



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS:	
Health & Wellness - Digby Gen. Hosp.: Dialysis Unit - Establish, Mr. Gordon Wilson.....	6977
PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES:	
Private & Local Bills Committee, Hon. S. Gough.....	6978
TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS:	
Agric.: N.S. Crop & Livestock Insurance Commn. - Anl. Rept. (2014-2015), Hon. K. Colwell (by Hon. Z. Churchill).....	6978
Health & Wellness: N.S. Health Research Fdn. - Anl. Rept. (2014-15), Hon. L. Glavine	6978
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS:	
Greenham, Capt. Kenneth (Sergeant-at-Arms): Retirement -Tribute, The Premier.....	6979
Justice: Atl. Women in Law Enforcement/Progress Women of Excellence Awards - Recipients, Hon. D. Whalen.....	6982

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:

Res. 2851, EECD - N.S. Intl. Prog.: Gov't. (N.S.)/Shenyang No. 2 HS (People's Republic of China) - Co-operation, Hon. K. Casey.....	6985
Vote - Affirmative.....	6985
Res. 2852, Intl. Human Rights Day (12/10/15) - Recommit, Hon. D. Whalen	6985
Vote - Affirmative.....	6986
Res. 2853, Agric. - N.S. Crop & Livestock Insurance Commn.: Board/Staff - Thank, Hon. K. Colwell (by Hon. Z. Churchill).....	6986
Vote - Affirmative.....	6987

NOTICES OF MOTION:

Res. 2854, Hfx. Shipyard: Fed. Gov't. - Commitment Fulfill, Hon. J. Baillie	6987
Vote - Affirmative.....	6988

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:

Intl. Human Rights Day (12/10/15) - Recommit, Mr. J. Lohr	6988
Intl. Human Rights Day (12/10/15): Syrian/Rwandan Families - Welcome, Ms. L. Zann	6988
Michaud, Julie - Fall River Fundraising, Mr. B. Horne	6989
MacDonald, Cst. Ken: Community Policing - Recognize/Honour, Hon. P. Dunn.....	6989
Long-Term Care Facilities - Budget, Hon. David Wilson	6990
Gidney Fisheries: Processing/Holding Facility - Opening, Mr. Gordon Wilson.....	6990
No Stone Left Alone Mem. Fdn., Mr. E. Orrell.....	6991
Fed. Gov't.: Tax Reforms - Effect, Hon. M. MacDonald	6991
Springvale Elem. Sch.: Democracy 250 Fund - Selection, Hon. L. Diab	6992
Pictou Garden Club - Pictou Elem. Schools Jr. Gardening Prog., Ms. K. MacFarlane	6992
Roseway Hosp. - ER Closures, Hon. S. Belliveau	6992
Whitney Pier Youth Club - Computer Equipment: EECD Min. - Thank, Mr. D. Mombourquette	6993
Owens, Reta - Commun. Contribution, Mr. T. Houston.....	6993
Downtown Dart. - Renaissance, Ms. M. Mancini.....	6994

Chambers, Dr. Christine: Ryl. Soc. (Can.) - Appt., Hon. L. Kousoulis	6994
Lahey, Michelle - Women in the House Conf.: Anniv. (15 th) - Coordinator, Hon. A. MacLeod.....	6994
Shoreham Village - Replacement Promise, Hon. D. Peterson-Rafuse.....	6995
Bent, Kirk: Death of - Tribute, Hon. L. Hines (by Mr. T. Farrell)	6995
Chiasson, Dr. Michel et al - Dr. M.A. Mian Award, Mr. A. MacMaster.....	6996
Film Ind. - Significance, Hon. S. Belliveau	6996
Cave, Tyson - World Union Super Bantamweight, Ms. P. Arab	6997
Ming's Rest. (New Glasgow) - Thank, Hon. P. Dunn.....	6997
Com. Serv. Min. - Budget Changes: Poor/Disabled - Effects, Ms. M. Mancini.....	6997
Cooper, William/Wynn, Megan - Mar. Jr. Limousin Show, Hon. K. Casey	6998
MacLean, Emma: 4-H Awards - Congrats., Mr. E. Orrell.....	6998
Indigenous Women/Girls - Natl. Inquiry, Ms. L. Zann.....	6999
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:	
No. 1129, Prem.: Mental Health Units - Closures, Hon. J. Baillie	6999
No. 1130, Prem.: ER Closures - Increases, Hon. M. MacDonald	7001
No. 1131, Health & Wellness: CECs (Cumb. Co.) - Closures, Hon. J. Baillie	7002
No. 1132, Health & Wellness: ER Closures - Increases, Hon. David Wilson	7003
No. 1133, Health & Wellness - Food Banks: Donors - Tax Credits, Mr. A. MacMaster.....	7004
No. 1134, Nat. Res. - Biomass Consumption/Electricity Generation: Wood Pellets - Impact, Hon. P. Dunn.....	7005
No. 1135, Prem. - Mental Health Units: Closures - Option Explain, Hon. M. MacDonald	7006
No. 1136, Health & Wellness - Hillside Trenton: Fly Ash - Urinalysis, Ms. K. MacFarlane.....	7008
No. 1137, Fin. & Treasury Bd.: Accountants Merger - Consultation, Mr. E. Orrell.....	7008

No. 1138, Health & Wellness - CNIB: Funding - Ensure, Hon. David Wilson	7009
No. 1139, Health & Wellness - Hillside Trenton: Urinalysis Promise - Min. Confirm, Mr. T. Houston	7010
No. 1140, Health & Wellness: Sutherland Harris Dialysis Clinic - Update, Hon. P. Dunn.....	7011
No. 1141, Com. Serv. - Chester-St. Margaret's: Seniors - Home Repairs, Hon. D. Peterson-Rafuse	7012
No. 1142, EECD: East Pictou Mid. School - Daytime Custodian, Mr. T. Houston.....	7013
No. 1143, LAE - OH&S Regulations: Phase II - Plan, Mr. E. Orrell.....	7014
No. 1144, LAE - Univ. Tuition: Cap Removal - Reverse, Hon. David Wilson	7015
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
HOUSE RECESSED AT 2:51 P.M.	7017
HOUSE RESOLVED INTO CW ON BILLS AT 2:56 P.M.	7017
HOUSE RECONVENED AT 3:26 P.M.	7018
CW ON BILLS REPORTS.....	7018
PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING:	
No. 112, Children and Family Services Act	
Hon. M. MacDonald	7019
Mr. L. Harrison	7025
Ms. M. Mancini.....	7026
Ms. S. Lohnes-Croft.....	7034
Hon. A. MacLeod	7037
Hon. D. Peterson-Rafuse.....	7039
Adjourned debate	7053
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Fri., Dec. 11 th at 9:00 a.m.	7053



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2015

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Ms. Margaret Miller

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table a petition, the operative clause being:

We the undersigned ask the Minister of Health and Wellness . . . and the Provincial Government to establish a permanent dialysis centre at the Digby General Hospital . . .

Mr. Speaker, there are 2,880 names on this, and I have affixed my name.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

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

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

Bill No. 144 - Antiochian Maronite Catholic Church - Our Lady of Lebanon - Corporation Act.

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

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

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, I'd like to table the Annual Report for the year 2014-2015: The Nova Scotia Crop and Livestock Insurance Commission.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. GLAVINE: In the gallery today we have three representatives from the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation. They are: CEO Krista Connell; Shelagh Campbell-Palmer, who is the board member; and also Marli MacNeil, Executive Director of Innovation and Collaboration. They are already standing, so if the House could give them a warm welcome, please. (Applause)

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

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as Minister of Health and Wellness, I hereby beg leave to table the annual report of the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation for 2014-15.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I rise today, with your permission, to congratulate Captain Kenneth Greenham, the Sergeant-at-Arms at Province House, on the conclusion of a remarkable career. Many of us in this House call him Kenny and I want to thank him for the work he has been doing over the last 10 years on behalf of all Nova Scotians, in a most friendly and professional way.

Kenny was officially named Sergeant-at-Arms on March 3, 2006. At that point in time the ceremonial duties associated with the position of Sergeant-at-Arms were combined with the security responsibility and protection of this House, something Kenny has approached with commitment and enthusiasm.

Kenny started his career in the Army as part of the Royal Canadian Regiment. He served his country with the Black Watch; he has also served in the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves.

Later in life Kenny started at Province House with the Corps of Commissionaires and has dedicated almost 10 years to that role. Kenny has served both his nation and his province through his service with the Canadian Armed Forces, both in the regular forces and Reserves, and the Corps of Commissionaires as Sergeant-at-Arms, for a total of almost 60 years. What an impressive career.

As Kenny leaves a wonderful legacy behind at Province House, he has much to look forward to in retirement. He loves fishing and gardening. He has two children and four grandchildren, with whom I am sure he looks forward to spending much time, and of course, I am sure Kenny is looking forward to spending more time with his wife, Mary. The question is, will Mary be looking forward to spending more time with Kenny? (Laughter)

Kenny, we know you will miss the mace and teaching young people across our province about the history behind it. The enthusiasm to which you carried out that duty will be remembered in this House for a long time, but more importantly, will be remembered in the hearts and minds of the kids you stood in front of with that enthusiasm, to teach them about the history of the mace and the history of this place.

Mr. Speaker, Kenny started at this House for a brief, two-week term almost 20 years ago, which developed into much more. Kenny, this is probably the longest two-week term anyone has gone through. You have served your country, province, and this House with diligence through all the years. On behalf of all Nova Scotians and members of this House,

I would like to offer my deepest thanks to you for your commitment, and wish you all the best as you enter into a new stage of your life, and on behalf of all of us express our gratitude to your children, grandchildren, and to your wife, Mary. Congratulations, Kenny, on a very well-deserved retirement. (Standing Ovation)

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: As Leader of the Official Opposition, it is my great pleasure to thank the Premier for his remarks today, to completely associate myself and the Official Opposition with them, and to express our great thanks to Captain Kenneth Greenham, known universally as Kenny, for his service here in this House, to the people of Nova Scotia, and to our great country.

Kenny is known for his pleasant manner, for his friendly disposition, for his easygoing ways, but we have had moments in this House where we've seen his serious professionalism as well, as he guides us not only through the daily routine here as our Sergeant-at-Arms, but as he looks after security here at this House. As you know, Mr. Speaker, on occasion we have visitors here, inside and out, to express their views in a democratic way and we've seen the serious, professional side of Captain Greenham, and we've all known that we were in good hands on those days.

Indeed, he has done his job well and professionally for almost 10 years, including being in charge of security, which no doubt comes from the service he provided to our country in the Royal Canadian Regiment as a member of the famed Black Watch, which I understand was founded in 1862. There are many who think that Kenny is a founding member of the Black Watch, but I have it on good authority that he wasn't actually there that day.

It is remarkable. He has served our country in the Canadian Forces and here in this House for a combined total of almost 60 years. For that, we are very thankful. We are thankful to him. We are thankful to his wife, Mary, and to his children and grandchildren.

I just want to remind him of something my own mother said when my dad retired. She said, "You know what retirement is, don't you? It's twice the husband and half the income." I'm sure she meant that in a good way, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure Mary will as well. We have no doubt that his garden will be all the better for his retirement, and that the fish stocks of Nova Scotia will be all the worse off.

Let me just say in conclusion, on behalf of the Official Opposition, how much we appreciate his service here, his kind-hearted personality, and his professionalism in this House. We wish him a very healthy, prosperous, and happy retirement. Thank you, Kenny.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Nova Scotia NDP caucus, I too would like to extend our very sincere thanks and our appreciation to Captain Greenham, Kenny, for the manner in which he has overseen the public access to this place that we all love - the people's House, the House of Assembly - and for the manner in which he took the security of the members who serve here in difficult times very seriously and very professionally.

I and our caucus have always found Kenny to be a gentle man and a gentleman. We will miss him very much. They're big shoes to fill. He has set a very high bar for a Sergeant-at-Arms in this place.

We wish him nothing but the very best in his retirement with his wife, Mary. We hope that we will see him around from time to time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Kenny, allow me, on behalf of all members, to echo the comments of the Premier, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party, and in my capacity as Speaker, on behalf of all the staff that you so ably served here over the last 10 years and certainly since I've been around over the last couple. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you very much for your service to this House and to this province, and for your service to our country previous to your coming here. Thank you very much, and all the best. (Standing Ovation)

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on an introduction.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it's a great tribute to Kenny, of course, that we're being so wholesome here at the moment, and it's a great time to introduce all the members of the House to a Grade 12 class from Prince Andrew High School. They are with us in the west gallery today.

They are led by their teacher Tim Halman, Ron Stewart, and Stephanie Duchesne. They are the politics and global history class at Prince Andrew. I would just ask all members to join me in giving them a warm welcome to the House of Assembly this afternoon.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. DIANA WHALEN: I rise on an introduction before I do a statement. I'd like to draw the members' attention to the Speaker's Gallery today. We are fortunate to have with us a number of women from our law enforcement community who have recently received awards and have been recognized at the Atlantic Women in Law Enforcement Conference, as well as the recent Progress Club Women of Excellence Awards.

I'll provide more information about their awards in my statement, but for now, I would like to have the guests rise, perhaps as I say your name. From the RCMP we have

Sergeant Lisa Stuart, Sergeant Charla Keddy, and Paula Sibley-Fox. From the Halifax Regional Police, Sergeant Nancy Rudback and Staff Sergeant Penny Hart. I would like to thank them for being with us today and I would like the members of the House to give them a warm welcome. (Standing Ovation)

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to do a Ministerial Statement today about the guests in the gallery. We don't normally do a Ministerial Statement, perhaps, of a congratulatory nature, but this is a little exceptional and I appreciate the members opposite participating as well.

As I mentioned in the introduction, we have with us women who have been awarded recognition at the Atlantic Women in Law Enforcement Awards, as well as the Progress Women of Excellence Awards. Just by way of background I had the opportunity as the new Minister of Justice to attend the awards night of the Atlantic Women in Law Enforcement organization and they held their awards in Truro earlier this Fall. When I was there, I was so impressed with the women who were being honoured and hearing about what they had done and I said it was an excellent thing to bring them to the House and to have others, as well, know their excellent work. It was really a very moving night, I stayed to the very end of all the awards. I hadn't perhaps intended to in the beginning but it was very important to be there.

So, just to let people know, the organization itself represents all peace officers, so RCMP, police officers from around Atlantic Canada, and as well as corrections and fisheries officers. I know the Minister of Natural Resources, as well, would be interested to know all of the officers that you have that are peace officers, and the Canadian Border Agency as well. So women that serve in all of those capacities. They are in their 24th year in Atlantic Canada and have more than 300 active members but there are more than that, of course, that would be women in those positions. They are an excellent organization, and at their awards they have many people nominated. We have with us today the ones who received awards this year.

I just want to tell people briefly, the first person I would like to introduce is Sergeant Lisa Stuart who was awarded for her critical leadership which ensured that the RCMP and HRP members were able to thwart the mass shooting planned at the Halifax Shopping Centre. I don't think I need to say more about how important that kind of work is and how critical that is. (Applause)

Sergeant Nancy Rudback was awarded the special award for her mentorship of women in law enforcement and assistance for many young female officers. Sergeant Rudback would perhaps be recognizable to many of us because she also serves as an aide-

de-camp with the Lieutenant Governor, so you may have seen her at special events there as well. She has also been recognized internationally in the United Kingdom at the International Association of Women Police awards. Nancy was a good example of how our award winners are submitted to national and international awards as well, so I think, again, that's very impressive for Nancy's accomplishments. (Applause)

Sergeant Charla Keddy was nominated and awarded this award for her global investigative knowledge as an undercover operator and proven leadership qualities that she exhibits every day. She was also recognized internationally at the International Association of Women Police awards. (Applause)

Staff Sergeant Penny Hart was nominated and awarded for her team work including the Catie Miller homicide investigation. She was responsible for the training and coordination of approximately 700 sworn and civilian members as well as that. (Applause)

Finally we also have Ms. Sibley-Fox who is recognized for her important role in communications in public affairs at the Progress Club Women of Excellence Awards very recently. She was also the MC, along with her counterpart from the Halifax Regional Police, at the awards night in Truro. She was recognized, as I say, for public affairs, for providing, which is so important to all of us, accurate and timely information on critical police information and keeping the public informed and safe, which we all know that is very important too.

On behalf of all of us I'd like to thank Paula, and I would just like to thank all of you for your service. I know we all feel very proud to know that you are there. It is providing safety and security for our province and you are also trailblazers in your own right. So thank you very much. I look forward to hearing from my counterparts. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for providing a copy of her remarks beforehand.

The face of law enforcement has changed over the years and women in law enforcement bring contributions in many ways. One of the things I think about is they are often the first point of contact for women who face situations where they have been sexually assaulted or abused. We know that women in law enforcement also bring an important perspective, and we need only think about the matter of missing and murdered Aboriginal women here in our country.

Mr. Speaker, we thank these officers for what they have been doing. Certainly it has been described by the minister about the cases and the situations they have been involved in. We thank them for their leadership, for their mentorship, for their professionalism, and we congratulate them today. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Justice, as well, for providing her comments.

Just over a month ago the minister presented the Nova Scotia Police Long Service Awards to police officers, and I was honoured to be able to attend that event. These are members who have selflessly devoted themselves to law enforcement. It brought home the value of their work and it cannot be overstated; they not only protect but they also provide emergency health and mental health assistance.

I have been around long enough to remember when a female member was quite a rare sighting on the police force, and it pleases me to no end to see these strong professional women on the force. All of you should feel especially proud of yourselves and know how much you have raised the bar in policing.

