going to happen. They like to say they took it off our power bill, but then they allowed it to go right back on our power bill in a different line, in the general power rate line. It is still there. Then, when they knew Nova Scotians would not fall for that, they said, we'll take it off for 2015, so it's not there at all - but they're allowing the power company to earn it back with interest over the next eight years. It is still there, plus interest. That is not keeping that promise at all.

Now, in this bill, we find out that they're going to extend the next three years of efficiency fees into a fourth year, into 2019, in order to align the efficiency fee period with the period for rate increases. Well, I don't know any Nova Scotians that came forward in the consultations or to any of us and said, "You know what we should do? We should make sure that when they put up the efficiency fee, it's at the same time as they put up our rates. That would make me feel a lot better." Yet that's one of the positives that the government is trying to claim.

What we now have is a bill which adds an extra year to the efficiency fee and sets that amount at \$34 million. The Premier himself was asked very directly in the election, in one of the debates, how much will Nova Scotians save under your plan? His answer was, \$46 million because we're taking the efficiency fee off. I was standing right beside him when he made that point. Well, that money is still there. That money is still there, that efficiency fee is still there, and now it's there with interest for another eight years plus the years that this bill ensures we pay it on again.

Not only is there no rate stability, there's a general rate increase that could step up for each of the next three years, and there's a fuel charge that could go up by whatever amount, and it's the ratepayers that will end up paying it, not the power company - and there's an extra year of the efficiency fee. Those were pretty big promises that the government made, and they're all gone now. They're shredded. The bill confirms it.

There are a number of speakers that talked about the government promise to break the monopoly. Well, here we are two years later, and that monopoly is still there. We've asked about this in Question Period, and I found it very interesting that just the other day, when I asked the Premier where they stood on breaking the monopoly, he pointed to the municipal utilities - the few existing municipal utilities - as examples of other places that Nova Scotians can go if they live in those municipalities.

Some of those utilities are over 80 years old. There is nothing new in that. They've always been there. What's ironic is that if you happen to live in Berwick, for example, or any of the municipalities that have their own electrical utilities, that utility is a monopoly. This bill that talks about opening up competition, exempts them too. Even in those places,

those residents can still only buy their power from one place. I know the government pointed to a plan to allow Nova Scotians to buy directly from a renewable power producer, and yet we are nowhere closer to getting to that day, today, than we were two years ago; in fact, we are further away.

Every wind energy company in Nova Scotia today is under a long-term power purchase arrangement with Nova Scotia Power itself. They are not able to sell directly to consumers even if the rules were in place to allow that to happen today, which of course they are not yet, because the Utility and Review Board still has more work to do on how much the transmission costs will be to the customer at the end. On top of that, the government in this bill has eliminated the COMFIT plan, which means it's going to be more difficult for new wind producers to come onto the system. And if there was somebody who wanted to, they don't know how much they're going to charge their customers for transmission, they don't have a long-term contract to finance their construction with, and they have no idea how many customers, if any, would be interested in buying their service.

On paper this might be a nice idea, but in the practical sense we're nowhere near having this actually happen, and Nova Scotians know it. That's why everyone that gets a power bill today, other than those ancient municipal utilities, gets that bill from Nova Scotia Power, and people know it.

Mr. Speaker, the government has entitled its plan "Our Electricity Future." Well, how ironic, because when you actually look at what the bill says, it's pretty clear what our electricity future looks like. The power company can still apply for rate increases, both in the general rate and in their fuel costs; that's in our electricity future. The efficiency fee is not only still there, but the bill extends it another year; that is in our electricity future. The guaranteed profit that the Liberal Party promised they wouldn't make us pay anymore, it's locked in, it's still there, it's definitely part of our electricity future. That monopoly that was supposed to be broken is as strong as ever; that is in our electricity future.

Mr. Speaker, it's really too bad that we're here today, because the government did have a mandate to actually make the changes that they promised, and they've had two years to do so, and yet, by bringing this bill forward, they've confirmed that it's not going to happen, that our electricity future is these things that I just mentioned - a monopoly, higher rates, more efficiency fees, fuel charges; our electricity future under the Liberals looks very much like our electricity past under the NDP.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to take a moment and point out that we actually do believe freezing power rates, if done properly, could work and is a good idea. It would provide real relief to those Nova Scotia families that are maxed out. We proposed and welcomed any Party to take up the plan to truly stop power rate increases.

It included getting to 40 per cent renewables in a way that we could afford, by using money freed up as our old electricity plants are paid off, to buy renewables. That on its

own would have taken a lot of pressure off our power rates. It included, as I mentioned, getting rid of the fuel adjustment mechanism and transferring the risk of fuel cost back where it properly belongs, which is onto the shoulders of Nova Scotia Power. It included getting rid of the guaranteed profit and putting in true performance-based regulations that include good service, fast response times, and a reasonable price - like any other company.

It included using more of our own natural gas, which is cheaper and cleaner for the environment than the fuels that we burn now, matched, of course, with onshore gas development to make sure we had a domestic supply that was affordable - the government has obviously banned any hope of that - and including a Maritime electric grid with an independent dispatcher who could actually dispatch power from New Brunswick, or P.E.I., or Nova Scotia, and someday Newfoundland and Labrador, from its cheapest source and greenest source, at any time.

Mr. Speaker, that is a real power rate freeze that could work. It doesn't push anything into the future and it doesn't average anything out, and it's still the way to go, but it's not the way this government is going with their rate freeze, which they ridiculed before and now they bring in a three-year freeze, an arbitrary three-year freeze that actually isn't a freeze at all.

Obviously we oppose these kinds of shell games and will continue to in the future until we get a real electricity plan. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and say a few words about Bill No. 141 too. It is clear that two years later this is the result of one of the key points in the Liberal Government's election platform that the power monopoly would be broken, that Nova Scotians would pay for the efficiency tax, that Nova Scotians would stop being asked to fund Nova Scotia Power's profits. We see at that time the idea that the monopoly would be broken was a head-scratcher.

I know on my farm I sometimes have people in. We buy diesel fuel and propane from one supplier, and occasionally we'll have another supplier come in and pitch us changing suppliers. It's not something we do lightly because of the service we get and these economic relationships. Certainly, I don't know how in the world someone is going to come to my farm and say, John, you can buy electricity from us; will you buy electricity from us? This is the quote we'll give you.

