



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20, 2016

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20, 2016

Sixty-second General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Mr. Gordon Wilson, Mr. Keith Irving

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, a reminder that there will be a late debate tonight at the moment of interruption, at 5:30 p.m.

The topic as submitted by the honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes is:

Therefore be it resolved that the importance of early childhood development intervention programs and services are important to all Nova Scotians and their families.

We will now begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition from the residents of Clare-Digby, the operative clause being:

“Petition for the Nova Scotia government to take a renewed look at the safety of BLUE (LED) lights on all motor vehicles.

We, the undersigned, do request that this matter be taken seriously and in consideration of those who have noticeable difficulty in oncoming traffic fixed with such lights.”

Mr. Speaker, there are 112 signatures on this petition and I have affixed my name to it also.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as Attorney General, I hereby beg leave to table amendments to the Civil Procedures Rules. The revisions were made in accordance with the Judicature Act by a majority of the judges of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court on February 26, 2016.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 156 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 24 of the Acts of 1998. The Public Archives Act. (Hon. Tony Ince)

Bill No. 157 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 7 of the Acts of 1995-96. The Government Records Act. (Hon. Labi Kousoulis)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Yesterday, Progressive Conservatives in Manitoba won a majority government in historic fashion, something I know everyone in this Chamber will cheer . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Is that a Notice of Motion or a Member's Statement?

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

PALLISTER, PREMIER-ELECT/PC TEAM: MANITOBA ELECTION - CONGRATS.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Whereas yesterday - no, I'm just kidding.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Progressive Conservatives in Manitoba won a majority government in historic fashion, something I know all members of this Chamber will applaud. (Applause) At least 10 of them will.

The PCs, led by Brian Pallister, captured 40 seats and 53 per cent of the vote, its best performance in modern history. Premier-Elect Pallister joins Premier Brad Wall of Saskatchewan, as a responsible voice on the Prairies. The historic win ended an NDP dynasty that stretched back - way back to the 1990s. Premier-Elect Pallister campaigned on a platform of investing in infrastructure and reducing taxes. He also promised to mend the broken trust between Manitobans and their government.

Today, I want to thank and congratulate all those Manitobans of all political stripes who put their name on a ballot yesterday. It is a hard decision but an important one in that it strengthens our Canadian democracy.

Finally, I'd like to extend congratulations to Premier-Elect Pallister and his Progressive Conservative team on their impressive victory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

COM. SERV.: SPECIAL DIET ALLOWANCES - FROZEN

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, since 1996, the rates of personal allowances administered by the Department of Community Services have risen by 91 per cent but the rates of special diet allowances have remained frozen for 20 years - yes, 20 years. Our province's most vulnerable who live with disabilities and chronic health conditions have been forced to live for decades without increases to their special diet rates

even though their doctors say they need this food in order to adequately manage their condition.

This is a human rights issue. All people, especially those who require a healthy diet to manage their health conditions, have the right to afford food.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

CONRAD, LAWRENCE - BUS. ANNIV. (20th)

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate constituent, Lawrence Conrad, on a big professional milestone. Lawrence, a hard-working entrepreneur, is celebrating the 20th Anniversary of his business on May 29, 2016. This 20th Anniversary encompasses three business: Mainstay Security Services, Independent Security Services Atlantic Inc., and Independent Armored Transport Atlantic Inc. The success of the company is evident. Recently, a new two-storey building was built in Halifax to accommodate the company's growth. The company has also been named as a top 101 companies in Atlantic Canada for 2015. Also, for 10 years it has been recognized as one of the fastest-growing companies in Atlantic Canada.

I ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Lawrence, his beautiful wife, and three little angels, and wish him continued success.

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

ANL. TISSUE DONATION CLINICAL DAY: ORGANIZERS - THANK

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the organizers of the 6th Annual Tissue Donation Clinical Day and recognize National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, April 18th to April 25th. This year, health professionals from various fields will meet those who are recipient families, donor families, and those who need donations but did not receive one. The idea is to encourage front-line medical professionals to help families consent to organ donations. It's a true honour to have the opportunity to thank the organizers of this event and hopefully have more families consider this life-saving option.

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

LICENCE DND 404 - GOV'T. RECOGNITION

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the government has finally decided to recognize the military vehicle qualification, or the licence DND 404, of servicemen and women, making it easier for these men and women to move into a civilian workforce. I raised this issue here in the Legislature last Fall and I want to thank the

minister for following through. A good idea is a good idea. For servicemen and women, the transition back to civilian life is not always easy. Finding work opportunities can often be one of the hardest parts of this transition. I'm hopeful that the recognition of the military vehicle qualification will make life a little easier for servicemen and women seeking a new start as they leave the military.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie.

EAST. MEM. HOSPITAL MEMORY WALK (3rd ANL.) - LITTLE DOVER

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, June 14, 2015, the 3rd Annual Eastern Memorial Hospital Memory Walk took place at the Black Duck Cove boardwalk in Little Dover. There was a great turnout for the walk; over \$6,000 was raised for the hospital foundation. Along with raising money for a local, worthy institution, this event is a way to remember loved ones who have passed. The names of all those remembered were called out, followed by a moment of silence, before the walkers headed out. Following the walk, cake was served and prizes, donated by local and out-of-town businesses and individuals, were drawn. I thank the many individuals and businesses involved in making this event a success.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**NIVEN, BILL - THE BOOK OF NEGROES:
CDN. SCREEN AWARD - CONGRATS.**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia's once-vibrant film and television industry was in the spotlight at the Canadian Screen Awards held in Toronto in March.

The evening's big winner was the mini-series *The Book of Negroes*, which took home nine awards, including: best direction in a dramatic program or limited series for Clement Virgo, best original music score for a program for Phillip Miller, best performance by an actor in a leading role in a dramatic program or limited series for Lyriq Bent, and best performance by an actress in a featured supporting role in a dramatic program or series for Shailyn Pierre-Dixon.

I am proud to congratulate Bill Niven, who produced the award-winning mini-series and filmed much of it here at home, for his work on *The Book of Negroes*. I wish him well in his future productions.

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

ROSEWAY HOSP. - ER CLOSURES

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: On Sunday, January 3rd the Roseway ER closed at 7:00 p.m. and would not open again until January 4th at 8:00 a.m., a total of 13 hours. On January 11th the ER closed at 8:00 a.m. and would not open until 8:00 a.m. on January 12th, a total of 24 hours. On January 18th the ER closed again at 8:00 a.m. and would not open until the 19th at 8:00 a.m., another 24 hours. On January 23rd the ER closed at 6:00 a.m. and would not open again until January 24th at 8:00 a.m., a total of 26 hours.

Mr. Speaker, in the first weeks of 2016, months after the Minister of Health and Wellness said he would fix the closures at Roseway ER, it was closed 87 hours. To be continued.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

**HANTS EAST ASSISTING REFUGEE TEAM (HEART):
HANTS EAST - CONTRIBUTION**

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Despite having only been founded in November 2015, the Hants East Assisting Refugees Team (HEART) Society has made a tremendous contribution to Hants East.

The HEART Society was created to sponsor a refugee family in the community, helping them to reach their full potential by becoming settled, productive, and participating citizens of Canada. The society held numerous highly successful fundraising events. Our communities have rallied around them and they have received an outpouring of support from a long list of volunteers and local businesses.

Beyond financial donations, HEART has collected clothing, furniture, and other items to make the new citizens comfortable and welcome. This wonderful group has taken great care to assist and ensure that everything is in place for the first family that will call Hants East their new home.

Mr. Speaker, what a meaningful example of how powerful a community can be when it comes together. Sometimes it really does take a village.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

N.S. SPIRIT CO. - WORLD SPIRITS COMP. MEDALS

HON. PAT DUNN: Nova Scotia Spirit Company, which is based in Trenton, was presented with a gold and two silver medals at the 2016 San Francisco World Spirits Competition, which took place in March 2016.

The Spirits Competition is considered one of the most influential spirits competitions in the world, with more than 1,850 entries from around the globe. These spirits were judged by 39 industry-leading spirit experts. The Trenton distillery was awarded gold in the vodka category for Blue Lobster vodka and a silver for their Willing To Learn gin and Fisherman's Helper white rum.

Congratulations to company owner Evan MacEachern, a local entrepreneur employing local people and creating a brand of spirits now recognized around the world.

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

THOMAS, REBECCA: HFX. POET LAUREATE - CONGRATS.

MS. LENORE ZANN: I rise today to congratulate Mi'kmaq poet, spoken word performer, and slam master Rebecca Thomas, who has been named Halifax's poet laureate. She is Halifax's first Aboriginal poet laureate.

Ms. Thomas grew up in Moncton, New Brunswick, and completed her Masters of Social Anthropology at Dalhousie University. She has worked as the coordinator for Aboriginal student services at the Nova Scotia Community College.

Coming from an indigenous background whose family has been greatly impacted by residential schools, Thomas believes that the arts and poetry can help people heal in ways beyond traditional therapies. I would agree with that, Mr. Speaker.

She began her two-year term at the beginning of National Poetry Month, on April 1st. Congratulations, Rebecca Thomas.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

PRO SKATES - COMMUN. CONTRIBUTIONS

MR. JOACHIM STROINK: Thank you, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, and welcome to your first day in the Chair. (Applause)

Pro Skates is more than a store. It has now officially been in business for more than 30 years providing style, service, and a sense of community. The last few years have been difficult for retail industry but Pro Skates has diversified to include a Barbour shop, a coffee shop, and have helped everyone involved - teamwork at its finest.

Pro Skates has ridden a wave of economic climate and evolved as a winner. The company is involved in promoting mental health awareness, community comedy shows...

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Could I ask that chatter remain a little bit calmer than it is, thank you. Back to the member for Halifax Chebucto.

MR. STROINK: Pro Skates has ridden the wave of economic climate and evolved a winner. The company is involved in promoting mental health awareness, comedy shows and of course, skateboarding events. They try their best to be a big part of the community and customers have responded. The skateboard community has been a strong supporter of Pro Skates for many years.

Mr. Speaker, Pro Skates will continue to thrive for the next 30 years, making their community better as all small businesses do. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

WESTVILLE & AREA REFUGEE MISSION (WARM) HEARTS - BEST WISHES

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, Westville and Area Refugee Mission (WARM) Hearts, a group that has partnered with Westville's St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, is currently working towards sponsoring a refugee family. With paperwork in place and a bank account where they can accept donations and offer tax receipts, they are moving forward. In fact, fundraising kicked off with a gospel concert held on March 19th and they are now looking to form subcommittees for additional fundraising ideas.

Chairman Lennie White says they started with a Syrian family in mind, but they look forward to helping a refugee family from any country. My congratulations and best wishes to WARM Hearts - may they never miss a beat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

BUDGET: COM. SERV./HEALTH & WELLNESS - DECREASES

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, yesterday this government showed where its priorities truly lie and it is not in the health and well-being of Nova Scotians.

The Department of Community Services saw an increase to its budget by 1.5 per cent. The Department of Health and Welfare saw a decrease to its budget by .20 per cent, a total freeze in health care spending. The Department of Business, on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, saw a 20 per cent increase in their budget.

Mr. Speaker, this government would have Nova Scotians believe that they are prioritizing the health and well-being of all residents but their budget certainly says otherwise.

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

HAROLD T. BARRETT JHS - POSITIVE POST-IT PROJ.

MR. BILL HORNE: Thank you, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, and congratulations again.

I rise today to congratulate students at the Harold T. Barrett Junior High in Beaver Bank, who have embarked on a new project to foster positivity in their school. The student leadership team, led by Margaret Coffin and Moira McConnell, began a Positive Post-It note campaign in the school. The goal was for classmates to be pleasantly surprised at break when they returned to their lockers and find a note just for them. The team leaders hoped their team would learn that you never know when the smallest thing you say can make or break somebody's day.

I would ask that the House join me in thanking these team leaders for encouraging our young people to use their small acts of kindness to improve, inspire and brighten the lives of others.

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

MUSQUODOBOIT VALLEY CO-OP FOOD MARKET - CLOSURE

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, recently residents of Musquodoboit Valley suffered a tremendous loss. After nearly eight decades of serving its community and members, the Musquodoboit Valley Co-op food market made the difficult decision to wind up and dissolve the business.

Providing more than farm supplies and groceries, the Musquodoboit Valley Co-op participated in community events, partnered with volunteer organizations, and demonstrated a willingness and determination to overcome diversity. A pillar in the community, providing employment and work experiences for generations of youth, it is a presence that will truly be missed in the community.

I wish to recognize the most recent board of directors, as well as past board members for their commitment and dedication.

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

DONOVAN, PAUL: PREM. - OPEN LETTER

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, in a letter published in *allNovaScotia* yesterday, filmmaker Paul Donovan writes an open letter to the Premier and Government House members. He writes:

“[The Premier] is right. Nova Scotia doesn’t want a film business. No we don’t, boy.

[...]

Nova Scotia is a small place and we think small. And that’s a good thing. We don’t bury our wires underground. We don’t live in brick houses. We don’t like people who think they can win Oscars.

We want real jobs . . . We don’t want to subsidize television shows for the rest of the world to watch; no we don’t, boy.

The high foreheads at PricewaterhouseCoopers might waffle on about how the film business used to rake in a pile of outside money . . .” billions or millions, “. . . we don’t care. They can argue that the hundred million or so that came in every year was good for the economy.

[...]

[The Premier] is right. Nova Scotia is a small place; we are happy having small minds and a small future. Suck it up.

MR. SPEAKER: I would remind the honourable member that it is out of order to use verbatim remarks extensively in a member’s statement. I would ask that the member consider this for the future.

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

MS. ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I was reading a letter from allnovascotia.com, word for word.

MR. SPEAKER: The ruling stands.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

RICHARDS, IRIS - BIRTHDAY (95th)

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Today I’d like to recognize Iris Richards of Yarmouth for recently celebrating her 95th birthday and for her years of dedication to her community of Yarmouth and to Holy Trinity Anglican Church. Ms. Richards is a beloved former school teacher who taught at Yarmouth High School for many years. She is still held with great affection and respect by former colleagues and students.

Since her retirement from teaching, Ms. Richards has stayed active and involved in her community by volunteering at Yarmouth Regional Hospital and many other organizations, and is an invaluable contributor to her church family at Holy Trinity Anglican Church. I'll also add, Mr. Speaker, that she is the most-loved Liberal in Yarmouth County.

Please join me in wishing Iris Richards a happy 95th birthday and in thanking her for her dedication to her community and Party.

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

**READ, STEPHEN/GREZEL, IRENE - REFUGEE FAM.:
SUPPORT - ACKNOWLEDGE**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, before I start, I want to congratulate you and welcome you to the Chair.

I rise today to acknowledge Stephen Read and his wife Irene Grezel, of Marion Bridge, as they recently welcomed the first family of Syrian refugees to arrive in Cape Breton. The family of six stayed with Stephen and Irene until they found a permanent place to live. Stephen and Irene helped this family by integrating them into the community and making them feel welcome.

I commend Stephen and Irene for the wonderful generosity they are showing to this family, and also the community of Marion Bridge, which made the family feel welcome in this time of many changes in their lives.

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

SUPER HEALTH AUTH. - MISSION STATEMENT

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Thank you to the new Deputy Speaker. The new super health authority's mission is "To achieve excellence in health, healing and learning through working together." Its vision is "Healthy people, healthy communities - for generations."

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the new amended Health Authorities Act claims it will "... result in enhanced patient care and safety and more timely and consistent access to care."

These words I have quoted ring hollow in the ears of citizens who rely on emergency services such as Roseway Hospital. The alarming frequent closures at Roseway are due to two other words: "staff shortages." Those responsible for building up the worth of the new super health authority should be replaced by persons who know the difference between promises and platitudes.

Mr. Speaker, to be continued.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

TOLLIVER, KASSINDA: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - SOCIAL MEDIA STORY

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: For women who experience domestic violence in their home, often in front of their children, the feelings of shame and humiliation often accompany fear, anger, and grief. For Kassinda Tolliver, her experience with domestic violence was something she wanted to share very openly with her friends, her family, and her employer.

The first time I knew of Kassinda's story was when my executive assistant showed me his Facebook page. There was Kassinda, bruises and all. You see, Kassinda did something very few women do - she went public. She shared her story on social media; informed her employer who was the Halifax Chamber of Commerce and who were amazingly supportive and caring; and she sought safety for herself and her children at Bryony House.

You see, Kassinda was done; she was done with the violence at the hands of her husband and she was done as being seen as a victim. After a stay at Bryony House Kassinda returned home to begin a new life as a woman living free of violence. Continuing her quest to lessen the stigma women feel when fleeing violence, this past Saturday Kassinda held a fundraiser at her home in Dartmouth North which featured food, activities, and local talent, including Poet Laureate El Jones.

Kassinda's courage is astounding. Her message is simple: Domestic violence does not define her or her children - you can escape, you can begin again, and you can end the shame and stigma . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The time for the member's statement has elapsed.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MACDONALD, HILIARY - NOAH'S ARK REPLICA

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: I rise today to recognize Hiliary MacDonald, who has retired from the Canadian Armed Forces. Mr. MacDonald constructed a replica of Noah's Ark over a six-month period and after a great deal of research. Hiliary then dedicated the replica to the Grace Fellowship Presbyterian Church, in Sydney Mines, to be used as a teaching tool in Sunday School classes. It will be shared with other churches and Bible camps.

It is a true honour to have this opportunity to thank Hiliary for his expertise and kindness with this gift of Noah's Ark.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

**EL-DARAHALI, ASILE & ASRAA:
SYRIAN REFUGEE CAMP - DENTAL CARE**

HON. KELLY REGAN: I'd like to tell you about the great work of two sisters who work at dental clinics in Bedford.

In 1992 their family fled Kuwait during the Gulf War. This past December, Asile and Asraa El-Darahali had the chance to give back. They travelled to a Syrian refugee camp, in Jordan, with 45 health professionals from North America. There, the two Dalhousie dental grads treated over 300 children over one week. Many of the children had abscesses. Few of the people in the camp, which is home to 80,000 refugees, have toothbrushes. Many were in chronic pain.

The sisters also brought with them a dental chair they fundraised for back here in Nova Scotia. I want to thank Asile and Asraa - and the Halifax Dentistry Student Society for Refugees - for the great work they are doing.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HAINES, DR. RONALD: RETIREMENT - WELL WISHES

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, Dr. Ronald Haines has been practising optometry in the Town of New Glasgow for 51 years, beginning in 1965. On March 9th of this year Dr. Haines decided it was finally time to enter into a well-deserved retirement. It is almost impossible to guess how many patients Dr. Haines assisted in these past many years - he not only ran the New Glasgow practice, but also opened a sister office in Port Hawkesbury in 1969.

If you mention Dr. Haines' name in most parts of Nova Scotia you are met with the same response from satisfied clients - great service with his signature smile is the way he will always be thought of. Dr. Haines has been a well-respected member of our Town of New Glasgow, not only as a professional but as a true supporter of his community.

We take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Haines on a stellar career, and wish him many happy years of well-deserved retirement.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

**CURRY, PATRICK ET AL: ANTIGONISH C OF C ANL. PRESIDENT'S
DINNER - RECOGNITION**

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, today I rise in my place to recognize four individuals - to say goodbye and to say welcome and good luck.

I was fortunate to be the guest speaker at the Antigonish Chamber of Commerce Annual President's Dinner hosted on March 30, 2016. At the dinner, special recognition was given to Mr. Patrick Curry, the outgoing president, and Anne Marie MacKenzie, the former executive director. Patrick and Anne Marie were strong advocates for the business community in Antigonish - Patrick volunteered as president for three years and Anne Marie had been with the organization for a lot longer than that. Their dedication and passion for the community were vital to their roles in the chamber. Mr. Speaker, I would like to formally thank both of them for their contribution to the Antigonish community.

While the chamber said goodbye and thank you to Patrick and Anne Marie, we also welcomed a new president and executive director. Dan Fougere is officially the new president, and it was Richard Burelle's first big introduction to the community as the new executive director.

