



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2015

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2015

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

12:01 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Just before we begin with the daily routine, under Rule 12(3) of our Rule Book, I am requesting that the member for Clare-Digby take the Chair should the Deputy Speaker need to be absent at any point during the proceedings.

We'll now begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 3054

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

Whereas Ulrike Bahr-Gedalia, a member of the International Women's Forum, and president and CEO of Digital Nova Scotia, was recently named one of Canada's Most Powerful Women by the Women's Executive Network; and

Whereas Ms. Bahr-Gedalia is known by many in this House and across the province for her passion and innovative work in advancing the province's digital sector and in helping position Nova Scotia's ICT and digital businesses in the global market; and

Whereas she's also known as a champion and advocate for diversity, dedicating a significant amount of her time and talent to mentoring young women and immigrants in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Ms. Bahr-Gedalia on her recent and well-deserved recognition, as well as for her many other incredible accomplishments.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**NOTICES OF MOTION****STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

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

ANTIGONISH MLA - PRINCIPLE SHOW

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, when he was first named Environment Minister, the member for Antigonish told the public that by not moving forward with a polluter pay principle, Nova Scotia was missing out on opportunities to offset waste management costs and increase diversion.

When the member for Antigonish was moved to Finance and Treasury Board, the government had a change of heart on the polluter pay principle, pausing implementation of the principle in Nova Scotia.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with his return to the Environment Department, the member for Antigonish has an opportunity to show Nova Scotians that he is a man of principle. Thank you.

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

LANE, CATHY: COMMUN. WORK - RECOGNIZE

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, the Fairview Community Association is a wonderful organization with members from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, all with the best interests of the Fairview community at heart. Cathy Lane is the chair of the association and truly an asset to our community.

On December 5th, Cathy took the lead on organizing the annual FCA tree-lighting event at Titus Smith Memorial Park in Fairview. Let me tell you what a wonderful success this event was: there was live music, warm drinks, delicious snacks, and great fun for the entire family - oh, and let's not forget a visit from Santa Claus. Cathy's passion for community-building and her drive to keep the FCA engaged is truly amazing.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in recognizing Cathy for her fantastic work.

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

DONKIN MINE: SANTA - COAL BRING

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to recognize the Christmas season. I recently heard the Canso Causeway will undergo improvements, and a new temporary bridge will be put in place so that the late great General John Cabot Trail will not have to go to the causeway to get Santa to Cape Breton.

The people of Cape Breton are all trying to be not so good this Christmas season so that Santa can bring us coal, open the Donkin Mine, keep everybody warm, our power plants working, and our power rates low. Thank you.

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

HEALTH CARE: LIB. GOV'T. - PROTECT

HON. DAVID WILSON: Universal health care is the greatest gift the NDP has given to Canada. (Interruptions) They all agree, Mr. Speaker. They all agree.

But with the Liberal Government, we now find that mental health is in crisis after a series of petty cuts. Home care wait-lists have doubled, ER closures are on the rise again, health care workers' morale is quite low, hospital construction is delayed, nursing homes have seen their operating budgets reduced by \$3.6 million, and there's a freeze on building long-term care beds.

It's time for the Liberal Government to change course and protect what we value the most: the health of our friends and family.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

LIB. GOV'T. - BUDGET DEFICIT

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Well, we're learning all too well the types of businesses that this Liberal Government doesn't want in this province, but we're still waiting with bated breath to see what they do want here.

Now, the Minister of Business last week was able to find one example of a company that was bucking the trend that they're setting to drive companies out of this province, and here we are today: they're surprised by the decrease in revenue. These poor, vulnerable, inept Liberals are so surprised that the revenues are down. We're waiting (Interruption) Of course it is. It was the NDP last week; it's the feds this week. At some point, sir, look in the mirror and realize that under your guidance . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind the honourable member for Pictou East not to refer to members opposite directly.

The honourable member for Pictou East has the floor.

MR. HOUSTON: It's this government's budget - this government's - and here we are, two times, almost three times the deficit? We'll see how it all plays out, Mr. Speaker. It's not looking too cheery right now, is it?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

CHRISTMAS DADDIES - CONTRIBUTE

MR. BEN JESSOME: Christmas Daddies is a Maritime tradition that started in 1964 and has since grown steadily, year after year, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars. They also collect toys for less-fortunate children in the Maritimes to give them a better holiday season. Since the very first broadcast, Christmas Daddies has raised \$28 million. All donations raised stay in the area from which they were made to help the children in those communities.

As of Saturday, December 5th, Christmas Daddies has raised more than \$410,000, and the number continues to grow. I want to personally thank volunteers who helped the telethon that weekend, because without them the event would not be successful. It is not too late to donate, and I encourage everyone to make a contribution to Christmas Daddies to help children in need this holiday season.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

COM. SERV. - ESIA TRANSFORMATION (PHASE II)

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, we know that the Minister of Community Services is undertaking a massive transformation of our province's Employment Support and Income Assistance program. The minister has put out a request for proposals to undertake Phase II of the program, and has said she will conduct consultation sessions with stakeholders.

Dalhousie University Student Union Vice-President John Hutton believes that one of the primary ways to fulfill the mandate of the ESIA program is to allow individuals to receive income assistance while attending post-secondary programs. The DSU argues that students now should be afforded the same benefits as past generations of recipients.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister enters Phase II of the ESIA transformation, I hope that the input of stakeholders like John Hutton is genuinely considered.

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

MUISE, ERNIE: N.S. GOLF ASSOC. - PRES. ELECTION

MR. GORDON WILSON: I would like to congratulate Ernie Muise of Little Brook for being elected the 67th president of the Nova Scotia Golf Association.

Since retiring back home, Mr. Muise has been active with the local golf course and the NSGA. Locally he was on the board of the Clare Golf and Country Club for 12 years,

including one year as its president. Since 2006 he has also been on the board of the NSGA. Over the years, he's gained much experience on the operations of the NSGA. He has served as its Western Zone Representative, Director of Membership, and first and second vice-president. He is also on the Provincial Council of Golf Canada.

Mr. Muise is the third member of our local golf club to be elected as the president of the NSGA. He follows in the footsteps of two other members of the club from Clare, Dr. Julius Comeau and Roland Deveau. Given Mr. Muise's commitment to golfing in Nova Scotia and his past experience in the NSGA, I'm sure it's in good hands.

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

PARIS CONF. - AGREEMENT

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, the Climate Change Conference held recently in Paris concluded with nearly 200 countries, including Canada, signing a first-of-its-kind agreement. These countries agreed to significantly reduce their use of fossil fuels.

These targets are ambitious - many would say that they're challenging - but extensive, concrete, and immediate action needs to be taken. There is no disagreement about that.

We owe it to our planet and to the natural environment we're so dependent on, and we owe it to our children and our children's children, who deserve the same quality of life that we enjoy. Thank you.

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

SULLIVAN, KATE: NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFETY - DEDICATION

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Kate Sullivan for doing a wonderful job of keeping our community safe. She has recently expanded the Clayton Park West Neighbourhood Watch program to include Fairview as well. She organizes and hosts regular well-attended meetings with great discussion of how community members can work together to keep the Fairview and Clayton Park areas safe.

Kate's passion for safety in the community and her drive to see the Neighbourhood Watch engaged is truly amazing. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Kate for her hard work, dedication and enthusiasm for keeping our neighbourhood safe.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

BABE RUTH - WESTVILLE BALL GAME

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I just take this opportunity to tell you a story that happened in 1936. I didn't witness this, Mr. Speaker (Interruptions) Anyway, a feared slugger who played for the New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox, Babe Ruth, visited Pictou County and attended a senior ballgame in Westville. At that particular time, since there was a large crowd knowing he was going to show up, he was asked to take his place at bat for the local Westville team. A young 25-year-old pitcher fired two hard fastballs by Ruth at the plate, and at that particular time, he stepped out of the batter's box, pointed to the pitcher, and told him, son, they're here to see me, not you.

Ruth stepped back into the batter's box, and the next pitch went sailing over the right field fence. Thank you.

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

**PULLEY, VANESSA/JOUDREY, BRIAN
- DIGBY & AREA BD. OF TRADE AWARD**

MR. GORDON WILSON: Last year, as part of their Awards of Excellence, the Digby and Area Board of Trade recognized two rising stars of the business community.

The first, Vanessa Pulley of VP Fitness, opened her fitness centre in May 2014. There she strives to help people meet their goals with the same drive, passion, and creativity with which she runs her business and lives her life. Even with the start-up costs associated with her first year of operation, she finished her first year in good financial shape.

The second, Brian Joudrey of Bnetworked, expanded his computer service business by opening a retail location in March 2013. With this, the company entered into the consumer market and now offers repair services for most electronic devices - this in addition to offering technological services and solutions to fit local businesses' needs and budgets. His focus is on clients' needs, and he has become such an asset to his clients and our community.

I would like to recognize these two recipients of the Rising Star Award. These two entrepreneurs have had such an innovative approach to business, and we will all continue to follow their success.

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

THERIAULT, CLAIRE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: I just wanted to stand for a few moments and speak about a lady who passed away in my constituency a couple of days

ago. Claire Theriault was a schoolteacher who I remembered over the last number of years during my time in high school who always had a quick wit, but was one that you always remembered as you travelled on school outings and such. She was just a great lady with a really great sense of humour.

I just wanted to pass on my best regards to her son, Colin Muise; her daughter, Carrie Anne; and her husband Eddie Theriault - and of course to sister Dianne Salterio and brother Leland Doucette. Just to understand the humour of that family, Colin was posting on Facebook today, and when he talked about his mom, he said he tried to organize a Viking funeral, but he didn't have time to get it together.

God bless the family, and my condolences to everyone.

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

LIB. GOV'T.: HEALTH CARE - ACCESS

HON. DAVID WILSON: Families have less access to timely care in emergencies as a result of the Liberal Government. According to the annual accountability report on emergency departments, emergency room closures across the province have increased by 30 per cent, or more than 6,000 hours in the past year. From a regional perspective, Mr. Speaker, emergency room closures in Cape Breton and on the South Shore have doubled.

One of the most crucial government functions is ensuring people have access to quality and timely health care. On this front, the Liberals have failed Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

GOV'T. (N.S.): ECONOMY GROWTH - IDEAS

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My colleague from Pictou Centre's story reminded me of something that Paul Taylor shared with me recently. He was talking about some Yogi Berra quotes and Yogi Berra had a quote that said, "If people don't want to come to the ballpark, how are we going to stop them?" That was one of Yogi Berra's comments and I was mindful of this government's dilemma, because businesses don't seem to want to come here.

We already know how they're stopping them from coming here, but I'm just waiting anxiously to see if they have any ideas - any ideas whatsoever - as to how to grow the economy here and entice businesses to grow here, to stay here, to come here. Mr. Speaker, their fiscal plan they are so desperate to stick to - we'll see how that works out. Maybe tomorrow is a brighter day, but their fiscal plan is not well-planned.

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

PREM. - PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS: GOOD FAITH - SHOW

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, the Premier needs to show the public sector workers of this province some good faith. How will attacking workers' rights help the government keep emergency rooms open? How will strong-arm tactics help us recruit more doctors? How will floating the trial balloon of legislating teachers' contracts help improve kids' test scores?

First, the Premier passed legislation taking away the hard-won rights of home care workers; he took away collective bargaining rights for health care workers; he went after our taxpaying, joy-giving filmmakers; and lately the Premier has his sights set on teachers. Now, we hear 75,000 Nova Scotians are in his bombing range. Who's next, Mr. Speaker? Who's next?

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

PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS - NEGOTIATION

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of activity here at the Legislature tonight. This is just one of the many gatherings that continues late into the night, particularly at this time of year. We will do our best, but we all know we aren't getting any younger.

Mr. Speaker, the government may feel it does not need to negotiate with Opposition while it has a majority. However, our public sector workers should not be considered Opposition. If there's a way forward it's through negotiation, not heavy-handed tactics done under the cover of night.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

COLE, DARRELL - YMCA (CAN.) PEACE MEDAL

MR. TERRY FARRELL: On Friday, December 11th, Darrell Cole of Amherst was presented with the YMCA of Canada Peace Medallion. This honour is bestowed on a citizen who, without any special circumstances, resources, wealth or position, demonstrates a commitment to building peace within their community.

Darrell has been a valuable volunteer in local, baseball, hockey programs, rotary and other community activities. Congratulations to my friend Darrell Cole upon receiving this special recognition for his years of service to our community.

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

DEThERIDGE, CLAIRE - UNSM: PRES. - CONGRATS.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Councillor Claire Detheridge, as she takes on the role of president of the UNSM. Claire has been a councillor for 33 years being elected first in 1982 to the then-Cape Breton County Council. Claire has served on all major committees of the CBRM, including two terms as deputy mayor.

Claire is passionate about the important role that municipalities play in making Nova Scotia a healthier, more welcoming place to live, work and play. I ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Claire and wish her all the best as she takes on her role as president of the UNSM.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 148.

Bill No. 148 - Public Services Sustainability (2015) Act.

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

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 148, the Public Services Sustainability Act, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation will apply to all public sector employees. We do not wish to create two classes of employee; we want to be fair and consistent in our approach. I want to be clear - government respects and appreciates the hard work performed by all employees who deliver public services to Nova Scotians. Government is committed to both meaningful collective bargaining and to preserving the public services Nova Scotians need. Government has a fiscal plan to return this province to sustainable finances so that we may continue to invest in the priorities of Nova Scotians, into services like education and health care and the infrastructure needs of this province.

Labour is our largest single expense, at 52 per cent of our budget. It is so large that a 1 per cent increase in public sector wages costs the taxpayers of Nova Scotia \$52 million. This is not a one-time cost. It is added to base costs, and we pay for it in perpetuity. We need to ensure that there is predictability and certainty in our labour costs if we are to establish and achieve sustainable finances.

Our fiscal program and the wage framework contained in this legislation will give Nova Scotia the flexibility needed to be partners in federal infrastructure spending; build roads and other infrastructure, including our hospital needs; continue to invest in our classrooms; strengthen partnerships with municipalities; and position Nova Scotia for economic growth.

Government does not take introducing this legislation lightly. Our recent fiscal forecast update clearly shows how vulnerable our fiscal position is, how significantly negative swings in revenue impact us. It also shows the value of predictable expenses. Our forecasted deficit has increased to \$241 million, an increase of almost \$144 million from April.

Governments across Canada are facing tough budget challenges in the face of a prolonged economic downturn. Nova Scotia is not immune to this trend. We have had to revise downward our estimates of GDP growth in both 2015 and 2016. We have tough choices to make, Mr. Speaker. We have to do everything possible to position the province for future growth.

Nova Scotia's fiscal plan and our labour settlements are about righting the ship and preparing Nova Scotia for long-term success. Fundamentally, this legislation provides public sector employees a fair, affordable wage framework and protects collective bargaining. Nova Scotia and Nova Scotians cannot afford more costly settlements - period.

The Public Services Sustainability (2015) Bill respects collective bargaining rights. This is very important. It will ensure that all other matters, such as working conditions, remain negotiable - to be worked out at the bargaining table. It puts a framework in place regarding the new money employers can offer for wages. This legislation establishes a compensation framework that is consistent with the province's fiscal plan.

Annual increments, or step increases, continue for eligible employees. This ensures that our youngest and newest employees continue to see higher wage increases than more senior employees. The compensation framework will be 0, 0, 1, 1.5, and 0.5 per cent on the final day of the agreement.

The Public Services Sustainability (2015) Bill also ensures that no public sector employee will lose the retirement allowance they have accumulated up to April 2015. It encourages the public sector employers and unions to work together to find savings. A portion of these savings could then be applied to further wage increases. This is a key part

of the Public Services Sustainability mandate that I introduced last August and I reiterated just a month ago to public sector unions.

Our public sector employees are creative, thoughtful people. They see every day how work and the work of government can be done more efficiently and effectively. Nova Scotians need their ideas on cost savings and cost avoidance. Government commits to returning a portion of those negotiated cost savings and avoidances as wage increases above what I have already outlined.

Lastly, the Public Service Sustainability Bill applies to all bargaining units, except those who have concluded negotiated collective agreements prior to the Act coming into force. It makes no changes to pensions, benefits and vacation time. It ensures that taxpayers are protected from arbitration decisions that could be higher than what is affordable as set out in the fiscal plan. In recent years, arbitration decisions have cost taxpayers millions of dollars. These decisions were imposed on the province by third parties who were not elected or accountable. They were not required to consider Nova Scotians' ability to pay. That cannot continue.

All Nova Scotians have to play their part as we position the province for a strong future. With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place to hear the comments from my colleagues, thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition. (Interruptions)

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: You know Mr. Speaker, I heard the remarks of the minister in defence of his bill, but really we might as well call this bill what it is, it's the "we don't know how to negotiate" bill. This is really what tonight is all about. A government that campaigned on their great faith in collective bargaining, the Leader of the government that actually wrote to the nurses of the provinces during that election campaign, saying he would always respect collective bargaining. A government that says they are competent to run the public finances of the province.

Yet, when they can't do what is required within the bounds of the law, which is to work out an agreement through negotiation, when they are so incompetent that they get to the point where the only answer is to bring a highly questionable and likely illegal bill to this House, something has gone seriously off the rails. That is why this bill should really be called the "we don't know how to negotiate" bill, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, let's look just at the last few weeks at how we got to this place, Mr. Speaker. The government started down the road of negotiating, then they either threatened the teachers and the public servants of the province, or they didn't - it was reported that they

threatened them with legislation if they didn't agree to the government's terms, then the Leader of the government, the Premier actually said no they did no such thing. Then the union leaders told their members that they had been on the receiving end of specific threats, and then the elected government said no, no, we've looked at all our options, but we're not considering that.

That was as recently as a week ago, Mr. Speaker, that they were denying that this was the plan. Maybe it wasn't at that time - maybe they're making it up as they go along. After all, when the government made the statement that they were in a hurry to get an answer from the public sector workers, from the government employees, about whether they were going to vote on the offer or not, the government wrote them a threatening letter saying we need to know by last Thursday, Mr. Speaker, at 9:00 a.m. When their bluff got called, then they said, well actually we aren't in any hurry whatsoever. Take your time over Christmas and we'll see you in January; there's no rush. That was the position of the government on Friday. Now, we're here on Monday and we have this bill before us.

No wonder it didn't work. When you threaten people, when you say one thing on Thursday and you say the opposite on Friday, when you then say the first part again on Monday, no wonder you're not going to get agreement from anybody. Mr. Speaker, the workers of the province, the teachers of the province, and the public employees have actually lost trust in the government to deal with them. Who can blame them when they get a different answer every day? Surprise, surprise, in fair old Nova Scotia, when a government pushes people around, when it threatens people, when it sends these mixed signals, it does not get a fair deal, and it doesn't get agreement on a fair deal. It has been messed up from the start.

Of course we want to see a government that lives within its means. Of course we want to see a financial plan that actually works. But after seeing this government cut and cut and cut to some of the most small and basic groups in our society, and then see them completely mess up the way they negotiate with public sector workers, we have lost any faith, any trust in their ability to get this done. All that the people of Nova Scotia received in exchange for the way this has been handled is higher deficits, more debt, further off track on our financial trajectory. That's what we have for all the efforts of the government, for all the tough talk, for all the threats. Things actually got worse. That's just in the last few weeks.

It was only a year ago that the government brought in its original legislation on labour, as you know, Mr. Speaker. They again said, oh, we're not sidetracking collective bargaining, when they brought in their essential services bill. They brought in Bill No. 100 to merge the health unions, where they actually proposed to bring in an arbitrator to allocate members to unions and to get on with collective bargaining. Mr. Dorsey was the arbitrator.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure this will come up, we were quite prepared to give them the benefit of the doubt then and support the health mergers. We asked the

government, is what you're doing constitutional? Is what you're doing even legal? We've seen assurance after assurance that they knew what they were doing, that they were working within the bounds of the Constitution of Canada. They sent their arbitrator, Mr. Dorsey, out to make his rulings.

But as it turns out, the government was wrong. They were not operating within the rules of the constitution. Their own arbitrator said that he's not merely an usher in the theatre allocating those seats in the unions, that he had serious concerns about whether the law that the government had passed was constitutional. Their response to that concern was to attempt to fire the arbitrator - not just once, not just twice, but three times - because he had the gall to actually say that maybe the government's labour law was illegal.

That is when we lost faith in this government's ability to manage the public sector of the province. We said then that the support that we once gave to them is withdrawn. And here we are tonight, a year later, with another bill which the government assures us is constitutional. Mr. Speaker, I don't think so. Not this time.

If they were so confident, one could only wonder why they go out of their way in their own bill on multiple occasions, to deny the ability of any tribunal, any labour board, any arbitrator - even the board that they're going to set up under this bill - to express an opinion on the constitutionality of what they are doing.

The government's lesson from Mr. Dorsey is not to make sure they bring legislation to this House that is constitutional, that would be a reasonable thing to do, Mr. Speaker, but instead their solution is to deny the Dorseys of the future the ability to express an opinion on whether their bill is constitutional or not. How typical of this government, instead of actually listening to those concerns, and bringing in bills that have the strength of the Constitution of Canada behind them, they would rather suppress the opinion in the first place.

You cannot trust this government anymore to bring bills like this to this House and take their word for it that they are constitutional, that they operate within the law. When a government has to resort to highly questionable legislation, it is a signature of failure in their ability to manage the public sector of this province. It is an admission of guilt in losing track of the finances of the province and resorting to quite likely unconstitutional means, Mr. Speaker, and I would say to get to the ends they want, but they're actually getting further away from financial balance every day on their own. So, there's not even a "we're doing this for" reason, because the reason that they are aiming for, they keep missing by more and more Mr. Speaker, as the financial update today showed.

Here is the problem, Mr. Speaker, here is the problem: when the government brings in a bill like this and they pass it and it is challenged in the courts by representatives of government workers, by constitutional scholars, when it is challenged in the courts and it loses, Mr. Speaker, it actually costs taxpayers more. It actually costs the people of Nova

Scotia millions and millions of dollars more than if they had done nothing. It costs hundreds of millions of dollars more than if they achieved, through bargaining, what they had set out to do without this bill, because when these kinds of bills are struck down, then the government has to go all the way back to the start. It has to actually come up with a negotiated settlement and pay for it, plus, the millions and millions of dollars in legal fees that will be rung up, make no doubt, they will be rung up on the taxpayers' dime as a result of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, not only is the government's whole plan highly suspect, but it costs taxpayers more at the end of the day. So I can tell you, as the Leader of a Party that absolutely does believe in the need for financial restraint, that actually does believe that government should live within its means, that wants the growth in our debt and deficits to stop, that this bill actually makes it worse, because it will not stand the test of time and it will cost taxpayers more.

We already saw this play out a year ago; the government's health reorganization bill is a year old. Their essential services legislation is a year old. Are we any closer to resolving those issues today than we were then? No, we're not, Mr. Speaker, but millions of dollars in fees are being rung up and lots of taxpayers' dollars are being spent. The health care system is no leaner today - in fact, the administrative costs go up and up, and up. We're supposed to have one big health authority but the fact is that the health system still operates under the old boundaries, the collective agreements still work under the old boundaries. You can't get a nurse in Dartmouth to come and cover off a shift in Halifax. That has not gotten better. It is just the same, but its cost millions of dollars to shuffle the paper around. That is the problem.

So, here we are, Mr. Speaker, even if we debated, we're debating a year later and millions of dollars later whether it's had any effect, but they bring in the same kind of bill with the same kinds of constitutional questions, and try and assure us oh, this time, well this time, it'll be right.

Mr. Speaker, that's not even the only time. It was not that long ago that the then-Minister of Justice brought in a bill called the Limitation of Actions Act and told us in both official languages that it was constitutional, that it was the only way to go, that there was nothing they could do to actually help people who were the victims of past sexual abuse. Well, led by the member for Inverness, we stood up on this side of the House and said, no, we don't accept that. You're wrong. Your advice is wrong. Go look.

They said, nowhere else in Canada can it be done as you want it to be done here in Nova Scotia. A simple Google search showed that, in fact, the protections that we wanted for past victims of sexual assault exist in six other provinces of Canada and at the federal level. But the government insisted that they were right on the legalities of it, and they were wrong. They had to reverse themselves in the next sitting of this House.

Now they bring in a bill with similar assurances of legality, but we have lost any trust in that advice. We cannot stand on this side of the House and support a bill that is so questionable, that inevitably leads to more costs for taxpayers. How ironic to call it the Public Services Sustainability Act, Mr. Speaker. How Orwellian to call it that when nothing in this bill ensures better public services, better schools, better hospitals, or more secure public services - nothing. In fact, it upsets the apple cart in all those cases. That's what's going to happen, inevitably, like it did last year, and like it has on every occasion.

Mr. Speaker, we could be in this House talking about the education system and what's going on in our classrooms, the learning environment, the teaching environment. But as the bill makes clear, when it comes to education, all the government is interested in is whether the teachers get zero or whether they get one. There's a lot more to discuss and decide about the state of education in this province than that.

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development brings in an action plan. Eight of the biggest items in it are in the collective agreement. They were quite prepared to trade all eight away in order to get their zeroes and ones on teachers' salaries. Why would you trade away important improvements in our classroom, to put them on the table, to take them off the table, because the teachers' union didn't want it?

Where they went so wrong is, as it turns out the teachers themselves actually do want to talk about education reform, classroom reform, working conditions, the learning environment - the very things the government was prepared to trade away because all they care about is how much they pay the teachers. Is it zero? Is it one?

Yes, we want financial restraint, but that is not the whole story. It's not even half the story, if you're going to trade away the classroom in order to get it. That's where they went wrong, and this bill enshrines it. Wouldn't it be better to be spending our time talking about how to make our classrooms better? Wouldn't that be better than a bill like this?

The same is true in our health care system. Nova Scotians want a better health care system. They want to know their emergency rooms are open when they need them. They want to know that they don't have to wait for years for hip surgery or knee surgery. They want to know they have a family doctor to go to.

But we're not talking about those things. The government is not legislating in those areas. That's what Nova Scotians want. None of that is being legislated in this bill. When the government sees health care, all they care about is whether the nurses get zero or one. All they care about is whether the doctors get zero or one. Mr. Speaker, that is not the whole story in our health care system. That is not even half the story of our health care system. They are prepared to trade away any hope of a better system to get zeroes and ones. Come on, Nova Scotia is a better province than that.

They can negotiate and get whatever fiscal framework they want, but when they stumble on that, when they fumble on that, they bring in this questionable bill, we spend our time on this, and therefore we're not spending time on the things Nova Scotians want this Legislature to focus on: wait times, family doctors, emergency rooms, keeping people healthy, health promotion, population health. These are the things we could be spending our time on. Instead, the government is totally consumed by legislating zeroes and ones and the rest of it can just go away.

Well, that is not right, Mr. Speaker. Let me tell you, we can once again ask the government to look around the country and see what is going on. We can ask them to look around the country and see what happens when bills like this come in. There's a very real example in British Columbia with the teachers, where the government tried to legislate, and that Legislature is being held up in the Supreme Court now, because it's likely illegal and unconstitutional. And when the day comes that the Supreme Court of Canada makes its findings, far from saving money, the taxpayers of B.C. will have spent more - hundreds of millions of dollars more than necessary.

Now, I don't know if the Liberal Government here knows what the Liberal Government in British Columbia does or not. Their record, as we've seen in other cases, suggests they don't know, because they don't do their homework. They don't look to see. But there is a very expensive lesson for the taxpayers of Nova Scotia going on in this very case in British Columbia, Mr. Speaker.

It doesn't work. It costs more. It puts our taxpayers further behind the eight ball. It makes our public services less sustainable, because we're not focusing on solutions in bills like this. That's a problem, and British Columbia is not the only example. In Saskatchewan there is a bill like this that was passed by the Legislature that is also being challenged in the courts as being non-constitutional. And when the day comes that the Supreme Court rules on that bill, it will likely cost the taxpayers of Saskatchewan more than if they had not brought in that bill in the first place, and they will be further behind the eight ball. That is not right.

Every million dollars that gets spent on lawyers and legal fees and consultants, as they try to sort out bad bills, is a million dollars less for our classrooms. It's a million dollars less for our hospitals. It's a million dollars less for things that Nova Scotians want their tax dollars spent on. And so for every Nova Scotian who is watching, who is scratching their heads and saying, how can the government cut things and then the deficit get bigger, and we get further behind - these are the reasons why, Mr. Speaker. These are the reasons why, because when you have nothing to offer except cuts, except doom, except threats, except pushing people around - when that's your agenda, things do not get better. They get worse. And even the books of the province will show that, as they show today.

I heard the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board give his financial update earlier today, which showed our deficit going from the original \$98 million when they did their

budget, to \$240 million as of today, Mr. Speaker. I heard him say, well, all we can do is cut things. That's all we can do, he said. But that is not the case. If that's how narrow the government's vision is, that all they can see is cuts and cuts and pushing people around, and bills like this, then the people of Nova Scotia will see that for what it is: a lack of vision, a lack of hope, a lack of planning.

There's a whole other side that is about making sure that we have all the conditions in place to actually create a job or two, to actually give Nova Scotians an opportunity or two, to actually see a paycheck come in and an income earned here in this province that can be taxed. In other words, to grow something and not just cut.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, there is no cut that is anywhere near as good as a new job in this province. There is no cut that can take the place of giving people meaningful work at meaningful wages. That's where we should be spending our time, because that's the road of hope and growth and opportunity and tax dollars for reinvestment in the things that Nova Scotians want. That is a way forward, but if the government is only going to focus on the expense side we will never get there.

That's why it is clearly a government that knows the costs of things but the value of nothing, Mr. Speaker. They knew the cost of the film industry, but not its value in the 3,000 jobs held in this province by young, dynamic, creative Nova Scotians who are earning incomes in private companies; who are buying homes and taking out mortgages, having kids, buying cars and putting down roots in this province; who are no longer doing that Mr. Speaker, or doing it in greatly reduced numbers, because the government knew the cost of their tax credit, but not the value of the industry.

The same is true Mr. Speaker, of our natural resources. Whether it's our forests, or our mining industry, our offshore industry, our onshore gas industry - there are estimates that we have 15 trillion cubic feet of gas beneath our feet. That could be used to make electricity in a cleaner way here in Nova Scotia, to reduce the cost of electricity for our manufacturers and for our households. But the government has banned any look to see if we could prove up that resource and actually use it here at home to create jobs and wealth, and then wonders why their tax revenues are going down, while their expenses go up. That is the problem.

So if the government looks at the books and says well, our corporate taxes are down, our personal taxes are down, our HST is down, so the only answer is to cut more things and to legislate something that we completely failed to get in a normal way at the bargaining table, we are in big trouble indeed. That is a lack of vision, a lack of hope, a lack of a plan to actually make Nova Scotia a richer place. This bill is an admission of all of those things. It's an admission of failure.

That's why it's the "we don't know how to negotiate" bill, Mr. Speaker. We've heard from teachers about the things they want to talk about are - not their wages, but

what's really going on in the classroom. We should take them at their word for that, the government should, and work out something that addresses the classroom experience.

When we are talking to the public servants of the province, who actually do want to see hospitals that work, who do want to see government services provided in a way that helps people, we should take them at their word at that and work something out that sees the government's fiscal plan dealt with at the able, along with ensuring them we negotiate something that improves the experience of Nova Scotians when they call on government services. But that's not going to happen; it's not going to happen.

Far from actually sustaining their public service, the bill throws them into more uncertainty than ever; that's no way to run a province. That's no way to say, hey, we're going to find a way to get back to balance, when every report we get gets further, and further away from that balance. I don't know what it's going to take for the government to realize that the financial plan that they say they have isn't working. Going from a \$98 million deficit to a \$240 million deficit, cutting your way from \$98 million up to \$241 million clearly is not working.

Looking at those declining revenues and saying that the answer to that is to cut further, that is not the way to go. I can tell you that if the government thinks that when they eventually pass this bill, as their majority will surely do, that it is not going to do anything more than cost Nova Scotia taxpayers more, they are sadly mistaken.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll resume second reading immediately following Oral Questions put by Members to Ministers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM. - ANTI-CYBERBULLYING LAW: COURT DECISION - RESPONSE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Last week, the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia struck down the province's anti-cyberbullying law. This is a real issue for all Nova Scotians who want to see the victims of cyberbullying protected, particularly our younger Nova Scotians. The government has said that they are going to consider what to do now that this law has been struck down by the courts.

I would like to ask the Premier, has he decided whether the government will appeal the decision of the Supreme Court or whether they will bring in new legislation to protect the people of Nova Scotia from cyberbullying?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As he knows, the Supreme Court ruled, the ruling was just last Friday. The minister and the department are looking at all options for the government. One of them would be to appeal and the other would be to actually bring in our own legislation. We believe there needs to be something in place to protect people. We will let the minister and the department do their work and then we'll respond in due time.

MR. BAILLIE: I am sure that we all agree, on all sides of this House, that leaving young people in particular exposed without the protection of a valid cyberbullying law is a situation that no one would like to see left unaddressed for long.

I recognize this is a recent ruling of the Supreme Court, but I would like to ask the Premier if he can share with the House - has the government set up a timeline for this? When might we hear a decision from the government on how they plan to ensure the protection of young people from cyberbullying? When will they have a decision about what they're going to do about the cyberbullying law?

THE PREMIER: I thank the honourable member for the question. As I said, this ruling came down on Friday. The minister has received the ruling. The department is looking at that, looking at the options for government to ensure that either we appeal the current ruling or we put in place a piece of legislation that we believe will withstand the Charter, as well as ensuring that we are protecting Nova Scotia children.

MR. BAILLIE: Of course we all want to see a solution here. We all want to see either an appeal or a new bill that will withstand any constitutional challenges and ensure that the young people of Nova Scotia - and indeed all victims of cyberbullying - have a piece of legislation that protects them without challenge.

I know that although the existing law in Nova Scotia was struck down, there are many other provinces that wish they had a cyberbullying Act as strong as Nova Scotia had to protect their young people. That only comes as a result of consultation among experts, stakeholders, parents, educators, and those themselves who have been on the victim end of cyberbullying. Does the government's plan to consider its options include consultation with all the affected parties?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As I said, the minister received this ruling on Friday. Of course as we go out, it depends obviously if there is going to be an appeal, it will be in the hands of the lawyers to appeal a specific case, but if it's a case of bringing in new legislation, the minister will be reaching out. I think it has been widely reported - Dr. Wayne MacKay, who was a part of this talked about how quickly this piece of legislation had been put together before, so part of the process of bringing in new legislation will be reaching out to those partners of ours outside government, to ensure that the next piece of legislation will stand.

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

PREM. - COLLECTIVE RIGHTS: PROMISE - BREACH

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, back in 2013, when the Premier was Leader of the Opposition, he wrote to health care workers in our province to let them know that he would respect their hard-earned collective rights, and I'll table that letter.

Two years later, this Liberal Premier has done anything but. First he took away the collective rights of home care workers with Bill No. 30, then health care workers with Bill Nos. 37 and 1. Now this government is going after the collective rights of social workers, highway workers, teachers - 75,000 Nova Scotians.

My question for the Premier is this, why has the Premier once again broken his promise to respect the hard-earned collective rights of Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question, and I want to assure all members of this House and, indeed, all Nova Scotians that this government respects the collective bargaining rights of all Nova Scotians.

We've heard loud and clear from Nova Scotians, though, that we need to live within the fiscal plan that we have and the finances this province has. We've made a commitment to Nova Scotians that all of us are going to share in this journey as we go forward.

No one is losing anything that has been earned up to this point. Nothing is being clawed back. No one has had anything taken from them. What we have said is this is an agreement before us that we believe is fair to workers, fair to Nova Scotians. We look forward to continuing to move forward and build on this.

I want to remind all members of this House that the only people to lose any rights were paramedics when the NDP were in power.

MS. MACDONALD: I remind the Premier that the paramedics went to arbitration without a gun to their head.

Mr. Speaker, in 2007 when a Progressive Conservative Government was planning to take away the collective bargaining rights of health care workers, the current Premier objected, stating, and I quote: We support the collective bargaining process which is working in the health care sector in this province. I'll table that. Incidentally, back in 2007, health care workers succeeded in keeping their collective rights, and they negotiated a 3 per cent increase, an increase this Premier supported, so much so that he appointed the former Health Minister from that government to chair his Treasury Board.

My question for the Premier is, why is the Premier so intent on breaking the same collective bargaining process he once stated as being a positive thing for our province's health care sector?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank hard-working men and women across this province. We're very pleased to come to (Interruptions). Mr. Speaker, we were able to negotiate at the table with residency doctors that reflects 0, 0, 1, 1.5, 0.5. We have a tentative agreement with Crowns across the province. We have a tentative agreement with NSGEU, with the same wage pattern that was negotiated at the bargaining table. We're continuing to work across all tables to be fair to all Nova Scotians. (Interruption)

They have the opportunity to vote. I think they're going to set a date. They're more than likely to have that vote. The reality of it is, Nova Scotia has a fiscal challenge that we have to pay and live within.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, today the Premier and his government are taking away the collective rights of doctors, the collective rights of nurses, the collective rights of health care workers and those who care for sick and dying people in our province. They're taking away the collective rights of teachers, who dedicate themselves to educating our kids. They're taking away the collective rights of highway workers, who this very night are out keeping our roads safe after the first snowfall. These are the people who make our province the good place it is to live.

My question to the Premier is this, why has he attacked the rights and refused to bargain respectfully and in good faith at the bargaining table with 75,000 Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to remind her that we have been at the bargaining table with a number of tables. We've come to agreements with a number of them. I want to explain to all members of this House that we went in with 0, 0, 0, 1, 1 at the bargaining table. We negotiated with the unions to make it 0, 0, 1, 1.5, and 0.5.

We went there working in good faith, but the reality is that we have fiscal challenges in this province, and all Nova Scotians are going to have to be part of getting us back to fiscal health. No worker in this province is losing anything that they've earned or that they had at the bargaining table. As a matter of fact, we believe we have a fair offer on the table - fair to workers across this province, as well as fair to the ability of the province to be able to pay.

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

JUSTICE: CYBERSCAN UNIT - STATUS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. When the province's cyberbullying plan was brought in, it included the creation of a CyberSCAN unit, which currently has 560 complaints that have been filed with it. The CyberSCAN unit was created under the cyberbullying Act, which was struck down by the courts last week.

I'll ask the Minister of Justice, what is the present status of the CyberSCAN unit?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. To delve in a little bit deeper into the CyberSCAN unit, there are actually 820 complaints, or individual cases, that that unit has looked at since it was first brought into play a couple of years ago. The current status is that they also spend a lot of their time in education, and they've done - I believe it's over 700 presentations at schools, to the police, and so on. They will continue to do that, and they will remain as a unit.

Perhaps you have a further question, and I could add more.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, yes, I do have a further question. Our anti-cyberbullying efforts do not include only the cyberbullying Act that was struck down, but also important changes to the Education Act, which among others, created a code of conduct in our schools and required a report card to parents on the progress of anti-cyberbullying measures in our schools.

I will ask the Minister of Justice, or whoever chooses to respond over there, what is the progress on the efforts in our schools, which are now more important than ever, about creating that code of conduct and reporting on our progress in stopping cyberbullying in our schools?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, again, that is a good observation about the linkage to our school system. A lot of the complaints are centred around youth, and that is the most vulnerable group that we're looking at. I have had an opportunity to speak with the Education and Early Childhood Development Minister about a lot of the systems that were put in place at schools. They will continue to gather information and to monitor and to do all of the work that they were doing under the Cyber-safety Act, because they still need that information for policing and reporting back to communities. So that will continue, while we look at our options in terms of the legislation.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - NEW HOSPITALS: PLANS - DELAY EXPLAIN

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

In the government's economic forecast update, they forecast Capital Grants requirements to be under budget by about \$12.9 million, mainly due to the design and construction delays for hospitals throughout Nova Scotia. Dr. Peter Blaikie has said that when a hospital needs replacing, the longer the government waits, the more it's going to deteriorate. I'll table that, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to ask the minister, why is the minister delaying plans to build new hospitals, forcing patients to be treated in increasingly deteriorating buildings for years to come?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say, in the wee hours of the morning, that we'll soon be opening a new facility in Guysborough. The previous government failed to act. The previous NDP Government talked a lot about Dartmouth General and did nothing for the four and a half years they were in government. We have finished the fourth floor, and the third is underway. The design work for the fifth and the surgical tower is now in scope. We'll have that contract out in 2016. There is more hospital work going on in just two years than we saw in four and a half years with the previous government.

MR. DAVID WILSON: The reason he is going to be able to open a new hospital is because of the work the previous government did with the community to raise money for that. Take the credit all you want, Mr. Speaker - the minister can do that, but we know what the truth is. We have a deteriorating Centennial Building right now that is ironically going through the same issue that we saw just a couple of weeks ago or month ago.

Construction was supposed to start in 2016 - delayed because of the Liberal Government. Why does the government continue to delay the important work of improving our hospitals? When will the minister bring forward a plan to replace the Centennial Building so that Nova Scotians can have access to the health care they need?

MR. GLAVINE: As the member opposite knows, the former Minister of Health, if his government had done real planning and consulting instead of throwing \$1 million and just hoping for the best and, in fact, the plan was not adequate, was not comprehensive. We will reveal in January to Nova Scotians what the QEII Health Sciences will actually look like.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - VG FLOOD (14/15):
SURGERIES - POSTPONEMENTS**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, speaking of the Centennial Building, another flood at the Victoria General Hospital forced officials to shut down the water and postpone surgeries yesterday. Back in September if we all remember, another flood in the ophthalmology outpatient clinic postponed over 100 surgeries, to move 50 intensive care patients.

