



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Third Session

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2016

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2016

Sixty-second General Assembly

Third Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Mr. Gordon Wilson, Mr. Keith Irving

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker it has been a while; I'm getting anxious.

If you don't mind, before I read my resolution, I would like to make a few introductions.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, in your gallery we are honoured to have with us Nova Scotians - Olympians and Paralympians, and some of the athletes and coaches who were at a reception down in the foyer earlier.

I'd like to introduce them: Genny Orton, an Olympian in canoe and kayak; Mark de Jonge, an Olympian in canoe and kayak; Danielle Boyd, an Olympian in sailing; Erin Rafuse, an Olympian in sailing; Scott Lutes, a Paralympian in sailing and a bronze medalist in Rio; and Lisa Ross, coach in sailing. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, with them - I don't know if they're here, but certainly in our House today there were many organizations from the national level to the provincial level in sport, who have come together to support these athletes, not only in their journey at the Olympics but as they continue to hone their skills to make it to the Olympics. I would like all of us in the House to acknowledge their sporting organizations both nationally and provincially that have continued to support our athletes.

On behalf of all of us, let me say to you we are very proud to have you in our House today. We are extremely proud of you, as athletes, not just for what you've done at the Olympics but for the tremendous example you're setting for all Nova Scotians and, particularly, our youth. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 151

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

Whereas today we celebrate Nova Scotia's 2016 Olympians and Paralympians; and

Whereas through their hard work and dedication our Olympians and Paralympians have risen to the top of their sport around the world; and

Whereas these athletes have accomplished extraordinary feats, setting a wonderful example for all Nova Scotians across our province;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly, and all Nova Scotians, express our deepest gratitude and pride of our Olympians and Paralympians, their coaches, partners, and families, for an amazing effort at the Games.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried. (Applause)

The honourable Minister of Business.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, with your permission I'd also like to make an introduction before I read my resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to the east gallery where we are joined today by Kevin Rimmer. Kevin is the co-founder and vice-president of strategy for Kinduct Technologies, and Kevin and his colleagues are experiencing tremendous success recently, but also over an extended period of time. So I'd ask my colleagues to give Kevin a warm welcome to the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Business.

RESOLUTION NO. 152

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

Whereas Dalhousie graduates Oliver Baltzer, Adrian Bentley, and Shivam Rajdev created Analyze Re in 2013, and earlier this week sold the successful start-up to a U.S.-based firm for a tidy profit; and

Whereas also this week Halifax health company Kinduct Technologies announced it had attracted a \$9 million U.S. investment to help the pioneering sport data firm continue to grow; and

Whereas also this week DHX Media and its founder, Michael Donovan, were celebrated by the BBC for successfully growing a small Nova Scotia firm into a billion-dollar, international, children's TV powerhouse;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature acknowledge that start-ups in Nova Scotia are enjoying tremendous momentum, and offer all of these successful entrepreneurs congratulations and continued success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Business.

RESOLUTION NO. 153

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

Whereas Nova Scotia realtors are trusted guides in helping Nova Scotians buy or sell a home; and

Whereas Nova Scotia realtors have created a vibrant industry that contributes to our provincial economy, creates jobs, and provides an invaluable service to citizens; and

Whereas real estate transactions through the Nova Scotia Association of REALTORS® MLS® System contributed an estimated \$310 million to the economy of the province through spinoff benefits in 2015;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize the important role the Nova Scotia Association of Realtors plays in contributing to the Nova Scotia economy.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 154

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

Whereas as Minister responsible for the Heritage Property Act, I remember meeting Mr. Philip Pacey on several occasions as a member of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Mr. Philip Pacey was, and will remain, a strong champion of Nova Scotia's built heritage, who has made us aware that a building is a visible expression of our culture, and that it makes it important; and

Whereas Mr. Philip Pacey died on Thursday, October 20th, at the age of 75, leaving behind his wife, Elizabeth;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature remember Mr. Philip Pacey for his tireless advocacy of heritage.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 155

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

Whereas Canadian Patient Safety Week aims to increase awareness of patient safety issues, and to share information about best practices in patient safety at national, regional, and local levels; and

Whereas Canadian Patient Safety Week encourages all health care professionals, patients, clients, residents, and their families to ask questions, listen carefully, and talk openly about concerns; and

Whereas this year's theme - Ask. Listen. Talk. - is about everyone who engages with health care to join the conversation and work together to spread the message;

Therefore be it resolved that October 24th to October 28th be known as Canadian Patient Safety Week in the Province of Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 156

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

Whereas International Brain Tumour Awareness Week helps raise awareness about the often devastating consequences brain tumours have for patients and their families; and

Whereas brain tumours are unpredictable, can affect people of all ages and backgrounds, and have physical and emotional effects that can last a lifetime; and

Whereas there are over 55,000 Canadians living with a brain tumour who suffer from vision, hearing, memory, balance, and mobility challenges;

Therefore be it resolved that October 22nd to 29th be known as International Brain Tumour Awareness Week in the Province of Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 50 - An Act to Make Universities and Colleges Safer Places. (Ms. Lenore Zann)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

MINERS MEMORIAL MANOR - ANNIV. (25th)

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: I rise today to recognize the 25th Anniversary of Miners' Memorial Manor in Sydney Mines. The great staff, who are kind and compassionate, and work to ensure that the needs of the residents are addressed, have done a stellar job over the last quarter-century. Manor administrator Carol MacLean is running a tight ship for the 49 residents and the staff of 77. Her big wish would be to have more volunteers. I wish the manor another 25 years of success in providing a dignified home for our seniors.

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

CDN. AIRPORTS - FED. PRIVATIZATION

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: I was disappointed to read this morning that the federal government is looking into privatizing airports across the country, including in Halifax. Although there has been a change of government in Ottawa, it seems that the appetite for privatization remains. There is not enough time for me to go over all the concerns I have with privatization of airports. What I would like to say, is that we all know what happens when profits take priority over public good. I hope this plan never takes off.

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

GAMBLE, GRIFFIN: ATHLETIC RECOGNITION - CONGRATS.

MR. IAIN RANKIN: I would like to recognize Griffin Gamble of Shad Bay. Griffin is 10 years old and goes to Atlantic Memorial-Terence Bay Elementary School. He plays left wing for the Halifax County United Academy Under-11 soccer team, and on June 15th of this year, Griffin was named CBC's Young Athlete of the Day. Griffin is a very bright young man who is interested in politics, and engaged in his community. I would like the members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Griffin on this athletic recognition, and wish him well in the future.

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

LEJEAN, PAMELA: RIO PARALYMPICS - CONGRATS.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: I would like to start out by thanking the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage for hosting an event this morning for the Olympians and the Paralympians. I think it was a very fine gesture on behalf of the province, and I want to thank him for that.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Pamela LeJean of Grand Mira South for participating at the Paralympics, held in Rio. Pamela has emerged as one of Canada's best throwers in para-athletics over the past couple of years, and she placed fourth in the F53 Shot Put at the Paralympics. I stand here today to congratulate Pamela on all of her successes in competing, and hope that the summer and the season that is ahead of her goes well.

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

PACEY, PHILIP: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MS. LENORE ZANN: I rise today to celebrate the life of Philip Pacey, a great citizen of a great old city, Halifax, who unexpectedly passed away last week at the age of 75. Although Phil was a long-time chemistry professor at Dalhousie University, he will be best remembered as an impassioned advocate for the protection and preservation of Nova Scotia's built heritage. During his time as President of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, he was a close observer of provincial policies on land use and buildings. He knew his stuff - in fact oftentimes I called on him for his advice when it came to heritage buildings.

Phil did everything he could to make sure our past was kept top of mind as we moved into the future. He was a true scholar and a great, passionate, gallant, and incredibly compassionate and thoughtful person, and a dear close family friend. Please, let's keep his

widow, Elizabeth Pacey, and the Pacey family in our thoughts throughout their difficult time.

I offer my utmost condolences to his family and his friends. He will be missed but he will not be forgotten. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I wish to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker and members, I'd like you to turn to the Speaker's Gallery. Mr. Scott Lutes is here with his wife, Sue Bourinot. In the lobby you'll notice a plaque with the Bourinot name. That is her grandfather who wrote the Rules of Parliament - and they are also residents of my hometown.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

LUTES, SCOTT/TEAMMATES: PARALYMPICS - CONGRATS.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, this morning I had the pleasure of attending a reception with the Premier to honour Nova Scotians, Olympians, and Paralympians. One of those Paralympians is Mahone Bay's own Scott Lutes. Scott, with teammate Logan Campbell, was part of Paul Tingley's bronze medal winning sonar division sailing team in Rio this past summer.

The crew fought hard to win the bronze for Canada, having at one point during the race fallen back far enough to think that it was out of their hands. They persevered and, on the world's largest stage, came from behind, from out of contention to cross the finish line and reach the podium.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend Scott Lutes and his teammates for representing Nova Scotia and Canada at the Paralympics, and to congratulate them for winning the bronze medal.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

ACOA: ATL. CAN. MINISTER - APPOINT

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, many Atlantic Canadians were shocked to hear federal Liberal Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay make the assertion that a Toronto MP responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency gives it more clout at the Cabinet Table.

Since ACOA was created in 1987, both Progressive Conservative and Liberal Prime Ministers have appointed an Atlantic Canadian as the responsible minister, but not the Trudeau Liberal Government. This is just another example of how the Trudeau Liberal Government is taking our region for granted.

Premier McNeil should publicly condemn the Trudeau Liberal Government for selecting a Toronto MP to be the Minister responsible for ACOA and call on his federal counterparts to make an Atlantic Canadian MP the ACOA Minister.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**THOMAS BERNARD, DR. WANDA/CHRISTMAS, DAN:
SENATE - APPT. CONGRATS.**

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate two new appointees to the Senate of Canada from Nova Scotia.

Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard is a highly regarded social worker, educator, researcher, community activist, and advocate of social change. Since 1990 she has worked as a professor at the Dalhousie School of Social Work where she served as director for a decade and is the first African Nova Scotian to hold a tenure track position. She is a founding member of the Association of Black Social Workers which helps to address the needs of marginalized citizens, especially those of African descent.

Daniel Christmas of Membertou is a leader in many areas, including Aboriginal and treaty rights, business development, and the environment. Working for the Union of Nova Scotia Indians, he led the Mi'kmaq response to the report on the Royal Commission on the Donald Marshall Junior prosecution and helped ensure the implementation of the report's recommendations. Over 20 years working with Membertou, he has helped to transform his home into one of the most successful First Nations in Canada.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

HFX. CAT RESCUE SOC.: WORK - THANK

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: It's no secret that my wife and I are proud owners of five cats, four of whom are rescues. Over the past few months we have learned about the feral cat problem in Burnside Industrial Park, located in Dartmouth North. The Halifax Cat Rescue Society is a registered charity made up of a handful of very dedicated volunteers. They strive to end the suffering and neglect of felines in our city through tireless volunteer rescue efforts and educating the public on the plight of homeless cats.

In Burnside alone there are 10 feeding stations which provide some shelter from the elements but, more important, they provide food every day, thanks to the volunteers,

including my wife, who take their time to service each feeding station 365 days a year. The society has a catch-fix-release program with almost 200 completed this year.

The Halifax Cat Rescue Society has an amazing website and newsletter to learn more about cat health. I want to thank the Halifax Cat Rescue Society for their tireless work in helping control the feral cat population.

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

DEER HUNTING SEASON: SAFETY PRECAUTIONS - EMPHASIZE

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow marks the start of general deer-hunting season, running from October 28th to December 3rd. I wish to emphasize the importance of taking all necessary safety precautions for both our hunters and our nature lovers and hikers.

The Department of Natural Resources has sent out reminders that hunters are required to wear their orange and suggests that non-hunters do the same throughout this season. Other safety precautions include carrying a compass, waterproof matches, a map or GPS unit, a first aid kit, and a communications device, and to communicate when and where they will be hunting.

My own son is a hunter - as are, I'm sure, many loved ones of my fellow members here today. I'm certain that all members will share my sentiment that everyone remain safe throughout this hunting season.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MOSAIC FOR MENTAL HEALTH: CONTRIBUTION - ACKNOWLEDGE

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Two weeks ago the Mosaic for Mental Health art exhibition opened at the Craig Gallery in Alderney Landing. The exhibition, which is comprised of 100 pieces of art donated by many different artists, also serves as an art sale open to the public until October 30th. All proceeds go to social programs of the Halifax-Dartmouth chapter of the Canadian Mental Health Association.

This is the 18th year of the Mosaic for Mental Health. It was started by Tony Myers and Kevin Moynihan in 1997, with the objective of engaging the public in a dialogue and an awareness of mental health, as well as encouraging the participation of mental health consumers.

I'd like the House to join me in acknowledging the important contribution the Mosaic for Mental Health brings to our community.

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

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction. With us today in the east gallery, I have a very special lady, a lady who has been a dear friend to my family and many others in the community. Her kindness and generosity have helped many of us. She's also the mother of my EA.

Please welcome Ms. Shirley Willmott. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

**MACHNIK, FRANK & LELIA
- WOODLOT OWNERS OF YR. (EAST. REGION)**

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Each year, the Department of Natural Resources recognizes landowners who have demonstrated outstanding management and stewardship of their property through the Woodlot Owner of the Year Award. One recipient is chosen from each of the three regions across the province.

I'm happy to say that Frank and Lelia Machnik of Antigonish were named the 2016 Eastern Region Woodlot Owners of the Year. Mr. Machnik grew up in Montreal on a 50 x 100-foot lot - not the traditional childhood setting you think of for woodlot owners. Fast forward to today, where Frank and Lelia own numerous properties, each of which Frank cares for with respect for nature and the environment. He has spaced forests, planted back, and even cut back "garbage forests" to allow for healthy growth, even when there's no gain in it for his bottom line.

Frank and Lelia have also made sure to consult with the forestry industry on best practices, objectives, and goals. This planning and consideration has led to the Machniks maintaining such a beautiful property that opening a successful cottage rental business on it was an obvious next step.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask my colleagues in the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Frank and Lelia Machnik, the recipients of the 2016 Eastern Region Woodlot Owners of the Year Award.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

GLENORA INN & DISTILLERY - CRAFT FOOD RANGE

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Glenora Inn and Distillery is now shipping the equivalent of 100 cases of bottled whisky per month to Maple Leaf Foods. The three-year-old oak barrel-aged whisky is shipped in bulk to the Canadian food giant every month.

