



House of Assembly  
Nova Scotia

## DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

**Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy**

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### Second Session

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2015**

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House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2015**

**Sixty-second General Assembly**

**Second Session**

**6:00 P.M.**

**SPEAKER**

Hon. Kevin Murphy

**DEPUTY SPEAKER**

Ms. Margaret Miller

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, with the unanimous consent of the House, I move that the House now go into a recess to allow the Law Amendments Committee to hear a presentation. Once that committee has completed, at that point it will be for the Speaker to call the House back into session, and I would suggest that the Speaker provide a 10-minute notice, through the bells, to allow all members to know that the House will be resuming at that point.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The House stands recessed until the call of the Speaker.

[6:11 p.m. The House recessed.]

[7:03 p.m. The House reconvened.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to advise the House that efforts have been made to contact the individual in question who wished to present to Law Amendments. I am advised by a member of the House that contact was made. Unfortunately, the individual is not available this evening.

We have arranged for the individual to be able to meet before the Law Amendments Committee, with the services of an interpreter, at 10:00 a.m. tomorrow morning, so we have done everything to be able to accommodate the individual in question. With that being dealt with, I move that the House continue.

MR. SPEAKER: Based on that information, the Speaker - myself - is satisfied that the conditions of the recess have been met, and we will now proceed with the daily routine.

#### **PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS**

#### **PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Chairman of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bill:

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

and the committee recommends this bill to the favourable consideration of the House, with amendments.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I stand on a point of order. I think it does a grave disservice to Mr. Tupper, who is a resident of this province and a full citizen of this province, to have his opportunity to speak to the Law Amendments Committee prior to the tabling of the report on Bill No. 148. This individual is a full citizen of our province, and the Law Amendments Committee is established to hear from citizens in our province. Unfortunately, he was denied that.

I thank the Minister of Justice, who I spoke with prior to the House coming into session tonight, for arranging a time for Mr. Tupper to appear in front of the Law

Amendments Committee, which was my request. However, it is highly inappropriate for the Law Amendments Committee to be reporting back to this Chamber, the conclusion of its hearings in front of that committee, when there still is a citizen who has not been heard.

To hear him tomorrow is purely going through the motions, Mr. Speaker. It is an insult to persons with disabilities who should have been accommodated in the regular proceedings of this House, like any other citizen in our province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you, I would implore that you as the Speaker, charged with the responsibility of overseeing the proceedings of this Assembly on behalf of all of the residents of Nova Scotia, review this matter and establish that no report from the Law Amendments Committee is appropriate to be tabled while there is still an outstanding citizen to be heard from in our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, just as you take this point of order under consideration, I am advised by Legislative Counsel that there was approximately 10 individuals who had asked to make presentations, which unfortunately was unable to take place due to the time, based on the motion of the committee. I'd also ask you to take into consideration as well, on the point of order, that we will be going into Committee of the Whole, where there is an opportunity to propose any amendments based on a presentation that may be heard or based on any other presentations that we may receive from Nova Scotians, which is common, that those who are unable to appear at committee or unable to travel will send us via email or other forms of communication. So the Committee of the Whole process allows for any further changes being proposed to the bill to be made during that stage. Merci.

MR. SPEAKER: I'll take that point of order under advisement and report back to the House.

### **TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

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

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I beg leave to file this report in accordance with Section 94 of the Pension Benefits Act, the Report of the Superintendent of Pensions for the Province of Nova Scotia, for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

### **STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

### **GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****NOTICES OF MOTION**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**RESOLUTION NO. 3055**

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

Whereas the Standing Committee on Law Amendments is intended to allow Nova Scotians to give their opinions on legislation before the House; and

Whereas the member for Cumberland North made a mockery of the traditions of this committee and this House by conducting a sham vote to deny a gentleman with special needs his opportunity to address the committee; and

Whereas the insensitive and heavy-handed actions of the member for Cumberland North were shameful and a terrible reflection on this Legislature;

Therefore be it resolved that the government apologize to Mr. Tupper for his treatment at the Standing Committee on Law Amendments and vote to remove the member for Cumberland North from his role as Vice-Chair of the Law Amendments Committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

I'll examine that to see if it's in order for the House.

The honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party.

**RESOLUTION NO. 3056**

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

Whereas Mr. Robert Tupper, a disabled Nova Scotian who suffers from hearing and vision loss and needs the help of an interpreter to communicate, was refused an opportunity to speak today at the Law Amendments Committee on Bill No. 148; and

Whereas this House of Assembly has a duty to take every step necessary to allow all Nova Scotians who wish to participate as full citizens in our democratic process to do so;



Therefore be it resolved that Bill No. 148 be returned back to the Law Amendments Committee to provide Mr. Tupper with an opportunity to be heard with all the rights of full citizenship.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

I'll report back to the House to see if that's in order as well.

### **STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

### **GREGG, CAROLINE - WRITING ENDEAVOURS**

MS. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Caroline Gregg is a Yukoner who, with her husband, Rob Woods, moved to Nova Scotia from Calgary in 2002. In 2005 they moved to their 120-acre haven, Rocaro Farms, in Georgefield.

In 2008 they purchased their first alpacas and the adventures began. An alpaca named Figaro that the couple raised on their East Hants farm was Caroline's inspiration for her children's novel, titled *Figaro Grows a Sweater*. This book is the first in a series, and it makes a connection for children on where some of the fibre comes from for clothing. There are also lessons in the book about having a nap, eating their vitamins, and getting their first haircut.

Caroline is working on a second book in the series, which is directed to older children. It's about Figaro having an identity crisis as he sees and compares himself to other peoples on the farm. You can imagine, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Hants East has the floor.

MS. MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On an ending note, I wish Caroline every success in her future endeavours as an author. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, today witnesses and members of the public were subjected to a distasteful display at the Standing Committee on Law Amendments. I am saddened to say that the member for Cumberland North resorted to shameful, insensitive, heavy-handed tactics in his single-minded mission to ram legislation through this House.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. A reminder to the member for Pictou East that a statement cannot be used to raise anything concerning the business of any committee of this House. We're in members' statements.

Next member. The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

### **GOV'T. (N.S.): PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS - ANGER/FRUSTRATION**

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, once upon a time there was a Liberal MLA who wanted to be Premier. He told the people, trust me, I'll protect workers' rights. In 2013, he even wrote an open letter to the public stating this intention.

Sadly, all is not well in the Premier's sandbox. Representatives of some 75,000 public sector workers from across Nova Scotia are now showing up at Law Amendments Committee and around this House, voicing their displeasure with this government. These workers have taken time away from their families during this Christmas season to show their anger and frustration with this government. Mr. Speaker, I wish this story had a happy ending, but it doesn't.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

### **SYRIAN REFUGEE FAM. (1<sup>st</sup>): ARRIVAL - WELCOME**

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the House that I was thrilled to welcome the first Syrian refugee family to arrive at the Halifax Stanfield International Airport this afternoon. (Applause) The Alhabash family of four, consisting of mum, Almasa, dad Mohamed, five-year-old Nada, and four-year-old Taimullah, were sponsored by St. Benedict Church in Clayton Park.

Father James Mallon, Sister Yvonne Pothier, Chris Yetman, and a number of parishioners attended to greet the newcomers; MPs Geoff Regan and Andy Fillmore were also there to offer their welcome. The family was overwhelmed with the love and support shown to them at the airport. They expressed their gratitude and appreciation a number of times to Canada, to Father Mallon and the church and to all people present.

The children reminded me of my own children at that age. When asked by media how he felt coming in the winter months to the cold, the dad's immediate reply, in Arabic, which I was happy to translate, was "The warm welcome we have received today will make me forget all the cold weather."

Mr. Speaker, I say "Ahlan wa sahan" to our newest Nova Scotians.

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

**SYRIAN REFUGEE FAM. (1<sup>st</sup>): SAINT BENEDICT PARISH  
- EFFORTS CONGRATS.**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, sort of an addition to that - on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition, today the first Syrian refugee family were welcomed to Nova Scotia. We can only imagine the trials and tragedy they have experienced on their journey to our nation.

I want to extend a heartfelt welcome to the Alhabash family - a mother, a father, and their two children - who have come to our province. May they find peace, comfort, and hope in their new community.

I'd also like to extend warm congratulations to the St. Benedict Parish Refugee Committee whose hard work and efforts made this dream a reality for the Alhabash family.

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

**PREM.: HEAVY-HANDED TACTICS - PETITION**

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, in 24 hours over 2,000 people have signed a petition opposing the Premier's heavy-handed tactics - teachers, health care workers, highway workers and many more, including concerned citizens.

Corinne in Dartmouth is a retired teacher who told us that her former colleagues' morale is at an all-time low; Catherine from Beechville is a member of the film industry who says she doesn't want to see another worker hurt by the Liberal Government's arrogance and incompetence; Karolyn from Church Point asked the government how graduates are supposed to pay off the debt with frozen wages.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the government the Liberals said they would be.

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

**CABOT TRAIL TRAILBLAZERS BASKETBALL TEAM - GOLD MEDAL**

MS. PAM EYKING: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Cabot Trailblazers basketball team on winning the Ainsley Danny Memorial Basketball Tournament in Neils Harbour this past weekend. The Trailblazers captured the gold medal Saturday afternoon with a 60-41 victory over the Cape Breton Highlands Academy of Terre Noire.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate all the Trailblazers players and coaches on their fine performance this weekend, and wish them the best of luck for the rest of the season.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**CAPE TO CAPE COMM.: HIKING TRAIL SHELTER - ESTABLISHMENT**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize the Cape to Cape Committee for establishing a shelter on the hiking trail in western Pictou County. The shelter is the first of its kind in Nova Scotia and is open and free for overnight shelter on a first-come, first-served basis. The shelter, known as a “bothy”, is popular in Scotland and Scandinavian countries. The shelter will be known as the McLachlan Bothy and is named in tribute to Jack McLaughlin, who made a significant donation to Pictou County trails for trail development in West Pictou.

Students from North Nova Education Centre and a group of volunteer carpenters are responsible for the building of the shelter. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate project coordinator Dr. Gordon Young and everyone involved with the construction of this project.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

**BILL NO. 148: PASSAGE - STOP**

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, thousands of workers from across Nova Scotia have been writing the NDP caucus in desperation. A woman who works for Housing Nova Scotia writes: We have not gone to bargaining yet as we are not civil servants but our contract, in terms of wage increases, usually mirrors what civil servants bargain for. I am barely making a living wage now. At a wage freeze for years, I will likely be right at the cusp. It is a good thing I have a partner with a good job in the private sector. Please, NDP, I am begging you to find a way to stop this bill from passing legislation.

Hardworking Nova Scotians have stopped looking to their government for help because they know that this not-so-Liberal Government has no intention of respecting their rights.

MR. SPEAKER: I'll ask the member to table her members' statement and the accompanying letter and I will review that.

The honourable member for Kings South.

**MORIN, MARCEL/LOST ART CARTOGRAPHY:  
ESRI MAP BOOK - INCLUSION**

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, two unique and intricate maps of Grand Pré created by Lost Art Cartography, a Grand Pré company headed by Mr. Marcel Morin have recently been selected from out of a pool of 1,100 submissions from around the world for inclusion in the Environmental Systems Research Systems annual map book.

The ESRI map book acknowledges important and innovative accomplishments of geographic information systems users worldwide. The Grand Pré maps detail the unique geography of the landscape of Grand Pré World Heritage Site and the tides of Grand Pré. These maps have also been chosen to represent Canada at the International Cartographic Conference.

On behalf of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, I would like to congratulate Mr. Morin and the Lost Art Cartography on their innovative, exceptional, and internationally renowned cartography.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

### **GOV'T. (N.S.) - BILL NO. 148: EFFECTS - CONSIDER**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the people are not happy and why should they be? They're asking this government to learn to negotiate instead of being so quick to legislate. They just want to have their say to talk about the issues that matter before legislation gets rammed through this House, with shutting down committees and turning away Nova Scotians.

There is still time for this government to show some respect to the people whose lives they are impacting. We just ask that before they ram this through and go off on their merry way for the holiday season that they stop and think about what they're doing to the people who have entrusted them to show some leadership, because we are not seeing that, and it's time that some leaders stood up on that side of the House and stopped being such puppets over there.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. It is unparliamentary to refer to any other member, including the Leader as puppets.

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

### **WORKERS: RIGHTS - REMOVAL**

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, thousands of workers from across Nova Scotia are speaking out against this not-so-Liberal Government's attack on their rights. Michelle, a disability support worker from Halifax writes: I am a full time counsellor working in a group home for 21 years. I work hard for people with disabilities, their families and their rights. I support, educate and care for people who may not otherwise have a voice."

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that recent events that have taken place within these hallowed walls of this building have shown that the Liberal Government is more focused on ramming through their own bills than, in fact, supporting people who are marginalized.