Nova Scotia Power obviously owns the power distribution lines, so how is this monopoly going to be broken when this infrastructure is in place? That is very unclear. The idea that power rates are going to be frozen is, I think, when we talk about freezing, your mind goes to winter. Winter is coming pretty quick, but this is going to be freezing in 2017.

We are not only talking about this winter, but next winter going mostly by before we find out what the frozen rates are. In the meantime, we're going to continue to see increases.

I can tell you that one of the heart-wrenching things for me as an MLA is to have people come to our office unable to pay their power bill. Last winter we had a brutal winter, as you know, and people who heated their homes with electricity were in for some shockers on their power bills. One of the reasons why, of course, was that there was so much snow, Nova Scotia Power couldn't get out to look at the meters. They were estimating the power bills and then all of sudden a couple of power bills go by, it's April, and they have a \$1,500 power bill when they were expecting a \$300 power bill. It's a big shocker for people, this rise in cost of electricity.

We pay currently, as I understand it, of all the provinces, the highest electricity rates in the country and I can tell you, as an entrepreneur and as a farmer, the cost of electricity is a serious factor to businesses and to homeowners in the province. We have become wedded to electricity in ways that we've become so accustomed to it that we take it totally for granted.

It's only when we have a severe event and we lose power that we are aware of how important electricity is to our everyday life. We normally have those events in the winter, but it was a couple of years ago that we had post-tropical storm Arthur. In the early summer, we had a near-hurricane with a huge rainfall event and we had a lot of damage to our powerlines. This idea that we're going to have guaranteed service or service delivery standards is one that I do welcome.

I know that in Kings North we had shockingly poor service at that time. I realize it was an unusual combination of circumstances that caused that event to be as severe as it was. The time of year it was, normally deciduous trees, trees that lose their leaves, have lost their leaves in the Fall or the winter we had that event. They stand up fairly well to the wind without a lot of leaf cover. When you have it in early summer, they're holding on to those leaves tenaciously, and the ground is wet, and they're going over into our power lines.

One of the things that is clear about that is that there is an increasing demand on Nova Scotia Power and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to keep roadside trimming in check. This is a big factor in the guaranteed delivery of service. I know that my colleagues have said that a \$1-million penalty sounds like a lot, but I know that the cost of doing the added tree trimming that is needed is in the millions of dollars.

The reality is that there's huge costs here, and a \$1-million penalty to a company like Nova Scotia Power or to Emera sounds like a lot of money, but it is really a very small amount of money when their profit is actually \$100 million or slightly over \$100 million. Some of their CEOs' salaries - for instance I believe it has been reported at \$4.7 million for the head of Emera and a \$1-million salary for the head of Nova Scotia Power. So this

is just one person's salary in this company, this penalty. I know it sounds like a lot of money to the average Nova Scotian, but in reality, in the overall scheme of things, this is not that significant an amount of money.

I will say that I do believe that Nova Scotia Power, and the people I know in the company, do intend to do their best and want to see Nova Scotians have continuity of supply. Again, at the same time, the corporation is clearly being operated to make a profit. I know that the average worker in the corporation wants - I know in reality those high salaries on the part of the top management bother the average worker and the fact that they're not able to offer this continuity and have not done that good a job of offering continuity of supply.

What will happen in the future? If somebody had said six months ago in this Legislature that we'd be seeing \$50 a barrel for oil - or maybe it was eight months ago - but the world has changed, and suddenly (Applause) What is that about?

Mr. Speaker, I understand from the reaction in the House that that's not to my speech, but the fact that Geoff (Laughter) I know that is a surprise to me - but I'd like to acknowledge that Geoff Regan is the Speaker of the House of Commons. (Applause) I would like to congratulate him. (Interruption) This is first time in 98 years that a Nova Scotian will be the Speaker of the House of Commons. And congratulations to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education on that too.

I think I've lost my place. Nevertheless, I want to express my disappointment at this bill, the fact that we have power rates frozen from 2017 to 2019. I was just saying that world energy prices are something that are obviously up and down, and currently down in ways that none of us could have imagined eight or 10 months ago. I don't believe I heard anybody predict a \$50 barrel; in fact, we heard, maybe a year or two ago, predictions of \$200-a-barrel oil, and I know I heard that often. The idea that oil was going to continue to be in short supply and continue to go up in price was a near-sure bet. Now we have very low prices of oil, but you know in fact I think oil companies themselves don't expect low prices of oil and energy sources to continue.

In fact, we see \$1 billion worth of investment in the offshore of Nova Scotia, and when we were in the Resources Committee I asked the CEO, the local head of Shell, Ms. Pagan, how in the world Shell could be investing that kind of money with oil prices where they were. She simply said that they have an investment plan in research and resource development, and despite the fact that oil prices are low right now that the long-term is that oil prices will continue to grow again and the fact is the statement is, nothing is better for low oil prices than low oil prices, for the industry. Low oil prices trigger consumption. I'm not sure if that's the best thing for our world but that's the reality.

So the fact that we have here a plan to freeze electricity rates in 2017 is not so much an electricity plan, but seemingly it looks like an election plan. So the platform here is, I

have to say, largely a disappointment. As I said, for me, a buyer of electricity in rural Nova Scotia, how is this monopoly really broken, in reality this is not what is happening. I still only have one choice of buying electricity.

I know that when we did have post-tropical storm Arthur, one of the shocks to many people was the actual cost of generating electricity and running generators, and that is actually something that might seem like that is a viable solution, but it is only a very, very short-term viable solution when you're trying to generate your own electricity. The cost of fuel is very high, and as I was saying, we as a culture have become wedded to electricity in ways that have become so common and so ordinary that we don't realize how wedded we are to the use of electricity and how important it is to our daily lives. You only have to have the electricity out in your home for about an hour or two before you're very seriously missing electricity, especially if it's connected to your water supply system and missing your water.

In fact, it was a big issue for us in Kings North with post-tropical storm Arthur in that there were farms that had to supply water to animals, and the watering of the livestock was a very, very serious issue in the Annapolis Valley when electricity was not supplied, and this idea that we have performance standards, I do believe that is a good idea in and of itself, that the power company have some incentive to supply us with a continued supply of electricity.