Maple Leaf uses the whisky to flavour its new Canadian Whisky and Apple Bacon. This is part of a new Canadian Craft food range that goes to all Canadian food retailers.

Canadians are proud of the food they produce and are interested in where their food comes from, and this new product taps into that. The 25-year-old distillery employs 40 people and produced 50,000 litres of whisky last summer.

Congratulations to Lauchie MacLean and all his staff at Glenora Inn and Distillery for their contribution to our Nova Scotian economy.

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

DOCTOR SHORTAGE: LIBERAL SLOGAN - UPDATE

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, the Premier promised a family doctor for every Nova Scotian during the 2013 election campaign. However, last week the member for Clare-Digby announced that goal has been pushed down the road possibly until 2026. This trial balloon - or should I say a lead balloon - is not going over well with Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, 90,000 residents are without a family doctor. Perhaps the member for Glace Bay or the member for Colchester North may wish to clarify this statement made by the member for Clare-Digby. If not, this must result in a new Liberal slogan because 2026 is too long for 90,000 people of Nova Scotia to wait for a family doctor.

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

PRESTON GIRL GUIDES - ANNIV. (35th)

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize that the Preston Girl Guides have celebrated 35 years of service on October 22, 2016, by holding a tea in their community of East Preston. The Preston Girl Guides continue to be an essential part of our children's youth and have been instrumental in promoting their growth and development for future leaders in the community. These young ladies earn essential skills that will teach them leadership and the ability to think for themselves and prepare them to pick up the torch and do their part in giving back to the community.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this Legislature to join me in applauding and congratulating the young people and their dedicated leaders for their continued contribution to the Girl Guides of Canada.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**ENGLISH, AMELIA
- GREAT WEST LIFE/LONDON LIFE/ CAN. LIFE SCHOLARSHIP**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to congratulate Amelia English who is the recipient of the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame/ Great West Life, London Life and Canada Life Scholarship. This scholarship is awarded to only one high school student in each of our four regions of Canada. It is presented to a community-minded individual who demonstrates leadership and is pursuing an undergraduate degree in medicine or health sciences.

Mr. Speaker, Amelia has met the criteria of academic excellence, leadership, collaboration, and community service. She plans to pursue her dream of becoming a medical oncologist. I am pleased to recognize Amelia, and I wish her well as she has begun her undergraduate degree at St. Francis Xavier University. Thank you.

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

**NATL. TRUTH & RECONCILIATION COMMN. REPT.
- ABORIGINAL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUC.**

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight yet another call to action from the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report. The next recommendation of provincial importance reads as follows, "We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families." Every member in the Legislature acknowledges the importance of early childhood education for the children in our communities and many would also admit that more programs are needed right across this province.

As we look to improve access to these programs, let us also recognize that more culturally appropriate spaces and programs are needed for the children of Aboriginal programs. These programs must be parallel in quality and must be easily accessible in First Nations' communities across the province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MARLBOROUGH, RAE - PROV. VOL. AWARD

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Rae Marlborough of Beaver Bank on receiving a Provincial Volunteer Award. Rae is one of the founding members of the Beaver Bank Kinsac Seniors Association known as the Keeners and has served on the board of directors for eight years. Rae has been instrumental in getting land for the Beaver Bank country garden, was involved with its annual planning and

maintenance. Rae also helps organize approximately 240 meals for the Keeners' Thursday lunches. I would like to congratulate Rae on her award and thank her for her continued dedication to our community. Thank you.

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

CHRISTMAS, DAN: SENATE - APPT.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute and congratulate one of our own, Mr. Dan Christmas. Dan has worked with the First Nations community of Membertou to make it one of the most prosperous First Nations in Canada. Dan has been named to the Senate of Canada, and we want to thank him for his service to Cape Breton and First Nations communities in Nova Scotia. Dan will do a great job in holding the Liberal Government to the highest standard and represent our province and Island well. Congratulations, Dan.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

CRAMMAN, FLISS - ONLINE FUNDRAISING

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, a couple of nights ago I made a personal contribution to an online fundraiser that should not be happening. The Elizabeth Fry Society of Cape Breton has agreed to welcome Fliss Cramman to their residential facility while she recovers from multiple surgeries and awaits her next hearing with Immigration. However, they need to fundraise for her medical expenses, as she no longer has health coverage. They are also fundraising for the cost of filing an immigration appeal on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Mr. Speaker, volunteers and non-profit workers, some of them residents in Halifax Needham, are stepping in and stepping up to cover the gap that Fliss Cramman has fallen through. I commend them, support them, and deeply regret that their actions are necessary.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HARRINGTON, AMY: UNITERRA INTL. SEMINAR - PARTICIPATION

HON. KAREN CASEY: I would like to recognize Amy Harrington from Debert, Colchester North, a second-year animal science student at Dalhousie University's Faculty of Agriculture. Uniterra International Seminar annually hosts 15 students from across Canada, and 15 students from Tanzania, to discuss hot topics in agriculture. Amy was selected as one of the Canadian student leaders to participate in this international seminar for five weeks during the summer. The topic this year revolved around technology in agriculture. Amy toured farms in Tanzania and met with farmers, NGOs, and other agricultural operators, to learn what is working there and what they might need. She was the only student participating from the agricultural school. I would ask the members of this

House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Amy Harrington on being chosen as a Canadian representative and wish her well as she continues her studies.

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

**D'ENTREMONT, RITA:
PRIX DU GOUVERNEUR GÉNÉRAL - FÉLICITATIONS**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Le 13 juillet 2016, lors d'une cérémonie au Quai 21, le très honorable David Johnston, gouverneur général du Canada, a remis des prix honorifiques à 72 volontaires de provinces maritimes méritants. Ils ont été mis à l'honneur pour le partage de leur excellence, leur courage et leur dévouement extrême dans leur communauté.

Parmi ceux qui sont honoré était Rita d'Entremont de Pubnico Ouest Centre pour ses généreuses contributions à ce communauté, recevant également la Médaille du souverain pour les bénévoles. Rita est une bénévole depuis plus de 47 ans, offrant son aide à de nombreuses organisations, le scoutisme, associations parents-enseignants, et baseball mineur pour en citer quelques-uns. Elle est présentement présidente du Village historique acadien de la Nouvelle-Écosse à Pubnico.

Les bénévoles sont le centre de la vie de notre communauté. Sans leurs conseils et leur assistance, les associations locales n'auraient pas existées. J'offre mes félicitations à Rita d'Entremont, la remercie, et lui souhaite la santé et le succès à l'avenir.

Mr. Speaker, if I can in English as well, on July 13th, at a ceremony at Pier 21, the Right Honourable Governor General of Canada, David Johnston, presented honorary awards to 72 well-deserving Maritime volunteers. They are being honoured for sharing their excellence and courage, and for extreme dedication to their community.

Among those being honoured was Rita d'Entremont of Middle West Pubnico for her generous contributions to her community, also receiving the sovereign medal for volunteers. Rita has been a volunteer for more than 47 years, offering her assistance to many organizations, such as Scouting, parent-teacher associations, and minor baseball, just to name a few. She is presently the president of the Village historique acadien de la Nouvelle-Écosse in Pubnico.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our communities, and without their guidance and assistance, local associations would not exist. I offer my congratulations to Rita, thank her, and wish her continued health and success in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

TRAINYARD GEN. STORE (DART.) - GRAND OPENING

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: October 15th was the official grand opening of a new small business in downtown Dartmouth. The Trainyard General Store has set up shop on Portland Street, along with the fresh faces of the Portland Street Crêperie and New Scotland Yard. The Trainyard, a brainchild of partners Kimberley Dares and Jason MacDonald, is a welcome addition to the growing downtown. It sells products made exclusively in Nova Scotia. Working with a large group of Nova Scotia makers, the general store offers a vast array of products from all over the province. Besides operating purely as a general store, The Trainyard also houses a creative space for workshops, pop-up shops, and open project days for creators to brainstorm new ideas. I would like to welcome Jason and Kimberley's business to downtown Dartmouth, and I look forward to seeing them regularly.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

MUN. ELECTIONS: CANDIDATES - CONGRATS.

MR. JOACHIM STROINK: I rise today to congratulate all of the candidates who put their names forward in the recent municipal elections across this province. It takes enormous commitment to the community to run for elected office, and I have great respect for all their efforts. In particular, I would like to congratulate the successful candidates now representing the residents of Halifax Peninsula: Waye Mason in District 7, Lindell Smith in District 8, and Shawn Cleary in District 9. All faced tough competitors and ran a good race.

I am confident each of these councillors will do an excellent job representing their constituents on City Council and I look forward to working with all of them. Congratulations again to all those who came forward to represent their communities. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

**MEEKIN, MARCIE
- MOUNT A CONTEMPORARY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD (2016)**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate Marcie Meekin of Springhill on receiving Mount Allison's 2016 Contemporary Achievement Award, which recognizes outstanding achievements of an alumnus early in her career.

Marcie's ingenuity and tenacity have been a leading factor for the growth of Springhill's Anne Murray Centre. She has worked relentlessly to raise funds and secure grants to keep the centre operational, and has set up events and programs to ensure the involvement of the community in the work of the centre.

Marcie's contributions to Springhill also include the proposal and the co-chairing of Springhill's 125th Anniversary celebrations, co-founding of the 2015 Art on the Hill Festival, secretary of the Springhill and Area Chamber of Commerce, and Springhill's representative on the Cumberland-Colchester Tourism Committee.

She was instrumental in the formation of the Springhill Muggle Quidditch House League which promotes fun and physical activity for children not involved in traditional sports. I think we'd agree that Quidditch is not a traditional sport.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations to Marcie on this well-deserved award, and thank you for your contributions to the betterment of Springhill.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

SHUBENACADIE TRADING POST - OPENING

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, let us celebrate a business opening in a small rural community. John MacIntyre and Andrew Buffett are going against the trend in rural Nova Scotia and they've opened the Shubenacadie Trading Post. The pair are part of the ownership group, Associated Maritime Pharmacies.

The Trading Post highlights local and Nova Scotia products and artisan work. It includes a café which serves everything from Lunenburg organic coffee to ice cream. The location serves Shubenacadie and the nearby Sipekne'katik communities, and has taken the communities into consideration in planning their enterprise.

It's a great place to shop on a day trip from the city and is near the Atlantic Motor Sport Park and the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park. There is something there for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to salute John and Andrew for investing in Shubenacadie. It is visionaries like them that will keep rural Nova Scotia alive. Thank you.

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

JEWELLS, JAMEY: RIO PARALYMPICS - CONGRATS.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Jamey Jewells of Donkin for placing fifth in wheelchair basketball at the Paralympics held in Rio this summer. Jewells and the Canadian women's wheelchair basketball team were the reigning world champs but were eliminated by the Netherlands in a heartbreaking quarter final game.

I stand here today to congratulate Jamie Jewells on her success competing in the Paralympics, and wish her all the success in her future goals and competitions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

CURRENT LABS & STUDIOS - CANNES LIONS AWARD

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate Halifax's Current Labs and Studios on a stellar year. They partnered with iconic New York ad agency JWT, formally known as J. Walter Thompson, to create the Tribeca reactor which is one of a total of three Cannes Lions awards, a bronze for Guerrilla Marketing and Stunts, a bronze for Promo and Activation cyber, and a silver for Use of Ambient Media.

This is Current Labs and Studios' first year in New York and I want to congratulate them and their owner, Bedford resident Nathan Kroll, on capturing these three awards at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

PARENT, MEAGHAN: BOOK PUBLICATION - CONGRATS.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Meaghan Parent, daughter of former MLA, Honourable Mark Parent, on publishing her first book. Meaghan had an interest in books and writing early in life; when she was eight years old she won a picture-book writing contest. As the winner she got to meet real authors, which fuelled her desire to write her own book one day.

Meaghan attended King's College University in Halifax and obtained a degree in journalism. She has just published her first book, entitled *The Fall of Beth Anderson*, based loosely on her experiences as a young teenager moving to a new town. Meaghan currently resides with her husband and two young children in the Annapolis Valley. Please join me in applauding Meaghan for bringing her dream to fruition and wish her great success in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

SPARGO, JEREMIAH "JERRY" WILLIAMS - MEDAL OF BRAVERY

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a truly exceptional individual, Jeremiah "Jerry" Williams Spargo. Back in January, on what was an otherwise normal day, Jerry happened to spot flames coming from the living room of his neighbour's home across the street in Fairmount. Jerry knew immediately that his neighbour's MS would have made it impossible for her to escape on her own. After telling his wife Irene to call 911, Jerry rushed into the burning home to help. Although his neighbour's clothing had caught fire and she had inhaled a great deal of smoke, Jerry managed to save her life that day, by dragging her out into the snow.

Last month, I had the distinct pleasure of attending the 9th Annual Nova Scotia Medal of Bravery Award Ceremony at Province House, where Jerry was recognized for this remarkable act of heroism. The courage and selflessness he displayed that day are deeply inspiring, and it would be hard to think of many people as deserving of that award as Jerry.

I ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in wishing Mr. Spargo a very happy 85th birthday next month, and thank him for his dedication in saving his neighbour.

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

WORLD STROKE DAY (10/29/16) - AWARENESS RAISE

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, World Stroke Day is Saturday, October 29th. This day attempts to raise awareness and to educate people on recognizing the signs of stroke because fast action can mean the difference between death, or living with disability, being successfully treated in order to continue living a normal and healthy life.

Stroke disability rates are expected to increase between 65 per cent and 71 per cent in the Atlantic Provinces by 2038. We've already witnessed hefty increases between 2000 and 2013 - the number of survivors living with disabilities still increased almost 29 per cent. Let's work together on recognizing the signs of stroke. The acronym FAST can help us to remember the signs: facial drooping, arms weakness, speech difficulties, and time to call 911. Thank you.