Michelle works selflessly day in and day out to support Nova Scotians with disabilities and their families. It is a sad day when hard-working women like Michelle have their rights taken away by this government and others who are living with disabilities, are denied the opportunities to have their voices heard.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

### **CURLEIGH, JAMES - LEVI JEANS CEO**

MR. JOACHIM STROINK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about an exceptional Nova Scotian. This gentleman's name is James Curleigh, who I had the great fortune to call a friend.

James started his career in a sporting industry on Quinpool Road in a store called, Aerobics First. During his time there he went to St. Mary's and graduated in 1989 with a degree in Commerce. From there his life went on an incredible journey. From 2002 to 2007, he was the CEO of Salmon North America; from 2008 to 2014, he was the CEO of Keen Footwear.

Today, James is the CEO of a \$4 billion company, Levi Jeans. He lives in San Francisco with his wife, Jackie and three kids. He runs the company with all the passion and heart of any Nova Scotian, but for James, Nova Scotia is always home. More recently he was invited to the White House to join President Obama and other selected CEOs for roundtable sessions on insourcing and for a joint press conference as well he had the opportunity to join President Clinton on a panel at the Clinton Foundation of Health Matters Conference.

So when you slip on your favourite pair of 501s, remember that this company is run by a Nova Scotian, and we can be proud of that.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

### **NUSTAR - HEAD OFFICE: N.S. COMMITMENT - THANK**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: NuStar Energy, a petroleum handling and storage facility operating in Point Tupper has a valued record of community involvement. Even during challenging times for the petroleum industry, NuStar has a practice of maintaining its employees and remains committed to supporting the community in which it operates.

This year they made a generous donation to the Cape Breton Cancer Centre at Cape Breton Regional Hospital. NuStar employees take great pride in giving back and building a brighter future for people living in the area. Let us thank the employees for the time and effort they contribute to community initiatives each year.

NuStar Point Tupper holds about 40 per cent of the daily volume of petroleum products consumed in the U.S., and they ranked 18<sup>th</sup> on Fortune Magazine's best companies to work for. Let us thank their head office management in San Antonio for their commitment to operations here in Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: Just before we move on to the next member's statement, I'm going to ask the honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River to table her member's statement as well as the email, the letter as well.

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

### **PUBLIC SECTOR SPENDING REDUCTION: LIB. FISCAL PLAN - EFFECT**

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, thousands of hard-working Nova Scotians are speaking out against this not-so-Liberal Government and are worried about their future.

A civil servant from North Sydney tells us: I don't want to feel beaten. I want to stand tall and protest the Liberal Government for bad-faith bargaining. I will be affected in a negative way when I go to buy food. Food costs are going up by 5 per cent in 2016. The cost of living is projected to go up by 3.7 per cent for the upcoming year. The Liberals think that it's okay to offer public workers a wage freeze for two years, then 1 per cent, 1.5 per cent and 0.5 per cent in the last year of the contract. There will be no extra spending. If 75,000 employees feel the same way as I do, what does that mean for our economy?

Mr. Speaker, if 75,000 Nova Scotians plan to spend less in the next five years, how is this going to help the Liberals' already-failed fiscal plan?

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

### **BRAYMAN, LTCDR TODD/VETERANS MEM. COMM.: CENOTAPH - EFFORTS**

MR. BEN JESSOME: The Greater Hammonds Plains-Lucasville Veterans Memorial Committee is an organization that serves to support an initiative to establish a cenotaph in Hammonds Plains, which has been taken up with great enthusiasm by members in our community. I have stated that the effort to establish a place in our community where members can honour our veterans and remember those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice to protect our country is greatly needed.

A cenotaph in our community would complement the Remembrance Day event that we hold every November 11<sup>th</sup> to remember and honour our veterans and currently-serving members of the service. I am proud to say that the province is supporting the project.

I would like to extend my thanks to Lieutenant Commander Todd Brayman and the members of the Greater Hammonds Plains-Lucasville Veterans Memorial Committee for their efforts and contribution and encourage members of this Legislature to acknowledge our community's efforts to recognize those who have served and continue to serve this country.

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

### **COLE HBR. COLTS - HOPE FOR HIRTLE BENEFIT**

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the recent charitable efforts of the Cole Harbour Colts Junior B hockey club in my riding.

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, the Colts hosted the East Hants Penguins in a benefit called Hope for Hirtle. The Colts raised \$350 during the game and presented it to 20-year-old Connor Hirtle, a Bridgewater native and former Nova Scotia junior hockey player who sustained a spinal cord injury this past summer while he was swimming.

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, the Colts hosted their first annual alumni night to benefit the Kidney Foundation, taking their inspiration from Colts board member and alumnus Steve Nelson, who is awaiting a kidney transplant. The Colts and the alumni raised \$1,500 for the Kidney Foundation.

Mr. Speaker, the rich history of the Cole Harbour Colts hockey club goes back to 1976. I'm proud to have this great organization in my community.

I congratulate all involved with the Cole Harbour Colts and their alumni on their passion for helping others in need in our community. I encourage everyone to support their local junior hockey teams in your communities.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

### **LEY, JADE - MUSICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take an opportunity this evening to speak about a very talented young pianist from Lunenburg West. Jade Ley, a 15-year-old high school student who attends Bridgewater High School, has been playing the piano since she received her first toy piano at the age of two.

Since then, through dedication and many hours of practice, Jade has become an amazing pianist, receiving top marks in Atlantic Canada at the highest level possible for piano. Jade recently competed at the Royal Conservatory of Music, achieving her Grade 10 level and awarded the gold medal.



Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate Jade Ley on her musical accomplishments, and wish her the best of luck as she further develops her musical talents.

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

### **CCH MIN. - BIRTHDAY CONGRATS.**

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, as you know, our responsibilities in this House often keep us away from family and friends on important occasions. Therefore, it's important that we not forget some of those important milestones. On behalf of all members of the House I want to extend a very happy birthday to the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage - bonne fête.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in Notices of Motion . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Points of order cannot be made during Members' Statements, but immediately following Question Period I'll welcome your point of order.

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

### **TEACHERS: COLLECTIVE RIGHTS - GOV'T. (N.S.) DISRESPECT**

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, as Education and Early Childhood Development Critic, I have been contacted by many teachers who say they are upset with the disrespect for their collective rights shown by this government. One teacher even told me that demoralizing the professionals in public education will not do anything to improve it, that there are many ways to support those working with the children of Nova Scotia and they said to treat them with respect, train them properly, listen to their needs.

Yesterday we even heard the president of the Teachers Union saying that the working conditions in the classroom are also the learning needs of children. I think this is something we all need to take into consideration, Mr. Speaker. A demoralized public sector will have serious consequences for the future of Nova Scotia and this government is now being considered even more draconian than the Harper Government. Is this really the legacy that these Liberals MLAs want to leave behind?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington on a point of order.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, during Notices of Motion the member for Pictou East had put one forward. He was cut off before he could ask for

waiver of notice and passage without debate. I was wondering if he would be allowed to do that or whether you are holding on to that until a future day. I was a little confused on what happened there. He got cut off before he could even . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member sat down. I'll certainly review it and we'll come back.

There is a ruling on an earlier point of order. I've reviewed the two Notices of Motion sought to be tabled. O'Brien and Bosc provides on Page 455 that motions may be made respecting the management of the proceedings and business of the House or its committees. The resolutions contained in the notices deal with those matters, and are tabled.

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

### **ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS**

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

#### **PREM. - CUMB. NO. MLA: LAW AMENDMENTS COMM. - HEARING-IMPAIRED PRESENTER**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: My question is to the Premier, and I can't believe I have to ask this question. It's bad enough that the government is rushing through legislation and sitting at all hours of the night, Mr. Speaker, and it's bad enough that the legislation in question is likely unconstitutional and is going to end up costing taxpayers even more money at the end. But for the Chair of the Law Amendments Committee a few hours ago to deny one last presenter, a hearing-impaired Nova Scotian, the ability to speak at Law Amendments before a bill is reported back, is just beyond the pale.

I'd like to ask the Premier to tell this House if he agrees with the decision of the Liberal member for Cumberland North, the Law Amendments Committee chairman, to actually deny the ability of this gentlemen, Mr. Tupper, to have his say before this bill is reported back to this House.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Yesterday it was brought to our attention there was a hearing-impaired Nova Scotian who wanted an opportunity to present. We went out yesterday to get an interpreter. We reached out to the NDP caucus, who actually were the people who brought this to the attention, I think, of the House. We had the interpreter here; we reminded him a number of different times during the day. We got to the five o'clock hour, practically, where the bill was reported back, and the man was not on the list, Mr. Speaker.

I think all of us would want to hear from this member. I think all members of this House - as I said just recently outside, I think if there had been a conversation that happened to amend the motion to 5:30 p.m. to report the bill back, we still could have heard from.

But on a broader note, I think this is an opportunity to look at the Law Amendments Committee. It may be an opportunity to say to people with disabilities in this province - feel that they have access to that committee, and is there a way that we can improve it, in particular the way that people call in, or that they're recorded and put on the list to make a presentation.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid that's not good enough. The fact of the matter is not all of us wanted to hear from Mr. Tupper, who came to this House to have his say. The Liberal chairman of the Law Amendments Committee did not want to hear from Mr. Tupper. The Liberal members of the Law Amendments Committee did not want to hear from Mr. Tupper. You know what, Mr. Speaker? It was 4:40. There was plenty of time.

We did amend the motion to shut down the committee, to say it could close down after the committee had heard from Mr. Tupper, and the Liberal members voted against that, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is, on this side of the House in Opposition, we have lost all confidence in the member for Cumberland North's ability to chair that Law Amendments Committee.

If the Premier truly is sorry for what happened, will he then hold someone accountable for it and replace the member for Cumberland North with a new chairman - which should be the Minister of Justice, after all?

THE PREMIER: Again, as I said earlier, in my previous answer, we've made many efforts today to accommodate and have everyone make their presentation. As I said to you, Mr. Speaker, there is an opportunity to look at the committee to make sure that people with disabilities have access to that committee and make sure that we have the interpretive services that are available, so that at the beginning of hearing any bill, someone wants to come in and make that presentation, we do so.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, this is not the fault of the gentleman, Mr. Tupper, who wanted to come here. The fact that he is hearing impaired is not the point. They could've heard from him if they wanted to, but they didn't want to. For the Premier to say it's because he has a disability is actually shameful. It is wrong. He was here, he wanted to speak, and the member for Cumberland North and the Liberal Party members of that committee decided to say no to him. Even when presented with a reasonable opportunity from the Opposition to have his say, Mr. Speaker, that is what happened. They said no.

I don't know what they're so afraid of with Mr. Tupper that they did not want to hear from him, but he is owed an apology. I will ask the Premier, in this House, to apologize

to Mr. Tupper for the shameful way he was treated by the Liberal members of the Law Amendments Committee here today.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all, in no way did I in any one of the two previous answers blame Mr. Tupper or any other Nova Scotian with disabilities. As the Premier of this province, we've made changes to legislation. I'm very proud of the fact that the Speaker's Chair in this House is now there for every Nova Scotian, abled or disabled. Mr. Speaker, it's one of the proudest moments that I've had as a Premier.

I have said all along, Mr. Speaker, that I will hear from Mr. Tupper tomorrow. There are amendments coming from him. We can make those amendments. I regret the fact that we didn't hear from him today. Again, we'll look at the procedures around that committee to make sure that this doesn't happen in the future.

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

### **PREM. - BARGAINING RIGHTS: REMOVAL - JUSTIFY**

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, tonight hundreds of Nova Scotians gathered outside this Legislature to voice their displeasure over this Premier's decision to take away their collective rights. Teachers, social workers, doctors, nurses, highway workers, civil servants, correctional officers, paramedics, Nova Scotia Liquor Commission employees and many others; they are all saying they are being treated unfairly by this Liberal Government.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't the first time that the Premier has targeted the Charter of Rights for Nova Scotians. He did it with Bill No. 30, Bill No. 37, with Bill No. 1, and now he's about to do it again.

My question for the Premier is this, why does he think his government has the right to take away the bargaining rights of more than 75,000 hardworking Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. No one's bargaining rights were taken away from them. If they actually read the legislation, we put in place a cap, a ceiling for arbitrators. When it comes to being able to provide an award that the province cannot afford, we felt that the arbitration and every member of this House, if they have been here for any length of time, would recognize that arbitrators haven't taken into account the ability of the province to pay.

Mr. Speaker, we put on a fair offer where people are accepting that offer but we could not afford to wait for an arbitrator to put out of place the fiscal plan. I want to tell you we are achieving financial success, even though all of these challenges. We've invested in classroom across this province, reversing the cuts by the former government.