I was saying, Mr. Speaker, about the high salaries and I will table that - I think I have that article right here I just received that - Chris Huskison, \$4.6 million annual salary. So the fact that we have a \$1 million penalty is less than one-quarter, less than 25 per cent of the CEO's compensation package. So is that really going to, on a \$100 million profit, give this company incentive? I would suggest to you that their simple pride of operation probably would give them more incentive than the actual penalty, and I do believe that they do try to do a good job.

The necessity to invest more in guaranteeing continuity and supply is there in the changing circumstances in the province, as the infrastructure ages, the telephone poles age, as the trees on the roads grow up into those telephone poles and into the wires, is a very serious situation for our province. I believe that will continue to be, for a number of years to come, a serious situation.

As a farmer I can tell you my opinion on why we're in such a dire situation right now, is that a number of years ago, approximately 20 years ago, we stopped the roadside spray program and that probably was the right decision, but we really didn't replace that roadside spray program with any real brush-trimming plan that approached anywhere near the efficacy of the spray program in terms of trimming brush. So what happened was we have trees that are approximately 20 years old, which I would call teenager trees, they're growing fast, and they're just up into the power lines now in many places in Nova Scotia, because that program of roadside spray was stopped in one year and there was really no

investment made by Nova Scotia Power, or the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to replace it.

For the first four, five, six, or 10 years, there's really not a lot of urgency on that. But as time goes on, those trees start to get up into the power lines. What was just a matter of using a brush cutter suddenly becomes a matter of trimming into electrical wires. If you know anything about that, that's not something for an amateur to do. That's something that needs to be done by professionals because of the hazard of electrical shock.

That's where we are right now. This is going to continue to be an expensive problem to deal with. Nova Scotia Power has to step up to the plate and invest, I would suggest, millions of dollars in brush trimming in Nova Scotia, millions of dollars in line replacement, and millions of dollars in poles to maintain the strength of our electrical grid.

On top of that, we know that with climate change - I think this is well-documented, and you're not going to disagree with me - storms are getting more severe. Storms like post-tropical storm Arthur that come at the wrong time of year for that kind of storm, or rainfall events where we have four or six inches in a few hours. All of us who have been around since the 1970s or earlier know that we didn't see a lot of those events in the 1960s and the 1970s and the 1980s. We're now seeing more of those types of storms.

It's of great concern to the insurance industry, I can tell you. It's of great concern to many different sectors of our economy. There's huge economic impact when you have these types of sudden aggressive weather events coming at the wrong time of year or coming at a bad moment when the system is vulnerable.

Not only is there a demand on Nova Scotia Power to do this proper tree trimming but there are culverts that need to be maintained. There are all sorts of things that need to be done. The wires are getting older. Pole replacement is important. All of these factors in guaranteeing the continuity of supply are, I would suggest, far in excess of \$1 million in cost to Nova Scotia Power in the future.

I believe the company does intend to deal with these things. I don't doubt their sincerity. They are a company that is fundamentally a profit-motivated company, obviously, but I know that they do care. The people that I know, the workers on the ground of Nova Scotia Power, do care about these things being done right.

The company needs to be held accountable for supplying electricity. We have a very low appetite for loss of electricity. As I said, it's not very long before that becomes a very serious factor in daily life. We can only go for a couple of hours without electricity. If we didn't have electricity in this room right now, it would shut this whole thing right down. If you think back 150 years ago, this room functioned quite fine without electricity - not today. We need electricity.

So this is an important thing to our province, Madam Speaker, and what we do with electricity, and the promises that were made in the platform, I think, it's incumbent upon the government to deliver. However it was in their vision to deliver that, it doesn't seem like this bill is delivering on those promises.

It's putting off, as we often say, at a future date. This is all freezing at a future date. I think that the ordinary electrical customer will want to have their power frozen now. In fact, I can tell you many of them are in shock at the bills that they got in the winter just past. They're probably still in shock about that. Some of them are still struggling to pay off those power bills, frankly.

This is not going to provide rate relief. I mean, I hope that we have a warm winter. There's no guarantee that we will; we don't know. I think it's highly unlikely we'll have a duplicate of the winter past. I hope that was an anomaly - once in 50 years or once in 100 years, hopefully, and we won't see that again. In any case, electricity rates are extremely high right now compared to the rest of the country, and this bill unfortunately does nothing to address that.

We have serious infrastructure issues which a storm like post-tropical storm Arthur exposes. I think this bill goes somewhat to doing that. I don't know if the penalties are sufficient. I do believe the company sincerely wants to deliver a reliable product. As I said, the people I know who are working in the company want to do that. Yet the profit motive here is very significant for this company, and it's not clear that a \$1 million penalty, when the top two or three officials in the company are probably making close to \$8 million or \$9 million, is really a significant penalty, as my colleagues have said.

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

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, I'm not going to take a great deal of time, but I did want to make a few remarks about this particular piece of legislation. I've been here for a while and we've had many debates about power rates and Nova Scotia Power over the years. I've often told the story that I think I'm probably the only member in this Chamber who has made a film, a video about Nova Scotia Power and its credit and collections practices called Disconnection.

It was a film that was made in collaboration with a number of other people back in the day when I worked in the Legal Aid clinic and Nova Scotia Power at the time was a Crown corporation and it had the distinction, I guess, in some ways, of having probably some of the most ruthless credit and collections practices of any public utility on the continent. I say ruthless because if you looked at the rate of recovery and the rate of write-

off that Nova Scotia Power had for bad power debts, it was less than 1 per cent, it was just beyond.

Nova Scotia Power at that time - and I don't know that they've changed all that much - certainly at that time used power as a tool to collect on bad debt and outstanding debt. They often didn't only go after the people who had acquired the services and not paid for those services, but they would go after family members and it was ruthless. From time to time we still see those kinds of ruthless credit and collections practices by Nova Scotia Power now that it is in the private domain.

I have to say it bugs the heck out of me when it happens and I've had more than one case and my office is dealing with a case right now. I would imagine that every MLA in this place has had to deal with Nova Scotia Power on behalf of constituents and it's no picnic when that happens. They can be pretty difficult to deal with at times.

You know, power is a necessity of life in our climate. We need to have electricity, we need to have light, we need to have electricity for refrigeration. Many people still heat their homes purely through electricity in our province and it is expensive. It has been a challenge.