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

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, before I read my statement, I beg leave to make another introduction if I may.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. INCE: Thank you. Joining us in the east gallery, I'd like the House to pay attention to the fact that I have my aunt here, Dr. Clotilda Yakimchuk, from Sydney, Nova Scotia. (Applause)

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

MAILLETT, MARC - CAN. GAMES TRANSPLANT CHAMPION

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and congratulate my constituent, Marc Maillett. This gentleman has overcome tremendous health challenges as a transplant survivor. He has shown great integrity and strength in his work towards being

healthy and physically active. His hard work led him to become the Canadian Transplant Games champion.

This past summer, Marc competed in 2016 Canadian Transplant Games in Toronto and came home with two medals: a gold medal in badminton and a bronze medal in mixed doubles. I would like the members of this Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating Marc in his success. His winning athletic wellness achievements are an inspiration for all Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

**PHILLIPS, ANTHONY ET AL - WAYCOBAH COUN.:
ELECTION - CONGRATS.**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, congratulations to Anthony Phillips, Stanford Phillips, Cyrus Bernard, Annie Daisley, Tiny Cremo, Stewart Basque, Jason Bernard, Stephen Googoo, John Leonard Bernard, and Chief Rod Googoo for their election to serve the people of Waycobah First Nation. The election was run under the new First Nations Elections Act, with chiefs and councillors now serving four-year terms. May we wish them well from their provincial Legislature, and work with them for the good of their community and our province.

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

BLUENOSE-ABILITY FILM FEST.: INIT. - COMMEND

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, we have a very unique and important initiative in our community that I'd like to commend. The Bluenose-Ability Film Festival is Atlantic Canada's only film fest that showcases contributions of this disability culture. The festival encourages participation of persons with disabilities through professional films and first-time filmmakers. The festival also offers a program geared towards youth, as well as a mentorship program for people living with disabilities who have an idea for a film, but need assistance making it.

The second annual film festival is coming up in December at the Halifax Central Library. It's a great initiative that encourages creativity, tolerance, and innovation right here in our community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

CURLEY, TERRY & CAROL: VOLUNTEERING - CONGRATS.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge two outstanding volunteers from New Glasgow, Terry and Carol Curley.

Volunteers play an increasingly important role in shaping the types of communities we live in. They connect people and causes and have an enormous impact on society, our culture, and the economy.

Terry and Carol are long-standing volunteers. They have offered their time and talents for charities, sporting, and other worthwhile activities. Terry is well known in Pictou County as the race director for the Johnny Miles running event - this event is now entrenched in Pictou County's sporting tradition.

I would like to ask all members of our Legislature to join me in offering Terry and Carol our gratitude for their volunteering as a means of building healthy communities.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

TANNER, MARSHA: HUMANITARIANISM - CONGRATS.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, for two months Marsha Tanner worked aboard *Africa Mercy* in Madagascar. *African Mercy*, the largest civilian hospital ship, is operated by Global Christian Charity that treats patients all over the world, who would not otherwise receive treatment.

Marsha, a nurse at the South Shore Regional Hospital, worked with other medical staff to care for patients with varied medical needs. Marsha worked tirelessly aboard *Africa Mercy* to bring quality care to those patients most in need.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank Marsha Tanner for her humanitarianism, compassionate and caring nature, and for representing Nova Scotia aboard *Africa Mercy*. Your ambassadorial role and impact on those you engage is greatly appreciated.

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

FITZGERALD, FRANCO: HFX. WEST HS HOCKEY TEAM - CAPT.

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Franco Fitzgerald for becoming the captain of the Halifax West High School hockey team. Franco was named captain by Head Coach Frank Hubley. He has worked incredibly hard and has trained hundreds of hours to obtain this position.

Franco isn't just a hockey star, though, he has also committed the last two years of high school to his student government and helping Halifax West High School gather food for Feed Nova Scotia. He has been a committed community volunteer for many years for countless organizations in Fairview-Clayton Park and is a very upstanding, fine young man.

I would like the members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Franco Fitzgerald for contributing extremely hard to his community and obtaining this position of captain of the Halifax West High School hockey team. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

TRIDER'S CRAFT BEER: AMHERST IND. PARK - OPENING

MR. TERRY FARRELL: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Trider's Craft Beer. They have recently opened a brewery in the Amherst Industrial Park - which I may have patronized on at least one occasion.

Trider's started selling beer from a 10-gallon pilot system in September of this year and they are on course to expand their operation by the end of the year. Currently they are active in farmers' markets from Amherst to Halifax. Their long-term plan is to set up a taproom and storefront in downtown Amherst, serving light fare and to house a small batch system to brew periodic specialty releases.

I would like the members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Trider's Craft Beer in setting up their operation in Amherst, and wishing them future success as they grow their business. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

DRADER-MURPHY, LISA: SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Lisa Drader-Murphy who is the president and owner of Turbine, which was established in January 1997.

Lisa graduated in 1990 from Form and Function Design Academy in Calgary at the top of her class, and has gone on to design numerous products for a variety of sectors, as well as contributing to the wardrobing for a number of film and television productions.

In 1998 Lisa moved her young family to Nova Scotia and opened a small store in Falmouth, where she continues to reside. Turbine also has locations in Halifax, Bedford, Cavendish and, most recently, Toronto. She has garnered national and international buzz. Lisa has been invited to celebrity gifting suites during the Toronto International Film Festival, the Golden Globes, the Oscars, and the Cannes Film Festival.

I'd like to congratulate Lisa Drader-Murphy on her huge success as a small business entrepreneur, and wish her continued success in the future. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MAHONE BAY SCARECROW FEST. & ANTIQUE FAIR - ANNIV. (20th)

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago a unique and creative idea manifested itself in the seaside community of Mahone Bay. That idea grew into the Mahone Bay Scarecrow Festival and Antique Fair. The festival welcomes hundreds, if not thousands, of people to the community to check out the unique scarecrows that adorn the town, and to check out the 200-plus hand-carved pumpkins, and to frequent the numerous shops and eateries.

For three days the community is bustling with people, helping to extend the tourism season and exhibit the charm of Mahone Bay and its people. Of course, none of this would be possible without the efforts of volunteers, citizens, and local businesses who embrace the festival and all it brings.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the Town of Mahone Bay and the Mahone Bay Scarecrow Festival and Antique Fair volunteers on celebrating the festival's 20th Anniversary.

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

**GILLAN, MARILYN ET AL
- TAPESTRY: BIG BRAS D'OR FIRE HALL - DONATION**

MS. PAM EYKING: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the rug-hooking efforts of Marilyn Gillan, Mary Boutilier, Heather Ahle, Lauren Wall, and Gwen Russell, who over the last year created a tapestry of 12 images that display memory-jogging works of art inspired by Boularderie Island's rich history. The women, who are part of a larger group known as the Old Schoolhouse Rug Hookers, meet every Wednesday at the Big Bras d'Or fire hall, which was once used as a one-room schoolhouse on Boularderie.

At an informal ceremony during the group's last session, the 12 handcrafted images were donated to the Friends of the Big Bras d'Or Fire Hall, and will be on display in the long-standing building.

The women who crafted the eye-catching wall hangings may not think of themselves as artists, but anyone who enters the hall and lays eyes on the images would disagree. These women have given a wonderful gift to the hall that has meant so much to the community over many years.

I would like to thank these women for all their hard work and congratulate them on this fantastic piece of art.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

THE BOX OF DELIGHTS BOOKSHOP - ANNIV. (40th)

MR. KEITH IRVING: I am proud to congratulate one of Nova Scotia's oldest independent continually-operating bookstores on its 40th Anniversary. The Box of Delights Bookshop has been a keystone Main Street Wolfville business since its incorporation in 1976. Hilary Sircom began the shop in her home in 1972, Mitzi DeWolfe took ownership of it in 1991 and has operated it for 25 years, and 2018 will mark new ownership by current employee Hilary Drummond.

This is a business run by women for over 40 years. The bookshop sells delightful books, of course, but also hosts countless community events, launches new local publications, and is a great friend and supporter of Nova Scotian authors, publishers, and lovers of print.

On behalf of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, I would like to congratulate the Box of Delights Bookshop on their 40th Anniversary and wish them another 40 years bringing community and culture together in the Annapolis Valley.

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

PALMER, ARNOLD "KING": DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: I would like to offer my condolences to the friends, family, and fellow golfers on the passing of Arnold "King" Palmer. Mr. Palmer passed away in Pittsburgh on Sunday, September 25, 2016, at the age of 87. Mr. Palmer had seven major championships and 62 PGA Tour wins in his career. Forty years after he played his last PGA Tour, Palmer was ranked as being among the highest earners in golf.

Not only was Mr. Palmer a great golfer but he is remembered as being a golf icon and legend. Mr. Palmer paved the way for many golfers like myself while I was growing up and working the Sackville Golf Course, then located in Middle Sackville.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Palmer accumulated many achievements that my time today will not enable me to share. I am sure he will be sadly missed.

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

YATES, PAMELA/GORDON, MURRAY - COMMUN. SPIRIT

MS. JOYCE TREEN: There are two special community members I would like to recognize today. Pamela Yates and Murray Gordon are fairly new residents in Eastern Passage, but upon arrival they wasted no time and immediately got started getting involved in the community. They both exhibit pride and community spirit in Eastern Passage and Cow Bay.

In June, Murray and Pamela commissioned a chainsaw artist to carve a sea serpent out of wood so it could be displayed in a local duck pond formerly known as Dan's Pond. The unveiling of the sea serpent turned into a community event where students from three elementary schools participated in naming the sea serpent. The winning name was CC the Sea Serpent.

Murray and Pamela can be found volunteering and lending a hand at many community events. They are happy to give back to the community that they now call home.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM.: NEGOTIATIONS - IMPASSE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, parents learned that teachers had voted 96 per cent in favour of a strike mandate. Today, parents are hearing that school boards are preparing strike contingency plans and mailing them out to parents shortly.

Mr. Speaker, the mess the Premier has made of these negotiations is getting worse and worse. Quite simply, parents expect their government to work out this impasse without a strike. I'd like to ask the Premier, does he still think today that the next moves are up to the union, or will he show some leadership and get back to the table and work out this impasse with teachers without a strike?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As teachers made a decision a few days ago, they have the ability to go on strike, they've given that authority to their executive. The executive will then determine whether or not they go on strike. In the meantime, we continue to work with classroom teachers. We've made investments as a government over the last three years in classrooms. We've heard from teachers who say that those investments needed to be in other areas that they wanted to see. We're reaching out and continuing to work with them, but the decision of whether or not they go on strike will be up the executive, not the government.

MR. BAILLIE: I guess the answer is no, Mr. Speaker. Here is how much a mess this government has made of the impasse with teachers: the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is caught up in a dispute about which table they'll actually get back to work at - whether it's the minister's partnership table or whether it's the union's table. That's unacceptable to parents. Parents don't care which table they talk at. They just want the government to work it out without a strike. The Premier has said that teachers

have made a decision. I'd like to ask him to make a decision. Pick a table and get back to work. Stop this bizarre impasse about which table you're going to talk at.

THE PREMIER: If the honourable member had been paying attention over the past week, he would know the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has reached out to the union, and to the school boards, to come to the table to talk about the challenges that are being faced in the classroom. We know they're real. We want to be partners with them. We want to make investments in the classroom. It's my understanding that the union has gotten back to the minister. That meeting will be ongoing. We're going to continue to make sure that we improve classrooms across this province.

MR. BAILLIE: I guess it's all up to the union now. Even when the union gets back to them or not, the Premier doesn't seem to care. They're just going to watch what happens. Meanwhile, parents are asked to make contingency plans for their kids. Meanwhile, as every day goes by, the chance of a strike happening gets greater because there is no leadership from the Premier or the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. It's all up to the union what gets decided. Parents want to see some decisions from this government, including something as basic as which table they are going to sit at.

I will ask the Premier, while he fusses over whose table they're going to talk at, does he have any idea what to suggest to parents who are now being made to make contingency plans about where to send their kids during the school day?

THE PREMIER: There isn't a subject that comes up in this House that the honourable member doesn't want to spread fear about. We're going to continue to work with the union and classroom teachers to make sure that we continue to improve the learning environment. We've invested \$65 million in education. We've hired over 500 new teachers for capped classes. We brought in classroom teachers across the province to reduce outcomes. We've hired more math mentors. We've hired mental health clinicians.

Is there more work to do? Of course there is. We know there's more work to do, and we want to speak directly to classroom teachers now. Obviously the executive of the union didn't represent them when they came to us and asked us to make those investments where they wanted them.

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

PREM.: DOCTOR SHORTAGE - COMMUN. EXPECTATIONS

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: My question is for the Premier. This government's promise of a doctor for every Nova Scotian is on life support. Speaking on a radio station this morning, the head of family medicine for the western zone said that Nova Scotia should not expect a doctor in every community. This, no doubt, comes as a

disappointment to many rural communities already feeling left behind by this government. I ask the Premier, does he agree that Nova Scotians should not expect a doctor in every community?

THE PREMIER: I am sure the honourable member has taken the doctor's comments out of context (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the honourable member has taken the doctor's comments out of context. We're going to continue to work with health clinicians across this province to ensure that we put together the appropriate health care delivery team - very proud of the fact of the nurse practitioners that we recently announced, along with family nurse practitioners as well, we're looking forward to continuing to build those practices. With that decision 14,000 more Nova Scotians have access to that team and we're going to continue to build on that across our province, in communities from one end to the other.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, as the goal of a doctor for every Nova Scotian becomes less and less likely under this government, it seems the next strategy is to move the goalposts. Last week the member for Clare-Digby told this House that the promise will not be fulfilled tomorrow, not in a year's time, but five to 10 years - I repeat, five to 10 years. I listen well and I'll table that.

Funny, Mr. Speaker, I don't remember seeing that part of the promise. I must not have read the fine print.

I'd like to ask the Premier, does he agree with the member for Clare-Digby that some Nova Scotians may have to wait five to 10 years for a family doctor - what I heard in this Chamber last week?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for giving me an opportunity to talk about my colleague from Clare-Digby and the tremendous work he is doing. I'm looking forward to spending some time with him in his constituency in November when I christen the new ferry down in Tiverton. I'm looking forward to seeing our former colleague who was in this House, whom he replaced, Mr. Theriault.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of this matter is this member has continued to represent that community from Clare to Weymouth to Digby, we're getting positive traction and getting positive results. I want to tell all members of this House how encouraged the people of Clare-Digby are with the representation they're getting from that member.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I think what's most frustrating for doctors and patients alike is that this government does not want to admit there is a growing problem here.