My question to the minister this morning is, how many Nova Scotians had their surgeries postponed because of the latest flood at the VG Hospital?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the member opposite is that there were about 10 surgeries cancelled, when I had the last update. I'll get an update early tomorrow morning on how things are progressing with the clean-up. I know that when there were cancellations during the last flood, we were able to move some of the work to another site and eventually all of those cancellations and delays were caught up 100 per cent.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Repeated floods and other problems at the VG continue to create uncertainty and longer wait times for people who rely on those services offered at that hospital. My question to the minister is, what is the plan to accommodate the patients whose surgeries were cancelled on Monday? How much longer will they have to wait, knowing that they probably waited a very long time already?

MR. GLAVINE: During the earlier flood when ophthalmology, the eye centre, had a huge hit on their plans for doing almost a couple of hundred procedures each and every day, they were able to move some of that work out to the Cobequid Community Health Centre. Perhaps that work will have to go on there once again. Hopefully - I guess now it will be Wednesday's Question Period - we'll be able to update all members of the House on how progress is going.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

EECD - STUDENTS: EUROPEAN TRAVEL - CANCELLATIONS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Teachers and students are concerned that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is considering cancelling all scheduled European travel. This decision would have a negative impact on many students who are scheduled to take March break 2016 trips.

My question to the minister is, has the minister cancelled European travel for Nova Scotia students?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you to the member for the question. One of the things that we try to base all of our decisions on is the safety of our students. When there is concern about international travel, when some of the trips that students have planned for are in areas of the world that are not stable and perhaps deemed to be unsafe, I think it's important and it's prudent on the part of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the administration at the schools to review and make sure that none of our students are at risk when they leave this province.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, cancellation so close to March break will result in approximately \$1,000 in fees for students scheduled to travel. This would be a true hardship for many students who have spent a great amount of time in raising funds at their school and community for these trips. My question to the minister is, will the minister reassure students and teachers that their European travel plans will not be cancelled by the province or by the school boards?

MS. CASEY: As I've stated, safety is a priority for all of our students. At the present time, the decisions about which trips are planned, involving the parents and the school board to determine if, in fact, it is safe for the students to travel - those decisions are made with parents, with teachers, and with school boards. I would suggest that the loss of money on a trip is nothing compared to the loss of life if they're in danger.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

COM. SERV. - INCOME ASSISTANCE: REDUCTIONS - EFFECTS

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, for the last two years, this Liberal government has frozen income assistance rates and arbitrarily clawed back benefits people had relied on for years, like bus passes and allowances for specific foods as recommended by their doctor. There is no arguing that the cost of food, electricity, and other essentials has risen in the last two years. How does the Minister of Community Services expect income assistance recipients to be able to afford these growing costs?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: I thank the member for the question. There is no doubt in my mind that people on income assistance, the working poor of Nova Scotia - many of us are having difficulties meeting the basic necessities of life each day. That's why this government has started a comprehensive, significant benefit reform on a system that, quite frankly, doesn't meet the needs of people today. It's been tinkered with for a couple of decades. What is needed is long-term sustainable change that actually can make a difference for people who are living on income assistance in Nova Scotia.

MS. MANCINI: The minister has made it clear that she intends to keep the rates frozen for the foreseeable future, despite the fact that yesterday's fiscal update showed \$11 million were unspent in the income assistance budget, and I will table that. My question,

Mr. Speaker, why has the minister underspent on income assistance when it is clear Nova Scotians who rely on that support are struggling to make ends meet?

MS. BERNARD: What the member fails to address is that we're not underspent in that area. People are actually moving off of the system and finding work in Nova Scotia. As Nova Scotians, we would all want people to be sustainable and self-sufficient and to meet the goals that they've set for themselves. Why we're \$11 million underspent is because people are actually moving off the system into the workforce. We actually are reinvesting into areas such as persons with disabilities and child welfare, both of which are under tremendous financial strain at this point in time.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

JUSTICE: CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES - MED. ADMINISTRATION

HON. PAT DUNN: My question is for the Minister of Justice. The minister had the opportunity to tour the correctional facility in Pictou County, the Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Facility. There appears to be different regulations or opinions about when medication is administered in our correctional facilities in Nova Scotia.

One inmate at the Pictou County correctional facility apparently should be taking Seroquel, a drug that helps with his depression and anxiety. For some reason, he's not allowed to have that drug at this particular facility, but when placed in Cape Breton for a short time, he was allowed to have this medication. He returned back to Pictou County, and he was disallowed it.

My question to the minister, why does there appear to be two sets of rules regarding the issuing of medicine within our correctional facilities?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: That's a question that I don't have the immediate answer for. I can say that when I toured the facility, there is a health centre within that facility and it's staffed all the time. There are always nurses on staff. A lot of them come from the VON, I understand, but they're there every day caring for the needs of the people, the offenders, who are in that institution. I'm not sure why the protocol would differ from Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional to Cape Breton, but it is certainly a question I can look into.

MR. DUNN: I thank the minister for that answer, Mr. Speaker. The Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Centre opened in February 2015. There is a state-of-the-art dentistry unit at the correctional facility. We have received complaints that you cannot obtain dentistry assistance. There is no dentist available at this site.

We continue to hear about this state-of-the-art facility that meets all the needs of the inmates, but despite a dentistry unit available, there is no dentist. My question to the minister is, why isn't this service available for inmates who require dental assistance?

MS. WHALEN: I certainly recognize that dentistry and care of oral health is really important in anybody's health. That again would be something I'd need to look into. I know that the facility is excellent. As I said, it has a wonderful medical health section. It has a social worker who is in there on a full time basis. They also have a new office just for a social worker who is in there every day.

It really has the best layout of any of the correctional facilities that we have. I will ask about the dentistry side of that provision of services.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

TIR: RURAL RDS. - IMPORTANCE

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. I know many members are disappointed with the amount of money that is being spent on rural roads in the form of the Rural Impact Mitigation budget. It is 25 per cent less than it was back in 2008.

The government has an extra billion dollars in terms of an extra 2 per cent in HST revenue, and an extra half billion dollars in federal transfer payments. So we're looking at 25 per cent less in this budget.

Why aren't these roads that are getting less attention now - in fact, we're only getting three years-worth of maintenance for the price of four, over the course of the term of the government. Why aren't these roads important to the government?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I thank the member for the question. It's a little rich coming from him. He knows that they are important to us. We've had a number of conversations - myself and that member directly. He has a good relationship with our staff on the ground in the County of Inverness, on all the roads that he's concerned with. He's certainly not alone with respect to the challenges that we have on our infrastructure.

We've got \$16 million in the RIM budget. We've added a million since coming in government. I know that doesn't make a huge difference across the board, but we've got our roads under control as best we can. We've got a strong system that takes the politics out of it and uses the local staff and their expertise to get things done. We're doing our very best and again, when the member has specific requests, we certainly do our best to meet those.

MR. MACMASTER: I know the minister is doing the best he can with the budget that's agreed upon at the Cabinet Table, but it should be known that it's not just myself that's complaining about this. I hear about it every day, and I'm sure many other members are hearing about it as well, so it's certainly good reason to lobby for it here in the Legislature because I think what's happening in our areas should be taken to the floor of this House.

There is a five-year capital plan that we're awaiting and we know there is a \$500,000 threshold on these capital projects. That means that there are many roads that might need reconstruction. I'm thinking of gravel roads that are never even going to get looked at. Why not change that policy so the threshold is lower, so these roads have a chance to get addressed?

MR. MACLELLAN: At the end of the day, we have a significant amount of budget for both operational and capital projects under TIR and under the government in general. We do our very best. When we move it from one allocation to the next, we do so to get the best impact of those tax dollars.

When there is an issue, when there is a specific problem on a road,- obviously we will apply our engineering, we apply the science of volume and what we use in terms of businesses that are on that road and the importance to the community. At the end of the day, it's one big pot of money. We really do apply the expertise of the local staff and we do our very best.

It isn't about budget. We look at priorities. We look at what we can do, and we do our very best to do those year after year. I'm very proud of the work our department does. We take the politics out of it.

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

EECD: REGULATED CHILD CARE SECTOR - REVIEW RELEASE

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has told us many times in this House what a good friend she is to the teachers of this province. Yet here we are, Mr. Speaker. Here we are. On January 8th of this year, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development commenced a review of the regulated child care sector. Workers in the child care sector tell me that they are eagerly awaiting the results of this review, which are expected sometime this Spring. My question for the minister is, specifically, when will the results of this review be made available?

HON. KAREN CASEY: When we formed government in 2013, there were a number of areas within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

that needed to have a thorough look to see how we can build on what is existing and look at new programs and new initiatives and stop doing things that frankly were not having a positive and intended outcome. One of the things that we did first of all of course was the public schools, and we have completed that. We also looked at early years, in particular looking at the number of preschoolers who are on wait-lists. We've been able to eliminate the wait-lists so there are no longer the 300 people on that list that were there when we formed government.

The third review is the review of child care. It is our intention to do a complete review, take one project, look at it, review it, and have actions designed to improve it. When we have completed that, we'll move on. The child care review has been completed, and we will be acting on it and making an announcement about the outcome of that review in January.

MS. ZANN: I do thank the minister for that response. Mr. Speaker, a number of areas were actually identified in that review, including wages and benefits for early childhood educators as well as access to professional development opportunities and undoubtedly with the recent events involving teachers and labour relations have child care workers concerned about their own future. My question for the minister is, given recent events around labour relations, what message does she have for early childhood educators who await the results of their review?

MS. CASEY: When we were doing the consultation as part of the review, we met with many of the early childhood educators, and together there were areas that we identified as priorities: safety for students, accessibility, affordability, and of course the wages of the workers there. I think all of us in our meetings and in our consultation agreed that those were the areas that we would focus on. We will continue to do that. The results of that report, as I've stated earlier, including those core areas, will be revealed in January.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: PHYSICIAN PROVISION - CAMPAIGN PROMISE

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The Nova Scotia Health Authority estimates about 5 per cent of Cape Bretoners, or more than 5,000 people, are without a doctor. Without a family doctor, people don't get important test results when they need them. No doctor means that some people don't get important prescriptions refilled and that their conditions are not properly monitored. My question to the minister is, does the minister have a plan to fulfill the Liberal campaign promise to provide a doctor for every Nova Scotian?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: We know that there are a couple of areas of the province that are more problematic in attracting doctors to their particular areas. We have made some gains in a very short time. The tuition relief program allowed the first number of

doctors to practise in about nine different communities across the province. We know that we have more work to do in Cape Breton, but probably we need to be talking as much about a primary caregiver, and not just a physician, in a number of cases.

MR. MACLEOD: There's no question that people require some primary care workers. Mr. Speaker, an article in the *Cape Breton Post* this weekend illustrated the uncertainty and fear people without a family doctor have to live with when they experience a health problem, and I'll table that article. People say they feel that they have been let down by this government and that they've broken their promise when it comes to doctors. The simple question that's on the mind of many, many Cape Bretoners is, how long will Cape Bretoners have to wait for the recruitment plan for the 11 new doctors that need to be had in Cape Breton? When will that be completed?

MR. GLAVINE: I'm pleased to say that there have been a few communities in Cape Breton that were looking for a physician for a long period of time that have been able to get a doctor. We know that this year the tuition relief program will allow us to add 25 doctors for a return of service to Nova Scotia. What I can tell the member opposite is that Cape Breton will get their fair share of those 25.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

FIN. & TREASURY BD. - BUDGET UPDATES: NOTICE - TIME FRAME

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. When this government was first elected, the former Finance and Treasury Board Minister held an Opposition briefing on the budget update and made quite a big deal over how the NDP never did that, and this government was going to do that to be open and transparent. We only had one of those briefings, Mr. Speaker. Then we used to get a couple of days' notice. It has fallen all the way to this morning, when we got about two hours' notice before the update. My question is, what has happened with the openness and transparency - that we try to hide everything in a short notice period of an update?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I guess, Mr. Speaker, with the work being done, both in the Legislature and with my work that had me attend the COP21 conference in Paris, and with the obligation to have a fiscal update before the end of the month, I just had to move forward and get the job done.

MR. HOUSTON: I think we heard the truth there. Too busy to be open and transparent was what I heard, Mr. Speaker. My question for the minister is, was the minister surprised with the dramatic decrease in tax revenues? He's so far out of touch with what's happening in this province that he was actually surprised that revenue was down. That's my question for the minister.

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I believe the member opposite is a little bit, I guess, off base perhaps in the suggestion that the fiscal update is somehow anything but open and transparent. The document, the details are all very public and open for review. Indeed, it didn't take very long for the members of his caucus to rise in this Legislature with questions and comments stemming from the details in that update. So I'm not sure what concern he has with openness and transparency. I think we've been very open and transparent with the state of the province's financial situation.

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

FISH. & AQUACULTURE - POLLOCK PROJ.: RESULTS - RELEASE DATE

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: My question is for the Acting Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture. Last week, when I asked about the ongoing lobster pilot project, the minister told us that the project has now been expanded to southwestern Nova Scotia. Mr. Speaker, the acting minister does not want to talk about dispersants in the offshore. Perhaps he will talk about the lobster pilot project. My question through you is, if the project is successful in expanding, why can't he tell us and all Nova Scotians who and where this mystery group is?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: As soon as the minister is ready to make that announcement, I'm sure he will.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, when asked about the results of the pilot project, the minister throws out a couple of numbers to support his argument that the project is successful. Lobstermen want to know more than just that.

My question for the acting minister, who has lost his voice on dispersants, is - and this is specifically for him - when will all the results of the pilot project be released and his voice gained?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I have never lost my voice in this Legislature, and another thing I didn't have to do was run 100 kilometres north of my riding to run in the last election either. My people know my voice and they hear it well.

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

AGRIC. - EQUINE ENCEPHALITIS: FARMERS - DISCUSSIONS

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Minister of Agriculture, and I'm asking this on behalf of the Agriculture Critic. Eastern equine encephalitis is a fatal virus - I got it out. (Applause)

It's a fatal virus that has impacted the South Shore and has now reached Annapolis County. The fatality rate of this infection is between 80 and 90 per cent, and often the horses are euthanized as a precaution. There were five confirmed cases, and 16 to 20 suspected cases in the South Shore this Fall.

Have there been discussions with farmers and stable owners concerning the spread of this disease?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. The Department of Agriculture is constantly in contact with our stakeholder community to deal with this and all issues. Thank you.

MR. HARRISON: Does the acting minister know of any program to educate and promote the vaccine of the horses with this disease?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I will direct staff in the department to provide the member with that information.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

COM. SERV.: FUNDING - REINSTATEMENT

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Services. While the minister has unspent funds in income assistance, this past Spring the Minister of Community Services cut \$8.5 million from her budget for children, youth, and family supports. During yesterday's fiscal update, we learned that the minister has reversed that cut and put the money back in the budget.

Mr. Speaker, when did the minister realize that her cut was impacting services and that the funding should be reinstated?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Again, I'll reiterate that the \$11 million that has been saved in income assistance is the result of people being attached to the workforce, reaching the goals that they've set for themselves, becoming self-sufficient - something that you want to see in a government. We are in the middle of transformation with benefit reform with persons with disabilities and with child welfare; and the last two are the ones that are the pressures with meeting the needs of Nova Scotians who rely on those services. We'll continue to do that transformation so that those systems will be in place for generations to come.

MS. MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, it comes as no surprise to me that the minister had to reverse her short-sighted cut. Now, given that many individuals across the province have raised significant concerns that recent amendments to the Children and Family Services

Act could bring even more children into care, I hope the minister will be investing significantly more into youth, child, and family supports that she budgeted for last year.

Mr. Speaker, what increases to financial and human resources is the minister going to make next fiscal year?

MS. BERNARD: I don't know where the member was over the last week, but in the last two weeks this government has actually invested \$1.2 million into child and youth services from every end of this province. We've increased Parenting Journey under Stronger Families NS from 12 sites to 27, which is unprecedented in the Province of Nova Scotia, including three sites for Aboriginal, African Nova Scotian, and Acadian communities. We've also increased the attachment training for parenting journey practitioners, and we now have a pilot project which does not exist anywhere in Atlantic Canada that I just announced in Sydney last week. We'll be announcing it again in Halifax in the coming weeks.

We are absolutely investing in child welfare. I'm proud of the staff that works with child welfare. I'm proud of the fact that we now have up-to-date legislation that will better protect children in the Province of Nova Scotia.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: ONCOTYPE DX - FUNDING UPDATE

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Over the last number of sessions, and a couple of times during this session, I've asked the Minister of Health and Wellness for an update on the funding of Oncotype DX, a test for women diagnosed with breast cancer. This test helps physicians determine the best course of treatment for someone with a breast cancer diagnosis and can save women from a great deal of unnecessary treatment.

The minister told the House that he is open to reviewing more information as it becomes available and the minister has received a great deal of information on this test and many provinces across the country already fund it.

My question to the minister is, has the minister reached out to stakeholders and experts to gain more information on Oncotype DX?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the member. We all know that any way that we can improve delivery for cancer treatment - in this case breast cancer - then government is prepared to move as quickly as possible. We don't have it, obviously, in our budget for this year, but it will get that kind of consideration as we now move into budget deliberations.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: I would like to thank the minister for that answer, but it's not good enough at this point. We know full well the impact that breast cancer diagnosis has on our loved ones. For those of us who have had loved ones that have had breast cancer, we know that it can be an incredibly stressful and painful time. Anything that we can do to ensure someone does not go through chemotherapy when it's unnecessary can save a great deal of distress, and on the back side, it can actually save a little bit of money.

Can the minister confirm whether or not his department will fund the Oncotype DX in the Spring budget?

MR. GLAVINE: I've also had conversations with the Nova Scotia Health Authority. They, along with the Department of Health and Wellness, have been looking at Oncotype DX as one of the tools that could be made available to assist with treatment. During our deliberations over the next month or so, every consideration for this instrument to assist in fine-tuning treatment will be given that consideration.

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

NORTHSIDE GEN. HOSP.: STEPS - CLOSURE

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, as I've asked many times before, the steps to the Northside General Hospital have been closed since February because of safety reasons. Recently I saw a letter from the newly appointed Janet Knox, the CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, that said she had signed a charter and made a promise to lead an organization that embodied the health and safety of not only the patients and residents, but the staff.

Could the minister give me a good reason why the steps to the Northside General haven't been fixed yet, if they embody a health safety atmosphere?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I know the member representing the North Sydney area and Northside General Hospital was probably on those semblance of steps this past weekend for a local community event. I can tell him that the tender for this project has gone out. It is approved and hopefully if the weather stays reasonable, it may be able to be done this Fall.

MR. ORRELL: Will the minister assure the people of Northside General, if the weather does stay well that those steps will be repaired by year's end?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, you get the opportunity to travel around the sun 65 times as I have, you get to do a little bit of work in many areas. I've done a little bit of cement work. If I get time before Christmas, I just may help out with getting the steps repaired.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Emergency room closures have increased by over 30 per cent. Why doesn't the Liberal Government support keeping emergency rooms open, especially in rural Nova Scotia?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: What I can tell the member opposite is that our government will not be credited with closing eight ERs in this province.

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

We will now resume second reading of Bill No. 148.

[GOVERNMENT BUSINESS]

[PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING]

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: I am pleased to add to my brief introductory remarks on this bill from earlier this evening before Question Period. Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, really the bill should be called the "we don't know how to negotiate" bill, sponsored by the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and the Liberal Government.

I do want to take up the theme for a few moments, Mr. Speaker, about this idea that the government claims it does not want to create two classes of employees. In fact, the bill does exactly that because it doesn't cover all the public sector employees of the province. It specifically, for example, exempts municipalities, the municipal employees.

The Premier says all Nova Scotians must do their part. The minister in introducing the bill says we don't want two classes of public sector employees, but the bill exempts one class of public sector employees, not direct employees of the Government of Nova Scotia but employees of our municipalities. I guess I should frame this in the form of a question, and I will leave it for the minister to answer when he is able to speak again in debate on this bill, but one can't help but wonder, if they don't want two classes of employees, if they truly are asking everyone to do their part, why the bill exempts municipalities. It lists them as an exemption, and no explanation was given as to why. It seems to conflict with the government's statement that they don't want two classes of public sector employee.

The same question could be asked about our school boards. I'm sure the government intends to include school board employees. The bill defines a school board, but it does not make clear whether the restraint in the bill applies to school boards as well.

The same for our universities; I suspect that the government intends that universities are included, but the bill is not clear on that. This is what happens when a government rushes in highly suspect legislation, likely to be challenged in the courts, the latest knee-jerk reaction to the twists and turns of their ability to manage the province and its public sector workers. But the bill has these questions that just hang there. So I am going to ask the minister, when he does get on his feet again, to explain to us why they've exempted municipalities, whether the bill includes school boards or not, and whether it includes universities and their employees or not, because it does seem to create the two classes of workers that the government says it wishes to avoid creating.

I want to end up on a point that I believe we started with earlier yesterday when the fiscal update came out, which showed that the real problem is the declining tax revenues of the province, the declining personal income tax revenues and the declining corporate income tax revenues, and even the HST is down a little bit, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know what more evidence the government could possibly need that it's tough out there, that Nova Scotians are not working in the numbers that they should be working in, that when they are working, they're not earning wages as high as we would like them to be; that their private employers are not making taxable corporate profits to the extent that we would like to see that happen. Even when it comes to spending their discretionary dollars, they're not spending it on items that have HST attached to them in sufficient volumes for the government to meet its budget targets.

In other words, the real problem is not on the spending side with runaway wages, as the government would pretend. It is on the economic side where we have an economy, where we have a job market, where we have private employers who are struggling to earn incomes sufficient for the government to meet its tax estimates.

Wouldn't it be better to be bringing legislation to this House that actually addresses that real problem, that actually points to what we can do to help Nova Scotians get jobs that earn decent wages, to help the corporate private employers of the province get on with the job that they are best placed to do, which is to create opportunity and wealth that we can tax.

Wouldn't it be better to be bringing bills to this House that enact the Ivany goals, that enact the supplementary goals that we have brought to this House to get the economy going? Wouldn't that be a much more optimistic and positive debate? That is the overriding question that hangs over this House tonight, as we debate a bill certainly to be challenged in the courts, possibly to be ruled at the end of the day to be an illegal act of the Legislature that the government is bringing forward, with all the cost to taxpayers that that will eventually entail.

I just want to finish on this important point, that where the government and those of us in Opposition see the same challenges in the economy of Nova Scotia where it's

weakening, where people are struggling to find work, where they have jobs and are struggling to pay the bills - that the Liberal Government's answer is to cut more, to cut in more places, to bring in questionable bills, to force settlements where they were not able to competently negotiate them in the first place.

The answer over here is not that. It is a more hopeful answer. It is a more optimistic answer. It is to focus on the very things that Nova Scotians want us to focus on, which is growth, opportunity and jobs because where they offer cuts, we want to offer something better, which is a chance for a Nova Scotian and a job to find each other, to fix that problem in tax revenue so we can invest in the things that Nova Scotians want us to invest in, instead of these back-handed solutions that only end up making things worse.

With those few introductory remarks on the bill tonight, I will take my place, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place on second reading of Bill No. 148, the Public Services Sustainability (2015) Act. What a misnomer that is. Karl Rove and Stephen Harper would be very proud of this government. The use of such fraudulent - is that a parliamentary term, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: No.

MS. MACDONALD: I take it back then. Misleading? Misnomer? That title in no way represents what this bill does. Before I get into the principles of this bill and what this bill does, the Leader of the Official Opposition spoke about how this bill should be or could be titled, "the government doesn't know how to negotiate" bill, which would certainly be closer to an appropriate title than what we have on this bill. I have another suggestion and that is "the self-fulfilling prophesy" bill.

The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board talks about the financial precariousness of this province, after giving his financial update today. I would ask the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board to read his own update. I will quote from this update, as I begin in this debate. On Page 15 of his update - in a section called Key Risks, subsection called Revenue - it says the following: "Slower growth in the level of compensation of employees poses a significant downside risk to personal income tax revenues . . ."

Personal income tax revenues are the largest single source of revenue for the province, and slower growth in the level of compensation of employees poses a significant risk. What exactly does this bill do? This bill contributes to that problem. This bill contributes to that risk. This forecast says, "Lower levels of personal income usually lead to slower growth in consumer expenditures, which account for more than 70 per cent of

Harmonized Sales Tax revenues.” Another important source of revenue for the province which is down.

Mr. Speaker, the solution that the government proposes for the fiscal problems they are experiencing is in fact part of the problem. It says so in their own financial forecast, right there as clear as anything on the page that it’s written on.

What would a government do if they had a financial plan, and it wasn’t working? What would a reasonable government do if they had a financial plan that was in crisis? Do they stick to that plan? Do they say, we’re going to ignore the evidence, and it’s full steam ahead? Well, apparently so. That’s what this government is intent on doing. There’s no change in the plan. There’s no deviation from the plan. We’re going to continue with that plan. Whether or not it will contribute to a worsening picture, we’re going to ignore that. We’re going to ignore that.

Mr. Speaker, I don’t know whether to be sad or to be angry - I feel some measure of both. I am exceedingly angry about the pattern of attacks on the good, hard-working people, men and women - mostly women - who are the people who provide public services to Nova Scotians, who are also Nova Scotians. I am exceedingly angry and sad about the manner in which this government has consistently divided Nova Scotians, much like the Harper Government played the politics of division, the politics of envy. They’ve done this consistently with the working men and women who deliver public services.

They started it within eight weeks of their mandate in this Legislature with Bill No. 30, when they went after the home care workers. Women who go into people’s homes and provide needed personal care services to people, who clean the bedpans, who wash people’s bums, who get them up in the morning and get them to bed at night. And what was that all about? Forty cents an hour, for probably among the lowest-waged workers in our health care system. That’s the legacy of this government. That’s where they began to talk about how they could not afford to treat people who provide those services respectfully.

After Bill No. 30, we had Bill No. 37. All health care workers - all of the workers in the health care system - a bill that still has not seen any results. Essential services agreements are nowhere close to having been worked out in the health care sector. A bill that this government said was going to solve a lot of our problems, solved nothing.

Bill No. 1 - who could ever forget Bill No. 1? You want to talk about disrespect for the women and men who provide health care services in the province - the bill where the government was going to tell people what union would represent them, without giving them any choice, any voice, any vote. Bill No. 100, university workers.

And now here we are with Bill No. 148, and the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board stands in his place and says, we respect people who work in the public service. We

respect public services workers. Well, with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, this government has a pretty funny way - an odd way - of demonstrating that they respect people who provide these services. The evidence is quite the contrary.

Look at the way teachers in the education system have been treated. The teachers in our province overwhelmingly rejected a negotiated agreement. Did this government go to conciliation? Did they go back to the table and talk to the teachers? No, they did not because this government has never intended to bargain respectfully and fairly at the bargaining table with any of the workers.

This government thinks the mandate they have, gives them the right to use their majority in this House of Assembly, to take away the collective rights of workers in the Province of Nova Scotia. What you win at the bargaining table, they will take away on the floor of the House of Assembly, and they think that's what their majority is for. It's pretty obvious, and the pattern is very well established. It's very well established. You cannot come into this place and tell us that you respect and value the men and women who are providing public services: the psychologists, the social workers, the child protection workers, the highway workers, the community college instructors, the lab technicians, the doctors. People are not that naive.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about the importance of fair, respectful collective bargaining and what that should look like and what our current framework is for fair and respectful collective bargaining and why this bill does not conform to well-established legal frameworks. Collective bargaining is not something that people just decide to do. There's a legislative framework.

There are a number of pieces of legislation at play in our province for collective bargaining. There's the Trade Union Act. There's the Civil Service Collective Bargaining Act. There's the bargaining Act under which teachers bargain. There's a Health Insurance Act under which doctors arrive at an agreement with respect to how they get remunerated for their services. In almost all of these pieces of legislation, there are well-established legal frameworks and processes for how bargaining should proceed. In these processes, there is an appreciation that sometimes things at the table don't go well, that the parties are unable to arrive at agreements. Sometimes they need help. They need help maybe from a conciliator, a third party. Sometimes they need the help of a mediator, a third party.

In some cases, if those things don't result in an agreement, the matter is sent to arbitration. What is arbitration? Arbitration is a mechanism where often a strike is avoided. Or in some cases where people don't have the right to strike under their particular piece of legislation, arbitration is what they have. Arbitration is what they have as a way to get a fair settlement because they have given up their right to withdraw their labour.

Police officers in this province gave up that right, for example. There was a police strike a number of years ago, quite a long time ago, but most of us remember that strike.

They gave up the right to strike, and now if an agreement cannot be reached, it automatically goes to arbitration.

This is the case with the civil servants in this province, the people who work in the various departments of our province. It's the case with the province's doctors. Civil servants don't have the right to strike under the Civil Service Collective Bargaining Act.

But the right they have, because they don't have that right that other people have, is to go to arbitration. This piece of legislation in front of us today has essentially stripped arbitrators of their ability to arbitrate a settlement for the civil service or for doctors, for that matter.

This piece of legislation establishes a new board that we know very little about, reading the legislation. A public services sustainability board will be appointed in accordance with regulations, regulations that we have no idea how this will work. This new entity has no ability really to act independently in any way, shape, or form.

I can't help but agree with the previous speaker on this bill about whether or not those provisions will meet a constitutional challenge. I can't imagine that they would. But this government doesn't really care. They don't really care about whether or not this bill - just like Bill No. 1 - could meet any kind of constitutional challenge.

I remind members of this House that it can be quite costly in the long run to the people of this province if, down the road, a constitutional challenge on this legislation is successful, if it succeeds, because all of the people who will be negatively impacted, financially and otherwise, by this piece of legislation, will have to be compensated at a future date. That indeed has happened before in this province, and it has happened as a result of legislation from a Liberal Government in the mid-1990s that made the same mistake - the mistake that they were above the Constitution of the country, that they did not have to observe the laws or the legislative framework that has been established over many, many, many years.

I have to say I was very disappointed when the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, in second reading, talked about how no third party is going to tell this government how to conduct the affairs of the province, and how no Third Party is going to impose on this government any financial or other requirements.

As I listened to those words from the minister, all I could think of was the former Prime Minister of this country, who's sitting someplace now on a back bench, who had the same attitude about the courts in this country. His attitude was: who do those people think they are? Nobody elected them. Nobody elected the judges; nobody elected the arbitrators; nobody elected these "third parties."

Well, Madam Speaker, I have news for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and members of this Liberal Government. Third parties, like our courts and the tribunals and the quasi-administrative judicial organizations that enforce the rule of law in our democracy, are very much a part of our system. They are not to be disparaged; they are not to be dismissed. Quite often, it's those third parties that protect people and their rights when they need protecting from a majority government that has overreached their own powers and are incapable of putting some restraint on the way in which they abuse their power.

That's what is important about unelected third parties, and that government may disparage unelected third parties, but I'm telling you right now, Madam Speaker, members of the New Democratic Party caucus will stand up and fight to protect those democratic institutions that are there to protect people from the tyranny of the majority; that is what we have right here in front of us tonight.

The Premier likes to talk about how no one in his government is taking away any rights, isn't disrespecting any rights of the people who deliver public services. I've talked to a fair number of teachers in the last little while. The teachers would beg to differ with the Premier. The teachers are not feeling respected. They're not feeling valued. They're not feeling heard.

I want to set the record straight about something the Premier consistently misrepresents in this House, and that's legislation with respect to keeping paramedics on the job, which I think, until this government, was the last time a group of workers had their grievances sent to arbitration. The Premier likes to present that as if the rights of paramedics were taken away. Paramedics had an opportunity that all of these workers do not have. They had an opportunity to present their position and their perspective to an arbitrator, and their employer had the same opportunity. An arbitrator heard both sides and made a decision; a strike was averted; the public were well served. Madam Speaker, that's how the process should work - not what we have in front of us here.

I look across the aisle and I know that members of the government want for this province the same thing that members on this side of the aisle want. We want our province to thrive, to prosper, and to grow. But we have a very different view of how you do that. You do not make your province thrive and prosper and grow by diminishing a significant proportion of your working population.

It has been quite a trip, this government's dealing with the public sector workers. The unions were called together earlier in the Fall, and the Premier - and I've heard other members of government - not all members, to their credit. I don't know how widely this is shared inside the Liberal Government, but some members of the government have a tendency to blame public sector workers for wanting too much.

They also have a tendency to speak in a really disparaging fashion around things like job security. Madam Speaker, who doesn't value job security? Who doesn't see the

value of job security for working people? What in the world have we become? This is the race to the bottom that people feared as western governments increasingly adopted the beliefs and the values of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. The race to the bottom - you're expecting too much.

I've heard members of this government rail on about past wage settlements for these very workers. The wage pattern that's being offered here will result in a probably 7 per cent decrease when you compare it to the annual cost of living increases. However you want to measure that - the rate of inflation, the consumer price index - when you freeze people's wages, they get no annual increases. The annual increase over a four to five year - the wage pattern that is being offered here: 0, 0, 1, 1.5, 0.5 - 3 per cent, a 3 per cent wage increase over four to five years is, in fact, a wage cut, when you factor in inflation and the cost of living. This government is asking 75,000 Nova Scotians to take a decrease in their standard of living.

You know, there was a time when the Liberal Party believed in fighting for a strong middle class, not eroding the middle class. That Liberal Party doesn't exist in this province. That Liberal Party may exist somewhere else, but it doesn't exist in this province. (Interruption)

Well, the member for Cape Breton Centre says it does exist in this province, but there's no evidence of that, Madam Speaker. There's no evidence of that whatsoever. The evidence is quite the contrary. (Interruption) The member for Cape Breton Centre will have his opportunity to stand up and speak on this bill. I will welcome him to the debate.

If people think for one moment that the only people who are going to feel the impact of this are the 75,000 workers, then their own financial statement says otherwise. Their own financial statement says otherwise. These Nova Scotians, they live all over our province. They live in New Waterford. They are the maintenance enforcement unit in New Waterford. And when you erode their standard of living, they have less money to spend on goods and services in New Waterford. The financial report from yesterday says it right here: "Lower levels of personal income usually lead to slower growth in consumer expenditures." Surprise, surprise, big surprise; we all know that. This bill could, indeed, be titled "the self-fulfilling prophecy."

Madam Speaker, it's really uncertain, if this bill passes - and I'm sure that the government, with their majority, are intent that it will, so it will pass, as one of the members has said. It will pass, but it will have very negative consequences for many people in our province.

The government will say - and they have said, in promoting this bill - that bargaining will still go on. It's just money that's off the table. I think there's no one over there who has ever done collective bargaining, or understands collective bargaining.

AN HON. MEMBER: There's someone here who ran a business for a long time.

MS. MACDONALD: Well, there are quite a few people - I hear the member from New Waterford saying there's someone here who ran a business for a long time. Good for the member. There are many members in here who run businesses. That's all fine and dandy. But how well is the growth in business working out for you? Your fiscal plan to grow business in Nova Scotia - how's that working out for you?

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. I would ask the honourable member to direct comments to the Chair and not to the members opposite.

MS. MACDONALD: How exactly is growing business in Nova Scotia working out for the Liberal Government? There is no evidence in the fiscal plan that it's working at all. Last week or the week before, when the Conference Board of Canada talked about how Nova Scotia will be growing in the coming fiscal year, they attributed it primarily to the shipbuilding contract. Not anything this government has done.

This government has, with respect to business, chased a lot of business out of this province in terms of the film industry. There's no evidence - not a shred of evidence - that all of these business giants in the government caucus are adding one iota of value to the economic and fiscal plan of the province. There's no evidence of it; we're not seeing it. All we're seeing is an attack on public sector workers and an attack on public services. This is a government that cut \$4 million out of community-based mental health services; cut \$3.8 million out of the operating budgets of long-term care facilities; and wasn't able to deliver any savings from the amalgamation of the district health authorities. That's the business acumen that we have on the government benches. (Interruptions)

There's no evidence of the business acumen that people are bringing to the province as members of the government benches - nothing. We're not seeing any progress on this front at all. No progress; no evidence. This government's idea of leading this province to a more prosperous future is to have people working for less money, lower their standard of living, sell off revenue-generating parts of the public sector, and introduce more pay-as-you-go fees, and more privatization.

We've seen a lot of this before, Madam Speaker. We saw it the last time there was a Liberal Government. It's like déjà vu all over again. We're seeing the same playbook, with the same disastrous results. It took 10 or 15 years for the province to recover, for health care to start to get back to where it should be. That's what we see from this government.

Madam Speaker, it's important, I think, to treat all working people - particularly those who are providing public services, working with children, working with special-needs children, working with our kids, working in our correctional system, working in our court system, working in our health care system, working in our schools - with respect and

with fairness. People who do this work are not the people who caused the financial problems of the province, and it's just wrong to suggest that they are the problem, that they are the source of this province's fiscal problems. It's just wrong to say to people, we can't provide the health care you want because we have to pay people who are providing that health care a competitive wage. That's wrong. That's just wrong.

This government has no ideas on growing the economy and leading Nova Scotia to a more prosperous future. They have demonstrated over and over and over again that their only big idea is to go after the working men and women delivering public services.

I don't know what one has to do to convince the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board that a different approach on the fiscal plan is worthy of consideration. I don't think anybody in this province, or indeed, anyone in the country, understood how persistent the economic stagnation that provinces are facing would be. It was the financial crisis around 2005-06 that ushered in this period. (Interruption) The member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island says 2008.

It has probably been one of the longest periods of precarious growth in our economy, and all provinces have been impacted by that. We're no different. The minister said that yesterday at the briefing, and that's something I would agree with the minister on. I also agree that we need to manage our expenditures; I agree with that. But the extent to which we're prepared to do that on the backs of a particular group in a time frame that may be completely unrealistic, and that will result in far more harm than benefit - that surely is something any reasonable person in government would need to consider. But we don't see any evidence that the government is prepared to think differently, to step back.

We had moments, I think, during this session - the strangest session I've sat through, I have to say, Madam Speaker, and I think people who've been here for a while would have to agree with that. I remind members that when we came into this session, right at the very beginning, there was some suggestion that the government were seriously contemplating legislation similar to what's in front of us, imposing wage restraint and wage settlements on public sector workers between Christmas and New Year's, or over the Christmas period. I think that was discussed with the member for Dartmouth East on the infamous tapes, or in the conversation that led up to the tapes that were of such interest and took up so much time earlier in this session.

The government has been thinking about this legislation for a long time. We knew that. We also know that a very senior official in government informed the leadership of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union that this legislation would be forthcoming, if the teachers rejected the government's proposal. We know that a number of missteps occurred by members of the government, including the Premier and the minister who is responsible for Treasury Board and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, in a very critical period before the Teachers Union membership actually voted on the agreement. Unfortunately, comments by the Premier and the Minister of Education and

Early Childhood Development fueled some anger within the ranks of the teachers, with respect to the manner in which bargaining was occurring.

One of the things I've learned doing social work is that sometimes it's more important how you do things than what you do. People attach great meaning to how they're treated. It's not just what you're doing to people; it's how you do it. Unfortunately, we now have a very well-entrenched pattern of behaviour from this Liberal Government on how they treat the men and women who deliver public services in the province. There is a feeling among people who do this work that they aren't respected, that they aren't valued, and it wasn't what they were expecting.

The Premier, on more than one occasion, indicated that he respected the hard-won rights of people who deliver public services. Sometimes there's no greater feeling to make you angry, disappointed, or demoralized than feeling like you were betrayed. You were told something, you trusted it, you believed in it, and then you could not take it to the bank. You would feel pretty let down. You sometimes get a little mad at yourself, that you were so gullible, that you would believe this. I've heard people say, I can't believe this. I never saw this coming.

So, Madam Speaker, this legislation is very much in keeping with the pattern of how this government treats all of those women and men who deliver public services in our province. It's unfortunate that the government did not learn any lessons from the heavy-handed approach they took on Bill No. 1.

I think this bill would definitely benefit by having it delayed for a period of reconsideration, and with that, Madam Speaker, I move that a motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word "that" and substitute the following: "Therefore Bill No. 148, an Act Respecting the Sustainability of Public Services, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence." Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Madam Speaker, it's with interest that I rise to speak today, on Bill No. 148, in light of the amendment that has been proposed by the Acting Leader of the NDP.

Madam Speaker, let us go back in history and see what has brought us here. More importantly, let us look at past behaviour of previous governments to understand what has brought us here, especially knowing that the previous speaker held the roles of Minister of Health and Wellness and then Minister of Finance, and how they dealt with labour negotiations.

We all know that the financial challenges faced by our province didn't happen overnight, and we can't suggest that it was just one government that was the reason for

this. But the question is, what government was prepared to have the intestinal fortitude to deal with the challenges facing this province?

We know that the last government started claiming that they had the intestinal fortitude. Graham Steele, as Minister of Finance, said, "We are going to hold the line," and reminded you of some war films, saying "hold the line" and how they were going to hold it. And at the start, they did; they held the line. (Interruption) Graham will probably read about it tomorrow; in fact I can show you what Graham writes about, and I'll talk about that in a few minutes.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. I would ask the honourable member not to use a prop in the House. Thank you.

MR. SAMSON: Well, Madam Speaker, fortunately we have a copy of it in the library here, so I can tell you right now I'm going to quote it quite often. So we can either table it each time or we can refer to it as what's in the library, because we're going to talk about it a few times in the next few minutes.