While change for any organization can be scary, I believe the new faces at the chamber will be positive. I look forward to working with them both and wish them the best of luck in their new roles.

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

**UPPER STEWIACKE VOL. FIRE BRIGADE:
SERV./DEDICATION - RECOGNIZE**

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Today I would like to recognize the exemplary service and dedication of a group of community volunteers, the Upper Stewiacke Volunteer Fire Brigade. They recently celebrated their annual awards banquet.

In addition to special awards given to four of the brigade's members - Ian Tapper, Alan Hamilton, Colton Cleveland, and Mary Ann White - for their achievements during the past year, several firemen and auxiliary members were recognized by the brigade, by the province, or federally for their many years of service. These 12 individuals between them have given a total of 215 years to the safety and well-being of their community.

It is the continued efforts of groups such as this that define community. I believe we often take their efforts for granted. I know I don't want to do that.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

DYCK, HATTIE - MEMORIES FROM NOVA SCOTIA

HON. KAREN CASEY: A book entitled *Memories From Nova Scotia* chronicles life in Colchester County and East Hants in the mid-20th Century. The book features stories from and about community members and includes tales of old grocery stores and barbershops and the heydays of the railway.

The author of the book, 83-year-old Hattie Dyck, has previously authored 11 other books. She believes that these stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things will be lost if they are not recorded for future generations to read, to learn from, and to enjoy. Her books are an entertaining way to learn of the history of the area.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Hattie for helping to further chronicle Nova Scotia's past for our future generations.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**DOUCET, CASEY/MACKENZIE, SAMI:
FORUM FOR YOUNG CANADIANS - ATTENDANCE**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: I rise to congratulate Pictou Academy students Casey Doucet and Sami MacKenzie for being chosen to attend the Forum for Young Canadians in Ottawa. Sami and Casey were approached about attending the forum as a result of their interest in politics, having been the only PA students enrolled in an online global politics course.

Forum is a one-week experiential learning trip including visits to Parliament Hill. It is an opportunity for youth to come together to discuss and learn more about Canadian politics. Forum is a unique experience attended by high school students from across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I offer congratulations to Casey and Sami for being chosen to attend this year's exciting Forum.

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

LAKE DISTRICT REC. ASSOC. - RECOGNIZE

HON. DAVID WILSON: I'd like to rise to recognize the Lake District Recreation Association, or LDRA. This is a community-owned association in the community of Sackville, but it serves a much greater area than that. It serves the surrounding communities with an elected board of volunteers who work passionately to provide dedicated sports and leisure facilities in our community. They run the Sackville Arena, which is the home of Sackville Minor Hockey, but the Sackville Blazers and the Millwood High, Sackville High,

and Lockview High hockey teams all utilize that arena. The Sackville-Fall River Wolves Lacrosse Association also calls the Sackville Arena their home.

The president, Robert Rines, should be commended for the work that they do in the community. They also run the bingo hall, which supports so many organizations within the community. They're hosting their volunteer dinner this evening, and I wish them success in the year ahead.

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

**AFRICAN UNITED BAPTIST ASSOC. WOMEN'S INSTITUTE (N.S.)
- ANNIV. (60th)**

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I would like to recognize the African United Baptist Association Women's Institute of Nova Scotia on the occasion of their 60th Anniversary. The three-day event encompassed delegates from all around the province and included a banquet that featured special recognition of several members who marked 50 years of service to the Women's Institute: Ms. Donna Symonds, Ms. Stella Anderson, Ms. Shirley Marie Jones, Ms. Irene Riley, and Ms. Loretta Parsons. Head table dignitaries were led to their place by Dr. Henry Bishop, who performed traditional ancestral drumming. The gathering was entertained later in the evening by the East Preston United Baptist Church Praise Dancers.

I recognize and congratulate the African Nova Scotia Baptist Association Women's Institute for their important work and on the occasion of their 60th Anniversary.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

WILLIAMS, GARRETT - LIFESAVING ACTION

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate an ordinary boy who did an extraordinary thing - 10-year-old Garrett Williams saved his sister's life. Six-year-old Shanna was choking on a Lifesaver - her face was red, her lips were blue, and she was unable to speak. After an initial attempt by his grandfather, Garrett remained calm and sprang into action. He promptly performed the Heimlich manoeuvre, dislodged the candy and saved Shanna's life. He knew what to do because two years ago Garrett took the St. John Ambulance first aid course at school.

These first aid courses are free. The majority of people taking this course will never have to use it, but to be able to save a life should the need arise is priceless.

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

**KENNEDY, COMRADE JOHN:
PORT MORIEN LEGION BR. 55 - DEDICATION**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Comrade John Kennedy, from Homeville, for his dedication to the Port Morien Legion Branch 55. Mr. Kennedy was recently thanked by members for his 15-year tenure as treasurer of the Port Morien Legion. This was a time of unprecedented construction and maintenance at the Legion, which doubles as a community centre for the area.

I stand here to thank John Kennedy for his many hours of dedication and community service which he has shown over the past 15 years.

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

**CHIASSON-MACDONALD, JOAN
- NEW WATERFORD CHAPTER IODE GOOD CITIZENSHIP AWARD**

MR. DAVID WILTON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Joan Chiasson-MacDonald for being the first to receive the New Waterford Chapter of the IODE Good Citizenship Award.

Joan has made many contributions to the community, from spearheading the annual cleanup to providing exercise classes for seniors. Joan was also the first woman to be asked to join the New Waterford Rotary Club; she initiated the Interact Club at Breton Education Centre; initiated the Island Breast Friends, a group of women dedicated to fundraising for breast cancer; and her latest endeavour is Help me prove Ma wrong, a fundraiser to purchase a water buffalo for Nora's Home, in India, to help a community there to become self-sufficient. So far she has purchased four water buffalo and is on her way to number five. These are just a few examples of many projects she is involved in.

I would ask that all members join me in congratulating Joan Chiasson-MacDonald on her Good Citizenship Award, and thank her for all the good she does for New Waterford.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

CHISHOLM, JOHN WESLEY/ARCADIA ENTERTAINMENT - ANNIV. (15th)

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it was in 2001 that Arcadia Entertainment began telling stories about ocean adventure. Fifteen years later Arcadia has built an impressive portfolio that includes award-winning series and specials about wildlife, unexplored places, and the great mysteries of civilization.

Arcadia's work has won two Canadian Screen Actor Awards, a 2013 Emmy nomination, and dozens of awards from festivals around the world, proving that Nova

Scotia's film and television industry is as good as any in the world. Arcadia programs, such as Hope for Wildlife and Chasing Wild Horses are seen in 140 countries around the world. Arcadia employs over 30 full-time talented and innovative Nova Scotians. They add to our province's cultural landscape and our economy.

Today I congratulate Arcadia President John Wesley Chisholm and his team on 15 years of creativity and job creation. We hope that this company is able to withstand the devastating changes that the Liberal Government has made to their industry and, some day, is able to celebrate 20 years in business.

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

MILLS, HAYLEY - BAY B BOUTIQUE

MR. IAIN RANKIN: I would like to recognize Hayley Mills, owner and operator of Bay B Boutique, located in Halifax North End.

Hayley recognized a gap in the market and came up with the concept of Bay B Boutique as a way to find new markets for high-end, great quality, gently used baby, children and maternity wear.

Bay B Boutique is a consignment shop that offers both buyers and sellers a chance to save money and the environment. The motto for Bay B Boutique is: Where it doesn't have to be new to be awesome!

Bay B Boutique loves to support local by offering a showcase of local artisan products and services. After being open for six months, Hayley is looking at exciting and innovative new ways to expand and grow Bay B Boutique.

I would like the members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in recognizing Hayley's entrepreneurial spirit and wish her good luck in the future with Bay B Boutique.

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

BICKERTON, KEN: C.B. SPORTS HALL OF FAME - INDUCTION

MR. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Ken Bickerton of Sydney, who this month will be inducted into the Cape Breton Sports Hall of Fame.

A standout goalie at Sydney Academy in the mid-1970s, Ken went on to have an outstanding career with the Dalhousie Tigers. He was named Rookie of the Year in 1976/77 and Dalhousie Male Athlete of the Year in 1979/80.

Mr. Speaker, Ken will be inducted into the Cape Breton Sports Hall of Fame in late April 2016 and I ask the House to join me in congratulating an outstanding hockey player and a community leader on his induction.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare Digby.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Merci le Président, et félicitations et bienvenue à votre nouvelle rôle.

MR. SPEAKER : Merci beaucoup.

UNIVERSITÉ SAINTE-ANNE - INSCRIPTION ÉLEVÉE

MR. GORDON WILSON : M. le Président, c'est avec beaucoup de plaisir que je souligne le succès de l'Université Sainte-Anne pour leur augmentation considérable d'inscriptions cette année universitaire. En un temps où on affiche un déclin de 2 pour cent du taux d'inscription dans les provinces de l'Atlantique, l'Université Sainte-Anne atteint une augmentation de 15 pour cent. Cette croissance a été atteinte dû, en partie, à une augmentation considérable d'inscriptions d'étudiants internationaux.

Pour assurer l'intégration des étudiants internationaux nouvellement arrivé au Canada dans la communauté universitaire, l'université a récemment effectué des changements au sein du département de la vie étudiante. L'université a également constaté une augmentation positif d'étudiants de la province et d'ailleurs au Canada.

Aussi, un grand nombre de ses étudiants choisissent de rester à Sainte-Anne, donc l'université réussie un taux de rétention relativement élevé. Cette augmentation est toute une réussite pour cette petite université, en français (Interruptions) - pardonnez-moi, merci - la seule université francophone en Nouvelle Écosse. Bien que ces résultats soient peut-être inattendus, ils ne sont pas...

MR. SPEAKER: The time for the member's statement has expired. I would like to thank the member for the eloquent statement en français, but I would also ask him to submit that statement in English for Hansard.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MR TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, this morning in the Public Accounts Committee, the member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River referred to our post-secondary institutions as little work factories that were in the business of turning out little robots to go into the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, I spent seven years as a university student. I have a diploma from the former Cumberland Regional Vocational School and I've served the Nova Scotia Community College.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order please. The statement is out of order. You should not be raising anything concerning the business of a committee.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HFX. JIU-JITSU CLUB (HARRIETSFIELD) - FUNDRAISING

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, you're doing a great job you just have to learn to look right sometimes.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of the generous spirit of the Halifax jiu-jitsu club that operates out of Harrietsfield. On February 18th the club had a donation day that raised \$500 for juvenile diabetes. Forty children and their families gathered for active games, fun, and snacks. Donations were collected at the event and were matched by the club.

The Halifax jiu-jitsu club regularly supports charities and has raised money in the past for such worthwhile causes as Bryony House, the Canadian Cancer Society, and ALS Canada, just to name a few. This family-owned business is known for its generosity. They often donate a portion of their profits to charities that are important to their members.

The Halifax jiu-jitsu club should be commended for their generous spirit and their willingness to give back to the community members. Please join me in thanking them for everything they do and wishing them continued success.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

WINDSOR ELMS VILLAGE - ANNIV. (50th)

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Windsor Elms Village, a long-term care facility in Falmouth, on their 50th Anniversary, celebrated on April 1, 2016. The Windsor Elms was established in 1966 in the Town of Windsor, where it was a permanent facility for 45 years. In 2011, the new Windsor Elms Village opened in Falmouth, with 108 residents calling the new facility home.

Residents have access to six therapeutic gardens, a spiritual room, a multipurpose room, a hair salon, and a separate area where families can gather for special events and milestone birthdays.

The staff at the Windsor Elms Village continues to be top notch in the care delivered to the residents and treat them just like their own family.

I would like to invite all members of this House of Assembly to congratulate the Windsor Elms Village on this milestone event celebrating 50 years and wish them all the best for the next 50 years.

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

KINGSWOOD REFUGEE PROJ. - FUNDRAISING

MR. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start by taking a moment to acknowledge the work that all Nova Scotians have done in accepting and welcoming Syrian refugees.

I'd like to further that acknowledgement by recognizing a group from my community, the Kingswood Refugee Project, a group of local volunteers who have come together to support a single family. They've been out banging on doors and raising money toward assisting with these folks coming over and providing them with a home and an opportunity to establish themselves as Nova Scotians. Their next endeavour is on May 28th at St. John's Anglican Church, where they'll be hosting the Mellotones.

I just want to once again acknowledge the work that they've done, and all Nova Scotians alike, in accepting these refugees.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

DAYSRING & DIST. FD - ANNIV. (50th)

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, on March 23, 1966, a dedicated group of residents in the Dayspring area came together to sow the seeds that would grow into the Dayspring and District Fire Department. Incorporated on July 7, 1967, the department is celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year.

Over those last 50 years, the department and its group of dedicated volunteers and its auxiliary have provided an invaluable service to the communities they help protect. These volunteers, from the ones who started it all to the ones who are currently working to keep us safe, aren't recognized nearly often enough for their dedication.

I ask that members of this House join me in congratulating the Dayspring and District Fire Department on celebrating 50 years, and I'd like to thank the volunteers for their many years of service.

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

CREMO, SHERMAN - HEROISM

MS. PAM EYKING: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge a heroic act by Sherman Cremo of Eskasoni. What began as a regular trip to the grocery store could have taken a tragic turn for the worse last Thursday if not for the quick actions of Mr. Cremo.

While shopping with his mom at the local Superstore, three-year-old Josh MacDonald began to choke on a raisin that became lodged in his throat. Mr. Cremo saw the young boy struggling to breathe and quickly acted. Mr. Cremo is well trained in first aid, including CPR and the Heimlich manoeuvre. He has graduated from firefighting school and is a member of his community's fire department. Mr. Cremo quickly performed the Heimlich manoeuvre and dislodged the raisin from the young boy's throat.

I would like to thank Mr. Cremo for his quick actions in saving this young boy's life, and am happy to report that young Josh is doing great and is feeling back to his normal self.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens South.

FISHER, LAURA: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN - AWARENESS

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, One Billion Rising is a global campaign to raise awareness of violence against women. Sadly, a billion women are raped or beaten during their lifetime. Ms. Laura Fisher decided to act creatively in the community to bring women together to stand in solidarity with victims of violence.

As part of a class assignment at NSCC, Ms. Fisher worked with the Valley Sexual Violence Project and Chrysalis House to mobilize two flash mobs, giving women a safe and supportive opportunity to express in dance and song emotions of strength and resilience and let victims of violence know they are not alone. The flash mobs took place in the days leading up to December 6, 2015, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

I would like to commend and thank Ms. Laura Fisher and her community partners on their dedication to raising awareness of violence against women globally and in our communities.

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

SUTHERLAND, NIKOLAS - LT.-GOV.'S AWARD

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: I would like to ask the House to join me in congratulating Millwood High student Nikolas Sutherland, who is a recent recipient of the Lieutenant Governor's Respectful Citizen Award. These awards recognize youth who take

initiatives to help create safe, inclusive spaces where bullying is not accepted and tolerance toward one another is encouraged. Well done, Nikolas. Thank you for the leadership role you have taken on this very serious issue.

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

COLE HBR. LIONS CLUB - SPEAK OUT COMP.

MS. JOYCE TREEN: The Cole Harbour Lions Club hosted their annual Speak Out in March. I was invited again this year to participate as a panelist. The competition is open to all students in Grades 9 to 12. This year's speeches contained a wide range of topics and all of them were very thought-provoking. This is a wonderful opportunity for our youth to challenge themselves and to speak about a topic that is important to them.

These public speaking competitions always remind me that our youth are paying attention and are quite amazing. The Cole Harbour Lions Club does a great job of organizing this event and it is always an honour to be part of it. Please join me in thanking the Lions Club for hosting this wonderful event for our youth.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie.

JENKINS, DR. JOHN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, in March, the community of Guysborough was deeply saddened to learn that a former colleague, neighbour, doctor, and friend has passed away, Dr. John Jenkins. Dr. Jenkins was a Newfoundlander by birth, but he made a deep and lasting impression on Guysborough, where he practised medicine full-time from 2001 to 2003. He later provided periodic coverage from 2005 to 2011. Along with general practice, Dr. Jenkins was widely known for his involvement in running the Well Men's Clinics of Guysborough. His loss will be greatly felt in the area. I express my sincerest condolences to his family and for our community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ALSHAZLY, HANNY - ATHABASCA UNIV. DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to congratulate a constituent of Halifax Armdale, Hanny Alshazly, on receiving the 2015 Distinguished Alumni Award from Athabasca University. In January 2016 representatives from the university came to Halifax to recognize Hanny at a special reception. I was happy to attend the event and to learn more about his outstanding academic and professional achievements.

The university presented Mr. Alshazly with a print award depicting the work of renowned Canadian artist Ted Harrison. Family, friends, and colleagues shared in Hanny's moment of glory and I'm proud that he's forging a great career in e-learning as the regional director for the Middle East and Africa at D2L, an online teaching and learning platform. I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Hanny.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Portland Valley with 45 seconds.

MORAND, GILLIAN ET AL - N.S. RECYCLES AWARD

HON. TONY INCE: I rise to extend congratulations to three young people who attend schools in my constituency of Cole Harbour-Portland Valley. They are all recipients of Nova Scotia Recycles awards. First, Gillian Morand, a Grade 6 student at Portland Estates Elementary for her runner-up award in ad design. Also two Grade 12 students from Cole Harbour High School are being honoured for sweeping the same category: Ms. Amy Nieforth for runner-up in the Scholarship Essay category and Mr. Evan Keough, who is the winner in the Scholarship Essay category. The Nova Scotia Recycles Awards and Celebration Dinner is being held tonight.

MR. SPEAKER: The time allotted for Statements by Members has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM. - YAR. FERRY DEAL: N.S. COMPANIES - PROTECTION

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: My question is for the Premier. We now have all heard the sad news that Nova Star, the last ferry operator, has gone officially bankrupt. As a result, 50 Nova Scotia companies, owed a total of \$205,000, will go unpaid for the work and supplies they provided. Obviously that was a bad deal for them.

Can the Premier inform the House what protections his government negotiated in the new ferry deal to protect Nova Scotia companies that want to do work for the new operator?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the Minister of TIR to respond.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for the question. The reality is that we had this relationship, this deal with Nova Star. Very

early on we became very concerned with the direction of the operation, with respect to what their passenger counts were being estimated at and the fact that they continued to come back to the government for additional funds.

We went in a different direction. Obviously we're very proud, despite what the Opposition has said about Mark MacDonald and Bay Ferries, we're very proud of that relationship. We're very confident in their operations and what they're going to do so we stand behind Bay Ferries. We know we've put a strong contract together and they are going to do the right thing for the people of this province. We know that at the end of the day this service is going to work again, despite the comments by the Opposition.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it's clear from that answer that the government didn't learn from its past mistakes and has no protections in place for Nova Scotia companies today that want to do work for the new ferry operator, that was my question. Obviously the answer is no or they would have said that they did have such protection.

Let me give you an example, Mr. Speaker: one local supplier is Proptonics here in Halifax, owned by Karim George. He is owed over \$4,000 by Nova Star, a significant amount of money for his company. He is worried that having that debt written off will really hurt his business in the future.

Mr. Speaker, why didn't the government ensure there would be protection for Nova Scotia companies in the new, bad ferry deal?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The minister spoke, I think, about two conversations. I realize the answer he gave to you was not to the one previously and you are referring to a particular company in Nova Scotia that is left owing by the former deal that was there. I want to assure the honourable member and those companies that I would be more than happy to meet with them to discuss the challenges that have been faced by that deal that was before us with the old ferry deal.

MR. BAILLIE: Well that's great, Mr. Speaker, we'll help set that up. I hope it results in his company getting paid for the work they did.