Speaking about the doctor shortage in Weymouth, the head of family medicine for the western zone said "We understand the crisis that's here. But it's important to realize that part of the problem is that the doctors simply aren't here to take the positions we do have." I will table that.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier, will he admit to this House today that his plan - I repeat, his plan - to assure a doctor for every Nova Scotian, if indeed there is a plan, it's simply not working.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for his question. I'm sure the physician he was talking to would tell you that new physicians across this province don't want to work in an old system that continued to build under that government, where they want to work is in a collaborative practice team - we continue to build on that, a team across this province.

I was pleased to be in Digby when we opened one, Mr. Speaker. We know there have been challenges, we're encouraged by what we're hearing from the medical students who want to come to rural parts of our province. I want to give Dr. Tom Marrie, who is the Dean of the Medical School, who instituted the rural residency program, which we're now starting to see positive results from that and we're going to continue to work with communities and health care providers across our province.

In some places, Mr. Speaker, maybe a social worker could be part of that team to deal with socio-economic challenges causing poor health. There are all kinds of different models that will work in communities, be part of helping that make that happen.

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

SENIORS: INCONTINENCE PRODUCTS - DAILY RATE

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Seniors. Dignity must be the centre of care we provide for seniors and others in our long-term care facilities. The professionals who provide the care are struggling to do this because of Liberal cuts to nursing homes. We have heard reports from a long-term care facility that due to cuts, the budget for adult incontinence products has been reduced to \$2 a day, which roughly equates to three incontinence products per day.

My question is, does the minister truly believe that \$2 a day is an appropriate amount for seniors? Are they being given the respect and the dignity they deserve when the budget for these essential products is so small?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that important question he has brought to the floor today. As the member knows, well before any cuts there were different models of delivering care in our nursing homes. It comes down to administrative decisions when a global budget is given.

Right now, we have actually reached out to almost 100 per cent of the nursing homes to identify any deficiencies that they have that are different than before any reduction was made in their budget.

MR. MACLEOD: It's typical of this government to cut and then find out what the consequences are. The Liberal cuts to long-term care are affecting the quality of life of our loved ones, even though this government says they are not. According to an article published by Gary MacLeod for *The Chronicle Herald*, residents of long-term care facilities noted that they only receive one bath a week; I'll table that. Does the minister not realize that these cuts are robbing our seniors of their dignity and their quality of life?

MR. GLAVINE: As the member just alluded to, we have for-profit and not-for-profit homes in the province. He just spoke about one group of homes in the province. I get (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness has the floor.

MR. GLAVINE: I get the fortunate opportunity to go to nursing homes and meet many of the residents. What I can tell the member opposite is that many of the administrators said that this was the first time they were ever asked to look at doing their business model differently. I know that the quality of care in our nursing homes is exceptional.

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

EECD: NSTU - MIN. DISCREDIT ATTEMPTS

MS. LENORE ZANN: Yesterday in the House a very serious event occurred. The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development chose to read selectively from two letters she had received from the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. These letters, one from 2014 and another from 2015, were both complaints from the union that the minister had acted in breach of the Teachers Collective Bargaining Act and contrary to her duty as minister to bargain in good faith with the union.

Oddly, the minister neglected to mention these important facts in context and instead, she tabled them in order to suggest that the NSTU does not speak for teachers. I think 96 per cent of teachers who gave the union a strike mandate would disagree.

My question today for the minister is, echoed by many teachers, will the minister apologize for her desperate attempt to discredit the Nova Scotia Teachers Union?

HON. KAREN CASEY: I would remind the member opposite that when any article or item is tabled, it is there in its entirety and I'm really pleased to see that she read it.

MS. ZANN: That's interesting because I think every teacher across this province is reading it, and that's over 9,000 of them.

Mr. Speaker, first this government threatened and disrespected teachers with Bill No. 148. Then they said that they were listening to teachers but still failed to meaningfully address their real concerns. Now, they've attempted to discredit the very union with whom they're supposed to be negotiating.

My question is simple, will this minister and her Premier agree to give up the mother and father knows best routine and get back to the bargaining table?

MS. CASEY: Thank you (Interruptions) Mother and Father? Mother and Son.

I would like to say to all of the teachers in the Province of Nova Scotia that I have continued to have dialogue with their president, as recently as this afternoon. We began meeting regularly when she became president and we will continue to do that, because we both want the best for the teachers and the students in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MUN. AFFS. - RICHMOND COUN.: EXPENSES - RESPONSE

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Earlier this week, the Minister of Municipal Affairs said that while he was concerned about Richmond taxpayers footing the bill for dry-cleaning, liquor, spousal travel, and political contributions, he would not act until the RCMP completed their investigation.

I was a little perplexed by that response because the people of Richmond don't need the RCMP to tell them that their money has been spent inappropriately. They want a government that has their back. When will the minister act immediately to ensure the misuse of taxpayer dollars does not continue in Richmond, and will not be duplicated in other municipalities?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we are acting right now. We've engaged our partners in a conversation around expense policy for the province. I think we have a great model here in this Legislature where all our MLAs post their expenditures online for everybody to see, for public consumption. I think that is an optimal model that should be applied across the board with municipalities.

Currently there is not a standardized level of financial reporting and expense reporting. I think that needs to change and we are going to do just that.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's narrative, but that was a narrative that the reality of Richmond taxpayers really needed last year, when they were requesting help.

The minister had lots of options, including legislation. The minister does not have to wait for the police to get serious about protecting taxpayers' dollars, so why is the minister afraid to tighten up the spending rules for all municipalities?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, as I just mentioned, we are going to do just that, we are going to ensure there is a standardized level of accountability and transparency for all our municipal units. What we're not going to do is have a knee-jerk reaction to this, treat all municipalities as if they are guilty of something when, in fact, they are partners, they want to help us do this, and they want to have a financial expense framework in place that Nova Scotians can have full confidence in.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MUN. AFFS. - RICHMOND COUN.: ELECTIONS N.S. - INVESTIGATION

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Yesterday we learned that Elections Nova Scotia is investigating an issue that I have raised with the minister on two different occasions. Elections Nova Scotia is investigating Richmond County councillors claiming reimbursement for political contributions or tickets to political events. Unlike the minister, Elections Nova Scotia is not afraid to act, they are not hiding behind a police investigation.

We know that Elections Nova Scotia is acting now, especially when they see something wrong - why isn't the minister?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the member pointed out that the issue is with those individuals and getting reimbursed for donations. They do not have to do the donations themselves but the fact of the reimbursement, that is the issue at stake. Elections Nova Scotia is the appropriate organization and authority to investigate issues that involve the Elections Act, they are the appropriate organization. The RCMP is the appropriate organization to investigate alleged behaviour that could have been in contravention of rules and regulations, they are the appropriate authorities.

The Ombudsman's Office is the appropriate authority to investigate concerns that come forward from citizens. We are the department and authority that oversees the Municipal Government Act, Mr. Speaker, and when we're done with that Act, we will have a system of financial expense regulation that this province will be proud of and have confidence in.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, his department knew about it last year. I've been raised that if it's important to you, you will find a way and if it's not important to you, you will find an excuse. Your department found an excuse not to help back in 2015.

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

MS. MACFARLANE: This much I know is true, Mr. Speaker, that between the audits, between the RCMP, and between Elections Nova Scotia, and this Opposition, we will get to the bottom of this and the truth will come out. Why won't the minister stand in his place and ask his colleague, the member for Cape Breton-Richmond, to reimburse the taxpayers? Isn't that the proper and fair thing to do?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, in fact I reject the argument that is being presented by the member opposite. The appropriate authorities are investigating the actions that have taken place. These are actions that specific individuals were involved with. They made the decisions, and these investigations will ensure that if there were any issues, they will be held accountable for it. But what this government is going to do is focus on what we do have power over - that is, the MGA, the Municipal Government Act that governs this province - and we are going to ensure that that Act standardizes expenses across the province and ensures that Nova Scotians have confidence in that system so they can be proud of their municipal governments from one end of this province to the other.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - CRAMMAN CASE:
HEALTH CARD - REINSTATE**

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, 33-year-old Fliss Cramman moved to Canada with her family when she was eight years old. She is currently being detained by Canada Border Services because there were no adults in her childhood who sought citizenship on her behalf. She is ready to be discharged from the hospital but has no MSI. The Elizabeth Fry Society in Cape Breton has agreed to house Miss Cramman but cannot do so unless arrangements are made to address her health care needs. If she continues to have no access to her health card, her only option is to be detained at the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility.

The Minister of Health and Wellness has the ability to provide an exemption and reinstate Ms. Cramman's health card on compassionate grounds. Will he agree to do so today?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased the MLA brought that forward to me yesterday and is being dealt with by the department.

MR. WILSON: Fliss Cramman is not the only woman in the province in this situation. Debra Spencer has lived in Canada for more than 20 years and was adopted by a Nova Scotia family. Miss Spencer has significant mental health issues but cannot access medication she needs because of change in her immigration status. So what steps will the minister take to make sure people like Miss Cramman and Debra Spencer don't continue to fall through the cracks?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, of course, there are always exceptional cases, and it's not always just the department, or our hospitals that are responsible for every aspect of a person's life, but we're going to work with these two people as fully and as consciously and as quickly as we possibly can.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - DOCTORS: VACANCIES - LIST TABLE

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Tuesday, the Minister of Health and Wellness and I discussed the issue of the doctor shortage in Dartmouth where I said 30,000 residents were either already without a family doctor, or imminently will be. Well, I was wrong. The Health Authority called today, and it turns out the issue in Dartmouth is 23 doctors - not 21 - so it's potentially 33,000 patients. This raises the issue of how many vacancies exist elsewhere in the province. So will the Minister of Health and Wellness agree to table a list of all current and expected vacancy numbers for family doctors by region across the province?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: One of the areas that the Nova Scotia Health Authority is working to get a full handle on is, in fact, the kind of practice that doctors have, in terms of the number of patients, how many days a week that they do work, because it's not just sheer numbers. Right now, in 2015-16, we had the most doctors, the most GPs working that we've ever had in the province. We need to realize that doctors have some very different practices than traditionally, so we're getting a handle on how many are currently practising, when they're looking at retirement, the number of patients they have - so some of that information will come in due course.

MR. YOUNGER: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the interest of transparency, the fact is that you can call the Nova Scotia Health Authority and ask for each region and get slightly different numbers each day, but to have a good, province-wide discussion on this - it would be useful to have that information available to every member of this House.

On Tuesday, the minister suggested that there had been some recruitments from the upcoming graduating class, and so in addition, I'm wondering whether the minister will table a list of the number of new doctors with whom agreements have been signed - not necessarily their names - and including what zones they will be setting up in.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that recruitment goes on on a continuous basis. We now have a strong team in place to look at what the needs are across the province, and I know that probably by January some of the communities that are without a doctor will get the information that they will need in terms of new hirings.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MUN. AFFS. - RICHMOND COUN.: EXPENSES - MLAs LIST

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Twice this week, the minister suggested expenses claimed by Richmond staff or councillors included members of the Progressive Conservative caucus. The minister didn't finger me, but then again, nor did he finger any of his colleagues. Who's to say there's not more of us involved? Will the minister table today the full list of MLAs identified in the information that he has?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: My point was that all of us, as MLAs, meet with our municipalities. All of us, as MLAs, meet with various stakeholder communities. Any expenses related to those meetings (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs has the floor.

MR. CHURCHILL: I speak on behalf of all of us when I say any expenses related to those meetings - we would expect that the regulations be followed to a T. I don't think I need to table anything in relation to the expenses I mentioned last week because the member for Argyle-Barrington has already admitted to that expense.

MR. MACMASTER: The minister is selectively using information that he has to deflect attention from his own Party. The minister can prove it by tabling information. It is difficult for me to understand - if I may use the word "obvious" because it was used a few times yesterday - the obvious outrage the government has with this expense scandal because it's not translating into action. What is the minister hiding that is delaying our ability to get to the bottom of what has happened in the Richmond expense scandal for the sake of the people in Richmond?

MR. CHURCHILL: Let's be clear what we're talking about. We're talking about decisions and actions that were perpetrated by certain individuals. The appropriate authorities are investigating the nature of those actions. Let's look at what the Progressive Conservative solution is to this particular event. The member for Inverness has suggested we direct the Ombudsman's Office. The member for Pictou West has suggested we direct and involve ourselves in an RCMP investigation and involve ourselves in an electoral investigation by Elections Nova Scotia (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs has the floor.

MR. CHURCHILL: Let's look at what the Tories are suggesting we do: involve ourselves and interfere in three separate investigations (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs has the floor.

MR. CHURCHILL: The Progressive Conservatives have asked us to intervene in an RCMP investigation, in an Ombudsman's Office investigation, and an investigation by Elections Nova Scotia - three arms of government that, for good reason, are at arm's length. Their answer to this might be to turn Nova Scotia into Putin's Russia, but I'm no Czar, I'm simply a public servant, and I will continue to do my job.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - CONTINUING CARE STRATEGY:
UPDATE - TIME FRAME**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Maybe it's not good that I get up and ask the next question. (Interruption) I'm not going to do it in Russian, as the member alludes to.

Last Spring the Minister of Health and Wellness told members of this House that we would see a fulsome, comprehensive update on the continuing care strategy by Fall 2016. Seniors across the province have been waiting for many years, since the first continuing care strategy was brought forward in 2006, and want to know what the province plans to do with the future of these programs. My question to the minister - and hopefully he can answer in English, and not in Russian - is, which day can Nova Scotians expect an update on the continuing care strategy?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: As the member opposite knows, we gave an interim report on the continuing care strategy. Work continues on that final document. He also knows that we've presented our home care improvements, our nursing home wait-lists, and the work on the dementia strategy, which is now out. We're also working on the acquired brain injury strategy. There are many components of that that have already had some information presented publicly. The full document will be on its way.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, you know these citizens have been loyal citizens, have worked hard in our province and of course deserve at least a return on all those contributions they have given us.