At first it started with "We're going to hold the line." Well, we all know, based on the reports that we have from the former Minister of Finance under the NDP, that they were going to hold the line - he understood what was fiscally responsible for the province was to hold the line. Yet somehow, at the last minute, when it came to the last contract, there were secret negotiations in the Premier's Office by unelected officials who had previously worked with the unions, who went back to the unions afterward, who worked out a secret deal, unbeknownst to the Minister of Finance.

But what was most interesting in this, after listening to the Acting Leader of the NDP, is that in his book he says that when he felt betrayed by the Premier of the day, the member who just spoke was with him and said I stand with you. This is offensive; this is wrong for our province. You're going to resign, and I will resign with you because this is wrong and I will stand on principle and I will do the honourable thing and stand against this. But lo and behold, what's written in the book and what history shows us are two different things. Suddenly, what was offensive back then, was looked the other way when an offer of Minister of Finance appeared. So history will judge - they will judge us all as to how those decisions were made.

What I can tell you, history will judge me, but nobody will ever write in a book that I offered to resign on a matter of principle, and at the last minute I chose not to resign because of it. But for us to stand here and be lectured by an Acting Leader of the NDP who would criticize us when there is a book written by a former colleague saying that she offered to resign, but at the last minute, unbeknownst to him, chose not to. Only she can answer for that and the fact that she chose, for some reason, not to stand behind the same principles that he stood behind in choosing to step down as a member of that government when they saw a backroom deal being done.

Madam Speaker, no one takes pleasure in the fiscal challenges facing our province. No one in this House put their name on the ballot to have to make tough financial decisions for this province - it's not in our nature. Naturally all of us ran - well, the Acting Leader of the NDP knows what my nature is. I can tell you again, nobody wrote any book saying that I'd resign based on principle and then resign, but she has to answer for that.

I'll say this, I'll put up my record against her record any day she wants. So if we're going to stand here and be lectured, then let's just look at the facts. When they had a chance, we all know, when it comes to labour relations in this province, the only Party in this province that took away every labour right that existed (Interruptions) Should I say I feel like I'm being bullied right now because the Acting Leader of the NDP is heckling me? Well I can tell you right now, you can heckle all night and you're not going to bully me, I can warn you right now.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. It is unparliamentary to suggest that you are being bullied in the House. (Interruptions) I would ask the honourable member to please retract the statement.

MR. SAMSON: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. If any way, I felt like I was being bullied by the Acting Leader of the NDP, I retract that fully because I can assure you at no point in time have I ever felt like I was being bullied by the Acting Leader of the NDP, nor do I ever expect to see the day that I'll feel bullied by the Acting Leader of the NDP, I can assure you that.

The fact is, we face a tough fiscal situation and we have a decision as to whether we're going to make responsible decisions or whether we're going to pass it on to somebody else. Too many times have we seen where governments have brought in legislation, where they've tried to bring in fiscal discipline, and at the last minute have backed away, and to hear the Acting Leader of the NDP take shots at our Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, our Minister of Finance and Treasury who has gone out of his way to try to work, be responsible with leaders of their labour movement and explain to them our fiscal situation up front and say the challenges that we face and to ask them, how can we face those fiscal situations together? How can we come up with solutions together?

That is what Nova Scotians expect. Nova Scotians know we face tough financial times. How is it that a government can work with Nova Scotians to be able to face those challenges.

It's interesting when I heard earlier that our government has not shown respect for our civil servants. One of the things that was most interesting, following the election in 2013, is that we had a Premier who went to every government department, walked into the offices, and went and shook hands with every one of the employees in that office.

I had employees in my department, 20- and 30-year employees who said afterwards: I have worked for the Province of Nova Scotia, and I've given them my best. I've been a loyal employee, I have done what I could for this province. This is the first time I've ever met a Premier. Not only that, it's the first time I've had a Premier come to my workplace, call me by name, refer to himself not as the Premier, but to shake their hands and say my name is Stephen, and to be able to say to them, thank you for what you're doing for the province. They still speak about that today - that they have a Premier come there in their own workplace and be able to speak to them and to show them that respect.

The fact is, regardless of what the Acting Leader of the NDP would try to have anyone believe, that respect is still there. They realize that they have a Premier who is faced with a tough financial situation, that we've just given a fiscal update that shows the challenges that we face as a province and the discipline that we have to face. We have two choices: do what's popular or do what's responsible. Nova Scotians have sent a very clear signal: do what's responsible, not what's popular.

I'm not going to speak much longer, as much as I could, but I will just say this: when I listen to the Acting Leader of the NDP I'm reminded again of a recent press scrum that she had in this House, just outside this Chamber. When she was making a number of statements, the press asked her a few questions and they challenged her, and at one point they challenged her and they said: Well, with all due respect, what you're really saying is you're just playing politics. Her answer was: That's what we do. Well, Madam Speaker, Nova Scotians are sick and tired of that type of approach to elected office.

Nova Scotians have said we want a Premier and we want a government that's going to govern fairly, going to govern responsibly, going to make sure that they take into consideration the finances . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I would ask the honourable member to please - we are debating the hoist at this point - if you could make comments based on the hoist, I'd appreciate it.

MR. SAMSON: Madam Speaker, Bill No. 148 is an example of how Nova Scotians expect the government to govern responsibly, to govern within their fiscal means, to govern fairly, to respect Nova Scotians, but to ensure that today's challenges are not passed on to future generations. Bill No. 148 is an example of that. It's an example of a Premier who is listening to Nova Scotians, who is respecting Nova Scotians and is going to ensure that our future is one that is sustainable, that respects our fiscal reality and respects exactly why Nova Scotians elected us to govern to start off with. Merci.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HON. DAVID WILSON: That was interesting to hear from the Government House Leader. I would agree with a few things he said, and one of them is that Nova Scotians are

sick and tired - they're sick and tired of the government saying one thing and doing the opposite.

Just days ago the Premier stood outside this Chamber and said he would respect collective bargaining; he would allow for the NSGEU members to vote on the collective agreement. He doesn't respect the process. He comes in with legislation that hammers them over the head. (Interruptions) The member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island thinks it's a funny thing. He keeps saying it's a funny thing.

It's a funny thing for your Premier to tell workers that he would respect them and allow them to vote on their contract, but then bring in legislation that will impose a contract unless they vote in favour of the one they just turned down - is that what is funny? I don't think so.

It's so important that we treat the workers of this province fairly and with respect. I commend the Premier - and I heard from friends of mine who worked in the . . .

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The member is implying that I am laughing here, cracking jokes, and actually it's that member that has been doing that, and we can go back to tape and see that.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: This is not a point of order. It's just a disagreement between members. (Interruptions) Although I would remind all members of the House that at this time we are debating the hoist motion, so please reserve your comments to that debate or we'll be dealing with that as we go.

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid has the floor.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Madam Speaker, I hope the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island gets up on this motion because it's important. (Interruption) I don't think you will, but we'll wait and see. Maybe in another hour or so he'll get up and speak because he likes to talk a lot when he's sitting in his chair, but he doesn't say a whole lot when he's on his feet. So I hope he does that.

The reason we brought the motion forward is I believe that Nova Scotian workers should receive the respect of the government. They should be given the opportunity to ensure that their fair collective bargaining rights and the process that's in place in our province is fulfilled so that they can take the opportunity to look at what is in front of them with a contract that has been negotiated, and that's why I think it would be in the best interests of all involved in this situation - that we can step back; that the government can look at what they're actually implying and imposing with Bill No. 148; and that they would look at this and say maybe we should pause for a moment.

Maybe we should go back to what the Premier said just a few days ago - that he would like to see the NSGEU have their vote in the new year and not threaten them with a piece of legislation that would impose a settlement package. I believe it's time we do that and that's why we brought this motion forward.

I think with the six months in front of us, it would give those collective bargaining units time to look at their options, what's in front of them. More importantly, just yesterday on the 15th - and I've talked about this in other pieces of legislation around would the proposed legislation stand up in a court of law. Just yesterday in Ontario, five unions challenged Bill No. 115 in the courts. It would be interesting to see how that will unfold. Of course, they're challenging their government, ironically enough a Liberal Government, for a similar piece of legislation that imposes a settlement on them. I see very close similarities between Bill No. 115 in Ontario and Bill No. 148 in Nova Scotia.

We've seen the government in the past put the brakes on legislation, regroup, take a step back, re-evaluate if this is the proper way to go forward, especially if the possibility is there for a court challenge, and have a look at it and let's see what happens in Ontario. Let's see if the four unions that are taking the Liberal Government of Ontario to court have a case and is it the mandate - and should it be the mandate - of the government to impose those settlements when we have labour laws and labour relations within our provincial jurisdictions across the country?

It will be interesting and I'll be keeping a close monitor on that court case, Madam Speaker, because I think it could have sweeping ramifications across the country, including here in Nova Scotia, where potentially down the road we may have to come in and the government might have to bring in legislation to change Bill No. 148. So why wouldn't the government take that opportunity to make sure that if this is the path forward that they want to choose, that they'll be evaluated on, that Nova Scotians will look at this moment and this piece of legislation and say that was good for our province.

The challenge the government is going to have is that this is not just a piece of legislation for a small, little bargaining unit that all of a sudden voted down a contract and potentially will go to a conciliator or go to arbitration. This piece of legislation will encompass some 75,000 workers, everyone from teachers, who I highly respect and I have to say most often don't take the stance that we just saw them take a week or two weeks ago. I don't remember the last time the teachers of this province stood up to a government and pushed back on an agreed settlement, a tentative settlement.

I don't recall in recent history that that has happened because that's not the nature of our educators in the province. In the 12, almost 13 years I've been here it's pretty rare to see a unionized teacher in the gallery, walking around the Legislature with picket signs or anything like that because they're in the classrooms. They know that's where they want to be and that's where they've been for a long time.

One of the things that stood out to me when they voted down the most recent tentative agreement was they said right off the bat that it wasn't about the financial component of the agreement. What they're concerned with is the environment and the working conditions of the classrooms. They want to try to improve that.

We heard from the Premier who doesn't want to go down that path in trying to improve the situation in their classrooms through the collective bargaining process but that's really where it needs to happen for the most part, Madam Speaker. That's where teachers want to see the commitment from the government on how we improve the situation we have in the classrooms now. They said it wasn't about the money.

Then we heard from the Deputy Premier when the Premier was away, the Deputy Premier kind of backtracked a bit. The Deputy Premier came out with a less heavy-handed approach about the situation that was in front of us. Of course the Premier right off the bat, quite threatening with possible legislation around settlement, and that was right from the get-go, but the Deputy Premier took a different approach.

I thought maybe the government looked at how the teachers responded, with the sheer numbers of people who voted in the vote and the high number of them who denied it and voted against it, I thought the government may have had a change of heart, I really did. I thought they may say okay, let's take the Christmas holiday to figure out what our next step is and let's see after the other bargaining unit - the NSGEU - looks at potentially taking a vote there, let's see what happens. By approving the motion we brought forward a little while ago, I think the government could continue to do that, maybe take that path, maybe take the opportunity to really figure out what is the best step forward.

Since yesterday, with the introduction of Bill No. 148, it's interesting that we're here at - the hours were called at 12:01 a.m. You look at the people who are working in our province under the Public Service Commission and under all the other segments that this bill will cover, most of them are probably in bed now getting ready for work in the morning, getting ready to go and educate our kids, getting ready to get up and go to the hospital to work in the NICU at the IWK or in the burn unit or at the ER. Some of them are actually working right now, clearing our streets, making sure they are safe for when people get up in the morning to go to work.

So to call the hours now, in my opinion - if the is government standing behind this piece of legislation - why wouldn't you do it at a time when there is the opportunity for these workers to really understand what's going on, because this is happening really quickly. I mean, we all live and breathe politics and we have every political feed on our cell phones and Twitter accounts, but many of the workers who are working and providing the important services that they do for our province to our citizens are not in the political bubble we're in. Some of them may not even know yet that Bill No. 148 was introduced yesterday. They may not know that we are speaking at 3:21 in the morning, trying to get

the government to realize maybe we should put the brakes on this and approve this motion and let's revisit this six months from now.

There's still an opportunity for the government to save some face, to put out an olive branch, in my opinion, to those workers who will need to make decisions in the months and weeks ahead on what they're going to do because either they are going to have to vote for what was given to them in the recent contract, tentative agreement, or they're going to have to live with what's in Bill No. 148.

Of course, in Bill No. 148 some of the things that may influence change would be worse off for them. So the government's message is, well, support what we gave you already or get something that's a little worse, when it comes to your package and the benefits that you may have. What kind of negotiation is that? How is that treating people fairly?

As I indicated, I applaud the Premier for going around to the departments and shaking hands with the workers. I think that was a great opportunity. I did that when I became the Minister of Health and Wellness. I know the employees appreciated it - having that engagement, that opportunity - but I wonder what they would be saying if the Premier did that tomorrow. I challenge the Premier to go around the departments tomorrow and shake the hands of those same workers and explain to them why the government feels they need to take this step and why they wouldn't support this motion that would delay it for six months so that they can have an opportunity to fully understand what's in front of them, if they're one of the bargaining units that have come to a tentative agreement or the ones that are coming up for negotiations. There are quite a few of them coming up.

So I challenge the Premier - how about doing that tomorrow or the rest of this week, to get a real feeling from those workers who appreciated that first round of meeting the Premier first hand? I'll be more than welcome to hear the comments from the Government House Leader after that happens because as I sit here tonight, even at 2:00 in the morning, I was receiving email and texts from individuals, from workers in our province. One was a health care worker.

Of course the bills that we've had before us, which we've seen go directly after their rights, it was almost a similar situation for a lot of the health care workers. They weren't talking about how much money they were making or an increase in their pension, what a lot of health care workers talked about when they came to the Law Amendments Committee under previous bills was about the working environment. How do we improve that? How do we make it better for them to do their job? That's what I think I heard from the teachers last week or two weeks ago - the exact same kind of argument on let's make sure we get this right.

I heard from a nurse who is working tonight who has mostly nurses around them with two and a half years or less experience, which is challenging when you are working

on a busy unit in a hospital, if you are an experienced worker with having a young workforce around you with maybe not the experience that would be quite beneficial in some of these units. This nurse indicated that their job has expanded into areas that other jurisdictions don't require of their nurses - in clerical, in labs, in paperwork.

The other thing the nurse mentioned to me was the fact that we have the oldest and sickest population here in Nova Scotia. We know those stats are out there, with our population aging every day - of course the population ages every day - our population has more aged people. We have an aging population that we're seeing rapidly over other jurisdictions.

There are challenges there, so I know that nurse who has sent me a message would want the government to look at this motion, to consider this motion, to say, maybe we should take a step back, and look at how we proceed, to make sure first and foremost that legally we're able to do this as a province, as a government - I mentioned the court case yesterday from the four bargaining units in Ontario around Bill No. 115, I believe it is - and take the opportunity to make sure this is the right step. We've seen the government do that in the past, we look at the amalgamation of the unions, the initial piece of legislation - I'm starting to repeat myself because the legislation is similar as we go through the sessions - that that legislation at the time could have been challenged and was challenged in other jurisdictions.

We've seen a government say, okay, let's pull back a bit, re-evaluate and they actually brought forward something that was almost similar to what they negotiated originally with the unions with the four bargaining units. So why not take the same measures now? Let's put the brakes on this, make sure that the government is doing it in the right steps, that they do it lawfully so that in another six months or so we're not back here in the Legislature having to bring in legislation that meets a Charter challenge.

The interesting thing about Bill No. 148, Madam Speaker, is how widespread the net is on capturing who will be covered under this. The bill applies to all bargaining units except those that have concluded negotiating collective agreements prior to the bill coming into force. So that means doctors, as I said before, any corporations, workers, so the Liquor Corporation - NSLC workers will be covered under this - nurses and health care providers, paramedics, plow operators and the list goes on and on.

I know that once the word gets out there will be a lot of workers out there who will start to voice their opinion and say, why didn't the government put the brakes on this? Why didn't they support the motion from the NDP to say, listen, let's move this for six months hence so we can make sure that it is done in the proper ways?

One of the things that is extremely important, and we know today - or yesterday, sorry, the days are blending - with the forecast that was provided to Nova Scotians, interestingly enough the government was so far off their mark a few months ago, three

months ago, four months ago, I think it was \$98 million, the forecast deficit, and now we're well up over \$242 million. It's interesting that that kind of is seen as the reason why we're moving forward with Bill No. 148.

I know my Leader had read the comment on Page 15 in the forecast under the section of Key Risks, and it says, "Slower growth in the level of compensation of employees continues to pose a downside risk to personal income tax revenues." We know how important personal income tax revenue is to the economy and to the province's ability to provide services. Bill No. 148 will feed right into emphasizing and probably allowing us to see more of that slower personal income tax growth that we should.

We're going after 75,000 workers potentially here and we know the cost of living continues to go up - we hear it every day from individuals finding it more and more difficult to make ends meet. The civil servants and those who are going to be captured under Bill No. 148 play an important role in the economy of our province. These are jobs that are not just here in Halifax, or in Sydney, these are jobs that are in every single community that every one of us here represent.

So there is someone in every riding that will be affected by this legislation and I've always said this in the past, as an MLA, as a caucus member, as a Cabinet Minister, as a government member, you're going to have to stand on your record into the future. Those 75,000 workers are going to challenge their MLA if they're in Opposition or if they're in government the next time we have the privilege to go out and ask for their support and ask for their vote in the next election.

I hope the government members recognize that, and they're going to have to defend their record. They are going to have to defend not supporting a motion that would allow the government, I would hope, some time to rethink this and make the decision if this is definitely where they want to go. Are there more benefits with Bill No. 148 being approved and implemented over the next six, eight months, or year or is it going to have a negative impact? The risks are in the government's own forecast, the Key Risks, talking about personal income tax. If you go after these workers in the manner in which Bill No. 148 does, will that have a negative effect on our economy? Time will tell.

I know I'm going to make sure that I highlight this page and it's filed in my office so that in about a year's time when we look at the forecast then we may be able to tell at that time what the impact of Bill No. 148 will be. Unfortunately at this time, knowing and seeing some of the figures in the forecast, it doesn't look promising. Interestingly enough, some of the things that are indicated in here are things that we supported as a government in the last government. Of course, we know the shipyard is thriving and many of the cranes around Halifax have been here well over two years and that's a positive thing, but we still see a forecast of revenues declining in the province; we see job numbers declining in the province. Unemployment rates are increasing, and migration is increasing.

We need to do, and I think government needs to do, everything they can to make sure they have a positive effect so when they bring legislation in that it has a positive effect not only on our economy, but to our province as a whole. How does taking the approach of Bill No. 148, how is that going to help in the efforts - and I'll specifically talk about health care - about the recruitment and retention of health care workers?

We see right across this province there are areas that are in desperate need of health care workers. When you go out and try to recruit individuals, men and women to come back here, or transfer here, or move here from other parts of Canada - or around the world for that matter - they're going to ask their colleagues. They all belong to colleges. They all belong to associations. Nowadays with our cellphones and Twitter and social media, they know what the atmosphere is and the environment is in jurisdictions all over the place.

How is this moving forward - if we move forward, if we don't put the brakes on it - how is this going to help in the government's role of trying to recruit and retain those much-needed health care providers? It's so important. It's so important that these workers feel like they're respected; that they feel that the government is responding to them.

I already indicated with the teachers and their decision, that wasn't the monetary side of the tentative agreement that they voted down. To be truthful, it sounded - and I talked with quite a few teachers, educators. They called me, and I have to say, this is the first time in many years that I've heard from as many teachers as I have, concerned about the contract, and it was just about how it was presented to them - how the government used the possibility of legislation, instead of allowing them to fully vet the tentative agreement. I think if the government took a different approach, we might not be talking about Bill No. 148 right now. I think they would have looked at it, evaluated it, seen if there were ways of improving it. The best way to do that is at the bargaining table.

I think the Premier said just the other day, in a response to a question in Question Period, that there were talks going on with the teachers, the Teachers Union or with the senior people at the union. What happened to that? We haven't heard an update that all of a sudden, no, the NSTU told them no, go pound sand, we're not talking to you anymore. That's not the last we heard. The last we heard was that they were having talks; that they were trying to figure out how do we move forward and how do we negotiate a different tentative agreement or settlement so that they could take it back to their membership.

They're not going to take back the exact same tentative agreement to their membership. I mean, that is a waste of time for the teachers. It's a waste of the government's time to do that. They're not going to approve it. Over 60 per cent of them voted it down in the first place. They aren't going to accept it in the second go-around. Now we see the heavy-handed approach with Bill No. 148.

I really hope that the government looks at the opportunity that's in front of them right now as we speak and discuss this motion to suspend Bill No. 148 for the time being.

We're not saying take it right off. We're saying suspend it for now, let's come back and revisit it in six months. That gives the government opportunity to try to engage with those bargaining units, the benefit of maybe agreeing to one of the tentative agreements, and do it at the bargaining table.

This piece of legislation really handcuffs that ability for workers to make an informed decision on what is in the best interests of them and their profession and their colleagues. Instead, we're going to see limitations on arbitration.

Some of the units could end up with a conciliator, where often in the past - and there are many examples - that the two sides, government and whatever side in the public sector, get to the point where they're in a conciliation opportunity, that they come back with an agreement, but we're never even going to find out if that's going to happen.

The same with an arbitrator and the ability for an arbitrator to work with those two sides to try to come up with an agreement that both sides can live with won't happen because it's going to be dictated to them through Bill No. 148, which we believe would not stand up in the courts.

I mentioned already, Ontario - they're going through it. They just announced it yesterday, I believe, on the 14th, that they're taking the Ontario Government to court. So we're not going to have that opportunity to maybe have those deals happen at the table or through a conciliator or through an arbitrator. Most, if not all negotiations, there's work on both sides. A lot of the time it comes down to the eleventh hour, right at the end when there's potentially a risk of a strike, potentially a risk of legislation.

There have been times in the past where government has brought legislation in to deal with labour unrest. The Liberals have done it in the past, the Progressive Conservatives have done it in the past and the NDP have done it in the past. Many times when you look at those examples, it's at the very end of a long process that allowed members to voice their opinion, have a vote, go back and try it again, unlike what we've seen transpire over the last couple of weeks where a tentative agreement was settled, went to the membership, and they voted it down.

The next step would be let's try to see what we could do to improve that. The teachers, for one, said it wasn't about the money so that should have given some comfort to the government to say, okay, well the wage packages they offered in the tentative agreement may be acceptable to the teachers - I don't know, I haven't specifically talked to every one of the teachers who voted in the tentative agreement. They said it was about other things that they wanted to see negotiated, so why wouldn't the government take that opportunity to do that? They felt bullied, Madam Speaker, they really did.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, it is unparliamentary to use the term bullied in debate.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Sorry about that, Madam Speaker, I'll retract that. I believe I can say what the definition of bully is, and the definition of bully is: use of threat or coercion, intimidate or aggressively dominate others; the behaviour is often repeated habitually.

Well, Madam Speaker, they felt the government was pushing extremely hard on them to just accept the tentative agreement or else - the threat of legislation, which in my mind is bargaining in bad faith.

So we hear the announcement that there's a tentative agreement with the teachers, which I think government would have hoped set the pattern, like we've seen in the past, but before they even voted there was that possibility of legislation that the Premier was holding over their heads. I do not understand why the government didn't allow the process to go forward.

After they rejected it, of course, legislation was one of the first things the Premier talked about. Then, of course, he went to Boston to light the tree and the Deputy Premier took over for a little while and I thought there was a glimmer of hope, of light there that the government was willing to look at alternatives to try to get a settlement.

This bill bypasses workers' rights. I think what we need to ensure is that workers feel as if they are valued. I think that's what I heard from the teachers when they pushed back on that settlement, that they didn't feel valued, they wanted to make sure that they had an opportunity to talk and maybe look at improving the situation they had in front of them. I know I'll be reaching out to them over the next day or so. I know they would want the government to support the motion that we have in front of us now, Madam Speaker, to suspend Bill No. 148, let's take a breather, the government take that back and look at what options are in front of the government.

They could start negotiating again, for one, they could get back to the table and try to see what they can do. Everybody knows now that the government wants to pass legislation - they already brought it in - and I think that would go a long way with repairing the damage and some of the damage that will happen as this proceeds. If this motion is voted down and Bill No. 148 is passed, and it will pass eventually; the government has a majority, you're in a majority government.

I think when majority governments take advantage of their majority, you see what we've seen for about a decade in our province, minority governments. They may clap today about having a majority, but we'll see what happens after the next election when those 75,000 people who will be affected by Bill No. 148 have an opportunity to vote in the next election, will those same members be clapping then? I don't know. (Interruptions) The other 860,000 people in this province (Interruptions) Interesting, the greenhorn from Cape Breton hasn't been up on his feet yet on this bill, I hope he will (Interruptions) He is still pretty new. I'm trying to pay attention to the Speaker. He's a greenhorn, too, and I think

he knows what a greenhorn is because he's from a fishing community - 3:46 in the morning, you hear things, but I'm trying to pay attention.

In all seriousness, they were talking about, what about the other 800,000 Nova Scotians? I would hope and I would think that the people we're talking about, the 75,000 Nova Scotians who are going to be affected by this piece of legislation, they provide services to those 800,000 people. They are the ones who are on a floor in the hospital in Cape Breton, down in Digby, at the QEII, at the Infirmary. They're the ones working every day and they're the ones speaking up right now feeling like they're being treated unfairly, that they don't feel like the government is treating them well. I think they're going to kind of relay that to the people they're treating.

Those people who are down in Digby plowing the roads when it snows will definitely talk with their neighbours about how they feel the government is treating them in not an appropriate way. That 75,000 is not just 75,000, that can expand. If you own a business and there's a customer who is upset with you, they usually tell somebody about the experience they had with your business, which turns into a couple of people saying well, maybe I won't go to that business. It's the same principle with this when you treat 75,000 workers and don't value their ability to have the opportunity to evaluate a tentative agreement, to fairly collectively bargain at the table, or have the opportunity to go to a conciliator or an arbitrator, that they will tell their family members, their neighbours, and people in their community on how they are treated, so it can snowball.

I have been there. I know it's not an easy job being in government, you make hard decisions sometimes. But all we're asking is that the government take the time to make sure this is right. Just a few days ago, as I said, we heard the Premier say, he looks forward to NSGEU looking at their tentative agreement. He initially gave them a 24-hour ultimatum to call a vote, 24 hours I think they said. By Thursday morning at 9 a.m. you better call a vote and if not we're going to bring in legislation. Well, of course, that didn't happen and the Premier then said okay, I'm glad they're going to look at it in the new year.

That is what I think these workers would want the government to do, to say, okay, slow down. Many of them say they want to be part of how to find savings within their sector, many of them have said that, I know that. When we were in government a lot of the savings came from within the departments where someone had an idea and said listen, we can save money by doing it this way or doing it that way.

I know that the Public Service and those who are paid within the government want to make sure that it's sustainable into the future. They want to make sure they can continue to provide the services they do, everything from plowing to putting an IV in your arm to protecting us in correctional services. They want to make sure they do the best possible job they can, and they just want to be valued. They want to feel today and tomorrow and the next day how they felt when the Premier may have come and shook their hands when he was first elected. They want to feel like here's a Premier who will listen to us, he

understands I'm working, I have an important role here to play in providing services for Nova Scotians, our fellow Nova Scotians. I'm sure they want to feel that way into the future.

I don't believe with this piece of legislation that is going to happen and the government needs to recognize that. That's why I think this motion is quite appropriate, to push it off for six months so that these bargaining units can continue on with the manner of free collective bargaining, I think, protecting the rights of workers, making sure that labour standards are being followed, that the rights that unionized workers and non-unionized workers have in this province to be treated fairly, that that happens through this process.

It's interesting that we are here at this time to see an action from a government that has been down this road before. We've seen a Liberal Savage Government bring in austerity measures that rolled back wages. If I remember, they had a majority government at the time and then they lost that because I think they miscalculated the impact that taking on the workers who provide the services that the government provides Nova Scotians have, and their ability to be motivated and mobilize themselves in an election.

I hope the government looks at this opportunity that is in front of them now, that they cannot repeat what happened in the Savage years. I'm trying to calculate the years now between the last Liberal Government and 2013, it was well over 10 years I think, a long time. It had a lot to do, if not everything to do, with how the workers were treated under that government.

There's nobody across the way who was there under that government, I don't think. I don't think the members were there, but they should know. I know they surround themselves with people who were there, Madam Speaker, so I think this is a great opportunity for the current government to look at what happened in the past and that here we could take an opportunity to put the brakes on this bill by supporting this motion that would allow the government to kind of step back.

They've done it on a number of pieces of legislation, Madam Speaker. We know they are more than willing to do that. You look at the tobacco legislation that was introduced a year ago or a little longer than that, there was quite a bit of uproar on that piece of legislation. They said okay, let's pull it, let's stand it, not follow through on the process here in the House and pass it. And they brought in a new piece of legislation that was better than what they initially had introduced.

We've seen it on Bill No. 1 where they've pulled back and re-evaluated and brought in a better piece of legislation, I would admit to that.

Here's an opportunity for them to do it again. I think the 75,000 workers who are going to wake up tomorrow and start to find out about the implications of Bill No. 148 and

start to learn about it - I would much rather see the government call this bill on normal hours, it's rare that we sit at 3:00 a.m. or 4:00 a.m. I don't know if they want to get it through with the least amount of people knowing about it where it was just introduced hours ago and we're sitting after midnight.

In the legislation itself, I know my Leader mentioned about this board that is going to be created that will have sweeping powers that will be deemed under regulations. We don't even know what those regulations are going to be - that should be a concern for all workers.

The Public Service Sustainability Board - we don't know much about that. I don't believe in the bill briefing they mentioned it a whole lot, if at all. The board may exercise any power conferred upon it by regulations - "any power" - what does that mean? What kind of power is this board going to have? Any that the Liberal Cabinet chooses to give it.

Those regulations are not going to be debated on the floor of this Legislature. We're going to learn about them down the road once we're finished with this piece of legislation, once it passes, whenever that is in the next few days.

I think Nova Scotia workers are going to be extremely concerned once they understand that it's not just about imposing a wage freeze and a 1 per cent or 1.5 per cent and 0.5 per cent. It's much broader than that - just by the definition of "may exercise any power conferred upon by regulations." I know that scares me. I'm concerned with that; I know workers will be concerned with that.

We're not talking about the workers we see here on a regular basis. There are very active workers - some who belong to unions who are very engaged in our process. They're here often. I know those workers who tend not to be engaged, I believe, will be concerned and may be engaged in the coming days when they start to learn about this piece of legislation. I know that they will ask why the government didn't support the motion just to put the brakes on - to make sure that this piece of legislation, so that they can at least have the opportunity to go through it, to understand it.

I read legislation. I've been reading it for 12, 13 years, and sometimes it's not that easy to pull out what's going on and the ramifications of exactly what the language is. Gordon Hebb does a good job and Legislative Counsel does a good job at making sure that the correct language and style is here, but there are a lot of things that we learn about legislation usually after it's passed, because of the speedy process of our Legislature.

I have to say, with calling us back in at midnight, this piece of legislation, they're trying to pass it a lot quicker than any other piece of legislation where we have sat hours in the Legislature. We sat on a Monday, which we usually don't do unless it's in the Spring session with the budget in order to get this piece of legislation in. I mean, we're here now so why would you not continue with the hours that we have? They're set in the bylaws that

we have. Nova Scotians are starting to know - the media know - the timeline when Question Period is and when Opposition business is taking place and when usually debates are happening.

I watched the news - I ran home for a few minutes to clean up and to come back, and the 11 o'clock news I think, one of the newscasts said they'll be debating a bill at 1:50 in the morning, or the Legislature will be called back in at 1:50 in the morning. Well, that's not the case - we're called back in at 12:01 a.m. A lot of people don't know what's going on and they're going to wake in a few hours and find out exactly what we're trying to do here - to give the opportunity for the government to say let's evaluate this; let's make sure if we're going to impact 75,000 workers that it's the right thing to do.

It's our opinion, as a caucus, that this piece of legislation is not the right thing to do at this time. We have bargaining units that still haven't voted on the tentative agreements. This is so premature, in my view, I'm concerned with the direction the government is taking this province and the direction that we see workers and how they are being treated and how they are being under-valued.

We have a process in bargaining that would allow workers the opportunity to fully look at tentative agreements, try to understand them, for those who might not understand legislation or what's in it, the opportunity for their senior negotiating team to tell them what the good things are, what the bad things are, what did we give up, what are we going to gain. But really that's not going to happen in this process we have now, unless the government puts the brakes on it and says okay, maybe we should hold this for a bit of time, to allow those workers to exercise the rights that have been upon workers for decades and decades.

It has been stated a number of times over the last two years how it seems like the government is in a race for the bottom on wages and benefits for our workers in this province. I recall what happened in the health care sector in the 1990s when there were wage freezes and rollbacks and mandatory days off. When the wages here in Nova Scotia dropped below the national average and health care workers were the lowest-paid in the country, one of the lowest-paid in the country.

Our graduates, who went through Dalhousie and medical school and the other facilities in education institutions, were recruited to leave Nova Scotia as quickly as they could and many of them left. Many of my friends who got into nursing and who were x-ray technicians and ultrasound technicians and some that took cytology, they were getting job offers before they graduated. They left because, for one, they had student loans to pay back. The disparity between what you would make here and what you made in other jurisdictions, especially in the U.S. - in the mid to late 1990s the U.S. tried to take every health care worker they could, especially nurses, doctors and many of them ended down in the U.S. I know some who are still there today, doing well.

I have to say that over the last few years we've been able to compete and that did wonders with the retention and recruitment of health care workers. We see now my colleague, Roseway Hospital closing every other weekend because of HR issues, health care providers, not enough to go to a rural community. That's a challenge on its own, trying to get health care workers, even if they are making a good wage, to go to rural communities.

If we start looking at this and what this package will do in three and four and five years, it's going to be tough on whoever is in government, to try to turn that trend around and try to ensure that we have an adequate number of workers in this province - not just health care workers but public service workers. Services will suffer. I know under the Hamm Government, when I got elected I was still talking about the shortage of nurses and the effects of the cuts in the 1990s from the past Liberal Government. It took 10 years for the Liberals to get back to government.

I respect the voters of this province that they wanted to see a different government, hopefully with a different approach - that's what we heard. But I've got to tell you that the approach we see from this provincial Liberal Government is nowhere near the same approach the federal Liberal Government just got elected on. Interesting enough, Madam Speaker, I would think that the federal Liberal Government would maybe support this motion, to say okay, put the brakes on.

I received an email earlier from someone writing the Prime Minister, pleading with the Prime Minister to call the Premier of Nova Scotia - it was a health care worker - to see if the Prime Minister would talk to the Premier to say whoa, this is not the government we elected. These are not the promises that were made to them about how the provincial Liberal Government would respect the rights of workers. I could go on and on about the possible privatization, which government said they wouldn't do when they were in Opposition in the election; respect workers' rights, which we know we have multiple pieces of legislation that has taken those rights away.

Now we see Bill No. 148 in front of us. I think it's a great time for the government to say, okay, let's slow this down. Let's see if we can move this off for six months. I hope that the government would consider it. I'm sure we will hear over the coming days how those 75,000 workers who will be affected by this, how they think about it and what they would hope the government would do and would act in this situation.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Madam Speaker, it is certainly an opportunity to restart and I guess that's probably a good segue into this particular speech. What we need to do is have a reset and actually look back and have an opportunity of six months and this is what this hoist motion actually does. It gives the government and all Nova Scotians the opportunity to participate in this important topic.

I listened with great interest and I enjoyed the debates. I have actually made a number of notes, but one interesting note, as this particular bill was introduced and started the discussions here tonight, I looked on the government side of the House and there were two speakers. I just want to bring this to your attention, Madam Speaker, the first was the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, who introduced second reading of this particular bill and he spoke roughly seven minutes. When the Government House Leader had his opportunity, he spoke roughly seven minutes.

Now I'm going to be generous that the Liberal Party has had ample opportunity - and I will take further notes as we move into this day and I will be interested to see if that moves anywhere in a total of more minutes in this discussion. It is interesting because I really look at our democracy, how you can have a majority government, how you can affect 75,000 workers and you can have great discussion and speak for 15 minutes, so I find that very interesting as I get into my notes.

What this particular hoist motion does is take a setback or an opportunity to reflect and it basically outlines six months where this can happen. I know earlier the speakers talked about the Premier actually shaking hands with each department and each worker and I applaud that. It would be interesting now, and what I want to get into here a little later on is that the Premier and his Cabinet colleagues, and the backbenchers of this Liberal Government go now and shake the hands and have a thorough discussion and I believe it may be more than 15 minutes in total with that population, those 75,000 workers. It's going to be interesting. The point I'm trying to make here is six months, I think when you come back, you may have a different outlook on this whole particular scenario, so it's going to be interesting.

I know that some of the earlier speakers here today, and I agree with them, they said maybe this particular bill - the Act Respecting the Sustainability of Public Services - there should be a better name. I have to agree, I endorse that - The Government Doesn't Know How to Negotiate Bill. That's probably a better title because apparently they don't know how to negotiate; they're just going to use their strong arm tactics to get a result. Yes, we have a democracy and we have a majority, and yes we are debating this in the wee hours of the morning, and yes we're not in normal House hours. I'll get into that a little later on, but to me - and there's a saying in my community that you just didn't fall off the turnip truck - there's a strategy here. There is a strategy of how we push this bill through and trample the rights of workers across this province.

Now it's interesting that I observed - and I admit that I'm a political-holic - I know, in my recollection, that I observed this Liberal Premier - this Liberal campaign literature talks about protecting the collective rights of workers. That's in their 2013 campaign literature. Now I suggest to you, Madam Speaker, the Premier was intent in going and shaking the hands of all those public workers back when they first became government. Now I'm wondering tonight, 75,000 workers across Nova Scotia, if that same interest is there. That's a good question.

The point I'm trying to make here is that our Acting Leader talked about the silence of this Liberal Party on this particular bill and it was evident as we moved through this speech here tonight, to me it was evident that there was, again, a strategy - let's just remain silent, let's table this bill, let's push it through, we'll ram it through the Law Amendments Committee and everybody in the festive season and so be it, let's get on and have a new year. Well guess what? You're going to hear the Opposition speak here tonight and they're going to tell what's on the minds of Nova Scotians - I can assure you that in the next few hours you're going to hear it.

The Liberal Government majority is taking away the collective rights and the bargaining agreements. They talked about that in their election campaign promises and they have trampled on the rights of workers across Nova Scotia. I'm going to get into that, but one of the things that is interesting to me is that the teachers - their service awards or their severance package has been negotiated over 30 or 40 years. That is my understanding and I'll admit that I'm not a lawyer, but when somebody had that legal background - they formed those agreements over 30 years of collective bargaining and all of a sudden that is taken away from them.

To me, there is an interesting point, and I know a number of the Liberal Government are taking notes and I hope you've got your pen in hand because there is a saying in my community - if you're not at the table, you're probably on the menu. Guess who is going to be on the menu with this particular bill? If we do not endorse or support this hoist motion, those 75,000 workers are on the menu of this government and the workers' rights will be taken away. This is what it's all about.

I have heard the teachers say to my caucus colleagues that they feel as if they are not being heard and people are not respected. To me that is something that we have an opportunity and for six months we can go out and have those discussions with those workers across Nova Scotia and shake the hands of those individuals.

Now Madam Speaker, I listened with great intent here and I actually take notes and I can tell you that I feel comfortable and I observe all the different debates, the late debates in this House and I make a lot of notes. I actually keep time of each speaker and I'm interested in the Liberal Government, so far on this particular bill and the hoist motion - and I'm being generous - 15 minutes.

Now I'm looking at the backbenchers here and I'm suggesting that I'll be taking notes to see if the member for Halifax Atlantic will be speaking on this hoist motion or if he will be speaking at Law Amendments Committee. I think (Interruptions) Well my colleagues are saying they probably are not allowed but I'm going to give them the benefit of the doubt. I'm looking for that person, Halifax Atlantic, one of the backbenchers, to go out in the next six months and have that discussion on this hoist motion. There is a good opportunity, Madam Speaker, to find out what is on the minds of Nova Scotians.

Now I look at the next backbencher, from Hants East, and so far (Interruption) - I'm talking to the bill - there has been a hoist motion, Madam Speaker. What I'm saying is, I'm taking accurate notes here and seeing how much time the Liberals are going to spend on this particular hoist motion. So far it has been zero.

Now let's move on, Hammonds Plains-Lucasville, now let's go there and let's look at that individual and say how much time have they spent on this debate? Zero. I mean you can keep a running score but those people from Hammonds Plains-Lucasville, in the next six months, need to go out and talk to those 75,000 Public Service workers. That is not an unfair request; it is a simple request. They have concerns. They do not feel heard. They do not feel respected.

Now I ask you how, over the Christmas holidays, when you meet those individuals, are you going to engage in that discussion? I would think it would be a perfect opportunity to have a hoist motion, to set this bill aside for six months and hear the concerns of the public.

Now let's move on to the member for Lunenburg and I've listened for their discussions on this particular bill. So far it has been zero. Now I'm willing to bet, Madam Speaker, that I have stumbled on a theme here on this particular bill and that, through Law Amendments Committee, I would say that we're going to see a theme and they're going to use their Liberal majority to ram this through, late at night. I'm sure that the Liberal members are not going to be on record but they'll have to defend that when they go out to the public. This is what it's all about; this hoist motion has given them opportunity to speak just on that.