Our province for many, many years was very reliant on coal as the source of fuel for our electricity. The members for Cape Breton say, careful. I understand, electricity fuelled by coal has underpinned industry and jobs in Cape Breton and people in those areas have felt the impact of a world that has moved away from coal for energy and the fact that the technology has not allowed certainly clean energy from fossil fuels and the growing responsibility put on provinces and our country to control emissions, mercury and some of the other pretty serious by-product of burning coal. We all understand these complicated issues. But ultimately, we're looking forward, we're looking to a government that has made commitments about helping people in the province deal with the challenges of the growing cost of living and electrical costs. This bill is a weak bill in terms of really providing a long-term solution to those challenges.

I, like every other member, would be grateful to see price stability for people in my constituency over the next three years but I do worry about whether or not this is a measure that simply kicks rate increases for Nova Scotia Power down the road until the next election is behind us. I do worry that a government that, when members were in Opposition, had a lot to say about the rate of return, the guaranteed rate of return for Nova Scotia Power.

I know that the impression was given that that would be something that would be tackled by this government. The Premier said he was going to break the monopoly and members of that government campaigned to see electrical costs reduced and the rate of return that Nova Scotia Power is guaranteed be addressed.

This bill is thin in terms of meeting any of those kinds of commitments. It fails to address the guaranteed rate of return, and they had an opportunity with this bill to address that. I and members of this caucus are very committed to green energy, to moving forward and addressing climate change, to seeing a better future for our kids with more price stability for energy from all of the various sources for clean energy: tidal, solar, wind. This diversification, I think, is extremely important and it is disappointing that this government reduced COMFIT, well, cancelled COMFIT, and reduced the amount of investment in renewable energy to under half a million dollars. This is, I think, very, very regrettable.

I don't want to talk at length on this bill, I have listened to other members and they made very good interventions around this legislation but I didn't want to allow this bill to be here for a second reading and not offer some thoughts on it on behalf of my constituents. Many people live on fixed incomes and any relief is welcome but people are very concerned about the growing cost of living of which power certainly is a significant portion and of course the impact it has on businesses is really considerable as well depending on your type of business. For many people who operate businesses this is a significant concern.

I think the speaker in front of me made reference to the generous pay package that we see for executives at Nova Scotia Power untouched in this piece of legislation. The fine that sounds like a lot of money to an ordinary person, \$1 million sounds like a lot to all of us, but when you're looking at probably the largest corporation in our province and the guaranteed rate of profit annually which is much greater than \$100 million, that potential fine is a drop in the bucket - it's almost meaningless.

I think my colleague for the Chester-St. Margaret's area had a very interesting idea about how this bill could have been named more appropriately and, perhaps after the Law Amendments Committee process, we will be looking to change the title of the bill so at least it reflects what the bill is all about, which is more the political perception of the growing costs of electricity, rather than reducing the costs of electricity. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to spend a little time talking about this bill, a bill that brings forward an issue that we as MLAs tend to deal with on a regular basis.

First of all, before I get into the discussion, I do, as well, want to send my congratulations to Speaker Regan and, of course, to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. It's a tremendous opportunity for Nova Scotia to have a Speaker in Parliament. As I've known Geoff for some time now, even before my election in 2003, I know he'll be a phenomenal representative for Nova Scotia, but also a wonderful Speaker. So I do hope

to see him in his robes, in his Chair, at some point in Parliament very soon. So if the minister could pass on my best wishes to him, that would be great.

Tonight we talk about power rates and the elusive Nova Scotia Power. We've heard many people present maybe what this plan is or what this plan isn't, what it offers to people or what it might offer to people. If it somehow comes close, I guess it's going to be hard to say it's a bad plan, but I think it is a little ill-conceived. If I can understand why it was a little ill-conceived was this is the second minister who has worked on the electricity plan, the second Minister of Energy that we've had. It has been a couple of years since the election when the first set of promises were put forward of what the Liberal Party was going to be doing for power rates. I think the government was challenged to come forward with a plan that could be relatively effective, if at all.

I know there is a debate here about whether power rates are truly frozen or whether they're not, whether the minister said he was freezing power rates, or whether he was just saying we were providing stability to those rates. I heard on a number of occasions the minister say that they were frozen, but we know full well that they are not.

On a day-to-day basis or a regular basis in our constituency offices we are confronted by constituents who have trouble paying for their power, to pay their bills. Quite honestly, what we see are bills that are absolutely beyond comprehension - we see bills coming in in the hundreds, if not thousands of dollars. And to the member who spoke before me, Nova Scotia Power can be really easy to work with sometimes, which is kind of funny - sometimes they're really easy to work with. Make the phone call and it seems they're able to fix one, and then somebody else comes in with a very similar problem, and it's a very difficult situation to try to get them the aid that they need.

Now, it's not always easy on the constituent's side either. If we look at what some of those bills are, like I said, in the thousands of dollars - I've seen \$3,500, I've seen \$4,000. I have no clue how they got there. (Interruption) The member for Pictou Centre says he saw one for \$9,000. How it actually even gets there is beyond me, but what happens is they allow the client to set up a payment plan - a payment plan that most times is unrealistic. They can't do it. If you're on a fixed income, if you are a recipient of IA, there is no extra money to pay for that power bill. Even if they say, listen, if you're paying \$10, \$20, \$30, \$50 - whatever that payment plan is going to be - it's impossible for that person to actually pay them.

So what happens is they continue to be in arrears, the next few bills come along, and that \$9,000 bill is now a \$10,000 bill. Then we set up another plan, and then eventually Nova Scotia Power says, we're done, we're going to cut you off. It's a private company, you're buying a service from them, so I guess they can do that.

Quite to the issue, I've seen a number of families go all summer without power, so that means no running water, no refrigeration, no lights at night. I see some of them try to

run a little generator so they could actually do a few things. Of course, that costs money, because they've got to buy some gas in order to run that generator.

There's nothing easy about it. If there was a performance base that the URB or the government could stipulate would be a program, a way that they could actually help those who find themselves in trouble trying to pay for their electricity - we know with the rising costs of electricity over the next number of years, it will become more and more difficult for them to pay for that.