We've hired 381 teachers, Mr. Speaker. We've reduced the outcomes for P to 3 from over 600 to almost 200. We brought in teachers across the province to do the same thing. We're going to continue to work with those people across the province who provide services to Nova Scotians.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, this Liberal Government isn't the first to use legislation to erode the rights of workers in our country. It's a method used by Liberal Governments in Ontario and B.C. and Conservative Governments in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Of course it was used on numerous occasions by the federal government under Stephen Harper. In fact the Premier's current wage freeze plan essentially mimics the Expenditure Restraint Act enacted by Stephen Harper in 2009.

My question for the Premier is this, why does he think the labour practices of Stephen Harper are in the best interests of Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to remind her that in her list she forgot the NDP Government that took away paramedics' right to strike in this province, the only attack that has ever been on the collective bargaining process of the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, what we've laid out is a fair offer; it's not a wage freeze. There are 40 per cent of teachers across this province, about 40 per cent of public services all receive increases next year, based on steps already in the agreement.

What we have said is that we need to be able to control the cost of government and the wage pattern across the government. We gave a 3 per cent wage increase over four years; that's on top of a 7.5 per cent wage increase offered by the previous government. That's an almost 11 per cent wage increase in the last seven years in public service. That's not a wage freeze. What we're trying to do is to get to a place where we can continue to afford to deliver the services to Nova Scotians in a way that Nova Scotians want them delivered. At the same time we can invest in the service and enhance them when we can afford to.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, Canadians voted overwhelmingly to reject the heavy-handed practices of the Stephen Harper Government. One of the promises the new Prime Minister made to workers was to eliminate anti-public service legislation, such as the Expenditure Restraint Act. I'll table that.

Unfortunately, while the new Prime Minister is rejecting Stephen Harper's labour laws, Nova Scotia's Premier is embracing them in an bill in front of this House. Mr. Speaker, the only real difference between the Premier's wage freeze plan and Stephen Harper's is that Stephen Harper's actually provided a 6.3 per cent higher pay increase over five years than this Premier's plan. So my question for the Premier is, given that it's 2015, when is he going to realize that workers have a right to be treated fairly?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the final statement she made. Workers do deserve to be treated fairly. We provided them a fair wage offer. We provided them tremendous benefits. We left in place the MOU which provides job security to the entire Public Service.

Following the plan of the NDP, we would have to do what they did to education, which would be to cut teachers. Over 300 teachers lost their jobs under that government because they wanted to plan unsustainable wage increases.

What we have done, Mr. Speaker, is provided a fair offer to teachers and a fair offer to public servants. At the same time, we've invested in classrooms. We've invested in providing supports to students. We put more teachers in the classroom, hired math mentors, hired psychologists in the education system at the same time delivering services (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**HUMAN RIGHTS: LAW AMENDMENTS COMM.  
- HEARING-IMPAIRED PRESENTER**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: My question is for the Minister of Justice, who is also the Minister responsible for the Human Rights Act. What happened in Law Amendments Committee today was disgraceful.

A hearing-impaired Nova Scotian wanted to have his say in Law Amendments Committee. He was here in plenty of time. He needed 10 minutes to tell his story to Law Amendments, and he was denied.

I'd like to remind the Minister of Justice that it's one of her responsibilities to ensure that people with disabilities, whatever they are, are given reasonable accommodation when they want to participate in our workplaces and our society, and first and foremost in our institutions of democracy. I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice, the Minister responsible for the Human Rights Act, if she agrees with the decision of the Chairman of the Law Amendments Committee to deny this particular Nova Scotian, Mr. Tupper, the right to speak at Law Amendments over a measly 10 minutes.

HON. DIANA WHALEN: I appreciate the question. I think the important part of the answer is that we need to look at the protocols that are used here in the House, speak to our Legislative Counsel and work on the protocols so that they will be in place, and there will be no confusion in the future.

MR. BAILLIE: The only protocol that was required here is human decency, and that's what got lost this afternoon at the Law Amendments Committee. We don't need to check a rule book.

This gentleman appeared in time, wanting 10 minutes to tell his story. It could easily have been done. The only people who didn't want him to tell his story were the Chairman of the Law Amendments Committee and the Liberal members.

The Minister responsible for the Human Rights Act seems to want to defend that. It's her duty to make sure that people who have disabilities get reasonable accommodation. How can she stand in her place and possibly defend what happened at Law Amendments Committee today?

MS. WHALEN: I think that the member opposite would agree that it's important that every Nova Scotian understand and know that the rules are in place and that we have addressed them and that we have proper protocols. Mr. Speaker, I believe this is the first time this has happened. It has raised an issue for us, and we're going to look at it.

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

#### **TREASURY BD.: WAGE-RESTRAINT - BD. ADVICE**

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Chair of the Treasury Board. Legislating wage restraint is a heavy-handed and unnecessary tactic that will ultimately undermine this government's credibility.

Teacher after teacher has come and presented to the Law Amendments Committee today trying to tell the government that their political fiscal priorities are out of sync with the needs of front-line teachers. My question for the Chair of the Treasury Board is, what advice did she offer to the board around wage-restraint policy and how it would affect teachers in the classroom?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to stand and to speak to the supports that have gone into all classrooms in all schools across the province based on this government's commitment to reinvest money that was gashed and cut by the previous government.

MS. MACDONALD: Well, Mr. Speaker, I remind the member and members of the House that the Chair of the Treasury Board of this Liberal Government sat at the Cabinet Table in the Rodney MacDonald Government and during that time, wages for teachers and other public sector workers rose by 2.9, 2.9, 2.9, and as it turns out, the Chair of the Treasury Board is more Liberal as a Conservative than she is today as a Liberal. Since changing political Parties I want to ask the minister, why has the Minister of the Treasury

Board changed her tune about how much our teachers, health care workers, and civil servants are worth?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, to continue what I was saying about the importance of education to this government and the investments that we have made, I'd like to remind all members of the House that in order to provide better working environments for our teachers and better learning environments for our students, we have reinstated the \$65 million and we have put back (Interruptions)

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

MS. CASEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have capped the class sizes that allowed us to hire 195 more teachers. We have capped the class sizes for Grades 3 to 4, 81 teachers. We have reinstated math mentors that were cut by the previous government that allowed us to hire 52 teachers. We have reinstated Reading Recovery, cut by that crowd, 53 more teachers. And we have totally funded 381 new teaching positions to make a better learning environment for our kids.

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

**PREM. - BILL: CONSTITUTIONALITY - LEGAL ADVICE**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker (Interruptions)

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

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, thank you. My question is to the Premier. This government has a habit of bringing legislation to this House only to find out later that it is unconstitutional. When that happens it ends up costing the taxpayers of Nova Scotia even more money in legal fees, consultants, and on and on it goes. We have a bill before the House now where the question is whether it's actually legal or not. I'd like to ask the Premier, did his government get independent legal advice about the constitutionality of the bill currently before the House, and if so, from whom?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the honourable member. As we do with every piece of legislation, we consult with Nova Scotians and try to take their advice and their opinion as we draft stuff. As we were moving forward on this piece of legislation, of course, we sought some legal advice. We believe this piece of legislation is constitutional. It's fair to all Nova Scotians and it will allow us to continue to make the investments that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development just referred to, and the Minister of Health and Wellness can stand up and talk about the investments of \$44 million on home care - and it goes on.



Every member of this Executive Council can talk about the investments we made in Nova Scotians, in committees and services that Nova Scotians are relying on. We can't continue to operate the same way we've done in the past. We believe this is fair and in the best interests of all Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm reminded by the Clerk that the question from the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition is out of order, as it's asking a question about legal advice on a bill that is before the House. The question and the subsequent answer are therefore out of order, and I won't entertain any further questions in that vein.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on his supplementary.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, when any bill comes before this House, if it's later found to be unconstitutional it costs taxpayers more, it turns our system of government into turmoil, and it ends up denying basic constitutional rights to Nova Scotians. My question isn't about any specific bill, but I would like the Premier to agree right now to table any legal advice he has about the bills, preferably before the House that . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The question is out of order. Next question.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

### **PREM. - GST HIKE: P.M. - SUPPORT CONFIRM**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Back in 2010 the Premier said that an HST increase will hurt the individual Nova Scotian and the average family every single day. I'm sure the Premier must have shuddered yesterday when he heard that the federal Liberals would refuse to rule out hiking the GST because Nova Scotians have already felt the devastating impact of such an increase here, under the NDP Government.

My question today for the Premier is, will the Premier support the Prime Minister if he decides to hike the GST?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister will make the decisions on behalf of his government. Canadians resoundingly supported him in the election. We'll continue to work with him to provide government to the people of Canada and the people of this province. What we are focused on in this province is continuing to make sure that the services that we deliver to Nova Scotians are top quality. We are investing in those services - health care, education, and the sustainable in the long run - and we're going to continue to work on behalf of all Nova Scotians.

I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, what struck time after time after time, they complain about the fact that we're trying to control costs in the government. They stand on the

opposite side, asking us to spend more money, whether it's on roads, and the list goes on and on, yet at the same time they want us to cut taxes. How do we do both?

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I think all we are asking from this government is the same as every Nova Scotian - learn how to manage things.

My question for the Premier is, if the Prime Minister hikes the GST, will the Premier reduce it here in the province by the same amount?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. It gives me an opportunity to recognize that we've actually controlled spending in this province, something quite frankly that the people of Nova Scotia haven't seen for over a decade. At the same time as we are doing that, we are investing in services.

We've invested in classrooms across this province to ensure those kids have a learning environment. We invested in teachers, we've invested in home care workers to ensure that Nova Scotians requiring home care services receive them in this province. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Premier has the floor.

THE PREMIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, let me start again - we've invested in classrooms across this province, we invested in teachers across this province, we've invested in home care workers. At the same time we're controlling costs to ensure we can get back to a balanced budget so we can continue to provide the services that Nova Scotians require, in a sustainable way.

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

#### **JUSTICE - LAW AMENDMENTS COMM.: PRESENTERS LIMITATION**

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Justice.

The Law Amendments Committee is a valuable and important part of how laws are made in Nova Scotia. We are the only jurisdiction in North America that gives members of our province the opportunity to have their say on legislation before it is passed. I think this is something we are all very proud of, yet this Liberal Government has dramatically limited people's time to have their voices heard and, in some cases, denied people the opportunity to do so.

My question for the Minister of Justice, the Attorney General, and the Chairman of the Law Amendments Committee is, what is her justification for limiting the opportunity people have had to be heard at the Law Amendments Committee?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I've certainly had the privilege of being a member of that committee, as well in Opposition. We have very capable members on the committee and I believe that the time allotted per presenter was set by the previous government and that was already in place.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, many teachers, to use one example, have been turned away and many would like to have come except they are teaching and the hours have not made it possible for them to come and have their say on this bill, which is really unfortunate.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, it is the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General who is the Chairman of the Law Amendments Committee. I want to ask the minister, why is it that she, as the Chairman of the Law Amendments Committee, has not been chairing that committee?

MS. WHALEN: Just to the earlier part of that question, Mr. Speaker, the committee sat last night until 10:00 p.m. That's well after the hours of school, so I do believe there is an opportunity, an ample opportunity, for people to come. I think that that's very important, and again reiterate that we have very, very capable members to sit at that committee. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member of Pictou East.

### **COM. SERV.: CENTRALIZED CLIENT SERV. - DETAILS**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Minister of Community Services. The Department of Community Services has just advertised for the head of a centralized service unit. In the job posting it says, "Centralized Client Services is a new organizational unit established through the Department's transformation, and will ultimately deliver many client services that are not required to be delivered in a client-facing manner."

I'd just like to ask the minister today, is the minister moving the department to a call-centre type of approach to client service?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Thank you for the question. No, we are not moving to a call centre, but one of the main complaints that I get in my office, and I'm sure many other people around here in the House, is that when people want the service, or they want an answer, they don't care who gives it to them. It's very important that people who need our services get an answer in a timely way, and we know that's not happening now.

Part of the transformation is looking at service delivery that's better going to meet the needs of people so that they're not waiting a couple of days to answer a simple question that, quite frankly, is important to them at that time.

MR. HOUSTON: I thank the minister for the response, but I'm not sure that people will take much comfort in that at the same time that this government is saying to employees to find savings, and they can keep them. People in Community Services are saying, what services should they stop delivering to Nova Scotians that would then translate to savings that they can keep? The whole premise just seems so bizarre. Maybe the minister can explain to me what the government has in mind with that?