Nova Scotians are going to wonder who is looking out for their interests, Mr. Speaker. We know the government has signed an even worse deal with the new operator. They have covered all their losses. They have provided a guaranteed profit that they are so embarrassed about that they will keep it secret from the people of Nova Scotia, the very ones who are paying the bills. They counted on this government the last time to protect Nova Scotians' interests. In fact, their contract with Nova Star provided that they were to receive information on procurement on purchasing from Nova Scotia companies every quarter so they knew this was going bad but they left companies like Proptonics in the lurch.

My question is, how can Nova Scotians trust this government now when they made such a bad deal and left 50 Nova Scotia companies in the lurch, Mr. Speaker? I'll table that.

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for question. As I said to him earlier and said to this House, I'd be happy to meet with those companies, the minister as well. I know that it's hard for the honourable member to realize he has been unable to support that international link from Yarmouth, the Nova Scotia ferry that leaves from Yarmouth into Portland.

We, as a government, have stayed committed to that link. We have a partner in Bay Ferries in Mark MacDonald, who has been working with the provincial government, the provincial Parties of all political stripes in this province to provide that service. We're continuing to go forward but I am concerned about the issue that was raised about those companies that were left owed money and I agreed to make sure that our government would be in contact to see what we can do.

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

PREM. - LOTTERY/CASINO REVENUE INCREASE

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, many Nova Scotians were alarmed yesterday when they learned of the government's VLT windfall contained in the budget. Budget documents state that sales revenue from the Provincial Lotteries and Casino Corporation are expected to increase by \$34.8 million this year. Now while Nova Scotians want to see provincial revenues increase, there are moral concerns that these revenues could come from problem gamblers.

My question for the Premier is, does he have any moral objections to the dramatic increase in VLT revenues over the last two years?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As she knows, the minister responded yesterday that the My-Play System which was put in place wasn't working. What we found out from that system was that recreational users were not participating. It became too cumbersome for them to participate. With the reduction in My-Play, we're seeing recreational use of VLTs going up. Mr. Speaker, we're still below the highs of revenues from VLTs across this province. We've continued to work forward with organizations when it comes to problem gambling and at the same time making sure that this opportunity is there for recreational VLT users.

MS. MANCINI: The NDP Government introduced the My-Play System designed to curb problem gambling. The current government cancelled My-Play without any plan to replace it. This type of short-sighted decision has become a trademark for this government,

Mr. Speaker. You can just ask the film industry. I ask the Premier, why was the My-Play System eliminated by this government without any concrete plan to address problem gambling in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Because the My-Play System, like everything else the NDP did, was failing, Mr. Speaker. We're making sure that what we have in place is a system that is recreational - the My-Play System was forcing recreational VLT users to not participate. What we've seen go forward - we have not seen a spike in problem gambling. We're continuing to work with those who require supports. I would also say that the number that the honourable member is using is the global number, not just the VLT revenue. We're seeing a spike in terms of some of the largest jackpots when it comes to the ticket lottery system in the province which has grown revenue for the province. To associate all of that growth with just VLTs is simply wrong.

MS. MANCINI: Nova Scotians are concerned about the social costs associated with dramatic increases in gambling revenues, yet despite the significant rise in gambling revenues over the last two years, it was reported in *allNovaScotia* yesterday that last year the Nova Scotia Provincial Lotteries and Casino Corporation budgets for responsible gaming programs was actually underspent by \$400,000. I will table that. I ask the Premier, why was the budget for responsible gambling underspent by \$400,000 last year?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As she knows, there are partners that we have across this province, sister organizations that help deal with some of the challenges that Nova Scotians are facing. Some of that funding would be applied for, and they would use that to deliver services and programs to citizens who require them. We're going to continue to reach out and work with them. We continue to make sure we put in our budget a number that is there so that when organizations want to access it, use it, it's there. We're going to continue to work with those partners so that vulnerable Nova Scotians, those Nova Scotians who require our help, will get it.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

GAMING: TEENAGE GAMBLING - SURVEY

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Minister responsible for Part I of the Gaming Control Act. We know that the money for responsible gambling wasn't properly spent, but we did learn that revenues from VLT terminals are way up, and clearly this is revenue that the Liberal Government needed to make the books look good. Instead of directing appropriate resources to assist problem gamblers, this government is hoping to recruit new ones. Just two months ago, the Nova Scotia Provincial Lotteries and Casino Corporation spent \$114,000 of taxpayer money to survey 160 Nova Scotian teenagers about their online gambling habits.

My question for the minister is, will the minister admit that using \$114,000 of taxpayer money to survey Nova Scotian teenagers about gambling would have been better spent on prevention and treatment programs?

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: To suggest that anyone in the House or any Nova Scotian would want to encourage problem gambling I think is shameful in itself, to even suggest that anyone would want to do that. I think all of us here have family members or know close friends who have been faced with problem gambling. To suggest that any government of any political stripe would do anything to encourage problem gambling is absolutely shameful.

MR. HOUSTON: And I absolutely agree that it is shameful. But this government dragged its feet on banning flavoured tobacco products, and now they're talking to teenagers about gambling. And under a FOIPOP, right here, we have some information where it was reported back to the government that most who currently gamble online for money would be interested in playing an online gambling if it was offered by the Nova Scotia Government. Why is the government trying to figure out if people want them to get more involved in online gambling? I'd be happy to table that.

MR. SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, currently a lot of online gambling is unregulated. There's absolutely no means to find out if there is problem gaming taking place, if people are gaming more than what they can afford to do. This was an initiative that was launched by Atlantic Lotto on behalf of the four Atlantic Provinces to look at whether there was a role for Atlantic Lotto, on behalf of the Atlantic Provinces, to look at online gaming as a means of trying to ensure that this is regulated to start off with, which it currently isn't, but as well to see are there people who are having problems gaming and, if they are, that those services are made available to them.

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

PREM.: FED. INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING - PROV. REQUIREMENTS

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Yesterday government provided no details on the relationship between the provincial budget and federal infrastructure funding. In the past, federal stimulus money usually required a commitment from the province to provide its own level of funding for projects and programs.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the Premier is, what is required of the province to receive federal infrastructure funding, and how does yesterday's budget address that issue?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for that question. As he would know, or he should know, sitting around the executive table, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of infrastructure money that comes from the federal government is cost shared with our

municipal partners. There are some relationships that go directly provincial government to federal government; the new government is looking at actually going directly to some municipalities. So there will be many options of where Nova Scotian communities can avail themselves of the federal infrastructure money.

As the honourable member should also know, we're working with our municipal partners to set priorities about what their infrastructures are. I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs, we've been working with our colleagues to make sure those priorities are set in place. At the same time I'm sure he has been listening to the great work that's been happening around COVE and Volta, which are great pieces of infrastructure and economic development opportunities. If you listened to the budget yesterday, there's investment in broadband we looked at to trigger federal monies, Mr. Speaker. There's a whole host of opportunities for us to capitalize on some federal money to ensure that we put in place the kind of infrastructure that Nova Scotians are expecting - some that deliver services to them and others that will drive economic growth across this province.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, federal money is badly needed for municipalities and infrastructure projects, however there is a concern that the federal funding may require a commitment of municipal funding that municipalities simply cannot afford. My question for the Premier is, what is the government's plan to help municipalities secure federal infrastructure funding?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. We are going to continue to work with our municipal partners across this province. I must say they were overjoyed when the former government was booted out of office and they finally had a government that was prepared to work with them to look at the infrastructure profiles.

Mr. Speaker, we've continued to work with them to ensure that their priorities are put in place. As they know, we know, they have a limited capacity in what they can and cannot do, and we're working with them diligently to make sure that we deal with the water and sewer issues that they're being faced with. At the same time we're working with the national government to make sure that we make some investments in strategic infrastructure that will drive economic growth and opportunities for municipalities and communities from one end of this province to the other.

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

PREM.: NDP BUDGET TRICKS - USAGE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Speaking of the former government, yesterday's Liberal budget reminded many Nova Scotians of some of the NDP budgets - projecting rising revenues, magically rising revenues to make the budget look better.

Well, it turns out that the now Justice Minister had a lot to say about that practice back when the NDP were in, Mr. Speaker. She said “its painting a rosy picture that is overly inflated on the revenue side, tremendously, in order to present that balanced look today - ” And I will table that, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the Premier is, how can Nova Scotians trust a government that is using the same budget tricks that they condemned the NDP for just a few short years ago?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question and I want to thank all Nova Scotians who, over the last number of years, worked with our government to rein in the cost of government, worked with us to make sure that the programs were being run efficiently, that we could deliver services to them in the most cost-effective way, brought us to the day, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we were able to table a surplus budget. The numbers he is referring to would have been gone through and gone over by the Auditor General who would have confirmed that those were accurate.

At the same time I want to remind all members of this House that this government was provided an opportunity with \$110 million of extra revenue. Instead of doing what previous governments have done, Mr. Speaker, and shove it into program spending that is unsustainable, we put it directly on the debt to reduce our debt that was owing for the Nova Centre.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, our debt is actually going up but besides that, that’s exactly what the former NDP Government used to say when the now-Justice Minister condemned them for doing the exact same kind of budget tricks that the Liberal Government is now doing. In fact she was very eloquent on the topic back in 2013 when she said that the budget of the time is based on inflated, wishful thinking, rose-coloured glasses, whatever you want to call it.

It’s not going to be sustainable. It’s not going to be reliable. I think there’s a high level of skepticism in the province about what exactly is going to be delivered in the months to come. It’s not going to work - the exact same thing that the Liberal Government is now doing with the budget yesterday, Mr. Speaker.

Does the Premier agree with his Justice Minister that using inflated, rose-coloured glasses in a budget leads to a high level of skepticism and that it isn’t going to work?

THE PREMIER: I do not agree at all, Mr. Speaker. I spent the morning at Shearwater meeting with military families and military personnel. I was at a school in the south end of Halifax making an announcement on capped classes that are being provided in Grades 5 and 6. There was not a level of cynicism out there.

Not a single person echoed the skepticism that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party - and oh, by the way, Kevin Lacey has been going out and spewing. As

a matter of fact, Nova Scotians are more optimistic, more forward-looking than that Leader will ever give them credit for. Guess what, they are leaving him behind.

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

TIR: ROAD MAINTENANCE/DRAINAGE WORK - REDUCTION EXPLAIN

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Yesterday's budget does little to address the tremendous needs of the road and bridge maintenance in the province. Roadside maintenance is down by \$233,000, drainage maintenance is down by \$80,000. With the poor state of so many roads in Nova Scotia we were hoping to see more work done, not less.

My question to the Minister of TIR is, would the minister please explain why his department is content to do less road work maintenance and drainage work to the roads around Nova Scotia?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I thank the member for the question. The reality is, as we've said many times and the member would know and many members in the House would know, there's a significant challenge with keeping up with the infrastructure here in the province. We do our very best with the transportation officials we have at the local level. We identify those priorities: the major challenges that we face here in the province with the weather, with the tough winters we have, with the Spring thaw, there's a lot of work to do; we do our very best.

I don't think we're being short-changed. We invest a lot of tax dollars, a lot of Nova Scotians' hard-earned money, into the roads to our transportation and all of our infrastructure for the province. I'm proud of our budget. I'm proud that we're able to hold the line on spending and do our very best.

Mr. Speaker, we're doing a great job on the ground for people, I think they realize that, and we'll continue to do that.

MR. MACLEOD: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that the people in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal do great work and nobody would dispute that, but I can tell you that they can't do more with less, They need to have their full budget. It's even less than they were offered last year.

Then our minister also says how important infrastructure is. Mr. Speaker, bridge maintenance is down by \$700,000 over the last years' estimate. Just two years ago we learned that 391 bridges were in serious need of repair; I'll table that. The maintenance is important for the safety of Nova Scotians and visitors on our roads and bridges here in the province.

My question to the minister is, is the minister confident that road safety will not be compromised by the reduction of \$700,000 of the highways and bridges maintenance budget?

MR. MACLELLAN: The answer absolutely is yes, I'm very confident in the processes that we have. We have 4,200 bridges and structures in this province. There were about 400 that were identified as being priorities to address in the near future. We have a very tough and demanding engineering process and safety is number one. There are never dollars put ahead of safety with our department or with any department in government. We do our best to look after the regions and look after the people that rely on these bridges and structures. We would never allow anyone to travel across those particular structures if they're unsafe.

We do our best, and I am confident that our processes are working. We'll make sure we keep people safe and get them home each and every night.

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

**COM. SERV. - PERSONAL ALLOWANCE RATES/SPECIAL DIET RATE:
INCREASE/REDUCTION - EXPLAIN**

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Yesterday the Minister of Community Services raised income assistance rates by \$20 per month, after two years of freezing rates. (Applause) Merry Christmas, Mr. Speaker.

She did not raise the special diet rates provided to the thousands of clients who rely on these benefits in order to maintain a healthy diet to manage their health conditions. In fact, the personal allowance rates have increased by 91 per cent since 1996, but the special diet rates have remained frozen for 20 years.

Can the minister explain how she has allowed personal allowances to increase but has not increased the special diet rate by one penny?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question. As I said yesterday, I'm proud to be part of a government that has raised rates, the highest level of any one-time rate increase in the history of the program. I'm also very proud to be part of a government that's led by a Premier who came out very quickly and very decisively about not clawing back any of the federal child tax benefits for anybody or any family in the Province of Nova Scotia.

I would remind the honourable member that there were cuts to special dietary needs and to special needs in the budgets of the previous NDP Government. I would also remind

the member that there was a \$17 million booking of a cut to income assistance payments, which would have resulted in late payments for every single recipient in this province.

MS. MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, the minister's clients who rely on this special diet allowance are individuals with serious health conditions and disabilities that require an adequate and healthy diet. Imagine a person on income assistance with Crohn's disease, colitis, or with an HIV diagnosis; they receive just \$66 to manage that condition. A person who is a paraplegic receives \$36. These individuals deserve the right to a healthy diet in order to manage these conditions. Does the minister agree that having access to an adequate healthy diet is key to managing the health conditions of clients who rely on special diet allowances?

MS. BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, food security is a tremendous issue in Nova Scotia, as it is in most provinces across Canada. I've worked with my colleagues nationally on this issue. Raising the income assistance rates across the board by \$20 is a significant increase.

Historically in this province, income assistance rates have only been incrementally increased, anywhere from \$2 to \$4, with the exception of one year a few years back. I'm proud of the government that we're recognizing the need. We've done consultations. People clearly have told us that they need more in their personal allowance budget, and this government delivered. We are taking care of the people who need it the most.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

GAMING - VLT REVENUES: INCREASES - DETAILS

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Part I of the Gaming Control Act. As has already been mentioned, VLT revenues in yesterday's budget go from an estimate last year to this year of \$27.1 million. That does not include the ticket and casino revenues, as was indicated earlier, and I'll table that.

I do agree with the minister that My-Play was eliminated because it didn't work. It didn't target problem gamers, and there were no other software options. However, any increase from regular gamers according to the data shown in 2014 should have been reflected in that year's budget, with maybe a bit of holdover this year. Yet they are still projecting an increase for the coming year. With 7,000 problem gamers in the province, that amounts to about \$4,000 each.

Why are VLT revenues in Nova Scotia expected to increase when in almost every other jurisdiction they are predicted to decrease?

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, as has been indicated, the My-Play System was not working. In fact, even where the revenues are today, it is less than what was in place prior to the My-Play System being implemented.

The other thing is that, as the member would be aware, there were issues with some of the VLTs that were in use in Nova Scotia. The Provincial Lotteries and Casino Corporation has changed those VLTs, new ones have been brought in after complaints by business owners, and complaints by users as well, which has been indicated as one of the reasons why we are seeing more participation - it has been because of the refreshing of those terminals.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the minister that My-Play didn't work. My point is that the increase as a result of eliminating that in regular non-problem gamers - if there is such a phrase - would have already been reflected in the previous two years.

Mr. Speaker, VLTs are on the rise in the province. Hammonds Plains has seen some in First Nations that are also not reflected in these, because the province doesn't get the data. In 2006, that member argued very strenuously to ban all VLTs in the province, and I'll table his statements in the House on that.

Mr. Speaker, when My-Play was eliminated quite a few VLTs were removed from the market at the same time to increase attrition. So how many net VLTs will be removed from Nova Scotia this year?

MR. SAMSON: It's quite amusing to have that member try to use someone else's words against them, in light of the choices he has made over the course of his career.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the job that our government is doing and proud of the work that our Gaming Corporation is doing in ensuring that responsible gaming takes place in Nova Scotia, under a regulated environment.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

**JUSTICE - BOOTS ON THE STREET PROG.:
TWIN BIRCH REVIEW - CONFIRM**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: My question is for the Minister of Justice. We learned from the Minister of Justice that in the almost 10 years the Boots on the Street program has been active, we've had an improvement in public safety in the province and the rate of crime has decreased, but the minister told us that her department was reviewing this program because times have changed.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the minister confirm today that a company called Twin Birch has been contracted to perform the review of the Boots on the Street program, and tell the House the value of that contract?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, the company has been selected for the review but I can't tell you the amount today, I'm not certain of it. I will look that up and let you know. It hasn't been finalized, all of the terms of reference, and I want to make it clear that the terms of reference for the work will be done with UNSM and with our municipal partners, because they certainly share in the interest of this program. So we'll be working that out together.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, by the minister's own admission the crime decreased in the province while this program was active. The government has hand-picked a company to do this review. They did not use an open and transparent competition. Will the minister explain the objective of this review and tell the House why it was necessary to hand-pick one company to do it?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, those are very good questions. The importance of using an alternate procurement method to find the consultants to do this is that it takes some real sectoral knowledge. We need people who understand policing and the models that are used, the modern ways of policing and so on. So it was important to get people that had that knowledge. I'm a former management consultant myself and not everybody has that, so you would need somebody who had actually worked in it. So that was the reason for that.

As I mentioned earlier, the terms of reference will be more fully defined with our partners, and we're working closely with the UNSM and their membership.

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

TIR - HWY. NO. 103 REVIEW: REPT. - RELEASE

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. There has been a review of the safety aspects of Highway No. 103 - looking at twinning, looking at intersections on that roadway. I'm just wondering if that work has been completed and at some point, will he be releasing the information found in that report?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. The answer is, yes. As the member would know, we've embarked on a very significant feasibility study with respect to eight corridors in the province that obviously have a significant impact on Highway No. 103 in its entirety and the member's particular region.

The financial modelling is the piece we're waiting for now with respect to the operations and the financial options moving forward. Once that is complete, obviously it will be released to the public, Mr. Speaker, then we'll hit the communities, a number of communities - about a dozen - with public meetings to get feelings on all sides of this discussion to make sure that what we do moving forward is reflective of Nova Scotians' wishes.

So that is coming, it will impact Highway No. 103 and a number of other areas in the province, and we look forward to getting that feedback from the people who put us here.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: I appreciate the answer from the minister, and I know there is more work to be done. I think preliminary reviews on that have identified a number of intersections in the Yarmouth County side that would be looking at possible reconstructions or realignments and those kinds of things, particularly Exit 32, which is the Nakile intersection. I know the member for Yarmouth would know that intersection very well, as well. I'm hoping that, as that report comes out, I can be brought up to speed on that information because it is very important to the people in southwestern Nova Scotia. Exit 31 is very important - Exit 32 is very important as well.

MR. MACLELLAN: Again, when we look at the twinning portion of Highway No. 103, where the volumes would permit to do so, obviously it will impact the entire corridor down to Yarmouth, and again it will impact many different regions of the province. For that member, once that information is compiled and we know exactly what we're going to do, there certainly is a number of short- and medium-term solutions that we can put together. That intersection is one, not only flagged by the member but also our own department. They look at some long-term infrastructure changes that would really enhance safety there. So it is on our radar screen, no question about it, and that will be part of that larger discussion, when we hit the communities directly.

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

EECD: CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS - FAIR WAGES

MS. LENORE ZANN: Early childhood educators in Nova Scotia have some of the lowest wages in the country. The province's largest child care union has said that this government's budget raises more questions than answers for the child care sector. CUPE Nova Scotia President Dianne Frittenburg says the Premier and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development promised real wage increases but instead there were no real details in the budget, only that there will be wage grants. I'll table that.