I think, quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, the government has played around with this one a little too long, they have committed that they would be bringing this forward. Seniors have lost faith, I think, that the government is going to bring something forward.

My question is, when can seniors expect a full, laid-out plan for the next decade for continuing care from this province?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, first of all, when we reviewed the 2006 document on a continuing care strategy there were many, many strong points in it. However, it became a document more about building nursing homes than looking at the comprehensive needs of seniors in our province.

I would finish by simply saying, you know, Fall isn't over yet.

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

NAT. RES.: KEJIMKUJIK NATL. PARK - CLEAR-CUTTING

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Many Nova Scotians were angered to learn yesterday that the minister has approved clear-cutting for 94 hectares of forest adjacent to Kejimikujik National Park. Concerns have been raised that Parks Canada has not even finished their review of this proposal and yet the minister has already approved this clear-cut.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister, has Parks Canada finished their review of this proposed clear-cut and, if so, what have they concluded?

HON. LLOYD HINES: I thank the member opposite for the question. The Department of Natural Resources has a terrific relationship with Parks Canada, we're in constant communication on many, many important areas and that was accentuated this year because of the proximity of the Seven Mile Lake fire to that gem that we have in Keji Park.

Parks Canada are telling us that they have no concerns around the proposed harvest in the area. I might just point out, Mr. Speaker, that in terms of Keji as a wonderful facility, 57 per cent of that boundary is against a wilderness protected area, the Tobeatic.

MR. BELLIVEAU: The minister opposite has got one part of the question right - that park is a gem for all Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society has come out against the minister's decision to approve this clear-cut. They stated there are very good signs to show that the six hectares of buffer zones approved by the minister are simply not enough to prevent damages of the effects of clear-cutting inside a protected area. I will table this.

Mr. Speaker, the minister himself stated in this very House that his department is following science-based decision making. I'd like to ask him, where is the science that supports this clear-cut, and will he table it in this House?

MR. HINES: I thank the member opposite. The wisdom that went into forming Keji Park and the wilderness protected areas around the province involves science in its essence. The wilderness protected areas and the parks are defined by the ecology that the experts in our department and in the Department of Environment and Parks Canada have sought to determine where these boundaries should be. So with flora and fauna and topographical changes in the landscape, the boundaries are actually defined. So the science exists in the wisdom that has given us and this government 12.24 per cent, exceeding the goal of wilderness protected areas, in Nova Scotia. (Interruption) No, he didn't do that.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: DOCTOR SHORTAGES - MIN. PROMISES

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: I don't know, Mr. Speaker, we did - I don't know.

Mr. Speaker, the Village of Weymouth has been without a doctor for more than a year. Dr. Westby was on CBC not so long ago speaking of the village's efforts to find a doctor, and Dr. Westby said that the Health Authority hijacked them, and I'll read that: "We weren't getting any help from the Nova Scotia Health Authority. In fact they hijacked us. We didn't even know this was in their plans - to remove physicians from the Weymouth area - until the very last minute."

The Liberal Government promised a doctor for every Nova Scotian and claims that they stand by that promise, yet the minister allowed the Health Authority to eliminate the position that was in Weymouth.

My question to the minister is, why would the minister approve this after promising Nova Scotians would each have a doctor?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, the member knows that the model of care that is developing across the province is not one that was simply put together by the Health Authority. It is being driven by doctors. Over the past five to 10 years, doctors right across our 17 medical schools in Canada have stated very, very clearly that they want to work in team-based practices. Even specialists are now talking about going to regional centres as a team.

In terms of Weymouth today, there is currently a doctor visiting there. A nurse practitioner is there. Many patients have migrated to the Clare clinic, and we'll also see movement to Digby in the future.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Last week - or almost two weeks ago now - at a public meeting about the lack of doctors, the MLA for the area, the Clare-Digby MLA, reported and told the audience that he had convinced the minister to agree to approve a doctor to work in Weymouth if one could be found. It says "he had convinced the Minister of Health . . . to agree to approve a doctor to work in Weymouth if one could be found."

This can't be true if the Health Authority has already removed the billing number and the position altogether. My question is, will the minister reverse the decision and assist the Village of Weymouth in their hunt for a permanent family doctor?

MR. GLAVINE: What I can tell the member opposite and all Nova Scotians is that recruitment goes on every day. In terms of the classes that will be finishing up their residency in the Spring, we've already made some very good signing of contracts. We know that area of the province, the residency program at Dalhousie now is starting to see rewards in that area.

As I know the member for Queens-Shelburne would like to get up and tell us, there's a new doctor from that residency program now practising in Shelburne.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: SPRINGHILL DOCTOR SHORTAGE - MIN. ADMIT

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. There is a family doctor crisis in Springhill. We are down to two doctors to cover the Collaborative Emergency Centre there. The hours that the ER is closed are going up and up. It's a far cry from what the people of Springhill were promised when the CEC was established.

In addition, too many people are going without the family doctor they need. I'd like the minister to be aware of one young woman who is expecting a baby, who does not have a doctor and cannot get the prenatal care she needs.

I'd like to ask the minister, will he acknowledge that there is a doctor shortage at the point of crisis in Springhill, obviously, when a young woman who is pregnant cannot get prenatal care?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we know in terms of prenatal care there are a number of programs that are available. I know that every young mother would like to have a family doctor who continues to check on her. We have areas of the province where nurse practitioners and family practice nurses provide absolutely high quality, competent care each and every day in this province.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, there is no program that can replace a family doctor, particularly for a young woman who is expecting a baby, who needs monthly checkups and prenatal care. I think it's insulting to this young woman to say that there are programs available when she needs a doctor. There is nothing going on to recruit new doctors to the area of Springhill, where hundreds of people are looking for a doctor and want their emergency room to be open.

The minister has the ability to put a locum doctor in place while the community looks for a new one. Will he agree today to send locum doctors to Springhill until permanent replacements can be found?

MR. GLAVINE: Yes, we have set aside considerable millions of dollars this year for locum doctors. I will do my best to work with the Health Authority to see what the short-term solution can be. But I think the member opposite should not overlook the tremendous value that nurse practitioners, family practice nurses, and midwifery add to the prenatal work of our province.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - DIRECTION 180:
RESOURCES - MIN. PROVIDE**

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, Direction 180 is a community-based methadone clinic serving the greater Halifax area that operates on a harm reduction model. The organization had to reduce hours and actually eliminate a community that they service with their mobile unit because of lack of funding. They had requested an additional \$350,000 from the department just before summer to help to respond to the growing opioid crisis here in the province and the addiction of opioids. The government just provided \$50,000, I believe last week. It takes \$5,000 per person per year to treat the addiction.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister agree to provide Direction 180 with resources they require to meet the growing needs for community-based addiction treatment?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I thank the member for the very important question that he is bringing to the floor here today. We are now working with a whole number and range of providers in addiction services across the province to look at comprehensive programs - not just methadone and Suboxone but what we can do province-wide. We know that Direction 180 plays a critical role in the delivery of that service. We were told at the department that it would be little bit over \$2,000 to provide the necessary methadone for the list that they had. The bigger ask was around a compressive program looking at the future.

MR. DAVID WILSON: It's great that they are starting to look at what can they do into the future, but here is an organization that is working today to save lives, Mr. Speaker. They had to stop going to a community to provide their services.

Mr. Speaker, last year up to August of this year, 70 people in Nova Scotia have died from addiction to opioids; last year I believe it was around 60. While groups are meeting tomorrow I believe to develop a response to the increasing crisis related to the fentanyl problem that we are going to see in our province, Direction 180 and the Ally Centre in Cape Breton are the only two sites in the province that have the pilot project to help fentanyl overdoses.

I would like to ask the minister, will the minister commit today to provide stable ongoing funding to Direction 180 and the Ally Centre in Cape Breton?

MR. GLAVINE: What we have done in terms of the Ally Centre in Sydney is to look at restoring if not all that federal grant, to be able to provide at least some transition monies that they originally gave for AIDS/HIV work in that centre. So that is certainly going on.

In terms of the opioid issue, I thank the member for bringing it forward. This is the whole purpose of being proactive and having a group of professionals in Nova Scotia come together in fact starting tomorrow to map out a provincial plan that would be responsive to the current need.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

CCH: BROAD COVE SCOTTISH CONCERT SUPPORT - LACK EXPLAIN

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage. This summer I was at the Broad Cove Scottish Concert. For six years, Broad Cove has hosted one of the most iconic concerts in our province's history. The time has come to upgrade the stage and the talent room.

The federal government supported this. In fact, Mr. Speaker - and I'm going to table this - the local MP featured the investment in a mail-out to residents. My question is, why didn't the provincial government support Broad Cove with this important project?

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, as I travel across this province meeting lots of community groups and organizations, I have learned that they are extremely proud of their organizations, their local communities. I will say my office has always supported any group who has walked through our door. We don't throw anybody away or push anybody away. So (Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage has the floor.

HON. TONY INCE: So to answer the question, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where the application is or if they've applied but I would ask them to come, talk to us, and we will work with them.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's words. There are a lot of requests that come forward to government, and it's not always easy to answer them all. May I ask the minister to reconsider? I know in his comments he may do that. (Interruption) I'll have to tell the member for Bedford that people visit our province every year just for that concert. The public supports this. We see that in the numbers of people that attend the concert. The federal and municipal governments support it. Will the province have a second look and support it?

MR. INCE: Thank you for that. As I've said, have them contact my office, we will look into it. We don't turn anybody away. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

COM. SERV. - AFFORDABLE HOUSING: FLAGSHIP PROG. - DETAILS

MS. LISA ROBERTS: The question is for the Minister of Community Services. We learned last spring that this government was no longer going ahead with the Bloomfield housing project. After more than six months of silence, during which volunteers with the community partner Imagine Bloomfield were left in the dark, the Premier and the Minister of Community Services walked away from the proposal.

This was this government's flagship project for affordable housing, and during the time that Housing Nova Scotia sat on the project, we actually lost affordable housing units in Halifax Needham - 40 per cent of renters spend more than 30 per cent of their income on rent in Halifax's urban core. So I ask the minister, where is this government's new flagship program?

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, I realize that the member opposite is new to the House but that absolutely was not our flagship project for affordable housing. One hundred million dollars for a small sliver of affordable housing was not the way forward in this province. We chose to do it through rent supplements. We chose to do it through new build. We chose to do it in many other ways in partnering with developers. Unfortunately, Bloomfield was not the answer or the panacea for affordable housing.

When it comes to Halifax Needham, I'll remind the member that there are currently 1,683 affordable housing units between Rainnie Drive and the north end of Halifax, and we have added to that by taking on Brunswick Street Non-Profit, and we have also added

a number of rent supplements through that, so there actually has been an increase in affordable housing in that area.

MS. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, mayors and planners from over 100 countries took part in the United Nations Habitat III summit in Ecuador. A new urban agenda was agreed to that would lay the groundwork in developed and developing countries alike to ensure that housing is considered a right afforded to all. The cost of affordable rental units in this province continues to rise along with the price of property. So I ask the minister, what is this government doing to act on the new urban agenda and ensure that the department's actions on affordable housing are consistent with viewing housing as a right?

MS. BERNARD: Well, thank you for the opportunity to tell this House what we're doing as a government. We're investing, in the next few months, \$74 million of extra money that we've partnered with the federal government. We've invested over \$42 million out of the deferred federal contribution, and that's on top of the \$102.5 million that we partnered with the federal government two years ago, for a five-year agreement.

So through rent supplements, through partnering with private developers, and through new builds, we've actually decreased the waiting list in this province by 10 per cent for the first time in a decade.

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

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. First, I want to say thank you to him and staff for attending several meetings in the community of Grand Mira South regarding the roads and the issues there, and going back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the roads are like Russia there.

So I just wonder if the minister (Interruptions) not yet. Soon, very soon. That's the answer this government has for everything - soon, very soon. My question to the minister is can he give us an update on the plan for the road in Grand Mira South?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Time allotted for Oral Questions Put by Members has expired.

I'd like to direct all members' attention to my Speaker's Gallery for an introduction. I'm honoured to have here with us today a couple of distinguished residents from the constituency of Eastern Shore.

We have with us here today Mr. Jim Livingston who is a resident of Lake Charlotte. Please stand, Mr. Livingston. Jim is a retired air traffic controller and has served 66 years

as a member of the Halifax Rifles Armoury Association, currently serving as the vice-president. (Applause)

We also have with us here today Mr. Robert Cuthbert, a resident of Head Jeddore on the Eastern Shore. Robert is also retired from the Canadian Armed Forces and has also served 60 years as a member of the Halifax Rifles Armoury Association, and is the current president. (Applause)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 47.

Bill No. 47 - Halifax Rifles Armoury Association.

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

MR. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 47 now be read a second time.

The Halifax Rifles is the third oldest regiment in Canada and the oldest one in Nova Scotia. The regiment came into being on May 14, 1860. A reorganization of the Reserve Forces in 1965 resulted in the regiment being reduced to nil strength and transferred to the Supplementary Order of Battle.

On September 5, 2008, then-Defence Minister Peter MacKay announced that the regiment would be reactivated. The association was formed in 1902 for the express purpose of acquiring funds to support the regiment and eventually to construct their own armoury. An Act to Incorporate the Association was passed by the Nova Scotia Legislature on March 27, 1902, being Chapter 195 of the Nova Scotia Statutes. The association continued to function under that legislation or the original purpose until the transfer for the regiment to the Supplementary Order of the Battle.

Following this, the association voted to carry on with three main objectives: (1) to manage the Memorial Scholarship Program; (2) to be the active sponsor of 2,841 Halifax Rifles Army Cadet Corps; and (3) to work towards the reactivation of the regiment.

Following Mr. MacKay's announcement, the association decided that it should renew and re-energize itself. To this end, it was decided to reconstitute itself as a not-for-profit society under the Nova Scotia Registrar of Joint Stocks. This was accomplished on April 1, 2009.

Mr. Speaker, after operating under the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies for three years, the following resolution was unanimously adopted at the association's May 3, 2012, AGM.