I'd also like to express my thanks to you, but on another note - I have a future daughter-in-law who will be entering your ranks in the early Spring and I know I am leaving her in very capable hands, so thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: I just want to remind the honourable member for Dartmouth South to direct her comments through the Chair.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, with your permission I would like to do an introduction before I read my notice of motion.

I would like to draw members' attention to the gallery opposite where we're honoured to have a delegation from China, who are here visiting officials and educational institutions in Halifax today. I would like them to rise as they are introduced.

There is an interpreter, so when I read my resolution, I'm sure the interpreter will be able to let them know exactly what I am saying. We have Mr. Chen Shuangwei, Mr. Li Tie, Ms. Sha Bing, and Ms. Wong Shu. We would like to give you a warm welcome to Nova Scotia and to our Legislature. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 2851

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

Whereas the Government of Nova Scotia is committed to ensuring a modern education system built on an innovative curriculum that prepares students to graduate into a world of post-secondary education and employment; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia International Program offers the Nova Scotia curriculum and awards the Nova Scotia high school graduation diploma to students around the world; and

Whereas Shenyang No. 2 High School in China has worked with the Government of Nova Scotia to maintain high standards in delivering Nova Scotia curriculum to its students since 2007;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature recognize the valued educational opportunity and ongoing co-operation between the Government of Nova Scotia and the People's Republic of China.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 2852

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

Whereas December 10th has been declared by the United Nations to be International Human Rights Day and it will be marked in Nova Scotia with events including the Human Rights Awards, which will be presented at Government House this afternoon; and

Whereas we've made significant strides since the inception of International Human Rights Day to ensure we have equal opportunities, safe and accessible workplaces, the right to same-sex marriage, and better recognition of issues faced by the transgender community; and

Whereas this government is committed to working diligently to foster a just and inclusive Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recommit ourselves to building on the great work of human rights advocates, leaders, and governments of the past so that we will continue to improve our society for our children, grandchildren, and many generations to come.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 2853

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: On behalf of the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture and Agriculture, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas since 1969, the Nova Scotia Crop and Livestock Insurance Commission has played a valuable role in supporting economic growth and stability in Nova Scotia's agriculture industry; and

Whereas the commission's 40th annual report highlights the positive impact it and its programs have made in the agriculture sector, including almost \$35 million in income-stabilizing support over its 40-year history; and

Whereas the commission has been proactive in expanding its insurance options to meet the evolving needs of the agriculture industry, including introducing a new grape insurance plan this Fall, which brings the total number of insurance plans to 17,

representing 48 different types of crops and livestock, and providing coverage to over \$160 million in crop and livestock value;

Therefore be it resolved that this House join me in congratulating the board and staff of the Nova Scotia Crop and Livestock Insurance Commission for their history of supporting and encouraging sustainable and fiscally responsible economic growth in our agriculture sector in our province.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2854

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

Whereas Halifax's Irving shipyard won the contract to build 21 ships, 15 surface combatant vessels, and six Arctic offshore patrol ships; and

Whereas during the federal election campaign, Prime Minister Trudeau committed to building all of those ships that Halifax has earned; and

Whereas now the federal Liberal Government's Speech from the Throne has called for a leaner military;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House urge the federal Liberal Government to fulfill its commitment to Nova Scotians and build all 15 surface combatant vessels and all six Arctic offshore patrol ships.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

INTL. HUMAN RIGHTS DAY (12/10/15) - RECOMMIT

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, today is International Human Rights Day. It commemorates December 10, 1948, the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Today is an opportunity to reflect on the political, civil, social, cultural, and economic rights we enjoy here in Canada and be grateful. But it is also time to think about all those who are oppressed, who live in fear, and who see no way out.

This year Human Rights Day is devoted to the launch of a year-long campaign for the 50th Anniversary of the two International Covenants on Human Rights: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 16, 1966.

On Human Rights Day let us re-commit to guaranteeing the fundamental freedoms and protecting human rights for all.

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

INTL. HUMAN RIGHTS DAY (12/10/15): SYRIAN/RWANDAN FAMILIES - WELCOME

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, today, December 10th, is International Human Rights Day. On this day in 1948, the United Nations General Assembly officially adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We are all lucky to live in a province and a country where our human rights are enshrined in law. That doesn't mean that we're perfect or that discrimination does not exist here, but it does mean that as a country we recognize it is unacceptable and are working toward a more respectful and inclusive culture.

In honour of International Human Rights Day, I would also like to extend an early welcome to the two new families who will be arriving in Nova Scotia in the next day or two. One is from Syria and the other from Rwanda - both fleeing violence, persecution, and homelands where their rights were not respected.

I want to welcome them to Canada and to Nova Scotia and I hope that they find the peace, freedom and respect here that they truly deserve.

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

MICHAUD, JULIE - FALL RIVER FUNDRAISING

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure everyone will agree that this is a very busy time of the year for many families, especially those with young children. It's hard to find time between work, school concerts, shopping, decorating, travelling and many holiday-related events. This is why it is my honour to recognize a hard-working group of community members who have volunteered their time to organize and promote a fundraiser event for Julie Michaud and her family.

Julie was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer after the birth of her third child and is currently undergoing treatment in Halifax. On Friday, December 11th, tomorrow, the volunteers are hosting a silent auction, along with other activities, at the LWF Community Hall in Fall River to help the Michaud family.

Thanks to the volunteers for their giving spirit, and best wishes to Julie and her family for a full recovery.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MACDONALD, CST. KEN: COMMUNITY POLICING - RECOGNIZE/HONOUR

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the New Glasgow Regional Police Service is dedicated to providing excellent police service to New Glasgow and Trenton. The New Glasgow Regional Police Service is committed to improving relationships and building trust in their communities. Their mission statement states: "Our police service will work as a team hand in hand with the community to protect and maintain a safe society for all."

Constable Ken MacDonald, for several years, has been the Community Policing Coordinator. Ken has practically worked 24/7 during this time providing presentations, coordinating numerous proactive crime prevention programs in schools, businesses and residential communities. Constable MacDonald is also known for his commitment to the D.A.R.E. program, Drug Abuse Resistant Education. Constable MacDonald created a police youth group with members from several areas of Pictou County.

Constable MacDonald has been recognized and honoured for his work in crime prevention. As a police officer he takes his responsibilities seriously, and his status in our community is one of respect and appreciation.

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

LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES - BUDGET

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, in the Spring budget the Liberal Government cut \$3.6 million from the operating budgets of long-term care facilities throughout the province - and now we have a memo that shows just how much each nursing home has been cut.

Let's look at some of the cuts outside the capital. In Bedford, Ivany Place has had their operating budget cut by nearly \$89,000; Ivy Meadows in Beaver Bank has been cut by \$46,000; and the Eastern Passage Oceanview Manor has been cut by over \$105,000.

Thousands of seniors live in long-term care facilities, calling it home, yet the Liberal Government has cut operating budgets of 63 out of the 87 nursing homes in the province. This is not the government the Liberals promised they would be.

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

GIDNEY FISHERIES: PROCESSING/HOLDING FACILITY - OPENING

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Gidney Fisheries, a wholesaler and exporter of lobster and seafood based in Digby Neck, for being awarded the Digby Area Board of Trade Export Achievement Award. In a business environment where every year some companies struggle and others fail, the Gidneys have been buying and selling lobster since 1892. Even back then they looked for markets outside their area and shipped lobster to Boston once a week. Since then they have expanded into ground fish, scallops, crabs, and dog fish.

Also, Gidney Fisheries now looks much further afield than New England for their export markets. Recently they have made significant inroads in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. As our government has often noted, growth in our economy will depend in large part on the ability of our companies to gain entry into foreign markets.

With lobster season upon us, Gidney Fisheries will be opening a new processing and holding facility in Centreville and employing an additional 20 people. I can think of no more tangible example of a link between excellence in exporting and employment levels at home.

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

NO STONE LEFT ALONE MEM. FDN.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, No Stone Left Alone is a memorial foundation launched in 2011 by Maureen Bianchini-Purvis in recognition of the Canadian men and women who lost their lives in service of peace at home and abroad.

Maureen was inspired by her parents, who served Canada in WWII, and by her daughter, who when placing a poppy on her grandparents' graves noticed that some gravestones were without a poppy year after year. No Stone Left Alone is committed, through its school education outreach program, to fulfill her daughter's mission to see that one day all of the soldiers' headstones would have a poppy placed in their honour, so the cemetery will resemble the idea of Flanders Fields where the poppies grow row on row.

This year, 4,000 junior high school students in our communities across Canada placed poppies on the graves of 20,000 veterans. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to recognize Maureen Bianchini-Purvis, No Stone Left Alone, and their mission.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

FED. GOV'T.: TAX REFORMS - EFFECT

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the new federal Liberal Government's proposed tax reforms will make no changes to the tax rate for the lowest and top two income brackets. Their plan benefits some of Canada's wealthiest and leaves the majority behind. Under the Liberal plan, Canadians earning between \$11,000 and \$45,000 annually will see zero in benefits. High-income earners making \$210,000 would get \$270 in tax cuts.

Sounds good, right? Well, one little problem. Two thirds of Canadian tax filers and over half of Nova Scotians are stuck in the lowest tax bracket, because they earn less than \$45,000 in taxable income annually. In other words, only one in three Canadians earn enough to even qualify for the middle-class tax cut in the first place. This is not the real change that was promised in the 2015 federal election, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

SPRINGVALE ELEM. SCH.: DEMOCRACY 250 FUND - SELECTION

HON. LENA DIAB: On June 9, 2015, I was thrilled to welcome two Grade 6 classes from Springvale Elementary School to the Nova Scotia Legislature. They were one of the three lucky groups selected by the Democracy 250 fund committee to participate in a tour designed to engage young Nova Scotians with local politics.

I was pleased to talk to the class about democracy and politics in Nova Scotia and about what inspires me: namely for them, my children, my grandchildren, and all young people to have a better future. The students were excited to meet the Premier and to be part of a photo shoot in the Red Room, and also to go into the lovely library. This was a venture in making political education accessible and relevant to young students, and I'm happy to have had the chance to help Springvale Elementary get this chance.

On behalf of all of us, I want to congratulate Principal John Dobrowolski, teachers, and staff for assisting us in this venture. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**PICTOU GARDEN CLUB
- PICTOU ELEM. SCHOOLS JR. GARDENING PROG.**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize the Pictou Garden Club for coordinating a junior gardening program in the Pictou elementary schools for the past fifty years. The program was developed to encourage and mentor young gardeners.

Retiring program coordinator Heather Mattie was honoured at the September meeting of the Pictou Garden Club for overseeing the junior program for the last fifteen years. Incoming program coordinator Anne Grattan was a junior gardener when she attended Dawson School in Pictou in the mid-1960s. She remains an avid gardener and looks forward to nurturing the love of gardening in young people.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Heather and Anne for their work with youth and for fostering the love of nature and gardening in Pictou Elementary.

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

ROSEWAY HOSP. - ER CLOSURES

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, the people of Queens-Shelburne have cause for great concern. Emergency department closures at Roseway Hospital have been on the rise since the Liberal Government took office. The accountability report on

emergency departments for 2014-15 shows that there are over 650 hours of closure, up from 117 hours the year before.

Mr. Speaker, the minister continues to play lip service to this issue but the numbers don't lie. It is becoming more and more evident that the minister has no creative solutions to health care in Nova Scotia beyond cutting services.

Mr. Speaker, these numbers on emergency department closures represent a cry for help from rural Nova Scotia. The stakes are high. People's lives are potentially at risk. The Liberal Government needs to do better.

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

**WHITNEY PIER YOUTH CLUB - COMPUTER EQUIPMENT:
EECD MIN. - THANK**

MR. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, the Boys and Girls Club of Cape Breton - Whitney Pier Youth Club, aims to deliver programs and services that promote the well-being of youth and their families within the local community of Whitney Pier and places a particular focus on those individuals who have the least access to programming.

This week I was happy to learn the youth club was successful in receiving computer equipment through the province's Computers for Schools program and the youth club will receive 20 computers, along with 10 laptops, printers and scanners for their new building to open in the near future.

A big thanks to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and her department and all involved with giving the Whitney Pier Youth Club a new opportunity for kids in the community of Whitney Pier and something the club has never been able to offer in the past. This will be a big help with programming and a very welcome addition to the Whitney Pier Youth Club's expansion.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

OWENS, RETA - COMMUN. CONTRIBUTION

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Salvation Army has been helping folks in Pictou County for 130 years but during December they become much more visible in the community. Reta Owens is a volunteer coordinator of the Salvation Army's annual toy drive. She is motivated by her girlhood memories of help from local organizations, including the Army. There are countless hours involved but that fuels her need to give back. Exhausted at the end of the drive, she knows that Christmas morning the smiles on the faces of the kids who receive that special toy will make it all worthwhile.

Mr. Speaker, today I want to thank Reta for her contributions to her community and efforts to make children's Christmases more joyful.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

DOWNTOWN DART. - RENAISSANCE

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: For far too long, people have said the only good thing in Dartmouth is the view. Now downtown Dartmouth is emerging as a place to open new, exciting businesses and for families and individuals to start planting roots.

When I look around my community I see tremendous growth and a spirit that is unwavering. Countless small businesses have opened up their doors in Dartmouth recently, which have added so much value to The City of Lakes. The countless new, small businesses in downtown Dartmouth are thriving and it is a testament to the entire City of Dartmouth.

Mr. Speaker, my community is undergoing a renaissance and I urge all members of the House to hop on the ferry and see it for yourself.

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

CHAMBERS, DR. CHRISTINE: RYL. SOC. (CAN.) - APPT.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Dr. Christine Chambers who was recently appointed to the Royal Society of Canada. The Royal Society of Canada honours distinguished scholars and scientists in our country. Dr. Chambers has been recognized by the society's College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists.

Dr. Chambers is a clinical psychologist and Canada Research Chair in child pain management. Her research is based out of the IWK here in Halifax and examines influences on children's pain, from developmental to social. She has been internationally recognized for her contributions in pain research, and now has been appointed to one of the highest honours a Canadian scholar can achieve.

I commend Dr. Chambers on her impact in the city's health care field and on this prestigious appointment.

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

LAHEY, MICHELLE - WOMEN IN THE HOUSE CONF.: ANNIV. (15th) - COORDINATOR

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, each year the organization Women in the House takes a group of accomplished women to Ottawa where they have an opportunity to

shadow a female MP or senator, as well as attending discussions and meetings. This year's 15th Anniversary Women in House Conference was held in November and was coordinated by Michelle Lahey, a law student at McGill University who is from Albert Bridge.

Michelle is the daughter of Brian and Donna Lahey of Albert Bridge. Michelle feels that as only 26 per cent of elected MPs are women, gender parity is very important. I personally know Michelle Lahey and her parents, and I'm sure that we will hear many more great things in the future of this wonderful young woman.

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

SHOREHAM VILLAGE - REPLACEMENT PROMISE

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, Shoreham Village long-term care facility in Chester is a home for 89 seniors. The staff offers exceptional care with a resident-centred approach and lots of love. Over 40 years ago, community members saw the need and had a vision to build a long-term care facility. As with any structure, time can be harsh on a physical structure and only so much patching work can be done.

While in government, the NDP had the political will and the commitment to invest in creating over 1,000 long-term care beds along with developing a plan to replace those in need of replacement. During the 2013 election the Liberals promised to live up to this replacement plan. Thousands of seniors and their family members were counting on the Liberals to keep this promise. As appalling as it is, this Liberal Government broke this promise. Now seniors like those living in Shoreham Village are left wondering why anyone would break such an important promise.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

BENT, KIRK: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the honourable member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie. Have you ever asked yourself what defines a hero? A hero is someone who is selfless, beyond generous in spirit who gives as much as possible to help others and gives way more than they ever receive. On Saturday, November 21st, Canso hosted its fourth annual alumni game for minor hockey in honour of one of their very own heroes, Kirk Bent.

Often when tragedy strikes we find ourselves wondering, what is the story we want to leave behind. Kirk Bent has left a remarkable story that has touched people all across the country. A talented young athlete, incredible hockey player, including being the first person in Canso to score outside of Nova Scotia.

After high school he went on to become a surveyor and from there moved to British Columbia. This is where he met his wife Lynn and raised three children. He was a man who gave and never stopped giving. He donated to local food banks, SPCA, and any other organization in need. Suddenly at the age of 35 he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Sadly, after two years, Kirk lost his courageous battle and passed away at the age of 37. Even after his death, this outstanding gentleman is still giving. Last year, the tournament, named in his honour raised \$4,000 for the Canso Food Bank and the Canso and Area Minor Hockey in his honour. We are tremendously honoured to have such a charitable and devoted person in our province. Thank you to all who have kept Kirk's memory thriving, we are certain he would be extremely proud.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

CHIASSON, DR. MICHEL ET AL - DR. M.A. MIAN AWARD

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, Doctors Michel Chiasson, Marcel Aucoin, Paul Sonier, and JC Aucoin of Cheticamp are being awarded the Doctor M.A. Mian Award from the Nova Scotia Health Authority for their work helping people living with mental illness and addictions. These physicians have shown leadership to ensure that people in need of mental health services get the help they need in rural Nova Scotia. They've created a model of care where there is always a physician on call and a physician is available to take walk-in patients each morning.

This helps to address the reality for many Nova Scotians that mental health specialists are not always available in their communities. Prompt accessibility is extremely important for anyone who is in need of mental health services. Let's thank these medical professionals for the important work that they are doing.