Rate stability is not a freeze. The minister said it was a freeze, and I really don't care in the end about it, because at the end of the day we will be judging this government on whether they kept their promise from the election, which this doesn't necessarily do. It is some of that promise, but not all of that promise, Mr. Speaker. I guess they'll be judged on that.

I want to get to the part that probably sticks in my craw the most, which is the issue of the fine. This comes from Alberta, and I'll table that when I finish up with it:

“Performance-based regulation is a method of calculating and setting utility rates using a formula that adjusts utility rate changes to inflation minus an enhanced efficiency or industry productivity factor. Except in limited circumstances, rates can only rise at changes less than inflation. A properly designed PBR system provides incentives to companies to operate more efficiently.”

The number of examples that we heard here today talk about power outages, and we have seen a number of power outages over the last few years, of a system that has not seen investment from its parent company, from Nova Scotia Power, or some funding from Emera to maintain a system that stays running. Okay, so from this bill, it is up to the URB to set those performance bases. One of the basic performance bases is to ensure that we have electricity delivered to our homes on a regular basis. I don't know if it's 90 per cent of the time, 100 per cent of time, whatever the URB is going to decide that performance is.

They don't invest in their systems - the URB finds out through reporting or a large power outage in an area because of a system that has not had its upgrades. The government or URB can then fine Nova Scotia Power up to a million dollars a year. A million dollars a year - we know profits last year of Nova Scotia Power were \$131 million. Never mind what the executives get, we did hear a few examples of what executives are getting on either bonuses or in regular pay, which are in the millions of dollars. A million dollars to me is not a true fine to ensure that those upgrades, those brush cuttings, those things that need to be done to the power system to make sure that it stays running - a million dollars to me is a bit of a joke.

I did talk about Alberta and as we know Alberta's electricity and natural gas distribution companies - there are a number of them, so this also does the gas utility as well: ATCO Electric, FortisAlberta, EPCOR Distribution and Transmission Inc., ATCO Gas, AltaGas Utilities. These companies own and operate the lines and pipes that bring electricity or gas to your homes or business from the transmission networks. The electricity distributor ENMAX Power Corp. moved to an individual PBR plan in 2009.

What does Alberta charge these companies when they are not in compliance of their requirements, of their performance-based regulation? A million dollars a day. This kind of makes the million dollars a year look like an Austin Powers movie when Dr. Evil was talking to what I think was the UN and he sort of did the million dollars (Interruption) Yes Mr. Speaker, thank you for reminding me of where my pinkie finger should be. But he went to a million dollars when really he should be saying a billion dollars.

So what does our market of electricity look like verses what Alberta's market looks like? We already know that there is more than one distributor of electricity and natural gas in Alberta. Their population, I believe, is about five and half to six million people. What could we do to change that? You know, if there's any change in here, regardless of what those performance based regulations are going to look like in the future, it's what the fine is actually going to be. Since we have a fifth of the population, maybe a fifth of the fine. A couple of hundred thousand dollars per day until it gets fixed.

My house went without power for five days during Christmas two years ago, three years ago, four years ago - I can't remember now. We went over Christmas without electricity during the wind storm, the post tropical storm. Over a week and a half without electricity. Why? Well, there are a couple of issues around it but a lot of it had to do with the transmission system and the lack of maintenance work done on it, the trees and the brush cutting that needs to go.

We shouldn't be going that long without electricity and it's not just my home that I'm worried about, it's not my home. I don't know how many phone calls we got as MLA's about people on oxygen, people requiring electricity for their health. I actually had somebody on a respirator who needed to have their electricity delivered to their house on a consistent basis.

So performance-based regulation, I think, is the way we need to continue to go and also forget about the Nova Scotia Power profits because we talk about Nova Scotia Power profits, of them getting those profits regardless of what their outcomes, or how that transmission system actually works. Get rid of that. Set up a PBR, a performance-based regulation that pays them if they produce or even fines them if they don't make up those requirements, something that I would say would hurt a little more than the million dollars a year that we find in this piece of legislation.

Those are my quick comments. I believe we should be charging them back more. I think there's a lot more we can do. I don't think this bill does what I think the Liberal Party promised during the election, but I guess only time will tell whether there will be rate relief for Nova Scotians.

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

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: I don't intend to speak long, but I think there are a few things that I would like to bring forward on this whole issue about this bill.

It's about Nova Scotia Power and where we are today with them. I think Nova Scotia Power has some very good employees who work hard to make sure that the electricity is delivered on a regular and consistent basis, and that's a good thing.

What we're talking about really is the cost of producing electricity; that's really what has got a lot of people upset and what people worry about time and time again and day in and day out. Other speakers before me have mentioned the very fact that we get so many people coming into our offices worried about the cost of electricity and the cost of keeping their home operating. We are in a society now where electricity is not a convenience, it's a necessity; it's what keeps us all going.

When we listen to Nova Scotia Power and indeed the government's own Department of Energy, they talk about the role that coal has to play for the generation of power in the Province of Nova Scotia for the next 20 years. One of the things that we've seen over the years is we've seen Nova Scotia Power, when they're estimating the costs of their coal, the cost of their fuel supply, they've actually gone over by millions and millions of dollars time and time again because they underestimate the cost of it.

We have a way here in the Province of Nova Scotia to have a made-in-Nova Scotia solution to help keep the cost of producing electricity cheaper and more consistent. That, of course, is coal. In the Donkin Mine, we have a vast amount of coal that's available. Currently, when Nova Scotia Power is buying coal, they buy it on the open market, and they buy it in U.S. dollars - and we know what our Canadian dollar is at.

If indeed Nova Scotia Power was compelled to look at buying onshore, buying coal from a local supplier, it would bring a lot of benefits to the community, first and foremost, and for the power corporation itself. They would be buying coal in Canadian dollars from a Canadian company, not buying coal at U.S.-dollar prices on an open market. Secondly, it would cut down on the transportation and the amount of movement of the coal, which again drives up the cost of producing electricity. Thirdly, it is well known that the coal that would be delivered out of the Donkin Mine would produce better BTU content than that that has been brought in from overseas. It has been proven that the coal in Donkin Mine is anywhere from 1,500 to 2,500 BTUs better quality than what we're bringing in, this so-called brown coal from overseas. Then of course, it would be also about the jobs it

would create in the community and what that would put back into our community in the line of taxes and revenue, and people would be buying new cars and doing renovations to their houses.