MS. BERNARD: Whenever you improve services, that's a good thing for the people who rely on them. Everything that has been saved through transformation has been reinvested back into Community Services. We recently have been putting out RFPs so that we could have people come to the table, work with the subject matter experts within the department, and look at transformation in a long-term way that effectively meets the needs of Nova Scotians who rely on our services. Quite frankly, it's long overdue.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

#### **BUS.: PICTOU MUN./BUS. GROUP - UPDATE**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: My question through you is to the Minister of Business. In March 2014, Sean Murray, a respected and successful businessman from Pictou, was asked by the Liberal Government to coordinate a group of municipal and business leaders to respond to the fallout of job cuts at the Michelin Tire plant located in Pictou West. Will the minister please provide an update from this group?

HON. MARK FUREY: I thank my colleague for the question. I'm not familiar with the specifics of the question that my colleague is asking, but certainly prepared to gather that information and provide that to her.

MS. MACFARLANE: I want to thank the minister. I thought that perhaps there would've been discussions between the past Economic and Rural Development and Tourism Minister, and the new Minister of Business.

Would the Minister of Business consider - it's almost two years, and we are hoping that perhaps you will consider arranging a meeting with the three MLAs from Pictou County, with this group - because we still don't even know who is part of this group - and come to Pictou in the new year. Let's talk about the challenges and opportunities for Pictou County and creating jobs. Will you do that?

MR. SPEAKER: I just want to remind the honourable member not to refer to members opposite directly.

The honourable Minister of Business.

MR. FUREY: I thank my colleague for the question. One of the things that has been apparent in our government, particularly in Pictou County - and I think my colleague will recognize this. I spent considerable time in Pictou County, engaging our municipal colleagues. I haven't had this specific discussion with representation from Pictou County, but certainly in the future would value the opportunity to reach out and speak with any business or business owners in the province to hear their views on how we can drive the economy to the benefit of all Nova Scotians.

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

**LAE - GOV'T. (N.S.): NEGOTIATING TACTICS - MIN. ADVICE**

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. At the Law Amendments Committee we heard from noted labour experts, including Mr. Ray Larkin. Mr. Larkin and others stated that the government's new negotiating tactics are unconstitutional. What advice did the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education provide to her government around the Charter of Rights and their current labour strategy?

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I, personally, did not provide any advice. Thank you.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I find it quite interesting that the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education has not been involved in talks on how the new government is moving forward with a labour strategy. I would like to ask the minister, does she find it odd that she's not involved in labour strategy for the Liberal Government?

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As I indicated previously, I did not give any legal advice on this particular issue. I am not a lawyer. Thank you.

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

**BUS.: C.B. JOB PLAN - TIME FRAME**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Business. For the past five years Cape Breton has had the second worst employment losses of any region in the country. For five years the population lost in Cape Breton has been the worse of any region in the country, at a minus 6,600. The unemployment rate in Cape Breton is now 14 per cent. My question to the minister is, when can Cape Bretoners expect a concrete job plan for job creation in this government?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. There are a number of initiatives ongoing within government to address the needs of youth and

unemployment in the province. We're expanding our Co-op Incentive Program, the Graduate to Opportunities Program remains and has been expanded; we've revisited and made improvements to the apprenticeship program systems, our youth transition, school-to-work, and connecting industry with a skilled workforce is available not only in Cape Breton, but right across the province.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the unemployment rate in Cape Breton is more than double the national average. All regions outside of Halifax have an unemployment rate above the national average. The population, labour force and the economy of Cape Breton has been in a downward spiral for far too long. This is a trend that is growing more and more common in all areas of Nova Scotia. Can the government commit to developing a youth strategy to ensure we can breathe new life back into our rural economies?

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my colleague that the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education certainly is focused on employment opportunities for youth. I do want to share with my colleague for Cape Breton some of the initiatives that are ongoing in Cape Breton, where we are seeing tremendous interest and growth. Most recently, our Innovacorp I-3 Program, technology start-up competitions has identified five finalists within the Cape Breton community. SONA NanoTech is evolving, just recently recognized having signed a significant agreement with a U.S. company to expand and develop their patent. There are a number of businesses in Cape Breton that are demonstrating leadership. They're investing their own capital; they're providing employment and I know that they continue to expand and provide growth opportunities and inherently employment to our Cape Breton communities.

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

**JUSTICE - PHONE SCAMS: LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES  
- MIN. CONTACT**

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, my question is going to be for the Minister of Justice. We continue to hear a number of stories of telephone scams targeting Nova Scotians. I know of a lady who received a call from a scammer posing as a grandchild in need. Recently we've heard of scammers calling impersonating the Canada Revenue Agency; that's a tough one. Has the minister been in discussion with law enforcement agencies regarding phone scams and has she been made aware of any increases in the number of phone scams reported?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Certainly there was a question earlier in this session about phone scams. I believe it came up about the elderly from the Valley, isn't that right?

Anyway, in speaking to that, I had, after that session, spoken to my staff about that. We're in regular contact with the police forces around the province to ensure that they're

always up to date on what's going on. They inform us, and we also do our utmost to inform the public through public education.

MR. HARRISON: It's usually my age group that gets the calls. I know the federal government and the RCMP run Project PhoneBusters to combat the telephone scams, and the Nova Scotia Department of Justice has a small website page dedicated to phone scams. Will the minister consider additional measures just to notify Nova Scotians concerning reports of phone scams in their communities in order to raise awareness?

MS. WHALEN: Indeed, that is something that I'd be perfectly happy to look into. I think that it's devastating for people when they do lose their money, and they are tricked and taken advantage of. I do believe that it is important that we do all we can. I'll review the means that we have now and see if we can improve it.

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

#### **TIR: N.S. HWY. WORKERS' UNION - ARBITRATION ACCESS**

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Today at Law Amendments Committee, we heard from Steve Joy, the president of Nova Scotia Highway Workers Union, the men and women who keep our roads safe. Joy stated that no arbitrator ever awarded highway workers an agreement above the cost of living, but the possibility of the highway workers' contract going to arbitration is one of the reasons the government used to explain their labour strategy.

Given that the Highway Workers Collective Bargaining Act of 1997 already took away highway workers' right to strike, why does the minister also want to take away their access to fair arbitration?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I thank the member for the question. First and foremost, I want to thank that member who was at Law Amendments Committee today and all the workers who support transportation in the department. They really do incredible work building our highways, keeping them safe, and looking after the maintenance.

With respect to the collective agreements and the conversations taking place, as has been said many times by our Premier, these are important decisions we have to make to keep our fiscal house in order. We're being fair. The processes are in place, and we're respecting those.

With respect to the workers, we do appreciate their work. We will continue to work on those issues related to their working conditions and the great things they do for Nova Scotians. We certainly support Bill No. 148, and that bill allows us to do all the things we can do on the capital and operational side to continue to keep Nova Scotians safe.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Today at Law Amendments Committee, Steve Joy stated that recruitment and retention of highway workers is already strained and a two-year wage freeze means highway workers will have less income at the end of this next collective agreement because they won't even keep up with inflation and the rising cost of living.

What message does the government's opposition to a fair cost of living increase awarded by an independent arbitrator send to the minister's 1,400 provincial highway employees?

MR. MACLELLAN: Again, I have full respect for the work that's being carried out in my department. The staff we have, the men and women across this province, work very hard on a daily basis. They really do keep us safe and give us that opportunity to get home at night.

Again, what we have on the table is fair. We have to keep our fiscal house in order to make sure that we're providing safety to that infrastructure for future generations. It is fair. We've done our very best. We can't bankrupt the province. We can't continue to carry this significant debt that we have.

Bill No. 148 gives us that protection, that assurance, that we're going to be fair to all Nova Scotians. I support the bill wholeheartedly, and I know that we're doing the right thing for this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

#### **COM. SERV. - MARGUERITE CTR.: PER DIEM - DISPARITY**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: My question is for the Minister of Community Services. At the Marguerite Centre, we're hearing about a disparity in the per diem for that centre. We keep hearing - I'm getting emails and communications from people who are concerned about the good work that's going on there, and a concern that the centre is coming into financial difficulty - can the minister explain what is going on?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, there's probably no one in this House who knows better the work of the Marguerite Centre than I do. (Interruptions) Well considering I founded it, I mean give me a break, right?

Where I'm going with this is that I'm very happy to report that the board of directors, the Executive Director of the Status of Women, the Department of Community Services, and the Department of Health and Wellness have been working together to find a sustainable, long-term solution for the Marguerite Centre.



We believe we've arrived at that space; we're committed to that centre. It does fantastic work for women in Nova Scotia as the only recovery centre and we're committed to seeing through their work in the long term.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister has an involvement in founding the centre, I am surprised to see comments in the media from people who were working there who are talking about the per diem they are getting is not comparable to other houses for men in the province. It's just surprising to me that this would even be an issue.

Is there something else going on here? Can the minister give us some clarity around - is the Marguerite Centre going to continue? Is it going to receive the per diem it needs to continue? Will the minister give some encouragement to people out there who may be doubting what is going on here and whether the centre is going to continue? Will the minister give some confidence to them that it will continue, that it will be funded?

MS. BERNARD: Thank you for the question and I appreciate the concern. My department has been at the table; I'm going to defer the question to the Minister of Health and Wellness and he can give his update. We've also invited the Office of the Status of Women to come along and look at the sustainability as well, so I'll hand it over to . . .

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I appreciate the question. The work of Marguerite Centre in our province must continue. To help them out in the short term the Department of Health and Wellness has made them an offer for this year and the board has accepted that, and we're looking for the long term to move it to one of the most appropriate departments to guarantee sustainable funding.

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

### **HEALTH & WELLNESS: DOCTORS - ARBITRATION ACCESS**

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. At Law Amendments Committee we heard from Nancy MacCready-Williams, the CEO of Doctors Nova Scotia. She spoke out against the government's plan to remove doctors' access to fair arbitration in the event an agreement cannot be reached through negotiations.

The reason why doctors have arbitration, Mr. Speaker, is that they cannot strike. Why does the Minister of Health and Wellness also want to limit doctors' access to arbitration?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. We all know that doctors have a very different arrangement in terms of employee-government relation - they provide a contracted service. Yes, they can be impacted by

arbitration; however, I can say in terms of the physicians, the master agreement, it's my understanding that things are going very well and I'm sure they will remain on track with the remaining scheduled meetings.

MR. DAVID WILSON: But the ironic thing is that doctors have never resorted to arbitration. It's an essential tool, though, that motivates both the doctors and the government to look at solutions and compromises. Nancy MacCready-Williams also stated that the government's tactics send a negative message to physicians working in an already tenuous environment.

Given that the Minister of Health and Wellness is already struggling to recruit and retain doctors in Nova Scotia, especially in rural communities, why is he sending doctors such a negative message?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what I can say to the member opposite is that we have not at any point during our time in office sent a negative message to doctors. I've established that our department has a great working relationship with doctors. In fact, we have worked hard to rectify a couple of situations that were even before the college involving large groups of doctors, and we have brought that to a successful resolve and we'll bring this contract to a successful conclusion in the coming weeks.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

#### **JUSTICE: VICTIM SERV. - FIN. ASSISTANCE**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Speaker, victim services appear to be lacking in Nova Scotia. I'm led to believe that \$4,000 is available within the year to assist victims in need. My question to the minister is, with numerous victims seeking assistance throughout the year, why are some victims ignored when seeking financial assistance?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: I do appreciate the question on victim services, that's an area that I know is very important to many Nova Scotians. I think the member opposite has given the figure of \$4,000, people that are victims of crime are eligible for support and for assistance in navigating through the legal system as well.

MR. DUNN: The order of restitution to the victim appears to fall short. Mr. Speaker, I have a constituent who was attacked on September 18<sup>th</sup> of this year. Presently he's receiving 45 per cent through EI; there is \$4,000 available for victims, but I'm told that \$4,000 is for counselling and counselling alone. He is facing many bills as we all do, if our pay is shortened. He made an attempt to acquire some money to travel to Halifax for surgery, but was denied. So my question to the minister is, will the minister commit to reviewing this policy and perhaps change it to help victims such as this?

MS. WHALEN: Certainly I would be willing to look into the details that the member opposite is bringing forward, to see if there is a different way to offer assistance. It's true, from some years ago, in Opposition I've raised a lot of questions about victim services and you're right, the funds available are for counselling services. Sometimes, perhaps victims need help in another way, so that is something I'd be willing to look at, as long as it's within the fiscal capacity that we have. Thank you.

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

**LIQUOR CONTROL ACT - CRAFT BREWERIES/WINERIES: SELF-DISTRIBUTION - COST DISPARITY**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, craft brewers, local distilleries and wineries are big business in this province. They are great tourism drivers. All of these groups, though, are not treated equally. Craft brewers pay 50 cents a litre for all litres of beer they self-distribute, while wineries pay 5 per cent of the wholesale price. That works out to be about 20 cents a litre. My question for the Minister in charge of the Liquor Control Act is, why are these two important industries treated differently in this province?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I just want to thank the member for the question of course, an important question, Mr. Speaker. I've had the opportunity to have some discussions with representatives of the association in an informal capacity. I've received a couple of letters asking about this particular issue, but I haven't had an opportunity to sit down in a formal capacity to discuss with the representatives. Certainly looking into this particular inquiry is on the agenda, and we'll take a look at that and see if we can work something out.