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

FILM IND. - SIGNIFICANCE

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, the impact of having a film or show shot in a community should not be underestimated. The hiring of local extras, hotels, motels, restaurants, carpenters, and painters are just some of the economic spinoff or benefits associated with this industry. Yesterday, in Public Accounts Committee, Liberal MLAs asked questions that were designed to downplay the significance of the film and television industry in Nova Scotia. These questions were like salt being poured in the wounds of an already hurting industry. Yesterday we learned that there is not much of a plan going forward. Unscripted, the industry continues to wither under this Liberal Government.

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

CAVE, TYSON - WORLD UNION SUPER BANTAMWEIGHT

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Tyson Cave, a Fairview boy and professional boxer who on November 28, 2015 became the World Boxing Union Super Bantamweight Champion in less than two rounds. This event was held at the Dartmouth Sportsplex, making Tyson not only the first Nova Scotia-born boxer to win a world title on home soil but also the first Nova Scotia-born boxer to win a world title since 1888.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Mr. Cave on his victory, thank him for demonstrating how athletic and competitive Nova Scotia can be to the rest of the world, and for making us in Fairview very, very proud.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MING'S REST. (NEW GLASGOW) - THANK

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, since 1979, a family with a diverse Chinese heritage has grown their business from humble beginnings to being one of the most popular and renowned Chinese Canadian restaurants on the East Coast.

Ming's Restaurant is located on Provost Street in downtown New Glasgow. The restaurant was founded on the principles of great food, service, and value, and these standards still guide their business today. Ming's combines the highest-quality produce from the local community with selected ingredients that are globally sourced for authentically traditional dishes. The owners and staff's dedication and commitment to excellence in culinary expertise, and their guarantee of quality service continues to be their trademark.

Pictou County residents have been receiving exceptional Chinese dishes for more than three decades. Residents of Pictou County wish to thank Ming's for their outstanding pledge to excellence.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

COM. SERV. MIN. - BUDGET CHANGES: POOR/DISABLED - EFFECTS

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, last week protesters from the national non-profit group ACORN took to the streets of Halifax to draw attention to the effects that recent decisions made by the Minister of Community Services and her department have had on the poor and disabled in Nova Scotia.

Since this year's budget, we have seen a new interpretation of the Employment Support and Income Assistance Act regulations and policies, which have resulted in the elimination of bus passes and transportation passes for our province's most vulnerable individuals.

Mr. Speaker, is this really the way that this government wants to balance the books? Surely there are more creative options.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

COOPER, WILLIAM/WYNN, MEGAN - MAR. JR. LIMOUSIN SHOW

HON. KAREN CASEY: Junior members from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island attended the Maritime Junior Limousin Show on September 12th and 13th, held at Balamore Farms in Great Village, and hosted by Joe and Carolyn Cooper. Balamore Farms is the home of the largest herd of Limousin cattle in Atlantic Canada. The two-day event involved points awarded for judging, clipping competition, photography, quality of the Limousin entry, and showmanship classes.

Two Colchester North juniors received awards: William Cooper was awarded the Grand Champion, and Megan Wynn of Crows Mills, received the Reserve Champion. The event was a success, and the Coopers have been asked and agreed to host the event next year.

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

MACLEAN, EMMA: 4-H AWARDS - CONGRATS.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Emma MacLean, a 17-year-old young woman from Sydney Mines, who was chosen as the provincial champion senior public speaker and Nova Scotia's 4-H hostess for 2015-16.

Emma's passion is 4-H. It has helped her learn many life skills. Emma is one of the more than 2,000 4-H members and 1,000 volunteers of 100 4-H clubs in Nova Scotia who complete 4,700 projects annually.

It's a true honour to have this opportunity to recognize this remarkable young lady who plans to be involved with 4-H until she's old and grey. Thank you.

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

INDIGENOUS WOMEN/GIRLS - NATL. INQUIRY

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, we marked the beginning of a process that is long overdue. The federal Ministers of Justice, Status of Women, and Indigenous Affairs will be touring the country over the next two months to determine the objectives and the scope of a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women.

I join the many Canadians from all political stripes who acknowledge the significance of taking the first step towards an inquiry. For far too long, the federal government has refused to take concrete action on this issue.

As the federal Minister of Justice said recently, the extent of violence against indigenous women and girls is not an indigenous problem. It's not simply a women's issue either. It's a national tragedy that requires an urgent and deliberate national response.

MR. SPEAKER: The time allotted for Statements By Members is drawing to a close.

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

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

PREM.: MENTAL HEALTH UNITS - CLOSURES

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Yesterday when he was discussing in an interview the future of mental health services in the province, the Minister of Health and Wellness said "one of the options being considered by the newly amalgamated Nova Scotia health authority is having fewer mental health units in the province."

That one statement will come as a shock to the thousands of Nova Scotian families who are in crisis and rely on those mental health units. I would like to ask the Premier, exactly how many of Nova Scotia's mental health units does his government plan to close?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I, again, want to thank the Minister of Health and Wellness for continuing to work with health care providers across the province, health care clinicians who are providing services from one end of the Province of Nova Scotia to the other in communities, helping to make sure we have the proper infrastructure in place for those clinicians to serve our citizens. I can speak for all members of this House and I think, indeed, all members on this side, but I think, indeed, all members of this House, we want

to make sure we have the proper services in place for when Nova Scotian families require services around them for health issues, in particular around adolescent mental health.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, proper mental health services across the province include the mental health units at our hospitals. We've been asking about the short-stay unit at the Aberdeen here all week - we can't get a straight answer about the future of that mental health unit. Now the Minister of Health and Wellness says other mental health units may close at the same time. And I've tabled the quote from the media where he said one of the solutions may include fewer mental health units.

So, Mr. Speaker, which mental health units are in jeopardy?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for raising the question. The Minister of Health and Wellness has been straightforward with Nova Scotians when it comes to the delivery of health care. The model of delivery is changing across our province in all aspects of delivering health care, and I would suggest to you mental health will be part of that journey.

I want to assure the honourable member that the Minister of Health and Wellness is relying on those professionals who deliver those services to Nova Scotian families who require those mental health services. As we do across the entire spectrum of health care delivery, we rely on the professionals to provide advice to this government so that we ensure that we put in place the right public policy pieces.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the mental health delivery system is changing and it's not getting better - it is in crisis. Families are going without the help that they need. Do you know what? Mental health professionals want to do a good job and that includes having mental health units in our hospitals where they can admit people to when they are in crisis, like the short-stay unit at the Aberdeen in New Glasgow. That is why it is so important that Nova Scotians know what the future of those mental health units is, starting with the one in New Glasgow and including the others around the province.

The minister said the future may include fewer mental health units and I want to ask the Premier, is the mental health unit at the Aberdeen in New Glasgow one of the ones that they're considering closing?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question and I want to correct something that he said. He said that the health care providers, the mental health clinicians across the province, want to do a good job - I want to ensure the honourable member they are doing a good job across this province. We are going to work with them to ensure that we have supports across our province in communities so that Nova Scotian families who require mental health services will have them there for them to be able to reach out, rely on, the health care professional who will guide the direction on how we deliver those services to Nova Scotia families.

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

PREM.: ER CLOSURES - INCREASES

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I think we all would agree there is no more important government function than ensuring Nova Scotians have access to quality and timely care in an emergency. When people are sick they don't care how many district health authorities we have in the province, they just want to see a health care provider as soon as possible. According to data in yesterday's Emergency Department Accountability Report, ER closures have increased by 30 per cent in the last year - or more than 6,000 hours under the Liberal Government.

My question to the Premier is this, why has he allowed emergency room closures to increase by 30 per cent in the last year?

THE PREMIER: I want to again compliment the Minister of Health and Wellness and the people in the Department of Health and Wellness, who are working with communities across this province to provide a model of care that reflects the ability in that community. We've seen a tremendous growth in the collaborative practice model, we're seeing nurse practitioners playing a much more active role in the delivery of health care, and we're seeing a new residence program - rural residency - which is now encouraging more doctors to live and stay in rural communities.

We're seeing some pickup on the issues of the dedicated seats at Dalhousie Medical School, where we fund, providing those physicians will go to work in communities where we need them; we're beginning to see some of those changes. I don't think anyone in this House would suggest to you there isn't more work to do, but we're going to do what we've been doing for the last two years: continuing to work with health care professionals, not for short-term fixes but for long-term solutions to the challenges this province faces.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, this government has not opened one new Collaborative Emergency Centre in the two years they've been in government, and ER closures are deteriorating. In Cape Breton, ER closures have doubled - an increase of 5,000 hours. Southwest Nova Scotia - they've doubled there as well. In the Guysborough Antigonish Strait region, ER closures are up almost 100 per cent.

My question for the Premier is, what is he going to do to reverse this trend and keep ERs open in communities where they're needed?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to continue to work with health care providers across this province to ensure that we have the delivery model that works for communities across this province. This government, this Minister of Health and Wellness, has continued to demonstrate to health care providers that he's listening, that he's paying attention, and that he's working with them to deliver services to Nova Scotia.

That's the direction we're going to continue to go in, because we are not looking for short-term solutions here. We're looking for long-term, sustainable delivery of services for Nova Scotian families.

MS. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, between 2009 and 2013, emergency room closures decreased by 21 per cent province-wide. In spite of this progress, the Premier, in 2013, in Opposition called a 21 per cent improvement in ER closures, and I quote, "an abysmal failure." I'll table that.

Two years later, under the Premier's guidance, emergency room closures have risen by 30 per cent, which means emergency room closures are now worse than they were at the end of the MacDonald Government.

My question for the Premier is this, can he explain to this House why his record on keeping emergency rooms open has been, in his own words, "an abysmal failure"?

THE PREMIER: Again, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The solution that the former government, the New Democratic Party, had when that Minister of Health and Wellness was - wasn't about anything to do with emergency room hours. They actually closed eight emergency rooms across this province, Mr. Speaker.

The fact of the matter is the Minister of Health and Wellness is continuing to work with health care providers and community organizations to ensure the long-term, sustainable delivery of health care in communities across this province. No matter how distracted they become, this government will stay dedicated to delivering those services to the people of this province.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: CECs (CUMB. CO.) - CLOSURES

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The fact of that matter is that the hours of closure at the Collaborative Care Centres in Cumberland County increased by 64 per cent in the last year. That's more than any other part of the province. Cumberland County residents were sold on the use of these CECs because they would avoid closures and hours of closures in their emergency rooms. Mr. Speaker, those hours are now up 64 per cent.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness, can he explain to this House why the CEC hours of closure jumped 64 per cent under his watch?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: During the past year we've had a very strong and significant report done by Mary Jane Hampton around CECs. We know that in some communities they're not providing emergency care; everybody now knows and realizes

that. It is primary health care and that is what is being delivered, same day or next day. It's a great concept and as Mary Jane found in her report, that application was not working as well in all of the eight communities.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, the people of Cumberland County will not be comforted to know that the minister's answer is that he commissioned a report. At South Cumberland Community Care Centre the hours of closure were up 163 per cent in one year; All Saints in Springhill, 28 per cent; North Cumberland in Pugwash, up 49 per cent. That is what happened in one year under the minister's watch.

In other parts of the province where this happens, they do public consultation to engage the public to see what can be done to turn this around. Nothing such as that has happened in Cumberland County, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the minister to explain why there has been no public consultation in Cumberland County about this record in that part of Nova Scotia and will he commit to a round of public consultations with the people of Cumberland to fix this problem?

MR. GLAVINE: One thing I can tell the honourable member is that the people of Springhill and that area of the province have not reached out to me, have not reached out to the department about the issues they have. They have sufficient GPs working in their community.

We know that the Nova Scotia Health Authority has now done their clinical services review and we'll take their recommendations on how they solve and resolve the problems that are at Springhill.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: ER CLOSURES - INCREASES

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, families across the province are frequently met with the closed sign at their emergency room. They are forced to travel long distances for health care and with the Nova Scotia winter approaching, you can imagine how dangerous and difficult that will be for them, especially seniors.

We know that emergency room closures across Nova Scotia have increased by over 30 per cent, more than 6,000 hours compared to last year, in addition, Mr. Speaker, in the past year. Why has the minister allowed emergency room closures to rise so dramatically in one year?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we know that we have a year divided by the - really we're under the nine districts, that is the statistic that we are looking at here in the House today.

I can already communicate to the members and all Nova Scotians that the tracking and the pattern for 2015-16 has a dramatically improved trending going on. About 5,000 hours were among three hospitals and those were pretty well all scheduled closures, summer hours that are now a pattern for many years in those communities.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Well Collaborative Emergency Centres have proven to be an effective way to reduce emergency closures in rural communities. The Liberal Government has failed to open a single CEC in the past two years, in spite of numerous promises from the minister.

Yesterday in Question Period the minister claimed there is no emergency care in the communities with Collaborative Emergency Centres. That does a great disservice, Mr. Speaker, to the paramedics, the nurses and other health care workers who are working to ensure there are no longer closed signs at these hospitals.

I'd like to ask the minister, why is the minister now opposed to opening new CECs in the province, as part of a plan to tackle the rising emergency room closure rates?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I'm very pleased that the trending for this fiscal year is on its way down. In terms of CECs, this year we gave the new Nova Scotia Health Authority an opportunity to take a look at what services are required in what communities. They are developing a plan that will have stronger care, whether it be emergency care, primary health care, in our communities across Nova Scotia and we're already seeing the benefits of some of their early work.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - FOOD BANKS: DONORS - TAX CREDITS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Everyone should be aware of the lack of fresh, local food at Nova Scotia food banks. One idea to fix this would be to give a tax credit to farmers who donate food to food banks. Farmers support this; Feed Nova Scotia supports this; and our own Minister of Health and Wellness supported it - and I'll table this from his own website:

“Mr. Glavine’s proven tenacity to better the lives of his fellow constituents and all Nova Scotians is evident in his persistence to introduce dozens of private Member’s Bills, including . . . The Food Bank Tax Credit for Farmers Act to promote donations of healthy, local produce to Food Banks . . .”

So, my question is, could the minister explain what has changed his thinking since he first advanced this idea?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what I can convey to the member for Inverness, and all members of the House and all Nova Scotians, is that the good ideas of Opposition also continue in government. This is an important issue for our government to give the strongest consideration to, and what I can tell him is that the Finance and Treasury Board Department is currently working on what may be the best approach to help farmers get food into food banks across Nova Scotia.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we would like to see an idea like this advance into law. We're talking about making families healthier; helping children to perform better in school; we're talking about reducing the burden on the health care system by giving people better access to nutrition. Surely that would save any cost that this tax credit would cost the province.

Tomorrow is CBC Feed Nova Scotia Day and it is all about raising awareness and funds. What better time for this Legislature to get together and show our good will, it's almost Christmas, get together and pass this law?

I put this out on the Internet and I had a comment from somebody and I thought, they asked a question and I think I'll ask it here because it's obvious: Where is the common sense of this government?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member and the Opposition for bringing this forward in the form of a bill. It has brought very strong discussion here to the floor of the Legislature and I welcome that discussion, and it also reminds me of actually encouraging the Opposition, the House Leader, to ask me questions about mental health because like food, it's all of our business to do a great job in this area.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**NAT. RES. - BIOMASS CONSUMPTION/ELECTRICITY GENERATION:
WOOD PELLETS - IMPACT**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Minister of Natural Resources. It now seems likely, for a second year in a row, Nova Scotians who use wood pellets to heat their homes will face a shortage. With large industrial players like Nova Scotia Power in the wood fibre market, some argue that the shortage of supply is due to a competition over a scarce supply of wood by-products and biomass materials used to make this wood product.

My question to the minister: Has the Department of Natural Resources studied the impact of biomass consumption for electricity generation with regard to the supply of wood fibre available to the manufacturers of wood pellets?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, all indications that we have in the department at this point is that we are not faced with a fibre shortage this year when it comes to heating people's homes. I think that Nova Scotians can take great comfort in the fact that the market has levelled itself out and people are receiving the fuel that they need to heat themselves in the winter.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, while it is encouraging to hear about organizations such as Haley Street Adult Services Centre in North Sydney, that are producing pellets on a small scale in the community, we also know that some manufacturers export wood pellets overseas where the exchange rate is high and there is significant demand. I am aware that the product shipped overseas is sometimes a different type of pellet that is used in stoves in homes.

My question for the minister is, what action has the minister taken to encourage the production of this wood product in Nova Scotia for domestic use, to ensure that Nova Scotians are not left with cold homes and unused stoves again this year?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, again, all indications to date is that the market has levelled itself out and we will not be faced with a fibre fuel shortage for folks in their homes. I think Nova Scotians can take great comfort in that.

When it comes to wood pellets, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the trends where the forestry sector is going, energy is playing a bit part of that. Our department is very focused on keeping ahead of that trend and helping steward our great natural resource sector, forestry in particular, into the future, and I believe that energy is going to be a big part of that, thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Just before we move on to the next question I have to remind the honourable member for Inverness in his quoting the honourable Minister of Health and Wellness by name, that it is in fact against the rules in O'Brien and Bosc in that great parliamentary quote: It is against the rules for a member to do indirectly what therefore can be done directly. I'd be happy to provide the details of that to you later.

The honourable Acting Leader of the New Democratic Party.

PREM. - MENTAL HEALTH UNITS: CLOSURES - OPTION EXPLAIN

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: What a great Speaker, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday when the Minister of Health and Wellness was asked about the closure of the short stay unit at the Aberdeen Hospital, which has been closed now for four months, he stated that one of the options the government is considering is having fewer mental health units in Nova Scotia. My question for the Premier is, could the Premier please explain why closing mental health units is an option for his government?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe that's what the Minister of Health and Wellness said. I believe what he talked about was service delivery and the service delivery model across all health care spectrums. We're working with our health care providers to ensure that we have in place the proper infrastructure that they require to deliver services to Nova Scotian families and the minister is continuing to work with health care clinicians to ensure that that is the case.