“Whereas the legislation enacted by the NS Legislature is in conflict with our current By-Laws as registered with the NS Registrar of Joint Stock Companies. Therefore be it resolved that the Board of Directors be authorized to seek action by the NS Legislature to revoke all legislation pertaining to the Halifax Rifles Armoury Association.”

Mr. Speaker, we are here today to remedy this conflict and respect the wishes of the Halifax Rifles Armoury Association. This bill repeals the appropriate Act. I look forward to hearing some vigorous debate from my colleagues and any subsequent presentations at the Private and Local Bills Committee. Thank you.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to thank the members in the gallery who are here today, the Halifax Rifles who, as a group, I would suggest are a phenomenal group of individuals who served their country valiantly over the years and even with their association have provided supports to our country and our communities.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of those situations where it's always fun to go back into the archives of the House of Assembly just to catch a glimpse of how legislation was done so many years ago. The Act to incorporate the Halifax Rifles Armoury Association was originally passed in this House of Assembly on the 27th day of March of 1902. At that time there really wasn't a Registrar of Joint Stocks or any Act to protect associations or groups in that respect. Therefore, members of the House of Assembly of the day had to come here and incorporate the different groups. That's why you see a number of those associations, whether they be church groups, churches, Odd Fellows Halls.

There are a whole raft of different organizations that had to be brought forward to this Assembly by the members for their incorporation, to set their rules and responsibilities as an association, and to truly set forth how they conducted business. Of course, today we have a number of different organizations and Acts that help that out in the House of Assembly that we've passed over the last number of years. That includes, of course, the Act for associations - I forget the exact name for it - the Registry of Joint Stocks and those

kind of things, as my honourable colleague suggested in his opening remarks, that cover those associations as they are today.

It says in Clause 5 of the original bill: The corporation shall also have power to issue bonds and to secure the same by mortgage upon its real estate and its improvements and to cause the same to be signed by its president and secretary.

In a lot of cases, these smaller organizations, if they wanted to own a building, if they wanted to be able to have a hall, that had to be set forward in a piece of legislation as it was done back in 1902. It's a bit of a shame, sort of like tearing down an old building and putting up something new. But the heart of the association, the heart of those who represent the Halifax Rifles Armoury Association is still there.

Of course this is a bill that we will support and thanks to the member for bringing it forward here today.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: I want to stand just for a few moments just to associate myself with the comments my two colleagues just made. I think it's important that we recognize organizations and groups here in our province.

When legislation was created such a long time ago - as was indicated, 1902 was when that first piece of legislation was introduced here in the Nova Scotia Legislature - we need to ensure that we reflect current goings on of organizations like the Halifax Rifles Armoury Association and make sure that we follow their wishes. Hopefully their members and the members who came before the ones who are there now realize the importance of updated legislation or the removal of legislation to allow them to continue on into the future.

I look forward to this going through to Private and Local Bills and through the process of the Legislature. I also want to thank those from the association for being here today.

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

The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

MR. IAIN RANKIN: I move that we close debate on second reading of Bill No. 47.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 47. Would all those in favour of the motion, please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee on Private and Local Bills.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Would you please call Bill No. 44.

Bill No. 44 - Maintenance Enforcement Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. DIANA WHALEN: I'm delighted to rise today on this. First of all, I move that Bill No. 44, amendments to the Maintenance Enforcement Act be now read a second time.

With that, Mr. Speaker, there is so much to be said about the bill in front of us. I'm hopefully going to draw your attention to all of the changes that are in this and some of the other changes as well that didn't require actual amendments to the Act but will improve the service that's available in our province.

I'm very proud of the work our staff have been doing over the entire past year. There has been a tremendous amount of effort and coordination and training and new systems being brought on board, all of which are leading to better results and better collection for the women and children of our province.

I want to continue on here, first to draw the members' attention to the bill. It's very sizeable; it covers an awful lot of amendments that our staff have been working on. As I said, I want to pay tribute to the hard work of our director of the program. She has been working tirelessly with her staff to change the way we do business with maintenance enforcement.

Before I go on, I think for those who don't know what maintenance enforcement is, I should provide the context. I think many members of the House have had those concerns brought to them, men and women coming to them with concerns around maintenance enforcement.

This program is serving almost 15,000 families; 28,000 adults are involved who are payers or recipients; and over 16,000 children receive support through court orders that are then enforced by maintenance enforcement. So you can see it has a tremendous impact across our province. There will be no part of the province that isn't touched by this, and there are a lot of difficulties in terms of making sure that people get their required payments every month and on time.

It's important to note that this is about economic stability, that these families, these people, the numbers that I've given you today, are about individuals trying to pay their bills, pay their rent, and look after their children. They require the money that has been authorized and ordered through the courts. These are families at their most vulnerable: families at a time of marriage breakup or family breakdown. These are times that are very difficult.

The Premier of our province himself has taken on this charge to improve our collections and made it a point to bring it to the Council of the Federation, which is our Premiers' meetings - Premiers across the country - raising with them the difficult issue that comes with families that are no longer in the same province. About 25 per cent of the cases that are registered end up being enforced by another jurisdiction because one or the other - either the recipient has left the province or the payer has gone elsewhere to work.

Therefore we have to have better coordination across the provinces. That's something that our Premier has taken on and made a national issue. We're recognized for it; we're now recognized as the leaders in the country. At my recent meeting of the federal/provincial/territorial Justice Ministers that was held here in Halifax about two weeks ago, we were able to speak to this, and we did get the recognition of other provinces, that they are looking to us to see what we're doing.

Mr. Speaker, I must say, we've looked across the entire country as well. We've looked to see what every other province has in their toolkit to help their enforcement officers do a better job. We saw some things that we don't do. We saw some things that we could do better - maybe taking two pieces that other provinces are doing and combining them and doing even better. Those changes are seen here in the legislation before you. They represent significant steps forward.

The Maintenance Enforcement Program came into existence 20 years ago. Its purpose is to help families with the collection of the support that has been ordered by the courts, as I said. The staff in Maintenance Enforcement don't determine how much money a person can pay. It's not their job to do that. They take the court order, and their job is to enforce it, to collect on behalf of one party or the other for the children in the families. They don't have a lot of discretion. They're following court orders.

Members of the Legislature will often hear back that if a person doesn't like the situation, they need to return to the court to get a new court order. We are looking at other processes that might expedite that, but that is the reality. We are enforcing a court order.

Before this program came into existence, no matter how difficult and fraught with difficulties it has been, things were even worse. At that point in time, the burden was placed on individuals to collect their own support payments. Many, of course, were women who lacked the resources to pursue spousal and child support. Back then, a person who was owed money for support was like any other creditor, they had to retain a lawyer, locate the debtor, start legal proceedings and then follow through for a remedy, potentially a very onerous process for many, especially for those of us without legal background who are unfamiliar with the courts and the court system, or may not have the funds to hire a lawyer and get that support.

We have come a long way since then. I know in reading transcripts from when the original Act was passed, the members at that time had high hopes that this was going to help women and children in particular receive the support they need.

Mr. Speaker, I will occasionally speak about it being women, but 96 per cent of the recipients are women, 4 per cent are men, and I have occasionally heard from a father who is caring for the children and receiving funds from the mother in that case. Occasionally I do use the gender because it is overwhelmingly women who are looking after the children.

As I say, the change we did by bringing this in and reading back to the 1990s when it was introduced, you can see the excitement and hope that our predecessors here in the Legislature had about how this would help, and it has been a tremendous support to families, but it has its limitations. As I said, we are only as good as the court orders we get. We can only do what we can do if people have made themselves unavailable, if they run and hide in other jurisdictions, if they are persistently unwilling to work with the government - with the Maintenance Enforcement Program, with the Department of Justice - if they just won't co-operate with their families and communities, then it's very difficult to enforce.

Just by way of background, about 20 per cent of the cases that are enrolled are considered very difficult. They are the ones that relate to 80 per cent of the arrears that we have, and I know many members of the House keep track of those arrears. It's in the range of \$65 million today owed to families in Nova Scotia. That is money that has accumulated over many years, where one or the other parent has not made their payments. That's a significant amount of money, Mr. Speaker.

I first became aware of the deficiencies in this program as a member of the Public Accounts Committee. In about 2007, our Auditor General of the day looked at this program. The report that came back was scathing. I think some members here may remember it, but at that time it was identified as a program that had very poor management,

poor controls, not working well, not serving people well. So there have been big efforts made, I would say, over the three governments that have been there but it was still in great disarray when I arrived in the department - there was a lot to be done, let me put it that way.

From the get-go this has been an important thing for myself. I know the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, when she was the Status of Women Critic, had done a lot of work, raised a lot of questions here in the Legislature about maintenance enforcement, and other members in the House, as well, have taken a great interest in this on behalf of their constituents.

Many of us hear directly from parents on this issue and I've had the chance to sit down with quite a few people since I've become Minister of Justice, to again get that front-line experience about what people are feeling when they are trying to interact with the Maintenance Enforcement Program, where the frustrations come from and what we can do about it.

Mr. Speaker, last year - I guess it was in September 2015 - a report was tabled here. It had begun under the current Minister of Immigration when she was Minister of Justice. She asked that a report be done on the client service that we provide to people who are interacting with Maintenance Enforcement, because we were hearing time and again how people couldn't have their calls returned, couldn't access their files online, couldn't get information they needed, and they were frustrated. We wanted to improve customer service, or client interaction, and that was the focus of the review that was presented last Fall.

There were 27 recommendations in that report and, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that 15 of those have been completed or are ongoing - there will be an ongoing nature to them, like training, for example, improving the training of our staff. That has been done but you don't stop once you've got them trained, you continually keep up a higher level of training. So we're well under way with many of those recommendations.

When I saw the 27 recommendations, Mr. Speaker, I felt strongly that there was more we needed to do. Beyond the client service, we needed to ensure that we had better enforcement, better ways to collect our funds. From that report, there was a clear indication that the enforcement wasn't being - our tools available weren't being used. A glaring example was that there had been no court actions - which would be our highest level of enforcement - no court actions had been undertaken in a year. So in light of that, that has been part of our training to get our staff better able to take cases to the final point, to get them ready to go to court, in the cases where there is no other remedy. This year, right now, we have 27 cases that are ready, or at court, so we've gone from zero to 27. I think that's a big improvement.

That really was related to the fact that people weren't trained well enough. And, why was that, Mr. Speaker? I would be remiss, and I'm sure the Opposition would be sorry, if I didn't say it was because 70 per cent of the staff had changed over during the New Democratic Party years when they had the idea to consolidate all the workers in one location. Seventy per cent of the people who knew and understood maintenance enforcement did not follow those jobs to the new location in New Waterford, and it is a complicated program. It requires people who know how to run the program, understand the complexity, and they didn't move, they chose other jobs with government or left the civil service.

So we had a very big task to take good employees, but new employees, and help them to understand and get the training they needed, and that has literally taken three years to become effective, Mr. Speaker. So we feel that with the extra training this year, with the experience that those individuals have now got on the job, things are starting to level out, but it was a very devastating change to the program. For whatever reason it was chosen to be done, it was just difficult on the people who worked there, and they've had a tremendous amount of stress in order to learn very quickly how to respond. I think some of the issues members of the House have had over the years have been because of the lack of experience, and new people in those jobs.

So I'm pleased to say that that has begun to work out, and the people tell us it takes two to three years to become very good at what you're doing there, but it has been a concern to me right from the get-go, that we lost that pool of experienced people. In dealing with that, of course, I said we had the 27 recommendations. Moving on all of those, I'd like to tell the members of the House that in addition to the bill being introduced this week, we also put online, for those that are interested, a one-year implementation report which says how we're doing on those 27 recommendations, what has been happening. I think that's important for the transparency and for following. A lot of the changes are administrative in nature, so it's improving the telephone calling system. I think very importantly, a new website was also launched, and it actually just went live a week ago.

Again, almost in line with this, we have a new website that's much more user-friendly, much easier to find and get the information we need. We have had people working all year to rewrite a lot of the information there to be more user-friendly, and that's really in the same vein as what we're trying to do with a lot of things in justice, we're trying to make it more accessible to people, and if you use a lot of jargon, or it's a lot of legal terminology, the average person doesn't really understand what their role is, or their responsibility, or what they need to do. So we've had people doing it in plain, easy-to-understand English. So if people find it isn't, let me know, and we'll keep working on it, because I've done my utmost to make sure that this is not full of jargon, and full of legal language that will be difficult, or obscure the points that we're trying to make.

We're very pleased with the new website, and we're working as well on something called MEP Online, which has existed, but we're trying to improve it, and that's where a

person can go online and see their own information, the history of payments, how much is in arrears, how much is paid up, and so on, and get a complete snapshot of what relates to them.

These kind of things are very important, because I spoke to women who said they couldn't get through on the phone lines because they work in the daytime when the office is open, and they couldn't get away to stay on the phone as long as it would take to get a person to answer. So you'd end up in a queue and have to hold, and if you work in a store, or work in some job where you're needed every minute, you can't just go away and take a one-hour phone call where you're waiting to get through on a line. So they were frustrated they couldn't get their information, so this kind of online access will make a big difference for everybody. It allows people to go on when it is convenient, when they need it. So we're really proud of a lot of the changes that are in this right now.

Another big complaint that we had in the past, and I had just spoken today to the member for Inverness about this - if you were a payor, you had a direct phone number to call your enforcement officer, and that was because the enforcement officer wanted to keep in close contact with payors to urge them to pay to know whether they were making a payment. But they didn't want to talk to the recipients, because the recipients were usually calling when they weren't getting their cheques, when they were anxious, when they were saying to them, what are you doing, what actions can you take, what else you are doing? They weren't really given the same opportunity, because I guess it wasn't seen as important.

Mr. Speaker, I felt it's important. How can you leave the recipients waiting for their funds in the dark, and without access to somebody to talk to? So in the past year, we have opened those phone lines. Recipients now get a phone number for the enforcement officer or assistant who is responsible for their case, and I think that has gone a long way to show that we value their input just as much, and we want their enforcement officers to know how urgent it is for the recipients who are waiting. They need to understand both sides of the story.