Now let's move on to Victoria-The Lakes. Here is another individual who will have an opportunity to speak to this and so far zero. So the theme is that we have a hoist bill and nobody is going to participate. (Interruption) Hoist, okay.

Now Kings South so far, zero. So (Interruptions) Well, we've got a lot more speaker's notes we can go for the next several hours here if you'd like. (Interruptions) We're making some real good points, yes. I got the member from Annapolis-Digby's attention. Maybe he can stand up . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The member for Queens-Shelburne has the floor.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just want to point out to the member for Annapolis-Digby that he'll have an opportunity to stand up and I'll get to him eventually, but he has been silent so far on this particular bill, has been silent on the use of dispersants in the Bay of Fundy and the offshore oil. I haven't heard him speak one word about the concerns of the fishing industry, not one word. He stayed there in silence and I know the present, newly-elected federal MPs sat down with the MP from

West Nova and the MP from South Shore-St. Margaret's and the MLA for Yarmouth and they were confident they were going to bring the issue about the use of dispersants . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member to please refer to the hoist motion that we're debating. Thank you.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Madam Speaker, my point is that those voices need to be heard. Just to continue on with that theme, the voices of those MPs and the MLA for Yarmouth were going to bring the concerns of the fishing industry to their respective Cabinets. I haven't heard one word in this House about dispersants from that member for Digby-Annapolis.

Now, getting back to this bill, my concern is, are they going to raise the concerns of these 75,000 workers across Nova Scotia? It probably falls into that same theme. I know everybody is keeping a record here so we're going to keep on track with the member for Sackville-Beaver Bank. The member has been noticeably silent on this issue and to me that is a theme.

The member for Yarmouth loves to heckle, but he doesn't want to talk about dispersants so I'm sure he's not going to talk about this particular bill. I've already got him down as zero and that's probably going to continue on as we speak.

The member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage - zero. These all have an opportunity to talk on this particular bill. Again, 75,000 workers are out there waiting for the government to respond and we have heard roughly 15 minutes from a majority government. Let's continue on. Fairview-Clayton Park, have we heard from them? Cumberland North or Lunenburg West, have we heard from them? No. So we can see the theme that is going to be generated here tonight is that they're not going to talk on this bill, but they're going to use their majority to ram this thing through. (Interruptions) The member for Lunenburg West, again, there's no response here and I think I made my point. These members are not going to participate and I've seen him at the Law Amendments Committee, I observed you there tonight that you have been continually silent on this issue.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I will remind the honourable member to please address comments not to members opposite, but to the Chair and please stay on track with the hoist motion.

The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne has the floor.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Madam Speaker, thank you very much. Again, the rookie backbenchers from Cape Breton Centre, Timberlea-Prospect, and Sydney-Whitney Pier, the backbencher rookies, how much have they participated in this particular debate, or are they going to participate? Again, I have them marked down and my score is zero. So I think

it is evident what's going on here. They're going to basically continue on down this road and try to force this thing through, which they do . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: We'll be next.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Yes, we'll get there. (Interruptions) Madam Speaker, the Liberals are sitting there having a laughing good time, and I don't think anybody across Nova Scotia is laughing at this - seriously, with this bill. This is all about a strategy - to introduce this particular bill, Bill No. 148, when the public may not be interested. They may have other things on their minds such as Christmas holidays, and the debate is taking place in the wee hours of the night and yet 75,000 public service workers - I wonder how they will feel today when they wake up to the new day.

I just want to review about the election promise. I recall that election promise - that the Liberal Party in their campaign literature said that they would protect the workers' rights. Now if you hit the pause button, you will have six months to review what we're doing. I think this is simply an important thing to do.

We've seen throughout Nova Scotia the setbacks and the step backwards what this government has done, and I've said it a number of times, the cumulative effect on rural Nova Scotia. I'm just giving them opportunity to have - here is another bill and an opportunity to just step back from the brink and take six months to review it.

I can show you an example of the cumulative effect in rural Nova Scotia. We've seen this government, as soon as they had their mandate, the first thing on their agenda was to gut the district health authorities across Nova Scotia and to create one super board. What we've seen - this is just an example of what I have observed in Shelburne County - we've seen the Minister of Health and Wellness come there in September, roughly a few months ago, and introduce a plan about keeping the ER open because it has increased over the last year by thousands. It increased so much that the minister had to come to town to introduce a short-term, long-term plan.

Do you know how long that plan lasted? (Interruptions) I know I got their attention so I want to get into the details of their plan. (Interruptions) I gave them my word too, that we kept that open and we did a lot better job than this member, Madam Speaker.

Do you know how long that ER - his plan, stayed open? He came there and made the announcement and he was going to have all the doctors and the health professionals come in and keep this ER open. It lasted for 11 days. That's their version. Now this is the cumulative effect on rural Nova Scotia. Now, I'm interested to see if the Minister of Health and Wellness would come back and have that same discussion with those town officials as we speak.

We'll wait, and to me this is a good opportunity - six months to reflect on this bill. I'm trying to help them out; I'm trying to actually give them an opportunity to correct their ways. We've seen the errors in creating the super district health authorities; we've seen how that can have a cumulative effect on rural Nova Scotia.

Now Roseway Hospital is struggling and the minister there basically lied to that community. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, it is unparliamentary to suggest that someone is lying. I would ask you to please retract that statement.

MR. BELLIVEAU: I'll retract that statement and, Madam Speaker, through you I suggest that the Minister of Health and Wellness fabricated the truth. (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. With all due respect, that is the same thing. I would ask you to retract that statement as well and proceed on the hoist motion.

MR. BELLIVEAU: I'll retract that also, Madam Speaker, and I will try for the word misled.

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, sir, that's still an unparliamentary comment.

The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne has the floor.

MR. BELLIVEAU: It seems like I'm having quite an effect there on the audio system. Madam Speaker, what I suggest through you to the Minister of Health and Wellness, he came to Shelburne and he suggested that the ER was going to be open permanently and it lasted only 11 days. I'm suggesting through you that he has taken that community down the wrong road.

Now there's a lot of effort in there because I can tell you, it is not working. To me, 11 days of a master plan and to have a super health board to come up and suggest that that is going to be indefinitely open and to have it last for 11 days, I think you need to go back to the drawing board, Madam Speaker.

The Public Service Sustainability (2015) Act, this is what we're going to try to have a hoist motion to put this on hold for six months. Now this government here on December 14, 2015, released a dismal fiscal update. It showed that the deficit is forecast to be over the original budget projected by \$143 million.

Now I want to talk about this cumulative effect because this is something I raised a number of times in this House. To me this bill is just going to continue to erode that cumulative effect in our communities. It's having a devastating effect on rural Nova Scotia. We have seen the closures of land registries. We've seen the closures of court houses.

We've seen closures of provincial parks. I want to point out that while there has been some positive improvement - not improvement, some positive additions to our provincial parks and we have - I needed to have a picture of this, I can put it on my BlackBerry if I have time permitting - but the addition in our provincial parks is one phone, Madam Speaker.

So we've seen staff and workers lose their jobs. We've seen people across our province's provincial parks, a lot of people, tourism, would like to be attracted to; what we've seen is the installation of a phone. Now I would suggest that is the erosion of services and jobs in our communities.

We've also seen closures to community services. I pointed out earlier, we have 1,000 per cent more ER closures. Now if that's not a cumulative effect in rural Nova Scotia, I would say that here is an opportunity - I don't want this to continue on so I'm going to suggest that you should support this particular hoist motion and have six months to reflect on where you're going down the wrong road, Madam Speaker.

Now it's interesting that we're sitting here and I know that we asked a number of questions, and you say further erosions and doing something positive for our community. To me, a good example of that is the IT system as a cost, it views it as a cost rather than an investment. I can tell you that the rural Internet in Nova Scotia is something that needs to be addressed.

I know before you all start to throw your comments across here, every political Party in this House had an opportunity to address that. It is about the hoist and this is, Madam Speaker, the cumulative effect on rural Nova Scotia is certainly taking its toll. To me this particular bill is another part of that erosion and it needs to be set out here. I mean the government can sit there and laugh and makes jokes of this, but this is a serious situation, we've got businesses and we've got individuals, we've got educational facilities that want access to the Internet and those opposite members, the Liberal Government, sit there in silence and they don't want to address the issue.

We all had an opportunity, I recognize that, and it's our job to bring that infrastructure to those communities because it's important, it is a highway of learning. It's not acceptable to say that we're going to wait for the technology to come - no, it needs to be done now. When you get back to this particular hoist motion you have an opportunity to reflect over the next six months. That's not unfair because I can tell you that you are going down the wrong road and this is what has to be acknowledged.

Madam Speaker, there are three important functions, certainly the service of the public interest, the probability of business for the government in providing good public sector jobs; that is something that these 75,000 workers do every day in Nova Scotia. Again, we talk about closing the motor vehicle registration alone that has brought in close to \$1 billion. Again we have an opportunity, as Opposition, to stand up and bring these

issues forward in a manner that possibly can bring some reflection of the present government and I think if they were wise they would reconsider that.

Madam Speaker, it's interesting that today I asked a question of the Acting Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture. You know he didn't want to talk about dispersants in the offshore oil industry and to me the question was about one of the major economic engines across rural Nova Scotia, across Atlantic Canada, the lobster industry. We have talked about - well the minister has talked about these mystery groups and we asked the member for Yarmouth an interesting question, can he identify them? The answer is well maybe the minister at some later date can do that. This is the information that's coming from this sitting government.

I'm sure that the workers across Nova Scotia have a lot of questions. This is the kind of response we get from this government and I think it's unacceptable.

I mentioned early the access to rural Internet and I really believe that is something that we all should be rolling our sleeves up - all Parties in this Chamber had an opportunity to address that. There are people actually who haven't got that service. I suggest to you - there are schools, there are businesses in rural Nova Scotia and all walks of life that need that issue addressed. That is certainly something that the government needs to take seriously.

We also see the tuition fees. I've just made a note here of Page 4 of the Canadian Federation of Students Nova Scotia 2015. It talks about 66 per cent in Nova Scotia believe that student debt is too high in Nova Scotia. Only 7 per cent of Nova Scotians support increased tuition fees. This is something that this government has done and again I want to point out that they are going down the wrong road, and when you have a bill before you, Bill No. 148, and you know that the government is going down the wrong . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member to please speak on the hoist motion.

The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne has the floor.

MR. BELLIVEAU: I'm showing examples of how this government and Bill No. 148 need to take a second look and set this aside for six months because they're going down the wrong path, and I'm showing some examples where they are having this cumulative effect on residents of Nova Scotia. This is what they should all take the six months to reflect on. Go out and shake the hands of these workers across Nova Scotia and see if you get the same response. Then come back and you could have your time on the floor and you can discuss it and you can be participating in the debate. You're not doing it now. You have 15 minutes in total so far and you're not winning the debate. (Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, I'm going to get close to summarizing my remarks here, but what I want to move into is that this projection of forecasts of \$241 million, an increase of \$118 million from September - to me, this is with reduced tax revenues and it proves the Liberal plan is simply not working. I know what they made a lot of reference to - that we cannot afford to have wages go up or an increase. This is what I want to talk about.

I've heard this in this Chamber before and we talked about the cumulative effect. I think I've raised that a number of times. I've also pointed out that there is corporate handout.

I remember being on that side of the House and when the Liberal Party was in Opposition, that was almost a daily speech - you can't continue to have corporate handouts. I'm suggesting where you could possibly get \$20 million to pay for some of these increases and that was \$20 million that was granted to the Royal Bank of Canada from this government and they suggested that they weren't going to introduce any corporate handouts. So I think that they need to reconsider some of their values that they set out.

What I want to point out here now - I want to get into this - is that in order for the teachers or the workers across our province to have a fair working wage and a fair contract negotiated, you're going to have to find revenue.

Now what I'm going to suggest to you is that there was an interesting note that I made here over the last day or two. We had a federal election just a few months ago, in fact, in October. The federal government, the new Prime Minister Mr. Trudeau - and I wish him well - said that he would create the infrastructure of \$5.8 billion over the next six years. To me that is a considerable amount of money. I look at that with great interest because I suggested this earlier, but nobody seemed to pick up on it, I know where I'm going to try to focus here, is if you're going to have good wages paid to teachers and our workers across Nova Scotia, to me you create jobs and you create a tax base so that wage can be paid. I'm going to suggest to you ways of doing it and I did it here earlier in some other speeches.

What the federal government is saying (Interruptions) - now I know we've got the members opposite's attention here because they're in quite a humorous mood over there. The federal government suggested \$5.8 billion of infrastructure money, okay and what we've got here is a government that is going to trample on the rights of workers across Nova Scotia. The Ivany report suggested it and I picked up on it and said we have an opportunity to double our fish exports. I stood in this Chamber and gave a speech on it and not one word of support from either Party, not one word. Double the fish exports and within 10 years.

I mentioned earlier that the economic engine in rural Nova Scotia is the fishing industry - if you double it, you're going to create a lot of jobs and a lot of tax base. I'll just leave that for you to reflect on. I also suggested in this Chamber that we have an offshore development of oil and gas in the nearby Shelburne Basin. I'm going to suggest to you that

there are some concerns out there in the fishing industry and the concerns are - now keep in mind the \$5.8 billion in infrastructure that is coming from the federal government - what if you had a capping mechanism built in Nova Scotia in case there was a blowout in the offshore oil? The industry said we can't afford that. We'll have to go to Europe to get one. Basically, it's \$50 million and there are seven sitting over there but we can never have one on North Atlantic soil. I suggest otherwise. Here's an opportunity to build that capping mechanism in Nova Scotia, with federal infrastructure money, and create the jobs here, okay - \$50 million for a capping mechanism.

The second part of that is, whoa, whoa, we've got another issue. In order to have a capping stack mechanism, we need a heavy lift vessel. We're just getting started. That's going to cost \$0.75 billion. Well guess what, here's a great idea, Mr. Speaker - build that heavy lift vessel in Nova Scotia and have it on the scene and we can develop our oil industry, and not at the expense of the fishing industry. Those two projects alone, I would say, are going to create a lot of economic growth especially in rural Nova Scotia.

Have any of those ideas come from this Liberal Government that has spoken for 15 minutes on this particular bill? No, not one. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, through you to the member for Yarmouth, who sat down with the fishing industry and had the meeting with the newly-elected MPs and they made a commitment that they would take those concerns to their respective Cabinet. Not one word have I heard on dispersants for the capping mechanism, the infrastructure projects and the list goes on. Anyway, these are some ideas that I think this particular government would have the opportunity in the next six months to go out and listen to the people across Nova Scotia.

They may think that I'm - and you can raise your laughter and poke fun at me, I can stand here for the next whatever but the issues do not go away, the problems still exist. We've got 75,000 workers out there who want a reasonable pay for their family. That's not too much to ask, Mr. Speaker. I am there for those individuals and to take those people back and strip them of their rights and to say that in our election campaign that they are supporting those people, again I use some other terminology but I can suggest that you are going down the wrong road on that one, too, it is in the Liberal campaign literature.

Now how do those people feel when that is basically there in black and white? Go out and shake the hands of those individuals this Christmas season, go out and have the discussion with them and I can assure you that you are going to get a different response.

Now when the sun comes up you may have some phone calls to answer. I suggest that they are not going to be too friendly, they are going to be concerned. To me I've offered a couple of scenarios here, Madam Speaker, that are reasonable. We have concerns in the offshore about the oil spill and to me they can coexist and the public, well the fishing industry, wants that capping mechanism built.

Why not build it here in Nova Scotia? Why not build that heavy-lift vessel that is capable of capping that blowout, if there was a blowout, to have that here in Nova Scotia built by Nova Scotians in this community, with the federal money from Ottawa? They made a pledge that they would run deficits and that money would be available. Who is going to Ottawa and bringing that message to create some economic benefits to our community?

Now I'm getting close, Madam Speaker, to my closing remarks here. I know I raised a couple of interesting comments about my suggestion about creating or building a heavy-lift vessel roughly \$0.75 billion in Nova Scotia, I think it's a good idea, I think it will create jobs. I think that having a capping mechanism on Nova Scotia soil is a good insurance policy for the industry. We've got five or six and they are all across that big pond out there. If you are giving me signals, Madam Speaker, I don't . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: I'm just reminding the honourable member to speak on the hoist motion, please.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Madam Speaker, I just want to say that I made reference to that infrastructure money in Ottawa and I'm going to suggest that the reason why I'm suggesting that is because I have a Christmas card here in front of me. I'll just make reference to it - I can table it afterwards. The interest of this particular Christmas card is it's from a Liberal member and I feel fortunate to receive that.

The point I am going to bring out, Madam Speaker, through you to the Liberal Party, is that this particular Christmas card has pictures of, naturally, the Liberal Cabinet, they have a few pictures of the Liberal Premier but the dominant one, the one that has the most pictures is our Liberal Prime Minister of Canada who is on that the most times - three. He outweighs all the rest and he's on there more times than anyone.

So if you had an opportunity to take this and talk about a capping mechanism or a heavy lift vessel that can be built in Nova Scotia, and you have a Prime Minister who is on your greeting cards who offered \$5.8 billion infrastructure money, I think we're on the right track. If you're promoting that Prime Minister, here's an opportunity to say I believe we've got a good project and we can stimulate the economy in creating a tax base to create these possible agreements with the teachers and the workers across this province. What's wrong with that? What is wrong with taking six months and going out to the communities and having an opportunity to consult people? What is so wrong with that?

Again, I went down through all the different MLAs, the backbenchers, the Cabinet Ministers and so far we have 15 minutes of their participation in this debate. That is not going to pass the smell test and we have an opportunity here to stimulate the economy in Nova Scotia and no response. The Ivany report talks about doubling fish exports. The Ivany report says now or never. The Ivany report says doubling fish exports can happen within 10 years. I believe that and the opportunities are there.

If we had a government that goes out - and we've seen boat shops and we've seen businesses in southwestern Nova Scotia in particular and the boatbuilding industry is crying for tradespeople. Have we seen the minister responsible for that try to address that through our community colleges and create trades that can fill those jobs? Their boat orders are backed up five to seven years. There is opportunity to create some tax base and to create an opportunity to have these negotiations and pay the way. You have to create revenue and all this government want to do is cut the legs out underneath rural Nova Scotia.

To me, the accumulative effect is starting to have a very negative effect. You cannot just have a phone in our provincial parks. You cut out all the staff - those were jobs. That phone that you use to make the phone call and hope that everything is right in your campground doesn't pay taxes, it does not pay taxes. That is what you're asking the people across Nova Scotia to participate in.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to take my seat here in a few minutes and my colleagues will join the debate. But 15 minutes is simply 15 minutes and the people on the government side, the majority, are going to have to go out and do your social networking this particular festive season. I would love to be a fly on the wall and just observe those discussions as they talk to some of the teachers and workers across Nova Scotia in that festive atmosphere. Here is a motion which we're talking about as an opportunity to put this aside for six months, put this aside and have an opportunity to reflect. That is never a bad thing, I think it's an opportunity. You may criticize me and say, what does he know about offshore oil? What does he know about creating a heavy lift vessel in Nova Scotia? What does he know about building that heavy lift vessel in Nova Scotia?

We have the Ships Start Here contract so I would think that we'd have the confidence of building that heavy lift vessel in Nova Scotia, also the capping mechanism that prevents an oil blowout, to have that on our soil.

We have a federal government who committed \$5.8 billion for infrastructure. To me, that is something that is worth working for. If you stimulate the economy with those few projects, the opportunity to double fish exports in the next 10 years, the opportunities are there.

Last April I talked about the area that is somewhere east of LaHave Bank which is virgin territory, it has never been fished before. The area there is basically double the lobster area of the Atlantic Provinces. Not one word from the government evolved out of that discussion, and I'm suggesting there are ways of creating economic well-being in this community. This government has completely stumbled over itself since being elected two years ago.

Here are some opportunities, now you take six months to reflect on it. Is the Ivany Report wrong about doubling fish exports? Is the MLA for Queens-Shelburne wrong about a capping mechanism and creating a heavy lift vessel, \$0.75 billion for this heavy lift

vessel? That, to me, is a grand vessel and it should be. We have an opportunity to develop the oil industry and it can co-exist with the fishing industry, but we don't do it at the expense of the other.

We've heard some discussions here and we talked about the protection of the fishing industry's Browns Bank, and I actually asked the member for Yarmouth to talk about dispersants. I know there was a meeting with the member for Yarmouth present and they pledged to bring that concern to the respective Cabinet. To me it's obvious that they're not listening and they're not voicing the concerns, because if they were doing both, they would be on this floor of the House bringing those concerns forward. Again, this is the reason why this particular motion is on the floor, to take that second look and to have six months to reflect.

When the sun comes up there is going to be, in your constituency offices - I'm going to suggest to the Liberal Government that they go back and check their emails, check their phone lines and see the messages on their phones. Perhaps tomorrow - or actually it's been a little late here, actually today, when it comes at a reasonable time, 8:00 a.m. or 9:00 a.m., there may be people encircling this particular House - it's their right, they have a right to and I'm sure you will feel that; you will feel the dissatisfaction that is across this province. This is why this bill is on the floor to take the opportunity to reflect.

Now six months is not that long and when you disrupt workers' lives, like this particular Bill No. 148 is doing, I'm suggesting that is going to be on the minds of a lot of people who are going to be around this particular building in a few short hours. To me it's not out of reach to have that as an option, so I plead, in my last few minutes, to the Cabinet Ministers, and especially to the backbenchers I know are listening intently and have made all their notes and they want to go out to their constituency over the Christmas holiday and engage in discussions with the workers and the people across Nova Scotia. What an opportunity, to have six months to get it right and, to me, they have missed many opportunities.

I talked about the cumulative effect and I'm sure that they are going to continue going down that wrong road. I made reference to some of their titles tonight and that apparently wasn't parliamentary procedures. I thank you Madam Speaker, for your advice, I really do. But again, I really believe that taking six months to reflect on this particular bill is the right thing to do. It's not about doing things in haste, it's taking the opportunity; that's why we're sent here. We're sent here to do the job for the people and to me, this is all about getting things right.

I believe I presented a few opportunities through the infrastructure money that is coming out of Ottawa. We have a federal Prime Minister who is deeply endorsed, is on the Christmas card of our Cabinet colleagues. They are promoting the Prime Minister, so it should be in good favour as we proceed down this road and to me to assimilate the economy and to create those jobs in Nova Scotia is simply the right thing to do.

Again, before I turn it over to my colleagues, I want to thank all the members for listening intently. I know you are going to be taking this back to your respective constituency and you're going to be answering those phone calls in the morning and you're going to be listening to Nova Scotians. I hope that the discussion is longer than 15 minutes because to me, that is not really participating in a debate, when you introduce a bill that has this much effect on this many people - 75,000 people across Nova Scotia are directly affected by this particular bill.

We're not talking about their spouses, about their partners, about all the other family members that this is having an effect on. To me it's troublesome that you can do this and you can have this heavy-handed tactic with a majority government, speak only 15 minutes, and have that much of an impact on the population of Nova Scotia. I suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that this government is going down the wrong path. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: I rise to speak to the motion before the Legislature here this morning. Essentially we are asking why the legislation forcing a wage restraint on public servants needs to be adjourned for six months. Public servants need to consider the impact of the legislation on their work and their life so that is why we need to adjourn it for six months.

We are talking about 75,000 Nova Scotians from one end of the province to the other. Who are Nova Scotia's public servants and why do they deserve six months to consider the effects of forced wage legislation? Well they need to plan their finances. How many of those 75,000 have mortgages coming up for renewal? How many loans are coming due? How many children of Nova Scotia's civil servants are planning to go to university or community college next year? How many of those families planned on a wage increase to meet those needs?

Madam Speaker, I refer to BlueShore Financial - it's a paper I can table later, if everyone will be interested in reading. There are 10 reasons why financial planning is important, is suggested by BlueShore Financial. I'd like to incorporate these comments into the reasons why we need six months so that our civil servants can get their finances in order:

“Financial planning helps you determine your short and long-term financial goals and create a balanced plan to meet those goals.

Here are ten powerful reasons why financial planning - with the help of an expert financial advisor - will get you where you want to be.

1. **Income:** it's possible to manage income more effectively through planning. Managing income helps you understand how much money you'll need for tax payments, other monthly expenditures and savings.

2. **Cash flow:** increase cash flows by carefully monitoring your spending patterns and expenses. Tax planning, prudent spending and careful budgeting will help you keep most of your hard-earned cash.

3. **Capital:** An increase in cash flow, can lead to an increase in capital. Allowing you to consider investments to improve your overall financial well-being." Maybe not relevant here.

"4. **Family security:** providing for your family's financial security is an important part of the financial planning process. Having the proper insurance coverage and policies in place can provide peace of mind for you and for your loved ones.

5. **Investment:** A proper financial plan considers your personal circumstances, objectives and risk tolerance. It acts as a guide in helping choose the right types of investments to fit your needs, personality and goals." Something civil servants need to think about.

"6. **Standard of living:** The savings created from good planning can prove beneficial in difficult times. For example, you can make sure there is enough insurance coverage to replace any lost income should a family breadwinner become unable to work." Or, I might add, your government introduces wage legislation.

"7. **Financial understanding:** Better financial understanding can be achieved when measurable financial goals are set, the effects of decisions understood, and results reviewed. Giving you a whole new approach to your budget and improving control over your financial lifestyle.

8. **Assets:** A nice 'cushion' in the form of assets is desirable . . .

9. **Savings:** . . . sudden financial changes can still throw you off-track. It is good to have some investments with high liquidity. These investments can be utilized in times of emergency or for educational purposes.

10. **Ongoing advice:** Establishing a relationship with a financial advisor you can trust is critical to achieving your goals. Your financial

advisor will meet with you to assess your financial circumstances and develop a comprehensive plan customized for you.”

Madam Speaker, I would suggest that in looking for the six-month adjournment on this proposed wage restraint legislation is very important for the 10 reasons that have been outlined. Our civil servants need to do their financial planning and I would suggest need to look carefully at what BlueShore Financial is recommending, given that they will be facing somewhat of an emergency with their finances.

We talked about why they deserve to have six months but who are the Nova Scotia public servants that we are talking about? Well there are many. We've provided a number of 75,000 but they come from many different sectors. Let's start with provincial social workers. Now the provincial social workers, many of them who are caseworkers involved in child protection work, have recently had to deal with the recent changes to their workload, this workload that will be a direct result of recent amendments to the Children and Family Services Act. I submit that it will make their work harder.

Now as they train - and they will have to train because they will be concerned about liability issues because of the broad nature of the language, and they will need to try to understand whereas before, under the old legislation, maybe I didn't have to act. I would go with a voluntary care agreement, maybe now I have to. So it will be a stressful period of time.

They will have to train and they will have to take professional development courses to understand the obligations under the legislation, and so in doing that, they have to plan their finances. If the professional development to learn the new Act takes place in Halifax, many in parts of the province will require child care to attend the professional development. Child care is expensive and if these people were counting on a wage increase to assist, and they don't get it, then they must plan.

The other people who will need professional development to study the new legislation are the legal aid lawyers, who will have to represent individuals who have had children taken into care. To cope with the new legislation these lawyers will be working overtime and then, again, that means making child care arrangements, and that means financial planning. Only today will they learn that there is no negotiation on those wages and that their wages will be frozen. This is a factor that must be taken into account.

At Nova Scotia Legal Aid there are what are called conflict lawyers who take on cases where private lawyers cannot be found and oppose other legal aid lawyers. These lawyers travel the province from one end to the other. They put hundreds of kilometres on their vehicles. How many of them have been looking at year-end sales and thinking it would be a good time to invest in a safer and sturdier car. They now have to redo their budgets. They need time to consider the impact of this legislation.

The Department of Justice lawyers will face similar problems. The Crown Attorneys will need time to plan, as well as the nurses. We all know how many times hospitals and organizations from out West come to Nova Scotia to recruit our nurses. Many of them will have to decide if it's in their family's best interest to stay here or to move to Alberta, B.C., and points west. They will need to consider the impact of the legislation on their lifestyle and their jobs.

I don't think it is trite to consider, at this point, the number of people who will actually be leaving. Again we have seen this with earlier policy decisions made by this government. We will see people no longer wanting to stay in the province because of this wage legislation. Because there will be no wage increases they will go to places where the wages are better. We will not attract people into the province as well.

We need to think about what is going to happen in the next six months and give this serious thought. We need to take the time to consider the impact on the actual numbers of people who will be working or not working in this province, should this legislation go through. We need to take the time to consider the impact on the actual number of people who will be working or not working in this province should this legislation go through. Then, again, we have to think about the teachers who may be planning to upgrade their education.

Many teachers take part-time courses to increase their teaching certificate and improve their credentials. These courses take place at different times of the year. There is an impact on that planning, the cost of the courses. What about teachers who are deciding to take sabbaticals? They may have to reconsider that. A percentage of their income is deducted each year and that may not be feasible for them now. They need time to look at this legislation.

Of real concern are all the financial administrators of all the government programs in this province. The chief financial officers who have been labouring over the last few months to provide government with budgets for their departments, now they must reconsider all those figures. They likely planned for wage increases, which affected the bottom line; they had to deal with a Long Service Award and try to figure out who the restraint applied to and who it did not, now they must reassess. Six months would give them time to present the government with a more detailed budget and allow them to assess the impact of the wage freeze on budgets.

This also will concern all the human resource individuals in all government departments. They may well receive resignations and look at replacing the people who plan to leave their employment for greener pastures if there is a wage freeze. They need the six months to discuss the impact of the wage freeze with their employees and determine what the impact will be.

Bankruptcy is on the increase in Nova Scotia and we hear all the time that household debt in Canada is at a crisis point. This is true in Nova Scotia as well, people are living paycheque to paycheque, individuals who will not receive a pay raise and are at the wall need time to consider what avenue they should pursue.

Orderly payment of debt does not exist any longer in Nova Scotia, so that will be of no help to them. Bankruptcy, they need to consider the impact of the wage freeze. These civil servants have many questions: if I declare bankruptcy in Nova Scotia, will my wages be garnished? If my wages were garnished by a creditor before my bankruptcy, will my employer be informed of my bankruptcy? When are payments from my income required during bankruptcy in Nova Scotia? How would bankruptcy affect my GST refunds and my tax refund? Can my retirement pension end or my RRSPs be seized if I declare bankruptcy? All these questions must be considered by public servants who considered an increase in salary and now may not have one.

I will refer you to this document again, which I will be happy to table. It is from Grant Thornton and it is called the *Effects of filing bankruptcy in Nova Scotia* and it provides the answers to some of the . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, I would remind the honourable member to please refer back to the hoist motion to debate the motion.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South has the floor.

MS. MANCINI: I believe that my comments in relation to the possible impact on Nova Scotians in not being able to plan for their financial future does involve bankruptcy and I believe it's very relevant to the motion before you, Madam Speaker. I think that Nova Scotians have to look at all the aspects of this legislation on their financial framework and what is going to happen in their households. They need to explore the effects of bankruptcy and what could happen to them. That is absolutely crucial.

I suppose I haven't really confessed it publicly about my hearing issues. I always found it so incredibly annoying that my hearing I'm losing, apparently age-related - but it has a good side to it in that I don't usually hear much of what gets said from the other side of the House, so there you go.

Another of the reasons that we need to consider putting this legislation off for six months is because of the season that is now upon us. This is a very special time of year for many of us. People are caught up in the preparations of the season. There is a tree to buy or go out to the woods to cut. There are presents to buy. There are gifts to wrap. There is baking. There is taking some time to visit seniors. There is taking time to volunteer with needy organizations. There is so much to do and we have 75,000 public employees - our teachers, nurses, Crown Attorneys, Justice lawyers, our court staff, our government

employees, our sheriffs and our correctional officers - they are all working and trying to get ready for the holidays.

All of these civil servants that are directly impacted by this legislation are working this week. If they are aware that this legislation is before the House, they are not in a position to come before the Law Amendments Committee, which I expect will be tomorrow. It is really unfair to all of the people who want to come and speak.

The legislation was introduced on December 14th and will go to the Law Amendments Committee very shortly. How can they come? How can they make presentations if they're working? Combine that with a busy time of year when workers who have - these are dedicated workers in this province. This is one time of year where they can experience really great quality time with their families in a spirit of joy and peace. Well, I think that will be virtually wiped out for them when they become aware of this legislation, but they want to spend time with their children, their spouses, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, great aunts, great uncles, in-laws, and pets.

If we adjourn this for six months to allow the 75,000 public sector workers an opportunity to appear and make their concerns known, then the province is better for it. As members of the Legislature, we may get home to our ridings, but our constituents will be asking, why did the government introduce this legislation? Are they aware of how it will impact us? Do they even care? Why won't they give us the time to talk to us directly? Why can't we all sit down at a table somewhere to talk - to bargain? We could call it a bargaining table.

I know my constituents and workers across this province want this legislation deferred for six months. What is the government afraid of - a massive general strike? This motion is talking about time. Time involves the past, the present, and the future. We can all relate to a certain story written by one of my favorite authors, Charles Dickens. There is a story that he tells about a fellow who believes in austerity and penury. He has shut himself off from any family or friends. He won't even light a fire to keep himself warm because he doesn't want to spend any money at all. He likes to hoard his money.

When we talk about past, present, and future, it brings to mind - and I think somewhat of an analogy to what is happening here in this province. If we can walk the Premier of our province through the past, the present, and the future, what would that look like? Well if the Ghost of Christmas Past appeared to take the Premier back into the past, would he take him outside the Legislature last April where he was required to be escorted because of the large crowds protesting while he was cutting to the marginalized in the budget, cutting to CNIB, freezing rates for our social assistance, cutting to our creative film industry - essentially driving people away. That is what the Premier, who would go with the Ghost of Christmas Past, would see.

Then there is the Ghost of Christmas Present, and here we all are having sat all night in the Legislature, a week or so before the holidays. We would all want to be, and prefer to be, with our families, but here we are in some sense shrouded in secrecy, rushing through legislation in a hurry so that the people directly affected will not have the opportunity to come and talk and speak their minds about their position on it. It is a Premier who's trying to deprive our public sector of their most basic rights to collective bargaining - 75,000 people. It's an attempt to ram legislation through, knowing these workers are working, that is what they do and they work hard. The government is not giving them, at this present time, the opportunity.

The Ghost of Christmas Present would ask the Premier: Why are you playing with people's lives in this way? Then there is the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come - that's the ghost of the future. Well in the story there is enlightenment. What will the future be, what will the ghost of the future look like with the Premier? Well that will be in the next election. If only that ghost of the future would come to the Premier now like in the story.

I could talk about the Christmas Grinch or Jimmy Stewart in *It's a Wonderful Life*, the common theme is at the end of all of those stories they all saw the error of their ways. They saw that they were surrounded by hard-working, dedicated people who cared about each other; they saw the importance of these values - the importance of respecting people; of being honest; and not making promises to them and breaking them.

If there is one particular sector of the 75,000 and, again, it's in that concept of giving them time, I would direct your attention to the nurses in this province. Historically the nurses in this province have fought probably one of the toughest battles out there to gain their bargaining rights. And it's because of the profession, itself, and it's not unlike I suppose the teaching profession in many ways, but the nursing profession was so interwoven with what the role of a woman was supposed to be in society, caring, giving, nurturing - and this was just an extension.

Sandra Redmond, a Dalhousie master's student wrote a thesis and discussed the whole history of the Nurses' Union. She stated that nursing may trace its roots to the beginning of time. Since the inception of the human race there have been people to care for the sick and the infirm. Bullough and Bullough (1984) report that during the Middle Ages the sick were cared for in their home by unskilled, female relatives. Nursing was perceived as part of women's work and as requiring no special skills other than those of caring, which were believed to be inherent in all women. It was believed that caring was integral to the female sense of self in that it allowed women to express their love of others.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable member to please refer to the hoist motion and not the bill itself.

MS. MANCINI: Madam Speaker, when I talked and wanted to discuss the history of nursing I wanted to bring it forward to point out again the unfairness of this type of

legislation for them and the things they will need to consider within the next six months if this motion was successful. The nurses have struggled so hard to gain their own respectability and independence within their profession. This will have an incredible impact on them, and that is what I ask the government to consider in looking at this motion: we need the nurses in this province.

I can relate to a time when I was very young and my mother was a nurse, and my mother had been brought up and taught by the nuns. Nursing historically had been very much related to religion and connected to people's religions. They were ashamed to go out on strike because it meant that they weren't the nurturers or there was a religious implication to it.

In the 1960s they did go, they did get organized and they did finally - finally - develop that collective bargaining. It was such a struggle, and for them the opportunity they need in these next six months, if they can have it, to review so we can clearly understand the implications of it for them. It's very, very challenging for that sector and not only for the nurses, but for teachers as well, it's the same. You can see the people who will be impacted, the 75,000 people who are affected by this, I would submit that most of those are female workers and they are female workers who have benefited from unions.

If we look at this through a gender lens, there's no question that that's what would have happened and that struggle reflected - and the nurses at one point in the 1940s getting paid \$40 to \$50 a week, they have come a long way and it was because of collective bargaining.

The same applies to teachers and the same applies throughout the Public Service. It's mostly for women and if women hadn't had the benefit of joining a union - they need the time, I would think that it would be respectful of this government to allow people the time to consider.

One other aspect that I had referred to briefly is that in terms of financial planning, people have to look at the impact of their income taxes. They have to decide, if people have invested or if they are going to take out RRSPs, it goes back to the original issues that I raised about financial planning. The 75,000 public sector workers will need to look at the Canadian Income Tax Act and they will have to decide how and when and what they are going to do to ensure that they are in a good and comfortable space and where they can meet the basic rules under the Income Tax Act. In doing that, they have to be able to compute their income.

Now under Basic Rules, Section 3 of the Income Tax Act states that:

The income of a taxpayer for a taxation year for the purposes of this Part is the taxpayer's income for the year determined by the following rules:

(a) determine the total of all amounts each of which is the taxpayer's income for the year (other than a taxable capital gain from the disposition of a property) from a source inside or outside Canada, including, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, the taxpayer's income for the year from each office, employment, business and property,

(b) determine the amount, if any, by which (i) the total of (A) all of the taxpayer's capital gains for the year from dispositions of property other than listed personal property, and (B) the taxpayers' taxable net gain for the year from dispositions of listed personal property exceeds (ii) the amount, if any, by which the taxpayer's allowable capital losses for the year from dispositions of property other than listed personal property exceeds the taxpayer's allowable business investment losses for the year.

So you can see, Madam Speaker, they need the six months.

This is complicated legislation, the Income Tax Act, and they need the opportunity to review this Statute. They need the opportunity to sit down with their financial planner. They need to consider what their options are, what they can do. Can they provide for their children, for their children's education? Can they meet the needs of their own employment as there are more and more stressors on these workers?

We will not see hiring take place under this austerity regime. People are going to be stressed to the maximum. Positions will not be filled. They're working for less. We are looking at a very disillusioned and unhappy group of people, I anticipate that. They at least deserve the courtesy of this government to allow them to put a plan in place, to review their own finances, to look at their debt, to see if they need to rearrange their debt, if they need to remortgage. Those are all very legitimate concerns that people will have.

I'm asking the members on the opposite side of the House to give that serious thought and to think about what you're doing when you - and I use the word "ram" and I'm not even sure if I, I'm sure you would have cut me off, I don't know, it sounds like it should be unparliamentary, but it seems to be the most effective way of describing what is happening here. We had a hint that something might happen, that this type of legislation might come in, but it comes in on a Monday and here we are sitting all night and then the Law Amendments Committee probably sometime tomorrow, not enough time for people to really get organized, even to get the time off work to get there. It has all over it, to me, a look of unfairness. That is why giving the additional six months to review it is completely legitimate. Those are my comments, thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Madam Speaker, I just have a few points I would like to address to the honourable member's comments about the hoist motion. She indicates that she feels that workers need six months to plan. We have made numerous pronouncements over the last number of years, including invoking wage restraint on ourselves. So, for someone to suggest that people would be planning large increases, I think, is unrealistic because, quite frankly, we've been clear on what this province faces.

She also went on to discuss a number of Dickens' characters and talks about a certain work (Interruptions) Yes, Dickens, I say, yes. I would just like to quote one of the most famous quotations from David Copperfield, "Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure 20 pounds ought and six, result misery." And that is about living within our means and we see quite clearly in David Copperfield what happens when you don't live within your means.

In that particular book Mr. and Mrs. Micawber, they are lovely people, they are wonderful people, they always have a great expectation, so to speak, of something better coming down the road but the result is that they move from place to place, they end up in debtor's prison. Nobody understood this better than Dickens, who himself had to go out to work as a child because his father couldn't actually balance the family budget. He ended up working in a blacking shop. It so scarred him that the rest of his life was coloured by that experience.

Madam Speaker, what I would like to say about the six months' hoist motion is that in fact it is not accurate to compare the six months to some kind of Christmas tale or anything like that. The fact of the matter is that we have to live within our means and Dickens himself understood that perfectly well. Thank you.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Actually I believe my colleague was talking about *A Christmas Carol*, not Dickens - oh, sorry, *Great Expectations*. She was talking about *Great Expectations* and my colleague was talking about Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*.

Madam Speaker, it is so great to be here this time of the . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, the member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River has the floor.

MS. ZANN: It is wonderful to be here this time of day and to speak to the hoist motion that our Acting Leader has put on the floor for Bill No. 148, an Act Respecting the Sustainability of Public Services.