MS. MACDONALD: Well, Mr. Speaker, proper infrastructure would be required in the community, if you were going to be closing mental health units, but last year in the government's budget, the Minister of Health and Wellness reduced mental health funding to community-based mental health groups by \$4 million. I'll table the briefing note from the department with respect to that.

So, my question to the Premier is, could the Premier please explain how closing mental health units, while reducing funding for community-based mental health groups, could be an effective way to get treatment to Nova Scotians who need mental health services?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to thank all those organizations across our province who work in partnership with government to help deliver services to families in need, to respond to the challenges that may appear or may show up in their community.

I also want to tell the honourable member that there have been more mental health clinicians and providers added to the Aberdeen Hospital, in the emergency department. The minister is working with those health care providers to ensure that we'll respond to the requests that they have in order to be able to deliver those services to Nova Scotian families that require it.

It is absolutely to the point why we need the support of the New Democratic Party and the Progressive Conservative Party to rein in labour costs in this province, so that we can use some of those precious dollars to invest in mental health services, to respond to the needs of food banks. All of that requires an investment and we need all of our partners to do that. So, I'm really pleased to see the Opposition members stand up and endorse the ability of this government to get a labour mandate that we can afford to pay so that we can provide those other services that Nova Scotia families need.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - HILLSIDE TRENTON:
FLY ASH - URINALYSIS**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The people of the Hillside Trenton Environmental Group have been working hard for years to safeguard their communities from toxic pollution. They last met with the Minister of Health and Wellness this past October; also they have had meetings with the past Environment Minister, now the Finance and Treasury Board Minister, and as well with the past Energy Minister to discuss their concerns regarding fly ash from NSP.

It was agreed that a urine analysis was in order to detect heavy metals. Can the minister please give us an update with this analysis and when it will be conducted, as I'm sure he would agree that it's long overdue?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I can tell the member opposite that, while that kind of sampling of urine analysis can reveal heavy metals that may be in a person's body, we also know that the medical community, the provincial health authority - nobody has brought this forward in terms of the current medical community that is in that community. If they've consulted with some other clinician, that's fine; that's their prerogative. But this must go through the proper process in order for the department to act.

MS. MACFARLANE: I want to thank the minister for his answer. I do believe he did promise the group that this would be conducted. Given the unusually high rate of cancer and MS in this particular area of Pictou County, would the minister agree that perhaps an epidemiological study is in order?

MR. GLAVINE: What we have done in terms of Pictou County is take a look at the incidences of different cancers. The conclusion at this point in terms of Pictou County is that they don't have rates as high as some other counties in Nova Scotia. If they need to take a look, they need to make an actual formal request through the medical community. That has not been done.

I'm not going to take the advice of the members opposite if they are currently getting advice from outside the medical profession of Nova Scotia.

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

FIN. & TREASURY BD.: ACCOUNTANTS MERGER - CONSULTATION

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Acting Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. A merger among the province's three accounting professions is under way. Government has brought forward legislation in support of the merger. We are now hearing from some concerned CGAs that their voices were not heard.

My question to the acting minister is, will the minister tell the House what steps the government is taking to ensure that all the province's accountants are heard?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you for the question. In my capacity as Acting Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, I certainly will share with the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board what the question is and ask that he respond to you directly.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, it's the job of the government to ensure that when legislation comes to the House, proper consultation has been done with key stakeholders. We have seen too many examples of the government acting first and consulting later.

Will the acting minister explain why CGAs are raising concerns this late in the process?

MS. CASEY: To the member opposite, I think we all recognize the importance of consultation, whether it's with any bill that's coming before the House or whether it's information that we're gathering within our department. We always want to look at all possible stakeholders, hear their side of the story, use their information, collect that within the department, and then make informed decisions based on that information.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - CNIB: FUNDING - ENSURE

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow will be one month since the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and their supporters protested outside this Legislature. The CNIB needs sustainable funding so that their place in delivering vision rehabilitation in the province is protected. I'd like to ask the minister, what is the Minister of Health and Wellness doing to ensure that vision rehabilitation services continue to be available through the CNIB?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I'm pleased to say that both the Premier and I have met with the CNIB, and we will have an announcement very shortly in terms of the short-term requirements that they have. But tomorrow I will be visiting the CNIB centre to take a look at some of their rehabilitation work. As has already been alluded to in a couple of answers here today, the CNIB do wonderful work, and we're absolutely committed to the long-term viability of the CNIB.

MR. DAVID WILSON: It's our understanding that the minister will be announcing support, the \$152,000 that was cut through the Minister of Community Services will be reinstated this year, but only as a one-time funding support. The CNIB will be forced to lay off vision rehabilitation specialists in January if they cannot get a commitment for adequate funding before then. The CNIB is at a point where cutting the position does not

mean longer wait times. It means services that are not offered anywhere else in Nova Scotia will be eliminated.

I'd like to ask the minister, why won't the minister commit to long-term, sustainable funding for vision rehabilitation services through the CNIB?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that we've had some very beneficial discussions. We know that, like a number of organizations, there was funding coming from two or three different streams. Rehabilitation fits 100 per cent under the Health and Wellness Department, and in the next matter of weeks we'll be helping and working with CNIB to chart a course for the future to continue the outstanding work they do.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - HILLSIDE TRENTON:
URINALYSIS PROMISE - MIN. CONFIRM**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. I was listening intently to the minister's commentary with respect to the Hillside situation. The people of Hillside are certainly under the impression that the minister promised to conduct a urine analysis, and they have been patiently waiting - maybe getting a little impatient in their waiting for that. I certainly believe that the minister promised that as well, having been in some of those meetings.

I seemed to hear from the minister today that maybe he didn't promise it. I'd just like to ask the minister, does he feel that he promised the people of Hillside that he would conduct a urine analysis or not?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, along the way, as you know, I had my very first meeting with the people from Hillside as a community. I had met with Peter Boyles on a number of occasions. It's my understanding that the former Minister of Environment had actually talked about the need for that particular test.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that response. The former Minister of Environment certainly did promise that, but in the meetings that I was in with the Minister of Health and Wellness, I had the impression that he was also supportive of that type of analysis. Perhaps he has gone away and spoken to some people in the medical community who have told him that it's not necessary. I'm not sure, that sounds like maybe what I heard today.

I guess what I would ask the minister is, if he has spoken to people in the medical community who have told him not to bother with this, will he meet with the people of the Hillside group and tell them what he is prepared to bother with? These people are

concerned about their health and they deserve some answers and some fulfilment of the promises from this government.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'd be very pleased to go back and meet the people of Hillside, of the Trenton area. There has been no formal request made in terms of a urine analysis test to determine heavy metals. That will need to come through medical personnel, epidemiologists, who may see some benefit in carrying out that test.

We have not had that request made to the Department of Health and Wellness.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS:
SUTHERLAND HARRIS DIALYSIS CLINIC - UPDATE**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Currently we have a waiting list of approximately six individuals at the Sutherland Harris satellite dialysis clinic in Pictou. Patients have to travel to Truro.

My question for the minister is, will the minister give the members of this House an update with regard to the demand for more services for patients requiring dialysis in Pictou County?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the dialysis challenges that a number of residents in Pictou County have. We know that this is a growing procedure that more Nova Scotians are having to receive. Again, our high rate of diabetes is one of the factors that propels that very high demand.

I am aware of the situation in Pictou. We've addressed it with the provincial health authority, and I know they are working on a solution.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the Aberdeen Hospital is currently under a two-year construction phase with a new ER, labs, and pharmacy being created.

My question to the minister is, I've been told by an office here in Halifax that any new dialysis sites must be located in hospitals. With this new construction underway at the Aberdeen Hospital, would the Aberdeen Hospital be a reasonable site for dialysis treatment?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I know that we are taking a look at the provincial program. We know that the dialysis service across Nova Scotia has had a need to expand. We know that we have a number of regional hospitals that are requesting that they have a dialysis unit and, in January, there will be an update on the provincial program as well as

where satellite locations will be determined and start the process of developing those in the future.

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

COM. SERV. - CHESTER-ST. MARGARET'S: SENIORS - HOME REPAIRS

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Community Services. Last week I asked why it takes more than a year for Housing Nova Scotia to provide emergency housing repairs for seniors living in Chester-St. Margaret's. I spoke of two seniors who are at risk of losing their homes if Housing Nova Scotia does not provide help soon.

Another senior in my community, Ms. Laura Edmonds, is also facing serious health and safety issues in her home and has been patiently waiting for Housing Nova Scotia to repair her roof since October 27, 2014. Two years ago she received a grant from Efficiency Nova Scotia to install insulation in her home, which is in jeopardy of being destroyed due to the lack of action by Housing Nova Scotia.

So my question to the minister is, can the minister tell the seniors in Chester-St. Margaret's when they can expect their homes to be repaired?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. As she would know, being the former minister responsible for Housing Nova Scotia, actually Housing Nova Scotia doesn't do any of the repairs on any individual's or any of the client's houses themselves; that is done by contractors in the community - oftentimes, which there is a wait-list for. Another reason for a wait-list is sometimes families are just above the income threshold for qualifying for programs within the seniors housing program and what they do is we know that those income levels are reset every year by CMHC, so we wait and see if perhaps they are gathered up in the next round of reset so that they can go on the list to have their repairs done.

Any money that is left over in one year, of course are all committed. They're just not booked because they are not done. There is no pot of money at the end of the day where people are not getting their needs met because of money unspent.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. It has nothing to do with contract work or any other thing that the minister is saying. They have been approved; they are waiting for the funding. Can I be any more clear? They're waiting for the funding, and on a list waiting because the budget has been underspent.

Through the freedom of information Act - and I will table this - it says that applicants for home repair programs normally get their funding within three to six months.

This is not happening. The seniors are concerned about their health, the health of their family, and they're deeply concerned that they are going to be homeless.

So can the minister please give us a straight answer - nothing to do with contractors please, nothing to do with the level of income, it is about they're already approved. What will the minister commit to do, today, to ensure that the seniors in my community can be safe and healthy in their homes?

MS. BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, again I just want to make it perfectly clear as well, I have been to every housing authority in this province, I know that there are wait-lists, but I also know that there are mitigating circumstances in every community from contractors, from people on wait-lists trying to get the work done in their community, there are backlogs with that, I understand that, but there is no money that has not been committed and sent out to communities and to applicants that has been unspent - not one penny; it has all been booked.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

EECD: EAST PICTOU MID. SCHOOL - DAYTIME CUSTODIAN

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. There are schools throughout my region, specifically East Pictou Middle School, where there is no daytime custodian. If you think about a school filled with students with no daytime custodian, it's not a good thing, especially heading into the wintertime, and I guess it's just something else that we're asking teachers to care for in the school.

Chignecto-Central Regional School Board announced this morning that they had a budget windfall, as a result of the lower gas prices - a million dollars - and that has been distributed in certain ways. But my question for the minister is, has the minister had any discussions with the board about making sure that there are daytime custodians in schools, and specifically a daytime custodian in East Pictou Middle School?

HON. KAREN CASEY: To the member opposite, I think one of your colleagues also asked a question earlier in the session about custodians in our schools. My response then will be the same as it is today, or was the same, and that is that the allocation of custodians to schools is by formula that's used by the board. The board would determine what level of custodial care was required in each of their buildings and they would assign their staff to that.

The funding that comes from the department to the board is used by the board to respond to the many needs that they have and if there's a concern about the level of custodial care, I would suggest to the member that that concern come through his board member, to the board, to make sure that those concerns, from that particular community

and from that particular MLA, get to the decision makers, which would be the board members.

MR. HOUSTON: I would like to assure the members of this House that my MLA is a very good MLA. Last week we had the Auditor General here raising concerns about the department holding the boards accountable, and I share those concerns that the Auditor General raised. My question is it's not acceptable to me that we have schools without a daytime custodian. There have always been daytime custodians in these schools and now there are not. The funding formula may have changed, the school sizes certainly have not, but it's just not right.

So my question for the minister is, does the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development feel that it's completely acceptable to have schools that do not have a daytime custodian?

MS. CASEY: As I've said earlier, the decision about the allocation of services to schools is made at the board level, by the elected board members, based on recommendations that they would get from their staff; that is a responsibility that boards have, and I will leave that responsibility to them. That's not to say, Mr. Speaker, that we do not monitor the effectiveness of the use of funding that comes from taxpayers, through us to the schools, and we certainly are asking boards to be accountable, and that's why I'm asking this member to take that concern, and I would be anxious to know, and I will find out what formula that particular board is using to allocate their custodial staff.

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

LAE - OH&S REGULATIONS: PHASE II - PLAN

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. Last Fall the Department of Labour and Advanced Education brought its draft Phase II Occupational Health and Safety Regulations to the public. After receiving significant negative feedback and concerns, especially from small businesses, the department indicated it was putting on the brakes to this process in February.

Will the minister tell the House what the plan is going forward with Phase II of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for his question, and I think we all remember the day when the member for Pictou Centre stood up and read out the very complicated chemical formula that folks had to follow under some proposed regulations, and chemistry was never my strong suit, but it was pretty confusing.

So we've actually gone back and we've developed a clear, more comprehensive engagement plan. We hope to have that signed off on soon and we expect to be back out to the community in the coming year.

MR. ORRELL: I thank the minister for her answer. Nova Scotians want modern and effective Occupational Health and Safety Regulations that work for employers and keep workers safe.

Stakeholders told the department that the draft brought forward by the department had many components that were not workable - complex, confusing language, and equations that do not work for small employers without dedicated HR of occupational health and safety staff. The vast majority of employers want to create a safe workplace but need clear, straightforward regulations to help them.

My question to the minister is, will the minister commit to bringing forward regulations for employers and workers, and improve on the complicated and flawed draft brought to Nova Scotians last fall?

MS. REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member, and I do want to let him know that, in addition to going out with this plan, in the new year we're also looking at opportunities to engage with the community on a regular basis.

For example, we've developed a tool kit for small employers around occupational health and safety. We're making sure that we're using our opportunities when we're out doing occupational health and safety blitzes that we actually include an educational component in there because what we've found is that when we use clear, simple language and we listen to the community, we get better results. So thank you to the honourable member for the question.

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

LAE - UNIV. TUITION: CAP REMOVAL - REVERSE

HON. DAVID WILSON: Lifting the cap on university tuition is one in a long line of short-sighted decisions this government is struggling to contain. On Tuesday, NSCAD's board of governors voted to increase tuition by 27 per cent. For graduate students, tuition is going up 30 per cent.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, when will the minister reverse her decision to take the cap off university tuition?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question and advise him that in fact the cap is still in place. We are allowing a market adjustment as

we indicated previously. I think it was that member who did raise the question last week or a couple of weeks ago.

In the particular case of NSCAD, they had students who were paying for four courses but were able to take a fifth and sixth for free. We just think that taxpayers need to make sure that they're getting fair value for the money that they're putting into our institutions. It's simply not something, quite frankly, that that institution can afford to do any longer.

MR. DAVID WILSON: No matter how many times the minister says they didn't lift the cap, Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians know, and university students know. When they're facing a 27 per cent increase, and that's not lifting the cap, what is it?

Students are concerned. In NSCAD alone, enrolment is down by well over 119 full-time students. That is concerning for the students who are there currently - 27 per cent and 30 per cent increases facing those students.

What is the minister going to do to ensure that enrolment in our universities goes in the opposite way - not decline but increase? Under the lifting of the cap, it's not going to help. What is the minister going to do to ensure that our universities are thriving here in Nova Scotia?

MS. REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I can tell you what I won't do: I won't do what that Party did when they were in power. After getting a report talking about the fragility of our university system, they turned around and cut \$35 million. (Interruptions) When I talk about the fragility of our system, Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education has the floor.

MS. REGAN: When I talk about the fragility of the system, I'm not saying that our universities aren't great because they are great. But in fact what we know is that the available pool of young Nova Scotians is declining because of the birth rate. What I am saying is that we have to make sure that we take measures to make sure that our universities can retain students here.

We know that for some students, this is a difficult thing to hear. We know change is hard, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we have one of the best student assistance programs in the country. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: My question is for the Acting Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Kings North has the floor.

MR. LOHR: Nova Scotia's lobster industry is worth \$400 million. Recently there were reports about a green crab virus that can affect lobster. What is the Minister of Fisheries . . .

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

Just before we move on to Government Business, the honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs on an introduction.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, just to explain why I was so well-behaved today, my mother Joanne Bishara is in the audience here in the east gallery. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has taken the liberty to do, every chance he gets, to remind myself she is why I have been elected twice to this Legislature. Of course I owe her much more than that, my mother was a teacher for over 30 years in Yarmouth and has made a great contribution to our community.

As we prepare for a new influx of immigrants, I think it's time we take time to reflect on the great generational impact that families of immigrants have had on our communities, Mr. Speaker, and get excited for the great opportunities that present us in the future as we welcome new people to our shores. (Applause)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: And he is never too old for a time out, is he?

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

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

[2:51 p.m. The House recessed.]

[2:56 p.m. The House resolved into a CW on Bills with Deputy Speaker Ms. Margaret Miller in the Chair.]

[3:26 p.m. CW on Bills rose and the House reconvened with Madam Speaker Ms. Margaret Miller in the Chair.]

MADAM SPEAKER: The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 138 - Chartered Professional Accountants Act.