Wage grants have existed in this sector for years, yet Nova Scotia has remained at the bottom. My question for the minister is, why hasn't this government taken steps to build

a system of early childhood education that includes fair wages for early childhood educators?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you for raising the question because it's important that all members in the public and all members in this House know. We looked at the wages for early childhood educators. We recognized that they were on a downward trend. In 1991 we were in 6th place nationally. In 1998 we were in 7th place. Under that government we went to rock bottom across Canada - the last place in the country. We have the lowest wages of any province for child care workers across the nation. That government, when they were in power, did absolutely nothing. We are going to bring those up to the national average.

MS. ZANN: I thank the minister for her response. I'm glad to see that she's so keen to give themselves a passing grade. But, Mr. Speaker, in 2014 a report says that this province received a failing grade on early childhood education, getting a 6 out of 15. I'll table that, Mr. Speaker. The government's own 2016 report on the review of regulated child care states "The current model of funding child care is not effective or sustainable." I'll table that as well. Why then, Mr. Speaker, has the government and this minister chosen in this budget simply to put more money into a model that they know just doesn't work?

MS. CASEY: I would encourage the member opposite and all members to read the child care review report that was released because it is comprehensive. It talks about curriculum. It talks about governance model. It talks about wages for early childhood educators. It talks about subsidies for parents. It talks about professional development. It's a complete package and we will act on every one of those recommendations.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

**MUN. AFFS. - MUN. INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS (2015):
COMPLETION - TIME FRAME**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: A question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The aquaculture industry in our province is a growing industry. In the case of Mabou, it's worth up to about \$1 million, right now. Our Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture has been doing what he can, but that work will be thwarted because in Mabou there are challenges with the water. There are a number of possible causes. One of them could be the 55-year old municipal water plant.

Will the Minister of Municipal Affairs tell this House how many municipal infrastructure projects were completed last year and how many are expected to be completed this year, given yesterday's budget?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I actually have a list of all the municipal projects we approved over the course of last year and I can table that for the House.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I'm hopeful that there is money for Mabou this year. A million dollar industry is going to return between \$2 million and \$3 million in HST alone over the course of 20 years, easily paying for the upgrades needed in Mabou.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Municipal Affairs work with the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture to ensure that the municipal application for funding for the Mabou water treatment system is awarded this year?

MR. CHURCHILL: There is an open and transparent process for the applications that come into the department. Our staff review those and provide a priority list for us to select. That process will continue and I'm sure if there is an application that is submitted from the folks of that region, it will be given due consideration.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

ENVIRON.: N. RIVER ROAD COMPOST FIRE - PROV. COST

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Environment. On March 10th the owners of a construction and demolition waste disposal site on North River Road in Kings County were ordered by the province to remove banned materials, including compost, plastics and other recyclables.

On March 22nd at 4:23 p.m. members of Kentville Volunteer Fire Department were called to the North River Road waste disposal site to put out a fire in the 200 x 100 debris pile. My question is, can the minister tell the House the cost to the province to put out this fire and if her department has taken any steps to recover costs from the owner of the facility that media claims could be close to \$100,000?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Thank you to the member opposite. I am very aware of the C and D site and do have some challenges in Nova Scotia with C and D sites on all levels, whether it is as a disposal site or other, with the three types of sites.

My department is going to be looking into those sites to see what we can do to improve them. Meanwhile, about the facility or the fire that was in Kentville, my department officials were onsite; they inspected the site and they looked for violations. The site has been shut down and my inspectors have been taking that information and will be taking further action.

MS. MACFARLANE: This is not the first incident at this site or other such sites around the province. There was another fire at this site previously and, as a result, firefighters have had to receive training in fighting these kinds of fires by using a combination of sand and soil.

Can the minister tell members if it is a policy of her department to bury debris in construction and demolition sites using sawdust, a known combustible material that would only accelerate such fires and put more risk on personnel fighting these fires?

MS. MILLER: I can tell the member opposite that my department takes issues of non-compliance very seriously. My inspectors are moving forward. They're taking all the information from the site.

I can't speak to specifics of what the procedure is on that but I know that my department does take the issue very seriously. We're looking forward, gathering information, and we're taking the next steps.

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

LAE: STUDENT DEBT REDUCTION - MIN. RESPONSE

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, students across Nova Scotia are facing serious problems with the rising tuition fees. Nova Scotia has some of the highest tuition rates in Canada and has the dubious distinction of having the fastest rising fees. Students are disappointed that the budget made no investments in student financial aid.

In 2015 universities were allowed to charge whatever fee they liked. Meanwhile, New Brunswick recently announced a program to fund post-secondary educational costs for families that qualified.

Will the minister explain why she is not doing more to reduce the debt burden incurred by students?

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the honourable member. I would like to remind the honourable member of what we do for our students attending university here in Nova Scotia. Right off the top every Nova Scotian student attending Nova Scotia institutions gets a \$1,283 bursary that reduces the tuition payable. For those students who are on student assistance, there is a 40 per cent upfront grant.

At the end of their period of study, if they graduate within a reasonable time, Mr. Speaker, they get their entire provincial student loan forgiven. That's \$15,000 and it is a significant contribution on the part of Nova Scotia taxpayers.

MS. MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, on the same day that the budget was brought to the House, Dalhousie University raised its tuition fees by 3 per cent for all students and additional increases for selected programs. The Canadian Federation of Students Nova Scotia released a statement asserting that the budget demonstrates the government's contempt for students and young people. I will table that.

What would the minister say to the students across the province who believe that the government has abandoned them and views them with contempt?

MS. REGAN: I'd like to thank the honourable member and I would like to point out to those students that Nova Scotia has one of the best student assistance programs in the country. Unlike certain other provinces, we have not abandoned the middle class when it comes to post-secondary education; we continue to support families that make middle incomes, which is not what other provinces are doing.

I would encourage the honourable member to take a look at all the programs we have to assist our students and not just look at a narrow definition of student assistance as free tuition because, at the end of the day, whether you pay free tuition up front or you have loan forgiveness at the end, this is a considerable benefit to our students.

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

TIR: BLUENOSE II - RUDDER ISSUE

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of TIR. This government has a terrible track record when it comes to boats - a bad ferry deal that will cost taxpayers millions of dollars, and in March the government announced they would have to replace *Bluenose II*'s controversial steel rudder and steering system, bringing the troubled project to around \$25 million.

Two years ago a veteran shipbuilder by the name of Lou Boudreau said that the steel rudder and the hydraulic steering system may actually make the boat more likely to capsize. At the time, Mr. Boudreau, who served on the original *Bluenose*, said the project should be stopped immediately and a thorough review of the steering system plans should be launched.

My question, Mr. Speaker is, why did it take two years and millions of taxpayer dollars to finally admit that the steel rudder was wrong and that local experts were right all along?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. Now obviously, as indicated by the AG's Report, the challenges with *Bluenose II* go right back to the initial planning stage which was done by that member's Party when that group was in government and, of course, carried on by the previous government.

Look, at the end of the day here's what happened with the steel rudder - a number of people, including the captain, including the very builders of the ship, the best boat builders in the world, the LSA down in Lunenburg, suggested that the steel rudder was the wrong rudder way before our time in government, Mr. Speaker.

The project was pushed through, again, way before we got the power. The reality is that after one season we happened to have 60,000 people on *Bluenose II*, Mr. Speaker, but it became very apparent that there was a problem with the steel rudder.

We called for the review, we were looking at what would be the best way forward. Now we have that best way forward. We have designs being put together for a new rudder. This is about safety, this is about the long-term viability of *Bluenose II*. It is a safe vessel, we'll have a great year and we'll do the right thing for *Bluenose II* and for the people.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's answer, but I want to tell him that that ship has sailed when it comes to using other governments as an excuse. You've been in power for three years.

The taxpayers are expected to shell out at least \$1 million for the new rudder and no timeline for completion. The expertise to build this boat and do it right exists right here in Nova Scotia and could be done in a shorter time, with less money.

Mr. Speaker, it's high time that this government admits that the locals know best. Taxpayers just don't trust this government to get this . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Does the member have a question?

MR. MACLEOD: . . . rudder replacement right. The mismanagement of this project has been frustrating and has broken taxpayers' trust.

Mr. Speaker, no more overpriced consults from out of the province.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time has expired for the member's question. We'll move on to the next speaker.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

LAE: TUITION CAP - MIN. STANCE

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. Domestic students are graduating with the highest level of debt in the history of the province and here's what the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education had to say when she was in Opposition regarding tuition caps, "Just to be clear, Liberal caucus does not support Tim O'Neill's report - he calls for the removal of the tuition cap. Some confused folks on twitter tonight." - and I'll table that.

O'Neill recommended the cap on tuition and you thought Nova Scotians had high debt? Just wait. What changed from the Opposition to government that influenced the minister to turn her back on this quote and students?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As I indicated previously, Nova Scotia has one of the best student assistance programs in the country. Right off the bat they get \$1, 283 off of their tuition. Oftentimes, Mr. Speaker, they don't realize they're getting this because it's just a line item on their bill, and unless they inquire of the institution, they don't always know about it.

I would like to remind the honourable member, because some people may have missed it, that the federal government has just increased the grant portion of Canada Student Loans by 50 per cent, so our students here in Nova Scotia will benefit from that, and I want to say how nice it is to have a federal government that assists provinces with issues like this. Thank you.

MR. ORRELL: The question was what changed when the cap came off, Mr. Speaker, because that quote was, we were not going to take the cap off. We're hearing from students that the cap coming off is raising tuition and is going to hinder some students from attending university.

International students make up 18 per cent of the student population and if our universities are going to survive, we need many, many more international students, but Saudi Arabia cancelled their scholarship program. Since the government has allowed domestic tuition increases and international tuition is typically double of domestic, which means they're going to actually pay more.

My question to the minister is, will the minister admit that her management of universities has fallen to the debt-ridden backs of our students, both domestic and international?

MS. REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question and just to remind those in the House who aren't aware of this, the King Abdullah Scholarship, which is what most students had who came here to Nova Scotia, they restricted which universities that they would support students from a year ago. I've been to the cultural bureau in Ottawa to meet with the folks there and they have in fact, added Dalhousie back onto the list now. So in the coming year Dalhousie will see King Abdullah students attending that university. Thank you.

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

COM. SERV.: WOMEN'S CTRS. - FUNDING

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, according to women's centres across Nova Scotia, the good news from this government's budget is that there were no cuts to their funding. The bad news is that there was no additional new funding to match the increased level of demand the centres are facing.

So my question for the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act is, does she not realize that this budget leaves women's centres struggling and actually lets inflation do the cutting for her?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: I thank the member for the question. Women's centres do tremendous work all across this province in very many different communities. I'm proud to say that women's centres in Nova Scotia, per capita, are the most well-funded women's centres in all of Canada.

I'm also pleased to say that over the tenure of our government, we have provided grants and increases to women's centres, including part of the \$500,000 when we came into government. Just this week I announced a partnership between an Aboriginal community and the Pictou County and Antigonish women's community to work on sexual violence training for young people in schools.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers has expired. We'll now move on to Opposition Business.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy New Democratic Party House Leader.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy New Democratic Party House Leader.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 151.

Bill No. 151 - Employment Support and Income Assistance Act.

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

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place to speak to Bill No. 151, an Act to Amend Chapter 27 of the Acts of 2000, the Employment Support and Income Assistance Act.

This bill would require the Minister of Community Services to take into account the cost of purchasing Health Canada's National Nutritious Food Basket when setting the rates of income assistance for income assistance recipients with dependent children. The

idea behind this bill is that the children in Nova Scotia should be getting their food from a grocery store or a farmers' market, not from a food bank.

The reality is, even with a \$20 increase to personal allowances, it leaves income assistance recipients without enough money to afford a healthy, nutritional diet. With the past two years of frozen income assistance rates, when you consider inflation, the \$20 increase this government is celebrating is less than a 2 per cent increase.

In Nova Scotia, we are facing a crisis of child poverty and food insecurity, and the numbers are shocking. Across Nova Scotia, one in five children lives in poverty. In Cape Breton, shockingly, one in three children lives in poverty. Even worse, in the Cape Breton census area, 42.7 per cent of children under six live in poverty; that's almost one in two kids, Mr. Speaker.

In Halifax, 26.9 per cent of children live in poverty. In my riding of Dartmouth South, 21.8 per cent of children live in poverty. In West Nova, the Premier's federal riding, 25.5 per cent of children live in poverty. In Kings-Hants, 22.4 per cent of children live in poverty. In Sydney-Victoria, 34.5 per cent of children live in poverty. Children living in all of our communities are living without enough to eat, and they are living in poverty. That is a reality.

Children are some of Nova Scotia's most frequent food bank users: 31.2 per cent of all food bank users in Nova Scotia - one in three - are kids. Mr. Speaker, this is not acceptable. Fifty-five per cent of all food bank users in Nova Scotia cite income assistance as their primary source of income. Even worse, 61.6 per cent of all food bank users in rural Nova Scotia rely on income assistance as their primary source of income. Given these truths, it is clear that income assistance is not adequate in providing people with enough to eat.

The cost of food - especially fresh and healthy food, which is required by children to develop physically and mentally in a healthy way - is far outpacing the rates of income assistance. The Consumer Price Index for food in Nova Scotia has risen dramatically from January 2015 to January 2016. Food prices have risen by 4.7 per cent from January 2015 to January 2016 - 0.7 per cent above the national average. In Nova Scotia, the cost of fresh or frozen meat has increased by 8.6 per cent in 12 months - 4.6 per cent above the national average. The cost of fresh fruit has increased by a staggering 18.9 per cent from January 2015 to January 2016 - 6 per cent above the national average. The cost of fresh vegetables has increased in Nova Scotia by 13.2 per cent in the same time period. We know that yesterday's announcement will do nothing to remedy the skyrocketing price of healthy food.

A report by FoodARC, a food research centre at Mount Saint Vincent University, did extensive research into food insecurity in Nova Scotia. They found that in order to meet Health Canada standards for a National Nutritious Food Basket, Nova Scotian families

need a lot more money than what is provided through income assistance. According to FoodARC, a household of four with two adults and two children would require an \$850 food basket, based on Health Canada's recommendations. If this family was in receipt of income assistance, they would have a monthly deficit of \$758 every month, after covering shelter costs, child care costs, bills, transportation, and food.

Mr. Speaker, a parent's desire to make sure that their children get enough healthy food to eat is a non-partisan issue. This is something all of us can agree on and want to see happen. I would imagine it's why many of us got into this work in the first place.

The reality is that while we sit here, parents still struggle to feed their children and we all have the power to change that. Our caucus, along with other stakeholders, have taken a hard look at the increase to income assistance announced yesterday by the government and the impact this will have on individuals who rely on income assistance. For a single parent with a small child, living on income assistance, they would receive \$943 a month to cover rent, food, transportation, medication, all household bills and any other expenses.

When you factor in the projected increase in the cost of living, the real increase to this single parent income assistance rates is only going to be about 0.7 per cent. For a single person with a disability who receives \$832 from the Department of Community Services, the \$20 increase after an inflation correction actually represents only a 0.9 per cent increase in their income assistance.

Last evening our caucus hosted a post-budget round table and several individuals who rely on income assistance were there, some of them living with disabilities. When we asked these individuals about the \$20 a month increase to income assistance their answers were much less enthusiastic than the government's response to this increase. There was one gentleman at this meeting who lives with a physical disability and relies on income assistance. When he spoke about the \$20 increase, he said, that for me, the only thing I think about is food and transportation and this increase will either buy me eight bus tickets or two packs of chicken when it's on sale. This is the reality for the 28,000 households in receipt of income assistance - choosing between food and transportation. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, this is wrong, this is not okay.

Another woman who lives in Spryfield told our caucus that it makes her very sad and upset to hear our Premier and Minister of Finance and Treasury Board gleeful about the \$20 increase that she will get. She says it looks like they forgot they gave me nothing for the past two years.

Mr. Speaker, I stand in my place today to urge this government to consider this bill, consider the thousands of children in our province who go without enough to eat. Consider the parents who have to choose between feeding their children and keeping a roof over their heads. Thank you.

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

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I take privilege to rise here today to also speak on the amendment to Chapter 27 of the Acts of 2000, the Employment Support and Income Assistance Act. I also want to thank the member for Dartmouth South for bringing this forward. I think that any time we can stand in the House and talk about some of the challenges we all face as MLAs in our ridings, especially with the people who are vulnerable, the people who are on income assistance.

I know as a member myself, it has been one of the most striking things that I've come to grapple with in my everyday work and I'm sure as many members in this House do, it is something that we all take very dearly.

I'd like at this time to also say how proud I am to have a Minister of Community Services such as we have who has taken the lead in that department, a lead that I think has been ignored for many years, a lead that I think is very challenging, complicated, and certainly something that takes a lot of our taxpayers' dollars to deal with. And I think we should be very proud that we've made the changes that we've made in income assistance, the changes that we've made for protecting people with disabilities, protecting our youth and our vulnerable.

So, in saying that, I'd like to talk briefly on the purpose of what we're here to debate today, and mainly what we're looking at is something that has been going on now for quite some time. I'd like to commend our minister for taking the time to go to every corner of the province and talk to people, over the last while, who truly want to improve their communities for vulnerable Nova Scotians and strengthen the province. So, that's why we're working to create modern answers to old problems, and services that help people change their lives, and improve the support where we can in the meantime.

It should never be understated what has happened in this budget, and it really tears me apart even as a rookie MLA - which sometimes you get torn apart a little quicker - when I hear talk that downplays one of the most significant increases in income assistance that this government has seen, that downplays the effect that that has on our communities and on the people we have out there. I have heard from people who already say thank you, and that is very much appreciated. That is not something, Mr. Speaker, we have seen in the past, and I'm extremely proud, and I am very disappointed when I hear these things downplayed.

I'd like to also point out that our vulnerable people we're talking about here - we're talking about parents, multi-children families - I'd like to point out that 78 per cent of the people that we have who are clients are individuals without children. So, although we do see large numbers, yes, approximately 30 per cent of the people in my riding are affected by this, but it's a small portion of those people that actually have multiple children in their

families. The significance of this, although I'm not going to diminish it, I think should be put in perspective.

I also want to point out that the National Nutritious Food Basket was developed by Health Canada and it describes the quantity and purchases of units of approximately 60 foods that represent a nutritious diet for individuals in various ages and gender groups. It is used by various levels of government to monitor the cost and affordability of healthy eating and is intended to assist policy decision makers who formulate sound health nutrition policies. But, most importantly, it should be noted that it is not intended to be described as an ideal diet. So, using it for one area is extremely important, but it should be noted that it is not intended to be prescribed as an ideal diet.

So, yesterday, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board stood in the House and delivered a budget that was sound and made investments in economic growth, education, youth, and supports for Nova Scotians who most need it. As yesterday's budget demonstrated, this government is committing to supporting vulnerable Nova Scotians.

A stronger province is only possible if we improve the health and well-being of all of our citizens. We know the healthier Nova Scotians are, the stronger our communities and our economy will be. And, as I had earlier mentioned, I want to thank the minister again for her commitment to working in that area, especially in the Department of Community Services.

We've heard from every corner of the province that we need to do things differently if we truly want to improve the opportunities for vulnerable Nova Scotians and strengthen this province. That's why Community Services is working to create modern programs that help encourage and change people's lives. We're improving supports where we can in the meantime.

This department does not support an amendment to the Employment Support and Income Assistance Act to legislate the use of national nutritious food basket in establishing income assistance rates. This legislation is not necessary. The food basket is already taken to account as part of the policy process when we regularly review and make changes to assistance rates. It is not intended to be prescribed as an ideal diet.

We'd also consider other information about different types of assistance that are available to provide efficiently for Nova Scotians in need. For families with children, these would include several things: the federal and provincial tax, Canada child tax benefit, the Affordable Living Tax Credit, the GST/HST credit, child support payments, employment insurance, and wages. So obviously, Mr. Speaker, there are several variables that come into play here.