Madam Speaker, to go a little bit on from what my colleague was saying earlier about putting this on for six months, I can understand why our trusty Leader has asked for this extension. This bill was brought about very quickly, very unexpectedly and in really the darkness of the night while teachers, in particular, are still at work, still teaching our children and many different workers were taken unaware.

I'm here to talk about the fact that I believe what is going on here boils down to what I would call a class war. This isn't the first government to have done this, Madam Speaker. It has been happening across Canada at an alarming rate, in fact across North America at an alarming rate.

Our previous Prime Minister, Mr. Harper, was a very expert person at doing this and he has caused a lot of damage in this country which I am sure you can appreciate. I am expecting and really hope that our new Prime Minister is going to address that issue. Here in Nova Scotia we are faced with a similar situation with many different bills coming at us very quickly, one after the other that are attacks on workers and the working class. At this rate if we continue like this, most Nova Scotians will be living in poverty before we know it.

I think it's very interesting to see the new reports about how little we are growing and how many more workers are not making much money and have not grown in their own ability to pay for things. One of the things I noticed during the whole 2008 economic tsunami, they said that Nova Scotia and provinces like it actually didn't do too badly during that whole downturn, partly because so many people are part of the public sector so their jobs were actually protected, whereas in provinces like Ontario, for instance, where they rely on manufacturing, they suffered a lot more in some ways than we did.

Now some people might say also that Nova Scotia has been perpetually underwaged and that Nova Scotians have been perpetually struggling for a good, sustainable living wage. Some of us used to joke that actually a downturn in the economy didn't really amount to much of a change for a lot of people because we were already struggling as it was. This goes for artists, too, Madam Speaker.

I have to say that when I was listening to our Leader talking earlier - I was watching it from the lunch room - it was interesting to see her passion and to see that she was obviously very sad. She was angry but she was very sad and I can understand why, because after being in this House, working hard to try and make things better for the people of this province for 19 years and to see everything starting to fall apart and start to feel that it is four steps forward and five steps back, it must be very difficult for her.

I've been in this House only six years and already I will tell you, when the bill came forward and the budget came forward that affected the film and television industry in this province, that's exactly how I felt as well, Madam Speaker. So for our workers in this province to start to feel that you're getting a little bit ahead and then have it all taken away

from you - (a) it's a difficult thing to watch someone else going through it, and (b) it is a difficult thing when you are actually somebody who has helped to improve things for people and then have it suddenly snatched away.

For instance, I worked for two and a half years to try and improve the Film and Television Tax Credit and to make our province one of the best provinces in Canada to try and attract that kind of work and to actually go from an industry that made only \$6 million to bringing in \$150 million and of that \$150 million only \$24 million having to go out, that is a huge improvement for that industry.

I know because I've lived everywhere in the world to do it and I've had to follow the money. So when I moved back to Nova Scotia, Madam Speaker, I wanted to help create a thriving, creative economy here in Nova Scotia where our young people would feel excited to live here, to stay here, to put down roots and . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, I would ask the honourable member to please refer back to the hoist motion.

MS. ZANN: Yes, and so for me to watch all these workers here, these young workers being able to stay here and put down roots, Madam Speaker, this is the type of thing that makes me realize that the type of bill that is going through this House right now is detrimental to our workers and more and more of these workers - young teachers, young nurses, young workers in general - are not going to want to stay here.

Already our students are leaving in droves, enrolment is down. Madam Speaker, I would really wish that the members opposite - I know we're all tired, we're all a little punchy, but I wish they would be quiet a little bit and listen to what some of us have to say over here on the other side because I've just gotten up on my feet and I'm trying to make a point here. I don't want to just talk about nothing. Enough of that goes on in this House. (Interruptions) Excuse me, some people are saying I should know about it. My goodness, Madam Speaker, you know one of the things I decided when I came into this House is that I don't want to be one of those people who just stands there and talks about nothing. There's too much of that going on.

It's very easy to poke at people and make fun of people and there has been a lot of that going on in this House tonight. In fact I watched our Leader stand there and have the other members make fun of her and put her down and bully her. I'm sorry, Madam Speaker, but that is not right. I will stand here and defend the rights of people to stand in this House and speak about things that matter to the working people of this province and that's why we're here.

If anybody wants to make fun of that, go right ahead, but that is why we are here right now and that is why we need to push this bill further. I know we probably won't be able to do it, Madam Speaker, because, sadly, the government has a majority but guess

what? The tides change, they come in and they come out, they ebb and they flow, and our little tiny group of six here, we know it and some people will know it soon.

Madam Speaker, let me please get back to what I was talking about which is the hoist motion on this bill, Bill No. 148, that is before us right now. I would call this bill an attack on the working people of this province and I would call it another attack. Sometimes I wonder why people do these sorts of things and why members belonging to any particular Party might just buy into this type of rhetoric and this kind of idea that this is actually good for the province.

I will tell you class warfare, according to many experts - they say it creates and enforces the limits of what is oftentimes referred to as the middle class and that we don't really talk about it that much anymore, unless we want to say, oh yes, we're doing service for the middle class, but in fact, many people have attacked the federal Conservatives for their attacks on the working people. In fact, we could expect that images of the left-wing class warriors like the NDP would be made fun of for just standing up for working-class people, but there's a reason for it. The majority of people in this country are working-class people and sadly, those working-class people are becoming the working poor. These kinds of bills will continue to make the working poor grow so that the very, very few, the middle class that we call the middle class, will get smaller and smaller as they get squeezed. A few of them will make it up into the higher echelons, but the majority of them will become the working poor.

One example of this war on workers, for instance, was the temporary foreign workers programs, which really hurt Canadian workers by helping to drive down wages. Governments also managed a very high-level exercise in multitasking to hurt the temporary workers who were also imported into Canada, by limiting their access to the minimal protections available to non-unionized workers. These programs also deny the foreign workers the opportunity to reside here permanently under an unspoken slogan which is basically, you're good enough to harvest our crops and care for our children and our elders, but not good enough to live here as Canadians.

Well, our Harper Government also launched another attack on working Canadians with its destructive tinkering with Employment Insurance which is a social safety net, basically, that in the 1980s provided benefits for close to 80 per cent of the unemployed. In 2013, Harper initiated changes to this program already diminished by the Chrétien era reforms in the mid-1990s, reduced eligibility yet again.

The Governments of Canada and also the provinces, like this one right here, have actually enacted 216 pieces of anti-union legislation. The Harper Government brought a special brand of this malicious kind of enthusiasm to its approach to labour relations, which I have to say is reminding me of what has been happening here since this Liberal Government came into power in 2013. I have to ask, what beyond the standard issue of right-wing, anti-union ideology makes attacks on unions so appealing?

Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, here's one thought. If unions can be undermined and weakened, then it means big-profit increases for business interests that support the ruling Party. Currently, even in their weakened state, our Canadian unions deliver a significant 30 per cent average wage advantage to workers, compared to average wages paid to non-union workers. That translates into an average of \$5.17 an hour advantage for unionized workers. For unionized women the advantage is \$6.89 an hour; for unionized young workers between 15 and 24, the advantage is a more modest, but still significant, \$3.16 an hour. I think the hoist motion will give us a little bit more time to talk about this, to get our union workers out here to talk to us, to talk to the public.

The other thing that bothers me about this, Madam Speaker, is that it seems to me that the government is trying to make the teachers and the nurses and the health care workers out to be these horrible, gouging people who are just out for a buck, and that is so far from the truth. Most of us have teachers, nurses, health care workers in our families or our friends. My whole family is made up of teachers and I know how hard they work and, to be honest, I don't think teachers make an exorbitant amount of money at all. They are the middle class, but they work really hard for that money.

As time has gone on, bit by bit it's harder and harder to make a good living on the amount of money they have. The thing is yes, we have so many poor in this province and yet why would we want to have a race to the bottom? Why would we want that? We here in this House are quite privileged, thank you very much. We all make a good living and ministers make an even better living than those of us who are simple MLAs.

Now those who are ministers make - about what? - \$40,000 or \$50,000 more than MLAs. I've been an MLA, I've never been a minister and I've made an MLA's salary and out of the six years that I've been in government, my salary has been frozen for four years, so for four years my salary has been frozen. Actually since I started in this job I am now making \$43,000 less than I was when I first started six years ago. But do you know what? I don't complain. Why? It's because I have a steady paycheque. I'm doing well, Madam Speaker, compared to so many in this province who do not have a steady paycheque and who are not unionized.

I'm not unionized in this job; I was in my previous job as an actor. I'll tell you it was nice to have a union to look after you, to go to bat for you when you needed it because right now we don't have anybody to look after us and I think it's our duty to try and look after the people of Nova Scotia. That's why I would really like to see this bill put off as long as possible; in fact I'd like to see it cancelled. It makes no sense to me and I really think that the teachers are going to be very upset.

I happen to be the Education Critic and as I was saying to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development earlier tonight in Question Period, I think the teachers are going to be very upset about this and although she has been saying that she is so close to teachers and she is their friend and whatever, I don't think so, because with friends like

this, who needs enemies, Madam Speaker? Sometimes when you are new in this political business, you have older members say oh, you know you don't have any friends in here, don't be nice to those people on the other side because none of them are your friends. Your only friends are just in your own caucus.

I have never believed that, Madam Speaker. I believe you can be friends with anybody. It doesn't matter what their political stripe is, it doesn't matter what their religion is. It doesn't matter; people are people, we all want the same thing. We want to be healthy, we want to be happy, we want to be peaceful, yet in this day and age there's less and less people who are happy and peaceful and secure. That's why job security is so important.

I was in Truro about a year ago when the then-new Premier came to town and spoke to the chamber of commerce. I remember him saying that he had all these great plans in store for the province. One of the things he actually said was that he planned on getting rid of Long Service Awards. The way he described it really shocked me - he said you know these workers have the luxury, basically, of having the same job, working for the same employers for 30 years and then they expect to get a Long Service Award of \$20,000 or \$25,000 on top of that.

Madam Speaker, it is the opposite of the way you are supposed to think of it. You are supposed to think, my gosh, these people have given their lives to you, have given their lives to the government, to the people of this province, and they deserve to be rewarded. Why shouldn't they? They worked such long hours, they worked so hard and these are the kinds of people who are going to be so affected by this bill, which is why I think we need to push it ahead.

Six months is short in the scheme of things. In six months' time we'll have another Spring session. It will give time for consultations with all of the various unions: our health care workers, the road workers, the people who are right now cleaning the roads and making them safe for all of us. I feel sorry for them because they feel that their lives are in our hands and they feel that they've trusted this government to do the right thing by them. But, in fact, many of them now are shocked, dismayed, and disappointed.

I know the members of the opposite side, the government side, do not want to hear all this stuff. It sounds negative to them; it's very critical, but if it was a good bill I would be here saying it was a great bill, as I did for other bills that I've believed in that the government has done. I think most people can remember when I've stood here and said, good for you, I'm really glad you've done this. I'm really glad that the government or the Premier or whoever has done this, but tonight is not one of those nights.

Coming from a family of teachers and coming from a family who does believe in unions, who does believe in the fact that we need to be equal and that society is better when there's less of a gap between the rich and the poor, that is the type of society I want to belong to. I was lucky, I talk about it often about living in Sweden, where people have a

guaranteed annual income and they're taught from an early age to be proud of their craft and be proud of the jobs that they do and to want to give back to society because society is looking after them. That society has the longest longevity, the healthiest people and they're happy. They only have to work 35 to 40 work hours.

In fact, I was married to a tool and die maker from Truro, a good friend, I went to school with him. He was working in the United States and he was working 60 hours a week and they were all working extra hours because they wanted to make extra money because they wanted to buy things. They wanted to build things on their houses. They wanted to buy fancy boats and cars and things like that. He went from there to being sent over to Switzerland, where he worked for the mother company. In Switzerland he was told he couldn't work overtime. He couldn't work longer hours, that they were only allowed to work 35-hour work weeks.

At first he was screaming and crying and saying, I just want to make money; they won't let me make money and then he started to get it because the reason why they do that is because they believe that quality of life is just as important, in fact, more important than just going to work for a carrot that's leading you along by the nose and that your family life is important, that your leisure time is important. (Interruption) I'm Australian so I can say leisure, you can say leisure, whatever you want to say, tomato, tomato. They love to make fun of us when we get up. They make fun of us, it's really sad.

Again, I feel that kind of lifestyle is what we should all want and that is the kind of lifestyle that our unions are trying to push for for everybody. In those Scandinavian countries, 90 per cent of the workforce is unionized. The unions work hand in hand with the government because the governments respect them. But here it's like this big fight that is an unnecessary fight.

When the NDP was in government we didn't have all these parades around the Legislature like we've had here with 2,000 people, for instance, the largest protest we've ever seen around the Legislature for the film and television industry, with all the businesses that were worried about their businesses hurting, which my friend and colleague for Chester-St. Margaret's can easily tell you, it has happened in her town. She says she goes down to the markets and goes downtown now and it's empty compared to when Haven was there.

The thing is in Truro-Bible Hill, whenever the Trailer Park Boys are in, whether you like the show or not, boy they spend money, they come, they buy food, they go to the bars and the restaurants. They bring tons of crew and tons of tourists with them. The tourists love to come and see the Trailer Park Boys and I think it's great and we need more of that. That is the type of work that we need here in this province and we need to teach our people that these kinds of jobs are important and that we need them and that they need to be protected, in fact, I'd like to see everybody have a pension.

Part of the problem with this kind of divisive behaviour is that it plays on the people who do not have pensions. Many people will say, I don't have a pension why should they have a pension? I don't care, why should they get a pension, why should they get this or that?

Madam Speaker, again, it's not a race to the bottom, that's not the kind of society we want. Don't we want to aspire to a great society? We don't want to be just a mediocre society, we want a great society where people are happy, where people are healthy and where they want more and more people to come here and live here. So for a hoist motion to be used it's usually a very important bill that we care about deeply or else we're not going to be bothered doing a hoist.

Yes, Madam Speaker, some of the members across the way are getting anxious, and I know that probably deep down inside this is touching some of their nerves because they know I'm right. I believe some people on the other side do know I'm right, others probably believe the rhetoric and believe in the class system and that's okay, but I think it's a sad thing and that's why we're here pulling the hoist motion and talking to the hoist motion right now.

Some of the members on the other side come from communities where there are a lot of union workers and they probably come from a background where they used to know how important that was. In fact, in Cape Breton people died for it. In Australia, where I come from, people died for it. In fact, one of my great, great uncles almost died for it but he lived, in spite of shooting going on all around him and he ended up going to jail for his actions to build a stockade against the greedy gold owners who owned the land that these gold diggers were paying taxes on, overly-expensive taxes, and they rebelled and a number of them were shot. My great, great uncle lived to tell the tale and was sent to jail. Then he learned about the law in there and got out of jail and become a governor.

So, Madam Speaker, many times it's these kinds of opportunities and challenges that tend to make us rise to the occasion and become the people we were meant to be. I would think that sometimes when you're a backbencher you're expected to just do what the government wants you to do, the powers that be, or as I call them, the powers that were, in our case over here - the powers that told us they had all the answers and they knew everything, and guess what? I'm the only backbencher from that government that's still standing here today, out of 31 members, so obviously they didn't know everything.

I don't think it matters if you're a lawyer or you're an economist or a business owner or an actor, we all know what we are good at, we all have craft, we all have skills, we all have talents. Those are the kind of people we want here in Nova Scotia and that's why we're here doing this hoist motion today.

Again, when our interim Leader was speaking earlier, I was really amazed at her knowledge about this whole thing. She reminded me of my mother, Madam Speaker,

because my mother was a teacher all her life and I used to watch her come home and mark papers well into the night, until 2:00 a.m., 3:00 a.m. Then she'd get up at 6:00 a.m. or 7:00 a.m. and get us ready and get off to school. It wasn't necessarily a fun time because she was stressed - she was stressed, I was stressed, she was trying to get everybody together. I wouldn't eat breakfast because I never did eat in the morning. My poor mother, I feel sorry for her now because I didn't give her an easy time.

But I'll tell you, I remember how hard she worked and I remember how she tried to make a difference and do extracurricular activities like when we moved to Truro from Australia, Madam Speaker. She noticed a huge racism issue, a huge racism problem between the Blacks, the First Nations, the French, and the English - like four solitudes. What she did - and I'll never forget this - she would take them all horseback riding. She would take different children, who might not be able to afford it, horseback riding, to get them to know each other so that the fighting would stop and they would start to get to know each other as people.

Madam Speaker, those are the kinds of things that teachers will probably not do in the future because they won't want to. I mean why would teachers want to give of their free time and their spare time when they're being treated with disrespect by their own government?

Madam Speaker, teachers, nurses, the caring professions, home care workers - these are all mainly women. As the Critic for the Status of Women, I have to say I have not been impressed either with a lot of these attacks on the workers.

Now it may not be very easy for some people to see, but I think the women who are here in this House can see, if you put your feminist lens on correctly, you can see - oh, isn't that interesting. They're picking on all of these unions that are full of women - women who make less than men, usually anyway, and women who are caring, nurturing individuals who are now feeling that they have been left behind and that their own government really doesn't value them, doesn't care about them, and their own minister doesn't care about them.

So we are here to say we care about them. When our own government was in power, I was one of the very first ones to say I don't believe in cuts to education. I believe in education. I believe in putting money into kids and into teachers.

It's interesting because this government likes to always talk about the kids, the kids, the kids, but I also like to talk about the teachers. That's why we're here doing this hoist motion today as well, because the teachers deserve our respect.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. There is a lot of chatter in the room.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River has the floor.

MS. ZANN: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I appreciate it. It reminds me a little bit of when I first came into this Legislature in, I think, 1982 or 1984, and I sat up there in the gallery. It was International Women's Day and I had been invited by Alexa McDonough to come and watch her in the Legislature and I was amazed at the passionate speeches that she was giving, and all these men around her were throwing paper airplanes at each other and not listening to her and making fun of her. I'll never forget that image and sadly I don't think the House has really changed much since then.

I know that Graham Steele wrote in his book about the rules of the game and how this House is so toxic and people don't learn anything. They don't listen to each other, and everybody is busy doing their own thing. I have to say, I agree with him. I agreed with many of the things he said in that book and I've seen it now first-hand because in six years - four years in government and two years in Opposition - it's not a very healthy environment. In fact, it tends to make everybody very much "us and them" and "we and they" as opposed to, how do we work together? How do we create a better system for all? How do we look after Nova Scotians? A hoist motion, as I said before, is usually used in dire circumstances, and I think this is a dire circumstance.

One other thing I wanted to mention was the Auditor General's Report about finances in Nova Scotia. I'd like to provide some context to it because the fiscal situation here in Nova Scotia, I'd like to compare it with other jurisdictions because past reports have done that, but not this time. So citing a lack of available data, the Auditor General fails to make any comparisons, and he could have reported that Nova Scotia's fiscal situation actually compares favourably with most Canadian provinces.

According to the Royal Bank, our projected debt-to-GDP ratio for 2015-16 at 36.4 per cent is comparable to the other Atlantic Provinces and Manitoba's, and is significantly lower than Ontario and Quebec, with debt-to-GDP forecasts of 39.9 per cent and 49.5 per cent respectively.

Only British Columbia and the oil-rich Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan have significantly lower debt-to-GDP ratios. Further, Nova Scotia's projected budget deficit as a percentage of GDP at only 0.3 per cent is the second lowest behind British Columbia's. So since the turn of the century, our debt-to-GDP ratio has fallen by over 20 per cent. Yet even with these positive comparisons, skeptics wonder whether the majority of Canadian provinces' finances are sustainable.

Well, fortunately, there's a proliferation of serious empirical studies on sustainable debt levels, and these focus on identifying the point at which governments' debt levels start to adversely affect their ability to finance programs.

A recent study by the IMF, for example, concludes that debt-to-GDP ratios of less than 90 to 100 per cent pose little concern, and that serious problems only arise when debt rises above 150 per cent of the GDP.

This doesn't mean that the Nova Scotia Government should just ignore the debt, Madam Speaker, the debt does need to be managed obviously and it may make sense to gradually lower our debt-to-GDP ratio, but it needs to be done responsibly. Again, that's why we're here talking about this hoist motion because rushing through austerity measures when our economy faces excess capacity will actually have a negative effect on economic growth, hampering our ability to manage the debt.

Just as important, austerity imposes real costs on Nova Scotia's prosperity in terms of higher unemployment - I'm going to repeat that - higher unemployment, lower public sector wages, increased poverty, and diminished quality of essential public services. We can afford to invest in our society and manage our debt responsibly. The federal Liberals' recent electoral success demonstrates, Madam Speaker - and I really hope that your government is listening - it demonstrates that the public is willing to accept a platform that includes modest deficits directed towards necessary public investments. Let's hope that your counterparts here, that the Liberal Government here could recognize the wisdom of this, and that's why we need more time - why rush through a bill that is only going to hurt us in the end?

We need people in Nova Scotia who have money in their pocket, and as I started off my talk talking about how we managed to ride through the recession as well as we did is because we had so many public servants, people with steady jobs, with paycheques they could count on. Madam Speaker, the more that we go down this rabbit hole, the worse it is going to become for our workers here in Nova Scotia, and more of them will leave and young people will leave - why would they stay?

Now the Nova Scotia Legislature did pass another controversial bill to merge the province's existing nine district health authorities, as we know. I've been speaking to doctors and to a lot of health care workers in my area and they are telling me it is not working, things are worse than they were. In fact, they're saying that under our government at least there was a doorway open where they could get information, they could find out what's going on; now they say it's like a void: they try to find out more information and there's no information coming.

Even in my hospital in Truro, their equipment in the hospital is much more advanced than the equipment here in Halifax and when they need equipment they are sending them old equipment that they can't even use, Madam Speaker; they can't even use it. So why are we doing what we are doing here? It's not working. Many governments over the last 25 years have tried the same kinds of things but they've just tried to shave off and manage these austerity budgets and they are not working.

We tried it, too, the get back to balance. Our thing was called get back to balance, living within your means. Well, how did that do for us, Madam Speaker? We did reduce poverty, it's true, but that was by adding tax credits for the very poor and to the lower-income people. We reduced poverty for many, many families in this province which now, unfortunately, is going back up again - one in five children on mainland Nova Scotia, three out of five in Cape Breton, living in poverty, and 42.7 per cent of children under the age of six - those are unacceptable levels.

These kinds of measures are not going to help and, again, that is why we're here talking about the hoist motion.

Now, Madam Speaker, earlier in the Nova Scotia Legislature our Health and Wellness Minister repeated the government's position that allowing all employees a vote on who will represent them in the future is too disruptive. "Anyone who joins our health-care sector today, does not have that right. If you're a lab technologist and you want to take a job at Kentville Regional Hospital, you're going to be a member of CUPE. You don't get a choice - that choice was made for you decades ago." We have held up that bill's passing by offering final thoughts on all of the things that we believed was wrong with the bill.

I can't remember if we did a hoist motion on that one but (Interruptions) Yes, I think we probably did, and that's because we believe in these things. We called the bill excessive and undemocratic. We didn't believe that merging health authorities would save any money. At that time our Interim Leader said, this is a dark, dark day for the Province of Nova Scotia; this is a regressive piece of legislation. Madam Speaker, we have to say we still agree with that, and as I've said, it hasn't saved the province any money; it has created chaos in the system. All of the doctors, nurses, technicians, people in the health industry that I've been talking to say it's a mess, it's a disaster, and whatever the minister is being told to say, I don't know if he believes it or not, but it's not right, it's incorrect because it's a mess out there.

I'll tell you those CECs that we started have really, really helped the people of this province to get to see a doctor as soon as possible. Again, the promise by the Premier to have a doctor for every Nova Scotian, where is it? It hasn't happened. Even in Halifax I know people who don't have a doctor anymore; they don't have a general practitioner. The doctors are retiring or they're moving to the States. Again, that's another issue, that's another problem and that's another reason why we're here talking about the hoist.

Since the Nova Scotia Liberal Government was elected in October, it has actually brought down a breathtaking barrage on labour. Restricting the right to strike, curtailing collective bargaining rights, demonizing public sector workers, and gerrymandering bargaining units and picking favourites among unions. This is set in the context of a province not previously renowned for its progressive labour legislation and, in fact, Nova Scotia is notorious for anti-labour initiatives going back to 1979, when the infamous

Michelin bill deliberately and retroactively blocked a union organizing drive at that employer and made it harder to organize multi-plant employees in the future.

In 1984, Nova Scotia was the first province in Canada to eliminate card count, evidence to determine union support, again, hobbling unions and, again, that's why we're here talking on this hoist. This is yet another bill along this line. Its labour standards legislation has been among the most regressive in the whole country, that's Nova Scotia, that's our legacy, that's what people say about us here. Trade unionists, therefore, were kind of hoping with some relief when the NDP was elected in 2009 and we did do many things to try to help them, all of which have now been clawed back by this government.

With the majority government, I'm sorry, but the Liberals here have stormed out of the gate with a series of purposeful legislative attacks. First of all they amended the NDP's first collective agreement law to make it almost impossible for unions to access the provision. They constrained the right to strike for a wide swath of public workers in health care and social services. Rather than ban strikes entirely, which would send disputes to binding arbitration, what did they do? They imposed essential services limitations so strict that the bill's wording actually contemplates negotiations becoming meaningless. That is why we're here speaking to this hoist motion.

The Liberal Government proposed to force acute health care workers into a single union for each of four bargaining units. The aim of the legislation was to kneecap the activist Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union and its leader, who was deemed public enemy number one by the Liberals, Joan Jessome - good for Joan. The initiative could have deprived that union of one-quarter of its membership and 40 per cent of its revenue, effectively removing it from the position of dominance in the Nova Scotia labour scene.

Now the Liberals did pass a law severely restricting the rights of unions in higher education, allowing universities to declare financial exigency and hence, to remove their unions' access to bargain collectively and to strike. Nowhere, nowhere else in Canada, Madam Speaker, has this been done, and that's why we are here debating this bill and talking about the hoist motion.

What makes these initiatives especially outrageous, Madam Speaker, is that they flout the spirit, if not the letter, of the Supreme Court of Canada's rulings of recent years on freedom of association for workers and their unions - and anybody on the other side who is chirping away and who has been in a union should know better.

Madam Speaker, again I'm coming back to my initial idea which is that this is a war on Nova Scotia's workers. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, Nova Scotia while not one of the richer Canadian provinces by any means, did become considerably wealthier, an increase in real GDP per capita of 54 per cent in the 30-plus years since 1981.

Now of course that bounty was not shared equally, workers and the poor were not 54 per cent better off. Much of that economic growth was fuelled by a 40 per cent increase in productivity, Madam Speaker, that's why we're here today - productivity of our workers, our workforce, measured in real output per worker hour with a steeper rise during the 1990s, but in that same time period real median earnings for full-time, full-year workers actually dropped by 5 per cent. Real average earnings did rise moderately, but mostly due to the ability of unionized workers at the upper end of the labour market and those with credentials and transferrable skills, like doctors, nurses, technologists, and tradespeople, to resist the downward pressure.

Now previously earnings had roughly followed productivity, as was the case in most developed countries. It was 1991 when the productivity and earnings lines seemed to take a permanent leave of one another, and the former continuing upward while the latter plummeted. By 2013, Madam Speaker, Nova Scotia had the second lowest average weekly earnings in the country. Only Prince Edward Island was lower, so if there were productivity and general prosperity gains over the 30-plus years and declining median wages, where did the bounty go, especially given that government's take of the GDP did not increase.

It has been analyzed that the proportion of net domestic product going to labour and owners of capital between 1991 and 2006, the proportion going to employees declined by 8.3 per cent while that going to capital increased over 200 per cent, Madam Speaker. That's why we're here today talking about this hoist. This exactly reversed the trend of labour gains of the previous 40 years. This was a sharper diversion than a similar trend across Canada during the same period. So the evidence could hardly be starker for a growing gap between owners of capital and the working people. So by the time Nova Scotia Liberals did assume power in 2013, unorganized workers and the uncredentialed union members had been truly beaten down. It remained only for the government to go after the skilled workers, especially those in the broader public sector.

Madam Speaker, Executive Director, Jim Turk, of the Canadian Association of Univer lagged woefully behind and made it difficult to recruit top talent. He commented that the TD Bank doesn't pay one-third less than competitors in order to save money, yet that's what McKenna is recommending for universities in the Maritimes and it's bad advice.

Now, Madam Speaker, our universities are in a difficult way, as you know as well. The caps on tuition have been taken off and now we are getting all these rises in tuition, which I would say are unsustainable for the students who want to come here. In fact, again, these are the young people our province needs.

This hoist motion is about all these various parts of Nova Scotia, these people who are all affected, in particular our unionized workforce. Again, as I'm trying to get across here, we need our unionized workforce. We need them to make the money they do, spend the money they do. A lot of the people who are film technicians belong to unions, in fact

the actors belong to unions. When you belong to a union you make more money and why shouldn't you, Madam Speaker, especially as an actor? I can tell you that you don't work every day so when you do work, you need to make enough money to get by for the rest of the time because you don't even get employment insurance. When you are an actor you don't get employment insurance, so if you are not working you are out of luck. You either have to get another job, a second or third job, or you make no money.

I was lucky, Madam Speaker, I worked for 35 years as a professional actor and I never had to take a regular job, ever. I existed on my acting, singing, writing, producing, directing abilities. I'll tell you, it's not easy, I wouldn't wish it on the faint of heart because it takes courage and it takes great stamina. My hat goes off to all our hardworking film people and our theatre people and our dancers in this province because they really are the meat and potatoes that holds us all together. They are the juice; they are the flavour that makes this place worth living in.

Madam Speaker, that's why we're here for this hoist motion as well, to speak for all these people, these hardworking, taxpaying Nova Scotians who are just like you and me, only they don't necessarily have a steady paycheque. All of the film workers I'm running into, most of them are unemployed right now or they have had to leave and it's very, very sad. It breaks my heart actually, especially to sit here and watch all the work we've done to try to improve the situation for the hardworking artists of Nova Scotia being thrown out the window and being dusted off as if these people are nothing, as if their talent means nothing, that they are minuscule.

All the people I've been running into in the last number of months have told me they feel completely disrespected by this government and they feel they are undervalued, they are underpaid and they feel it's an attack on the arts, almost like what Prime Minister Harper said when he went, oh yes, they just like to have their fancy balls every now and then and pat themselves on the back and drink champagne. That is so far from the truth, Madam Speaker.

I've heard some of the members here say, oh they are a bunch of elitists. My goodness, Madam Speaker, most of them are making under \$25,000 a year, I don't see how they could possibly imagine that they are elitists. Most of the filmmakers I know have mortgaged their homes so they can make a film that they dream of making. It's not easy.

I can hear some of the people chirping around in the background, going speak to the thing. I'd like to say you know some of those people have not had these kinds of opportunities where they've had to make a living based on their wits. Maybe they have a business, which is fantastic. We don't hold that against them, I think it's wonderful, we need more entrepreneurs in Nova Scotia. But I'll tell you, people like to live in a province where there's a ton of amenities and there is great arts and culture, or else why would they be here? They will go to Toronto, or Montreal, or Vancouver; they'll go to many other

places instead of staying here in Nova Scotia. Again, that is why we're here talking about this hoist today.

Madam Speaker, again I say this is like a class warfare and I think all of us here in the House need to think about this because again, when you are living in a glass house, oftentimes you don't notice what's outside there; you are living in a little bubble. As an actor, again, I used to notice when I was on a television series, for instance, the new people, usually younger ones would get a lead role. They would come on set and be very nice and sweet for the first couple of weeks and then they'd start to take it for granted. Then they'd start complaining about, oh the craft service isn't good enough, their dressing room is too small, oh this person has a bigger dressing room than me, why do they have a bigger dressing room?

Bit by bit you would see these people change. It would go right to their heads and it was pretty scary because I knew, as an actor who has been around for a long time, that they would be out on the street knocking on doors and doing more auditions very soon, as soon as that TV series ended and many of them never got another TV series, so many of them had to leave the business, they have become other things, in fact, nobody has even heard of them, they had one series and they're gone. That is the same with this, we shouldn't take anything for granted, it could be snatched away from you tomorrow.

One of the things we have also noticed in this House in the last couple of years is we've had members die, both of us have had members die and it really puts it in perspective (Interruptions) Madam Speaker, I find some of things that people say here so petty, when somebody is trying to speak from the bottom of their hearts and be as honest and authentic as possible and yet people love to just make little snatchy, nasty little comments. (Interruptions) I'm sorry, what would you like to say over there?

MADAM SPEAKER: I would remind the honourable member that she has the floor and to please direct all comments to the Chair and not to members opposite.

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

MS. ZANN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, as I was saying, some of the other members on the other side are probably feeling a little punchy. They're probably tired. They are sick to death of hearing us criticizing and hearing the negative things that we have to say because they don't want to hear it, but I'm telling the truth.

When I talk about the fact that I see these things in my longer life than many of them over there, I have to say that it is sad when people don't appreciate what they have while they have it because it doesn't last forever. As I was saying, we have lost members and we lost a member today, Mr. Sid Prest, today, that's who I was talking about. (Interruptions) Madam Speaker, people are getting punchy and they're getting very nasty,

but that's okay. They're human, aren't they, Madam Speaker? Life is short and you know that, Madam Speaker, I know, we've talked before.

I have to say that this House is a House where we need to be honest, truthful and talk about the things that matter and that's why I'm here talking about this bill and that's why I'm here talking about the hoist motion. I care about the workers of this province. My Party cares about the workers of this province and we will defend the workers of this province until the sun sets and does not come up again. It's defining the Charter-protected labour rights as well and I have a feeling down the road this will be challenged in court. It turns out there are other bills in Ontario, for instance, that were tried to be passed against the elementary school teachers, who have been fighting and fighting for their rights.

I would hope that the workers and the teachers of this province do the same thing here because once somebody takes your rights away, what do you have left? Nothing. With that, I'll say thank you very much and take my seat.

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Madam Speaker, I'm going to start to ask, why are we here overnight and early in the morning. It's a little bit baffling because the Premier stood in this House and said a number of times that the fact is the government is not taking away anybody's rights; they're not losing their rights. The teachers will have an opportunity to discuss their concerns beyond the wage factor. If that's the case and that's guaranteed by this Premier, then why do we need a piece of legislation? Why do we need legislation if the Premier is telling Nova Scotians and telling teachers we'll listen to your concerns? As long as you don't talk about the wage component, we'll listen to your concerns - well we shouldn't need any legislation then.

Why should the teachers or anybody who works in the public sector believe this Premier, the Cabinet, or the caucus? With the number of promises that were made or implied since that Party ran for government and then turned around and it was the complete opposite. There is a long list and that's why we're here this early morning talking on a hoist about trying to encourage this government to give that time because this government indicated that.

The fact is that we all know that the Premier cozied up to unions and public sector workers during the election and prior to that. I watched that. (Interruption) I know the member is saying some things over there, but the member who is saying it was not in this House and did not see that performance. I saw it every time we sat in this Legislature, the performance of that Premier, now who is a Premier, cozying up and implying - no, not just implying, but actually consciously telling people that he believed in the right of collective bargaining, he believed in the rights of public sector workers and what they do for the people of Nova Scotia. He said that over, and consciously took advertisements out in the newspaper.

So why are we here then? Shouldn't Nova Scotians and the teachers be able to believe in what is being presented to them? We don't need legislation if the fact is that their concerns are going to be heard. Well, we know their concerns aren't going to be heard. It has all been a great performance. Even though this Premier has devastated the film and television industry, he is the one who has done the great performance, and that's why we are here this early morning to talk about giving that time and truly giving that time to the teachers and to the public sector to have that opportunity.

In the last several weeks, we thought that there was a turnabout, a little bit at least, with this government when the Deputy Premier publicly said that we need to take time, we need to be able to have some discussions, open the door to that for the teachers. That's what was said; it was said publicly. So part of the whole plan here was, once again, to provide a performance to those people that they were talking to, to let them think that they could take the time, they could prepare for the holiday season with their families - hard-working public sector workers - that they could spend the time with their family and friends over the holiday and then they could come back and start on the process of conversation with this government. That did not occur because it's a performance; it's exactly that.

How shameful is that to tell people that we're going to give you some time to discuss your issues and bring them forward? I don't know how you do that, how do people do that? How do you do that, Mr. Speaker, how do you publicly say one thing when you know that you have another plan? Isn't that betrayal, isn't that the word? That's what Nova Scotians have today, betrayal, a whole list of it.

We could stand here until tomorrow and the next day, going through that list and the government members cannot deny it because it's not just talking back and forth that it's not public, it's in printed form, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we are talking about a hoist this morning because we think it's important to make sure that the government is accountable because when you've been betrayed a number of times, after a while you are not going to believe it. I think there is a story called *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, very similar to this government. We might as well put the Premier's name in that book because it has been like that ever since this government was formed, it led up to that.

Mr. Speaker, I do have respect for a number of members in the Liberal Government and I actually personally feel sorry for those people who I know are suffering from this because it's part of the political game. We can't speak out, we have to look like we're part of the team. But for some people it must be very distressful because some of the government members are teachers or know teachers, have family members who are teachers, have family members who work in the public sector, so it must be very stressful because there's a difference, when you are running for government and you make comments and I'll tell you one thing that I learned very early on and I think it was from my upbringing, that was the fact that I was not going to promise anybody anything that I could not guarantee that I could do.

Mr. Speaker, when I do go door-to-door, if somebody says to me, will you promise to do that, will you promise in Opposition or you promise in the government, my reply would be and has always been, I will do my best but I am not going to stand and look in your face and tell you that I am going to promise something because we don't know. You don't know until you are in a position whether or not you are able to actually do what you are promising.

Mr. Speaker, that's why we are here this morning and talking about this hoist, because hopefully this government will reflect on how many promises it made to people that they haven't fulfilled. I do know that the members, many of those members really want to do good for the people of Nova Scotia. They want positive outcomes but unfortunately when you have leadership that performs and the political process forces you to follow behind that leadership, that is sad.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, I'd ask the member to stay on the hoist. I have been watching the time, it has been 10 minutes and the hoist has only been really mentioned once so please stay on the hoist. We are asking that the bill be read for a second time in six months.

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

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I have been talking about the hoist many times, I have mentioned the hoist and I'll mention it again. We're here to speak on the hoist - we're here to speak on the hoist, and the hoist is about giving time. I repeat myself: we're here to speak on the hoist.

So as I speak on the hoist, I will go into my further discussion on the hoist, that being the fact that we have 75,000 people who deserve the hoist. They have family who deserve the hoist. They have friends who deserve the hoist. Because the fact is, Mr. Speaker, the hoist will give people time.

Unfortunately, that's not what this government wants to do. We wouldn't be speaking on the hoist here this morning if this Liberal Government wouldn't put on such a performance and the Deputy Premier wouldn't have given the signals and publicly said, we will give it some time and allow for discussion. That is why we are here to speak on the hoist. So no wonder people feel betrayed. I don't understand, Madam Speaker, as I speak on the hoist, how one human being can do that to another human being.

I do remember while we were in government, the Opposition would go on about broken promises; well, there were very few broken promises. There was one in particular that stuck with us, and that was in terms of the increase in the tax. That was one. There's a long list with this government. The other fact with respect to taking some time through having a hoist is that this very government had the opportunity to keep legislation in this province that would reduce that tax, and they chose not to.

As I speak about the hoist, Madam Speaker, I want to reference an article that was in *The Chronicle Herald*. (Interruption) Oh, there's some people who want to speak about the hoist too. This was published on April 7, 2015. It's an article that was co-authored by Jeff MacLeod and James Sawler. Mr. MacLeod is the chairman of the department of Political and Canadian Studies, and James Sawler is an associate professor of the department of economics, Mount Saint Vincent University. What they were reflecting on was a very similar type of government by the Liberals when we had Premier Savage.

I know that the government of the day does not like us to reference that, Madam Speaker, but during this discussion on the hoist I'm going to do that because I also experienced in my life the disrespect to somebody who works for the public sector at a municipal level. I used to have the privilege to work for Halifax County before amalgamation was thrown in everyone's face for HRM, which cost this municipality a great deal of money. It was a very similar situation, and that situation was that a Liberal Government was elected on a variety of promises, and turned around and did the same thing and broke those promises.

One of the first things they decided is, oh, we need to amalgamate the City of Halifax, Dartmouth, Bedford, and Halifax County, and we don't really care what the people of those communities think or say. There was very little consultation; this is what we are going to do.

During that time I do not know if in this House there was an opportunity or if there was a hoist that was brought forward like the hoist that we're speaking about this morning. It was a terrible experience for anyone who was working in municipal government because there was no plan, no organization; people who were in supervisory positions were losing jobs left and right, had to reapply. There was no coordination in terms of where is this going to save money. It was chaos, very similar to what's happening in our health care.

Lessons aren't learned from the past, which is difficult to understand and that's why we're talking about postponing this legislation and that's why we requested a hoist because maybe we can encourage this government to read the history books, to review what happened during the amalgamation of the municipalities, the cost of that, the devastation, what happened to people's jobs, what happened to their lives because people lost jobs. Wages were frozen. People couldn't go on and plan for the future because their wages were frozen and what happened? Millions of dollars were spent because of the lack of coordination.