MR. ORRELL: I'm told that the craft breweries, if they could pay the same amount as the wineries pay, could expand their business and even hire more employees. So I'll ask the minister, will he commit to sit down with Craft Brewers Association of Nova Scotia and find a solution, early in the new year, so these people can get on in their tourism this summer?

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, again I appreciate the question and of course, as I indicated earlier, this is something that I have heard of. I had informal conversations with the executive director, as well as the president and a number of members of the Craft Brewers Association, just a couple of weeks ago. I've also received correspondence from the association and we have been working to get together, a sit-down meeting with them; my schedule has been quite busy. We're working to find a time that works out for both parties to sit down as soon as we can in the new year, and we'll do that.

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

Just before we move on to Opposition business, I want to take this opportunity to remind everybody that there's some good reading in O'Brien and Bosc on Page 503 with regard to questions: a question should not ". . . seek information which is secretive in its nature, such as Cabinet proceedings or advice given to the Crown by law officers." A friendly reminder. O'Brien and Bosc, Page 503.

### **OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

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

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

### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING**

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

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, it's the most wonderful time of the year, but what if it's not? TV commercials, Christmas carols, and social media all send the message that we should be happy and grateful at this time of year. We feel we should be celebrating and having get-togethers with family and friends.

However, for many people this is not their reality. For many, this Christmas season can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and depression. The Christmas season brings added financial stress to families already struggling to make ends meet. For people coping with existing mental health issues, the Christmas season may serve to amplify those issues.

What do you do if this is you, or a family member or a loved one? The Aberdeen Regional Hospital had a short-stay mental health unit that individuals in need could access, and this unit was closed four months ago. Mental health staff were shuffled into other units, and a study was initiated regarding mental health services provided in the Pictou, Cumberland, and Colchester-East Hants areas. Pictou County residents were told that this was to be a temporary three-month closure. So if you are struggling with mental health issues, you can go to the Aberdeen Hospital, where you will be assessed. If you require hospitalization, you will be shipped off to the nearest hospital with an available bed.

The thing is that the nearest hospital could be in Yarmouth, as it has been for some patients seeking help since the “temporary” closure of the short-stay unit at the Aberdeen Hospital. Recently a story was published of a woman sent from Pictou County to Sydney for mental health treatment. When she arrived in Sydney she was in emergency all night. She wasn’t admitted, and was sent back to Pictou County without receiving any treatment. It was unnecessary to put this woman and her family through all this trauma and undue hardship. This woman deserved to be treated locally, in familiar surroundings, with her family by her side.

It simply cannot be beneficial to put mentally ill people through the added stress of removing them from home and shipping them off to other parts of the province when they are at their most vulnerable. Recovery would certainly be much quicker and healthier for the patient and make it easier on family members.

The Health and Wellness Minister has been repeatedly questioned by myself and my colleagues regarding the closure of the unit and the status of reopening it - if it is indeed a temporary closure, as we have been assured all along. The Health and Wellness Minister has dodged and negated many questions, and we don’t really have any more information than we did four months ago, but I hope there will be an announcement this week.

What we do know is that vulnerable people and families are undergoing unnecessary hardship. The people of Pictou County deserve better and they expect more. They deserve answers from the Liberal Government and the Health and Wellness Minister as to when the people of Pictou County will be treated with compassion and care.

It is totally unacceptable for there to be no mental health unit at the Aberdeen Hospital. We have a population of 46,000 people in Pictou County and we have one psychiatrist; the Truro area has a population of 60,000-some people and they have eight psychiatrists - the ratio doesn’t work; the balance doesn’t work.

On July 8<sup>th</sup>, the Progressive Conservative Party called on the Liberal Government to launch a public inquiry into the mental health system in Nova Scotia. A public enquiry would ensure that the findings and recommendations would be made available to the public, therefore enabling Nova Scotians affected by mental health issues and their families to hold the government accountable for how mental health services are provided in our province.

With the growing number of individuals speaking up about gaps in mental health services it is obvious that small changes and quick fixes are not the solution. One in five Nova Scotians will suffer from some form of mental illness in their life, such as depression, neurosis, personality disorders, and addictions. Mental health makes up only 3.5 per cent of the provincial health budget. According to the most recent Nova Scotia Health Authority business plan, the Liberals have cut mental health funding by \$25.6 million, while increasing spending on administration.

Wait-lists published by the Department of Health and Wellness show that proper access to mental health services is an ongoing problem. Nova Scotia has a higher ratio of psychiatrists per capita than the national average, yet there is a substantial shortage of psychiatrists outside the Halifax area, leaving rural Nova Scotians at a significant disadvantage when it comes to getting help with mental health issues. As wait times increase, the chances of mental health issues escalating into emergencies increase, as well as further taxing the health services in our emergency rooms.

In 2012, the NDP Government produced a mental health strategy which required annual updates; the Liberal Government has not provided an update despite being elected over two years ago. The government must find ways to improve the mental health system and ensure that Nova Scotians have timely and effective help for mental health issues, as too many times situations end in tragedy.

Mental health awareness is rising on a national level and with Bell Let's Talk Day in 2014, six-time Olympic Gold Medalist Clara Hughes took a 12,000 kilometre, 110-day bike trip to raise awareness of mental health issues and to help end the stigma associated with seeking help. She arrived in Pictou County to a sold-out event at the Pictou County Wellness Centre in Pictou West.

As awareness increases and people are encouraged to seek help, government must ensure that the services are in place to catch up with the increase in demand. We need a complete reset and that is what a public inquiry will do. This bill is a step forward to end suffering of those Nova Scotians who are fighting, perhaps for their lives, and for peace of mind.

For those with mental health issues, sometimes it's hard to shut out the noise that tells them how they're supposed to be living in society. The fear of judgment is unbearable. And for most of us, if not all of us in this Chamber, this time of year you are giving a lot of thought and energy to what it means to be in this world and being able to have access to so many opportunities and privileges. I often say that love is not a luxury, it's a necessity. We all have to do better to reach out and help those who need our help, especially during this time of year.

I hope that the government will put much thought into this bill and see the need for it. I think Pictou County alone and what's going on there in itself is enough to grant the idea of having this inquiry and following through with it. Mr. Speaker, on those few short notes, I will take my seat.

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

**HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place this evening to offer some comments on Bill No. 119, the Mental Health System Public Inquiry (2015)

Act. This is a very short bill, but a bill that is really important, asking for a public inquiry into mental health in Nova Scotia.

The whole issue of mental health is very near and dear to me and members of the NDP caucus. As the previous member indicated, it was in 2012 that our government introduced the first mental health . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Unfortunately, I have to remind the honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party that she has already spoken on this bill and therefore is not able to speak any further. Is there another member of your Party who wishes to speak to the bill?

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

MR. JOACHIM STROINK: I would like to begin by recognizing all those people, paid and unpaid, who serve Nova Scotians in the field of mental health and addictions. These are the people on the ground in the communities providing support and care for individuals and their families and who are living with mental health and addiction issues or experiencing them for the first time. I would also like to recognize the courage of those living with mental illness and addictions and their families as they deal with and live with and succeed with all these health conditions. They are living proof that recovery is possible.

Three years ago, our province released Together We Can, a five-year mental health and addictions strategy. The province has made significant progress since the strategy was released in May 2012. Access to assessment, treatment, care, and support has improved for Nova Scotians around our province. People across this province are accessing care and support in emergency departments, peer support programs, hospital clinics, offices and schools, homes and coffee shops, and other places in our communities. The province spends more than \$270 million a year on mental health and addictions. These dollars cover programs, doctors, social workers, drugs, programs offered inside and outside hospitals, and treatment in community centres, offices, and homes.

There is a fundamental misunderstanding on the part of the Official Opposition. They think the system is broken because we're not building more buildings. If they read the strategy and if they speak with mental health clinicians, they will understand that the goal of the strategy is to change the way people receive mental health and addictions treatment, the emphasis on early intervention, support in the community, help for families, and people leading their own care.

The province will always offer treatment for those experiencing mental health or addiction crises. Sometimes these people will require in-patient care, and they will receive it. But if we intervene early, if we provide services and support in the community, we can improve people's lives. We can decrease the number of times they find themselves in crisis.

Let's look at successes in the strategy. We are the only province in Canada to offer the Strongest Families program across the entire province or territory. We are treating up to 900 families annually. Our mental health crises line has been expanded across the province and responds to about 18,000 calls a year. We have placed mental health clinicians in schools in Nova Scotia. We are one of the first in Canada to do this. There are 25 SchoolsPlus hub sites supporting 185 schools, in every school board in every county.

We are adopting Trauma Informed Care, a model recommended by Dr. Jana Davidson, one that is recognized as a leading edge best practice. We support certified peer support workers, the only province in Canada to offer this. We have a person and family-directed service model called the Choice and Partnership Approach, a first in Canada. There is cultural safety training for those working with First Nations people in Nova Scotia, again first in Canada. We have community-based mental health clinicians in large First Nation communities around Nova Scotia.

There are more initiatives under this strategy, all of them improve access to care and treatment, and they ensure care is provided in a greater variety of settings. This is how we're improving mental health and addictions treatment. This is how we're making the system better.

I also want to highlight what others are saying about innovation, collaboration and success in mental health in Nova Scotia. The Mental Health Commission of Canada partners on a number of initiatives, including anti-stigma initiatives, workplace training and mental health first aid training, to mention three. The honourable Michael Wilson, board chair of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, recently said that our province has been a leader in advocating mental health first aid training. He went on to add that in Nova Scotia alone, more than 11,000 people have received this training, and the province has over 100 instructors.

Mr. Speaker, this bill lacks clarity. More importantly it demonstrates a lack of understanding of mental health, mental illness and addictions. The Official Opposition says there is a crisis in mental health, but they never define the problem. They don't define what they want the inquiry to address. We can't afford to go on a fishing expedition. We can't afford to take resources away from planning and services currently in place. Can we do better? Oh God yes, yes we can. Are we doing better? Yes we are.

Starr Dobson, president and CEO of Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia says that we are making strides. She says she hears that our system. . .

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

MR. STROINK: I'll go back further, maybe a little bit, no? (Interruptions) We can't afford to take resources away from the planning and services currently in place. Can we do



better? Oh yes we can. Are we doing better, yes we are. Starr Dobson, president and CEO of the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia...

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

MR. STROINK: Starr Dobson, President and CEO of the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia says, we are making strides. She says she hears that our system is better than five years ago and 10 years ago.

Mental health stigma is eroding; people are talking about mental health issues and that's a good thing. But to quote Ms. Dobson from the August radio interview: what we need more than ever is to let people know there are people who care and who support and who can provide hope.

Negativity is not the answer; an inquiry is not the answer. We know that one in five Canadians will face a mental health or addictions problem in their lifetime. We know we have to do more, and I guess this is a good time to kind of talk about my friend that I spoke about last time I was in the House. You know when you talk to a friend who has a gun to his head and he doesn't know what to do, where to turn, and when that police officer called his friends who are trained to help him walk through this situation, he was able to live to tell his story about the support he got from his fellow friends in the community of law enforcement. From there he was able to heal over a period of time by talking to friends, to colleagues, because a good support program was put in place for this police officer.

This police officer, I am sure has seen, as many people have, horrific scenes in Nova Scotia and those scenes took him to the dark place where he ended up. You know when I hear these stories of young servicemen who have dedicated their lives to make Nova Scotia a safer place and you hear that they go down this dark road, I am more than thankful that they were able to get the support and the love from family and friends in this province who helped him get better.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take a moment to applaud that because friends are what matter to mental health, friends help these people get better, so thank you to all those family and friends. (Applause)

I was at one time the chairman of the Learning Disabilities Association of Nova Scotia and I saw a lot of other people who weren't getting support within that, and if there was a foundation of support that was built within this organization with people with learning disabilities they were addressed at a younger age and they got the support at a younger age, the statistics showed that they did not go down the road of mental illness, depression, and all that kind of stuff because it was addressed at an earlier time.

With the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development now doing early assessments, this is another step of taking people through the process of preventing people from getting mental illness. So taking the time to diagnose children at a young age, to help them create support in the classroom so they can succeed, and then they can take this learning disability and turn it into a gift because a learning disability is a gift. I've spoken about that in the past, I'll speak about it again any day, anywhere, that having a learning disability in this day and age is not an issue, in this day and age it's accepted, and in this day and age you can succeed with it, and in this day and age you can become the CEO of any company you want to be.