So there's a way for Nova Scotia Power to help stabilize power rates for Nova Scotians, and that's by buying their raw coal supplies right here in Nova Scotia. We're always talking about value added; we're talking about how we need to do things better. Well, here's a way that we can actually do that and make a difference and help stabilize the power rates in Nova Scotia.

When it comes to this bill and the penalties and all that, it's a step in the right direction, but what we really need to be doing is trying to find a way to help stabilize the raw materials that are used for generating power in Nova Scotia. One of those ways is by using something that we produce in this province, that we have an abundance of in this province, and we have the ability and the knowledge to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the government to encourage them and to work toward making sure that they are looking at the qualities of using a local source of energy - it being coal. I do know the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal has been working hard making it easier for the mine to develop and become an active part of the economy on Cape Breton Island. I congratulate him and his government for doing that, but I think they should be taking it one more step further and encouraging them to be using Donkin coal to help stabilize power rates for all Nova Scotians. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, it was with interest that I listened to the words of colleagues in the House. I first want to thank my colleague, the member for Timberlea-Prospect for his insight into this and for setting the record straight with some of the revisionist history we got from the member for Chester-St. Margaret's regarding the privatization of the utility.

I know he's listening to me very intently, the Leader of the Official Opposition, as he was listening to me intently the other day. I've got his attention just as much today as I did the other day. Let me say I will make one last reference to the movie Frozen for him, and it's the very famous song from that movie, "Let It Go." If I had thought he was going to go to that well as often as he has gone, I never would have made that reference to start off with. Talk about pushing something a bit too far.

I found it interesting, some of the remarks being made. The Leader of the Official Opposition said that millions of dollars would be spent on consultants through these rate hearings. Well, by having a three-year plan, it means that there will only be one rate

hearing. That's part of the savings involved in this plan, that we put a stop to these yearly rate hearings that have cost so much money, that's been passed on to consumers.

I also was a bit surprised by the comments from the Acting Leader of the NDP, where she talked about the very high salaries of the management over at Nova Scotia Power, because the one thing we can agree with is that it was her government who brought in legislation to cap the amount of those salaries to that of deputy minister levels that could be passed on to the rate base - which I thought was a good move, and we fully supported it at the time, but I was a bit surprised that she didn't make remarks on that when she had the chance.

The fact is, as much as the member for Chester-St. Margaret's wishes to blame everything other than her government, rates went up 27 per cent in four years. Now that was rate shock. That put business in trouble. It put Nova Scotians in trouble, and an absolute inability to plan because of constant increases year after year under their administration. This plan is there to fix exactly that.

I want to go to - and this covers both the member for Chester-St. Margaret's and the member for Pictou East, because they both said, well, you haven't broken the monopoly. Right now there is a URB hearing taking place to determine what the transmission rates that Nova Scotia Power can charge independent power producers to use the grid will be. That's underway right now. Once that is set by the URB, it will then be up to independent power producers, private industry, to decide how they can approach Nova Scotia and say, we can offer you, here's the deal, will you buy power from us? Prior to our election in 2013, that wasn't a possibility.

When I hear the member for Kings North saying he doesn't have an option, well, guess what? You were never going to have an option until our government brought Renewable to Retail legislation in and allowed that to happen. It wasn't even a possibility in the past. We have now listened to industry who've said, change the rules and allow us to compete.

To hear the Leader of the Official Opposition somehow suggesting it's up to government to create how this competition is going to be - that is not the way it works. Industry has told us, get out of the way and change the rules. Allow us to go out and be innovative, to find new ways of being able to produce energy and to be able to sell directly to consumers; and that is exactly what we have done with our legislation. That's exactly what this plan intends to do.

It's with great interest that I heard a number of members, but again, the member for Pictou East suggests a couple of things. He talked about performance standards, and then he talked about the fine. On the performance standards, he said, it's the government itself that should have set what those standards are; that's who should have done it, not the Utility and Review Board. So we said, in our plan, because the Utility and Review Board is the

regulator and the enforcer, and so that its arm's length and Nova Scotians see that it is being done independently, we said it should be the Utility and Review Board that looks at other jurisdictions and establishes what they should be and enforces them, and the member for Pictou East doesn't like that.

So, I thought with interest that we would look at his bill, Bill No. 81, which is a change to the Public Utilities Act, where it talks about performance standards and it's interesting because here is the description, the explanatory note of the bill. It said, "This Bill amends the Public Utilities Act to require Nova Scotia Power Incorporated to prepare service-standard audits."

So, it's Nova Scotia Power under his bill that would actually determine what their service standards are going to be. Now, isn't that interesting that we'd allow the company to decide what their service standards are going to be, but it goes on and it requires the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board "to review the audits and apply service-standards penalties, if required by the regulations." So, not only does he not tell us what the penalty should be, he says maybe there will be a penalty, but we're not sure, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, you can shake this bill as much as you want - there are no penalties in here. It doesn't address it, so how ironic that the member that says that we went from \$0-\$1 million in penalties per year, mocks that, yet his own piece of legislation before this House would allow Nova Scotia Power itself to set its standards, and doesn't even say if there will actually be a guaranteed penalty involved, let alone say what that amount is going to be.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is we have heard the Opposition talk about consultation in the last number of weeks. There is no question that what we have here in this legislation and in our electricity plan is a reflection of what Nova Scotians have told us that they wanted. We made a commitment that we were going to break the monopoly; that is happening. We made a commitment that there was going to be reliability, stability, predictability, and that's in place. We said Nova Scotians told us, we want innovation; yes COMFIT had to end, but they still want to see: what can we do with solar? What can we do with storage? What can we do with new technologies? We've allowed for that in the plan.

What was interesting as well, Mr. Speaker, before I forget and my time is getting short, is that how ironic that in the House again today you've got the Leader of the Official Opposition once again doing his imitation of Chicken Little and saying again, rates are going to go up. So, we heard the Leader of the Official Opposition and we heard the member for Pictou East tell Nova Scotians, whoever was listening, that rates were going to go up in 2016. Well, right now it is anticipated that rates will not go up in 2016 and yet once again, now with our plan, he says, oh, they have another kick at the can and they will increase rates again.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians are proud to see that a government is finally holding Nova Scotia to account, that a government is looking to the future not year-for-year, but looking out into the future, and a plan that is going to bring predictability, stability,

accountability for Nova Scotia Power, and innovation so that we can look to our energy future and see how we can improve that.