I can remember working for Halifax County and one day being told, okay your job next week is going to be over in Dartmouth with HRM and no archiving of any files, historical facts. I challenge anyone to try to find out information that existed in Halifax County. People were just moved. There was no respect for those individuals or concerns with how that affected their lives with their families, or the loss of a job, or that they had

to work in a different location and that their wages were frozen. That was the Liberal way and it's being repeated.

One of the huge mistakes that was made at that time was exactly what is happening now and it relates to austerity budgets. It did not work then so why does this government think it's going to work now? This job is really interesting because having the opportunity to be on the government side and seeing the Opposition as the government now - and that's why we're talking about the hoist is to have that time - what I saw was, and I really encourage for those that are sitting in this House for the first time, really encourage a little bit of history and to go through Hansard and to read what was said by the Opposition who is now government and how they attacked the government of the day. I suppose a part of that is the Opposition's job - of you're not spending enough here, you're not spending enough there, it was just like you must have a gravy train of money. Oh what do you mean you're trying to live within your means?

I have to say that one of the things that is different is that it's all about choices and during that time, while we were in government, we chose to look after people, that's the one thing that we did do, we chose to look after people. That is why there was a reduction in poverty by 18 per cent in this province for the first time. As I said, take some time through a hoist and reflect on that. Decisions should only be made when you feel that you have researched and obtained as much knowledge as possible. That is the role that we're supposed to be in, that's why people vote us in as lawmakers because they put that trust in us that we're not just going to make decisions because there's a small group indicating this is the way it has to be, you've got to stick with the team, that's part of politics.

Unfortunately, the world of politics affects people's lives and sometimes I don't think people reflect on that, I really don't. I don't think that people think about how decisions are made. I'm sure that a very small percentage have even read the legislation, really understand the legislation, and decisions are being made based on that that affect people's lives. That is why we felt it was so important to bring this hoist forward in order to take the time, that each and every one of us that had the opportunity to speak, that we can make the point that it is very important.

When you are making decisions as a government that affects the lives of people - and I'm not talking about strangers, I'm talking about probably friends of government members, family of government members, neighbours of government members, and I think that there's a responsibility when people have put a trust in a political Party, there's a responsibility for everyone involved in that political Party to have an understanding of what that decision means at the end of the day. And question, not just because a member is told that oh, there is still opportunity for discussion here, the concerns of the teachers will still be heard, don't worry about that, we'll listen to them. Question that, you have to question that and that's why we're asking for a hoist. What we're seeing right now is that no one on the government side is really questioning that, they think that this is okay to do.

As I mentioned with the article and a reflection on the Savage years, there is some really valuable information that the members of the government should read, and hear and understand - and this is not from me, this is from those two authors that I talked about who are professionals and understand this. They said the last Nova Scotia Liberal Government, led by John Savage, also imposed draconian cuts to vital social services; it didn't work.

In the lead up to the release of the budget, because they're referencing last Spring, the Liberal Government of Nova Scotia is in full spin mode. What is the message? The message is the cupboards are bare. Well, when we were in government and the Opposition was the government of the day and we talked about living within your means and making the appropriate decisions, what was yelled out to us was oh the cupboards aren't bare. Like how it changes, right, how it really changes. When the fact is the cupboards aren't as bare as the government is trying to make out that it is.

Part of the reason there are some issues around it in terms of revenues is due to how the government is governing. Exactly. Even in the government's own financial report and update on the budget, it shows that both personal taxes and corporate taxes are not moving up, not bringing in the revenue that was expected. Well, why is that? Number one, what corporation wants to establish here in Nova Scotia? Why? We had the Ivany report that talked about having to change our attitude.

As I said, I know that I am talking on the hoist and you have to fill in the lines. You have to have the opportunity to give some foundation to what you're talking about. So the foundation that I'm talking about is the fact that corporate taxes aren't moving up. So I guess that the hands-off job creation plan of the Liberal Government after two and a half years is obviously not working, because if it was working, we would have investments in corporations here and they would be hiring people and we would have more corporations, so the government would receive more corporate taxes.

I'm not creating this. The government itself has created this because they put it in their own report. So you call that an oxymoron when you say one thing but it means the other thing. It's confusing, I find for most Nova Scotians it is confusing but it's quite simple, Madam Speaker, and that's why we're talking about a hoist, to give some time, so a little research and knowledge can be looked at, the same thing we suggested when it came to the film and television industry. You'll never convince me that that was not one of the biggest mistakes ever made in this province's history. That's right, you ask the people who have left this province and that's why we're asking for some time in a hoist. Perhaps this time the government can look and maybe do a little bit of research, maybe look at the information.

So we have corporate taxes that are not rising at all in this province. There's a reason behind that, there's a logical reason: government is not doing its job in that area.

Personal taxes, well why would personal taxes rise? Well you know it goes together like a puzzle and it is puzzling that these decisions are being made by this government. When you look at it, Madam Speaker, part of putting the puzzle together is that if people have a higher income, they are in a different tax bracket so they pay higher personal taxes. So why would we try to discourage that and restrain that through legislation, to hold back the opportunities for the public sector? If you do not have the dollars in your pocket, you are not going to spend it in the local economy, we know that. That's why many economists will now say the austerity tactics do not work.

We've seen that in Greece. How many times do we have to see that? It's baffling that we would have a Liberal Government that would manage our province that way. So hopefully, maybe even we talk about a hoist and have some time, I'm hoping that if the government would accept that then perhaps some of the Cabinet members should have a discussion with our new Prime Minister because as far as I've seen to date, and no attack on my Progressive Conservative friends, however, the Liberal Government of Nova Scotia has a little illness, it's called Harperism. They picked up a virus because if you really look at (Interruption) Yes, my colleague beside me says we got rid of it. Well, I know where it went, but that's exactly true.

You look at the decisions that are being made by this Liberal Government, fits so well into Harperism. I hope that the members in the government have an opportunity - and maybe with the hoist, they'll have an opportunity over the holiday season - to read the book by Michael Harris, *Party of One*. If you read that, you will see the foundation of decision making that stemmed from Mr. Harper - very similar.

Yet the members of the provincial Liberal Government stand up in this House and proudly talk about our new Prime Minister. (Interruption) Wonderful - one clapping. You know what? This provincial Liberal Government is so far from being like the Prime Minister we have today, because the Prime Minister today has given this nation hope. I do hope myself, personally, that the Prime Minister will be able to fulfill those promises. Some of them are going to be challenging. But you know what? We've seen him come right out of the starting gates doing everything possible to do that. I know that the Prime Minister hasn't been in very long, but I have not seen any indication that Prime Minister Trudeau is not trying to keep to his word.

I will tell you, Madam Speaker, that there's not one member in the provincial Liberal Party who can associate themselves with Prime Minister Trudeau, because I think he would be quite embarrassed. I believe he would be quite embarrassed because it does not fit into what the Prime Minister has said. (Interruption)

Yes, the cloud has risen, has gone away over Canada, and it's moved to Nova Scotia, the dark cloud of negativity, absolutely - if anybody asked anybody working in the public sector if they feel very sunny these days, if they don't feel that there's a cloud over

their head. It's so disappointing, so disappointing. So it's very important that we do bring forward a hoist because we're trying to encourage this government to study and reflect.

One of the things that my parents said to me as a child, and said to me many times, is make sure what you say is what you do. Make sure what you say is what you do - that has not happened under this provincial Liberal Government at all. There is a long list.

How a government can speak about transparency and collaboration is beyond me, Madam Speaker, when they do the things they do. To indicate to teachers that there's an opportunity to discuss their concerns and then pull this one - I'm telling you, what's going to happen is going to be the same thing as the Savage Government. There's no question in my mind.

I know that it is important, Madam Speaker, to ensure that we do live within our means, but there are choices. The budget situation in this province is no worse than what we were dealing with when we were in government, because there was a severe downturn in the world economy and our province, and we didn't go after those people who provide a public service.

Let's think about that, and maybe through a hoist, you can take the time and think about that. Think about when you go to the hospital and you have a nurse looking after you or you have a very ill family member and the time and the effort. It is beyond me how anybody can say, we appreciate what they do, but we're not going to show it in action, we're just going to say it in words. Believe us, we're the ones to believe, the boy who cried wolf, exactly, that's the story we're talking about.

The other part of the story that we're talking about when we talk about this hoist is the fact that, as my colleague said earlier, part of the plan is creating a divide and that is so unfortunate, especially on the heels of the Ivany report that said that we need to come together. We need to change the attitude. We need to be more positive. We need to work together. Especially from a Premier who stood in Opposition and during the election said, we're going to be the most collaborative government this province has ever seen, the most collaborative in Canada. Total opposite.

Collaboration means you work with people, you listen to people; you take a restorative approach. You don't sit on your high horse and think that you know it all, that's what restorative and collaboration is. Just because you have a majority, a government feels that whatever that government said is the thing that has to be done. We don't need to listen to the people. But, and the but is, as we talk about the hoist, the but is let's see and let's have on the record what little bundle of joy of money that will come through six months or eight months before an election. Suddenly, our budget is going to look good, part of the political plan. This has been written over like a million times in history, so I hope that the Liberal Government doesn't think it is the first one who had this idea. Look in the history

books, take the time during the hoist and look at your history books. There is nothing different going on here.

This creating a divide, we can see that happening, presently in the U.S. We can see it with Trump's style; perhaps they should have a hoist too. What is happening in the U.S. is you have a Republican, I said, Mr. Trump should have a hoist like the hoist we're talking about today, take some time because what is he doing? He's creating fear. He's dividing people, not bringing people together, which is our responsibility as elected officials.

That is why we are here, and we've been here overnight, because we feel that there's a responsibility to bring a hoist forward and try to convince this government to take some time, the very time that this government told the teachers and the public sector that they would have. How do you do that? How do you tell people publicly this is what we're going to do?

We felt good about the fact that the Deputy Premier had made that offer. We thought, oh my goodness, maybe they are seeing a little bit of light here, but no, the darkness of the cloud is - let's just perform that. You know we don't have a film industry anymore so there have to be some performers left so we'll take that role up because we're government and we're a majority, and we've been acting all along, way before even 2013, so we'll continue the act and that is why we're talking about a hoist. We are encouraging this government to seriously look at what's going on.

Sadly, we've seen the history. The writing is on the wall, because there's a majority and there's an entitlement to that majority and there's the power of that majority, we're just going to make this happen, we're going to do what we want. It doesn't matter that 75,000 people in this province who work every day to save lives, to teach our children, it doesn't matter because we've got the power, we're full of the power and we're going to use that power and we're going to tell those people that they are the ones who are causing the problem because they get paid too much, they get rewarded too much.

But let us try to put a divide, let's go to Nova Scotians and talk about the fact that those who work in the public sector get too much. You wouldn't get that in the corporate world, gee, maybe if you work with Nova Scotia Power you'll get it, you'll get \$400 million-and some a year, \$500 million a year.

Madam Speaker, the reason why the hoist is so important is because we need to take time, and people have to realize that when you work for a corporation - I've worked in the private sector - there are benefits that can be equal or even more than what you get in the public sector. However, what we've got to do, as a government, we've got to create that divide. The Trump style, the Harperism, that's exactly what we're going through.

We are repeating history and that's why we are asking for a hoist, because we believe that government members have to look at what happened during the Savage years.

Madam Speaker, it is just like looking in a mirror, it's a total reflection. Every step this Liberal Government is taking is exactly what happened during the Savage years.

What happened during the Savage years? One term, and I know as a former Cabinet Minister, we had one term. So can't you see the writing on the wall, Madam Speaker? Like, what does it take? Somebody who has experienced it, it takes the hoist, I guess. But I mean we've had that experience, right? I can tell you too, that people are getting a little bit tired of the pointing the finger at the other government, oh you caused all this in four years. We did a lot of good things in four years, we reduced the poverty rate by 18 per cent in this province, we developed the first Housing Strategy, we developed the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, we invested in the creative industries. There's a list of good things.

There are things that were mistakes, too, because we are human beings and unless the government members aren't, they are human beings, too, they make mistakes. Do you know what makes a good politician, it's one who admits to the mistake and okay, we need to have a hoist, we need to take time because what we're doing is we're having so many people telling us that it's not the right thing to do.

I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, this government had better not misjudge the power in those 75,000 public sector workers, do not misjudge the power of the public sector. This government might have thought, well, if we just bring this in during the holidays and people are busy getting ready for the holidays and we tell them that they've got until the new year to talk about it, we'll just betray them one more time.

Well, I think there have been enough betrayals, Madam Speaker. I believe that those 75,000 workers multiply in terms of people talking. That's why it's important to have the hoist, because the fact is that if the government doesn't change their pathway on this - it's like when you're in the sales business and you work really hard to make sure that the person you're making a sale to is happy with your business because when they're happy with your business, you'll get more business. But when they're not happy, they'll tell 10 people. We know the multiply factor. They'll tell 10 other people how unhappy they are.

We do have business owners in the government. They should realize and understand that because we have business people. Business people know it's important to keep customers happy because if they're not, it multiplies. Those people who are not happy will tell 10 other people. That's what's going to happen in this province with the public sector. This is what's going to happen, Madam Speaker.

That's why I believe that the NDP in this province are doing the Liberal Government a favour. We're bringing in a hoist. We're asking for a hoist. We're asking for you to take the time and reconsider. We're good people. I'm telling you, we're good people. We've experienced it. We have the knowledge. We have the scars. So why don't you listen to us? That's why we're talking about the hoist. It doesn't matter how much

Kool-Aid anybody drinks, that's not going to change the fact that you're affecting 75,000 workers.

The hoist is very important because it offers time, and that time was originally offered by our Deputy Premier. That didn't last very long because it was only part of the performance. It was part of the performance.

As I was talking about in reference to the hoist, I'm going to go back to that article that was published in *The Chronicle Herald* on April 7, 2015, by Jeff MacLeod and James Sawler. They were questioning why, when the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education said the cupboard is bare. They're saying this is a statement about the government, that the government believes, ". . . in the amputation of public services as a cure for a disease that doesn't exist. The dogma of austerity has reached our shores and the cabinet has swallowed the spin hook, line and sinker. The problem is, solid economic data do not support their case."

It would be very interesting to know how many members who sit in the provincial Liberal Government are economists. How many have studied for years on the economy, what works and what doesn't work?

That's why we're talking about a hoist: because we're working hard to convince the members who have drunk the Kool-Aid that there is a reversal potion that they can drink to reverse their decision, and that's the hoist potion. Take a little sip of that, which means a little bit of time.

In continuation of speaking about the hoist to give some time, these authors say, "Austerity means pain for Nova Scotians. It is the notion that governments should prioritize deficits and debt . . . even combined with the federal ratio of 32 per cent, still places us in much better fiscal shape . . ."

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. The chatter in the room is getting a little loud.

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

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, because it is very important for them to hear the word "hoist" because it gives the members of the government an opportunity. Those who are really having second thoughts and those who, over the holidays, will be sitting with family and friends who may work in the public sector or know somebody, and I would think that probably the majority of us do have some relationship with somebody who works in the public sector.

Madam Speaker, I think it's so important, as I said, with the Ivany report and talking about being positive, that it's important that we understand and appreciate what our public sector does for us. Where would we be if we did not have the expertise and the caringness

of our nurses? Where would we be if we didn't have the teachers who go an extra mile? And they are teaching our children, our future generation, and all they are asking is simply let's have some conversation about the stresses at our workplace.

I would say, Madam Speaker, that there is not one member, whether you are in the government or on the Opposition side, who would feel extremely frustrated if they did not have any opportunity to discuss the issues in their own jobs. It's challenging to be a MLA, but to have the opportunity to sit at caucus and talk amongst your fellow colleagues and to be listened to, that's the big thing. That's why we're talking about a hoist, because it's all about listening to people.

People don't write to newspapers, call radio stations, they do not march around this House if they feel they are being heard, so obviously they are not being heard. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that my experience while I was in government, there were not marches around this House like there has been since this government came in. Is that not an obvious sign that the government is not listening to people? The government will listen in a couple of years if it comes to be, which it will be, the same as the Savage years. The austerity approach does not work.

Madam Speaker, I understand the weight that is on people's shoulders in terms of a balanced budget, the same weight that every political Party has tried to balance. The difference is the difference in philosophies of how you get there. When you repeat something that has been done before and has not worked, over and over again, why would you repeat it? That's why we're here, the NDP are here, bringing forward and standing in this House early in the morning, staying overnight, because we feel it's very important to have a hoist in order to give time, in order to listen to people.

It's so ironic how during an election and for many on the government side it was their first time going door to door. It will be quite a different experience the next time around because the next time around you have to live up to your promises. This whole concept of creating a divide amongst Nova Scotians between the public sector and those who work in the private sector is desperately unfortunate for the people of Nova Scotia. As I said, the heartbeat of this province comes from the public sector. It's a fact - that's why we have so many people in the public sector. They provide services to us, to our family members, and very critical services, services to our seniors.

As one of my colleagues talked about, what it's like to be a home care worker. I'll tell you, I know we do have a lot of younger individuals in the government, but their day will come when they have a parent who is ailing and is a senior and they will call upon the expertise and dedication of somebody in the public sector. It is no different than if they have children and they're calling upon the public sector and they're calling upon teachers to educate their child and send their child to school for that education.

One of the things that my dad always said to me - he did mention a hoist every once in a while, but I think that was with fishing. My parents didn't have a lot of money, but they have and they still offer a lot of love and support. The one thing that I will take to my grave is the fact that my father said, what goes around comes around in this world. That's why, Denise, you treat people with respect, that's why you tell the truth because if you don't it will catch up with you some day. That's why we are talking about a hoist.

There are people on the government side who are truly very good people and they do not deserve to be brought down by a few people who are offering the Kool-Aid. They don't deserve that and I know they want a good outcome. There is no good outcome in an austerity budget. There's no good outcome in freezing people's wages. There's no good outcome in not allowing people to express their feeling or their concerns. There is not a good outcome when you provide a performance and that you betray people. Madam Speaker, betrayal sets you on the course of what goes around comes around, and it will happen.

As my colleagues stood here, each and every one of them, supporting our public sector and the work that they do, they deserve collaboration and consultation; they absolutely deserve that. I will impress upon those individuals who think that they don't need to talk to the people because they're in a majority government, they don't need to consult; they don't need to tell people the reality of the truth that what goes around comes around. I would impress upon those in the government to take great consideration in this hoist and take time - time that the public sector absolutely deserves as hard-working Nova Scotians.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion put forward by the Acting Leader of the NDP is, I move the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word "that" and substituting the following: Therefore Bill No. 148, an Act Respecting the Sustainability of Public Services be not now read a second time, but be read a second time this day six months hence.

A recorded vote is being called for.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[7:44 a.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please.

Are the Whips satisfied?

I ask for the co-operation of all members to be very silent during the vote. It's very easy for them to make a mistake, so proceed.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[8:44 a.m.]

YEAS

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

NAYS

Ms. Regan
Ms. Whalen
Ms. Casey
Mr. MacLellan
Mr. Horne
Mr. Gordon Wilson
Mr. Stroink
Mr. Ince
Mr. Kousoulis
Mr. Furey
Mr. Farrell
Mr. Maguire
Ms. Lohnes-Croft
Ms. Eyking
Mr. Gough
Ms. Treen
Mr. Wilton

THE CLERK: For, 15. Against, 17.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is defeated.

The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Madam Speaker, I know that there may be some people out there in the television audience who are keeping score and I know we have the attention of the Liberal Government. I have been encouraged with the discussion from Opposition members, including in particular my caucus. I want to recognize the NDP caucus and their commitment to bringing the issue forward to the Nova Scotia public on this important Bill No. 148, an Act Respecting the Sustainability of the Public Service.

For those who are keeping a tally of the time spent, the Liberal Government had two speakers so far and I summarized it was roughly seven minutes apiece and I'm going to be generous and suggest that in total they have spent 15 minutes on this bill. This is a good indication of how a majority government can use their majority and just ram

legislation through. You are going to see an example of this in the next few hours and the days as they unfold in front of us.

Bill No. 148, to me is a threat, the heavy-handed legislation that we're seeing before us here today. It is interfering with the collective agreement and the bargaining process. Again, I'm deeply appreciative of my colleagues here that will go into great length as we continue on with the discussion on this particular bill.

If there were any question during the last several hours, during the early morning of this particular day, that I can stand here and boast of my caucus colleagues, this NDP caucus is committed to making as many people in Nova Scotia aware of this legislation, and I really appreciate the commitment.

I know that directly 75,000 public service workers have interest in this particular bill. Earlier this evening we talked about the Premier who said he shook hands with all the workers in different departments when he became Premier of this province, which is a nice thing to do.

Now earlier today we asked, I wonder if that Premier would be just as interested in shaking hands with those 75,000 workers and the heads of those departments today? That's an interesting point. I know that the Premier is obsessed with trying to get the spending under control and I think we understand that. I think anybody who comes to this Legislature can appreciate that comment.

It is interesting to know, when you are talking about bringing these agreements to the bargaining table, that it's a two-way street. And it's interesting - I talked earlier about the newly-elected Liberal Prime Minister of Canada and it's interesting to note that he has a totally different approach. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau thinks there is more to managing the economy than eliminating deficits as quickly as possible. He talked about infrastructure renewal.

Earlier, I talked about how we can stimulate the economy, and this infrastructure money that is talked about at our federal capacity is \$5.8 billion, and I'll repeat that, \$5.8 billion dollars - with a "b". Now people will say to me, it's the best way to move this economy forward. What we've seen and what we relied on and what we talked about earlier today was the cumulative effect this Liberal Government's two years in office has had on rural Nova Scotia. We've seen the elimination of jobs in our land registries, our courthouses, our community services; the list goes on and on.

I've said this many times, the cumulative effect is having a negative effect on our community. To me, if you tie in that \$5.8 billion with a "b", the best way forward is to create jobs for Nova Scotia.

I heard it just a few days ago, one of the responses to the Cabinet Minister's response was bucking the trend. That was an interesting comment because I think I would like Nova Scotians to buck the trend and stop moving away from our province and create some economic well-being in our communities.

Now you may say, how are you going to do that? To me this bill is the path forward. We talked about the concerns we have in our developing offshore industry and the co-existing with the fishing industry. I'm getting into this federal infrastructure money. One of the discussions was around the concerns that the fishing industry would like to have a capping mechanism in case there was an oil blowout on our offshore. The fishing industry is the economic backbone of our rural Nova Scotia. It's a fair question to say, instead of all those capping mechanisms being located across this large, Atlantic pond out here, that we could have at least one on Atlantic or even on Nova Scotia soil.

Now why couldn't we have that built here, a \$50 million project. That would be a good idea for this infrastructure money coming from Ottawa.

The second point of that is, what the oil companies will say is that if you have a capping mechanism, that's only part of the puzzle. The member for Queens-Shelburne, if you're asking that question, you need the infrastructure, a heavy-lift vessel, in order to place that in the North Atlantic. I understand that, but back in June, you asked the fishing industry, oh, no, just take your time, wait 21 days. We'll have everything in place in 21 days. Everything's going to be okay if you have a blowout. Now, you can tell (Interruption) No, just let me finish the point here.

That was in June, and when the industry got hold of that, they said, that is unacceptable. They applied public pressure, and I can tell you, this caucus, including myself, made that a public issue. It was unacceptable to have 21 days. We raised that concern and, Madam Speaker, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board looked at it and said, we agree. We think it should be reduced to 13 days. I asked the question, okay if you reduce it from 21 to 13 days, what's going to happen in those 13 days?

The point that I'm trying to make here is, when the industry came before our Resources Committee - and I thank the Chair for his work to create that emergency meeting, and I'm very appreciative - there were a number of questions that were asked there. One of the questions that was asked was that the oil companies and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board painted the scenario that this is out of reach. You can't have a \$50-million capping project, and you can't have a \$750-million heavy-lift vessel. We can't afford it. We have to bring that in across the Atlantic in case there was a spill. I'm saying that we're going to be the first elected officials to stand up and say that infrastructure needs to be on our soil in case of an oil blowout. Both can co-exist.

Just think of the jobs that can be generated in Nova Scotia by those two projects. Just think of the confidence that the industry will have going down that right path. These are the issues that the industry wants to address.

Earlier today I stood in this same place and spoke of a meeting between the newly-elected MPs from West Nova and South Shore-St. Margaret's, and the MLA for Yarmouth, sitting down with the fishing industry and talking about the very same topics that I am talking about here now. They were reassured that their issues would be brought to their respective Cabinets.

Madam Speaker, the silence is deafening because I haven't heard one whimper, not one word to talk about these issues. Here's the opportunity. You've got \$5.8 billion - with a "b". Not one word - not one word has been uttered by the MLA for Yarmouth about dispersants. That is a concern for the fishing industry.

You want to create some jobs? I suggest that we should be working together to push that idea, that concept, with the federal government.

The other issue is, a few months ago, I stood in this very same place and talked about what the Ivany report talked about - doubling fish exports. Not one word came from the present government in power, saying, I support that. I really think that we should do that. Doubling the fish exports in 10 years, can you imagine the wealth that that's going to bring to rural Nova Scotia? I can visualize it because I know that the economic engine is the fishing industry that drives many coastal communities across Nova Scotia.

Now, I'm not going to be long, but I'll conclude on this path. We have a booming fishing industry as I speak and the opportunity is there for the boat-building industry. We have some boat builders with five or seven years on their order books, trying to replenish or upgrade some of these new vessels. Those are opportunities, but the issue is we do not have enough tradespeople in that sector and they could reduce that to two years or cut that in half. Can you visualize how many jobs that is going to create? Am I making sense now when I talk about the previous development in offshore oil, doubling fish exports and doubling the boat-building industry in rural Nova Scotia?

I think that I have the attention of every coastal community in this province, every one. I want to point out that there's only a few constituencies that do not touch the Atlantic Ocean in some capacity so I believe, like the original *Bluenose*, fishing is important to this province. We're sitting here telling people, our teachers and others, the cupboard is bare, there is no more money. Well guess what, just what I laid out here in the last five minutes are opportunities. We have the opportunities to keep people in our province and we can create a tax base by doing just what I said earlier, and that is not a difficult thing to do.

I can assure you by the time this day is over that those 75,000 people in Nova Scotia are going to know about this bill and they're going to be aware of this government's plan.

This is simply heavy-handed, it is going to eliminate the bargaining process, but we're going to lay out here for the next few hours, my colleagues and I, we are saying you're going down the wrong path.

If there are any lessons being taken from this, just last Spring we watched the film industry dissolve in front of our eyes. We watched protesters circle this particular building saying revisit this, don't do this, don't destroy an industry, and this is what has happened. Within two years of this Liberal majority they have squandered an opportunity.

I'm going to suggest to you just beware and treat people the right way because you're treating those people upon your way up, and guess what? You're going to visit those same people on your way down. This is something that is going to be highlighted here in the next few hours and I can just end on this - I saw the campaign literature and I saw what they said about how this Premier and this Liberal Government is going to protect workers' rights. I wonder if those same workers are feeling the same way about that campaign literature as we speak today, and I wonder if those 75,000 people would have the opportunity to say I don't think that's what was in that document?

To me there is a real difficulty accepting what this government had intended to do and many people made reference to the commercials. One of the things that I will suggest is that I talked about and I've heard it many times, about this Liberal Government being open and transparent, and I have difficulty with that phrase.

I'm going to end on this comment: if you have an open and transparent government and you put out campaign literature and you win a majority and you have a Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture for two years who talks to mystery groups and doesn't disclose who they are or where they are, and you have a fishery industry asking that question almost on a monthly basis and the minister does not produce those names, I ask the question: is that an open and transparent government? I think not, and the people can see it for what it is. You can put out the glossy flyers, but it's not going to have the lasting effect with the people of Nova Scotia.

You had an opportunity, Madam Speaker, to set this bill aside for six months and they used their majority again, and I understand that, I understand the principle of a democracy and you have a majority, you didn't give it the chance of day, of setting that aside and sitting and talking with those workers. That's a missed opportunity.

It's a missed opportunity when you talk about having an open and transparent government and when you talk about the fishing industry you talk to mystery groups and you can't identify them for two years, when you talk about protecting the offshore industry and the fishing industry and the oil industry co-existing and you commit, the point is you commit to two federal MPs who are sitting around the caucus federal government in Ottawa and the MLA for Yarmouth, you commit to bringing their concerns forward, the use of

dispersants and a capping mechanism in the offshore oil and not one word in Hansard about that.

I can say and I can stand here and I look forward to turning this over to my colleagues, this is not an open and transparent government. I can assure you that the people of Nova Scotia will correct it and there will be an election, there will be accountability and people will pass their judgment. I look forward to hearing my other colleagues. Thank you very much for your time, Madam Speaker.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: I'm pleased to rise to my feet again today to speak to Bill No. 148, the Public Services Sustainability (2015) Act. First of all, I have to say that an Act respecting the sustainability of public services is rather an oxymoron since I don't really feel that this bill respects anybody, in particular it does not respect the rights of our working people of this province.

I'd like to talk a bit about teachers here today. I have to say that since the moment that our Premier called the unions together earlier this Fall, it seems like he has been trying to blame provincial woes really on the workers of this province. Both the teachers and the public service were presented with a deal, but basically with a gun to their heads. The teachers, feeling pressured and strong-armed, rejected that deal, Madam Speaker, not on the basis of wanting more money but on the basis of feeling they just weren't part of the process.

I've heard that over and over again and I've brought that up many times in this House, that the teachers just do not feel that they have been consulted. I know that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development keeps telling us that they have been consulted but I keep saying that the teachers are saying something different, Madam Speaker.

The tentative agreement did not address front-line conditions in the classroom and that's what the teachers are mainly concerned about - that and respect, Madam Speaker. Again, respecting the sustainability of public services, I say, is an oxymoron.

Teachers' morale is really low right now, they feel attacked, they feel disrespected, they feel put upon by the government, and they feel really disappointed. They also feel betrayed. They were promised a bill of goods that has not materialized. They were told leading up to the last election that they had friends that were going to look after them if they voted them into government.

Now, the writing is on the wall and like many of the other workers of our province, they are also seeing that they were betrayed. The filmmakers, the nurses, many of the public

health workers have been feeling that they have been betrayed, and that this is not business as usual and this is not as advertised. I have to say that I really feel for them because I don't know what it feels like to vote for somebody and then be completely denied what you were promised. I just feel really bad for them, Madam Speaker.

I know that our Premier went to the final step and has basically enshrined this strong-arm tactic into legislation - take the deal, it doesn't matter about improved working conditions, or take even a worse deal. That's what is being said to them. I'd say the Grinch just stole Christmas. For many of these teachers, they're going to school today shaking their heads and thinking, I'm trying to get through the classes this week, I want what is best for the students, I'm feeling very stressed, I'm under pressure here, I need to be able to get out of school and look after my Christmas presents and get things ready around the house for Christmas, but I'm being really put upon by my government and disrespected.

Well, that must be a horrible feeling, Madam Speaker. I haven't had the chance to speak to too many of them in person, but I've certainly been getting some Facebook messages and emails and people saying good on you for trying to stick up for us, good on you for trying to keep this bill going long enough so that some of us can get to the Law Amendments Committee, so that we can speak to the government ourselves about how we're feeling and how disappointed we are.

When I first ran for government, I never expected something like this to happen, I really didn't. I was disappointed when we made cuts to education, as the NDP Government, and I did speak around the caucus table about my concerns, but I was not listened to. But, Madam Speaker, you have this spin that happens in politics where you've got a Party saying there was \$65 million cut from education when, in fact, the minister herself on the floor of this House admitted a year ago that it was really only \$13 million. Then I have to say, why all the spin? Why not just be honest and tell people the truth? That's what I would expect.

The history of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union is a long one and my mother, as I've said in this House before, was a lifelong member of the NSTU. She, in fact, marched on this House during the Savage years and she remembers those years. She says, this time right now reminds her exactly of those times. Now my sister is a teacher as well, but she was too young, she doesn't remember those times at all, but now she's seeing it for herself and all of our friends are seeing it, the ones who were too young to remember the Savage years.

From its inception in 1895, the Teachers Union has been actively supporting teachers and the cause of public education in this province and I have to say, good for them. "As professional educators, teachers know that their own personal and professional well-being are linked and essential to success in teaching. Therefore, they have insisted upon an organization built upon that dual reality." Right now that dual reality is at risk because they are not feeling very well right now. They are not feeling respected, they're not feeling like their well-being is being looked after. They're feeling personally attacked. But the roles of

both teachers and the education system have grown enormously in the past 105 years. The NSTU has not only kept pace with these changes but has played and continues to play a proactive role in many of the positive ones.

In the early days, public education existed in Nova Scotia, in one form or another, since the Capuchin friars opened schools in the 1630s. Two centuries later, in the 1800s, Nova Scotia was still a province with a primarily rural population, and parents were directly responsible for the education of their children. The quality and sometimes even the existence of education varied greatly from place to place across the province. Some areas depended on itinerant school masters who were supported by the fees of parents of the schoolchildren. Urban areas fared somewhat better, of course, with such institutions as the National School, in Halifax.

In 1864, the Free Schools Act became law, and the 1865 Education Act included compulsory tax assessment for the support of common schools which was the basis for a province-wide education system. I'd say that was a wonderful thing, when free schools were formed, and children of all incomes could actually start to go to school.

Teachers, however, like many of their schools then, were quite isolated. They were completely at the mercy of the local municipal boards that hired them. Often, teaching positions went to the lowest bidder, and the person who named the lowest figure for which they would work would get the position regardless of qualifications. Even after that, they often were not safe for the school year. They could be dismissed at a moment's notice at any time if a new applicant showed up and underbid them.

Well, some progress was made in the latter half of the 19th Century and eventually, Mr. Speaker, things did change. In September 1939, Canada went to war, and many teachers enlisted or were drawn to industrial work. That was much more highly paid than teaching. However, in 1943, the federal government froze all teachers in their positions; otherwise, a teacher shortage would have led to school closures.

Then a man named Bradford Finigan, who was principal of Freeport School, was appointed the first Nova Scotia Teachers Union general secretary in 1942. Although he was paid, he was obliged to operate from his home in Lawrencetown, or actually from his car since there was no central office at the time. Furthermore, since gasoline was rationed at the time, he sometimes had to resort to bus, train, walking, or hitchhiking to visit locals. In spite of these handicaps, membership did grow rapidly.

Up to 1946, teachers were paid differently depending on the board, the grade level, and gender. Halifax male high school teachers were the most highly paid in the province, of course. In that year, the union was successful in its push for the implementation of a provincial minimum salary scale as well as for the elimination of salary differentials based on grade level and genders.

The post-war 1950s were years of growth and prosperity for Canada, and in Nova Scotia school enrolments mushroomed to just over 171,000, which was basically an increase of 40 per cent in 10 years. This created a teacher shortage.

The first two vocational schools were established in 1949 and 1950, and the Primary program was introduced in 1951. “Besides expanding the scope of curriculum offered in Nova Scotia’s public schools, this opened up a need for still more teachers in the system.

“In 1951 the 1932 Act to Incorporate the Nova Scotia Teachers’ Union was repealed and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union Act was passed. The NSTU Act was amended in 1953, legislating voluntary negotiations and conciliation. These very basic mechanisms allowed either the NSTU or the school board (employer) to request the other party to negotiate with them or request a conciliator to help arrive at an agreement. In 1957, some improvement was made to this legislation when a school board now was required to negotiate with the Union when asked to do so. And conciliation was now actually mandatory when requested by one of the parties.”

You can see where I’m going with this, I hope, Mr. Speaker, because negotiation and mandatory negotiation is something that was set way back then, and really should still be the way forward. Surely you’d think that things would be getting better now, not regressing, but I’m finding that with this new legislation that we’re debating, we’re going backward.

“The Union continued to push for improved salaries for teachers. In 1956, salary scales were established for teachers with a formula requiring the province to top up funding for disadvantaged municipalities.

“The turbulent 1960s were years of economic growth, prosperity and change. Due to the baby boom increase in the student population, teachers were still in great demand. Programs were expanding and 13 new vocational schools were constructed in the province. In Nova Scotia teachers had developed a new militancy and were pushing for higher salaries and benefits. An annual review of the grant scale was achieved in 1965. Previously, teachers were sometimes forced to resort to mass resignations in order to gain minimal pay increases from their boards. As Norman Fergusson put it, ‘Salaries of teachers moved from the “miserable” average salary of \$3,196 in 1959-60 to the “much less miserable” average salary of \$6,482 in 1969-70.’”

That's interesting, because my parents and I moved to Canada in 1968. We moved here because there was a shortage of teachers in Canada that year, and there were too many in Australia, so the Canadian Government offered a deal to Australian teachers to immigrate to Canada. We sailed over on a boat called the *SS Canberra* - which is the capital of Australia. We sailed over with 2,000 Australian teachers, all destined for Canada. We landed in Vancouver. We made our way to Regina. My father taught at the University of Regina, and my mother taught at the junior high school there. A year later we made our way to Nova Scotia, and in 1969, we arrived in Truro.

It's very interesting to realize that they must have been making a very small amount of money, which is probably why we lived in a small apartment that first year.

“At Annual Council 1963, a resolution was put forward by the Cape Breton Rural and Village Local to address a discriminatory practice of some provincial school boards: terminating married women teachers, regardless of their education and teaching experience.

“The resolution read as follows:

“Whereas some school boards in the province have passed resolutions discriminating against female married teachers on the sole ground that they are married,

“Be it resolved that the NSTU immediately take the necessary action to guarantee the same eligibility for appointment and the same security of tenure for married female teachers as for single ones.

“It was adopted by a vote of 76 to 28.”

As I said, this bill is very interesting, because it does not really respect the sustainability of our teachers, and it really is detrimental to the Teachers Union. As you can see, the Teachers Union has been standing up and fighting for the rights of teachers for many, many years.

“As a further indication of teachers' support for professionalism, in 1968 . . .” - the year we immigrated to Canada - “. . . the NSTU appointed professional development coordinators to assist locals in the field of PD, as it had already done in the area of negotiations by appointing economic consultants.

“Services to members were being constantly improved and in 1965 a much more comprehensive group insurance plan, including term life, accidental death, salary continuation and medical and health benefits was put into place.

“With the arrival of MSI in 1968, a new Total Care Plan came into effect in 1969. Since some aspects of this coverage were not suitable for retired teachers, a new Health Care Plan for Retired teachers was implemented.

“In 1968, the Teaching Profession Act was passed. It revised and consolidated all previous acts related to the NSTU. Essential items such as the objects and powers of the NSTU are codified here. This Act forms part of the NSTU Constitution along with the By-laws and Standing Orders.

“A milestone was achieved in 1969 when, after years of Union effort, the Education Act was amended to provide for a new Section 76, defining probationary and permanent contracts. Previously, both types of contracts could be terminated at the will of the employing board, with no recourse for the teacher. Now a board of reference provision was included for any permanent contract teacher who wished to appeal the termination of a contract. However, since the Minister had not approved forms for such contracts, the effect of this legislation was limited. This problem would not be solved until 1972.”

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that it’s a long history, again, fighting for the rights of teachers, trying to improve working conditions, trying to improve protection for these teachers.

“The NSTU had always been concerned about its role in improving the calibre of teachers entering the profession and in enhancing the status of teacher education. In the 1970s, several conferences and seminars were held with teachers, Department of Education officials and representatives of teacher training institutions. And the Advisory Council on Teacher Education of 1975-76 adopted a number of Union proposals about strengthening teacher training: although the Department did not adopt them, some of the teacher training institutions did so by increasing the duration of the practicum as well as the professional component of their programs.

“The Union’s publication, which had undergone several name changes, became *The Teacher* in 1970.” I do remember my mother receiving those.

“The 1980s began with both Canada and the United States in the throes of an economic recession. Double-digit inflation exceeded

12% in 1981. The federal government attempted to put a tight rein on money supply through the Anti-Inflation Board's measures.

"Premier Buchanan had a provincial restraint program put into place in this province: salary increases were held to a 6% maximum over this time period.

"In Nova Scotia, the government appointed a commission on Public School Finance, which produced a report now known as the Walker Report. Its main recommendation was a funding formula based on student numbers, greater provincial contribution to education and a reduction in the number of school boards from more than 80 to 21. The reduction had earlier been recommended in the 1974 Graham Commission Report.

"In 1982 the NSTU put in place a model for 21 district locals, matching the 21 new school boards.

"The Walker formulas were driven by number of students (fewer students = fewer dollars = fewer teachers) and student enrolments were declining. In order to combat the effects of declining enrolments and save teaching positions, a number of items were negotiated" - again, there's that word, "negotiated" - "at the provincial level. Among these were a deferred salary leave plan (1981), severance pay and provincial staff placement arrangements (1983). At the local level, improved transfer clauses, job-sharing plans and seniority clauses were successfully negotiated (1981-82)."

Again, there's that word, "negotiated." Well, "negotiated" means that both parties listen to each other instead of one of them putting the hammer down and forcing them to accept something that they just don't want to accept.

"In spring, 1982 there were a number of teacher terminations due to cutbacks.

Twenty-nine permanent contract teachers lost their positions . . . The NSTU decided on a province-wide withdrawal of voluntary services . . ." - hmm, I wonder if they could do that again? Maybe they'll think about that - "followed by a strike vote June 7th, if no settlement had been reached. By May 25th, the situation was resolved: all teachers were reinstated.

"The Atlantic Institute of Education, which promoted cooperation" - again, "co-operation," what a wonderful word.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to stop for a minute and make a presentation of somebody in the gallery. Would that be okay?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. ZANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce Kyle Buott, who is here with us today. We welcome him to the gallery. Thank you for joining us. (Applause)

"The Atlantic Institute of Education, which promoted cooperation among all education partners, was instructed to close its doors by the provincial government, to the dismay of the NSTU and many of its members.