One of those famous people is Kevin O'Leary. We all know him through the Dragons' Den. I had an amazing opportunity to sit in a taxi with him for half an hour one day and he talked about his struggles with a learning disability. He said he had to take a mirror in front of a book to be able to read. We talked about that to where he is today - guess where he is? He's on Dragons' Den, it's pretty cool. He did not let his disability affect him through education, did not allow his disability to become a mental illness, and then from there he became a successful billionaire with his own TV show, Dragons' Den and Shark Tank.

There are lists and lists of people in this world who have this ability of ADD, or dyslexia, or anything like that to be able to succeed. The CEO of Jet Bloom can't even read and he built an airline company without that ability so, again, taking that strength of his disability, ensuring that he didn't get a mental illness, and then created it into a success. Number two of Goldman Sachs, the same thing. He's become the number two of Goldman Sachs because, yes, he had a disability; he did not let his disability affect his mental health and was able to succeed.

I guess I'm going to wrap my thoughts up tonight as, you know what, the big thing we need to do here in Nova Scotia is let us work together, and I mean this, together to build a better system. Let us be positive in our approach and work together to build our successes and achieve even more.

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to be able to stand here and say that the NDP did recognize the importance of mental health services in the province and developed the very first, historical, mental health strategy. I do know that the previous government under the Progressive Conservatives were moving in that direction and I'm pleased that we were able to fulfill and bring that strategy forward.

We support this bill to have an inquiry because the system is in absolute chaos. I find it quite surprising and baffling how a member of the Liberal Party can stand in the House and say that there are lots of services out there and that we could do better, but there are services available. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, if you have anybody who is dealing

with mental health issues, especially in rural Nova Scotia, I can tell you my experience is that those services are not available at the same level as the member just said. I will talk about some stories because it's very sad and what we need within the strategy - there are a variety of things.

You need a strategy, but you also have to have immediate response to the level of care that is needed in our province. The Liberal Government likes to always talk about having reviews and putting things off to the future and say well, we're working on this; we're going to do this and so forth. But there are many needs that are pressing.

When you talk about mental health, those are needs that need to be addressed immediately because somebody who is suicidal is not going to think about well, there might be some services down the road or I'm going to take an opportunity to try to find some services that help me. When you're in that kind of state, you need those services immediately available and you need to know how to access those services.

I found it quite appalling that the member said, we're not going out on any fishing expeditions. Well, they don't have to because the fact is there are many, many people in our province who are suffering from mental health issues. There would be a number of people actually in here suffering from mental health issues because of the number of people that we have in this House. It is common because of the stresses that we deal with in our lives and the stresses that we have.

I want to talk about a couple of situations that I am aware of that I find extraordinarily sad. These situations do comment on the fact that those services are not available, and we need an inquiry in this province to be able to make the government accountable. This government does not want to be accountable.

We also need to do an inquiry to have a starting base to find out exactly what is going on. You cannot say that you're improving a service if you don't have that kind of information, Mr. Speaker. Once again, true to the Liberal style, it's words. That's all it is. It's words, but it's not actuality.

Just in the last year, within my own community and also with some friends who live outside of my constituency, here's what they've been dealing with.

There's one person I know who had an addiction issue, a severe addiction issue to drugs. They were taken to the hospital, and this person tried to commit suicide. They went to the hospital - a hospital that should actually be a Collaborative Emergency Centre but is not, under this government and under the minister who keeps promising, and it never happened. So the services were not really available, and when this person went there, they patched up where the cut marks were and told this individual that they had to seek services in Middleton for addiction services. Nobody giving this particular individual anything but a piece of paper that said, "Tomorrow you call there."

Can you imagine? You are having a breakdown, and you try to commit suicide, and you go to a hospital for assistance and, because of the chaos in our system that we have today, the lack of services, you're just given a piece of paper? This is a person who's a cocaine addict. This is a person who just tried to commit suicide. Would you not think there would be some type of counsellor, somebody who would be a mentor, somebody who would come into this person's life and say, "We are going to make these arrangements for you"?

Can you imagine? This is under the Liberal watch. That's why we have to have an inquiry, Mr. Speaker: because we have to know what's going on out there. I do not think that people really, truly understand.

I know that the member talked about the importance of family and friends. Yes, but they should not be responsible for the responsibilities of the health care system. They should not be given the responsibility to take over where the health care system should be providing that. The government should be taking the leadership to provide that kind of care.

But I know why this Liberal Government would not support a bill of this nature: because it means it will make them accountable, which is part of being government. However, under the leadership that we've seen to date in this province, we don't have a democratic system. It's being stripped away. So we don't want to be accountable. It's all talk.

Just recently, I learned of a young lady who committed suicide - 17 years old. She was sent to the hospital, and then she was sent home because there weren't the supports to be able to take her into the hospital. (Interruptions) This happened. Member opposite, it may be fresh, but it's a result of the system. The fact is that to have an inquiry would be able to look at these situations. (Interruptions) I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'm talking about real situations and the truth. That's what an inquiry would do.

An inquiry would look at . . .

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

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I know it's a tender point, because it's terrible. An inquiry would look at, why are we failing young people like this? Is the government scared to look at that? Why does this happen?

There's another young person who's not going to be with his mom and dad this Christmas, and his mom asked for people to send her Christmas ornaments in memory of her son. The same situation - they had come to me, and I have been a friend of theirs for years, and they were looking for years for support for their son. Years, and they could not

get that support. That's one of the reasons that the NDP developed a mental health strategy, because you need a strategy. You need a strategy, and to develop any strategy you have to know where you're coming from and where you're going. That's why you have to look at what is happening in our communities. I know that the government members are not happy that I'm bringing these stories up, but these are realities. I'm not making them up. It's the reality, and that's what a mental health inquiry would do. It would look at the real situation.

I can't go back to my constituency and tell that family that this is not reality. They don't have their son with them for the first Christmas coming up next week. So I'm not supposed to stand in this House and talk about that, because it's too sensitive and it's not something that I should bring up? Well, I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'm here for a reason, and that reason is to express and represent those people who supported me and have been telling me that the services are not there. They keep on hearing that the services are available, that there are no problems, but we've got mental health units being closed down. If the services are so good, as this government says they are, why don't they provide that information to Nova Scotians? How many people here know, if they were running into a crisis, a mental health crisis, what they would do? Who would they get a hold of? How would it be resolved?

Mr. Speaker, it's almost impossible to get in to your family doctor. So what happens if you're having a crisis, or know somebody who's having a crisis? Then you're told to call 911, then you go to the hospital and they don't have enough beds for you, and you're sent out on the streets, or it's entirely up to your family.

I'd like to also inform the government that some people don't have family support, or the friends to be there for them when they need that. What do they do? That wasn't even mentioned in the speech. It was talking about and congratulating and clapping hands for families and friends. Yes, they deserve to be recognized for what they do, but they shouldn't be carrying the load of a government.

My question is, what is the problem with this government supporting a piece of legislation that asks for an inquiry? We know that the issue is there. We see it; we experience it; we know people that have gone through that. This is one of the places that I have that ability to bring it up, even as sensitive and as tender as it is, but that's the reality. I'm speaking about what is happening in our province and in our rural communities and in the cities.

We know our health care system is in an absolute crisis, and since this government has been in, we have not been presented one piece of literature to say what they're doing. We're not seeing, at least come back to us and say okay, there was a strategy developed and this is what the strategy was and this is where we're at because that's what accountability is, that is coming back and saying okay, a strategy was designed before we came in, we think it's a good strategy or we need to do some work around this or that but here's where we were when we came in in 2013 and this is where we are in 2015. We never

hear that about any project that the government is working on, it is always down to entirely words.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that our government had an opportunity to develop a strategy and we would like to encourage this government to be accountable and put action to their words finally because this is people's lives, and to support this bill to have a mental health inquiry because we have to know the real truth of what's going on instead of hiding it behind politics.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to rise tonight in my place and talk about Bill No. 119, the Mental Health System Public Inquiry (2015) Act.

Mr. Speaker, in July the Progressive Conservative caucus first called for a public inquiry into mental health. It's a subject that touches nearly every Nova Scotia family. Too many people were telling us about gaps in the system that prevented them or a loved one from getting the care they need and deserve.

Mr. Speaker, since July dozens of Nova Scotians have contacted us, some with heartbreaking stories. They have told us about their frustration, their anger, their worry and their genuine fear. Too many people are afraid about what will happen to a loved one who is not able to get treatment.

This bill is a step forward to end the suffering of those Nova Scotians. It is clear that our system is broken, no Band-Aid or short-term fix is sufficient. We need a complete reset and that's what a public inquiry will do. The government has repeatedly denied that there is a crisis in our system - of course, we disagree. I don't know how anyone can look into the eyes of Fran Morrison, Mr. Speaker, a grieving mother, and tell her that the system is working as it should.

Nova Scotians have reason to fear that the system may further deteriorate under this government. We have already seen funding to the mental health community and support organizations slashed. We have seen the temporary closure of the short-stay unit at the Aberdeen Hospital drag on. We have heard there are now desks and filing cabinets where beds used to be and into this environment the Minister of Health and Wellness admitting that the new amalgamated health authority is considering cutting the number of mental health units in the province.

Mr. Speaker, this government is considering having fewer mental health units but just this week the IWK President and Chief Executive Officer Tracy Kitch said that the evidence is clear that the mental health of children and youth in Nova Scotia and across Atlantic Canada represents a call to action. Comedian Cathy Jones said that if we want some idea of how in the world we are going to do better for our youth, many of whom are

hurting and desperate for help, we need to figure out what works, what doesn't, and make tweaks along the way. I'll table that. That's what a public inquiry would do - figure out what works, what doesn't work, and make the necessary changes along the way.

Mr. Speaker, with so much at stake, we in the Progressive Conservative caucus think an inquiry is a common-sense way to do better for the Nova Scotians who want, need, and deserve our help.

I get the sense that the government views taking our suggestion in holding an inquiry as a failure or a political weakness - nothing could be further from the truth. This is a moral issue and announcing a public inquiry into mental health would be a show of strength and leadership. It would demonstrate to Nova Scotians that their elected officials are responsive to their needs, and have the will and the ability to change lives for the better.

Statistics tell us that one in five people will have a mental illness at some time in their lives. There has been no meaningful update to the province's 2013 Mental Health Strategy - a chart with check marks means nothing to a family in crisis. It gives no confidence that their lives will get better.

The percentage of the overall health budget spent on mental health programs in Nova Scotia is about half the national average - 3.55 per cent in Nova Scotia versus 7 per cent nationally. There is no doubt the financial demands on the system are daunting, but what is really staggering is the toll mental illness takes on individual lives and on families caring for loved ones. The longer we wait to fix our system the cost to families will only get worse.

Recently there was a veteran in my constituency office. This particular veteran had finished a career with the military police and suffers from PTSD. He feels strongly that there is a lack of services not only in Nova Scotia, but in particular at the Aberdeen Hospital. Go to the ER - he feels there is a lack of protocol. This individual will tell you that his body will tell him when he requires assistance and sometimes it's a type of sign where he has to get assistance very, very quickly, especially if he's under stress or strain. He feels the service is very inadequate. If you are transferred to another clinic they really do not know your history, what works and what doesn't work. It's just not the same.

The minister mentioned recently that eight residents reported to Aberdeen Hospital in recent months. I believe that number could be much higher and that people realize the state of affairs with no mental health unit and they just stay away. Nurses in the hospital at times would like to have discussions about the situation, but do not - for obvious reasons.

There is a considerable cost for policing. Often a crisis occurs and the police become involved. Perhaps it's a family situation or an event at a hospital that gets out of control and the police are called. It's usually two of them and they are often taken away from their normal shift and, if possible, off-duty officers are called into the ER and, again,

it's at time and a half; police at times are required to protect health staff from potential harm; and if a patient is transferred to another location outside Pictou County, additional policing costs occur in many cases - it doesn't take long for the dollars to add up.

Residents in Pictou County are convinced the mental health unit will never reopen, that the government is not interested in reopening it, they prefer to adopt a new model. A patient arrives at the hospital and eventually is diagnosed and perhaps sent to another community for in-patient assistance. Residents in Pictou County want the mental health unit to reopen, they realize challenges exist and they realize the previous service can improve.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not totally convinced that problems in recruitment is the real reason that this unit did not reopen. Residents in Pictou County feel that internal conflicts within the hospital and department may be a reason why things are changing. Whatever the reasons are, the residents of Pictou County struggling with mental illness need a safe place to receive treatment when they are in crisis.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 119.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak to this very important issue, something that I know is probably close to the hearts of all Nova Scotians. I think most of us have lived lives that in some way have been touched by the spectre of mental illness, whether it has afflicted ourselves or touched us through someone that we know.