Bill No. 140 - Public Accountants Act.

without amendments, and

Bill No. 139 - Municipal Elections Act.

with certain amendments, and

Bill No. 110 - Marine Renewable-energy Act.

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

Bill No. 143 - Regulatory Accountability and Reporting Act.

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

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

The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg on an introduction.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Madam Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of our Legislature to the west gallery where we have today sitting with us, Mr. Dan Boyd. Dan is a member of our caucus staff and he has been with us in our caucus for a quarter-century. He is a member who works hard, is very committed to serving the people who work in our office, and has been very active in his own community as a county councillor and a municipal councillor. Dan has decided to call it quits at the end of the year. He's going to take his retirement package and move on to other things.

On behalf of all of our caucus and certainly members present and past, I would like to congratulate Dan and thank him for the service that he has given. I would ask all members of the House to recognize, as they would know from their own staff in their own caucus offices, how hard and gruelling a job it is to satisfy the needs of MLAs, and thank Dan. I'll ask Dan to rise. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: If I'm not mistaken, I think Dan told me he started under the Buchanan days, so he goes back quite a bit and has seen a lot of political history in our province.

Madam Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Public Bills for Third Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 112.

Bill No. 112 - Children and Family Services Act.

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

HON. MAUREEN MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, I had an opportunity to make some opening comments on Bill No. 112 and I would like to pick up from that. Perhaps first I will summarize the points that I had made.

This bill is a very, very important bill; it's probably one of the most important bills that a Legislature could ever be entrusted with, and that is because it deals with the most vulnerable in our society in many ways: children, their well-being, and essentially the conditions under which they will either thrive or not thrive. I was saying, when I had a chance to talk on this bill before, that our ideas, our concept of what a child is and what a child needs has changed quite dramatically in the past century, let's say.

The very fact that we have child welfare legislation is in and of itself an interesting history. We had legislation protecting animals before we had legislation protecting children. In fact, the early child welfare organizations, the Children's Aid Societies, were often, and I think in our province, were an off-branch of the Society for the Protection of

Cruelty to Animals. So as a society we have come to the realization, somewhat late I suppose in some ways, that children in particular, particularly children at a very young age, have particular needs and we are bound, ethically and morally, to ensure that those needs are met.

We take more of an interest in the needs of children, as a society, than just allowing families, parents, to make every single, solitary decision about children. We have compulsory education in our province and in our country. That wasn't always the case. No doubt if you go back and look at the debates around compulsory education, you will find people who would have argued very strenuously that the state and government had no business requiring families to send their children to schools.

This is a really interesting field, the whole field of children, childhood development and child welfare. In no way do I have any expertise in this area but I have worked with many families where the well-being of children was the central concern that I had and certainly perhaps other agencies that were involved with a family and trying to get resources to support families so they could do the best they could do, the best job they could for their kids has certainly been a feature of my work prior to coming to this Legislature.

In particular I laugh and I tell people sometimes that I was the adolescent social worker at the Nova Scotia Hospital and I almost was an adolescent. I was in my early 20s when I worked at the Nova Scotia Hospital on the adolescent unit, where I was responsible for a number of young people. During that time, Madam Speaker, I saw many young people who were wards of the court, were young people who had over many years perhaps gone through the revolving door of foster care, many foster homes, group homes, and eventually might have found their way to the Nova Scotia Hospital. I also worked with children who were never in the care of the state, never in the care of government, but only in the care of their families.

This particular bill is very important but this bill, in my view, has some problems. I was starting to talk a bit about some of the problems that I see with the bill and I expressed my disappointment that when the minister made her remarks, she indicated that at the end of the day, if anyone voted no on this bill, they would be voting no against protecting children.

I want to make it crystal clear that you can in fact vote no against a flawed piece of legislation because of the flaws you see in that legislation, but still be for protecting children. To suggest otherwise is something that no one in this Chamber should stand for. I want to be very clear, Madam Speaker. I will not stand for being accused of not being for protecting children if I think this bill is not good enough to protect families and children, is not good enough for the families and the kids in this province.

If I and other members of this Chamber think that more consultation is needed on the deathbed amendments that this minister raced into the Law Amendments Committee in an attempt to address flaws in the first or second iteration of that bill - then that's our right and our responsibility.

There are people across our province with front-line knowledge, day to day, in our courts and in the work they do with families and children, who have expressed serious reservations and concerns about this legislation. In particular, they have said that the amendments the government have brought forward are worse than the bill that was tabled.

Now, the minister has rhymed off all of the people she's had discussions with - or her department - and I don't doubt for one moment that she did. Nobody has said she did not have meetings and her department didn't have consultations, but there were no consultations around the third iteration of flawed amendments that now are in front of us on this bill. This is too important a piece of legislation not to get it right, and that's the minister's whole argument. She wants to get the bill right.

I don't doubt for a moment, and I said this at the outset when I spoke the other night, that the minister is concerned. Her background demonstrates her commitment to families and kids. I don't doubt that for a moment, but this process is not living up to her own standards in terms of getting this bill right, and a flawed piece of child welfare legislation will create difficulties. It will create difficulties for people in the minister's department, and it will create difficulties for people who are in our court system, our judges, and for people who represent all of the parties in these matters.

If the legislation is not clear, if the legislation is vague, if definitions are vague and hard, subject to a lot of variation in interpretation, then because this is not a science, this is where there can be a lot of room for human error unless you have very strong legislation that demonstrates what the intention of this House of Assembly is and what the government's intention is with respect to the welfare of children. I've pointed out that we have a history of more than a hundred years where that is all evolving. The definitions in this bill, new definitions, broader definitions of what constitutes neglect and emotional harm are very vague. What may be emotional harm for one person is not necessarily what another person would consider emotional harm.

If you swore at your children, is that emotional harm? If you sit them in the corner as a form of punishment for two hours rather than 15 minutes, is that emotional harm? What are those lines? What are those guidelines to determine at what point, at what point are we looking at emotional harm? These changes in this legislation are pretty significant, and they will have tremendous repercussions for people.

Now I, and everybody else in this Chamber, would like to say that people who work for government always are perfect and they never make a mistake. In everything they do, no mistakes are ever made. You're processing social assistance applications - you never

make a mistake; you're working at the Motor Vehicle Registration Office - you never make a mistake; you're in a housing department and you're processing applications for housing assistance - you never make a mistake; you're in a child welfare department - you never make a mistake. But, Madam Speaker, we all know that that is an unrealistic expectation for any of us to have in this Chamber. Mistakes get made in all of these areas.

When a mistake is made with respect to something minor, that's one thing. But when a mistake is made and children are apprehended let's say, the power of government is enormous. I don't know if people understand that the authority that's given under child welfare legislation is a much greater authority than police officers have to get search warrants to go into somebody's home. Police officers have to go first to a court and make their case; child welfare authorities don't have to go first - nor should they have to go first to make their case, because the consequences could be too great if a child is at risk.

I understand that, I accept that, I agree with that. However, these enormous powers that we give need to be balanced and we need to have a system in place that will allow for independent oversight. That is what judges are all about and that's what our judicial system is for. Our judicial system is to have oversight - fair, impartial oversight. Our system is also one where all the parties should have an opportunity to be heard, to have the facts, as they interpret them or understand them, laid out in front of a judge and then ultimately the judge gets to decide.

I'm not a lawyer but my understanding from reading this legislation, and from people who actually are lawyers and who teach and write and research about child welfare law across the country - we saw an op-ed piece in *The Chronicle Herald* by Rollie Thompson, a Queen's Counsel lawyer, professor of law at Dalhousie, who writes extensively about family law and child welfare and is frequently called on by CBC and *The Globe and Mail*. He's not an individual who is not learned in these areas; he has raised some pretty serious concerns about this legislation, including the fact that this legislation has provisions in it that in fact take the power of the courts and judges away and give it to the department.

Now that's a problem. I have talked about the pieces of this legislation that I agree with. I think it's fantastic that we are looking at the 16- to 18-year-old young people and finding a way to expand the support and the responsibility that goes with that under this legislation, and that's a good thing and I certainly hope and, as I said, we will be watching very carefully, with expectations that the government will be putting more resources into the budget, because if there are expanded responsibilities then that is going to require expanded resources.

I spoke here on Friday, or whatever day it was, maybe it was Tuesday, I spoke here earlier about having seen young people at 15, when they still were wards of the province, have their wardship terminated without any plan for transitioning that young person. All you have to do, frankly, Madam Speaker, is visit a correctional centre in our province. Our

correctional centres, unfortunately, are full of young people who have a fairly extensive and lengthy history in the child welfare system in our province. There is a lot of room for improvement in working with young people who become wards of the courts.

I don't quite understand why the minister - I know the minister wants to get this legislation changed. She has made it really clear that she has been committed to seeing improvements in the child welfare system for many, many years, almost since the current bill was first introduced back in 1990, but I don't understand why a slightly longer period would not give her ample opportunity to refine those pieces of this bill that are egregious and of concern to people. I think, with a bit more work, it could get us to a place where there is some consensus.

You know, one of the things we saw another bill brought forward, a bill that was changing the maintenance and custody legislation I believe, the same lawyer from the Dalhousie Law School, Rollie Thompson, praised that bill, praised the minister that introduced that bill, said that was a bill that will reduce the amount of time that's taken up in court, the adversarial nature of the relationships that go on between parents in court. And as I listened to him present at Law Amendments on that bill, I thought what a missed opportunity this government had with this bill.

Surely we could all agree that in the best of all possible worlds, we would have child welfare legislation that strives for more harmony and less conflict around the children themselves; and I recognize this is not always possible. I probably recognize as well as anybody in this Chamber it's not always possible, because I've worked with many families in conflict, where the family was pretty darn dysfunctional, as we like to say in social work, but what you attempt to do is stabilize families and get people talking. Sometimes you have to teach people how to talk to one another in a constructive way.

This legislation, unfortunately, will introduce into the child welfare process, a much more adversarial set of relations at a much earlier stage than is currently the case. That's a real tragedy; that's a real tragedy.

I didn't speak to the Aboriginal provisions of the legislation and I'm not, frankly, all that well-informed about those amendments, but I'm first of all very glad that we have these amendments. There is a tremendous recognition, certainly in the field of child protection that the Aboriginal community has borne a great harm from the residential schools, the impact of residential schools. If anybody was able to attend any of the truth and reconciliation process at the Metropolitan Centre when the commission was here, or any other forums where our people in the First Nations communities, the Mi'kmaq community, mostly in Nova Scotia, talked about Aboriginal schools or Aboriginal people from across the country, they speak of the great legacy of harm that has been done not only to those who had to live the experience in the residential schools, but the great legacy of harm in fact is in the extended Aboriginal family, the inability to parent children in the cultural traditions, how those traditions were lost for people who spent great periods of

time in residential schools. As a result, generations will be, and are being, impacted by the fallout from the harm that was caused in those residential schools.

Here in Nova Scotia, we have kind of a separate or parallel child welfare organization or agency, the Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services. Dr. Joan Glode was a founder and, I think, probably one of the first executive directors of that organization - a great, great champion for children, for their families, and for First Nations communities.

It is encouraging to see that there are provisions in this bill to address the concerns that were raised by people throughout the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. However, it is my understanding that there were chiefs who appeared at Law Amendments who were initially consulted, but not consulted after amendments were developed and who would have liked to have had a greater opportunity and a greater role to play in that process, and this troubles me. So this troubles me - that people did not feel they had sufficient input into what's in front of us here.

If they were here to decide whether to vote against this bill or not, I don't think that would make them people who would be voting no against protecting children. I think it would only be them voting no we want more time to get this right and to have more input into this.

We heard from people who came to the Law Amendments Committee who said that the changes in this bill will result in more children being taken into permanent care. We already have a very high number of people in foster care in the province - we have 750 children in foster care. Foster care is a very important component of the child welfare system.

My family is a foster family. I have a foster sister, an older sister. I grew up with her; she's as much a part of my family as any of the birth children in our family and we love her dearly. There isn't anybody who understands more than someone who lives in a foster family, the importance of foster families.

The reality is that the number of people like my mom and dad who were prepared to be a foster family has dropped dramatically. There's difficulty finding foster families, and there has been for a while. The people who are foster families today are an aging group. They're probably around my age, quite a few of them. It's not as easy, when you get to be in your 60s and 70s, to be dealing with 9-year-olds or 4-year-olds or 15-year-olds. Just keeping up with the technology that they are into would be a challenge, I would think.

I wonder if what we are being told by members of the community with some knowledge about these things, that more kids will come into care and into permanent care - who is going to care for these kids when they are in care? What's the plan for that, Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. Time has elapsed.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Madam Speaker, I just want to say a few words on this. I'm probably not going to take the tack that others have, but I do have a few thoughts.

Because of age, I guess, and because of the season, I was looking back at my own life growing up. I was one of the fortunate ones to be in a home of loving parents who had a stable job to work at and a caring, spiritual family, a caring community, around me. It was very stable. Other people don't always have that kind of good background - no fault of their own, but circumstances just come up where households are really struggling just to even communicate.

I see our mandate - and I'm going to say this for me more than anyone else - as being given a pot of money. I'm simplifying this. We take that money and we do our best to help the residents of Nova Scotia have food and shelter and jobs and good health and education, and to do all this in a safe environment. This is the task, as I see it, for all 51 of us. As I say, I just keep reminding myself of that all the time.

We create new legislation, we look at old legislation, and we try to change that in the hope that we're being true to our mandate with the residents of Nova Scotia. We all have different ways to manage this. We come up with different ideas. We are trying to create a province that is healthy in a political way, is healthy in a social way, is healthy in a physical way, is healthy in a mental way, and also healthy in a financial way. We try to create an atmosphere where the people in Nova Scotia are going to be able to communicate in a good way with each other.

Now, I am not the kind of individual who can take an Act of legislation, strip it down to all of its parts, and then try to put it back together again. My mind just doesn't work that way. I wish it did, but it doesn't. It's good to have other people who can strip and help me do that (Laughter) Let me rephrase that. Yes, it was Karla who picked that up, yes. People who take it apart and rebuild. Thank you very much, teacher.

The bill does have a lot of good things in it, as in ages 16 to 19 coming under that umbrella. That's always a good thing. It's going to create more work, there's no question about that, but it is still a good thing to do, because more children now will be able to receive some help from the government system.

There are a few concerns in doing that. Yes, that's going to give early intervention, and hopefully the system is going to allow for that early intervention to put families back again, to be able to be better communicators.

The downside of that is that if more authority is given to the social workers, there is the possibility that that authority can go a little bit further than it should in that more children will be taken out of their homes and put into other homes, and that's not always a good idea. I've been involved in my ministry with enough families to know that there are ways in which we can increase their communication and care for each other. If they are given that opportunity, I think a lot of families are going to be a whole lot better off. Like I said, the authority is a good thing, as long as it's handled properly.

We in this caucus do support this legislation, not because it's perfect but because it keeps us moving on a road that will bring better legislation as we move down that road. We can put the best legislation in the books, but that legislation has to be worked out on the front lines and that's where some difficulties will come. You can't always stop that. It can happen in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. It happens in the health system. It can happen in a lot of areas. We cannot create perfect legislation. It's just not going to happen. I am hoping that as a government we can support those who are working on the front lines and to give them some means to walk in and do a more creative job with families.

There are just so many people out there who need us to care for them. We always need to have that personal interest, that personal touch in any of the legislation that we put out there. If we have 10 families, let's say, and we say this legislation is going to make it good for six of those families - not good enough. We need to work in an atmosphere whereby we're going to work very hard at that seventh family, the eighth family, the ninth family, the 10th family and if we ever stop working, until we reach that 10th, then we're not doing the job we were given.

Like I say, legislation, yes, it is very, very important but it's up to us to carry out that legislation in a very caring way, and we try to take that right down to the front-line workers who are out there dealing with families every day.

In this room we have some very caring people with a lot of smarts. We can put legislation in place that is going to work as long as we work with it. Once we stop working with it, then we've just lost our cause. Again, I say we are in favour of the legislation. I am a little bit afraid of some of the authority given to people, because it can be misused as well as used properly. There is always that very fine line. I'm hoping that we, as a government, are going to stay with it and help people straddle that line well, and I think we have the power to do that if we just keep our communication open with the workers on the front line.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Madam Speaker, the Minister of Community Services stated in her comments yesterday, when she introduced the bill for third reading, that if you vote no on this bill, you are voting no against protecting children. I submit that it is

simplistic and erroneous to suggest that anyone opposed to this legislation is not concerned about protecting children from harm.

It is also simplistic, erroneous, and maybe political posturing to state what the member for Halifax Atlantic stated last week in his member's statement - that this member had made disparaging comments at Law Amendments Committee about children in foster care because the member, myself, stood up to challenge this legislation. In fact, it is our job in Opposition to offer constructive criticism and to challenge the government, and that is what I am attempting to do.

When the minister is saying we should not challenge the legislation, she is dismissive of the democratic process, the very process that affords her the privilege to sit in this House of Assembly. If she turns her mind to learning the legislative process of the Law Amendments Committee, she should also turn her mind to a study of the democratic process.

Perhaps she took a page from the member for Halifax Atlantic. In his member's statement last week, he stated that I made disparaging comments. He has never stated what those comments were. Perhaps he wishes to curtail any criticism that I may make of this legislation. Mr. Speaker, I will do my job, and I will not be silenced on this.

During the by-election in July, I was often asked on doorsteps: what could I do for constituents if elected? I told the voters I would be in Opposition, and if those voters were unhappy with the government's policies, then I would speak for them. I would not be silent; I would be their voice. The promise I made to my constituents trumps political posturing, and I will speak to this legislation.