"In 1983, the NSTU ran a very successful public campaign, '*What's Left?*'. It opposed the government's restraint program and emphasized the need for collective bargaining." Ah, there's another couple of words: "collective bargaining." They have a certain music to my ears.

"The NSTU also worked to help teachers threatened with job loss by holding job fairs and participating in the Utilization of Personnel committee."

"In 1984, Dr. Norman Fergusson retired. He had been a NSTU staff member since 1956, and Executive Director since 1970.

"During the 1980s, several positive initiatives came into being at the organizational level. In 1980, the NSTU Status of Women committee was set up." About time, too. "It later changed its name to the Women in Education committee. In 1985, the NSTU established a policy statement on the involvement of women in leadership roles in education and in 1987 Annual Council delegates approved resolutions including affirmative action for hiring practices of the Department of Education and the NSTU.

"In 1985, the NSTU administered *SHARE*, (*Students Helping African Relief Efforts*) which raised funds for famine victims: a total of \$178,000."

"In 1985 and 1986, *WOW* (*Work Orientation Workshops*) pairing newly graduated unemployed teachers and at-risk students were highly successful. They would continue for a number of years."

"In 1986, the President's column in the *Teacher* appeared for the first time in French."

“At the end of the ’80s, in the face of concerns about job loss and shrinking education funding, the NSTU was able to make progress in such member service areas as group insurance.” Salary Continuation “was a huge success. Teachers who joined SALCON were able to do so without medical evidence—meaning that many who were previously unable to purchase disability insurance now could have the coverage they required.”

Mr. Speaker, again, I’m trying to say here that all of these incredible gains that the NSTU was able to acquire for its teachers - it’s so important, and I feel that this new bill, Bill No. 148, is a step backward. We need to move forward. We need to protect our workers. We need to make our workers feel that they are valued, and we need to respect them, listen to them, find out what they feel they need in order to do their job properly. Yes, the children are important, but so are the teachers. Anybody who’s had good teachers knows how important that is in your growth as an individual.

“The 1990s opened on a sombre note as Canadians grieved for the female student victims of the Montreal Massacre of December 6th, 1989.”

“In January, 1990, the NSTU was part of a massive rally in the Town of Canso, protesting the government’s handling of the fisheries crisis and the proposed shutdown of the town’s fish plant, affecting adults and children alike.

“And Nova Scotia teachers were about to face the most difficult and challenging decade they had ever experienced since the hard times of the thirties.

“NSTU President Karen Willis Duerden stated accurately that teachers ‘appear to be in for retrenchment, restraint and possible cutbacks yet again.’”

“Nineteen-ninety saw the equivalent of 200 teaching positions cut and programs compromised, due to cuts in school board funding. The NSTU organized a Crisis Task Force and later put together *CHIIP*, a *Crisis Help Information Input Package* workshop to assist locals in their own information dissemination, strategy and action planning.”

“Donald Cameron’s new Tory government introduced” - wait for it - “Bill 160—a two-year wage freeze on public sector salaries. For teachers, who were in the third year of a three-year agreement, this was a breach of the collective agreement in place.”

Mr. Speaker, as we know, the 1990s were a very difficult time. The Tory Governments and the Liberal Governments both took great advantage of the teachers, and the Savage years were also known as one of the worst times in teachers' history. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that this particular time right now does remind me of those times.

It's interesting, because in the Liberal Party platform of 2013, it talks about how education is investing in Nova Scotia's future, and how education isn't a line item in a budget - it's our future. Isn't that interesting? Here it is, and doesn't it seem that education is once again a line item in a budget? It doesn't seem to be anything but that.

Earlier tonight - this morning, whenever it was - I already gave a big long talk about how we're actually not doing as badly as this government is claiming, and we can actually afford to invest in our workers and our public sector. In fact, that is when our province does the best: when we have strong public sector jobs. That is how we managed to ride out the recession as well as we did, whereas many provinces that had manufacturing jobs and manufacturing economies didn't fare as well as we did.

I think it's very important to remember this, and to remember that in countries like Scandinavian countries, 90 per cent of their workforce are unionized. Why? Because they know that it works, and they are respected. They work with government. There's no rift there.

This government came in as if prepared to do battle with an enemy, with a foe. Every time the Premier talks about our hardworking union people, he does it with a sneer and I don't understand why that is, Mr. Speaker. I know he doesn't have much experience working with union people but he sneers, I swear it, he sneers and many of the other people on the other side do as well. It's very sad, I find, because most of these union people are just regular, ordinary Nova Scotians trying to put food on their table and they are feeling completely disrespected, they are disillusioned; they are disappointed and they feel betrayed. That is a shame for our province. It's a shame on this government and this is going to be the legacy that this Liberal Government is left with.

I can tell you as I stand right here, I can tell you right now that this is not going to fare well for this government in the next election. I hope that some of their backbenchers are listening because the Dexter Government already learned that lesson and as I said earlier tonight, now I am the only backbencher left standing from that 31-member government, so what does that tell you?

Mr. Speaker, I think some of my other colleagues would like to share some time. With that I would like to say thank you very much and please rethink this. Don't pass this bill. It's not a good bill and it will come back to haunt you. Thank you very much.

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to have an opportunity to speak on Bill No. 148, the title of the bill, from the Harper Government - I'm sorry, time is warping my standing here and speaking, being up for a couple of hours, I did think we got rid of Mr. Harper but we replaced Mr. Harper and we replaced him with the Premier we have today.

Let's see where Mr. Harper is today and that's what is going to happen to the Premier that we have today because it's absolutely unbelievable that anyone who would call themselves a Liberal would act in this manner. I'm sure that our new Prime Minister is keeping a keen eye on what is going on here and must be extraordinarily disappointed because the Prime Minister just went through an election and the Prime Minister seems to be working very hard to fulfill those promises.

He didn't start immediately by breaking those promises and betraying the people of Canada; he's putting effort in to make a difference. It is very discouraging and disappointing for the people of Nova Scotia to believe they actually put in a Liberal government that, in turn, has been acting like a Harper Government; there's just no question.

Mr. Speaker, you know it's hard to believe - and the proof is in the pudding and I guess we could say it's in the writing, because to call Bill No. 148, An Act Respecting - respecting - the Sustainability of Public Services is absolutely the same as what Mr. Harper did during his mandate. He would introduce bills that had a fancy name, that made it sound to the general public like he was trying to do some type of good, but within that bill it was the complete opposite. It would be exactly like - what do they say - a wolf in sheep's clothing. I think that goes in tune with what I talked about earlier this morning, about the story of the boy who called wolf, very similar because the fact is, once again, it's about the perception.

I know that the public is very busy in their lives and that's what the government hopes for. That means that the public, because they're so busy and they're trying to sustain their own lives, look after their own families, and do their work, they don't really pay attention to what goes on in this little bubble world. Well, bubbles break and this bubble is going to break for this Liberal Government. There will be a point that Nova Scotians will truly see the writing on the wall, they'll see the perception game, they'll see the betrayal, they are actually starting to see it now.

As much as those in the government who giggle about this and as much as they feel that, well, we're 64 per cent in the polls, yes, we're 64 per cent (Interruptions) Well, I hear somebody say that's pretty good. Yes, it is when you're following an election with someone like Prime Minister Trudeau, who is actually a real Liberal and trying to do something good for the people of Canada, rather than a provincial government that is acting like Mr. Harper who lost the election. So therefore (Interruptions) Well, somebody said did I vote for Trudeau? Well, do you know what? I voted NDP, but I respect the fact that Prime

Minister Trudeau has not turned out so far to betray Canadians. We have seen him try to do the best he can and I have hope.

As I said earlier, there was a real cloud over Canada and since Mr. Harper has been voted out, that cloud has moved to Nova Scotia - it is over Nova Scotia. We have a Liberal Government that has talked about the Ivany report, it doesn't believe in it, it is talk again. It's not about the words, it's about the actions. You can fill as many diaries as you want with words, you can talk and write and write, but words don't have meaning until you show the action behind those words. That's not happening. Now members may believe that's happening, but that is not happening.

For anyone to blame the wages and benefits of the public sector as a drain on our province's budget, certainly does not value the work of our public servants in this province. How does anyone blame the public sector for being the cause of our deficit in the Province of Nova Scotia? How bizarre is that? I have heard the Premier of Nova Scotia stand in this House and lay blame on the NDP because we were too kind to the public sector and that is the reason that we're facing a budget deficit in this province.

Shame on a Premier who is supposed to be a leader, and a leader is exactly what the word is - a person who leads. Any of the great leaders in our society were individuals who listened, who consulted, who collaborated, which is not being done at all by the Premier that we have in this province, not at all. It is all pretense. It is all an act. It is all a charade.

The very sad part of this is that it's about the lives of people who work for our province and who work for us, who provide the best of service to Nova Scotians. Whether you work in TIR and you have to go out in the middle of the night to plow during a snowstorm and risk your own life, whether you're a nurse who has to find his or her way to work in a storm and work two or three shifts in a row. We find it difficult ourselves to be here and on our feet and be speaking and engaged for 12, 14, or 20 hours, but, Mr. Speaker, that's nothing compared to nurses who work two or three shifts in a row. Often the fact is that there is nobody there even to replace them because our health care system is in such chaos.

Yet, our Premier and Cabinet Ministers and caucus members will stand and say how much they respect nurses, how much they respect the work of people who are part of the public sector. How can anyone say something like that, or a government member stand in this House of Assembly and say that, without showing it in action? This piece of legislation certainly is not providing any action to those words - not one bit.

We didn't even need this legislation, according to most in the Liberal Government. The Leader is standing in this House and saying, oh, we haven't taken people's rights away. We're still going to listen to them. Then, Mr. Speaker, what are we doing here? Why are we here going around the clock? This government doesn't need a piece of legislation if it's

telling Nova Scotians and telling each other that the fact is that we're going to listen and that there's still going to be an opportunity for our teachers to express their concern.

How would anybody feel about the fact that you're told that you can express your concern, but you're bringing in a law that doesn't allow you to negotiate in good faith? What is that all about?

I truly don't understand where this bad feeling towards the unions comes from. I would expect better out of any Leader in this province, the same Leader who stood in Opposition and waved his arms around with all the support for anybody who was in a union and recognized the importance of collective bargaining and offered to those people in a union that the Liberals would be the saviours, that they're there to support. (Interruption) Absolutely.

How do you do that? That's a question that I think most Nova Scotians are going to start asking. How do you treat other human beings with that kind of disrespect? How do you tell them one thing, and get the honour to govern this province, and you completely turn around and take off that little sheep's outfit, and what's behind it? That's exactly what's happening in this province.

It happened during the Savage years, and there was one term. That's going to happen again. It will be recorded in Hansard that we're saying this because that's going to happen again.

Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to look at somebody and hold a level of respect for any individual or persons or government that would do that to another person. It's really difficult, I think, that Nova Scotians have an absolute right to question that.

I would say there are individuals in the government that were a part of unions and I bet you at that time that they talked proudly of being a part of that union. The fact is that every one of us likes to have a team approach and likes to have a voice on our behalf. That's what unions do. They provide a voice on the behalf of workers. What kind of society would we have today if unions were not created - what kind of a society would we have?

We are put on this earth supposedly to look after others and I hope - we didn't succeed in our hoist - that during the holiday season when it is a time to reflect that there will be members of the government reflecting on several things - on the fact that their Leader and their platform during the election purposely offered support, and not just verbally. There were paid advertisements in newspapers. There were press conferences. The film industry is very similar because there are many people in the film industry that belong to a union.

How do you do that? I hope that's the reflection that comes upon people at Christmas time because we're supposed to reflect during the holiday season. I would hope

that we would reflect each and every day in our lives because we live in a very difficult time in our society, where there are wars and we don't understand them. A lot of wars are between religions, which personally I don't understand if we respect each other's beliefs.

I bet you there's not one person in this House that does not want their beliefs to be respected. Somebody doesn't have to agree with your beliefs, but certainly I am sure each and every person in this House has a desire and a want that they are respected and that they have an opportunity to offer a voice; that they can say what's on their mind and what's important to them.

Can you imagine if we didn't even have an opportunity to stand in this House and offer our Opposition viewpoint? What kind of society would we be living in? Certainly not a democratic society, but for some reason the Leader of this province doesn't seem to be running a democratic government when you have a majority and you ram legislation through.

The performance leading up to this was that the Deputy Premier offered publicly to our teachers: there's time. They knew that wasn't going to resonate coming from our Premier because there were too many times that the Premier said one thing and within a minute turned around and it was the other, but I believe that people felt there was some hope coming from the Deputy Premier - that the Deputy Premier was sincere in the fact of saying, we have some time - take some time over the holidays, and in the new year we will listen to the concerns that the teachers have.

In fact, the teachers made it very clear it wasn't all about the almighty dollar. They, in fact, very clearly said that there were other concerns that they had that they felt could make a better system for them to teach our children. So where is it fair to have that conversation? Why do we need this legislation when publicly the Deputy Premier offered this and so what happens? Most of us expected that Monday was going to be our last day. Most of us believed in that because most of us believed in the Deputy Premier and what was being offered to teachers. This is more than just a flip flop, this is outright betrayal. There is no other definition for this, outright betrayal.

I bet if anyone in this House was to read the definition of betrayal, it is when you tell somebody one thing, but you really know that your action is going to be opposite to that. I didn't make this up. I'm not just saying this as a political attack on the government. I did not talk to the teachers and tell them we will listen to your concerns; we appreciate that you have concerns, let's take a little breather. You took a stand. You said you didn't want to agree with what your union leaders brought forward, that's part of the democratic system. I did not say to any teacher that you shouldn't be heard; it was the Deputy Premier, offering it publicly.

Usually when somebody betrays somebody else they do it quite quietly so the other person may accuse you and then you can say no, I didn't say that, but not with this

government. This government has absolutely no problem publicly stating one thing and doing the other. I didn't do that. My colleagues in the NDP didn't do that. My colleagues in the Progressive Conservatives didn't do that; this Liberal Government did that and they've done it a number of times. How that is justified, I do not know. I do not know how anybody can put their name on a piece of paper to run as a politician and then do this betrayal.

As we talk about teachers and education, let's talk about what we try to teach our children. We want our children to have a good educational foundation, but one of the things that our teachers do, and hopefully our parents or our guardians, they want the best for us, so what is part of the philosophy of being the best for us is to teach us respect and very early on, even before you go to school, you were taught that you need to share.

How many parents in this House of Assembly have said a number of times to their children, you need to learn to share. You need to learn to listen. You need to learn to get along with your friends. I bet you every one has said that and even if you do not have your own child, you said it to a niece or a nephew. You said, learn to share, learn to talk, learn to have feelings for what other people go through, learn to walk in their shoes. So it's absolutely disappointing that that is not the case with this government.

We have public servants and why do we call them public servants? Because they serve the public, they serve you, Mr. Speaker, they serve me, my family, my friends, strangers on the street, that's what they do. There's no big corporation behind them saying look, we have to pay the shareholders first. So that's the top of our priorities, Mr. Speaker, we have to make sure the shareholders are happy.

That doesn't happen when you work in the public sector. The first oath you take in the public sector is to serve the people. It is not about a profit, so that's why when this government talks about privatization, when this government turns on unions, when this government does not respect collaboration, collective bargaining, that is not supporting the public sector.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that every time a member of the Liberal caucus gets up and reads a statement or congratulates somebody who works for the public sector, or a minister gets up and goes on about his or her staff and how much they do for them, think about this piece of legislation and what you are doing to them. That's the reality because that's the action that this government is taking with this piece of legislation.

This is not just a political game we're talking about. I will never forget, and it was a fine Liberal who said this to me because when I first became a minister and I was sitting on the government side, I had a real difficult time with what I saw in these rooms, around these walls. I couldn't believe, from a person who didn't even come from a political background, who had the privilege to get elected, who had the privilege to become a minister, would come in a place that I thought was honourable and I saw the back and forth

and the betrayals and the lines that were thrown back and forth, and that fine Liberal member said, Denise, it's only a game.

Well what kind of game is it when you are dealing with people's lives, Mr. Speaker? That will bother me my entire life, that I would be told by a Liberal member, and this person was a fine, fine Liberal but got trapped in the same situation of thinking that this is a game and it certainly is not a game when you do not allow, in a democratic system, for people to have a voice.

Mr. Speaker, I would believe and think that every one of the members of the Liberal caucus who went knocking on doors looking for votes said yes, we listen; we're going to listen. Oh, we support you as teachers; those bad, bad NDPs, they cut \$65 million out of the budget, and forgot to say that that was just a made-up figure.

It was difficult enough sitting at that table and looking at the \$13 million that was cut out of the budget. That's part of the reason that we are over here. We're not perfect, there were mistakes made. Not all of us were heard around the table. The one thing I'm proud of is the fact that we realized that it did come down to choices, so we made the choice to reduce poverty 18 per cent; we made the choice of developing the first Mental Health and Addictions Strategy; we made the choice to develop the first Housing Strategy; we made the choice to invest in the creative industries; and we made the choice of developing a 10-year plan for people with disabilities so they can live in communities instead of institutions. Those were choices.

We made those choices even during a very difficult time with the budget. I do not recall ever in my lifetime that I ever heard of any government not saying that there weren't financial constraints on them - not once. I'll bet you if you go back 250 years, the same words were used - oh, bad financial times.

I would say that's a reality of the world, and I believe that our new Prime Minister understands that. That's why our new Prime Minister does not agree with an austerity budget, that it is important to invest in people and invest in infrastructure because then those people that we represent will have some jobs.

What do jobs mean, Mr. Speaker? It means more money in people's pockets. What does it mean when there's more money in a person's pocket? Well, traditionally, it means those individuals will spend more money. They will spend more money. What does that mean, Mr. Speaker? It means that it stimulates the economy. That's the theory.

What's the theory on the austerity budget? Take it away. Take the resources (Interruption) No. Somebody said responsibility. That's not responsibility when you take away people's ability to live or a person's right to provide a government with their concerns. That is not my definition of responsibility, but obviously it's the definition of the

provincial Liberal Government. It's not even the definition of their federal partners, not at all, not one bit.

How sad is that, Mr. Speaker? Life is about choices, from the time that you're born and you have your parents teaching you and you have your parents or your guardians teaching you about respect. Then you have teachers taking on that huge responsibility. Lots of times, if the parental support is not there, what ends up happening is that the teachers take on a critical role in children's lives - a critical role. They don't just teach about the ABCs. They don't just teach $1+1=2$. They teach respect. They teach how you interact with other human beings. They teach that you need to be able to be a part of a team and collaborate. They teach you to tell the truth. That's what teachers do every day.

So we're telling them that it is not important, that what they do is not important. We don't want to hear from you. Times are tough, so you've got to take the brunt of it. You public sector workers, you're using all the money up in our province and you're creating a deficit. Can you imagine? I can't even figure out how anybody's mind would wrap around that kind of theory. But I guess maybe I'm naive. I've had experience of being in government. I'm becoming more aware of course of the political spin.

It's just the same as when I talked about the electricity perception plan; that's exactly what it's all about. It's not about the choice of supporting people. It's not about allowing people to have an opportunity to consult or collaborate. What it's about, Mr. Speaker, is power - power. That's the word. It's not people; it's power. The power is, how do we get re-elected again? How do we get re-elected again but people don't really know what we're doing behind the scenes? How do we do that? Well, we create an electricity plan that pretends that we're freezing rates for three years. Then we turn around, and after three years, because there's a law that gives them a guaranteed rate of return, Nova Scotia Power can ask for the money that they've lost in those three years, so prices quadruple. But that's okay. We'll get over that little political period. We've got to look at the calendar; we've got to look at the dates. So what do we do?

The other thing we do, and I would say that if you look back in history, every political Party that has gotten a mandate has done this same thing, Oh, the budget doesn't look as good as we thought, they did not tell us everything. Hmm, how many times have I heard that one? So when we first got in we've got to do the dirty deeds, we have to cut because Mr. and Mrs. Nova Scotian, we're in such rough shape, we have to cut. But, just wait, oh my goodness, it must be Christmas, we're getting closer to the election, it must be Christmas. Suddenly we found money, okay we'll give it to you, Mr. and Mrs. Nova Scotian. We took millions away, we'll throw you a couple of hundred thousand, but you'll see the money so you'll feel good, you'll vote for us again. You will vote for us again because we're giving you money, we're making you feel good.

That is what you call the political process, it usually happens every four or five years, it hasn't changed for 250 years. This government is playing out of the same

songbook. The only difference is they're acting like Mr. Harper, they're not acting for the people of Nova Scotia. How do you do that? How do you act for people when you won't even listen to them? You take their rights away.

There are many Canadians who have lost their lives in wars fighting for the rights of democracy - fighting for the right to be heard, fighting for the right to be considered, fighting for the right to even have a discussion. It is serious, this is not political posturing, it's the truth, I'm not making this up. How many veterans do we have in Canada and in our province? How many lives have been lost for that right? How many? Then here, in Nova Scotia, we have a leader who obviously doesn't respect any of that because we don't have a democracy here anymore. We do not have a democracy in the Province of Nova Scotia. A democracy gives people the right to negotiate, it gives people the right to sit around a table. Where are those rights? How embarrassing.

But for the government members when they go out in the public, and the more that people learn - I always said, knowledge is power. In a democracy, we want people to have knowledge because we want to share the power, we want to work together. According to the Premier we have in Nova Scotia, we don't want to share any knowledge. That is the perception game. Every decision that is made around the Cabinet Table is not what is the best outcome for Nova Scotians, it is how do we spin this so we can get re-elected.

That is the discussion around the Cabinet Table because we're seeing the results of that in every piece of legislation that a majority government is ramming down the throats of Nova Scotians and public sector workers. What our Premier is hanging all of his hopes on is, let's divide and conquer. We're not going to follow any Ivany report that talks about needing to be more collaborative. I keep hearing from the government side when they talk about business, we are stepping back from creating jobs, it's up to the corporations and businesses.

How many times have I heard, we're going to create a Nova Scotia that opens the door to business. How many businesses want to do business when there's no democracy. It's obvious, the numbers are starting to come in. It's absolutely obvious, it's in the government's and the Finance Minister's own report showing the fact that corporate taxes are stalled.

Why are they not going up? Well, what business wants to come to the Province of Nova Scotia with such a cloud over it when there are many opportunities throughout all of Canada to go to a province that is investing in their creative industry, who have film and television activities that are investing in people, investing in their business.

This government thinks that all they have to do is get rid of the red tape. There might have been some effort in that, but not a whole lot because I talked to business people, they are not finding a whole lot of difference in the red tape.

Mr. Speaker, it is really hard to believe that we're actually in the Province of Nova Scotia. I would think, if I didn't know how to drive on Highway No. 103, I would think I was in Russia, actually I would, because I'd be scared to death to open my mouth and say anything, they're not going to listen to me anyway because that is the rule. That's the heavy hand that you bring down, that's the rule. That's the way it is in those countries.

We aspire to be different, but unfortunately, not this government and not the Premier of Nova Scotia. As I said many times over, Mr. Speaker, I'm not making these things up. I wasn't the one who went to the film industry when I was running to become Premier and said let's do a press conference together, buddies, so I can stand there and I can say I support your industry and I'm going to invest in that. Let Nova Scotia know.

AN HON. MEMBER: Remember the bill. They put a bill in that extended the Film Industry Tax Credit.

MS. PETERSON RAFUSE: Really, where did that go? How do you do that, Mr. Speaker, how do you publicly - you have to organize it, you have to put thought into it - you have to put thought into it, right? I'm sure that our Premier didn't do that all on his own, I'm sure what happened was there was some discussion. So let's go and let's go to the film industry and let's let them know we support them and we're going to, if you elect us, we're going to invest more money.

I didn't make that up, that took place, that's part of history now and the film industry is part of history now in this province; after 25 years and 30 years of building it to the magnitude that it was. You know, as a representative of an area that saw great economic development through the industry, I feel a little bit that I have a right to say something because of the \$50 million that Haven put in and then the producer of Haven had another huge project with \$20 million; that's gone, we don't have it.

I didn't make that up, that's reality. I believe they went out West, that's reality, that's not made up, right? And the perception game right now with the film industry, is, oh, we have money, but you are not using it. That's once again the perception game. The reality is that the money is there for small productions and the big productions are not interested in this province anymore because there's a cap of \$10 million. I didn't make that up, that's reality.

I remember in Opposition, that's why I always encouraged those who were new, that really knowledge is power. Maybe the members are scared of having the power of knowledge because it is easy to refer to Hansard, and it's easy to see and read what was said when the Premier was in Opposition and the commitments that were made and the things that were said - not just to us as government members, but to hard-working Nova Scotians, and the promises that were made.

The Premier who, when in Opposition - I don't know how many millions of times that the Premier stood up and said, this is the most expensive province in all of Canada for taxes. It was not understood at all that the fact is that we were under the barrel, the same as the government is today. So the choice was with the taxes. However, we made a commitment to Nova Scotians that those taxes would be reduced and we put it in legislation.

Choices again, Mr. Speaker, because this government had a choice to leave that legislation alone, but what did they do? They repealed it. Yes, stood in this House - probably 150 million times stood up and said the highest-taxed province. Had the opportunity; it was all there; all the paperwork was done. The legislation was passed and the government and the Premier had to take action to repeal it. The ironic thing is we're still one of the highest-taxed provinces in all Canada.

Now, for whatever reason, that's okay under a Liberal Government. Not okay under an NDP Government, but boy is it ever okay under a Liberal Government. Funny how things change when you take 10 steps in the other direction.

Mr. Speaker, I do become passionate about this because of the fact that I see the political writing on the wall and I think that Nova Scotians had a hope in this Liberal Government that they were going to be different about that. It's more than different, it is 150 times worse, because there is quite a long list. I would invite people to take a look at the platform the NDP had versus the platform of the Liberal Party and count how many promises were broken. I would suggest that the Liberal list is a lot longer and the fact is that there is betrayal on the Liberal list, because it wasn't just said out of context because a microphone was put under somebody's nose and they, from nervousness or whatever, said, well, we're going to do this. It was all thought out in fine detail. Then, as soon as Nova Scotians gave the Liberal Party an opportunity and the honour to govern this province, it was totally changed.

In my dictionary, that is the definition of betrayal, absolute betrayal, and it's still happening now. It happened two weeks ago when the Deputy Premier publicly said to teachers, we'll chat about that; you go away, spend time with your family over the holidays, come back in January and we'll talk about it. What is that but the definition of betrayal?

We want to teach our children as best we can and we're supposed to learn by example. Well, how do our children in the Province of Nova Scotia learn by example when one of the highest honours that you have in this province is to be sitting on the government side.

I realize that mistakes can be made. Sometimes the decisions don't turn out the way that a political person wants it to turn out, but the difference is when you make an honest effort. You've told someone, you've made a commitment and you've made that honest effort to do what you have said. You make an honest effort, but when you don't make an

honest effort and you orchestrate one position and then when you get the honour to govern this province and it's flipped around, that is extraordinarily sad.

It's no wonder that politicians are painted with the same brush. I'm sure that every one of us have gone to a door or been at a public event where we have run into people who say, you're just talking the political talk. Oh you're a politician, that's what we expect. Well once again, Mr. Speaker, in our society it is very sad that the people who we're here to serve believe and have an expectation that we're going to betray them, and that seems to be okay?

Is that the kind of province that will generate interest from corporations to come and set up business? Is that the type of province where public servants are supposed to get up and go to work every day and look after the people of Nova Scotia that we feel that they should be motivated to do that? It's not easy being a nurse. Can you imagine - and I can't even imagine this - how do you go and work at the IWK and go to a parent and say, I'm sorry, your child has cancer and they may not live very long? How do you do that day in and day out? You do that because you're motivated to look after that child. You're motivated to provide support to the family, and you're motivated by hope.

It would be nice to be rewarded for that service and be respected for that service, and not be blamed that you're the cause of the debt in the Province of Nova Scotia when you have had no control over the political decisions that were made in this province for 250 years. You're carrying the weight of blame because you're a public servant - because of the fact that you have decided that you want to help people by being a nurse, or you want to be a teacher, or you want to have a job out working with TIR.

I have such respect for those people. I have respect for people who are working in - TIR, can you imagine? Never could do anything right. You get this road paved; you should have done that road. There is a pothole here, you should do that. Why weren't you plowing? Why did you plow that road - didn't do my road? On and on and on.

Nurses facing sickness and death; home care workers looking after the elderly - each and every one of us are moving along that path. The alternative is not too good so I guess we're all hoping that we'll get there someday but, Mr. Speaker, I hope when I get there that there is a government that respects the home care workers who are coming in and looking after me; that the home care workers are not just self-motivated, that the home care workers are motivated by who they work for.

Each and every one of us, Mr. Speaker, every day in our work life strive to be respected for the job we do. We are the same because humans are the same and we're all the same in the fact that we like that motivation and need it. MLAs are no different, we all have bad days when it doesn't seem like we can make anybody happy, we have days when people accuse us of things, or think we have a magic wand. And what do we strive for at our workplace? Respect and honesty is what we all strive for. No matter what our job is in

life, we strive for that respect, whether we've had opportunities in our life to put us in a better position than the person next to us, or maybe we just did not have the luck that some other people have. Maybe we were not born into that situation where we would have the same supports or monetary value, but do you know what? The money does not count if you don't get respect. That's what it's all about, we strive for that respect.

Why should we think or believe, Mr. Speaker, that anybody who works for the good of the public does not deserve that recognition? Once again, it's not in the words you say, it's the actions. If you are bringing forward legislation like this over the holiday season with the hope that we're not going to have the amount of protesters that we would if they had a little bit of time to organize themselves - you don't think that is planned out? That's exactly what's going on here.

We betray them by saying we're going to take time and we're going to chat with you, we're going to allow you to express your concerns. There are members in the Liberal caucus who still believe that those concerns are going to be heard. Well then challenge those who are making the decision by asking: why do you need this legislation, why do you need a law if you are saying we're going to listen to their concerns?

You don't need this law; you don't need it. If the government is going to give people an opportunity to express their concerns, you don't need this legislation - Bill No. 148, you don't need it. So, Mr. Speaker, I know people will say, well, there she goes again and she's going on about this. I did see one of the members earlier making like a motion of a violin - I did and I can tell you who it was, I saw it.

This is not about a violin. This is not about politics. This is about people who gave this government the trust to make the best decision on their behalf, and this piece of legislation is not the best on anybody's behalf who works in the public sector - 75,000 people.

As my colleague has said, this province is a small province and those jobs are part of our economic stimulus - they put money back into the system, they don't take the money from the system. So if you do the statistical analysis, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that what you will discover is the fact that it's an investment and more money actually comes into our province because we have such a huge public sector.

They are not the enemy, but for some reason our Premier believes the public sector is the enemy and the government members were clapping over the fact and bragging about the fact that this Premier went around when he first got elected and shook their hands. The thing that the Premier did not tell them when he was shaking their hands that it was the handshake of death and not life. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing here is a perfect indication of how this government has chosen to operate. It always has to do with, don't look here, look over here. I don't think it's a coincidence that their disastrous budget update came down and then a few hours later we see this legislation - don't look here, look over here.

For some reason, their budget that they tabled just a few short months ago - they would have known what the wages were going to be. This was all within their realm, but for some reason they want Nova Scotians to believe that the reason there's such a big deficit over the last few months is because of the unions. It is not their fault, it's not poor budgeting, it's not like members stood up in this House and said, your revenue estimates are way off the charts. I don't know if members stood up at that time and said that; I think there might have been a couple who said that.

But this government doesn't want Nova Scotians to look at that. They want them to look at the unions. This is the way they operate. They will just kind of bumble along, bumble along, and manufacture a little more chaos so people don't look at the chaos that they created yesterday. I guess they'll call that progress, but it's not progress.

The NSGEU hasn't even voted, and here we are with this piece of legislation. Why? If you believe what you read on Twitter, and some of it's true, the Premier said last night that he can't risk arbitration. Well, there's no risk of arbitration. The vote hasn't even happened. Why are we here sitting all night again with this government? More manufactured chaos, more confusion. Why? Because they have no idea. They don't know how to move things forward. It's all attack. It's all somebody else's fault.

The Minister of Internal Services last night said that the budget deficit that is spiralling out of control on them is the federal Conservatives' fault. Last week it was the NDP's fault. At some point, look in the mirror - it's your own budget. Nobody told you you have to put this budget down. You blew it. It's nobody's fault but your own.

If we think about the teachers - if there's one member in this Chamber who thinks that the teachers are on the verge of going on strike, please stand up and have the courage to say it, because they're not. And to put a piece of legislation down here and try to create this illusion that you're saving something, that you're protecting Nova Scotians from something - you're not.

Stand up, somebody, and tell me the teachers are on the verge of going on strike. One person stand up. I'll be really curious to see that.

The reality is that this government has options. If they wanted to take this route, they could have tabled this bill down and introduced it on first reading, and then said to the NSGEU, okay, you told us last week or the week before you want to go and speak to your locals, you want to speak to your members; go and do that, go and have those meetings, but do know this bill is sitting here.

They could have done that. Why didn't we do that? Why are we sitting here all night? Why?

There are no answers to these questions, Mr. Speaker. I think this government has had more all-night sittings in two years than you could add them all up from any number of years in prior governments. We still have time left. We'll see it again, and the reason is, it's not called courage. It's called ineptness. When you can't manage issues, you create chaos around them. It's not called courage.

Mr. Speaker, I remember in the Lacewood McDonald's, there used to be a sign on the manager's wall and it said, "If these customers would stop bothering me, I could get more work done." I remember that sign very well, that's where I spent many times in my youth, working at McDonalds. I remember that sign, it always stuck with me - it's a very poignant sign. Obviously you need customers or you are not going to be in business.

This government might as well put that sign up on the Chamber behind them - if these Nova Scotians would stop bothering us, we could get some work done. These pesky rural Nova Scotians want rural schools - how dare they? They want a health care system they can turn to - how dare they? How dare those customers interfere with us trying to get our work done? Let's see how it all works out for Nova Scotians because it's not working out too well right now.

So what's the reaction from this government? Disregard for Nova Scotians. Stop bothering us, we have a fiscal plan, we have a fiscal envelope. What's the plan? There's no plan here. This bill is being introduced so that the minister can preserve his fiscal plan. Well, well, is there a plan? There's no plan. The plan is to cut, cut and hope somebody from somewhere else rides in, drops off a pot of money and we can say, look what we did.

There's no plan to grow the economy. I haven't seen one idea from this government as to how they are going to grow the economy. Nothing. The minister goes on TV and says poor us, the Canadian economy is suffering and we're part of it, poor us. It's somebody else's fault, Mr. Speaker - it must be the federal Conservatives.

If we see a plan to grow the economy, then we can have a glimmer of hope. No hope today, nothing. So what does the government do to react? A divisive, attacking government pitting Nova Scotians against Nova Scotians. Exhibit A comes from the innermost circles of this caucus, of this government. When faced with the public knowing the mistakes they've made around a former minister, what does the second-highest ranking person in their Party do? He goes on the media and tries to discredit this person by disclosing his illnesses that he has, and why? Attack, divide, discredit. Don't look here, look over there.

We've been talking in this House about the failures of the government around the mental health crisis. The short-stay unit in Pictou County, the services available to people

in Pictou County are obviously of great concern to myself and many people in the area and beyond. What have we heard from the government? We can't staff it, excuse number one; excuse number two, it didn't work properly, it's somebody else's fault. Nothing towards a solution.

Mr. Speaker, we haven't heard one indication that there's any ability to address the issues. These are real issues and there are real solutions, but not coming from this government. That is a shame.

If we look at how this province is going to advance, it's not going to advance from cutting, cutting - it's going to advance from growing. So if you are a business owner and you are looking at this province, what are you seeing? Well, the first thing we see is that they'll pass pieces of legislation with their majority in all-night sittings, that they don't understand having them thought through.

You may remember the fracking bill, Mr. Speaker. How long ago did they pass that bill? The bill all hinges on a definition. What is it that they're banning? High-volume hydraulic fracturing - okay, what is that? A year later, they have no clue what they did. They have no clue why they did it. They just know that they have a majority, so they'll do it.

I would love for a member to stand up here today and say, well, actually, we took the past year and now we know what we did. Here's the definition. There's not one member in this Chamber who could stand up and do that. That's a great message. That's a great message for this province to send to business. We will do things that we don't know what we're doing and we don't understand what we're doing and why we're doing them, but we will do them. That's the message.

The film industry - we certainly don't need their revenue. My colleague gave a little bit of a history on that. I will go back to one portion of that history that I think really puts an exclamation point on this government's inability to understand business. That is when they passed their own bill that extended the Film Tax Credit as it was - as is. I think they probably stood up with great laughter and back-patting and said, there, we've fulfilled our promise.

Of course, we all know their promise was to continue to support that industry. That was their promise. Then they passed a bill, and sure enough, they said, put a tick in that box. We've done it. Then they probably didn't really understand what they did or why they did it, and they passed another piece of legislation to wipe it out, probably without even knowing, Mr. Speaker, that they had just passed a bill to extend it.

This is the type of bumbling that we're seeing from this government, and this is more bumbling. We're here all night to talk about the bumbling. It all stems from a lack of respect for Opposition Parties. We could go through and spend some time about Opposition

Day and the types of things we hear from the government for the ideas that are advanced and then they turn around later on and say, well, maybe there was something there. We've seen a couple of great examples of that. No respect for the Opposition Parties. No respect for Nova Scotians; lots of laughter though and all kinds of cheers for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, for me, that point was made pretty strongly last night when I stood in here, and I was talking about the electricity bill. I wasn't in favour of that bill; I voted against it. As I was speaking, and I was pointing out some of the flaws of that legislation, the Minister of Internal Services sat in his chair and he said, he'll be over looking for a favour tomorrow. Those were his words. He said to his colleagues, he'll be over looking for a favour, as I was providing my commentary on the flaws of the electricity bill.

Now that one statement I think is representative of a mindset. (Interruption) It is absolutely. The mindset (Interruption) Well, I guess the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal wants to be excluded from that, and in fairness I will exclude him from that. I'll focus in the Minister of Internal Services. His mindset, I believe, is very much that when a member from the Opposition comes over to speak to a minister to look for help on an issue, that they're asking for a favour for themselves. They're not, Mr. Speaker. They're trying to bring an issue from Nova Scotians forward.

When you hear comments like that, it speaks to that member's view of the world. It's not a good view of the world. It's not a good view of the world because it's not about me, it's not about us and them - it's about Nova Scotia. I will say that I do see a few ministers over there that are very helpful, so the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, I take your point on that. (Laughter) The member indicated I might be sucking up, but it wasn't to that minister.

It does concern me. This is the government for the people, and these are real issues. When you say to, in this case, employees there is a deal there, go talk about it, come back and vote on it, you should let them do that. To not do that, to not give them that respect, is unfair and it's unjust.

What I would say in closing is that these are real issues and there are real people behind those issues. We can move this province forward, but it will take ideas and you have to listen to the ideas and assess the ideas and not discredit them because of where they came from. In this case, to try to pit Nova Scotians against each other and victimize one group over another because of your ability to get a deal done, it's just not productive.

We don't have to be here today doing this. If the government would do a better job of what it's meant to do, we wouldn't be here doing this today. I think that for me is the real shame of it all. With those few words I would take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: I just want to start my comments and I want to assure everyone that they are not going to be overly lengthy, so I guess that's a positive note at this stage of the day. But I did want to thank my colleagues, the member for Queens-Shelburne and the members for Halifax Needham, Sackville-Cobequid, as well as the member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River, the member for Pictou East, and also the Leader of the Official Opposition for their comments on this bill to date.

I would have to say that I pretty well concur with just about everything that people have said to date about this bill. I'm appreciative of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition when he actually did dissect the bill a little bit and pointed out, saying, why does it exempt municipalities? What about school board employees? What about universities? Seems to create two classes of workers, which the government says they don't want to do, and suggesting that the wording in the legislation could be ambiguous and somewhat flawed.

I think it has been mentioned before - I'll just mention a little bit about the name of the bill, An Act Respecting the Sustainability of Public Services. The word "sustainability" does seem to be somewhat inaccurate. It has a very Orwellian sound to it. We've gone through 10 years at the federal level of getting this legislation with these names that mean exactly the opposite of what the intent is. I don't know what we would call this one if I wanted to get to the nub of what it's really saying, but I maybe expect that if we stated that it was an Act respecting the elimination of collective bargaining of public services, why not call it what it is and let's get rid of the doublespeak. We don't need that and we're tired of it.

Canada, I think, generally over the years, certainly in the past, maybe not in its recent past, has been widely respected for its civil service. If it hasn't been recently I think it's because the federal civil service has gone through a pretty rough time, positions being eliminated. There were a lot of issues with regard to the level of responsibilities, et cetera.

I think it was commendable by our new Prime Minister that he took steps. In fact, his first steps, I believe, were to recognize the civil service. The member for Queens-Shelburne referred to it as well and it was earlier addressed, when we compared that to our Premier, when he was elected, meeting with our civil servants. It is a compelling thought to question, to think about what those civil servants would think today? How are they looking back on that handshake that they got from the Premier on that day?

It is without question that our civil servants need to be treated with respect. Even in our own self-interests, we should be looking at that. With an aging population we will rely on them more and more. We need to attract young families and grow the population and this type of legislation discourages people from coming to the province. We need good services provided by a professional civil service. That is the bottom line; we need that.