I'm rising to speak tonight in a somewhat reflective mood, maybe with a different tone than I bring to some of the addresses that I've made in the House. I certainly want to give this subject the gravity and the importance that it deserves. I don't think it's really something that is a partisan issue, something that we as members of this House should play politics with. I think it's far too serious for that.

I also think that we all have the same interests at heart with respect to this. We all want to do the best that we can to tackle the fact of mental illness, if you will, the people who are afflicted by it, and also getting at the roots of it and getting at the treatments and the ways that we deal with it.

I certainly don't think that it's a time to throw barbs back and forth, or throw accusations back and forth across the House, about how previous governments may have dealt with this issue and how it might be better than the current government is dealing with this issue. Once again, I think it's really important to note that we all have the same issues at heart here, and we all have the same interests at heart here and that is attacking the issue of mental illness and the affliction of mental illness and taking care of people in a situation when they are touched by it and affected by it.



I do think, though, that it's a good time to look at some of the things that we are doing as a government currently, to deal with what's out there in the community. It's definitely a situation where over the last couple of years, more community support is driving the success of our province's Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. To give credit to all concerned, it does go back farther than October 2013. This strategy is in its fourth year. There are well over 30 actions that have become part of this strategy. It's known as Together We Can. It appears that about 33 of those actions have actually been completed or are significantly under way.

Carrie Lee is a Cumberland mother who I happen to know personally, who lives with mental illness and who now helps others through the peer support program. It's one of the 33 actions that have been identified as part of this strategy, which is designed to help people in her communities. Carrie said: I was once told I'd never work again. That was harsh for me, because I'd worked my entire life. But I knew I wanted more, and I found people to support me.

Now Carrie visits food banks, restorative justice programs, and other locations as part of her work in the peer support program. Carrie went on to say: There are some pretty amazing individuals, and they just need a little support in getting through a rough patch. I think they have everything they need, they just need validation and support.

The strategy itself is focused on improving access to assessment, treatment, care, and support for Nova Scotians in communities across the province. Priority areas include reducing waits and improving care, especially for diverse communities. Our own Minister of Health and Wellness said that every day people are getting the care and support they need to live with addictions and mental illness, because of the incredible efforts of family, community treatment programs, and peers.

Some of the other improvements to date include doubling the number of families receiving support for children with anxiety or behavioural issues through expanded telephone coaching; adding 20 mental health clinicians in schools as part of the expansion of SchoolsPlus, which serves over 40,000 students in all school boards across the province; reducing almost by half the waits for non-urgent mental health care for adults; adding 34 more gay-straight alliances in schools in the past two years; training up to 50 family doctors to support patients with mild to moderate mental health issues; funding 37 organizations over three years to provide projects and supports in the community; launching the Gambling Support Network with online and mobile options and an awareness campaign to promote it; nearly doubling the number of methadone treatment spots from 75 to 145; and training nearly 200 more physicians in opioid replacement treatment. The province has increased investment in mental health and addictions over the last two years to more than \$270 million in 2015.

Perhaps I'll get a little bit personal here, Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks. I've never really discussed any of this with my colleagues in the past, but I grew up in a

home afflicted with mental illness, where my father experienced some severe difficulties in his life. I guess at the time it was like a chicken-and-egg scenario, where he definitely had a serious alcohol problem, but he also had an organic brain disease. I guess we never will know now whether the disease was caused by the alcohol or whether the alcoholism was a result of his disease, but it certainly made for some very difficult times.

Now, I'm not going to say that community supports then in the 1970s were what they are now, but we definitely had the support of some amazing people all around us, including our family doctor, who was a very strong rock for us during all those times. The thing I learned from that experience was that mental illness is surrounded by tragedy. It happens as a result, and it doesn't matter how many people come to your aid and how many people come to your support; there will be tragedies surrounding mental illness, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's unfair to the system, to people who are working in the system to do the best they can, to bring those tragedies onto the floor of this House for the purposes of making the government look bad or making someone in the Opposition look good or making it seem like somebody did a better job than somebody else. As I say, I've learned from those experiences, and also from my experience in practising family law and in practising criminal law and in working in the child protection system in the courts of our province, that mental illness is a fact. Some of it is treatable. Some of it is curable. Much of it is not. All of it brings heartache and tragedy to the families and friends and those surrounding the people who suffer.

That is a fact, Mr. Speaker. No amount of government money is going to eliminate it. No amount of political debate is going to eliminate it. But as people, as politicians, as government, as Opposition, we all have the same interests at heart. We all look for the best interests, the best treatment, the best care for people with mental illness and to act at every turn to help them and support them and to do the best work we can, whether it be in the Legislature or in the medical system. Thank you. (Applause)

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you very much and I would thank all the members for that great round of debate. There were some wonderful stories and information, and very heartfelt so I want to thank everybody for that.

Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 142.

**Bill No. 142 - An Act to Ensure Economic Growth in Nova Scotia.**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: I would like to start out by saying, how is this bill any different from a bill we passed here the other day, namely Bill No. 143, which was an Act Respecting Regulatory Accountability and Reporting in Nova Scotia. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think it really is much different. It's about accountability. The government, in a bill that was introduced - just to confirm, yes, it was introduced by the Premier himself - it was about accountability. It was about the government tackling red tape, about working with other Atlantic Provinces to reduce and eliminate red tape where it is safe to do so, to help our province become more productive, to help to improve the economy. We supported that bill.

This bill is very similar - it's about accountability as well, but this time it's about the goals in the Ivany report. So, Mr. Speaker, anybody who could support the red tape bill surely could support this bill, because both are about accountability and both are about improving our province in terms of our productivity, in terms of our efficiency, in terms of our ability to make our province a better place to live.

So, I know this bill has been debated and discussed before and, you know the government has said that it was foolish, it was a silly bill and in fact, I believe my colleague was pointing out the other day, some of the comments that were made on the government side of the House could've been made about their own red tape bill. So, I have to point that out, Mr. Speaker.

When we look at, and this is a bill that has already gone through the House so I think I can look at it in a little more depth, but this red tape bill talked about the province recognizing the climate for economic growth and prosperity in the province, including the productivity of its private and public sectors, and stating that those are directly affected by the efficiency, transparency and accountability of regulation and the quality of regulatory governance. It went on to say, “. . . the purpose of the Joint Office is to take action on opportunities for regional regulatory reform among the governments of the three provinces. . .” - Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

So Mr. Speaker, clearly the government was attempting to inject some accountability on itself to do that. There's really no need for that legislation, the government can act on red tape any time it sees fit, because it can, it has the power, but the government wanted to put something into law for accountability's sake. All we're asking is the government do the same thing for the goals of the Ivany report.

So the other thing, Mr. Speaker, I guess the question that arises is, why would they do it for red tape, but not for the Ivany report? Well, I think the answer is clear - actions speak louder than words. This government does not want to be held accountable to goals in the Ivany report. We've seen an enormous amount of discussion, and some might say navel gazing on this Ivany report. Where is it going without action, without accountability? I don't think it's going to go too far, but it's obvious to me the government doesn't want

to be held accountable to the Ivany goals and if that's not the case, what other reason could it be?

I don't know, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps at this time someone could heckle me and give me a reason why it couldn't be anything other than this, because that would assist me in debating that point. So, I'm welcoming heckles here, Mr. Speaker. I have another five and a half minutes to go here, it would help me with my remarks.

This is about accountability and the government doesn't want to be held accountable to Ivany. I have to find my next point here since I've not been taken up on my request to be heckled.

Let's look at some of the Ivany goals. We look at growing rural industries. I can think of one industry, it's actually multiple industries, but if I could encapsulate it I would say the artisan craft industry. Anybody who travels to places in Europe will see that in some of the towns and small cities there are many businesses that exist that are based on somebody's ability as a craftsperson and they've taken that ability, matched it with some small business sense and they've been able to create sustainable businesses in rural areas. I say rural, they may, indeed, be small cities, but there's no reason why that couldn't be something that we could grow here in this province, especially in rural parts of the province.

We see the prominence of farm markets, where a lot of craftspeople do sell their wares. I know they are right around the province, we all have them in each of our areas. That is an area where the government could be biting in and trying to help grow that industry in a rural area.

Another Ivany goal is developing a rural youth job strategy. We also hear, it's a surprise, but often we hear from small businesses that have difficulty even in areas of high unemployment in finding people who can work in their businesses. Maybe there are opportunities there with young people to give them an opportunity to get some experience. They may not work there forever, the wages offered may not be something they want to work at forever, but they're certainly something for today, they're certainly an opportunity to get experience, and certainly an opportunity to help to improve productivity right across the province.

Mr. Speaker, I only have another three minutes here and still no heckles. I think about improving the province's fiscal health (Interruptions) Well, hey, thank you. Finally, I get a heckle from another Opposition member at least and I'll tell the member what I mean by that.

An idea was put forward here that has been put forward a number of times and that is a tax credit for farmers to give to food banks. I know the government looks at that as a cost, but I actually look at that as a cost savings in the Department of Health and Wellness.

We know Health and Wellness has a budget of well over \$4 billion, it was once approaching about 45 per cent of the budget. Why aren't we making decisions in this Legislature that would improve the health outcomes for people who are facing socio-economic challenges, people who have to go to food banks, to give them food that is more fresh, food that is local, because we know that food is going to produce healthier outcomes.

Young children could be eating better food in this province if the government accepted that idea, made it law and got on with enacting the idea. That's going to result in many savings to the province, developing good eating habits in young people who are at risk, quite frankly, for developing poor eating habits because in their families they have little choice as to what they can eat and often have to choose food that is less healthy. That is cost savings and that is one idea and I have more. I only have another minute and 20 seconds left.

I will leave on this note, how do we put power back into the hands of the people that have sent us here in this Legislature? I would say the best way we can do that is through accountability. This bill asks this Legislature to be accountable to the Ivany goals. What better way to respond and to show our respect for people in the province than to pass this bill because this bill does put power back into the hands of the people we represent, in terms of accountability.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the other members' comments. I do hope they are positive and, if they are not, they might hear some heckles from me.

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 142 is a very important bill for this province to have. I know that all political Parties want the same outcome for our province in terms of economic growth. That's a very important goal to work towards and to reach in order to make our province more vibrant and sustainable, and to enable people to have more opportunities for work, for our youth, and also to be able to support the many services that are needed, through our public services.

I think it's like each and every political Party has different philosophies in how they believe they would reach those outcomes. We've had a discussion about this bill many times and we talked about the Ivany report. The Ivany report, as we know, said very clearly and loudly that we need to be more collaborative and we need to change the attitude in our province in order to go forward. We need to become more positive. That was a key theme throughout that report - we have to become more positive. Unfortunately the fiscal plan that this Liberal Government has proposed is all about negativity, and negativity actually will push your economy down.

Mr. Speaker, I would really wish that our Premier and our Finance and Treasury Board Minister would understand that philosophy and the fact that we know austerity

budgets have not worked - there is a great deal of research and proof that the less money people have, the less will be spent in the economy. It makes sense.

So how do we create a positive province when we turn around and we gut the Film Tax Credit, the very industry that was a real natural resource, I would say, Mr. Speaker, to this province. We have lost it. I know the province continually says well we have \$10 million there and nobody is using it. Well the reason that very few people are using it, and we never get an explanation on this, is because those are for smaller projects, smaller productions, which are very important to our province.

On top of that - the cherry on top of the ice cream sundae so to speak - this province was receiving, after 25 to 30 years of dedication and investment in the film and television industry, those major productions. Who would not want major productions coming into their province and telling the world about their little province so people around the world would see and want to come here? And that actually was taking place. I find that so extraordinarily disappointing in this particular government, that they have not seen that, and have not reversed their decision, and trying to tread above water so they are not drowning, come up with this new credit that in fact does not support the large productions and they just are not coming here.

Once again it has to come down to the stats - look at the figures, look at the stats, and listen to what people are telling you. And the outsourcing of good jobs - why are we outsourcing good jobs in this province? We want our own people in Nova Scotia to have those jobs.

Now we're in the middle of this huge, baffling piece of legislation, Bill No. 148, that is looking at freezing wages and creating more negativity in our province with the very people who are supporting us and our needs.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I'm hearing on the other side that they continually say, well it's the fiscal reality. That fiscal reality is about choices, and this particular government made a choice on one major component of the budget, the \$600 million that needed to be put back into the retirement plan for the public service workers. But there was a choice. There was a choice in that by this government.

It could have been amortized over 10 years, which was the plan that the NDP had. Even though the Auditor General said we need to pay that off, that was not by law. We do need to pay it off, but it's like in anybody's life, you choose. Most of us probably have a mortgage. Most Nova Scotians have a mortgage, so they understand amortization. They take a mortgage out because if they spend all the money that they have, then they're not able to feed their family. They're not able to do important things with their family, and their lives are not as fulfilling. So, Mr. Speaker, that was a choice this government made. They could have amortized it. They would not be standing here and telling Nova Scotians

that the cupboards are bare, that we're short of \$241 million. That's what we're talking about.