Madam Speaker, children want to be with their parents; children do not want to be in foster homes. That is nature, and that is our starting point. Foster parents do amazing work and to suggest that anyone is saying differently is taking us off course. This legislation is too important for that.

I have been on the front lines representing parents for 30 years. I represent them in child protection cases. I assure you that their voices have not been heard throughout this process.

Those parents face a huge stigma, and as I said in Law Amendments Committee, they need to be reached out to. They have a great volume of information and insight that they could have provided to us when these amendments were going into place. Parents will consent to permanent care because they love their children. Just because a court order removes a child from the parent, the emotional attachment does not disappear.

We have resolved many of these cases as front-line lawyers working in the system, the lawyers on both sides. We know, and the parents know, that sad day when they can't

get the job done. Many of their cases involve addiction issues - addictions to prescription drugs that doctors have provided to them. OxyContin, for example, is highly addictive, and it can pretty well destroy your life when it gets hold of you.

In Law Amendments Committee I talked about a case that I had when a parent who had lost children before was scheduled to go through a two-week hearing. She was not in a position to parent that child. I could not understand what kind of case I could present on her behalf, and we had some very hard discussions about that. I worried about her having to face two weeks of listening to a lot of evidence that would be negative. So I talked to her quite a bit about that. I asked, why are you not consenting to this? You know the inevitable outcome, we know that with certainty, and she said I will not put my name on a piece of paper that says I gave up my child.

When I explained to her that she didn't have to do that, that she could go into the courtroom and she could indicate that we would not be contesting the matter, that that would be the end of it she did eventually agree, but that's the shame and the stigma that a parent carries, and that parent can be in any state, being unable to overcome addictions. They know for the most part and because I've seen so many of the cases resolve, because the parents love their kids and they know what's best in the end.

So, my comments, because I speak against this, have nothing to do with trying to keep children who need to be in foster care away from that - that's unrealistic and it just has no foundation - but I do want us to give some consideration to those voices that have not been heard in this. Parents who are overwhelmed and they're trying to manage - once the child goes into care, or even if they're under a supervision order, the parents are faced with many challenges. They have to deal with managing appointments. They're dealing with many complex emotional issues. They're dealing with self-esteem issues themselves and many of these parents have never had or seen decent parenting themselves.

They have to go to see their children under supervision, and parents will often clash with the social worker who's assigned to their case. That's not rocket science and that's okay, but then they have to fight to find somebody who they can work with, and sometimes they can and sometimes they can't. Sometimes a new worker on the case will totally change the whole flow of the case and another worker, if there's a personality clash, because we're all human - that happens you know - that worker may work really well with that parent whereas another worker was unable to do so and really move it along and get the parent to where they need to be.

I will tell you this: almost all of the cases involve living in poverty, and mostly it's women. Children having children who have never experienced positive parenting. We need to shift the focus from unnecessarily creating punitive legislation to providing the resources the family needs.

I just cite as an example, we use it all the time when we talk about early childhood education, but I checked with a member from the school board who represents Dartmouth South, and I asked, what does early childhood education actually mean? Are the parents involved in that? The answer was, no they're not. I can't speak a great deal on this, but I just suggested that we need to involve a parent who may not have ever had any framework from which to parent, to involve the mother or father, or both, in the early childhood education and this type of plan does not need legislation. We do not need legislation. We need to put resources in.

We're going to shorten the timeline for court orders, but will we shorten the wait times for services? While the number of case files will increase, there is no indication that there will be an increase in caseworkers. These are just a few of the fundamental issues that need to be addressed before we proceed with this legislation.

I've spoken before and my friends have spoken before about the consultation process. The consultation process was flawed. The minister gave a list of individuals and organizations and interest groups that her department consulted with. I reviewed her comments and I did try to ascertain which groups she had actually met with personally, but I was unable to ascertain that. But I believe based on what we saw at Law Amendments Committee, and much of the activity from what I heard in the community leading up to Law Amendments Committee, was that there was a lack of meaningful consultation.

The matter had to go to Law Amendments Committee three times and each of those times, when amendments were brought forward, we were never consulted or briefed on those. It was apparent in *The Chronicle Herald* editorial of December 3rd - and I will refer just briefly to some of the comments made there. I agree, some of the changes should go ahead right away, for example, extending protection to neglected or abused youth between ages 16 and 19 if this would help, although I add myself that again more resources are required for this.

The editorial goes on to say, "When we're talking about what's in the best interest of vulnerable children, we'd prefer legislators take all the time necessary to work through the strong concerns raised by credible, well-informed critics like Dalhousie law professor Rollie Thompson and others."

It is apparent, as well, in the December 8th editorial opinion piece by Professor Thompson that the consultation process was flawed. The proposed amendments, for example, the new definitions of neglect, emotional harm and domestic violence, we've been critical. We say they are broad and vague. Professor Thompson stated that in his editorial as well. He said that, "Bill No. 112 gives increased powers to the department . . . It massively expands the ability of the department to intervene in families and apprehend children."

Why do we get so concerned - at least as lawyers - about broad language? It's so much more so because of the type of legislation that we are dealing with here. Parenting is very subjective. I can tell you when parents don't have to see their children only on a supervised basis, that access is supervised by someone we used to call, and I think they still do, access facilitators. Access facilitators often sit in the room, most times sit in the room, with the parent and observe what happens.

In recent times, these visits started to be videotaped, so you have a parent and the children in a room at the child protection office and they are being videoed. I can recall a case - it was not my own case but I was very familiar with it - where the basis of the case against the mother was her interactions with the children during these access visits. The judge, to his ultimate credit - what he had were the notes but he hadn't actually been able to access the videos and they hadn't presented them, so he demanded that all of the videos be presented and there were probably 20 hours. When he looked at the videos and he observed the interaction of the mother with the child, he came away with a completely different impression. That's how subjective parenting is.

He brought his own experiences with parenting there and he arrived at a very different conclusion. So the language needs to be tightened. We can't go with this floating concept that is being put out there right now, or being proposed right now.

Quality parenting - I have three children. When my youngest was 18 months old - I can remember this very clearly - I was changing her diaper and we had a routine. When I would finish it up and wrap up the diaper, she would take it and she would walk over and put it in the garbage can. One day, for some reason, she picked it up and she just threw it right across the room and looked at me like, okay, what are you going to do about it? She was 18 months. I picked it up and brought it over to her and I put it in her hand. I was astounded. I said okay, I'm being challenged here and my authority is being challenged - and I'm a little annoyed here, too.

I gave it back to her and put her in front of the garbage can and she held her hands out for the longest period of time and would not drop that diaper into the garbage can. She was being completely and utterly defiant. I am at the point, because I can see her little hands and arms starting to shake and I thought, I did this all wrong, I really messed this up, this was not the battle I should have had. Eventually what I did was kind of give her a little nudge and the thing fell in the garbage can and I said, very good, you did a good job. But she looked at me and I know she knew that she had me. She knew I dropped it in there and I was pretending I hadn't. I remember it, I struggle with it, but that's just an example.

I was fortunate that I had a partner whom I could talk these things through with. I couldn't ever raise kids as a single parent - I could not do it, it's beyond me. I have so much respect for people who are able to and produce fantastic, great kids at the end of the day. But it's not within my range of talents.

I also remember a story - you watch kids with their parents, you'll see it in the grocery store, you'll go in and you'll see a kid having a tantrum and you think, are you going to do something, are you going to deal with that? We're always making judgments about parents and the way people parent.

I can remember watching someone I knew who I wasn't friends with, making very disparaging comments in a restaurant to her overweight kid. I couldn't stay, it was horrid to me, but that is definitely going to affect that child's self-esteem. That child grew up and still loves her parents and didn't need to be removed, it wasn't that, but that's what we're dealing with, this is a highly subjective and very judgmental area.

I have said before that the bill fails to address the underlying poverty issues and those issues in this. You've heard this before in the definition of neglect, it does point to people who are in poverty. Stella Lord addressed these issues at the Law Amendments Committee, she's an activist and I'm sure most people are aware of her name or are familiar with her. She said, you're drafting legislation that unfairly puts those in poverty at greater risk of losing their children. Families are facing increasing challenges to provide appropriate housing and food for their children directly due to income assistance freezes. Parents can now be at risk of losing their children due to government policy over which they have no control.

The proposed 12A(2) which allows protection workers to interview children without the consent of their parents, how would you feel as a parent if your child came home and said that a social worker had come in to interview them, because now it's very possible that can happen.

Section 45 shortens the duration of orders. Again, the impact on parents with these restrictions on time can be monumental. Parents already face challenges completing programs due to factors well beyond their control. It's not uncommon to have very long wait-lists for services, especially for admittance to rehab facilities and other addictions services. Even some of the technology that is being used, when hair follicle samples are being collected from parents, and that's a processing time. I don't know if people are familiar with it, but if anyone gave up a hair sample and had it analyzed, they can tell you how much you drink and if you're taking any drugs, so you know, we've got it. They are required to submit to that, but you have to have it. Some people try to shave their heads so they don't have to do it, but these things all take time.

When you're shortening those timelines, it just makes it so much more challenging. It is a challenge under the current timelines, and will be an even greater struggle under the new legislation.

Section 45A, the cumulative duration of orders, the first amendment said total 18 months, and then after Law Amendments Committee, if I'm following correctly - or maybe

just before Law Amendments Committee. I can't remember now, but it was done very quickly. Within a week or so, it got changed to a maximum of 36 months.

Well, we weren't briefed on that, so I don't know what kind of thought process went into making that change, but it raises a red flag. Eighteen months? Oh no, they didn't like that? Let's put 36 months in there. That's the way this legislation is being drafted. Regardless of whether it is 18 months or 36 months, there could be a large gap and very different reasons for the subsequent proceedings, but regardless, the clock is ticking from the date of the original proceeding.

Now, there is the section and it's Section 47(2). In the original Statute, from Section 47(2) right down, including Section 47(4), were repealed. There is now a new Section 47(2), which essentially states that there will be no access after permanent care and custody. I just want to draw attention to one housekeeping issue with this Statute, and I admit I could be wrong on this, but I've looked at it quite a few times now. Section 47(8) has stayed in, and that particular paragraph refers to giving notice - ". . . thirty days prior to consenting to an order for adoption, the Minister shall inform any person who has been granted . . . access." Well, we've just cut out access altogether, so why is that paragraph still there? It has a sense of sloppiness about it that will just cause problems for everybody when they try to use the Statute and interpret the Statute. This is the price of rushing legislation.

The other aspect of Section 47(2) is that it has taken away judicial discretion. I've spoken about this at second reading. I believe it will be subject to a court challenge. My friend alluded to the history of the court's involvement with protection of children - originally what we called parents' "patriae jurisdiction," which was to protect children's welfare - has existed since the 17th Century. In modern language, we would refer to that as the court acting in the best interest of the children. It is an inherent part of the judicial function, and it cannot be diminished by legislation. In fact, we refer to this in the courts as the inherent jurisdiction of the court. Denying the court its ability to act in the best interest by awarding access infringes on this inherent jurisdiction.

Just recently, on November 26, 2015, there was a ruling that came out of the Court of Appeal of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was the Newfoundland and Labrador Court of Appeal vs. Manager of Child, Youth and Family Services. In a judgment rendered on November 26th, the Court of Appeal stated - they refer to Section 32, which is similar to our Section 47(2), which is the inability to order access after permanent care and custody. They have the same legislation in Newfoundland and Labrador, and they determined that it was of no force and effect insofar as it purports to preclude the ability of the judge to grant access to a child in need of protection when making a continuous custody order, which we would call a permanent care and custody order. Section 32(6) in their legislation is preventing a court from ordering access after a permanent care and custody order was struck down. We will see similar challenges in Nova Scotia.

There are some positive aspects to the legislation, but even those carry some baggage with them. I'm happy to see the unique and important role of indigenous culture reflected in the bill. I think that is a move forward. It concerns me that Chief Prosper, when he appeared at Law Amendments Committee, was less than satisfied by the limited opportunity he had to express his concerns over these new amendments. I cannot imagine why Chief Prosper was not granted that opportunity.

Extending the age limit, yes, this is good. But if there are no resources in place, it's not going to be very helpful.

We heard from people at Law Amendments Committee. We heard from Cheryl Watson. She was concerned about Section 12, as I mentioned before - the ability now to interview a child without parental consent.

Debbie Reimer, a social worker who works with family resources and works with families, talks about the preamble of the bill. We haven't even talked about that, and I won't get into it, but it does talk about - it's the last resort to remove the child. It's the last resort to intrude into the privacy of the family.

This is legislation where there are no Charter protections. You can walk in. You don't have to have a search warrant. You can go into somebody's house. It's huge, the amount of authority that the state has, in terms of entering into our private residences.

She also expressed concern about the fact that the number of foster parents is down. She expressed concern about no time to complete services. She also expressed concern that foster parents are not getting the resources that they need.

Sharon Cochrane, with the Kings County Bar, wrote an open letter to the Premier. She also was at Law Amendments Committee. She talked about the fact that there are no Charter protections here. She talked about how the current legislation addresses the concerns, but the amendments, the new legislation, is targeting the poor.

Shelley Hounsell-Gray from Nova Scotia Legal Aid again noted her concerns at Law Amendments Committee with no access after permanent care. She stated that we don't need to shorten timelines. When the situation warrants it, timelines can be shortened. That's true. At the protection stage, normally, there will be a three-month delay before we go into disposition. There is nothing to stop the minister from saying, we're waiving that three months; we want our disposition hearing right away. Timelines can be shortened. You don't need the legislation to do that.

Claire Levasseur, also with Nova Scotia Legal Aid and also from the Kings County Bar, talked about 12 to 16. In Section 37, they used to be able to get legal counsel. With the amendment, they will not have this option.

We also heard from representatives from the Community Child Welfare Boards. When they were asked, they indicated that Section 88, which was the advisory committee, had not been fully constituted. I said before on that issue that no governments have ever properly dealt with that since the Act came into being. It was supposed to be a very important aspect to the Statute when it was amended in 1990. This advisory board, fully constituted, could be a very significant tool if it's used properly, and it never has been - never, right from its inception.

I am opposing this legislation. I oppose it on the grounds of insufficient consultation. I oppose it because there is no urgency. I oppose it because I know that children are not suddenly going to be more at risk if this bill does not pass. I oppose it because the resources and the services are not in place, again because the case loads are going to go up for caseworkers and I see no indication that people are getting hired to help with this transition when this legislation comes in.

We need to get to the root of the problems that create the risks to children and that's poverty. We need early childhood education. Children having children who have never had any parenting themselves. I'm opposed to the legislation because I've seen indications that there may be some sloppy drafting here.

We are aware of the very recent decision; I've already spoken to that, striking down one of the new amendments in another jurisdiction. I urge the minister to properly craft the legislation because if it goes through as it is, we're going to be stuck with it and the legislation is going to be challenged, and that is not going to reflect well on the government.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Madam Speaker, I rise today to address third reading of Bill No. 112 - an Act to Amend Chapter 5 of the Acts of 1990, the Children and Family Services Act. Madam Speaker, this bill protects one of Nova Scotia's most vulnerable populations: children and youth who are vulnerable to neglect and abuse. They deserve our protection, and this legislation addresses the realities facing families today.

Three times this bill has been taken to Law Amendments Committee and the department has made changes. They will promote early intervention to prevent long-term harm and, when necessary, proceed to permanency for children as soon as possible. The changes will also address the gap in the protection of youth from 16 to 19 years of age. Services to these youths will be offered on a voluntary basis. These changes will also update the language and address administrative issues.

During the Spring session the Minister of Community Services introduced amendments to Chapter 5. The minister's reasons for introducing this bill, then and now, was to allow stakeholders and the public to have an opportunity to comment on the proposed amendments during the summer before they were finalized during this Fall

session. The department staff met with both Dalhousie and Nova Scotia Legal Aid. They met with women's centres, transition houses, and foster parents. Every stakeholder who wanted to have input into strengthening this bill had the opportunity to meet with the department. Over the course of the summer 25 meetings took place with 37 stakeholders. The minister read off these stakeholders on Tuesday. Valuable feedback was received by many individuals and groups who are passionate about the well-being of children and youth.

The department took their feedback seriously, and as a result this government will ensure that the requirement for third parties to report child abuse will remain as it is. I am proud of my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, for moving these amendments forward. For 15 years the advisory council of the Children and Family Services Act had met, submitting eight reports. What happened to those reports? They sat on a shelf. For 15 years dedicated individuals tried to amend this Act but there was no political will to do so. Madam Speaker, children and youth who are vulnerable to neglect and abuse deserve our protection. By updating the Act, we can address the realities that are facing some families here in Nova Scotia. These improvements are about keeping children and families together. These amendments are about supporting families in this province.

This Act has not been amended for 15 years. Nova Scotia is far behind when it comes to child welfare. This bill is not about keeping families apart. It is about strengthening and supporting families sooner, before they get to the point of crisis.

Madam Speaker, I am proud of the way this government has listened. It is not about your level of income or your parents' source of revenue or where you come from. With the new amendments, cultural case connections can be applied for whatever ethnic community is seeking services. This bill is not intrusive or invasive. It is about protecting children and strengthening families.

This bill will promote early childhood intervention and prevent long-term harm and, when necessary, proceed to permanency for children as soon as possible. The Children and Family Services Act of 1991 is outdated and no longer reflects the best practices for today's family structure.

The amendments also include addressing administrative issues and much-needed language updates. I am so pleased to see the changes to the definition of a child. This is huge. This will allow youths up to the age of 19 to qualify and receive important supports and benefits. We all want families to stay together, but in some situations that is not possible. Circumstances may make it safer for some youths to live separate from their families, and then there are youths who, for other reasons, need to be on their own. We need to work with all sides of the issue.