On average, a single-parent family with two children under the age of six would receive direct cash benefits of \$25,207 annually, plus another \$6,290 to cover the cost of

prescription drugs and child care. Additional funding is also available for recipients who have specific dietary needs as the result of a medical condition.

Mr. Speaker, at Community Services we are embarking on transformational change intended to address the root causes of poverty. I certainly would like to thank the minister for her leadership, where we see in our budget \$10.5 million for new investments to address the needs of our clients and to support transformational change. Again, this is the largest increase to personal allowance since the ESIA program began and will come into effect 2016-17.

Yes, the personal allowance is increasing by \$20 or 8 per cent, bringing it to \$275 each month. This is effective May 1st so that benefit changes will be seen on cheques in late May.

I also want to note that, as some have seen in the past, unfortunately there have been some games that have been played when monies are allocated and I'm proud to say that we're not going to be part of a \$17 million booking at the fiscal end of a year savings when we do implement these changes. As mentioned, the ESIA program is in the midst of transformation, including looking at ways to improve income security for Nova Scotians in need.

More comprehensive changes are expected to improve the quality of life for all the recipients, the health and resilience of these families that are in need, the social and community inclusion that is very important for moving forward in any community, and self-sufficiency skills. We are very pleased to see the partnering we have with Labour and Advanced Education in these areas and access to jobs.

Another new and important investment that was failed to be mentioned is the investment of \$3 million for the Disability Support Program, which will specifically support the roadmap. I'm very proud of that because that is something that affects my community directly. We will be moving 25 people from larger, adult residential centres and regional residential centres into community-based independent living and alternate family support programs.

We recognize the need for additional day programs; \$800,000 will be used to increase the capacity of adult service centres. Overall, the 2016-17 Community Services budget includes a positive increase in the base funding and programs: \$9.9 million more for the Disability Support Program; and \$5.4 million more for Child, Youth and Family Supports. This is a significant enhancement and enables us to reinvest directly in the programs that benefit Nova Scotians.

This opportunity to completely redesign the province's social support system is historic. Our transformation will result in a department that is responsive to the challenges and diversity of Nova Scotians into the 21st Century. Mr. Speaker, the Nova Scotians we

serve will have a greater control over their own lives. The ability to meet their basic needs, safety from abuse and violence, and inclusion in the community and workplace cannot be overstated.

I'd like to close by again thanking the member for Dartmouth South. Any time we stand up in the House and talk about the vulnerable people in our communities, we're raising again the bar that we need to talk about, and I do truly commend her for that. This should not be a partisan discussion. This should be a discussion that's all-inclusive, a discussion that just does not focus on one area of those who are truly in need.

I believe that with the broad approach, the broad scope with which our minister has approached her challenges in Community Services, we are going to serve all of the clients in that area. It's about doing what's right for the people we're serving and creating a system that better supports them in achieving their goals, because transforming our social supports is only meaningful if it helps people to transform their lives.

I thank you for the time to stand here. I'm very proud to hear of the work that we're doing, and cannot support the amendments that we have forwarded by the member for Dartmouth South. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount on an introduction.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: In the opposite gallery today I'd like to introduce a young lady who, after finishing her nursing degree this year and graduating, has decided to move to the Caribbean in the Virgin Islands to further her education. She's home on a two-week stay with us and decided to come in and visit today to see the proceedings of the House. It's my beautiful daughter Bhreagh. (Applause) Everybody says they're glad that she looks more like her mother than me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill No. 151, the Employment Support and Income Assistance Act.

In one sense, the bill is calling on the government to consider the cost of Health Canada's National Nutritious Food Basket when determining the assistance rates. For more than 40 years, Health Canada's National Nutritious Food Basket has been used at various levels of government to monitor the cost and affordability of eating healthy. It's made up of about 60 foods that represent a nutritious diet for individuals in various age and gender groups. Stakeholders use this information to collect the price of the items and determine the cost of the basket for each age and gender group. Food costing can be used to monitor both affordability and accessibility of foods by relating the cost of the food basket to the individual and the household incomes.

Nutrition is certainly a key determinant of health, along with such other things as income, social supports, education and literacy, and employment status, to name a few. Healthy eating is crucial to promoting good health and preventing disease.

The logic of the bill is to make an investment in nutrition in order to save money in the health system and create healthier, happier, and more productive Nova Scotians. Especially when you consider the obesity rate in our province - almost 10 per cent higher, they say, than the national average - there's no doubt that it's a statistic that translates directly into health care costs.

Farmers, fishers, and dieticians; policymakers, activists, and entrepreneurs; community organizers, community leaders, students, and academics all have a role to play in ensuring families get the nutrition they need.

But the reality is that healthy eating isn't just about the cost of food we eat. It's one piece of a much bigger picture. I guess that's where I really want to go with this, because I know what that bigger picture is. For example, in addition to the cost of food, there is also an inadequate public transportation system across the province to allow people who do not own cars to access grocery stores. This means that they may have to shop at more expensive convenience stores that usually offer higher-priced, lower-quality food.

Another example - and this one is very simple that many people overlook - with rising energy costs many families do not have a deep freeze, therefore they can't buy in bulk and put food away.

Unlimited access to transportation is not there; the ability to freeze and store in bulk is not there - that leaves families opting for less-healthy processed foods. So, definitely, government should take the cost of a nutritious diet into consideration when determining assistance rates.

Then you take, for example, employment stats. Just yesterday the government unveiled its budget. It didn't outline a plan to grow the economy and create jobs for the many people who want to work. Nova Scotians are proud and they want to provide for their families and themselves; they want to earn an honest living and put healthy, nutritious meals on the table. Far too many Nova Scotians do not think that is possible for them. Over the past five years, Nova Scotia's labour force has decreased by 5,900.

Statistics Canada tells us that the average household food expense in Nova Scotia increased by almost \$530 between 2013 and 2014. Wages are not increasing at that rate, and too many Nova Scotians do not have the jobs.

I certainly don't want to in any way diminish what the Minister of Community Services is doing on behalf of the government and Nova Scotians. There is a lot of room to move and I do think, though, that we need to take some good legislation and firm it up

more because I'm still dealing with people in my own constituency who really do not have the transportation to get to stores - they just don't have the money left over after paying rent and fuel and that kind of thing. A lot of people are still very vulnerable. In spite of all that has been done, and that has been good, we still need to go a little bit further and make sure that the most vulnerable are cared for - not most, but all.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take my place.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: I'd like to make an introduction, if that's okay with you.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, go ahead.

MS. ZANN: I would like to turn everybody's attention to the west gallery where we have a special visitor today, Roger Boutilier, who is from Wolfville and is actually a former NDP candidate from the Annapolis Valley. He's sitting with our new Leader, Gary Burrill. Welcome today to the House, and come back again, anytime.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that it is an honour to rise to my feet today to talk about this particular issue. It has been an important one for our new Leader and for others - actually for our Chief of Staff as well, Jim Morton, who brought up grocery security while we were in government. We talked about trying to get that in in our next mandate if we had gotten one the next election.

Apparently, if you do the number crunching, it wouldn't really cost that much. It would be about \$16 million, I believe, to be able to cover grocery security for all people in Nova Scotia who would be at risk and who need it. I really do think that the Grocery Security Act would be a very good and positive step forward for the province.

Today I'd like to speak to it particularly in my capacity as the Status of Women Critic. The issue of child poverty must be considered in a context of family poverty. Poor children have poor mothers and fathers and they are living in the same circumstances, often making significant sacrifices themselves and going without, in order to provide for their children.

Oftentimes I find, Mr. Speaker, that goes for dental care as well. When we were in government, we took the dental care age up to 14 from, I believe, nine, and we were planning on taking it up to 17 the following year, again, if we had continued on as government. I am sorry to see that this government hasn't done anything about dental care for our Nova Scotian children and for older Nova Scotians as well.

When I speak to mothers in my community about dental care for their children and for themselves, they often tell me, you know I haven't been to see a dentist, Lenore, in 25 years because it's more important for me to get the money and for my children and for the grandchildren as well. I know that mothers and fathers do make these sacrifices and the same thing goes for food and feeding hungry children, especially if you have teenagers who are growing and, as anybody who has teenagers around knows, they drink a lot of milk, they eat a lot of food, they are always hungry. Again, this is something that would help many families who are on the brink.

When children are poor it's usually because their mother is poor. The causes of women's poverty are complex and often involve sexist, misogynistic or racist policies and attitudes about women and the work that we do. Women do a far greater share of unpaid work than men. That is a fact. Women are more likely to work in low-wage, precarious jobs and they are more likely than men to be lone parents.

In Nova Scotia 85 per cent of lone-parent households living on a low income are headed by women. As a matter of fact, Nova Scotia broadcaster and journalist Jackie Torrens, who is a good friend, recently made a documentary film about this very subject. It is called, *My Week on Welfare*, in which she spends a week finding out and discovering what it is like to actually live on welfare in Nova Scotia today, or income assistance as we call it here.

According to Jackie - she has a Facebook post today addressed to politicians - she says that politicians who are currently in power don't need to tell me, as a Nova Scotia film worker, to think of the children. She says that not only am I trying to get a documentary done right now about kids with autism and my partner spent a year of her life making a doc about Nova Scotians on income assistance, along with me, she says 30 to 60 per cent of people below the poverty line currently live below the poverty line and one in five households don't have enough access to the things they need. They don't have enough access to nutritious food, Mr. Speaker.

By the way, she says that's part of what a province's film industry does, it tells the stories of the region to the region and sometimes to the country and the world. She says that is the purpose for film-making and that is why she does what she does.

I'll tell you, if you get a chance to see her movie, *My Week on Welfare*, which I saw last year in Truro with an anti-poverty group there, it's very moving. It tells the story of several different people living on income assistance in Nova Scotia. I'll tell you, it's like Bette Davis says, like she once said about being old, she said old age ain't for sissies. Well I'll tell you, poverty ain't for sissies - very difficult, Mr. Speaker.

Surprisingly, income is the strongest predictor of food insecurity. The more money you have, the less likely you are to worry about running out of food, going hungry or missing your medications. Lone-parent families headed by women are the most vulnerable

to food insecurity. Across the country, Mr. Speaker, more than 170,000 lone-parent families, headed by women, were food insecure in 2014, that's 170,000 families headed by women. Almost 50,000 of those households were experiencing severe food insecurity, missing meals, reducing their food intake and going whole days without food. Last year more than half of all food bank users in this province were women, half of the food bank users were women. This is an increase from the year before. With significant increases in the prices of food and no corresponding increases to income assistance rates, which were frozen, as we know, for two years in a row, women are struggling to provide nutritious food for their children and for themselves, and I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, this is going to affect the health care budget.

As you get older and if you are not healthy and you haven't been eating nutritious food, guess what? You're going to get sick. You're going to get sick more often and more severely and that is going to take a toll also on our health care and on the budget there, and on people's lives, which is really what it's all about - isn't it?

So, with significant increases in these prices of food, it's very, very difficult for people in Nova Scotia right now and it could get worse. The Food Action Research Centre at Mount St. Vincent University calculated that a lone mother with three children, who is receiving income assistance, would face a monthly deficit of \$715.92, while trying to pay her bills and feed her family a nutritious diet.

Now, last year as well, the United Way put on an event here in Halifax, which I took part in at the library, and it was very interesting. It was called, Living on the Edge, I believe, and it was an exercise where probably about 100 of us were there. You were given a number and you took a name and a character, you were given a character and a name and you were told what your circumstances were that you were living in here in Nova Scotia.

I might be a single black woman living with three children and a mother who is blind and can't look after herself, for instance. Then you get a certain amount of play money, the amount of money you would normally get, and you have to then go and pay all your bills and get across town, and they even took into consideration whether you needed bus passes. I'll tell you, trying to make that amount work was almost impossible. You had to do somersaults and dance around and not pay certain things just to get by, and I have to say that brings up bus passes.

So, in this budget it does not give money back to the people who need to go and prove that they are sick enough. They have to go and see a doctor 12 times in a month, in order to receive a bus pass. Well, that's ridiculous. I don't know what kind of planet we're living on where people have to go and prove that they're so sick that they need to see a doctor 12 times in order to receive a bus pass. I think it's atrocious and it's degrading and I think that these people deserve much, much, much more.

So, the Grocery Security Act mandates that government adjust income assistance rates for families with dependent children in order for them to be reasonably assured that they can purchase nutritious food from grocery stores and farmers markets, as opposed to food banks. On that note, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to mention the legislation that's coming forward about food banks and having some tax credits for farmers who would be assisting the food banks.

This was done in Ontario last year and I actually spoke at length about this in our last session, because I was talking about possibly the idea of having farmers give money to a children's food program, a breakfast program for schools, and how I thought that would be a very a good idea to use farmers and have them contribute and have a tax credit for providing fresh, nutritious, homegrown food products to our schools.

So, this government has decided to move forward with the same bill that they did in Ontario, and while that definitely helps the food banks, it would be nice, as our Leader Mr. Burrill says, to get out of the food bank business and actually give the money to the families so that they can buy their own food, and fresh and nutritious food.

It would be really helpful if this government would actually consider this the Grocery Security Act. If it accepted it and moved forward with it, as I said, it wouldn't cost too much, possibly around \$16 million to \$20 million. It would improve the situation of women who are currently sacrificing their own health for the good of our children, our Nova Scotian children, whom we want to grow up to be healthy and strong individuals. Healthy and strong children will grow healthy and strong adults, and they'll grow children who are able to learn much more easily and to comprehend what they're learning and to retain it.

To quote Nelson Mandela at the end of my little speech here today: "Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life."

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services. (Interruptions)

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to speak today to the bill that is currently before us, Bill No. 151, the Employment Support and Income Assistance Act.

On June 1, 1990, one of the best things in my life ever happened to me - I had my son. The day after I found out that I was expecting my son, I left my husband. I went into a very scary time in my life where there was uncertainty in terms of my support from my family, in terms of support for my living conditions and, quite frankly, whether or not I'd be able to support my son throughout his childhood. A lot of soul-searching happened during that time.

But one advantageous day, while I was in Family Court trying to get some child support from an absent father, I noticed a poster on the wall. The poster was for the Single Parent Centre in Spryfield. I looked at it, and I was living in Spryfield at the time, and I thought I'm going to go there because I need some answers; I need some support; I need to be able to raise this child with a Grade 12 education, with a bit of community college and figure out where I'm going to go in my life.

I spent that day with Sister Joan O'Keefe - and if you've never met Sister Joan O'Keefe, she's a Bostonian nun, Sister of Charity, and she's awesome - she sat down and within four hours my life plan for the next 15 years was before me. It involved moving out of my parents' home; it involved applying for income assistance so that I could be self-sufficient on my own and learn that; it involved applying for university and student assistance at that time; and it involved working with her and going to all of the programs that were available to me at that time.

After three years, I did go to university. I did take advantage of every program that was at the Single Parent Centre. I did attend food banks. I also taught women basic shelf skills in cooking classes so that women who were on the same income assistance levels as me in the 1990s could cook from the basic shelf, and we could do what we could do in terms of our own food security at that time.

Now 25 years later, almost 26 - my son will be 26 in a few weeks - I look at the system that I'm now trusted with to lead, to transform, and to change. It disheartened me when I came into this ministerial role in 2013 that it was the exact same system that I entered in 1991. There are fundamental problems with this system, and every one of us here - every member of this House, from all Parties - all want what's best and for people to be able to reach their full potential to be healthy, to be safe, to be able to reach for their goals and dreams in life. There is not one of us here who doesn't want that. There is not one of us here who would ever want to put children in harm's way. There is not one of us here who wants disabled people not to be able to live to their goals, their dreams, and their full potential.

But there are choices that have to be made. Choices have to be made in a department nobody calls on a good day. It's very simple. Nobody calls this department on a good day. The pressures on the front-line staff, whether it be in the disability supports network, whether it be in child welfare, or whether it be in income assistance - the people who work those front lines - and thank God for the person who answered the phone when I called in 1991 - do their best under a very burdensome, patriarchal, paternalistic system to do the best they can with what they have. (Applause)

Over the last two and a half years, we have embarked on a challenge. A challenge of transformation, a challenge of accountability, a challenge of making sure that people who use our system and want to get ahead and move away from income assistance are able to do that. We've been told time and time and time again that we make it difficult for people

to leave the safety net that is established in the Province of Nova Scotia. We've heard that in the 1,700 consultations we had in the last four months; we've heard it in the 19 stakeholder face-to-face meetings we have had in the last four months; we hear it from single mothers in Meat Cove to single mothers in Yarmouth. We hear it every single day.

We know that 85 per cent of the people who apply for income assistance in Nova Scotia each month have done so in the last five years. We know the system is not working. It has nothing to do with the people who work in it, who do tremendous work. It has nothing to do with the people who access the services. It has to do with a system that has not kept up with the complexities and with the unique needs of people who are living with difficult circumstances in 2016. It's as simple as that.

One of the trends we see in the work that we do - and it's a positive trend, I will say - is that single parents actually are on the decline on income assistance in Nova Scotia. That's a good trend. We want to continue that. It has been declining since the late 1990s; 16 per cent of the people who are on income assistance in Nova Scotia are single parents, mostly led by women. When I was on income assistance, it was as high as 29 per cent. So we do see a positive trend.

One of the things that I was most excited about in the federal government budget was the change to the child tax benefit, where it really targeted low-income families across Nova Scotia. We've looked at the calculators for that. We've looked at the numbers that we have in terms of our clients in family assistance, and we know that this will make a significant difference in the lives of children and families in Nova Scotia.

We know that with this new tax credit from the federal government, one-parent families will be receiving close to \$566 extra per month. When you calculate that, we know that this new federal child tax benefit - which the Province of Nova Scotia will not be touching, will not be clawing back, will not touch one penny of this new federal benefit - it will lift 8,000 children from below the poverty line in Nova Scotia. (Applause)

We also know that 72 per cent of the caseload of income assistance in Nova Scotia are single individuals who will not benefit from this new revenue stream from the federal government. Clearly there is work to be done and we are trying. We are trying with this \$20 increase, which is the largest that has ever been seen in the history of the program. We know that, historically, increases have been nominal, \$3.00 to \$4.00 over a year. We know that any amount is going to impact a budget when budgets are scarce. We know that because we have been told that. We know that because I've lived that. I get it.

At the end of the day, income security and food security are intrinsically linked; we know that as well. We also know that the system that is tied to rates is not working. So with transformation that hopefully will be finished in a timely time frame that we've set forth - because as I said, the same system existed 25 years ago that exists now. We know that at the end of the day there's more work to do. Transformation will address some of the

challenges that are in the system now, specifically around the administrative burden that front-line workers have.

I remember on the campaign trail having a young woman come to me - two young women come to me. The first one was in a wheelchair and she said to me, please, if you can do anything, make sure that no Income Assistance worker has to say to me every year that I need a letter from my doctor that I am not going to get out of this wheelchair and walk. It's demeaning for me; it's dehumanizing for her.

The second young woman who came to me was on a three-week hiatus layoff from a job that she had and she came to me because she was behind in her child care and she was behind in her rent. Income assistance in this province will only help you if you quit your job and you go on income assistance. That is absolutely ludicrous that we cannot help people in the short term, when they are going through financial bumps in their life, and that we insist they lose their employment in order to get help from the province. It's absolutely ridiculous. These are part of the conversations that transformation are addressing - these and many more.

I actually will live for a day when front-line workers can do social work and work with clients with their challenges, whether it's addictions, mental health, domestic violence, instead of worrying about collecting receipts. That is my goal.

Although the genesis of this bill is - I understand it. We are so further ahead than what this can offer and for that reason I cannot support this amendment. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I stand here today to talk on this bill. I actually wasn't going to get up and speak on it but I decided to because income assistance has such a huge impact on the area that I represent. It is also something that I have intimate knowledge about. I have cashed a \$24 cheque for food before. I don't know if there are a lot of people in this Legislature who have but they pretend like they are experts on it.