Unfortunately, time limits how much more I could say based on the remarks, but Mr. Speaker, with that I do appreciate the comments that were made. They will all be taken into consideration and with that, Mr. Speaker, I would move to close debate on Bill No. 141.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 141. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. With that we will be meeting again tomorrow from the hours of 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. During that time we will be dealing with Public Bills for Second Reading, Bill No. 143. We will also have Private and Local Bills for Second Reading, Bill No. 144, and from today's Committee of the Whole, for third reading we will have Bill Nos. 112, 128, 129, 130, 131, 133, 135, and 136.

Mr. Speaker, as previously indicated, the Law Amendments Committee will meet tomorrow at 11:00 a.m., where they will consider Bill Nos. 110, 138, 139, and 140.

I believe I've got it all there, Mr. Speaker, and with that I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Friday, December 4th, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for adjournment of the House, to meet again tomorrow, December 4th, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Would all those in favour of the motion . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Recorded vote.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for a recorded vote.

We'll ring the bells until the Whips are satisfied.

[6:01 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

[6:05 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The Clerk has brought to my attention Rule 4 (1) which reads, "Unless otherwise ordered or provided by these Rules, at the ordinary time of adjournment the proceedings of the House shall be interrupted by the Speaker, or if the House is in Committee of the Whole, by the Chairman thereof who shall rise and report progress and the Speaker shall adjourn the House without question put."

Therefore the House stands adjourned until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

[The House rose at 6:06 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 2626**

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 Cassidy Langley from Crowes Mills, Colchester North, swam more than 14 kilometres across the Northumberland Strait as part of the GIVE TO LIVE's Big Swim; and

Whereas Langley's goal was to raise \$2,000 for Brigadoon Village, a non-profit recreational facility at Aylesford Lake that provides camp programming to children, youth, and families living with a chronic illness, chronic condition, or special need; and

Whereas this 20-year-old university student completed her swim in four hours and three minutes and had raised more than \$2,400 by the time she finished her swim;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Cassidy Langley for her successful fundraising accomplishment.

RESOLUTION NO. 2627

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 30, 2015, Shawna and Travis LeBlanc welcomed their daughter into the world;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2628

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 15, 2015, Jody Malone and Donovan Shand welcomed their daughter into the world;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2629

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 18, 2015, Tamara Atwood and Todd Ruff welcomed their son into the world;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2630

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 August 17th, Tanya and Jeremy Doucette welcomed their son into the world;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2631

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 22, 2015, Katrina and Aaron Swim welcomed their son into the world;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2632

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 anniversaries are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of two individuals united as one; and

Whereas it was once said that a marriage anniversary is the celebration of love, trust, partnership, tolerance and tenacity, but the order varies for any given year; and

Whereas on June 19, 2015, a very special occasion took place when Donald R. and Carol A. Warner celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Donald and Carol on this remarkable milestone in their life together and wish them many more happy years together.

RESOLUTION NO. 2633

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 anniversaries are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of two individuals united as one; and

Whereas it was once said that a marriage anniversary is the celebration of love, trust, partnership, tolerance and tenacity, but the order varies for any given year; and

Whereas on September 12, 2015, a very special occasion took place when Gary C. and Linda M. Greene celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Gary and Linda on this remarkable milestone in their life together and wish them many more happy years together.

RESOLUTION NO. 2634

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 anniversaries are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of two individuals united as one; and

Whereas it was once said that a marriage anniversary is the celebration of love, trust, partnership, tolerance and tenacity, but the order varies for any given year; and

Whereas on October 25, 2015, a very special occasion took place when Melford J. and Pauline M. d'Entremont celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Melford and Pauline on this remarkable milestone in their life together and wish them many more happy years together.

RESOLUTION NO. 2635

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 birthdays are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of an individual; and

Whereas on May 21, 2015, Loretta Brown of the Meadows Home for Special Care celebrated her 100th birthday; and

Whereas to have reached 100 years of age and continue to be active and share all the memories gathered over your lifetime with your loved ones is a wonderful reason to celebrate;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Loretta on reaching this milestone in her life and wish her many more happy birthdays and continued good health.

RESOLUTION NO. 2636

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

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

Whereas birthdays are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of an individual; and

Whereas on June 12, 2015, Jeanne C. d'Entremont of Middle East Pubnico celebrated her 90th birthday; and

Whereas to have reached 90 years of age and continue to be active and share all the memories gathered over your lifetime with your loved ones is a wonderful reason to celebrate;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jeanne on reaching this milestone in her life and wish her many more happy birthdays and continued good health.

RESOLUTION NO. 2637

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

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

Whereas birthdays are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of an individual; and

Whereas on June 6, 2015, Carole Pothier of Lower Wedgeport celebrated her 75th birthday; and

Whereas to have reached 75 years of age and continue to be active and share all the memories gathered over your lifetime with your loved ones is a wonderful reason to celebrate;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Carole on reaching this milestone in her life and wish her many more happy birthdays and continued good health.

RESOLUTION NO. 2638

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

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

Whereas birthdays are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of an individual; and

Whereas on October 12, 2015, Melford J. d'Entremont of Lower West Pubnico celebrated his 90th birthday; and

Whereas to have reached 90 years of age and continue to be active and share all the memories gathered over your lifetime with your loved ones is a wonderful reason to celebrate;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Melford on reaching this milestone in his life and wish him many more happy birthdays and continued good health.