Please permit me to tell you a story with an experience that I had. One summer, while leading a program for children and youths, an 18-year-old volunteer who I will not

name came and worked with our group. He was a great role model for the other youths in the program, but he did not come from a home like my children came from. It wasn't an ideal home situation. He was very close to a certain minister in town who really nurtured him and set an example for him, spent a lot of time with him, got him involved in sports and in youth groups. He turned out to be a role model and sort of broke the cycle that was going on in his family.

At the end of this program, I had a celebration, a luncheon for the volunteers. I invited him along with all the adults. He was just in awe of coming and having a lunch at a table that was set properly and actually had napkins and silverware. He was not exposed to that in his own home. I told him, when he left that Fall for university, to not be a stranger, to come back and visit me. Do you know what he said? He said, I will not be coming back. When I leave home, I'm leaving home for good. This boy was only 17. Had there been a law like this, and had amendments been made back in that time, he would have had valuable supports and benefits that he could have used.

This boy was in the engineering program at one of the universities here in Halifax, and he had to withdraw because he just financially couldn't handle it. But he did turn out okay. He went to the Community College - I see him on some of the ads that they have to promote their programs, and he did turn out okay. I just think there are so many children like this individual who would really benefit from the amendments in this legislation.

As a parent and as a human being, my heart aches for youths like this who can't go home, who must decide for their own safety and well-being that they can't go home. There are many out there.

Madam Speaker, had the definition been changed many years ago, my friend may have had a different ending. He's had a somewhat good one, but his life could have been a lot better. Those benefits would have gone far to assist him in living a better quality of life while he was in school.

I've listened to the debates here, and I have to commend the member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley - he was very fair in his remarks. Mike Gorman tweeted that he was probably one of the best legislators here as far as being fair, and I want to commend him. That was tweeted not too long ago this afternoon because he showed his passion and his compassion when he addressed the Legislature today. He wasn't grandstanding. He wasn't standing up there to make himself look good. He was standing up because he was speaking for children and families with sincerity.

I've spent much of my adult life studying, working, and volunteering with children and youth. I see these recommendations closing the cracks which many DCS children fall through. I must say it has been disheartening to hear some of the comments and remarks that have been made about this legislation. We should all be working together to make Nova Scotia a better place for all children - all children.

I commend my colleague the Minister of Community Services and her staff for their forward thinking, and I'm grateful to be part of a government that is going to put children first here in Nova Scotia.

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

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: I rise today to speak on Bill No. 112. Before I start, I want to preface my remarks by saying two things: I'm no expert, and I've never come across a piece of perfect legislation.

That all being said, I've listened to my colleagues from all sides of the House talk about this very important issue. I think they've all made some good points, some points that I think we could all stand by and understand and listen to.

We have many stories about individuals and where they come from. I wasn't going to share this story when I started out today, but I think I will. The story is no different from a lot of other people's in the Province of Nova Scotia that I grew up with.

I was seven years of age when my parents separated. We had myself, and I had a sister who was a year old, and we ended up living with my father. We had a pretty good life, but it was different from all our neighbours' and from all the people who lived around us. On my 16th birthday, my father died, and we had to determine what was going to happen to my sister and what was going to happen to me. We were lucky because we had family that took us in, and although my sister and I lived in different homes, we were close and we were able to be brought up in a loving, kind, and nurturing household. But when you come from that type of background, it gives you a different perspective of what the world is like.

I've been very fortunate since then. I've had a good life. I married a wonderful woman, and we have great kids. (Interruption) Some would say that the woman is a saint. The only thing I would say to that, Madam Speaker, is I know she's going straight to Heaven because I know what I've already put her through here on Earth. But this is a very serious situation.

Look, when I listened to my colleagues, my heart goes out because I want to know, and I want to be sure that we're doing the right thing. What I do know is I would sooner be criticized for doing something than be criticized for not doing anything at all. (Applause)

I do believe, when we listen to the arguments and we talk - and even when Rollie Thompson talked, he talked about how long this bill has been in place and how long it's been needing changes. We know that the government before this government tried to make changes, and it didn't happen, but we know that something has to happen.

I, like other people in this House, believe that this is the most important piece of legislation that I've had the honour and privilege to speak on. Do you know why it's so important, Madam Speaker? Because it's about kids. It's about the future of those children. It's about moving this province forward in such a way that we can all stand proud in these very seats that we are so honoured to hold.

Now, this is only a piece of legislation, and as I said earlier, it's not perfect. I know that, and I'm sure the minister knows that. It is not perfect. It's a step. It's a part of a puzzle that needs to be fulfilled. This piece of legislation alone will not do what we want it to accomplish. We need to have supports put in place. We need to look at other things that are there that will make this easier - not for judges, not for lawyers, and not for advocates, but for the children that this bill was meant to support.

There are some things in this bill that I really think need to be worked on. One of them, I really believe, is that a review in four years' time is too long. I think that if you're going to review this bill, if the true meaning of this bill is to make it work for kids, then it should be reviewed sooner than that. Four years is a long time, and it can make an awful and devastating effect on children if there's nothing done to help them along.

When it comes down to the vote on this bill, there's no question that I'm going to vote in favour of it, but I want to make it clear why I am voting in favour of it. It's not because the government brought it forward. It's not because my caucus is completely behind it. The reason that I'm voting for this bill is constituents of mine who have come forward, one after the other after the other, and have said to me, this bill is a step in the right direction. This bill is something I want you to support.

Those are the people, at the end of the day, that we are here to represent. The very people that gave us the honour to be able to sit in this House of Assembly are the people that I have been listening to. People like Delores Feltmate from Sydney, who has been a foster mom, who has been a driving force behind this bill, with the previous government and with this government. People like the Association for Safer Cape Breton Communities; the CBRM Council; Victoria County Council; the youth and children at risk support group of the United Church of Canada; foster parents group; Community Child Welfare Boards of Nova Scotia; Dr. Budden, the Chief of Peds at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital; the Golden K in Sydney; the Federation of University Women; the Cape Breton Children's Rights Centre, and the list goes on, Madam Speaker, of people who have asked me to represent their beliefs.

The bill's not perfect. The legislation should not stop today. Looking at it should not be limited to four years - it should be something a lot quicker, a lot more effective. The tools that need to be there - this is only a small part of the puzzle, as I said earlier. The tools need to be there. They need to be something that can be worked with, remembering why this legislation came forward, and that's for children.

I'd like to close my remarks, Madam Speaker, on something that Winston Churchill said: "This is not the end. This is not even the beginning of the end. But it may be the end of the beginning." Thank you.

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

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to talk about this critical bill, Bill No. 112. This is a challenging piece of legislation, as we know. It's not about we're not doing anything, it's about are we ready - are we ready at this point? I know that we're very close to being ready, but there are some factors here that are very concerning and I believe it's a responsibility of myself to bring forward. This is not because I stand here in Opposition, this is because of the fact that I had the privilege and opportunity to be the Minister of Community Services in the previous government for four years, and I was greatly involved and dedicated to the child welfare changes and initiating part of that process.

Now that process was looked at - there were four reports. I know that the minister had mentioned eight, but there were four reports that were provided over the years that were reports from the Minister's Advisory Committee. So when I initially became minister in 2009, I was presented a report that had been completed in 2008, and that report was very similar to the reports that had been done previously. The similarities were with issues that the advisory committee felt very strongly needed to be addressed, and what I saw was the fact that there were a number of critical points that were brought forward in every one of those reports that were not addressed yet.

To me, and people know this about me, I'm always talking about children. It was absolutely, I guess the best day for me as Minister of Community Services - and it's not an easy job, a lot of ups and downs - was when I went to one of the events for children in care and the children and youth were standing at the door. I had met with them a number of times, but this day they called me Momma Community Services. I was so proud of that because I felt that each and every one of those children were like my children, and how deeply concerned I was for their welfare and their well-being. I always have believed my entire life that children are the most wonderful gift that we can be given as human beings.

I know that members who have recently had children, on all sides, know that as soon they tell me that they are expecting, I get all excited and do my talk - this is the most wonderful, exciting part of your entire life and you really don't know what it's like until you have a child. You really don't. It doesn't matter how much I talk to you about how exciting it is and that every stage of your child's life you're going to say, oh my goodness, that's the best stage. It really, really is.

For myself and my husband, we were blessed with a son who is now 23 years old, and if life had offered us a little bit, a different opportunity, we would have had many more children. Unfortunately, for myself, we had second-time infertility and it was really an

awful experience, but yet at the same time it made me realize how lucky I was to be able to have one child because that was our choice and that's what life is about. There are some people who make those choices that they don't feel they want to bring a child into the world. But when you have a desire and you want to bring a child into this world and you are not able to do that, it is really very difficult to deal with. That's when you start to look elsewhere, maybe there are opportunities with fostering or opportunities with adopting.

Believe it or not, back at that time when we looked at actually adopting, because we were from the South Shore we had to wait much longer, up to even eight years at that time, for a child versus if we moved into Halifax or if we moved as far from Chester just to Hubbards, which was only like a 10- or 15-minute drive from where we lived, we would have gotten a child much faster because the system at that time was not consistent, but it is now. You have the opportunity, no matter where you live in the province, you are under the same rules.

The whole aspect of child welfare was very important to me when I became a minister. When I went through the report and became more knowledgeable about the recommendations that came from the minister's committee, I realized there was still a great deal of work to be done. That's why I think that this piece of legislation is probably one of the most significant pieces of legislation that we could be speaking about in this House because it is about children. It is about their families and their welfare and their ability to remain as a family or, if that is impossible, the ability for us to be able to provide the suitable services and the love and the caring and the mental health support, whatever supports we need to wrap around that child or the supports that we need to wrap around the parents.

When I initially brought it up, I did hear that this would be a beehive, that once you open up a piece of legislation you open it up for every part of that legislation. I kept saying, I can't believe that we can't just change the gap in the age because that seemed to be one of the most prominent issues when I was dealing with and networking and communicating with the child welfare boards and when people would talk to me about this legislation who wanted changes to be made.

Being as stubborn as I am, I tried to get the staff to look at every angle possible. I just couldn't understand why can't you just change one part of legislation, because that's the part that was extremely problematic, the definition of a child and the gap years and how the youth, you know aged 17 and 18, that there were really no services available, although it is stated in the legislation that under certain circumstances they could be made available.

As my colleague talked about with language in the legislation, you have to make sure that language is very tight, precise and understandable. It can be really challenging when you don't come from a background of being a policy wonk individual. You just can't understand - well, this should be just common sense. How can we, as a province, or a

society have those gap years, and why can't we change that one piece of legislation to provide those supports?

Well I learned that you can and when you open up that legislation, you have to make sure that you are as far along the continuum of change that you feel absolutely comfortable with, that you've got to that point. I know my colleagues on all sides have said that it's better to do something than nothing. However, I'm not standing here today and saying that we should do nothing. We did start the process and something needs to be done. But as I also indicated, I don't think we're quite there yet. That's what's concerning to me, and what I experienced as a minister, and what I saw internally in the department.

Things do take time. It takes time and it can be very frustrating for those individuals who are so passionate and they have fought and fought for the rights of children. They see this vision and this troubling piece in the legislation - the gap years and what that means to those youth who are not able to access the same supports. What happens from that passion is that - and this is just being a human, the other noises of the problems within that piece of legislation - sometimes you don't pay attention to or don't feel as strongly about because you feel so passionate about the change you want. There's nothing wrong with that, but it's also our job in society to not only listen to all sides, but take the best approach available to us, to come to as far along as possible when we change that piece of legislation.

So, in the first part of my mandate, I did spend an awful lot of time with the child welfare boards - going to their meetings, to their functions and out in the communities talking to foster families. My husband's grandmother did fostering for years. I have some very close friends, one in particular who has fostered for 25 to 30 years. Not having the crystal ball and knowing that I'd ever become Minister of Community Services, I did know and learn through my experience from my close friends, some of the frustrations that they had as foster parents and about the system.

So, the first part that I felt was very important was that as a minister, if I was going to encourage my colleagues around the caucus and the Cabinet Table to open up this piece of legislation and make changes, I better know every bit of that legislation inside out and also be aware of what people in the province felt. Those who were in professional positions, those who had been in the foster system, or those who were parents - what were their opinions?

So, I did learn very quickly why this type of legislation is like a beehive, because there are so many different points and some very valid points on all sides. So, the next step in our process, as minister - and we did a lot of consultation, you can go back and look at the reports then. I know the present minister talked about a lot of consultation, and one of her comments, though, was that we didn't take it any further.

Well, that in fact is not the case. It's not the case because the next step that we were pursuing and developing before the election was to have and develop and create a

restorative panel that would come together. One of the factors that we really have to look at is, what is the definition of consultation? If we went around the room today, we probably would get a number of different definitions of what consultation is.

Often we think that if we allow people to speak with us and give us their opinions, that is consultation. That is one level of consultation, but the more detailed type of consultation is the next step that I was hoping to pursue as minister which unfortunately did not happen, and that was with respect to the restorative approach. That approach we use each and every day in this province in the justice system and in fact, we are known throughout the world in Nova Scotia for our restorative approach in justice.

I had the privilege to be involved with some key professors - Jennifer Llewellyn - working at Dalhousie in the Department of Law on restorative approaches and how those restorative approaches could be used, not just within the legal system, but in how we run government and how we run our departments. I learned a lot about that approach and felt that was a proper avenue to take. I did it on a couple of other major contentious issues that we had in the Department of Community Services, for example, with service providers that had very different opinions on how the department operated and how their funding was provided. They were actually in competition with each other, and we brought them all to the table.

What it does is it gives everybody the opportunity to give their story. It's very much like the Aboriginal communities when they come together and they have the talking stick and they pass it along and everybody has the opportunity to speak. Nobody speaks over the other person while they're holding the talking stick. Maybe that's something we should bring in here.

So I saw how that approach could work. It worked for the development of the 10-year strategy for persons with disabilities and that transformation. There are a lot of different views on how you deinstitutionalize and how you offer community options in your communities.

When people do come together, there is a commonality. Many times you'll find out and you'll discover that people may sound like they're really against each other, but they're saying the same things, and they don't understand it, because it's in the level of communications. Often we may not appreciate somebody else's point of view, but when you're sitting around a table together it does something to you and it brings you down to more of a human level and offers you the opportunity to listen more.

It was not that we did consultations and stopped it there and had no more desire to move along this piece of legislation. Not at all. The next step was to do the restorative approach and bring those individuals and those organizations that supported the changes in what is called Bill No. 112 now, but in the CFSA, the Children and Family Services Act, those who felt there were going to be some real, major issues. That was what I was hopeful

for. I felt that taking that type of approach, you would be better able to move this piece of legislation along to a point that there would be more consensus on how it would work and how it would be implemented.

I haven't seen that in this particular process, unfortunately. I know there has been consultation; I know there are people coming to the Law Amendments Committee, but we've also seen an enormous amount of changes going back and forth. It's good that the government is listening to those changes. However, there still needs to be a restorative approach where people can be sitting together in the same room and discuss how those changes may or may not work. So that's a concern I have.

I know that there will be people who will be very disappointed in me because I can't support the bill right now. They will say, well, you worked hard on it when you were minister. You spent a lot of time with the child welfare agencies and you spent a lot of time with foster families, so why aren't you doing it? I have to know within myself that there's a part that does not often come through in this Legislature, and that part is the reality of the real world. That reality is how all these different components must come together and fit together and work like an engine. If one part of your engine isn't working, or the parts aren't working together, then you have difficulties. That's the part that I have to be very hesitant with, and I'm going to draw some attention to those particular parts.

Now, for those who are not aware, I mentioned the four reports. There was one done in 1993, 1996, 1999, and then 2008, and that would be the report that was presented to me when I became minister. There was a recurring theme in all those reports. Those themes were that the Nova Scotia Children and Family Services Act, CFSA, is generally considered to be a good Act; that came from all those reports.

There is a critical lack of resources to implement the CFSA in accordance with its principles. Mr. Speaker, that's one area where I have grave concern because of the fact that I know it's very important to have services for those gap years. My concern is that is going to be written down in a piece of legislation, but in the reality of the world, it's not going to happen, because the reality of the world is - and we all know - if it's not funded properly, we're not going to be able to provide those services.

As minister, I heard some very horrible stories that happened in terms of staff trying to do their best. You stand here, and we praise staff in the department, and they deserve that praise, but when they're on the ground running, and they don't have the resources - I know that the numbers of caseloads are much higher than what was quoted in the House here.

You can take those numbers and do an average across Nova Scotia to try to get the numbers to look good, and we have heard from social workers who came to Law Amendments Committee and spoke to the media about this very, very real concern.

What is going to happen when a youth needs service? We're not talking about saying, oh well, go on the waiting list. They need that service, and they'll expect that service, and we're not going to be able to provide it in a timely manner. Some people may argue, well they don't get it now, so what would be the difference? Well, there is a difference because we're talking about the entire service.

Are we going to put so much pressure on the resources that we have now and the staff that we have now that there's a breaking point? There is always a breaking point. When that breaking point comes, and if a crisis occurs, it will occur throughout the entire child welfare services, not just one component of it. So that is a reality that we should be discussing.

The resources and the supports - and I'll get into a little bit more detail about what some of those are. In this report - and this is probably the key reason we're here today - is that ages 16 to 18 receive inadequate protection, insufficient services, and have little input into decision making.