I want to speak about how things have changed. Things have changed from the Third Party from when they were in government to what they are saying now, the things they could have done. Let's point out who is sitting over there: we have two Cabinet Ministers. (Interruption) Listen, I'll be the first one to admit that I like all of them. They are all great people, I get along great with them. We have the former president of the Party, we have an MLA who has been sitting for a while and the new Leader who is a former MLA.

Here's some of the information I found just doing a quick check on their stance. Nova Scotia NDP - this is from August 31, 2011 - say no - and I'll table it - to essential services for disabled. I'll table it when I'm done reading it, "Siphoning thousands of dollars

from a special-needs program for the disabled while pumping tens of millions into a convention centre is a 'betrayal' by Nova Scotia's New Democratic Party government, said many in attendance at a Halifax news conference on August 16." A betrayal.

This is a Party that is supposed to look out for the social needs, the social fabric. This is what they say. (Interruption)

The member for Sackville-Cobequid is over there heckling and pointing and stuff. Respectfully, I listen when you talk.

One of the interesting things that we saw here is the government's cuts (Interruptions) Listen to this - were made without notice or any public consultation. Something that they're continuously saying to us is, you don't consult. We consulted as government, they say, but you don't. We have it right here: did not consult, no input from health or disabled rights groups. So who made the decision, and why was it made?

Some of the stuff that was said was, "This change undermines a human right that has been in place since national standards were put in place 45 years ago under the Canada Assistance Plan." This will all be tabled for everyone to see and witness.

"Pamela Harrison said that, had these cuts been made three years ago . . ." - three years ago - ". . . the audience of people protesting the cuts could have included many NDP MLAs and party officials. None were in attendance."

None were in attendance when they cut special allowance food programs for the disabled. Where were they? Maybe they could stand up and answer these questions, the few members who have been there, who would have been around in 2011. Where were they when these cuts were happening?

Another article I have here, from *The Chronicle Herald*, talks about the increase. Now in fairness, they did increase income assistance - we'll give credit where due - \$17 over five years, \$3 a year.

We won't talk about the cuts to education. If you do a quick scan of the Internet, you'll see some of their opinions on tuition.

Some of the quotes from that *Chronicle Herald* article - well, the title is, "NDP failing to help poor bridge food price gap." Five years of a majority government, and they failed. They failed to bridge that gap. But it says here that they gave ". . . a \$16.3-million tax break to the large corporations in the province." No money to bridge the food gap.

But they'll do it now that they're in Opposition. Now that they're in Opposition, they're going to stand up and say: all these great things we've done, we're going to rewrite

history. We're going to tell you why the people of Nova Scotia were wrong. Why were they wrong? They got rid of us. They were wrong, when we did all these great things.

From this article, Wayne MacNaughton - we all know Wayne. Everybody in this House knows who Wayne is. Wayne is a fantastic individual. He talked about that tax break. He said, "If the government took that tax break . . ." that they gave to big corporations ". . . and applied it to income assistance, it would mean an additional \$53 a month for every income assistance recipient in the province."

Did they do it? Nope, they didn't. Instead they said, here's \$3 a year. And then they did this one. Look what we did. They tapped themselves on the back, the \$3 a year. (Interruption) Yeah, and that is a good point. Who started the Poverty Reduction Strategy? (Interruptions)

Thirty seconds. (Interruptions)

All I'm trying to say, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a bunch of individuals over there who have been around since the beginning of time, it seems, and yet, things are going to change if you give us a second chance. Give us a second chance, we'll do things right this time - even though one, two, three, four, five individuals, if we're counting the gallery, voted on . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for debate on this bill has expired.

The honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

HON. DAVID WILSON: That was entertaining.

Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 43.

Bill No. 43 - Voluntary Blood Donations Act.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to rise today to say a few words on Bill No. 43. It's interesting that it's the Voluntary Blood Donations Act which was introduced by our caucus in 2014. The result of us looking at this piece of legislation and feeling the need to introduce Bill No. 43 at the time was that there were reports out of Saskatchewan that they had just approved a private, for-profit company to set up shop in their jurisdiction to collect blood plasma and pay donors for that.

Currently here in Nova Scotia we have a 100 per cent voluntary collection of blood and plasma in Nova Scotia. I think we, as Canadians, have a social contract that says that blood and blood plasma is really a public resource and should be donated by individuals

on a voluntary basis. It's not just our caucus that is saying this, it's not just our caucus advocating for ensuring that voluntary collection happens in Nova Scotia, there are many organizations and individuals who have been calling for this for many years now. I think it's important now that we, as a province, look at this and that the government make a decision on it.

We recently heard reports that the minister actually met with a CEO from one of these private companies that I would assume was lobbying to set up shop in Nova Scotia. What concerns us is that the minister and the government have been very quiet on this. They haven't indicated why they have met with this private company. Are they considering potentially allowing them to set up shop here in Nova Scotia and I think put in harm the voluntary donation system we have in Nova Scotia?

I know so many Nova Scotians who are proud of the fact that they donate their blood and plasma, especially in times of need and whenever there's a call-out of a certain blood type or the need to increase the stock that we have in Nova Scotia, we see Nova Scotians respond.

The World Health Organization is an organization I believe that I would think everybody respects. The work they do world-wide to improve health delivery and make sure that jurisdictions are responding in the appropriate way to health emergencies, I think we would all agree that they do that in a way that we commend them. They have called on not only Canadians, but world-wide governments to ensure that they support a voluntary blood and plasma collection system in their jurisdiction. There is a resolution that their hope is that by 2020 world-wide we would have a 100 per cent voluntary system.

I think the government needs to take their advice, not only listen to the Opposition Party when we bring an issue forward but organizations that have been talking about this far longer than I have and who have much more expertise in this area, Mr. Speaker. We know in Canada there are many organizations that have come out of tragedies, I think, and issues that we've seen affect many people. After more than 30,000 Canadians were affected by hepatitis C in the 1970s and 1980s and of course HIV under the tainted blood scandal that we know affected many people and many people lost their lives, the Krever Commission was implemented and the federal government invested I believe it was around \$17 million on that commission and that inquiry.

I think it was important for Canadians and for provinces and territories to ensure that we take back the recommendations coming out of that commission to our jurisdictions and we fight to make sure that we never, ever see that type of tragedy happen again in Canada and for that matter worldwide, Mr. Speaker. Out of that inquiry, the recommendation was against private, paid blood collection, and Canadian Blood Service came into being.

There are experts, as I said, academics who are in our own province, from Dalhousie, who have worked on trying to educate governments, for one, jurisdictions on the importance of not allowing these paid companies to come in and set up shop in the jurisdictions. I know recently the Province of Ontario dealt with this, and interestingly enough, it was the Liberal Government of Ontario that, I think, recognized and did their homework on the call to make sure that these private corporations and companies and identities don't set up shop in Ontario.

There was a private company that was trying to do that. There were calls from many organizations into the province to try to talk to the Minister of Health at the time. I think Deb Matthews, who I know in my time as Minister of Health, was the minister in Ontario at the time, who sought out the advice of people around the country and definitely made the decision that (Interruption) You know what? The recommendation from the World Health Organization and the recommendations of the Krever Inquiry are something that the government needs to pay attention to. They brought legislation in a year and a half ago, I believe, that would do just what Bill No. 43 would do and that would be not to allow for private identity or company to come in and set up shop here in Nova Scotia.

There have been many Canadian organizations that have committed to and supported this fact, Mr. Speaker. We know there is an organization called BloodWatch that Kat Lanteigne is the co-founder of, who has been working throughout Canada trying to make sure that parliamentarians are educated, trying to make sure that governments understand where we're at today and that we can't go back to a way of collecting blood and blood plasma that would jeopardize the supply that we have and jeopardize the security that I think we all have now, the comfort of knowing that if we get sick or if we're injured and we go to the hospital and we need to receive blood or blood plasma products that we have a safe system of collecting that blood and plasma here in Nova Scotia and in Canada.

We know the World Health Organization has put up the red flag around when you don't have that 100 per cent voluntary collection service that the supply is unstable, that potentially hazards and the security of that product could be in question. I would hope that the government, our government, would recognize that and take the advice of those who have been very vocal over the last number of years to try to make sure that we never turn back to the days where we may see the tainted blood issue rear its head again in our province and in our country.

I think it's important that the government be upfront with Nova Scotians. What was behind the meeting with the CEO or the president of the company? Is the government entertaining this? I hope that the government response today will make it very clear to Nova Scotians the path that they are going to choose to go forward, and we're hoping that they listen to the experts, that they listen to not only the Opposition but those organizations like BloodWatch, like other governments in Canada, like Ontario, the Government of Quebec, there are many organizations and individuals who have put their name in support of a voluntary collection system, especially if people want to go to the BloodWatch

website, and I was going through earlier and interesting names stand out, Bob Rae, former federal Leader and former Ontario Premier, and lawyers, agree with the WHO's resolution and hope that we would have 100 per cent volunteer collection . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. I'd just like to remind everybody that the honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid has the floor. There's a little bit too much chatter going on in here and I can't hear him.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, this is a timely issue I believe and an important issue. I was mentioning Bob Rae who has allowed for BloodWatch to post his name as someone who supports the initiative of BloodWatch, and many, many others including the World Health Organization, to make sure that jurisdictions have 100 per cent volunteer blood collection and plasma collection service.

Mr. Speaker, and there are so many people within the health care field who have lent their support around this initiative. As I said, a number of different governments across the country, and I'm glad to say that our federal MP and the NDP Health Critic on the federal level has questioned the federal Health Minister about this issue and it has been very clear that it does lie in the responsibility, even though I know I heard our Minister of Health and Wellness indicate that the federal government could take care of this, but it does fall on the responsibility of the individual provinces and territories. That's why Ontario passed legislation and that's why the Province of Quebec knew that they needed to do something to ensure that these private, for-profit companies don't set up shop in their province to collect blood and plasma.

So, the concern I have is that the government has been quiet on this and they haven't indicated to these organizations, or to Nova Scotians, what their intentions are, and I would hope when the government members have an opportunity to stand that we'll know a little bit about what that is. The concern we have is definitely vulnerable Nova Scotians. These private companies in other jurisdictions have, I think, targeted, and all indication is targeted vulnerable people in society. One jurisdiction, and I won't call them out, but a shop was set up next to a homeless shelter and a \$25 gift card was given out for that donation.

That is not the system I believe Nova Scotians would want to see here. I don't believe Canadians for the most part would want to see that type of blood collection system in our province. I think the generosity of Nova Scotians and Canadians is well-recognized, but when it comes to blood plasma collection and organ and tissue donation, Mr. Speaker, and I think it goes hand-in-hand for the government to support both those initiatives to ensure that residents know the importance of donating blood, know the importance of donating organs and tissues, and I think by allowing for-profit companies to open up in Nova Scotia we'll see our system deteriorate and I think put in question the security that we have and the comfort we have currently in the system that we have, that if any of us here are ever in the need of blood product, we have confidence that the system is in place,

it has the checks and the balances that are needed - and I would hope that government recognizes that they need to play a role in this.

So, I look forward to the comments of the minister, or the government, and I can tell you that it won't be the last time I try to move this issue forward, and I know that they'll start hearing from many organizations and individuals, that they just need to do the right thing, pass this legislation, or bring in your own that would prohibit a for-profit blood and plasma collection here in Nova Scotia. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise today for a few minutes and offer a couple of comments on this very important topic. The first thing I want to do is recognize all the people in Nova Scotia across this province in many locations. I know where I come from in the Windsor-West Hants area, we host an annual blood drive clinic. We have many hundreds of volunteers who come out to donate blood and not once or twice, some have done many, many times.

We need that to continue and I know that those folks will continue to do that. I know a lot of them and they know the importance of it.

Today I want to talk about how important it actually is in the use. We know there are often times when that blood that is collected is needed, unfortunately, and we're very fortunate to have those folks. From my previous life as a paramedic, where I spent nearly 17 years in the streets in this province, we know that there are not just traumatic incidents that require this through surgeries and other things, we know we need to have a supply available to us. It is vitally important.

We know there are long-term issues with medical problems and diseases that require blood transfusions. Some are specific, some are not. We know there are issues making sure that we have adequate supply. We know, we heard the members speak about the safety and security within the province. We have not had concerns around that in a very long time and I would hope, as he stated, that we won't.

We have a very good system in place as it is now. There's nothing new going on, Mr. Speaker. The one new thing probably is that there's a greater need, as we move forward, for blood services than there has been. We need to ensure for Nova Scotians and Canadians as a whole that we have the ability to have the product available, regardless if it's a medical treatment that some of us are very familiar with that requires that. There are people in all our constituencies, in all likelihood, who suffer, people we've known who have suffered from cancer and other diseases who require blood transfusions. I've had family members years back who required transfusions. As they get sicker and as time goes on, that need goes up. We really need to ensure that we have it.

There are examples, and here's one, if you can pronounce it, Mr. Speaker, and I would recommend that no one try five times to do it quickly but when you look at it, intravenous immunoglobulin - there's a mouthful, say that five times quickly, better known as IVIG. What this is, in all seriousness, is a treatment for folks who have immune deficiencies or inflammatory deficiencies. It is made - and here's a key point we should remember, how many donors does it take to make that serum for one person? One batch of that could take up to 15,000 donors.

If you think about how many people come out on an evening or a day or a couple of days, as I referred to a few minutes ago, to donate blood, how many people does it take or how many days or places across the province does it take to gather enough to create a batch? Quite a few I would assume. It's a long process and again we appreciate the folks who do come out and continue to come out but what we do know is that it's not enough. We know there are other issues. We know that three-quarters of Canada's supply for these vital treatments come from the U.S. and Europe even, where blood donations are accepted. Some of those we know are paid.

There's a bit of conversation around that. Only 25 per cent of these treatments are made using voluntary blood donations from Canada, information that probably not a lot of people are aware of. I think a lot of times as well, even though we have a lot of folks come out to donate blood, we know that unless you find yourself in a position of maybe needing it or a family member in a position of needing it for some reason, whether it be one of the treatments I just spoke of, whether it been a need through a surgery that is an emergency, a trauma on the highway, whatever that might be that incurs that to happen, people don't understand I don't think, they just think it's naturally there.

One of the things that we - I don't want to say we take it for granted but we do take it for granted that it is available to us regardless of the situation. We don't anticipate not having it. We've seen, over at least the past few years, where Canadian Blood Services will go out and do advertisements - I think the tagline is "it's in you to give" - as an example, trying to - pardon the pun - draw that blood out of you, but to get you there to donate and to express the importance of that. I'm not sure there isn't more that can be done around that, especially when we look at the numbers and how much that we get from other places and the need that we have to meet. We simply cannot produce - Canada in general cannot produce - enough of these medications to satisfy the patients' need.

The member for Sackville-Cobequid and I go back a long way. We have worked together, and he understands very well how this need comes about. From transferring sick patients from hospital for treatments, from seeing incidents on highways and other places that are traumatic - they're not necessarily all motor vehicle related. There are a number of traumas that take place in the province where people find themselves in situations where they're going to require a blood transfusion to survive. Again, that's expected. That's not an if - maybe we've got it available, maybe we don't. It's a must have available at all times.

Nova Scotia prides itself, I would dare say, in the medical community, on having it available, as does this entire country.

Passing legislation that has been put forward in Nova Scotia that would ban paid blood donation clinics won't change that at all. We know that there is security around this, that there's safety around this. Even the member who put the bill forward agrees that that's in place, and he would know that, from the research that he has done and from the hands-on work that he has done. Nova Scotians can have and always should have the confidence that this is in place. Whether blood or blood products come from a paid or a volunteer base, they are subject to the same screening processes. We learned some lessons a long time ago about the significance of safety around blood products and the screening that has to be done.

Health Canada continues to inspect and license any blood clinic before it ever opens, whether it intends to pay donors or not. Donors are subject to the same screening criteria. That doesn't change whether they are paid or they're volunteer. Canadian Blood Services is working to expand its volunteer base, and they'll always continue to do that, I'm confident. However, again, this will not replace the demand for manufactured blood products from outside of this country. We must continue to meet the needs.

Canadian Blood Services tells us that from experience of other countries, paid and voluntary donor clinics can co-exist and provide all Canadians with access to safe and life-sustaining blood and blood products. Can you just imagine someone who has had a heart attack, who's being taken in or who has gone through a trauma, who is in the operating room, who is in need of that blood, that transfusion, regardless of the type - that it's not available? That's not an option for us here in this country, nor in this province. It's not reasonable to think that that could happen. We continue the efforts to get people out to donate, and at this point Canada continues to deal with other countries around the world, like the United States and throughout Europe, to maintain its volume.

I'd also like to point out that the Canadian Hemophilia Society supports the use of paid donors as well as the voluntary ones. They do this because they know the products are safe. They know the screening process, and they support that. They do this because they know our need for blood products, not just in Nova Scotia but across the country, far outweighs what our voluntary needs in each province are.

This is a topic that probably will come up many times over the next number of years and months, and probably has come up in the past. Our biggest challenge will be to continue to get our folks out to donate blood as often as they can, to keep the clinics going, to keep them in places like Windsor and West Hants and the Legions and in the community centres all across the province and all across the country. We need to make sure that we are meeting the needs of those people - again, not only involved in those traumas or the incidents of the heart attacks that we aren't expecting, but the long-term treatment that's out there for folks who need a variety of different kinds of transfusions that include blood and blood plasma

products. We need to ensure that we're able to get those and process them safely and securely, Mr. Speaker.

In closing, I would just like to add that the safety of all medical treatments is indeed paramount; we need to stay on top of that. I would think the member for Sackville-Cobequid, being a former Health Minister in this House, and the member for Argyle-Barrington, also a former Health Minister in this House, may speak on this topic. I'm not sure what the opinion of the Official Opposition is. Both of those gentlemen have sat in that office and both have probably dealt with this very issue, over the course of their time there. It's not new. I'm seeing the former NDP member saying no, he's never dealt with the issue. I find that hard to believe actually, given that this has been around a long time and the process that we've been through around blood safety in the province and in the country.

This is something that all members of this House need to work together on, as do all Nova Scotians, not only to make life better but also to continue the process that we've had in place for accessing blood and blood products to treat all Nova Scotians and all Canadians, Mr. Speaker. It's vitally important that we continue to do it and, as I said, in the safest way possible.

I think, regardless of our difference of opinions on voluntary versus paid, where it comes from, that we would always see the challenges of safety first and foremost and the ability to supply and meet the needs and the quantity that we need throughout the province and throughout Canada are first and foremost. With those very few comments, I'll take my seat.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: It's my pleasure to stand and speak for a few moments on this bill. I thank the member for Sackville-Cobequid for bringing it forward so that we can have a fulsome discussion around voluntary blood donations in this province or paid blood donations in this province.

Just to line a few things up, because I think we're mixing up a whole bunch of issues all in one, and I don't think that's doing justice to the importance of the blood file in Canada. Really, we've got the issue of blood collection, we have the issue of paying for donations, and a third of issue of having the availability of those important products for our medical system.

I can say that I myself, during my time as minister, did not meet with the private company that we're talking about today, or the one that the member for Sackville-Cobequid brought up. But I can say that on many occasions I had an opportunity to meet with Canadian Blood Services, with their President and CEO, Dr. Graham Sher, and I did have

the opportunity to be the chair of the blood file for the federal, territorial and provincial ministers.

It was a file that actually I found was very satisfying and very interesting - one that is extremely complicated, mostly because of its inception in Canada. If we remember why Canadian Blood Services was created, it really boiled down to the issue of the tainted blood scandal back in the 1980s and early 1990s, when our blood system was less than safe, when a number of individuals got sick as they received the blood products from the Canadian Red Cross at the time, who was the purveyor of that system. Many of those people ended up having Hepatitis-C, and in some cases AIDS, because the system did not screen correctly. Nor was it able to test correctly the products that were being collected voluntarily from Canadians across the country.