RESOLUTION NO. 2639

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Marilyn Murphy is a resident of East Petpeswick and has been actively involved in her community; and

Whereas Marilyn is a member of the Petpeswick Yacht Club, volunteering with many club activities such as fundraising and being treasurer; and

Whereas Marilyn is a recently ordained minister of the local Anglican parish, providing spiritual leadership to parishioners;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Marilyn Murphy for giving her time and talents for the betterment of the Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2640

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Allan Lewis is a resident of Musquodoboit Harbour and has been actively involved in his community; and

Whereas Allan is a volunteer member of the Musquodoboit Harbour Trail Association; and

Whereas Allan provides countless hours helping to maintain the trail for the enjoyment of people who frequent it;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Allan Lewis for giving of his time and talents for residents and visitors of the Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2641

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Diane Nolet is a long-time resident of West Petpeswick and has been actively involved in her community; and

Whereas Diane is a retired member of the Canadian Armed Forces; and

Whereas Diane is an active member of St. Philip Neri Catholic Church in Musquodoboit Harbour, helping in various aspects of parish activities, and she has also volunteered as a greeter at the Twin Oaks Memorial Hospital in Musquodoboit Harbour;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Diane Nolet for serving Canada and for giving of her time and talents for the betterment of residents of the Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2642

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Harry Philpitt is a long-time resident of Musquodoboit Harbour and has been actively involved in his community; and

Whereas Harry is a retired Canadian Armed Forces member serving at home and abroad; and

Whereas Harry is an active member of St. Philip Neri Catholic Church in Musquodoboit Harbour, helping with various aspects of parish activities;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Harry Philpitt for serving Canada and for giving of his time and talents for the betterment of residents of the Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2643

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Helen Marks is a long-time resident of Musquodoboit Harbour and has been actively involved in her community; and

Whereas Helen recently retired as a personal service worker, helping seniors with their everyday activities; and

Whereas Helen is an active member of St. Philip Neri Catholic Church in Musquodoboit Harbour, helping in various aspects of parish activities;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Helen Marks for giving of her time and talents for the betterment of the Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2644

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Mike Young is a lifelong resident of Musquodoboit Harbour and has been actively involved in his community; and

Whereas Mike is a volunteer member of the Musquodoboit Harbour Railway Museum, always lending a hand with numerous activities of the museum; and

Whereas Mike is a well-respected pillar of his community and a business owner providing employment to numerous people;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Mike Young for giving his time and talents for community projects and for providing employment for residents of the Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2645

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Stanley Van Dyke is a resident of East Petpeswick and has been actively involved in the Musquodoboit Harbour Trail Association; and

Whereas Stanley regularly helps his association by ensuring the trail is up to the standards expected of its users; and

Whereas Stanley has taken on the role of liaising with governmental agencies with the goal of acquiring funding for the trail;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Stanley Van Dyke for giving his time and talents for residents and visitors of the Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2646

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Robert Arnold is a lifelong resident of East Jeddore and has been actively involved in his community; and

Whereas Robert is an excellent cabinet maker, helping hundreds of people on the Eastern Shore obtain quality cabinetry; and

Whereas Robert is a respected musician and provides hundreds of hours of entertainment for various individuals and organizations:

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Robert Arnold for giving of his time and talents for the betterment of residents and visitors of the Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2647

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Pearl Newcombe is a lifelong resident of Ship Harbour and has recently retired; and

Whereas Pearl owned and operated a restaurant in Ship Harbour known as Family Fries, providing a warm and friendly service to those who dropped into her business; and

Whereas Pearl was always willing to support local community activities and employment:

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Pearl Newcombe for giving her time and talents and employment to the residents of the Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2648

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Darren Myers is a long-time resident of Oyster Pond and has been actively involved in his community; and

Whereas Darren owns and operates the Home Hardware Store in Head of Jeddore, providing employment for many residents; and

Whereas Darren is a continuous supporter of numerous local charity organizations along the Shore:

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Darren Myers for providing support and employment for residents of the Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2649

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Frank Stevens was a long-time resident of Musquodoboit Harbour and now resides in Dartmouth: and

Whereas Frank played a large role with local organizations such as the Eastern Shore Recreation Commission, Petpeswick Yacht Club, the Juvenile Hockey House League, St. Philip's Catholic Church, and the local men's breakfast club; and

Whereas Frank ran a successful business employing many people during his long career:

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Frank Stevens for giving his time and talents and for providing employment to people of the Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2650

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Diana Brown is resident of Musquodoboit Harbour and has been actively involved in her community; and

Whereas Diana is a member of the 1st United Church and Musquodoboit Harbour Community Cemetery Group lending a hand wherever possible; and

Whereas Diana is a coordinator of the Chezzetcook Garden Club and helps various senior residents with their daily activities:

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Diana Brown for providing continuous support to her community and residents of the Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2651

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Don Russell is a long-time resident of Upper Lakeville and has been actively involved in his community; and

Whereas Don is a member of the Musquodoboit Harbour and District Lions Club, helping with fundraising events and many other functions within the club; and

Whereas Don is a retired school teacher who has helped hundreds of Eastern Shore students obtain their educational dreams;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Don Russell for making a difference for students of Eastern Shore and for his continued embodiment of the Lions motto, We Serve.

RESOLUTION NO. 2652

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Theresa Stevens was a long-time resident of Musquodoboit Harbour and now resides in Dartmouth; and

Whereas Theresa was a devoted parishioner of St. Philip Neri Catholic Church in Musquodoboit Harbour; and

Whereas Theresa volunteered at her church with such things as Eucharistic Ministry, fundraising and social outreach;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Theresa Stevens for giving her time and talents for the betterment of the Eastern Shore.

RESOLUTION NO. 2653

By: Hon. Diana Whalen (Justice)

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

Whereas the Ingonish detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police provide a vital service to the communities of Victoria County, protecting 5,000 residents, businesses and 400,000 vacationers in one of Nova Scotia's most beautiful regions; and

Whereas the detachment is the oldest in Atlantic Canada and today makes its historic move to a modern, state-of-the-art detachment headquarters on the Cabot Trail; and

Whereas the community has come out to celebrate the official opening of the new facility with its many upgrades, including a fully operational cell pavilion, breath-testing and fingerprinting area, secure bay for offender transfers, as well as leading edge environmental design features;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly join with me in congratulating the RCMP, our provincial police force, builders Joneljim Concrete Construction Ltd, of Sydney; DSRA Architecture and KMBR Architects Planners Inc.; and the community of Ingonish and surrounding area on the opening of their new detachment.

RESOLUTION NO. 2654

By: Hon. Denise Peterson-Rafuse (Chester-St. Margaret's)

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

Whereas birthdays are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of an individual; and

Whereas on December 9, 2015, Mrs. Mary Grace Reeves celebrates her 100th birthday; and

Whereas to have reached 100 years of age and continue to be active and share all the memories gathered over the your lifetime with your loved ones is a wonderful reason to celebrate;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mary Grace on reaching this milestone in her life and wishing her many more birthday and continued good health.