So I think it is really important and it's gone a long way in sensitizing all of us to the situation, I think, and also showing that it's not a kind of brick wall that they were dealing with. They just couldn't penetrate and couldn't get to talk to anybody, and it was very frustrating. As it is the same in many areas, communication is key; that was what we heard last year. So we think getting that phone number, as simple as it sounds, is very important. So there are lot of things that have been done, as I said. I urge members to go and have a closer look at the report we have given, just to let you know what we have done on those 27 recommendations.

At the same time, we were preparing for changes to the Act. The changes to the Act, we knew, would be required in some ways. We knew as well there were enforcement tools we were not using to the fullest, so that was appreciated. Things like getting to that

final point, which actually to take court action - we recognized that had to happen, and has begun. That was part of training, and giving people more confidence to move in that area. Everything from withdrawing passports, garnishing wages, increasing the number of enforcement calls - all of that has gone up dramatically in this past year. And so those figures are worth noting as well.

But Mr. Speaker, some things did require changes to the Act so I'm going to speak again, specifically, to what is in this bill, because I am sure you are looking for that. We went and did some consultation across the province on this. We heard from a 162 people at the end of day, and got feedback on what they thought we should do in terms of improving this program.

One of the things we asked about, which I think might get the attention of members, is something you won't find in the Act today, but it does remain a possibility for the future. That is, two provinces in the country post the pictures of payors who are persistently in arrears - it's important to get that term "persistently in arrears". You would not post a picture unless a person was completely unwilling to work with the program and was not paying, and in addition to that, it would have to be a person we did not know how to find. So in one province they call it "help us find this payor". It's under that umbrella of, we want the public's assistance in finding someone.

That was a suggestion that we looked at and we asked the public what they thought about that. As I said, I participated in a number of the stakeholder groups. I spoke with the Family Bar - the section of the Bar Society that are family lawyers - I attended a session with them. I also attended one with the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on Status of Women, to see what they thought and again, we listened to viewpoints from others who were able to write in.

I suppose it's natural, or it seems to be the case, that whenever we look for consultation on maintenance enforcement, we hear overwhelmingly from the recipients, and we have a hard time engaging with people who are payors. I think that is unfortunate, because we do want to know more about how the payors are feeling and what they like or don't like about the Act and changes that we're making, but we have a difficulty in hearing from them.

I think we had six people who were payors who participated in the responses, out of 162, so not very many. We actually had pretty good support for posting pictures; it was overwhelmingly in favour. The Advisory Council on the Status of Women approved of it, and many of the other individual submissions approved of it.

In this report, which is also online, it's what we heard. Again, that's another document I would ask that you have a look at. What we heard on the proposed changes to the Maintenance Enforcement Act is posted, and it gives the reasons why we might hesitate to post pictures as well.

Some of the concerns, and they came largely from the legal community who work both with payors and with recipients - they were concerned about the harm to children, for example, in a small community. If your parents' pictures were posted, that that would be traumatizing or difficult in a small community where people know each other. They were also concerned about whether or not there could be some threat of domestic violence to the spouse who might be the recipient, that perhaps because the person whose picture is posted might be angry, it might make that spouse more vulnerable to violence. So that was certainly a big concern.

There was a concern that it might be considered more of a wall of shame, that you'd be posting the picture to shame the individual. My take on it, Mr. Speaker, was that if we were to do it, it would be to help locate, because this is a huge problem when people decide not to be found, and they just want to disappear into some other part of the country, or elsewhere.

I want to make it clear, we looked very carefully at it, and I had a certain amount of enthusiasm for doing it, but we've decided at this point in time, the Maintenance Enforcement Program has a lot of enforcement tools, a lot of things we can use and we want to see that our staff and our program are using all of those tools before we look at something new like this.

I would say that even had we adopted it, it would be very few who would ever be there. It has to be the most egregious cases that would ever be listed, and people who, again, are lost to us, we don't know where they are. That would have just been one other tool, and we were just not moving on that one right now, Mr. Speaker.

The other things that we did consultation on, we are going to be introducing. I think I'll go through those a little bit, just to help everybody understand what they are. One thing has to do with the category of investigators. Mr. Speaker, sometimes over the years the Maintenance Enforcement Officers, when they cannot locate a payer, would ask the investigators who work in the Department of Justice to try and find them, but it was done a little bit ad hoc and not very often.

Since I've been the minister I've been encouraging them to do that, and many more cases have been sent here. It allows the enforcement officer not to try to be the investigator, and do all the online investigating and everything. If they hit a wall and can't find somebody, we say send it to the investigators. By and large they are retired police officers, they have training, and they know how to do this.

Mr. Speaker, we've been using the investigators more, but this Act now formalizes that. It identifies them as a category of employee in the Maintenance Enforcement continuum, and it also gives them the power to use video surveillance. That is a power that other investigative units have, and for different Acts. We are giving them that power too, as they try to locate missing payors.

When they locate somebody they send that information to the Maintenance Enforcement Officers, so then the collection can continue.

I think it's a really important change, I'm really excited that they will get proper tools, and be given some extended authority and abilities in their efforts. I think that is very important that we go that route so all of us here will see - if you are reading the Act - where that is included.

Another one of the important changes, and I think people will appreciate this is that up to now when there has been - I guess it's an enforcement action, they would call it, was to notify somebody that you were going to take back their driver's licence. That's quite a serious step, and it's quite high up in the continuum of things that enforcement officers do. In the past we had to send notification to the individual, and tell them that you have 30 days' notice that we are going to take your licence. That really wasn't found to be very good in some instances because sometimes people could circumvent that if their licence was coming up for renewal. They could get in early, get it done, and get a new licence. Again, if we can't find them after that point, we can't seize the licence. That was a problem with the notification that we ran into.

Think about it in terms of what we do for fines. If you've run up a lot of fines for parking and maybe motor vehicle infractions, when you go to get your licence renewed - without any notification previously, just when you appear at Access Nova Scotia - you will have your driver's licence denied until you have paid up all those fines. That's how we do it. We don't give notification in advance. We get people as they come in to renew their licences.

I should say, as I'm talking about driver's licences, that this includes vehicle registration, which as you know comes up every two years. Your driver's licence is only every five because mine's about to be renewed. Your car or your vehicle, though, you need to do every two years. That's another opportunity when people come in to get their vehicle registration denied.

What we've changed is that we can now do it without notice, making it parallel to parking fees and unpaid fines. In the case of people who are in persistent arrears, people who have been paying no attention to the program and ignoring our calls, they will be having this put in place. With no notification, we can take your licence, and your vehicle registration will not be renewed. Mr. Speaker, I think that's a big improvement. We needed legislative authority to do that.

Another one of the improvements that we're looking at is another quite exceptional power, I think: to provide the program with the authority to hold additional money that is seized or garnished from a payor beyond what is currently owed. We have the power to seize property or vehicles or homes. We actually have that power if we choose to do it. Any time maintenance enforcement gets a block of money that comes in above the amount

that is owed in arrears, they of course give the additional amount back to the payor. But sometimes this is a payor who is persistently in arrears, who you know, as soon as you return the extra money to them, is going to disappear again. This power allows our maintenance enforcement program to hold the extra money and to continue to pay the amount that's owed monthly to the family until the money is exhausted. That's because the history of that payor is that they will not pay, and we don't trust them to pay in the future, so we will hold that money.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that we have to write some good strong policy around each of these. We have to define who is the persistent non-payor and at what level we would start to take these actions. I know the frustration of women and children, the families, grandparents, and others who are helping their families. When they know that thousands of dollars are owed to their loved one and that we have in our hand that extra money that we're handing back to the other parent who won't pay, that's not right. We want to ensure that, within the powers of this Maintenance Enforcement Program, we can hold those extra funds, and we will continue, as long as we have the funds available, to pay that money on a regular basis as court ordered to the families.

I think it's the right thing to do, and I think that it's a good change. Again, other provinces do this. We've had some of these improvements come directly from other provinces that have been doing just this. When I saw them doing it, I said, why aren't we? Why can't we do that here in those rare cases where we could help a family? I think it's really important. As I said, currently we can't do that. I'm hoping that the entire House will support those changes.

Another change that's given here is that in the legislation, we'll have new powers to actually demand more information from the payors. In our own caucus, we've had presentations with maintenance enforcement, and people have asked, why don't you have their social insurance number? Why don't you have the mother's maiden name? That is another key way of identifying people. Or their birth date - why don't you know the payor's birth date? We haven't always received that information in the past. Now going forward, these amendments will allow us to demand social insurance numbers, photographs and other identifying information that we currently cannot get. We think this is extremely important because that comes back to how can we trace and find these individuals - it's very difficult for us at present.

Mr. Speaker, I've had conversations even with our federal counterparts about this, about the difficulty of getting this information, so allowing us to get it through this Act and the amendments to this Act will greatly increase the ability of all our staff to locate and find people and begin to get some funds to the children who depend on them. So that's very important.

Mr. Speaker, as well the Act is going to allow for a much greater sharing of information. I was really shocked to hear that in years gone by Community Services used

to routinely speak to Maintenance Enforcement, which makes sense, because sometimes either the recipient or the payer is on assistance. We need to know that; that's pertinent information. If a person is on assistance we understand they can't make their court orders and so on, that had been done.

But then somebody got cold feet, I guess, about the legality of sharing information - it's highly protected, of course - so they stopped doing that, Mr. Speaker. And even though we're looking at the same people, trying to help them, trying to work with families to help the children and all them, we weren't able to share information, and that was really tying everyone's hands and giving less service to the people who are depending on us.

So this Act will allow a much greater sharing of information, again with very careful controls. We will work carefully to ensure that the information is protected. But where it is going to help the families and help us in the enforcement, we need to be able to share information.

We are including in that other government departments and the courts as well, Mr. Speaker, so the powers to do that are included in this Act as it is amended. It think it only makes sense that we do that as we're trying to help people really get on with their lives and be able to afford to support their children.

Again, I think it bears repeating - this really is about the children and not about the anger and animosity people might feel towards each other. I've heard the Premier say on many occasions what two adults feel or say about each other or do, that's one thing, but you cannot abdicate your responsibility to your children, that's forever. (Applause) Mr. Speaker, you can tell we all feel passionate about that, this is just something that is so overdue that we treat this the way it should be treated and get all the powers needed.

Another change in here, which I think is very important and it just brings us into the more modern day, is the ability to notify people - and that would be either recipient or the payer - electronically. We are so behind the times, the way we've been doing this up to now. It's dependent upon having a good address, a valid postal address for the client, as I said, whether it's recipient or payer.

Believe it or not, sometimes we lose track of the recipients and that's because they haven't been getting their money, they've thrown their hands up in despair, they have just lost all their energy fighting the system and they've just said I'm going to go away and raise my children and do the best I can, and they're not getting their money. So even if we then get some money on their behalf, we have trouble finding them. We need to notify both parties at times and keep in touch with them.

This will have an impact most on the payers, though, because we notify payers about certain enforcement actions that are being taken and we want to keep them in touch with what we're going to do or what we need. What we're doing in the Act today is making

a change that says it's the responsibility of the payer or the recipient to keep us up to date on your address and on your electronic address. So we want emails and we want postal addresses kept up to date. If you don't, we're considering that if we've sent out a letter to you both postal and by email, within 10 days we're assuming you got it and that you've received that information. It doesn't matter if you don't answer us, it doesn't matter if you try to ignore it, we are assuming you've got it and we will advance on it, whatever stage of enforcement has been in that notification. So that's very important.

I was speaking today to one of our lawyers in the Department of Justice who said that this is really meaningful because in the past it created tremendous delays. If a letter went out - and it would be a registered letter - and it either came back or it went to another family member who said I don't know where they are and nobody would accept the letter, then it stopped all the enforcement action. Things came to a halt because we were bound, duty bound, bound by the law to notify people.

So that's a pretty easy thing then, you can avoid being notified and you might put a halt to some of the actions that the Maintenance Enforcement Program was taking. Well, that won't be possible because going forward, 10 days after we notify you we'll carry on with that action - and that's important too. (Applause) Thank you. Thanks. So, as I said, the onus is squarely on both payers and recipients to keep the Maintenance Enforcement Program up to date, and I don't think anybody would argue with that.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting - I've mentioned about email. I've been asked about other electronic means, and if you read the wording in the bill it will give powers to the Maintenance Enforcement Program to use other electronic means. So, then, we're talking about Facebook, messages on Twitter, LinkedIn, and who knows what new platforms in the future. I think you can send messages in so many different ways. So we will leave that open.

I want to begin and start with email and then, if need be, we may use other platforms. But, as you can appreciate, there will have to be strong policies written to support the use of that. So we want to make sure, again, that we're doing it, that it's done right, and there are lots of things we need to - dot the i's and cross the t's. So we're going to start with email. We're going to see how effective that is, and I think we will get a lot better response just doing that at the moment, so just to let people know that the others are possible things to do.

I've already spoken to you about the investigative powers of our Department of Justice investigators. As I say, they are people largely with police training and skills. So they are having some success. I understand they find - or if we can take the cases they've had just in the last year, 30 per cent, possibly 40 per cent they can locate. So there will still be people we can't find, but even if it's just a few families that we can help, that we can get in touch with the payer and start receiving payments again, that's huge, and I think we need to show those people who are asking us to take action, those recipients who are calling

and saying what are you doing, I know where he is, can you please help me, we have to show that we're doing everything we can. So that's why we want to leave no stone unturned and continue to use all the tools that we have right now in trying to ensure that we reach the people that are there.

Those are the main points of the bill, those points that I mentioned. I talked about one that we're not going to do it this time, but there are a couple of things we're doing that I think that members of the House would be interested in, and they're things that I think, again, are long overdue and that we need to reach out and get more people involved as well. This is not just an individual's problem; this is a societal problem. This is something that I think we all need to take seriously.

I'm very disheartened when I hear of things like people working under the table and their employer is going along with that because they don't want to garnish their wages. So they know that the person, if we knew where they were we would garnish their wages, so they work under the table in collusion with an employer. People have to realize that there are children here who are being left uncared for because there isn't money, because a parent isn't doing what they need and should do.