What do we use blood products for? If we look at what Canadian Blood Services does, they are extremely important on two fronts, maybe even three. The one front is the actual collection of the blood product, of the blood itself, to be used in hospitals for those people who need it for surgery, the people who need it for life-sustaining treatments, and a lot of it happening because of emergency situations, accidents, those kinds of things.

Canadian Blood Services also is a producer of blood products, so not only do they distribute I guess what we would call it the raw blood, but they also have a number of processes they use to sell products, different products across Canada to hospitals that need them.

From my understanding - and I'll read the actual statement from Canadian Blood Services in a few moments - my understanding from my discussions with them, and I hope to have more discussions with Canadian Blood Services about this issue in the near future, revolves around the issue of capacity. Within the capacity they have, they are unable to produce the amount of products like hemoglobin, those kinds of products that are required by hospitals. We as Canadians, we as a hospital system like here in Nova Scotia, have to go to international partners to purchase these products. The Canadian system is actually not able to produce, with its number of volunteers, the products that are required.

For those of us who have been donors and/or still are donors, how many advertisements do you hear on the radio now, how many times do we get our phone calls - how often are we called to donate once again? I don't know what the total number of donors with Canadian Blood Services is, but even with the thousands of people who give blood every year - if not the hundreds of thousands of people who give blood every year - there are still not enough to go around. So, number one, the quick plug that we could say is that for those of us here who have given blood, or are still giving blood, to keep that in their minds, when the opportunity arises that we should give that little bit of life that we are able to give.

Of course those of O-negative, O-positive, ABs, Bs and As, all of these are needed. Those of you who are O-negatives of course are the ones who are wanted the most, which happens to be my wife and we get lots of calls for her to come in. Unfortunately she doesn't give blood very well and I think the last time kind of scared her a bit, so I'm trying to push her back towards it but it's not something that I'm going to insist upon because of those situations.

That's the collection system. Again our collection system is robust for the requirement of blood in Nova Scotia, blood in other provinces. There's always shortages here and there, but I think as a rule Canadian Blood Services does good on that.

Those other products, those plasma products, those other products that they require, I think there is always a challenge to get those products produced and of course get them out. The member for Hants West said that 15,000 people are required - or maybe it was the member for Sackville-Cobequid, but 15,000 patients or donors are needed to produce very small quantities of certain of these products.

Of course these products are coming from places where they have a higher donation rate - and how do you incite a higher donation rate when our system is already having trouble meeting the needs or requirements of the system today? Well you're going to have to give a better incentive than maybe a cup of juice and a couple of cookies, which is what Canadian Blood Services does, that is the incentive. I mean, you've got to look at it from a truly busy lifestyle kind of way - do we have time to donate blood?

It takes time because you've got to go, sit down, and you have to wait for them to draw the blood. You then have to sit and wait to make sure that you are okay, and you end up having some cookies and some juice, and an hour or more can go by before you are sent home. But you do have that good feeling that you've done something for someone else but most times, what is the extra incentive for people to give blood?

When it comes to plasma products, though, it is a different situation. In plasma donation it's not the same as going and drawing that full bag of blood. I forget how many millilitres are in that bag - I think it's a fair amount but, quite honestly, it's not a whole lot but it's enough to make you think about it. In a plasma donation, you are actually hooked up to a filtered kind of system where that filter system actually takes the plasma out of you over a certain amount of time. Apparently it's not very long - in fact, within the half-hour range, from what I understand from those friends who do give plasma today - and you can do it twice a week.

It's something you can continue to do over time without depleting your blood capacity within your body. Those of us who have given blood can assert that it's made us a little lightheaded, that you can feel unwell after doing it in most cases, that there is a concern about the amount of blood that you're taking away.

In the blood plasma situation, because it's a filtered system, you can give it more often, and the quantity - I mean, I don't know enough about the quantity to comment about it, but it is definitely something you can do over time.

I thought I would share with you the statement from Canadian Blood Services. I'll talk about that before I finish up with my final thoughts on this. In absence of my capability or my understanding of the system and the way it's structured, I have to go to the experts in the field. I would say that in my mind, in Canada the experts in the field are Canadian Blood Services, and of course the CEO, Dr. Graham Sher.

If you do want to look on the website, the website has a number of videos and also has this statement there. It also talks about the specifics of blood donation in Canada and how private plasma donation or payment for plasma donation can work or how it should work hand-in-hand with the volunteer system that we do have in Canada.

This is dated Thursday, February 18, 2016:

“Public debate on whether Canadians should be permitted to be paid for plasma donations has resurfaced. While Canadian Blood Services does not pay donors for blood, plasma or any other kind of donation, it does recognize:

- Drugs made from plasma donated by paid donors are just as safe as those made from plasma from volunteer donors.
- Access to the commercial paid plasma market is essential in ensuring enough supply so that Canadian patients continue to receive the lifesaving therapies they need.

While some have argued that a parallel paid donation system for plasma could mean fewer volunteer donors, the experiences of other countries suggest both paid and voluntary plasma donation can safely coexist. We will continue to monitor these practices closely.”

And of course this is a statement from Canadian Blood Services. It goes on to talk about the background of plasma:

“All the plasma Canadian Blood Services collects is used for patients in Canada. This collected plasma is used for two purposes:

- **Transfusion:** Some plasma is transfused directly into patients to treat bleeding disorders, trauma and other indications. We collect enough plasma to meet patients' needs for these treatments.

- **Plasma protein products:** Plasma is also used as a raw material to produce a category of drugs called plasma protein products. Large volumes of plasma are heavily manipulated and manufactured into small amounts of finished product. Within this category of drugs, the products in highest demand are immune globulins. We only collect enough plasma to meet about 25 per cent of the demand for immune globulins. The remaining plasma needed to make these drugs comes from paid donors in the United States.”

So even for the products that are being created or produced by Canadian Blood Services, they need to get the raw product, the plasma, from paid donors from the United States. It goes on to say:

“This is not a new practice and has been common for decades. It is safe and is acceptable to patient groups who use these products and recognize this practice ensures security of supply (as outlined in the Dublin Consensus statement).”

I could print that out. It was a very long document. It talks about the safety and the requirements of things that need to be followed in order to maintain the safety of the blood system:

“Canada, the United States and Europe have strict standards for collecting plasma and turning it into pharmaceutical products. That means all donors (paid or volunteer) must meet specific criteria to be eligible to donate, and their donations are thoroughly tested. As an added safeguard for patients, manufacturers also use technology that eliminates viruses. Most of these products we buy are sold worldwide and are subject to regulation and licensing in multiple countries, including Canada.”

That’s a pretty good statement.

Again, like I said, watch the videos below to learn about Canadian Blood Services’ role as it relates to plasma and protein products. There’s a website there that I’ll be more than happy to share. I will table this for the use of the House of Assembly and of course for those who are interested in it as well.

So quite honestly, I don’t know why the New Democratic Party is risk averse in this particular case of having a private company come in and take plasma products if they pay for it and put it into the system, because we need it for our patients here in Nova Scotia. We need the product. The majority of this is coming from the United States, and the bulk plasma product that is required comes from paid donors from the United States already. Why are they risk averse to private companies doing public health care issues?

Mr. Speaker, when we set up Scotia Surgery across the harbour a number of years ago, they spoke against it. They spoke against it a whole lot. But guess what? When they were in government and they got to renew the contract, what did they do? They renewed the contract because they understood the importance of all of those partners working in health care to make sure that we get the products that we need to keep our patients safe and sound in our own health care system right here in Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member Queens-Shelburne.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: I rise today to speak on Bill No. 43, the Voluntary Blood Donations Act.

First of all, I want to recognize the previous three speakers. I know everybody was paying attention, and I know that of the three speakers, two of them were former Ministers of Health, and two out of the three were former paramedics. I just want to point out that the NDP member for Sackville-Cobequid is both. I just wanted to point that out. I do want to recognize their expertise and knowledge on this topic.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that I don't sound like a fish out water on this topic, pardon the pun. If you asked Canadians what's one thing that they would value in our country, most often the answer would be public health care. I can assure you that it's one of the topics that interested me in politics, in particular this Party. It goes back to the days of Tommy Douglas, and something that all Canadians cherish is a universal health care system.

I'll get to my notes later, but I can assure you on this point: I have family members in other countries and our neighbour to the south, and one of the things that I wrestle with knowing is that hopefully their health insurance covers their medical conditions, because it can actually force their family into bankruptcy.

That's one of the reasons why I appreciate the universal health care that Canadians have, and I think it's recognized around the world. No matter who you are, no matter what you look like, or who you look like, or how much education you have, or how much money you have, you can be guaranteed that you will receive health care.

A for-profit blood plasma clinic opening in Nova Scotia flies against everything that many Nova Scotians believe in. We believe that one should not be paid for blood or blood plasma. We believe that this is not going in the right direction. Now that the Canadian Plasma Resources has set their sights on Nova Scotia, this legislation is needed to preserve the public system of blood and plasma donation. This company will take Nova Scotian blood plasma and sell it to large pharmaceutical companies for them to sell at higher costs. These companies are for-profit on Nova Scotia blood plasma, and this in my opinion does not fall in line with our values.

Mr. Speaker, I can't understand how a government or government members would be okay with a for-profit clinic operating in their communities, or even worse, opening in their communities next to possibly food banks or homeless shelters like they have done in the past. This bill will protect the integrity and the safety of blood supply, it is also a bill that says Nova Scotians believe in public health care, and that there is no place here for companies who pay people for their blood.

I want to congratulate my colleague, the member for Sackville-Cobequid for bringing this important bill back to this House and standing up for this important issue. I just want to first speak on a private issue and as I just did some research on this particular topic today, all I had to do was reach in my billfold and retrieve my own personal blood donation card.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear that I am not what I call a regular donor and I appreciate people who do that on a regular basis. At times, sporadically I go and do my duty, I hope that it has some impact, but I looked at that card and I know when I go in to do my blood donation there's an interesting type on there, and I don't have the medical knowledge to understand all the terms in this House today, but on that little card with my name on it, it has a type of blood, O Rh Negative, and when I go in and give that card, the health care providers there are very enthused about the importance of this type and how that is going to have an impact and what it can do, and I appreciate that.

It's also interesting to note, that every person has roughly five litres of blood in their body, and to me that is something that is truly important and Canadians are some of the most loyal donors in the world. Many of them donate two times or more a year and I emphasize that I am not one of them, but I just wanted to know that when I go in there it's not - at times you get very relaxed and you're sitting there, Mr. Speaker, and you have the tubes hooked up to you, and the beds are in very close proximity and the locals know that the local politician is in there and you're fair game for a reasonable good line, and it comes.

I was in there one day and the line came, I took it and the guy looked at me innocently with my tubes hooked up to me and the machine was working at its normal speed and the blood was flowing, and he kind of had a questionable surprised look on his face and he looked at me and he said, I never thought that politicians actually had blood in their system. I took it as a good joke at the time and I wanted to ensure them that all the members in this House actually are blood donors, or carry blood in their system, but that's a fair, good joke at the time, but it's a very serious issue.

Something that I want to highlight on here is that Canadians actually do volunteer in great numbers for this particular need and I think that one of the concerns that I have is that when you ask Canadians, or possibly paying donors, it would actually decrease the number of individuals who volunteer donating their blood. I think this is the appropriate time to have that debate in this House, because it's an important issue.

One of the issues that was raised earlier and there are three points, Mr. Speaker, that I think we need to pay attention to on this particular topic. Paying for blood raises an issue, and I know that in a number of years past, several decades past, was regarding the safety of blood for all Canadians, and if my memory serves me right, there was a very in-depth study on that and there were a lot of recommendations that came out to protect the safety of blood collection. So that's the first concern I have - making sure that we have a safe system.

The second point is what I raised earlier, the risk of depleting or diminishing the existing volunteer blood donor pool. Now if you're going to go into am I going to get a monetary incentive to do this, where is that going to fit into all those who go on a regular basis on a voluntary basis? I would think that's going to have a harmful effect.

To me, what I have learned in researching this topic is that when you go for-profit, to pay for blood donation, you're going to be exploiting the people who are impoverished or are at the Canadian low-income scale. Is that the path we want to take? Are we going to ask those who may want to be able to collect \$40 or \$50 or \$60, \$100 a month, or every two months? Here is an opportunity. I don't think that's the right path to go. Those are not the Canadian values that I have and I think this particular bill actually protects against that.

Mr. Speaker, I know this is a Private Member's Bill and I am somewhat discouraged to know that a Private Member's Bill does not have the success as a sitting government which would want to introduce their own. I do recognize the knowledge of the member for Sackville-Cobequid and the common sense of this bill is something that we all should be proud of in promoting, and it is something that we can be doing to protect all our neighbours and all Canadians.

Now there's one other interesting scenario that I want to point out, and I know that other people talked about giving blood on a volunteer basis. One of the things that separates us as a country is that we are Canadians. I pointed out that our Medicare system is something that has been recognized around the world. There's one group I want to talk about before I end my message here today, Mr. Speaker. There's one group that gave blood voluntarily, and that group was on June 6, 1944, and the place was called Juno Beach. There were roughly, my understanding, 14,000 Canadians who entered that beach and they gave their blood voluntarily to protect our freedom, and one of the freedoms we have is that we have a voluntary service that we supply blood for different individuals, and I know there are many needs.

One of the needs that I can assure you that affects my family is for cancer patients. I know there are volunteers out there and they have contributed and that has value to my family who face that disease almost on a monthly basis. I also know, Mr. Speaker, that there are victims who may be in car accidents who are dependent on volunteers' blood supplies and how that can benefit them. I also know that we have medical professionals who can actually create transplants, and I will make reference to heart transplants and how

that volunteer blood can actually make that heart beat for the very first time in a new patient. That is something remarkable, to know that we have that system in our country and it is something to be proud of.

But I'm not proud of the fact that we're going to be having an opportunity to let non- or for-profit organizations come in and take advantage of the poor, the people who are going to do this for some incentive, for all the wrong reasons, when we have a voluntary system in place. We have a very safe system in place that protects the well-being of all Canadians, and I think that this private member's bill is the right approach.

I thank the member, my colleague, for bringing this forward, and I thank you for the time.

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

MR. BEN JESSOME: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that I have the opportunity to speak to this particular bill today. I have a significant other who did some work in the United States for the American Red Cross, and she actually worked as a first responder on an ambulance as well. She has told me time and time again how critical it is for the people who are first responders to have ready access to good blood services and to good resources of blood.

It's important to recognize the work that first responders in our community and throughout Canada do. They put their necks on the line. They put their thoughts and their hearts into what they do. I think that it's important to recognize everything that they do for our communities.

Additionally, when they get beyond that point, once they actually get these patients to the hospital, there's an incredible amount of work done by incredible individuals in our hospitals. The importance of having good resources of blood is - no pun intended - critical for them to be able to do their jobs. I need to acknowledge, again, the people who work in our emergency services centres and our hospitals, who work hard to keep Nova Scotians alive, who put their necks on the line, who put their time and their emotions on the line to provide essential services to Nova Scotians. Again, it's important that we recognize the work that they do.

With respect to the collection of blood, I think it's important that we acknowledge that all of us as legislators and as Nova Scotians have a role to play in encouraging Nova Scotians and Canadians to support that cause, to actually show up and donate blood. I stand here today saying that very humbly because I have actually never donated blood in my life. I've been encouraged by many to do so, and I don't quite know why I haven't done that yet, Mr. Speaker, but I know that there's significant value in doing that. I think that I shall endeavour to make that plunge and do my part for blood collection for Nova Scotia.

I think it's important that we highlight the work that goes into keeping blood up to par and ensuring that the blood we provide to patients in our hospitals and at the scene of accidents and in emergency situations - we have a responsibility to ensure that the blood that we're transmitting or the blood that we're transferring to our patients is safe. At the end of the day, that has to be the most important consideration in any sort of debate that we have: the safety of Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for members' comments on this topic is expired.

The honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

HON. DAVID WILSON: That concludes Opposition Business. I hand it over to the government. Oh, the Speaker will have a moment of interruption. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: We have in fact reached the moment of interruption and the late debate as submitted by the member for Victoria-The Lakes.

"Therefore be it resolved that the importance of early childhood development intervention programs and services are important to all Nova Scotians and their families."

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: At this time it's the intention of the government to withdraw the late debate topic for today and to proceed directly to the item of government business, Reply to the Budget Speech.

[GOVERNMENT BUSINESS]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Government Motions.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 3129.

Res. No. 3129, Estimates: CW on Supply - Referred - notice given April 14/16 (Hon. R. Delorey)]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East to continue his comments.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the budget for a few minutes again today. I think yesterday when we started the Reply to the Budget Address, we tried to give a little perspective around what a budget means and where we go from here. I think at the time we were talking about when a government puts down a budget, it is the government's view of what they hope will happen that year, what they maybe expect will happen. But we always have to look at those things in the context of a budget being a political document.

There is obviously a lot of work that goes into it from the department level, from each of the departments, and then from the Department of Finance and Treasury Board around the revenues. There are hours and hours of work that go into the budget. But all told, what gets presented to us in this House and to all Nova Scotians is a political document that was signed off on by ministers and Cabinet and the Premier. In that process, no doubt, things come up from departments and get - well, let's change that, or you can't do that, and there's some toing and froing on that.

That's all to say that I think it's pretty rare that what is put down in a budget is actually what happens. I would say that it's also often rare that what actually happens is close to what was budgeted for, what was forecast at that time. I used the example last night of looking back at a budget that the NDP had tabled when they were in the last half of their mandate. At that time, they had budgeted for a surplus of \$16 million. We know that over the fullness of time what actually happened was the province did not have a surplus that year. It had a deficit that I think was in the \$680-million range - quite a dramatic swing from what was budgeted to what actually happened.

Then I went back and I looked at what happened last year, in the year that has just ended in March, what happened. I looked back and I said a year ago that the government budgeted for a deficit of \$97 million, and we will see how that shapes out, but I can tell you the fluctuations during the course of the year were, indeed, pretty shocking. The very first quarter after that budget was put down, the deficit had deteriorated from \$97 million to \$120 million or so, and then the next quarter had deteriorated all the way down to \$240 million. Then we got an update yesterday on the third quarter that that deficit was no longer \$240 million, and thanks to a miraculously incredible quarter, it was down to just \$70 million.

There are some pretty wild fluctuations there, Mr. Speaker. Then based on that tremendous quarter that the province obviously experienced, because no doubt every Nova Scotian felt so much better right now about their financial prospects after that one quarter - what a corner we must have turned there in that quarter. I don't know those Nova Scotians, but no doubt they're out there, and so now, on the backs of that, we see the budget tabled this year with tremendous, tremendous revenue expectations and increases; \$300 million,

\$370 million in additional revenues that will befall the government this year from the strength of this wonderful economy that we are in now.

We will see; we will see what happens as this year materializes and we will see if those revenue estimates become reality. We will have to wait and see, but we will wait and see with the knowledge of the fluctuations that have happened in the past.

So, we don't know what will happen with the revenue projections. We don't know if they will become reality. We don't know what will happen with many of the expense predictions, but we do know a couple of things, and I think the theme is that when a government tables a budget, it's their opportunity to put their stamp on, put their mould on the province, what they expect to happen. What they are asking Nova Scotians to do is believe in them, to trust the numbers, and it's against that backdrop that we should all look at the numbers and make our own assessment as to what we feel is accurate, and is reasonable, and is possible.

Those are all things that we have to make individually, and in making that assessment we should keep a couple of things in mind that became obvious from the budget yesterday. The first thing, I spoke to the revenue increases and the tremendous degree of optimism that the government has about the revenue prospects for the province, for the Treasury, but let's think about the convention centre. I think the convention centre is a good place for Nova Scotians to look and see what they can make of what's in this budget.

I've heard the government describing the \$110 million that came from the federal government and HRM as a one-time revenue windfall. It's one-time for certain but, it's not a windfall. It's not free money. It's not something that was won. It's actually money that was already spent and is being paid back. It's like you're standing at the bar and a few people around, and somebody says I've got to drop out for sec, can you pick up a round? And you get the round and the friend comes back and says, well here's the \$10 for the round and you say oh look, I won \$10. No, you actually still have to pay the barkeep for the round.