Nova Scotians now are demoralized. They really truly are. We've heard that many times over, in Law Amendments and people marching around this House.

It's about choices, and so one of the choices should be actually supporting this bill. As my colleague said, it's about accountability, again. We've heard this government many times over saying that their business plan is to step away from creating jobs. When they were in Opposition, I don't know how many hundreds of times we heard, oh, you should have job targets. I guess it is also a little baffling why it's so different when they have become government. It was something that they supported before and requested a hundred times over. That's what this piece of legislation does: it requests that we have more targeted outcomes, and that creates accountability.

Mr. Speaker, we are under a cloud in this province right now, and it is a cloud of negativity. As I said with the Ivany report, that was one of the central themes, that we have to change the attitude; we have to be more positive.

I believe that's why Nova Scotians voted for Mr. Trudeau, because there was a ray of hope there, looking at investing in infrastructure, looking at investing in the people of Canada, getting them working. Look at the rallies of positivity.

It is extraordinarily interesting that we have a provincial Liberal Government that is governing the total opposite of their federal counterparts. It's like the Grinch that stole Christmas over and over and over again. It's all about negativity in this province now. You can't treat people like that and expect economic growth. They want to encourage major corporations. Who wants to come to a province of negativity?

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I think that this government, for once, should show that they are not fearful of accountability, support Bill No. 142, and go forward with targeted outcomes for the people of Nova Scotia, so we can start looking at the reality of what's taking place and the fact that we need to turn this province around and be more positive.

It's hard to believe that they won't do that, but they pretend that they're supporting the Ivany report. I know there was some question about public service in that. However, those are the same people who are investing money into our economy. So Mr. Speaker, I think it is time for this government to realize that they better turn their own ship around or in two more years or so they will absolutely be sinking. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased this evening to speak on Bill No. 142, an Act to Ensure Economic Growth in Nova Scotia.

I will be providing in my comments tonight both some comments on the bill and some comments on why I believe that the bill is somewhat disconnected from where Nova Scotians are going with the Ivany report. Before I do that, I do want to just comment on the debate so far, in that it appears that the Progressive Conservative caucus has had some difficulty speaking actually to the bill, with the exception of the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the NDP has commented primarily in terms of attacking the government on recent decisions, so it's rather difficult to respond to those.

I do want to point out that the member for Pictou East spent much of his presentation on this worrying about the attack from the government. I can quote from Hansard: "I do worry about when you put a piece of Opposition legislation forward and we see this very attack-mode response from the government." He goes on to say, "I always believe that tomorrow could be a better day and maybe a better day might start momentarily here when we hear some actual constructive feedback on this legislation." Later he goes, "... we're bringing an opportunity forward, with this bill we're bringing an opportunity forward and we will see how those opportunities are received." I'm happy to table those comments from Hansard.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to do my best to provide some constructive comments on this bill. What is the essence of this bill? The essence is that it appoints a Commissioner for Economic Growth and it forms an Economic Growth Committee for the House of Assembly. The first problem, or the first concern, or the first suggestion I would have is to look at the title of this bill: "an Act to Ensure Economic Growth in Nova Scotia." Now, if appointing committees and commissioners can ensure economic growth, then we should be creating a lot more committees and our economy can get moving. Perhaps the word "ensure" has been adopted from the We Choose Now report, where Chapter 8 is entitled "Implementation: Ensuring Accountability and Sustaining Momentum." So my first piece of constructive criticism here is to change the title of the bill.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask why a commissioner and a committee? Clause 4(b) asks for a commissioner appointed by the House of Assembly to provide regular updates. Then Clause 9 has a committee that asks and appoints each minister to each goal. (Interruption) Thank you. We take care of us over here on this side of the House.

In Clause 9, the committee then appoints a minister to each goal and has each member of the Executive Council responsible for that goal tabling a report at each sitting. The difficulty with that is that many of these goals are going to require multiple departments and ministers to work together, so we clearly would have report after report after report created by this legislation. This is really unnecessary duplication, and it's unclear to me why we need two avenues of accountability. This, to me, seems unworkable.

I'd now like to move to the composition of the committee proposed in this legislation: six members - three from the governing Party, two from the Official Opposition, and one from other Parties. I see some problems with this, and I would suggest



any committees not be an even number as we try to work together and work without partisanship as we go forward.

Unfortunately, before we create another committee, I think we need to do some work on our existing committees before creating more committees of this House.

Clause 7.1 states the committee shall focus on the goals, and then sets out the six priorities. These apparently have been decided upon by the Leader of the Official Opposition, which is where we get to the disconnect that I want to speak about. The *We Choose Now* report, which is a playbook for Nova Scotians, has really set out the work here that we are moving forward as a province but unfortunately this bill is taking a different track, as led by the Leader of the Official Opposition, who has clearly chosen to go his own route with the Ivany report.

In his document, which took me some time to locate, it wasn't on the PC website but the Leader of the Official Opposition stepped away from the oneNS Coalition to create his own report, entitled *Driving Momentum: A Case for Action and Accountability on Ivany Report*. I'm not sure about the grammar of the title but I'll leave it where it is.

Now what's clear to me from the start on this report is that the Leader of the Official Opposition has stated that the Ivany report was unequivocal and that the responsibility to make this happen rests with the provincial government. In fact, Ivany's report was to all Nova Scotians.

Going back to the oneNS Coalition report, their recommendation on accountability, their whole section on Chapter 8, Ensuring Accountability and Sustaining Momentum, their recommendation is an independent organization - the organization must have deep experience in the collection, quality control, and presentation of the relevant types of statistical data. They go on to ask that there be a website or a dashboard for presenting data to the public and, published annually, a full report that obviously can be shared with this Legislature. The important thrust of their recommendation is that we preserve the objectivity and transparency in terms of the accountability of the work on the Ivany goals.

Ivany asked us in his *Game Changers* for a new type of politics, and I quote from the *Game Changers* on a new politics, "When elected governments make the tough decisions they see as necessary, opposition parties, and also the media, may choose to champion the easier way out even if they don't have a better option to solve the problem." They go on to say that, "The Commission is concerned that continuation of this divided leadership will not serve the province well in its current circumstances."

I want to offer to the Leader of the Official Opposition that I believe he is actually in line in his thinking with the oneNS Coalition as in his report he has six areas which actually line up with the oneNS Coalition. Leadership and accountability that the Leader of the Official Opposition is interested in is covered off in implementation and ensuring

accountability. The interprovincial migration and immigration topic that he talks about is covered off under the immigration and welcoming communities work under the oneNS Coalition.

Anyway, I'm running out of time here, but all of the goals outlined by the Leader of the Official Opposition are actually in the report. I think it is important and imperative to welcome back the PC caucus to work with the rest of Nova Scotians on the Ivany report together, in a non-partisan way, with business, with Aboriginal organizations, with universities, with immigrants, and with the federal government.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand and maybe speak for a few moments on this bill. I will end a little short so that the Government House Leader can - I'm playing cleanup so that the assistant can actually call hours for tomorrow.

First of all, I just want to say that throughout this whole process there were three Party Leaders who were chairing and vice-chairing the One Nova Scotia Coalition. If we remember, the One Nova Scotia Coalition working group that was supposed to come up with the actions included, of course, the Premier, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the Leader of the NDP.

I can say that I know the Leader of the Official Opposition went to probably 95 per cent of the meetings, and actually chaired a good number of them. He also did accept the recommendations from that group, and wholeheartedly agrees with We Choose Now. What he did find was that there were a few things still to be said and still some things to be debated, and that is why we have this bill before us, to truly give government responsibilities when it comes to the Ivany report and trying to make our economy a better one.

I don't know how often I can go to my community and talk to businesses - businesses, for example, like boat shops that build vessels for our lobster fishery, who are crying for workers, who cannot find a person to work on a boat. That is the kind of thing - what is the responsibility of the government to make sure that our economy is going to not only repair itself but to become better and provide tax dollars so that we don't fall into fights like we are with Bill No. 148?

With a good economy, we can afford the public services that we, as Nova Scotians, expect. A strong economy is what makes that happen, not the thousands of little cuts that we continue to impose upon our unions, our civil servants, our teachers, and our health care workers, because they have given a lot of themselves.

With those few words, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this one quickly. I wish I had a lot more time to talk about it, because I have a lot more to say, but I know the hour is coming near and I know the Government House Leader has to call hours for tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow between the hours of 12:01 a.m. and 11:59 p.m. At that time, the government will call the order of business Committee of the Whole for Bill No. 148, and such other government business as may arise.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for adjournment and for the House to meet tomorrow, Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>, between the hours of 12:01 a.m. and 11:59 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 9:59 p.m.]

**NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)****RESOLUTION NO. 3057**

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Immigration)

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

Whereas Danielle MacDonald is a resident of Armdale, a student in the Bachelor of Business Administration Program, and an MSVU women's soccer player; and

Whereas Danielle has always been a star soccer player and had played since the age of five for many years with my daughter Monica, allowing her mom, Connie, and myself to become great friends as we cheered from the sidelines; and

Whereas Danielle, the captain of her team, was voted Athlete of the Week September 22, 2015, by the Atlantic Collegiate Athletic Association; kicked the winning goal at the 2015 Provincial Championships; and was presented the All Canadian Soccer Award at an awards banquet in Peterborough, Ontario, on November 10, 2015;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Danielle on this outstanding award and wish her future success.

**RESOLUTION NO. 3058**

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Immigration)

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

Whereas David Joseph Salah and Andrea Lauren Acheson will be uniting in marriage on December 28, 2015, at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Halifax; and

Whereas Mrs. Catherine Salah, along with Mr. and Mrs. Alan Acheson, will host a special reception to celebrate the marriage of their children on January 9, 2016, at the Prince George Hotel; and

Whereas David and Andrea will begin their life journey together with the support of their family, friends, and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate David and Andrea, together with their parents and families, and wish them happiness and health for many years.

**RESOLUTION NO. 3059**

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Immigration)

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

Whereas Mike Habib is the co-owner, together with his brother, of Jubilee Junction, a busy convenience store in Halifax; and

Whereas I was pleased to have attended the Jubilee Junction Store for the Government of Nova Scotia's announcement on cutting red tape through the Convenience Store Bundle, making it easier for store owners to start or grow their business in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas I would like to thank Mike for contributing to the conversation on cutting red tape, for taking the risk to start a business, and for inspiring others to work hard and succeed;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly commend small business owner and Armdale constituent Mike Habib and family for the entrepreneurial contribution to our province and wish them future success.

**RESOLUTION NO. 3060**

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Immigration)

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

Whereas Melvin Boutilier was the head of the Parker Street Food and Furniture Bank for nearly 31 years, and is an outstanding community leader who gives so much of his time and energy to help improve the lives of people in need; and

Whereas he started a new charity at the age of 86, in 2014, using all the proceeds to fund tuition and education support for young people and helping people in emergency situations; and

Whereas Mr. Boutilier is also helping the donation efforts started for the Syrian refugees with supplies from his thrift shop, delivered to the Horseshoe Lake Drive storage centre;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly also congratulate Mr. Boutilier and wish him and his wife, Thelma, health and happiness.

**RESOLUTION NO. 3061**

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Immigration)

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

Whereas David A. Cameron, CPA (Hon.), CGA (Hon.), was awarded an Honorary Certified General Accountants designation by the Board of Directors of CGA Nova Scotia; and

Whereas this honorary designation was given to David for going beyond in supporting the board and the association over the past 10 years as association counsel; and

Whereas in addition to his successful law career and many volunteer positions within the legal community, he was also past president and board member of the North British Society and past president of the Nova Scotia Liberal Party;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Cameron on this honorary designation, and wish him and his wife Tammy, and their daughters, continued health and success.

**RESOLUTION NO. 3062**

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Immigration)

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

Whereas D'Arcy Morris-Poultney, a resident of Armdale, served two years on the John. W. MacLeod - Fleming Tower School Advisory Council (SAC); and

Whereas his term on the SAC may have ended in the autumn of 2015, but his service to the school and community continues; and

Whereas D'Arcy recently put forward an outstanding proposal to ArtSmart, who, in return, gave a \$2,000 grant to the school to create felted artwork murals;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly commend Mr. Morris-Poultney on his volunteer commitments, and wish him future success.

**RESOLUTION NO. 3063**

By: Hon. Denise Peterson-Rafuse (Chester-St. Margaret's)

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

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

Whereas on September 24, 2015, Mr. Douglas Arthur George celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday; and

Whereas to have reached 80 years of age and continue to be active and share all the memories gathered over your lifetime with your loved ones is a wonderful reason to celebrate;

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