I really do applaud the minister because she is taking this journey and she is so supportive and wants to make these changes. We may be in opposite Parties politically and philosophically, but I believe that she is very dedicated and that the minister cares very much about what she's doing and the outcomes that will result from what she's doing.

But like I said, and it is not to say anything against the minister, it's just that in the experience that I've had in the department, what I saw, I don't think we're quite ready yet. The other (Interruption) I know I heard the comment about another 20 years. That's not what we're talking about. Please don't throw out comments, this is one of the most crucial pieces of legislation. We need to really take it seriously, and I'm not talking about 20 years.

That's actually part of the concern, that if we open up the legislation and we pass it, that it may sit there another 20 years because the motivation - look, we have, like I said, reports from 1993 that were making recommendations for changes to the Department of Community Services and what type of resources were needed to be put in place before this legislation was changed. That is the concern that I feel very passionate about, that I need to express to the House here and, like I said, it's not about (Interruption) I hear the member saying about status quo. It's not about status quo, and I don't know how many times I have to repeat that.

It is about making sure that these children and youth, these are people, these are people and I know the minister would agree with me because she is passionate about it. These are people, human beings who need the service. It's not going to work if it's just on paper, and we've seen that over and over again that things are on paper but in reality they don't work and that's why we have to make sure that when this is passed we need to take a lens and look at are the services there? We need to do a test. We need to do a test, if we feel, if the government feels the services are there and the government can provide that

information to us here and to Nova Scotians that they're ready and the support mechanisms are in place, then that's wonderful. That would be great.

I would feel so much more comfortable about it and feel that yes, we did the right thing right now to change that legislation. I haven't been convinced yet and I hope that the government will take an opportunity because this is such an important piece of legislation, that they will look at that and they will provide us with that information. If you believe that much that that information is there and has - I know what it's like when you're in government, I know what it's like in Cabinet, I know what it's like in caucus, there is so much information flow, but I bet you if I ask the question, who read this legislation through and who actually read some of those reports from those committees of people who have made recommendations over the years? I bet there would be very few hands put up.

That is another concern of mine, because knowledge is power and if you don't have that knowledge and you're not making the appropriate decision because you haven't read the information or you're not well versed in it, that can be concerning too. That's why the restorative approach of getting all sides together that has that knowledge because there's so much information that you have to know or that you try to know, it's virtually impossible. That's why you have to be absolutely sure when you're making these types of decisions.

One of the other things that came from these reports was that extended family have little if any involvement in custody protection plans. They also talk in the report that there are wide-ranging opinions on the legislation. There is also a lack of trust in the child protection system by recipients of services and members of the public. Has that changed? I remember as being minister that there is a lack of trust and that's one of the issues that these committees wanted to be addressed.

There's a need for the establishment of a children's advocacy office. Well, that is something that actually, I believe it was the member for Yarmouth brought up as a private member's bill when he was in Opposition. So I have to wonder (Interruption) Well, if was important then, why haven't we seen that piece of legislation come through since (Interruption) Listen, you're government now. You have been government for two and a half years, you have the opportunity . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind the honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's to direct her comments to the Chair and not refer to members opposite directly.

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

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the very important fact is - and I don't want to play games back and forth because this is about children and it's about families and parents and children and grandparents - the fact is that this government has been in for

two and a half years, they have had every opportunity. Where is it going to get anybody to keep pointing the fingers and blaming the others?

These reports go back to 1993. I know when the Progressive Conservatives were in, there are activities in these reports, there are programs and plans that they did implement because what they were doing was the same thing as what I have been suggesting here, you take these reports. There's a reason why you bring people together on committees who are experts, and you start working at trying to fulfill the recommendations of these reports.

I do know there were some that were done after the Nunn Commission that were initiated around 2007 by the Progressive Conservatives, but yet they are not all done yet; they weren't all accomplished.

Then the other suggestion was that there was a trend towards open adoption and disclosure of adoption information. I do know that's another area that's very contentious, with different opinions.

Some of the issues that have been brought up to the minister in these reports is that it's all about - and that's one thing I did learn also, as minister, is that the way the structure of the department has been developed over the years has been a structure of crisis mode and reacting to crises rather than being proactive. It's very difficult to change that culture, to move it into more of a proactive rather than reactive.

Mr. Speaker, how you do that - a big part of that is investment, investing in those programs. That's what we were working towards. I'm proud of the fact that while we were in government, although four years, that the poverty level was reduced by 18 per cent. That's not happening now because choices have been made to freeze income assistance, so that's not happening. That was one of the factors in these reports: if you want to deal with the issues in our child welfare in our society, we must deal with the poverty issue or it will never change. We have to get back on track.

We are not on track if the government has decided not to increase the income assistance rates. We do know that the figures are coming out that are not good about poverty in our province. It says, "In summary, the review suggests that the 'residual thinking' that characterizes most of the child protection program, with its emphasis on reaction to crises, cannot adequately address the real needs of families in difficulty because there is no connection between the underlying societal problems of poverty. . ."

I know we're not going to totally eradicate poverty. It's a long journey, but we cannot be going backwards by cutting programs, not just income assistance; we've heard of a number of programs that have been cut right at the heart of these non-profit organizations that actually support children and families.

I will give the minister credit for the fact that when she first became minister she did invest in family resource centres. She deserves to be applauded for that. Family resource centres are a critical element in our communities to help with these types of issues with children and family and the needs and supports.

I know that the minister also has brought in new language and has looked at the cultural aspects in this piece of legislation, and that was another item that was brought forward in these reports. So that is very good. I thank the minister for doing that, and I think it is vitally important that it has been recognized.

As I said, it's not all bad. There are very good things that the minister has done. Once again, for me it comes down to those resources and making sure that those resources are there, or we're just going to create another gap. If the resource is not there, it's the same as what we talk about and are always saying seniors deserve to stay in their homes longer. Well, they can't do it unless we provide them with the resources, and that is funding which you have to budget for.

A piece of legislation like this has to be paralleled with your budgeting process, and the minister needs support from the entire government in order to do that, in order to make sure that a piece of legislation like this, that affects children and affects family life in our society - that she has provided the resources in order to make those changes and provide those supports. I mentioned about the poverty aspect, and in the report they highlighted that, that we need to be addressing the need for breakfast and lunch programs at schools, food budgets based on food guidelines in the Canada Food Guide, and school start-up supplies and clothing.

Now, my colleagues with the Progressive Conservatives, one thing that they initiated from one of the reports was SchoolsPlus. So you see, we are moving forward, and we have been, but as I said again, we're not at that spot that we need to be, and I believe through a restorative approach we really could get there. I do believe that any of the comments that I have heard or read, those who are opposing the passing of the bill right now, feel the same way. I do know that those who support the bill, many of them, it's because of the gap-year, which certainly does need to be looked at. I do know as a minister that that was one area that really, truly did bother me, but I did know we had to build those resources.

It is the workload, too. We don't have a perfect system out there - far from it - and I'm sure the minister has seen that and has heard of situations. As minister, I would hear about children - that we didn't have any foster families to take a child, so then a social worker would need to get a hotel for that foster child and be there. That's not appropriate, but they do the best they can. I know one thing that I was proud of as minister was that I was able to have a questionnaire created for foster families. It was the first one that was ever done in the province, to go directly to foster families and ask them, what are we doing

right and what are we doing wrong? I think that probably provided some good foundation for the minister to look at.

I know probably one of the struggles for the minister is the fact she does know that the number of foster families is reducing, and that is really a difficult situation. I can recall when staff would be calling a foster family and they already had three children and they're begging them to take a fourth child because we had nobody else. I think my colleague had mentioned about our aging society, and that's probably putting some pressure on the number of foster families that we have.

These are real things. That's the point that I'm trying to get across. These are real things that these children, families, our staff, and our social workers are experiencing every day that goes by. That is why it is so important that we do a checklist of our resources. One of the other recommendations was to increase youth navigators - have more youth supporters, and we were able to do that when we were in government. Now, there's a lot more as a minister that I would have loved to have been able to do, and I'm sure the minister every day probably says, gee, I wish I could do this. And I know that she realizes that there are gaps there, I do know, because I know how important this is to her and I know that she will get accolades from people who will say this needed to be done, she will - and then there are people on the other side. So like I said, it's not an easy piece of legislation, but it would be nice to have a report to see where we are in the province.

Can we really do this at this point? If we can't, you know this government still has time to be able to take that restorative approach. You know, when people say well I have hope and trust that this is just the start, well once again when we go back to the reality of politics, if that was the case this piece of legislation would've been looked at a long time ago. There would've been more services available, we would've been investing more in those areas and you know that's the struggle that the Minister of Community Services faces each and every day.

So, there are many things that people have to realize that this has not been forgotten over the years, because there have been a lot of very dedicated people working on this piece of legislation, or working on child welfare and what they feel needs to be changed in order for us to be able to actually support this change.

So, as I said, there are a number of things. I think there was a list of like 16, Mr. Speaker, that came out in 2007 and that was a result of the Nunn Commission, and then also the development of a strategy called "Our Kids are Worth It." That was released in 2007, and that would be the time that I said that the Progressive Conservatives took these recommendations and started to move them along. It's impossible for any one government in the time frame that they have, and with the resources they have, to make all those changes. But I know that those changes have been made and we've been working through that very important bucket list, but yet we still have a crisis in our child welfare system.

We have a crisis with the number of foster families that we have and some of those need to be addressed before we make these changes and put more pressures, because as I said earlier, the concern is, where is the breaking point for our social workers? Where is - you know when you've got a child who needs to go to a foster family and there are no foster families available, or the foster families are struggling themselves, or the mental health services are not available in that particular community where the child is - what do we do with the child? Do we move the child somewhere else that's further away from their family?

One of the major goals too is that with a restorative approach you want to be able to support the family, and you want to be able to give the family every single opportunity to come back together and try to address those issues that they're having, and because we don't work on a preventive style and we work on a reactive style, we don't provide the appropriate services. We haven't built them up enough for those families and for those parents.

All this information is available to each and every one of us, it's in these reports - and the reports also, they identify the fact that what families that have had crisis and have been a part of the system, what they have discovered is the fact that the little bit of service that they get is actually when the crisis happens and when the child may be taken out of their home. But there was nothing beforehand. They were crying out and nobody was listening to them.

This is just one little example, but it kind of blows your mind. I talked about my dear friends who have fostered for 25 to 30 years. Over one holiday, they called me - that's when I was actually the minister - they called me and they said, Denise, we can't get hold of anybody in Community Services. We've got a crisis going on with our foster child, and we've called all the numbers. I said, well, tell me what those numbers are. What's the number?

I called, and they were speaking the truth. When I called, there was a recording. That particular social worker was on Christmas holidays, and you were to call the next social worker. I called that number, and that social worker was on holidays. Then there was another person you call, and it said that social worker was on holidays. What happened was that somewhere along the way, there was nobody available because there was no communication within the departments in that particular district. They each thought the other person was going to be at work over the holidays, taking any of the crisis calls, and they weren't. This family was in panic as foster parents.

That example alone tells me that we've got a lot of work to do. I was horrified, as the minister, that that took place. I'm not convinced it may not take place again. These are the kinds of little things that maybe some people think are only small, but they're huge when you're a foster family and you're having a crisis with a foster child. It's huge.

One of the other things that I learned as the minister that foster families have huge challenges around is that we live in a society that is quite different than when I grew up. I know we have some young members here, and we have some older members. When good old dad would take the belt off, that's how you would be disciplined. I think that there are a few of us who have felt that belt at one point. People would be horrified.

But I'll never forget the time that I was a little bad one day. The design of my parents' home was one where you could go through the kitchen - my dad and mom are always watching Legislative Television; they love it. But I'm telling on you, Dad. It was a roundabout so you could go through the kitchen, through the dining room, through the living room, and back around. I was bad that day, and he didn't even have to hit me with the belt. It was just that sound of opening the belt and starting to pull it, after he came home from work, that's all it took. I just started running from him. He was starting to run after me, and we just kept going around. After a while it was like the Bugs Bunny cartoon because I was actually chasing him. So at the end of it, we just both fell on the floor laughing our heads off.

We live in different times, though, now. Even to think about your dad opening his buckle and taking his belt off, you would be thrown in jail. But how many here got the strap in school? Now, I was fortunate; I didn't. I see my colleague, the member for Queens-Shelburne. He was a problematic child. I know some stories about him in school. But my husband will tell me of all the times that he got the strap; he was in the principal's office more than he was at his desk.

So society has changed, and the way that we define discipline is quite different. But we will also hear people say, well, back in those days, our children were good. They would say: yes, ma'am; no, ma'am. It's a little bit different today in the world that we live in. That's what we have to take into consideration: things are different and we're living in difficult times.

Also, as I said, we have to have the resources there. I keep referencing that in my speech today, because I think really that's the fundamental problem that we're dealing with: we don't have those resources, and when a foster family is in crisis and they need to be able to call and get that support, if it's not available, or if it's not available for 24 hours, you can't wait.

One of the other things, what I was mentioning about discipline, is that a lot of the foster families told me that it can be really difficult. You have children, you take them under your wing, you foster somebody else's child, and if there are some really - and often there are some behavioural issues there, and the way our society is today, those foster families, those foster parents really have to balance how they discipline a child, because they can get themselves in real trouble. The children know that, so they will push the limits of foster families, foster parents.

What we need to do is recognize that, and if we are recognizing that, that means there need to be services available. I know there's training for foster parents, but those immediate crisis services just don't seem to be there. I think we need to do a lot more work. It was good for us to do a questionnaire, but I think we need to take it and do some more, continue that. One questionnaire is not enough. We need to have an actual program or system in place that continues that conversation with the foster families, because we are in real crisis in terms of providing those supports.

As I said, the support in terms of the social workers and the caseloads that they have, I can only - I can't really even imagine how they deal with it. As I said, there's a point of suffering that takes place and there will be a point in time that they're not going to be able to handle it. We're putting too much pressure on them.

Here are some other recommendations that came from that advisory committee. One of the recommendations was to engage in public education. I know we worked on that, and I think that the minister has done a lot of work around encouraging adoption, encouraging foster families, so that's good. That takes time. It's like anything - you have to continue it, repeat it, and repeat it to encourage people to foster.

To resolve disputes - I think that's one area that we do need to have more focus on. I think we need to be looking at it in more of a restorative manner, and we don't do enough of that. We need to provide a system in the province that allows for that.

These are things that were suggested that if we created a child advocacy office, and that's the one I mentioned - the Private Member's Bill that was brought forward by the member for Yarmouth, when in Opposition. I would really encourage the government to do that. If it was important at that time - and every time I bring it up, I hear the member going on, well, why didn't you guys do it? There are a lot of things that were done, and you can't always be pointing the finger and saying (Interruption) We didn't have the opportunity to do it. Does it make it correct that you sit there and you say, well, you didn't do it? Talk about children. (Interruption) That makes . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's has the floor, and I'll remind her once again not to refer to the members opposite directly.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I think it's reasonable, Mr. Speaker, to say that the public doesn't see it like that. The public understands the fact that there are responsibilities for each government and it doesn't matter how many years you're in, there is so much work in every department that you can't get to it all and what you do is develop a strategy, a plan, and that's what we had been doing with respect to this piece of legislation.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, we were looking at the fact that the first part was to have the consultations and develop relationships with the Child Welfare Advocacy Board; the second part was to have discussions with those who had other issues

within the Act and what to do about that; and the next step was to look at that restorative approach. So we were moving along a strategic path. Yes, if we had the opportunity to have another mandate, we most likely would have looked at - I had many discussions with the child welfare boards about this child advocacy office.

The members who are sitting in the government, there is going to be a day when they are either not in here or they're going to be over on this side again and it's inevitable, they are going to hear the same thing. They are going to hear, why didn't you do that? You should have done that. It's impossible, it's not realistic. (Interruptions) That's not . . .

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

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I hope you will add a little time to my clock, Mr. Speaker. (Laughter) I should get some bonus points. Yes, my clock is ticking.

I talked about the reality of the world and that's what I'm still talking about. The fact is that you can't be pointing fingers at the other side saying you should have done that. There's an opportunity now, if it was that important to the member for Yarmouth to bring it forward in Opposition, I hope that it's that important to him now that he's in government and he has the ear of the minister and the Cabinet to say this needs to be happening: this was important to me a couple of years ago, why is not important to me now that I'm in government?

AN HON. MEMBER: Same as the food bill.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Same as the food bill, as my colleague from the Progressive Conservatives said.

I know that the time is running short, but I really wanted people to understand that this is not an easy piece of legislation and I wanted people to understand that I know that there will be people angry at me as a former minister that I'm not supporting it. But I hope I have been able to give, very clearly, the reasons why and the points that I have addressed because I very much do care about the children in our province. I very much do care about the families.

I've seen it myself - I've seen the horror of families breaking up, I've seen the horror of mental health issues, and I've seen the horror of alcoholism. I have seen that and I know what it does and we need the resources. That's the key to this and I hope people respect the fact that at this time we cannot support the bill because it's just not quite ready. But I do want to say thank you to the minister for her passion. I hope she does look at the fact that there needs to be more restorative discussion around this bill and maybe hold it for another session.

With those words, I've been asked to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on Bill No. 112. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. The House will meet again tomorrow, Friday, December 11th. Tomorrow following daily routine we will do Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 144; continue third reading of Bill No. 112, as well as the bills that cleared the Committee of the Whole tonight, which are Bill Nos. 110, 138, 139, 140, 141, and 143; and any other business that may arise following that.

Mr. Speaker, the House will meet tomorrow from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. With that, I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House adjourn, and rise again tomorrow, Friday, December 11th, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

[The House rose at 6:01 p.m.]