This government took the same pocket of \$110 million dollars and would actually have Nova Scotians believe that they have the magical powers to use that same money four times. They're going to use it to make the numbers look good, which they've done. They are going to use it to pay down debt, and they're going to use it to pay for the convention centre. (Interruption) Well, four times we're going to roll it through here. We're going to pay for the convention centre and we are going to . . .

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

MR. HOUSTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to pay for the VG. Four times - the same pocket of money that's not even theirs. It's a repayment and I don't

think Nova Scotians should take very good comfort in the fact that even now this government doesn't seem to understand what they're doing with that. The fact is Nova Scotians know, you can't use the same pocket of money four different times. They can catch onto that; they can understand that and that's the lens that we should look at this budget from the mindset, where they will even now on the floor of this House, try and defend that. That's the mindset of the government as they are preparing this.

That was something that was clear to Nova Scotians. This is a big amount. They could see it. It was put right in front of them.

There were a couple of things that maybe weren't so clear to them, weren't so obviously put in front of them, but are equally concerning. Of course we have to talk about the accounting for the Yarmouth ferry. People would say, well, I thought the Yarmouth ferry cost \$33 million over two years, so why can't I see that in the budget? You can see \$10 million this year, and we can assume that there's \$10 million next year. There's something missing from that: there's \$13 million. When you scratch below the surface, they put the \$13 million into last year.

These are the types of things that Nova Scotians will look at and will assess, and they will say, can we trust this document? When you scratch and you find these things, they will say, what else are we not seeing? Those are the questions that we are asking.

We don't know what the numbers will look like at the end of the year, but we certainly know the risks. We know the execution risk. We know the risk around the wage settlements. There's any number of things that can happen here.

Of course, when we talk about the revenues of the province, we should talk about some of those revenues that we won't see here, from things like the film industry, which PricewaterhouseCoopers would have you believe contributed over \$100 million to the GDP. We don't need that anymore, according to this government, because things are so good elsewhere.

I disagree with them on that. That is revenue that we could use in this province. That's people working in this province that we could use, that I could support and that I think most members on this side of the House support. Now, the government members have decided that they don't support those people and that's a decision that they've made, and they will be happy with that decision. But if we are talking about growing an economy, we should look to areas of our economy that have been successful, that we have been successful in growing.

We had a dynamic film industry here of smart, respected people, and that industry is suffering because \$24 million that was returned to the province was deemed too expensive, was deemed expendable, by a government that has no problem at all writing a blank cheque to a private company and saying, take as much as you want over 10 years,

we'll worry about it later - and then can turn around to Opposition members and say, it's irresponsible to ask how much it will cost; how dare you ask how much it will cost? Of course we don't know.

Now just imagine that. Imagine somebody who just signed a contract for 10 years saying, of course we don't know how much it will cost. Nobody would do that with their own money. No company would do that. Only this government would do that.

Those are the types of decisions they make. They will stand in their place and say, we are making tough decisions. I would say to them, making decisions is part of governing, and just because you've made them doesn't make them tough, doesn't make them smart, doesn't make them good - and in many cases, quite the opposite.

I would ask them to reconsider what they are doing with some of these things and try to actually grow our economy. In this budget we see forecasts of higher HST and we see forecasts of higher personal income tax, but we see forecasts of lower corporate taxes. I would ask reasonable people to stop and think about that for a second: higher personal income tax, but lower corporate tax. So what's the message there? Are companies going to pay more wages in the face of falling profits, or are shareholders going to forego profits and pay them out? It's just hard to understand the rationale behind some of these things.

I think the reason it's hard to understand is because it comes from a spreadsheet from somewhere else, that people don't have the ability to stand back and say well wait a second here now, what's really going on - does it make sense? We all deserve that; and that's what happens when you see these types of things. It's nice and it's cute and everyone can clap and say wasn't that great, but it has to go beyond a one-hour speech and it has to turn into action; it has to turn into results. I think that's the part that people are worried about. When you look at the papers last night and you follow things, people are wondering, can they trust this bunch? Can they trust them? That's what they're asking - and many people have asked me, and I've said we'll see. We will see; we will see what happens.

I do remember a point if we take our minds back to 1999 - there was a Liberal Government back then that introduced a balanced budget. And people may remember that it was a minority government at the time, and their balanced budget that they presented to Nova Scotians, their government fell on it. Their government was defeated. The big issue they had was the financial problem that they faced at the time - health care. To try to solve the health care financial problem they were faced with then, they tried to create an off-the-books \$600 million health investment fund - and the reason that they tried to put that \$600 million off the books was so they could present balanced books.

That budget was defeated; that government was defeated - and not just because the books weren't balanced, the government was defeated because it was perceived by the people that the government was trying to mislead it. That's what happened. If we flash back to yesterday, now we have a Liberal Government that has introduced a budget that

they would have you believe is balanced plus - that's what they would want you to believe, and one of the big financial issues they're facing today, health care. One of the main things they were facing back then - health care is still an issue for this province today. So we have another Liberal Government, another balanced budget - same problem.

Now, to solve it, what's this government doing? Well, they're not being so brazen as to have an off-the-books investment fund that we know of, but what they are doing is they're coming up with some pretty wild revenue expectations, and they are coming up with some very low health care cost estimates.

What our job will be is we cannot defeat this budget, and this budget will be passed. We can't defeat it, but we will do our best over the next couple of weeks to make sure that people understand the little sleights of hand that are happening. We will make sure that people are aware of how these numbers are coming up, and people will make their own decisions on that, but we will make that available to them. So when we talk about health care, if you look back over the last five years, I think you'd see that the health care costs in this province generally have gone up about 2 per cent per year; about 2 per cent per year.

Now, this year, it's not a clear line to determine what's budget to budget, because there has been some stuff taken out of Health and Wellness and some stuff put in there, so it's hard to really do the apples-to-apples comparison. But what I've been led to believe by staff is that the Health budget is up. I was led to believe that it was up about 0.9 per cent, compared to a five-year history of 2 per cent escalators, and back further than that, even higher.

So will the health care dollars be enough? We'll see. We'll see. But are health care costs being contained because of administrative changes, or are they being contained because of degradation of services? Or are they even being contained? These are all things that only time will tell.

But I will say that there are a lot of people who believe that services are down. Obviously mental health is one that we are all aware of, but there are a number of areas where people are worried. People are worried about what's happening in health care. If we look at that line item, which is roughly \$4 billion, and if this budget is off by a couple of percentage points in the hopes of looking good in the numbers that we were looking at yesterday, then we'll see. I will hope that services are still there for those Nova Scotians who need them.

We also will be looking at the Education and Early Childhood Development budget. We'll see what happens with the education system. I listened intently when the minister said yesterday, in speaking about the Education and Early Childhood Development budget, they'll get the help and the attention that they need. I hope so, but what I'm hearing from teachers is that they don't know how a government like this can make that statement. They would say, from their perspective, from their daily lives, that the government doesn't really

have a sense of what kids need and what they're being offered, and therefore where there's any difference. It's bold, for sure, for a Finance and Treasury Board Minister to declare that they'll get the help and the attention that they'll need when there are questions of whether there's a good understanding of what it is that they need.

We've been talking about this, but teachers have also been talking about this. In fact, didn't teachers vote against a contract or something over the fact that they didn't believe that the government understood what was happening in the classrooms? I think they did, Mr. Speaker, if you check that. And yet, still, waiting for the acknowledgement that maybe teachers are right. We didn't get that acknowledgement. Instead, we got a definitive statement that this government is going to fix something where they don't properly understand what's wrong.

It will be interesting to see how that plays out. All we can do on this side of the House, from over here, is hope that the money goes into the system at the right places and makes the experience better for everyone - for students, for teachers, for families.

It was pointed out to me, along the theme of the priorities of a government, and somebody who is directly impacted by this made a statement last night - and I told them I'd have to think about that, because it was hard for me to kind of wrap my head around. But they said, what's the message when there's \$3.6 million to help families with autism and \$3.5 million for wineries? I said, I'll have to get my head around those two things because this is a government that would have us believe that they know where the help was needed and people will get the attention they need. At the same time we have teachers saying, they don't know what's going on in my classroom, they don't know what's going on in my school.

We will have to see how it goes and how the numbers look, Mr. Speaker. In time the reality will set in one way or the other. I think Nova Scotians are skeptical. I know I am. I have a front row seat to see many things that happen in this House, and when I see the magic around the convention centre and I see the things put in the last year for the retrofit, it just makes you wonder, what else is there?

But I would say, on a \$10 billion budget, there will be some good stuff in there, no question. There'll be some expenditures that maybe are a little more suspect and there'll be everything in between. I worry about governments that see these big revenue projections and feel like they got a little bit of extra cash, that they had a windfall, and they do deals like the ferry - we'll talk about that a lot over estimates - and they do some of the other things that we hear here.

I would say that we want to believe that Nova Scotia is turning a corner, so to speak. That's what the government would have us believe, and I want to believe that. I'm a little uncertain at the moment, given the timing and the "politicalness" of this document and the stage that this government is at in their mandate, that everything all of a sudden is pretty

good. I do want to believe that things are better because we have a lot of discussions in this House, about different things - toing and froing. There are a lot of things that happen in this House.

I would say, at the end of the day, we all want better for this province. I believe in this province. I believe in its people. I believe in its people to produce and to thrive and succeed and I believe that if a government gives them the opportunities, they will capitalize on those opportunities. So we have questions about this budget and thankfully we have 40 hours of estimates to ask some of them. We have a lot of questions. We might even get a couple of answers - who knows, but we'll keep trying for them.

As I stand here today, what I would say is, let's see what happens with this budget. Let's see if Nova Scotians are doing that much better that they can afford to pay that much more tax and let's see what this government can do to improve the quality of life of those Nova Scotians who need it. With those few words I would take my seat. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise, and I might mention it's my first time ever having experienced a lockup, which was quite a fascinating experience. It was interesting to explore and try to ferret out what was happening in a budget in a very condensed period of time.

I think I want to start off by assuring the House that my friend has spoken well on this and covered many of the topics that I would have covered in addressing the budget. I kind of revert to my experience practising in the courtroom when a judge would say, you stand up and you repeat a lot of things that the other guy said, and they would shut you down and say, we've covered that ground already. My present to you today is that I won't do that, all right?

I do want to talk about something, and I guess it goes back again to my own career with Legal Aid. I was very fortunate to work under the direction of our Executive Director at the time, Gordon Murray. He was from Antigonish. He was clearly an inspiration. When I moved into a management position at Legal Aid I would have to meet with him quite frequently - well not that frequently, but sometimes it was to discuss issues that might be happening with some of our staff; occasionally there were issues.

Gordon always had an interesting way of describing a situation. He would refer to it as the halo effect. What he meant by that, I think, was that when you walked in to start your career, your halo burned - everybody has one - and it burned brightly, it shone. But through your own actions over the years, that halo could get pretty dull and it was all dependent on your actions. If you behaved badly, you developed a certain reputation and you wore that in your halo. If you did well, your halo shone.

I always remembered that metaphor and I think it might aptly apply to the discussions we've been having here today. Back last year, before the last budget that came out, I remember I was actually approached because it was during the by-election and somebody asked, why are you doing this? You are recently retired, why are you getting into politics? I said, well, it's not just for one reason, I mean I really had to think about it, but it turned out that there were several. The first one that caught my attention - and I'm not sure if I referenced it here in the Legislature before - the first thing that maybe kind of popped out of my retirement relaxation was an article that I had read in the *Halifax Chronicle Herald*. It ended up on the front page and it ended up a little bit unusual in the fact that the editorial made it to the front page.

The reason it was there was because it was a story about a woman - I think she was in her 30s, very severely disabled in a car accident. Her parents were older and they had been providing the care for her. When they finally settled an insurance claim that had gone on for years and years, the government was seeking to claw back that money. It ended up going to court and there was just this really grim picture in the newspaper - and it was on television as well - of this woman being wheeled into court in a bed. She was completely a quadriplegic, there was brain damage, she was very severely disabled - with her elderly parents. It shamed me. I felt ashamed that I was living in this province and something like that was taking place. But it did wake me up and I said, what is going on here?

I was puzzled by that, but I went on with my life. But after that, following that, the budget came out. We've talked about it so many times - it was first the astounding decision to cut the Film Tax Credit. It just was riveting, a clear promise that had been made to the film industry. They were cut off at the knees and they absolutely have not recovered since. It was just a startling event to me. Then it went on and on, throughout the month there was more and more. Bus passes gone for disabled people - why would you even think of doing that? Where is your head? Where is your mindset, when you would think that somebody who is disabled shouldn't be able to get bus passes?

You know, Mother Teresa said about North America, when somebody asked her how she managed to survive and care for people in leprosy colonies all over the world - she said, that's not the worst thing. She said, the worst disease is the disease that I see in your North America, and that is the disease of loneliness. You couple that isolation that people have, who are also disabled, and then cut off their bus pass - to me, it just stung very deeply, and as you can tell, I still feel very passionate about that particular point.

Then it was the cuts to organizations. Those organizations - small cuts that make no difference to this bottom line here, they really don't matter, and yet they were doing so much work in the communities. The CNIB having to march out here - it's just shabby business. I kept looking at it, and what I saw was a government who - and I was not particularly judgmental about the government that went in at the time; I honestly wasn't looking at it that carefully - but I saw a halo that was getting very, very tarnished. I think that the thing with that is that when you come in with this budget, you're fighting that. You

are fighting a very tarnished reputation in this province, and if you think that this document is going to fix that - we shall see.

What I would like to say is this, and I think that my friend has - well, I think that we noted at least some language that was used by Gary Burrill yesterday when he talked about it. I thought he said it very succinctly, when we're talking about the surplus. It's not the surplus of money that was most astounding about this document. It was the surplus of words.

This budget contains many wonderful words, and I give you credit for that, but beneath these words is a document that is focused solely on the government's obsession with balancing the budget at any cost. It's a glossed-over program of hardline austerity for Nova Scotia.

For example, we have many wonderful words on the subject of education. However, is post-secondary education any more financially accessible by anything in this budget? The answer is no. Do we have investments of the sort that Prince Edward Island has been making in a provincial program of early childhood education? The answer is no.

And we have many wonderful words on the subject of poverty. You know, this afternoon, listening to the debate and listening to my friend who, just when I start thinking I can start saying hello and being nice to him, does what he did this afternoon.

We're trying to move forward. Can anybody in this room say that they accept the fact that children are living in poverty? We've talked about this before - are we so removed in our daily lives that we no longer see the plight of our children? So that we can stand up in this House when a bill is presented and suggest that it's done for - use only partisan language to defend themselves?

The other thing, about the \$20 - why defend that? Why not just even say, we have no money, we can't do it, this is the best we can do? But to defend it and applaud yourselves on \$20 a month is absolutely unbelievable. So, in this, is there an improvement in the Nova Scotia child benefit? No. It is frozen, and provincial spending in this area is decreasing.

Yesterday, we spoke with poverty advocacy groups, and they don't want to make a snub of the increase. Of course, they'll use the \$20 in their social assistance rate, but they also spoke to the fact that their rates have been frozen for two years. Please don't congratulate yourselves for that, not for a two-year freeze.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order.

MS. MANCINI: I apologize; I think I know where . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I would ask the member if she would direct her comments to the Chair, please; and, at the same time, I ask that people be respectful of the speaker. Thank you.

The Leader in the House of the New Democratic Party.

MS. MANCINI: A marginal increase will little more than help them play catch-up with the increased cost of living. So, while child poverty rates in Nova Scotia are at an unacceptable level, this budget reduces child welfare spending by \$1.4 million.

Will this budget improve public housing? No. Will this (Interruption) well, I'll tell you. Well, that's how the government will creatively move their money around, but, we will discuss that further in the estimates. (Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please. The honourable Leader in the House of the New Democratic Party has the floor, please. Order, please. Order, please. Thank you. The Leader in the House of the New Democratic Party has the floor.

MS. MANCINI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, will this budget improve public housing? No. The maintenance and operation budgets for public housing has decreased by \$0.75 million. So, there are many, many wonderful words in this budget about health care, however, the hard truth is that the Health and Wellness budget has been frozen for a second year in a row. The truth is the funding for nursing homes in Nova Scotia has decreased by \$3.1 million. The truth is that many Nova Scotians cannot find a family doctor. After an NDP Government made many improvements to the health care system, it is difficult to see this government's lack of progress on this file.

Oh, and then there's the economy; more words on the page. Nova Scotians recognize this budget is balanced by freezing the wages of public sector workers which will actually have a negative impact on the provincial economy.

This budget is balanced by making rosy projections of provincial revenue. This budget is balanced by very questionable accounting. So, there is a surplus in the budget, there is a surplus of words.

What is needed in Nova Scotia is investment in opportunities and our people. It is this investment that is absent from this austerity-driven budget that is before us. So, you know, I talked about halos. The halo is pretty tarnished right about now, and I know that Nova Scotians will be looking very carefully at this budget, but I don't think they're going to see too much of a shine coming forward from it. The halo has not been shining brightly for some time. Those are my comments.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. We will resume again tomorrow between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. at which time we'll call Government Business, Public Bills for Second Reading, Bill Nos. 152, 154, 156 and 157, as well as Committee of the Whole on Supply.

I would move that the House now rise, to resume again tomorrow between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise, to meet again on April 21st between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until April 21st at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 5:36 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)

RESOLUTION NO. 3171

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Marilyn Webber is a long-time resident of Upper Lakeville; and

Whereas Marilyn is a retired schoolteacher who has helped hundreds of Eastern Shore students obtain their educational dreams; and

Whereas Marilyn went beyond her duties and provided exemplary service to her students;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Marilyn Webber for making a positive difference for students of the Eastern Shore, and wish her well in her retirement.

RESOLUTION NO. 3172

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Rusty Swinehammer has been a long-time resident of the Eastern Shore and currently lives in Salmon River Bridge; and

Whereas Rusty is an accomplished musician both playing guitar and singing; and

Whereas Rusty volunteers at various musical events along the Eastern Shore to young and old alike;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 3173

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

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

Whereas Robert was the founder of the Eastern Shore Ground Search and Rescue organization; and

Whereas Robert was an active member of the Musquodoboit Harbour and District Volunteer Fire Department and the Eastern Shore Board of Trade;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 3174

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Eileen Humphreys is a long-time resident of Lake Charlotte and has been actively involved in her community; and

Whereas Eileen has been a past volunteer member of The Birches nursing home board of directors; and

Whereas Eileen is an active member of the group known as Grandmothers for Grandmothers and also a member of St. John's Church, Oyster Pond;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 3175

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Barbara Markovitz is a long-time resident of Clam Harbour and has been actively involved in her community; and

Whereas Barbara was a participant of the Musical Friends singing group, performing in many volunteer musical functions; and

Whereas Barbara is an active member of the Eastern Shore Forest Watch Association, helping to protect the wilderness, waterways and wildlife of the forest areas along the Eastern Shore;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 3176

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

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

Whereas Myles is a long-time volunteer member of the Musquodoboit Harbour and District Fire Department; and

Whereas in his role as a firefighter, Myles continuously participates in the necessary firefighting training and makes himself available for emergency calls anytime;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 3177

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Gary Mitchell is a resident of Ostrea Lake and has been actively involved in his community; and

Whereas Gary is a member of the Musquodoboit Harbour Trail Association, helping with maintenance of the trail; and

Whereas Gary understands the importance of having the trail provide an active transportation alternative to encourage people to become fit and enjoy the beauty of the outdoors;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 3178

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Eleanor Keeping is a resident of East Jeddore and has been actively involved in her community; and

Whereas Eleanor is a member of St. John's Anglican Church in Oyster Pond and helps with various aspects of parish activities; and

Whereas Eleanor is an active member of the seniors Harbour Lites New Horizon Club and the Musquodoboit Harbour & District Lions Club and is always willing to lend a hand;

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