Earlier this morning when we were addressing the motion, I had talked about a little bit of history. Some of the historical significance and I think it's useful to look at that. It helps us put it in perspective, what is the true significance of what we're dealing with, what we're tampering with, and what we may be eroding.

The member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River went through in some detail the history and the struggle for the teachers to get their bargaining rights. There is a parallel struggle and it's interesting to note that it seems to follow the same timelines with the nurses and that took place, I think they really started to get on track in the 1960s. I think it's worthwhile to look at the struggle that they went through to achieve collective bargaining.

I had earlier referred to - and I can table a copy of it later - but I do want to reference briefly a Master's Thesis completed by Sandra Redmond, a Dalhousie student, who examined this issue and the term "collective bargaining" and going back to the very early history. I referred to it earlier where nurses were just considered to be - if you were female you were expected to be able to heal. Nursing was perceived as part of women's work and required no skills other than those of being a caring person.

The nurses, throughout their struggle to achieve collective bargaining, this persona really did not work in their favour. It appeared to be that the role of women in society and the workplace was reflective of the fact that the majority of the nurses were, in fact, women. When we analyze the development of collective bargaining by Nova Scotian nurses, we cannot escape the gender issue. It has to be considered.

Twentieth-century nursing in Canada has been identified as a profession of white middle-class women. I think that has eventually been disputed, but what isn't disputed is the influence of religion on nurses. A nursing education cannot be overlooked when we look at the role and development of collective bargaining. While nurses were educated and practised in both Christian and secular settings, Christian rituals were often part of the student nurses' daily routine and these teachings emphasized servitude, submissiveness and obedience, traits that have historically been valued in nurses. I believe those words reflect the difficult struggle of nurses.

It was noted in this report that just in terms of the hospital setting, it continued to be a location of education for most nurses but it was perpetuating the dominant/submissive relationship between physicians and nurses.

Now while it was suggested that the emphasis on the nurses' education was on service and obedience and these were behaviours that were inconsistent with collective bargaining. The majority of nurses in Nova Scotia were white females. They were not middle class but from a lower socioeconomic background. The nurses were mainly the daughters of fishers and farmers and miners. The women chose the career in nursing for a variety of reasons: nursing was less expensive and more accessible than university

education; parental expectations that their daughters would become nurses or teachers; and the influence of their peers who had decided to enter into a school of nursing.

As the struggle sort of plodded along - I mean we're talking about going through the 1940s, the 1950s and 1960s - eventually there was a strike and that strike took place in Amherst. That strike involved a withdrawal of non-nursing services. This was the first strike by Nova Scotia nurses who were involved in collective bargaining. It's interesting - even the manner in which the strike took place, it was withdrawal of specific, non-nursing tasks. It wasn't the complete withdrawal of nursing services.

The nurses were attempting to work in co-operation with other unions representing the hospital employees and, as a result, the only available personnel to do these tasks was the administrator and the Director of Nursing. Interestingly, apparently the action of refusing to deliver meal trays was significant in ending the strike, with a call for the return to bargaining when the board of directors received within 48 hours of refusing to carry meal trays. Apparently the administrator at the hospital was quoted as saying he had never felt so humiliated in his life as to have to carry trays.

This, of course, is indicative of the many class issues that were inherent within the medical hierarchy. I won't go any further than that but I can say enough to say that the nurses have moved well beyond this and have developed and created for themselves a very significant union that really represents the values that I think we to this date respect and want for the nurses, because they do carry out very special work. I think the same applies for teachers but I think what's really critical is that - I think that what it is is that at this point in time it is a critical time for women in Nova Scotia to watch and ask questions about how this bill will affect gender equality. Public sector cuts hurt women more than they hurt men.

I can also table this as well, a document through the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives looking at the 2015 budget through a gender lens. Some of the comments are really significant and apply and show us the importance and significance of unions to women. Some of the stats that were provided in that - and they were all footnoted as to their sources; for brevity's sake, I won't do that, but I will table the document.

Women in Nova Scotia are the majority of workers in six of 10 of the lowest-paying jobs. Women make up 61 per cent of employees that earn minimum wage or less. Women represent 100 per cent of those employed in six of the 10 lowest-paying occupations. Women fill only 32 per cent of senior management positions. Women experience a 33 per cent pay equity gap, which means for every dollar a male earns in full-time, full-year work, a woman earns 67 cents. The earnings, on average, are \$15,000 less for women than a man because of the pay equity gap.

I remember in the 1990s we actually had pay equity legislation, and that was something that was supposed to be reviewed. I think it has fallen by the wayside.

I think that this document points out some really interesting information. It states that our current provincial government's budget will likely contain further public sector spending cuts. Well, they were right about that. Even if it only freezes spending, this will result in cuts in practices.

Any cuts will have a disproportionately negative impact on women because public sector cuts hurt women more than they hurt men. Public services play an essential role in the redistribution of wealth and help us move toward an equal society for women, who are the primary providers of unpaid caregiving and access public services more than men. Women also make up the majority of public sector workers.

In Nova Scotia, women compose 66 per cent and 84 per cent of workers in education and health employment respectively, and hold 66 per cent of all public sector jobs. These public sector jobs represent quality jobs where pay is on average higher than private sector jobs with similar pay equity gaps. They are unionized and provide good benefits to women, often including extended health and maternity benefits.

In addition, more women in the public sector have pensions - two-thirds as opposed to only one-third in the private sector - and they make valuable contributions to the common good. The province's austerity agenda will have an adverse, negative effect on everyone, but women will suffer disproportionately.

We know that when services are cut, many people seek out community-based services that are often offered by women in under-resourced, non-governmental organizations. We also know that gaps in services are more often filled without pay by women. So those are comments from that report.

I myself don't come from a labour background. I have never been in a union. But I found that reading through this material and reading through other articles and trying to educate myself a little bit, I was quite astounded by the significance of that information as it relates to women in the province. Without the strength and protection of the unions, women will find themselves less well off financially. They will not have pensions. It doesn't take a lot of research to determine that many women - as was already indicated - will end up without pensions and will end up as seniors. We already know the disproportionate rate of women who are living in poverty compared to men, and it is usually related to the fact that they haven't been able to pay into pensions.

I think this legislation is targeting, I've heard - you know it's hard to say on this, but I, again, took the teachers at their word when they said it wasn't about, I think it was Clauses 13 and 14 in the bill, they are the money sections. They want to sit down and talk, and to me it was such a great opportunity and so much could have been accomplished, I believe, when you're in this really great position of not having to negotiate money; it was really to talk about what is going on in the classroom.

Now some of the issues may have required putting some money into the classrooms, but I think the teachers need to be really respected for their stand on this, that it is about improving the situations for the children in the classrooms. I just think the approach and putting this in, it has been discussed for many hours here today, it was heavy-handed. The government was in a position to be in a position of trust with people and have a really unique environment at the bargaining table. Bargaining doesn't have to be always about money and I think that maybe from both sides there is a flaw there in that demands have always been money focused.

In wrapping up I did want to say much earlier today the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education addressed - I used the analogy of *A Christmas Carol* to take the Premier through the Ghost of Christmas Past, Present and Future. At that point she was suggesting that the message was about living within our means. I don't actually think that was the message from *A Christmas Carol*, it may have been from *Great Expectations* or for some other Dickens' novel. I understand living within your means, but I think that is the challenge for all of us is to become much more creative.

We've heard it said that the austerity approach just does not achieve what we want to achieve; there are other options. I don't agree with everything in the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives when they provide their alternate budgets, but it's really good reading for people and it really does open up your mind to new possibilities. Much of what is in their proposals involves legislation or involvement by the federal government, but, again, this government is hopefully in a unique position to really move forward with the federal government and move on health accord and move on getting our transfer payments where they need to be.

We have been shafted for so long and it has been a particular frustration of mine that the Premiers and all MLAs, whatever political stripe, haven't been pounding on the doors in Ottawa to demand that we get what is entitled really from our days of Confederation. (Interruptions) The Liberals know all about that, so why aren't they there? The Cape Breton ones do, anyway.

I guess what it is, is that we need to change our priorities. We need to look at opening up and expanding our ideas and thinking about different philosophical approaches. I believe, as I said, there are ideas to consider out there. I also would go back to the analogy of *A Christmas Carol*. *A Christmas Carol* was about giving, caring, rejoicing, friendship, and a new awakening for Scrooge who realized it was more important to take care of those less fortunate. It was about opening his heart first, and then he opened his mind. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak on Bill No. 148, An Act Respecting the Sustainability of Public Services. I would

like to start by saying how much respect I have for the individuals who work for the Province of Nova Scotia, the nurses and the teachers. I think we all know that these are good, caring people, and they're Nova Scotians.

When I started out today, I didn't think I was going to want to say something about this bill, but when I think more and more about it, I can't believe that this government would go from where they were last week with Bill 112, which was such a great progressive piece of legislation, to Bill 148, which is actually taking us backwards.

Mr. Speaker, I come from an area where unions have made a strong difference in our community. There were people there who are caring individuals, Nova Scotians, who were working on behalf of other Nova Scotians dealing with, for the most part, more Nova Scotians.

Yesterday, I guess it was now, we saw the government bring in a bill to address the amount of dollars and cents that could actually be given in the settlement of a contract. What's really interesting about that is, we're dealing with a contract that the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union hasn't even had an opportunity to vote on.

Before this House came in, this Liberal Government was going around patting themselves on the back for reaching an agreement, for sitting down and negotiating an agreement with this very union, and everybody thought, that's good; that's a step in the right direction. But now, after having that opportunity, and they had the same thing with the Teachers Union, they were going around again. I thought my colleague, the member for Northside-Westmount, was going to get some extra work as a physiotherapist because everyone was so busy patting themselves on the back. But very seriously, Mr. Speaker, it seemed like things were moving in the right direction. That came about by sitting down and talking to people, by negotiating.

The first contract failed. The membership wasn't happy with what the teachers union had brought back to them, and they voted against it. But isn't that the very basis of the whole system that we're involved in, the very fact that they had the opportunity to have people sit down and bring back to them some information and they had an opportunity to vote for it or against it? In this case, they decided to vote against it. We should all respect that because that's their right. That's what they're allowed to do when they live in a province as great as Nova Scotia.

Now we have the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union having an opportunity to look at a contract and looking at which way they should vote. Before they have that opportunity, the government decides, we're going to make a decision for you.

I think the greatest disappointment that I have, Mr. Speaker, is the very fact that this government doesn't have faith in its own ability. They went around during the election campaign, as we all did. They set out a platform. They set out a vision for the Province of

Nova Scotia. They said, this is what we'll do if you put your faith in us. But this legislation was not part of what Nova Scotians did to put the faith in this Liberal Government.

You know what's really ironic, Mr. Speaker? If this legislation is so great, and if the people on the government side of this House believe in it, why is it when the Opposition asked for a briefing on this bill, they said, no, we're not going to do that? If you believe in something, if you think you're bringing forward the right idea, and you're trying to convince other people to go along with you, wouldn't you want to sit down and show them and explain to them, why it is I'm moving forward with this piece of legislation? But this government decided not to do that. But then again, I guess I shouldn't really be surprised at that because that's the same tack they took when it came to the negotiation process.

Mr. Speaker, we are all Nova Scotians and it is tough to be in government at a time when there isn't a lot of money. It is tough to be in a leadership role in a union but it's even tougher when your own people won't sit and talk about finding a solution that works for everybody and doing it together. There is something wrong when a government believes that the people who are key to keeping this province alive and moving forward can't be trusted enough to sit down and negotiate a fair and equitable deal for all Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, this is a failed piece of legislation by a government that has no faith in themselves, by a government that doesn't believe in sitting down and negotiating and making the processes work. It is a shame and it is a very sad day for the Province of Nova Scotia. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, it has been a long night, we're almost at 12 hours since the House was called back at midnight last night. It's important, I feel, that we, as a caucus, took the opportunity to try to get across to the government the importance of what is in front of us here with Bill No. 148 and the ramifications that come when government chooses to take a path that they are taking.

I am definitely disappointed that the government did not support the hoist motion to put the brakes on this and revisit it in six months because labour relations are extremely important. It's extremely important to our province, but it's important for those on both sides of that equation and that process. It's important for the employer, we understand that, I understand that. It's important for the employees, I understand that, we understand that, Mr. Speaker.

Ironically I have been on both sides of that equation of labour relations here in this province, because of the roles and the employment that I've had throughout my career. I've often talked about how I ended up here in the Legislature after becoming a paramedic. It's not kind of an obvious jump or step forward to become a volunteer firefighter, a paramedic

in the province and then jump into being an MLA. That is usually not the progression when someone enters front-line health care, emergency health care.

I was very proud to be the first paramedic elected to the Legislature. I know a couple of years later, followed by a former colleague of mine, the member for Hants West, which I always said he ended up in the wrong Party but I was glad to see him engaged - I think he said that eventually too, Mr. Speaker, maybe that's why he's sitting as an Independent today. I was glad to see a fellow colleague engage in another important profession, that of course is a representative in the Nova Scotia Legislature as an MLA.

What is needed, Mr. Speaker, during the process is a level of mutual respect from both sides - from the employer and from the employee side. Without that you find yourselves in a tough slog, you find yourself in a difficult position. That's what happened with me, as a paramedic I was actually involved in the union at the time and trying to make sure that, in the late 1990s, the paramedics of this province were being offered and being shown the respect that was needed. It's no secret the transformation of paramedicine has been amazing in our province and there have been a lot of people before me who have contributed to that. And I think I've contributed to that success over the last 12 years as an elected official - first in Opposition and then in government, and then of course having the privilege to be the Minister of Health and Wellness.

That's why I said I've been on all sides of this, as an employee in the 1990s, being what I would consider disrespected and not valued and labour relations were in the toilet at that time. As a result, our side, the employees' side at the time, took the position and the stance that we needed to be heard loud and clear and Nova Scotians needed to know the conditions in which we were working at the time. I've said it before - when I started as a medic I made \$6.50 an hour and worked 84 hours a week.

AN HON. MEMBER: Overpaid

MR. DAVID WILSON: Overpaid, someone said, but I know he is only joking. Eighty-four hours a week, 168 hours every two weeks, that was our paycheque for \$6.50 an hour or 168 hours, and I made just under \$29,000. I said this also before, that I loved every minute of it and I wouldn't have changed the way things were, but at a time we recognized with the training that was involved, the progression of that profession, that that was really unfair.

Paramedics were being treated unfairly by the government at the time - I might add a Progressive Conservative Government at the time, but before that a Liberal Government, Mr. Speaker. We collectively chose to push back, to say no, labour relations are not going in the direction that is showing that value or that respect from the employer at the time and chose to have a strike vote. We actually did go on strike, I think it was October 29th or 30th, in 1999, probably one of the most difficult decisions I had to make was to leave the ambulance unattended in the fire station in Sackville, just down the street from where my

family lived, and in the community where a lot of my family lived and my friends and my colleagues lived.

I knew we had to take that stance at that time. It was interesting enough, we headed down here to the Legislature where there was a midnight session of the Legislature, where legislation was being brought in, Mr. Speaker, to force us back to work and take away the collective rights of the paramedics of the day.

It was then - I was sitting right up behind me, Mr. Speaker - that I heard the Leader of our Party at the time, Robert Chisholm, speak at length on how labour relations had broken down and how the government needed to change course and start to show that respect for the men and women who were working as medics at that time. It was then I realized that the Party I am with now was the Party that understood what was going on, they were standing up for us and I joined the Party the very next day.

Here we are almost 20 years later, and here I am almost 20 years later as an elected official and as someone who is standing up throughout the night for workers in our province whom I believe need to be shown that respect, that government values them, that there is a bargaining process that is meaningful that will result in a settlement that is mutually agreed upon.

Labour relations are very difficult. I was in government when we had to work extremely hard at labour relations. I can't count how many bargaining units came up for negotiations, but it was difficult. We had to work every day managing that relationship to ensure that we were trying to keep the best interests of the government and the taxpayers at heart, but also trying to make sure that those workers had the opportunity and ability to make sure that their interests were being looked at in a respectful manner.

We have to keep in sight the bigger picture. Public sector workers are not an entitled class looking to bankrupt the province, they are not. We heard this loud and clear in the most recent pushback from one of those bargaining units, the teachers of our province, who indicated after voting down a tentative agreement and were very quickly out of the gate indicating that it wasn't about the monetary value of the offer that was negotiated. They were out really quickly after that and it wasn't just the senior leadership of the Teachers Union, but it was teachers themselves.

I started to receive calls from teachers that have never brought up any political issue with myself and I have known them on that level of being the father of two kids who are in the education system now. One of my son's former teachers called me and just needed to talk to me, and it was interesting to hear him talk about how he felt the government was not listening to what they and his colleagues had concerns on. It wasn't the monetary amount in the settlement, but it was the inability to address some of the concerns that they wanted to have addressed in that collective agreement. They voted overwhelmingly against

that tentative agreement and I think that started - well no, it started a couple of years ago, but that really started the escalation that we saw from the current government.

Bill No. 148, an Act Respecting the Sustainability of Public Services, is a very heavy-handed way to deal with one bargaining unit that voted against a tentative agreement. I know the importance of setting a pattern and how that impacts other settlements, but there was another bargaining unit that had a tentative agreement with the government and we saw the Premier go out and give an ultimatum to that group, the NSGEU. When the NSGEU saw what the teachers had done, they decided they needed to talk with their membership to see what direction they would want to go when it comes to a possible tentative agreement.

Right out of the gate, the Premier gave that ultimatum that they needed to hold the vote immediately and that the government needed to know within 24 hours - it might have been 48 hours - when that vote was going to happen. How is that going to benefit labour relations in our province? How is that respecting and giving value to those who are working within our public sector? These are teachers we are talking about in the first example and these are health care workers we are talking about in the second example.

Often the government classifies them as union members. I know that's how they would want to classify everybody who is covered under Bill No. 148 - they are unionized workers, benefits are too rich, we can't afford it. These are teachers who are in the classrooms every day teaching my kids, teaching many of the members' kids here, working extremely hard, a group that I might say we don't really often hear from because they're educating our young people in this province, and they took a stance.

Bill No. 148 is talking about highway workers - those men and women who last night were put to the challenge and the night before with the snowfall, and more today in the northern regions of our province - I believe in Cape Breton. These men and women are working long hours overnight like we've just done. It makes me feel like I'm back being a shift worker as a medic, and it would be very difficult to do that after being off that shift for a number of years. These highway workers make our roads safe - try to make sure that we can get to work in the day so that we can get down here to the Legislature if we're in session, if it snows, and make sure that our members from Yarmouth and Sydney and everywhere in between can have the opportunity to get up here. That's what Bill No. 148 is talking about.

We're talking about allied health workers: ultrasound techs, X-ray techs, cytologists - those who work within the allied field who provide the tests that Nova Scotians need when they're ill or sick or have been injured or are dying. That's who we're talking about. Yes, they may belong to a union, but these individuals work every day, 24 hours around the clock, seven days a week providing the care to us and to other Nova Scotians. Correctional officers who protect us, who oversee those who are incarcerated in

our province - that's who they are. Yes, they may belong to a union, but those men and women work in a dangerous environment.

I talk often about PTSD around first responders, especially medics, firefighters, police officers, and military personnel, but I don't know if members know that the highest percentage of workers with PTSD in a workforce come out of corrections. You can just imagine what they deal with every day with some of the criminals that they have to look after and what they hear. It's not something that most people want to talk about - on a daily basis being threatened, feces being thrown at them; their families being threatened that if they got out they would rape, murder, or kill their family members. They hear this on a daily basis.

I know it's not something we want to talk about, but that's what they go through on a daily basis. What they're asking in return is that they as an employee have an opportunity to be respected, be valued by the government when it comes to labour relations and bargaining for benefits and wage packages and many other things.

Many of these groups and many of these workers that I've just mentioned - often it's not the wage pattern. Yes, everybody wants to make more money. The cost of living goes up, you want to make more money so you can offset that. People want to save for their retirement. They want to be able to go on a vacation. They want to be able to provide for their family and pay for university, but often what we hear is they want their working conditions to improve - in all the ones I've mentioned.

Corrections officers want to make sure that they have the safety equipment that's there for them, the protection so that they can do their jobs without fearing for their lives and fearing that they may be injured. Allied health workers want to work in an environment that's safe in hospitals and health care settings that allow them to do their jobs and not worry about some of the things we're seeing more recently with flooding and air quality and bugs - I mean it's the environment that they work in that often is what we're hearing about over the last number of years.

Even the paramedics - the wages have come up significantly from the days of \$6.50 an hour, but they too want to make sure the environment that they work in is one that can help them do their job. They want to make sure that they're protected if for some unfortunate reason they might be diagnosed with PTSD. When they see this type of bill, it's disheartening for them. It brings them down.

It's heavy-handed tactics that will only create a discouraged public sector. These people are important to the delivery of services from health care to corrections to road maintenance, throughout the services that are provided to Nova Scotians that the government is responsible for providing to Nova Scotians.

This legislation deals with the rights of over 75,000 workers in our province. It's not a small bargaining unit that is threatening to go on strike, with 30 or 40 employees. What's captured under Bill No. 148 are the rights and the privileges of 75,000 fellow Nova Scotians who want this government to respect the hard-earned collective rights that so many before us fought to get.

We hear about 50, 60, or 70 years ago, the working conditions around the province. People stood up to try to ensure that their working environment is safe, that they're respected and valued. Workers have lost their lives trying to change conditions and how government, for one, treats them.

The government needs to remind themselves that the government is a major employer of this province: 75,000 Nova Scotians who provide services earn a paycheque from the government. You can just imagine what impact those wages have on our economy.

I mentioned earlier that in the forecast that was released yesterday, even in the risks that were identified in the forecast, it talks about the impact that those 75,000 workers and their wages and benefits have on the overall fiscal environment or position of our province. It said in the Key Risks area under revenue that, "Slower growth in the level of compensation of employees poses a significant downside risk to personal income tax revenues . . ."

So in their own document that the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board released yesterday with the updated forecast, which should be concerning to all Nova Scotians, it's recognizing the impact of a reduction in the compensation and the wages. It's referring to those 75,000 and what will happen in the years ahead when the cost of living continues to go up. If someone's wage doesn't and is frozen, which is proposed in Bill No. 148 - a two-year freeze - they're going to have less money to spend. The cost of living is going up, they'll have less money to spend, and that downside of the risk to personal income tax revenues will be seen. The government needs to recognize the risk that Bill No. 148 has when it passes.

Listen, Mr. Speaker, I'm the last one in our caucus to speak. Every one of our caucus members spoke not only for second reading but all but one - because the rules state that whoever moves the motion to defer it for six months can't speak on that actual motion. We all spoke over the last 12 hours to try to bring up some of the points that I just raised over the last few minutes, to try to get the government to recognize their own risk assessment on going forward with something like Bill No. 148, but yet it doesn't seem to be sinking in, Mr. Speaker, and that's unfortunate. It's unfortunate, too, the hour that the bill was called. We know and we'll just be waiting for the government to identify and indicate when the Law Amendments Committee will happen.

I know that people have called in requesting the opportunity to come before the Law Amendments Committee, whenever that is held. I would assume it would be later this afternoon. There I predict that we're going to hear similar presentations that we heard on other pieces of legislation, especially dealing with labour relations in this province.

Of course there will be the heads of some of the unions, I mean that's their role, to make sure that they are protecting the rights of their membership, advocating for their membership. That's part of their role, that's why they are elected, that's why they are there, and that's why they are getting paid, to make sure that when legislation and legislative changes affect their members that they have a voice at the Law Amendments Committee.

I hope we do hear from those who might not be in that leadership role who will be affected by this. The unfortunate situation is that we are 10 days from Christmas, Mr. Speaker. It's no secret, we're at the 15th day of December, 10 days from Christmas. Many of the people who will be affected by Bill No. 148 are working. Our teachers are still in school, class isn't out for the holidays yet, so it's going to be difficult for them who have just taught most of the day - well half the day so far - and I'm sure they just found out over the last number of hours that this bill has been introduced.

One of the great things about technology these days, Mr. Speaker, is that the old days of the Queen's Printer releasing a newspaper clipping or an article or the paper doing it the next day, with social media and what's in front of us now, the information is getting out. I have been receiving tweets and texts all night long, thanking our caucus and myself for standing up and trying to bring forward an opportunity for the government to put the brakes on this. Many of them will find out, but unfortunately because of the time - we're here through the night, which is not a normal time to meet, actually rules that changed more recently in the last year or two, we don't normally sit on a Monday evening during the Fall session. We changed that rule and we saw ourselves sitting yesterday because I know the government wanted to introduce Bill No. 148.

Then of course sitting at midnight is pretty rare. In my almost 13 years I'm trying to count or trying to think back how many times I've been here all night, and I don't believe we've had too many other than in the last two years. Under our mandate there were some late nights, but that was due to some bell ringing that I know the Opposition Liberal Party took great comfort in making sure that we stuck around and kept a quorum and had a number of votes late into the early morning, but we didn't sit around the clock.

In the six years prior to that, when I was in Opposition, from 2003 to 2009, I don't believe we sat through a midnight session under John Hamm or under Rodney MacDonald. Most of the debate on the legislation that we saw, especially dealing with labour relations, was all debated at the normal hour when those involved in it knew when it was going to take place, not at midnight or 1:00 a.m., 2:00 a.m., 3:00 a.m. - I think I was up at 3:30 a.m. doing my hour's speech on the motion to defer this for six months. That doesn't normally happen, but it's now being seen as a trend in the last two years.

Bill No. 148 isn't the first piece of legislation that required the NDP caucus to stand up all night and try to slow it down a little bit so that the people who will be affected by the piece of legislation will find out about it and try to figure out what they can do to mobilize the people affected. I just mentioned that most of them are working. The health care workers are on shift now at the hospitals, the teachers are in the schools right now teaching, the correctional officers are in our correctional facilities doing the work that they do. They can't just drop everything and come down here to the Legislature and hopefully get the attention of the government. I know that is what it sometimes takes for the government to back off on an issue.

Most recently, when cuts to the CNIB happened, we saw that when they protested outside the House it was hard to ignore that. I'm glad to see that the government is going to reinstate that money for this year, but it doesn't help them next year, and it doesn't help them with the sustainability of providing vision rehabilitation to Nova Scotians. I think one of the reasons they reinstated it was because it was hard to ignore them when they were outside and when they were in the gallery.

But the workers that I mentioned, who will be affected by Bill No. 148, haven't been able to mobilize like that. It would be extremely hard to expect them to do that when it was introduced at 4:10 p.m. on a Monday and we were back in at 12:01 a.m. to start debating the bill, especially when the workers that are affected by Bill No. 148 aren't just here in downtown Halifax or in Sydney. They are all across the province. They are in every community.

For them, even travel time - we haven't had the time set for the Law Amendments Committee yet, but I would assume it's probably going to be a couple of hours after we finish a vote on this. How are those individuals supposed to get here to the Legislature to take part in an important process of passing legislation? That's the ability for the public to have their say, the ability for someone who feels they are not being valued by the government, not being respected when it comes to labour relations and the bargaining process that we have in front of us.

As I said earlier, I know it's extremely difficult for both sides when it comes to labour relations, but it's an important process that needs the attention and the respect of both sides so that you can mutually come to an agreement that, in the end, hopefully both sides have won something.

I've been there, and I know that one side is not going to be the overall winner and get everything they want. That's not how bargaining happens. That's not how negotiations happen. But with Bill No. 148 - the tentative agreement that is in front of the NSGEU right now, they're pretty much being told, take that or you're going to have to deal with what's in Bill No. 148.

From the quick read that I have had now with Bill No. 148, they'll be a little worse off than what's in front of them now. That's the heavy-handed approach that the Premier and this government have taken over the last 24 hours. When those who have worked to get to the point where there was a tentative agreement, all that work has been erased. It doesn't really matter if they are going to their membership and saying, well, you should maybe take it. I mean, ultimately, I don't know what I would do if it was me in that position, as a paramedic, as I was so many years ago. I know at the time we were going on strike because that was the only avenue we had.

With Bill No. 148, the rights of those workers and the options they have are really wiped off the map. Everything that people have worked for decades and decades to get the rights to bargain in good faith will be wiped out with Bill No. 148. That's sad to say, it really is, Mr. Speaker, that's not what the Liberal Government of today indicated to voters and to those same 75,000 workers, what they indicated to them during the last election.

I had friends of mine, colleagues of mine, neighbours of mine, indicate that they were going to support a Liberal candidate because of the commitments the Liberal Party made during that campaign, that they would protect and not privatize good public service jobs, Mr. Speaker. And what do we see now? That threat is there on a daily basis over the last two years and we'll learn more in the Spring, I guess, that they would respect workers' rights.

There are letters that I've seen, not only on the privatization one, I think there was a letter from the Premier on the bulletin board of every staff room in the Liquor Corporation stores, Mr. Speaker, saying that if they were given the chance to govern, they would protect their jobs; they said they would support bargaining rights and protect bargaining rights of unionized workers in this province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if you read Bill No. 148, that is just not the case anymore. Look at the film and television industry, they actually wrote down that they would protect and extend the Film Tax Credit to protect those jobs - a growing industry in our province that contributed to the economic growth of our province. Well we know what has happened now, thousands of workers who worked in that field are not here working. Many of them are in other jurisdictions that recognize the importance of having a good tax credit for them so they can monopolize on the low dollar that we have.

Right now we should be thriving with the 73 cent dollar. I think now those productions in the U.S. they want to get out of the U.S., they want to come to Canada and film. With the tax incentive that was in place prior to the change and the dollar now, we would have been booming this year, next year, and the year after. Unfortunately that's not the case, but we see it in other jurisdictions.

I'm very proud to see the NDP Government in Alberta enhance their tax credit, Mr. Speaker, and they've seen an increase in production there, which will contribute to the economic issues that they have in Alberta with the reduction in oil prices and gas prices.

We see the Liberal Government in Ontario increase their incentives there, Mr. Speaker. I bring up Ontario because under the motion that we brought forward, I used the example that just yesterday four unions or bargaining units have taken the Liberal Ontario Government to court over Bill No. 135, which is similar to Bill No. 148 - it imposes wage settlements. They believe that it's unconstitutional and that it could be a Charter challenge. In the end if it sides with the employees, it will cost not only Ontario a lot, but it will have ramifications here in Nova Scotia.

I don't know the intentions of the bargaining units in our province today if and when this passes - I shouldn't say if, because of the majority Liberal Government - will they take the same route as those in Ontario? I would think they are going to be in touch with them pretty quickly to find out what is going on and where it is and try to figure out if that's an option for them here in Nova Scotia.

As I said at the start, labour relations are extremely important. It's important for the future forecasts of our province because of the sheer impact that those 75,000 workers have when they go and spend the money they earn, their hard-earned money. It will have an impact if Bill 148 is passed, and we see those rights of those workers eliminated with a piece of legislation like Bill 148.

It's unfortunate that we're in this position now. I'm very proud of my Leader and my caucus colleagues for standing up now for well over 12 hours to try to get across to the government the importance of labour relations, the importance of respecting the process, respecting the other side. This isn't about winning in the end and winning all the marbles. It should be about respect and, in the end, understanding that both sides I think try to represent the best interests of what needs to take place. That mutual respect is not there when we see Bill 148.

I hope that I've been able to make sure that those who will be affected by this legislation know that there are MLAs who are willing to go the extra mile, even stay up all night, Mr. Speaker, to try to make sure that they're given every opportunity to have a say, be heard, and be respected. Ultimately, that's what is needed here.

I would hope that the government will reconsider Bill No. 148. The damage is done, unfortunately, and we've seen with the other pieces of legislation dealing with labour relations that the relationship between the current Liberal Government and workers of this province is in a bad state. I don't foresee how over the next couple of years the government will be able to turn that around.

I've said this often - we all have to take responsibility for what we do, our actions here in the House, no matter what side of the House you sit on. As an Opposition member or as a government member, you need to take ownership of your decision, and you need to make sure that you're able to explain your decision and why you did something.

Ultimately, it's not up to the 51 of us in here to determine who is here at the end of the next election. It's those 75,000 workers; it's their families; it's their neighbours; it's those people who will make a decision. Unfortunately, I think Bill 148 will make it much more difficult for government members to go to those individuals and explain exactly why the need for Bill 148 was so important to do over less than a 24-hour period throughout the middle of the night.

So with those few words, I think it's obvious that our caucus does not support Bill 148. I hope that the government reconsiders it, Mr. Speaker.

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

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to close debate on Bill 148.

Before taking my seat, I just wanted to let my colleagues know I want to thank them, the members who have taken the time to share their thoughts on this bill through second reading. Indeed, there were several speakers who commented on the nature of democracy and indeed that is what is taking place, the democratic process.

I do honestly and sincerely thank the members for their input, for their feedback and for their thoughts on this piece of legislation. I know there will be further discussion at the Law Amendments Committee, where the public has an opportunity to bring some thoughts forward as well to government before it comes back to the Legislature for third reading and further debate.

I won't spend time to address all of the comments that have been brought up. As noted, there were many, many hours of debate thus far on the bill, as well as a hoist motion. I will make a brief comment on the hoist motion to defer the bill, which I know that decision was made earlier, but just to the members to make the point that indeed this piece of legislation already has a mechanism in it with respect to delay and that is the fact that it does not come into force until it is proclaimed.

Even as this bill moves forward through the legislative process, if it passes the Legislature during this sitting, even then the Act does not go into effect and into force until it is actually proclaimed by government. Indeed, that would come at a future point in time.

With respect to I guess motivation and the situation, a lot of discussion took place about the fiscal status and the situation facing the finances of the province. A number of members cited the recent fiscal update that was released just yesterday and it doesn't paint a rosy picture for the current state of finances in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Some members during their comments made some comments suggesting that it's a political ploy, that this is a tried and true mechanism to claim, I believe one member said, it has gone on for hundreds of years, I think the quote from one member was, I don't know of any government who has never stated look how bad the books are so that we can go ahead and make difficult decisions around the expenses of the province.

While it may be true that many governments highlight the fiscal challenges faced in this province, that does not make the raising of those concerns false. Our province has under-performed our national economy. We're one of the worst performing economies for the last number of years, for decades. For 20 of the last 30 years this province has run deficits and that is the majority of my life, Mr. Speaker.

While governments in the past have often highlighted the financial challenges of this province, the economic impacts and challenges that face not just the current government at any point in time in the past that have made those statements, drawn the attention of the people of Nova Scotia to the floor of this Legislature and that apparently wasn't good enough. The decisions made by those Leaders and those governments at those points in time still resulted in poor fiscal management. Those decisions made decisions to spend beyond our means. Those decisions, despite the economic realities and fiscal challenges faced in this province, they chose in those points in time to borrow money from our children and our grandchildren from the future of this province, from people who do not have a democratic voice, who do not have the opportunity to cast a vote in an election, those are the people who are paying the price for those 20 years of deficits in this province.

While it may not shock the members opposite that a government would stand up and highlight the fiscal realities and the economic challenges facing not just our province but the entire country, the difference is this government is standing up to make the decisions to ensure that we right the ship; that we put the province back on a path to fiscal sustainability. That is what we are doing here.

There is also a lot of talk about - and indeed, I believe at least two members of the NDP caucus cited yesterday's forecast update. They cited a section in the forecast update which outlines some additional risks or potential risks that we are anticipating could have some impacts. They cite the fact that that report notes that reduced wage growth in the public sector with 75,000 employees approximately can put downward pressure on personal income taxes. That's true. We're not trying to hide anything. We're being very transparent highlighting that point in the report.

The reality is that it does impact revenue, but the accounting equation, very basically, deals with both revenue and expenses. Those members who noted the downward risk on our revenue failed to account for the fact that 100 per cent of the money that goes into those wage increases is accrued on the expense side, and that expense far exceeds the revenue downward risks.

So when we're talking about the need to evaluate and consider fiscal restraint when we're dealing with our public sector employees and the wage pattern being established, what we can afford to pay - not just what we can afford to pay, but what we can afford to pay on top of what they're already earning. If increasing spending on wage pattern was a path to prosperity, then under the previous NDP Government we'd be one of the richest provinces in the Country of Canada.

The move forward of Bill No. 148 and the wage framework of 0, 0, 1, 1.5, and 0.5 on the last day for increases - I take no satisfaction in bringing that legislation forward. I would love to stand here and be able to offer the public servants who provide such valuable work on behalf of all Nova Scotians - regardless of what political Party is in power, they provide those services to all Nova Scotians. I would love to be able to offer them 2 per cent, 2.5 per cent, and 3 per cent, but the previous government did that, and they borrowed money from our children. That 2 per cent, 2.5 per cent, and 3 per cent results in \$375 million each and every year added to the expense of the Province of Nova Scotia.

Our deficit position, even in these difficult economic times, is forecasting at this point to end fiscal 2015-16 with about a \$240 million deficit. Had the previous government held the line at 1 per cent, 1 per cent, and 1 per cent, we would have seen an increase of \$150 million - a difference of about \$220 million, which would bring our budget forecast well within balancing territory.

The fiscal constraint that we're talking about here on the wage pattern has to do with managing the expenses and the costs that the province has been burdened with - not because we don't value our employees. We do. They received compensation in the previous collective agreements that exceeded the province's ability to pay.

What we've been working with, and public sector employers have been doing, is negotiating wage pattern - a mandate that was brought forward by this government to public sector employers, which is what Bill No. 148 is effectively doing - legislating that framework that protects our fiscal plan, that directs the employers of the public sector that they cannot have any additional new money that would negatively impact the fiscal plan. What we've established is a framework on wages that indeed correlates with a framework and a pattern of wage increments that was accepted as a tentative agreement by four bargaining units, ratified by one, and yet to go to a vote with a couple of others.

For one bargaining unit, it was rejected by the membership, but yet the information that has publicly come back from that group, they've highlighted that it's not the wage

pattern, Mr. Speaker. There are far more items other than the wage pattern that are of concern.

Bill No.148, let me be absolutely clear, does not get in the way of, does not prevent, bargaining at the table for teachers or any of our other bargaining units. They can sit down, they can bargain, and they can negotiate.

Indeed, the wage framework that I've spoken about, if you read the bill, it says that that is the new money that can be put in towards wages. However, employers and the bargaining representatives are encouraged at the table, if they so desire, to negotiate further. They could find savings. If they want to move money within the system around within their collective agreement, they can do so. This legislation allows for wage increases beyond the framework. I want to be clear, the framework is about new money that's available. If we can find more money in the system, then portions of that money can be shared and even greater wage increases beyond that.

I want to be absolutely clear - this legislation, thus, is not legislating or mandating specific wage settlements or contracts. This is legislation which sets the framework in place for public sector employers who are sitting down at the table to move forward to achieve collective agreements at the table. At the end of the day, those agreements will be negotiated between the employers and the employees.

We are setting a fiscal framework, as is my responsibility as the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board under the Finance Act, as the steward of the finances of the Province of Nova Scotia, to do so to ensure that the proper direction is being provided so that for the programs and services we are committing to, we do so with the ability to pay today, not tomorrow. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 148.

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[12:23 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

Are the Whips satisfied?

We'll now proceed with the recorded vote for second reading of Bill No. 148.

As always, a friendly reminder for all members to please remain completely silent during the vote until the vote is completely finished.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[1:23 p.m.]

YEAS

Ms. Bernard
Ms. Regan
Ms. Whalen
Mr. Glavine
Mr. Delorey
Ms. Casey
Mr. MacLellan
Mr. Horne
Mr. Gordon Wilson
Ms. Diab
Mr. Ince
Mr. Kousoulis
Mr. Furey
Mr. Farrell
Ms. Arab
Mr. Maguire
Ms. Miller
Mr. Jessome
Ms. Lohnes-Croft
Ms. Eyking
Mr. Irving
Mr. Gough
Ms. Treen
Mr. Rankin
Mr. Mombourquette

NAYS

Mr. MacLeod
Mr. Dunn
Mr. Baillie
Mr. d'Entremont
Mr. David Wilson
Ms. MacDonald
Mr. Belliveau
Mr. Orrell
Ms. MacFarlane
Mr. Houston
Mr. MacMaster
Mr. Harrison

THE CLERK: For, 25. Against, 12.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, I'll just begin by reminding all concerned that the Law Amendments Committee will be meeting this evening between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m., and then will be reconvening in the morning at 8:00 a.m. to consider the matter of this bill.

That concludes the government's business for today. The House will meet again tomorrow to consider Opposition business between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. I will turn it over to the House Leader for the Official Opposition to set Opposition business and hours for tomorrow.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, after the daily routine and Question Period, we will be calling Bill Nos. 20, 119, and 142.

I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow, December 16th, between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

[The House rose at 1:28 p.m.]

NOTICE OF QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

Given on December 14, 2015

(Pursuant to Rule 30)

QUESTION NO. 7

By: Ms. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

To: Hon. Labi Kousoulis (Minister of the Public Service Commission)

(1) What is the average time it takes to fill a vacant position in the Public Service, from the job being posted to an individual starting employment?

QUESTION NO. 8

By: Ms. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

To: Hon. Labi Kousoulis (Minister of the Public Service Commission)

(1) What is the expected time for the Public Service Commission to fill the jobs announced under the *Experience Through Opportunity* program?

QUESTION NO. 9

By: Mr. John Lohr (Kings North)

To: Hon. Joanne Bernard (Minister of Community Services)

(1) Please provide the actual totals for the number of cases social workers in Kings County handle on an individual basis. I am seeking actual totals per social worker and not formula-based numbers.