So we want to be very, very clear that this needs all of us to recognize that harm is being done when somebody isn't paying their maintenance support to their family. And, so, with that, one thing I am doing - in fact it was just today I signed letters as a first - I guess a first reaching out to some professional societies and to chiefs of police across the province including the RCMP, and I asked in those letters if they would work with us if any of their members are in arrears and persistent arrears with maintenance enforcement.

So, for example, the one group I've spoken to is the Barristers' Society. There are many lawyers in the province, as we know, and we also know from experience that the people who are in arrears, and some of the people of the 20 per cent that I said are persistently ignoring us are members of professional societies, have positions that should be positions of respect. So they can be members of the police force or the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society or doctors or nurses or architects or engineers; we could go through all of the professions. I wanted to reach out and say if we notified you that one of your members was in arrears, would you or within your guidelines or your codes of conduct or standards of practice, are there ways that you could sanction that member? Could you help us? You don't want people in your profession to be basically ignoring court orders and ignoring the law.

As you can appreciate, the Barristers' Society was receptive because any member of the Barristers' Society is a lawyer, and they are sworn to uphold the law. They understand what a court order is. They don't have the excuse that maybe some people do about not understanding the importance of this. They said, absolutely if a member was ignoring a court order, they would be in contravention of their rules and standards.

I'm not sure what any of the other professional societies or other groups will do, but we want to reach out to them and ask could they consider this, could they look at it. It isn't our place to tell a professional association how to react or what to do, but we want them to have the discussion. We want to know if they will be part of the solution here as we try to have parents do what is right.

That's one that we're just setting in motion, and others may hear about it as those letters go out. I am going to be clear: I'm not directing anybody. I'm trying to have the discussion. I think that that's important.

Another thing I'm very excited about, Mr. Speaker, is that we are working to impact the credit rating of a person who is greatly in arrears with our program - again, a person who persistently won't pay, who is always in arrears, who hasn't gone back to get the court order changed and worked with the system if there is a legitimate reason why they can't pay. We are going to do what anybody else who is owed money would do. If you owe money to the bank on your mortgage, or you default on a loan to the bank, or you don't pay your Visa, or you're not paying your credit cards to stores, they take action. They put your name into Equifax. They tell that credit rating agency that you're in arrears, that you're not paying well. That has a big impact on people's ability to go buy a new house or a car or some other big thing. Other businesses, retail and otherwise, look at your credit rating.

We felt it was wrong, and I heard this directly from a mother who said that while she was struggling with the help of her parents, the grandparents, to keep a standard of living for her son, her ex-husband was paying nothing. In the midst of her credit rating being completely blown because she had to use every avenue of debt that she could access, in the midst of that, her ex-partner is out buying new cars and living the life. That's not right. So we want to see that the person who owes the money treats this just as seriously as if they owed money to the bank or on their mortgage or somewhere else and that it has repercussions not to pay maintenance enforcement. I think this is very exciting.

This didn't require a change in the Act. You won't find it in the Act. But it is something we've been working on. It does require a legal agreement with Equifax, again, to protect information, to make sure that what we're providing is done in the proper manner. It requires us to have the policies in place - and I know this is important - that once we send information that a payer is in arrears, we also need to correct that if they begin to pay. We have to make sure that we are ready to do all of that so that we do it right. In order to do that, it's going to take a couple of months, but my hope is that it will be in place by January. That, I think, is not too many months away, and we'll be able to begin to impact the credit rating of a person who is scoffing at us, ignoring court orders, and not looking after their obligations.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think my time may be up; I'm not sure, maybe. I really am looking forward to hearing from the members opposite and members of my caucus who

would like to speak on this. I want to let the members of the House know that this is a tremendously important priority.

It is a very small part of the Department of Justice. We have about 35 employees in Maintenance Enforcement - it's under 40 anyway- and we have 1,600 people working in the Department of Justice. But this little program has been ignored. It has been allowed to be less than it should be. This last year, we've been trying to find the resources to provide the training, the website, the improvements to information, better systems in place, and better support for the people calling. We're doing all of that because we believe that this small Maintenance Enforcement Program is tremendously important to the people of Nova Scotia, to the mothers and fathers who have the responsibility of looking after their children. Regardless of family breakdown, they still have that responsibility. It is a priority of our Premier as well, and that's why we are going to do the right thing. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, thank you for acknowledging me. This is important legislation. I know we, here in this Chamber, have calls on a frequent basis from people who are struggling with maintenance enforcement issues.

I will start by saying that we, in the Progressive Conservative caucus, believe that Nova Scotians should pay support payments owed to their children and their spouses. We think about the impact this has on people's lives, it's not just about money, it's about what that lack of money means for families who probably have enough stress on them as it is - single parents trying to give their children the best upbringing they can. That's not easy with one person, let alone having money problems put on top of that.

This legislation - and I have taken a look through it, Mr. Speaker - there's certainly some teeth in this legislation. I think that one of the big complaints by people who have not been receiving the money that has been awarded to them by the courts is that the system isn't able to get the money for them, even though they have been awarded that monthly amount of money.

There has been a call for more teeth in the regulations and in the legislation here, so that the system is empowered to do more things to ensure those payments are made, so I think that's a good thing. Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate there's even a need for this legislation. Many people out there would give away one of their limbs for their children, for the well-being of their children, but there are people who, for whatever reason, and we won't go into it here, they don't feel the same way. Maybe they have problems in their life, maybe there are reasons contributing to that, and you never know until you walk a mile in a person's shoes. There are people who are not coming through on their payments and that has to be addressed. That's why I think the teeth are needed in this kind of legislation, in those cases.

Now, I do have sympathy in situations where a spouse may have lost their job, or may have had a change in their income, and if there are delays in their ability to communicate that, and to get their monthly payments adjusted, because of course in that situation, they would be going through a very stressful time, and they may be having a hard time putting bread on their own table, let alone looking after their children and their former spouse.

Mr. Speaker, I do have sympathy for people in that situation but again, that's an example of where the system can be improved to ensure that no matter what happens on either side, between either spouse, that the system has the ability to move quickly and effectively to make adjustments, as the case may be.

Mr. Speaker, I know the minister talked about the recommendations and about making the response to the recommendations transparent. I think that's important to give people confidence in the system. We have been asking questions here, in the Opposition, because we believe this to be an important issue and we want to make it important and bring relevance to it by asking questions here in the Legislature, so we're glad to see progress.

Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that this legislation is going to give the province and the Maintenance Enforcement Program more power to do its job. So we will be looking forward to seeing in Law Amendments Committee, there may be views coming forward from the legal community on this, there may be people who have been payors and payees coming forward to tell their stories. We are interested to hear their perspective on this legislation, and their perspective on how they feel this legislation might help in their particular situation. There is no substitute for practical experience when it comes to finding out if legislation is actually effective. If anybody out there is thinking about coming forward to Law Amendments Committee, they should. It is an opportunity for anyone to walk in right off the street, and come into the Red Room in this Legislature, which is across the hall from us, where we are here today in the Chamber, and they can have their say on this bill. We look forward to hearing from people at Law Amendments Committee.

I also want to make a couple of points, Mr. Speaker. I know the office was moved to New Waterford for Maintenance Enforcement, and I know that caused a lot of upheaval, and the office was short-staffed for some time, perhaps adding more frustration for people who may have already been frustrated with the system, but that decision was made. It's in the past, the office is where it is, and the important thing is that things are starting to come together, and improving, and I think the office is fully staffed now, or thereabouts. That is important and that's good to see.

I know this is not an easy field to be working in, you are dealing with people who may not be having their best day, and you are the person tasked to solve a problem that you might not actually have the power to solve that day. Hopefully this legislation will help

and that's all we can ask for, that people are empowered to do their job to make things easier.

There are going to be people who are not going to make their payments, they are going to try to skip out on their responsibilities, and those people need to be dealt with. Hopefully this legislation will help with that.

Just a small note somewhat related to this topic, it's something I've discovered in my own constituency, and it's a federal matter, Mr. Speaker, it's the Child Tax Benefit. I came across an example in my constituency of where the father - I know the minister mentioned the issues of gender and oftentimes it is women who are going without payment, but in this particular case the gentleman, he's a father - was caring for the children and the Child Tax Benefit was going to the mom, yet the children were with the father.

Of course we investigated, and it turns out that the federal government only makes payments to the mother. That is an issue. It may not be 95 per cent of the cases, Mr. Speaker, but even if it's a couple of cases, the federal government should be looking at that, and perhaps it's something the minister may bring up in her discussions when she's meeting with the federal government, to ensure that those funds are finding their way to the parent who is actively raising those children.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing the comments of my colleagues. There is one point, I almost forgot, one of my colleagues mentioned to me about the legislation, about the key words of people working in Maintenance Enforcement, if they - we often see legislation where it's written that you "may" do something, versus you "shall" do something. If the word "may" is in there, it might allow a loophole for somebody not to go after somebody who may owe money.

I'm not going to get into that too much, Mr. Speaker, because it was not a point I was raising myself and I know that member will want a chance to put that on the record himself but I just want to raise that here at second reading for the minister's benefit. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: I am very pleased to have the opportunity to stand and make some comments with regard to this legislation. I concur with the comments that have been made by both my colleagues. I certainly support this legislation.

It's an area of law, and I think the minister has probably dealt with that in some way, in her discussion of this legislation, but it's a unique area. We can look at the evolution, or I can, I suppose, in a sense from the last - I'm afraid to say it's over 30 years, I guess, since I started doing family law work and going into the courts.

Before we had this Maintenance Enforcement Program we had a system in the courts where they actually called it “show cause” day. So you would go in, and usually we were representing the people who were attempting to get money from the payer, trying to obtain their child support, it would be a long docket and all of us at Legal Aid hated show cause day. It was not a great day. It was very intense - a lot of people showing up, there were so many matters on the docket. Fifteen minutes at most you would have to go in there and try to sort out not only how much this person owed, but how much of it should be forgiven, which I always found just a little bit aggravating. The first thing we should be looking at is how much he owes. If he wants them forgiven, let him look after that. It shouldn't be part of our job. We used to get pretty frustrated with that.

It's like going into Small Claims Court except you don't have any time to present your case. Matters would get adjourned if you could convince it was worthy of getting a hearing date, but again you could be looking at days before it would get resolved. At the nub of it is getting the money on a timely basis and that has always been the struggle.

It's not of that much use for a person to - well never mind the level of stress that the parent would be going through to have to deal with the fact that am I going to get the cheque? Am I going to be able to make the rent, pay the phone bill, get the groceries? The cheque didn't come in, rent is in arrears. Then it would take months and it would accumulate, and then maybe if you're really lucky in six months' time you might get a substantial amount of money, but by then - have you been evicted? It was just always problematic.

I guess the other aspect of this type of law is that it evolves from a certain level of, historically, paternalism. The wife and the children were seen essentially as the property of the father and for some reason it seemed that the law evolved that when people were able to get - decided and divorce and separation became much more common, we still maintained that paternalism about the women and the children.

For a long period of time, I can remember very clearly in the courtroom the judge saying why are you pushing him for that amount of money - it's going to be deducted from her social assistance cheque anyway, so let the province pay for it. Well, I'm not a conservative, but I didn't like that approach to it. If the person had the ability to pay, the person should be paying it. It took a long time, and the sad part of it is that we're still not there because the enforcement aspect still reflects a lot of that paternalism.

I think what did happen to make it so much more challenging for the Maintenance Enforcement Program was the federal child support guidelines. When they came into existence there was a chart and it was available and everybody could look at it - this is your gross income, you have these many children, this is what you pay. I think that maybe - and the support guidelines were fair, but I think at the time shockingly higher than the typical child support awards or spousal support awards - that's another category - that were being given out in the courts.

So even within the judiciary the support orders were low. And it wasn't until we had that - and I do believe it came from our, and I mentioned this before, it's all a question of when we started seeing female judges on the bench, including at the Supreme Court of Canada level, and I would say Justice Bertha Wilson played a big role in moving us along. It has evolved, but here we are dealing with this situation. I'd say, I don't have any problem with the amendments and putting more teeth into it, increasing the powers of the investigators, but I worry about the fact that there's 35 people employed - when you look at the thousands - and, I think our recovery is 63 per cent. That's one statistic that I noticed in passing, is we are able to collect the appropriate amounts of money, and Maintenance Enforcement is able to do, but it leaves a huge percentage, and that's a lot of work, and that's a lot of applications, and increasing the powers of the investigators is a good thing.

I was not aware until today, when I heard the minister speak, that the investigators were not - it has been a long time since I've had hands on in this type of work - I didn't realize the investigators were underutilized, so one of the comments I was going to make today is that we need additional investigators - I think I may still be right on that point, but if they've been underutilized, then it will be really interesting to see what will happen if the enforcement officers turn the work over to them to handle.

There is another aspect in the legislation which allows the director to allow the recipient to get involved in the investigation as well. The recipient has to have the consent of the director to do that, and I'm not sure - these things will be fleshed out further, whether at Law Amendment Committee or at third reading - I'm not sure if there's any restrictions put on that, if the director says you're permitted to do this, this, and this, I think that might lead to some confusion, I don't know. It's a minor point, but I would suggest it might be something that would be worthwhile looking at.

I did note, as well, that there's a shift here. There may be a little bit of the department having said, we can't manage, and I think when we see the number of outstanding orders, and the number of cases, that's absolutely understandable. I think it's also reflective, when the consultation took place, the number of times people commented about their manner of being treated by staff, and that, to me, is directly a result of being really stressed out at your job. People don't want to be rude to people phoning. You don't want to be at work saying, gee I wish could avoid that phone call, or, is there a way I can avoid it, because you're so stressed out at work.

Then, of course, it's constituents - I've heard it from my own constituents in Dartmouth South, that they've been treated poorly or that they were made to feel insignificant, or made to feel low, just because you are a recipient, maybe you're not as worthy of me being decent to you as anybody else, and I think there was a bit of tainted feeling that people had. I hope that with the new training that the minister alluded to, that these things will be rectified at least now there's an awareness of that.

Is the department kind of giving up, to a certain degree, and saying, let's let the recipients do some of their investigation? I don't know. I don't know how that will play out.

Regardless, I think overall - I've consulted with some of my former legal colleagues in relation to this. They're pleased to see this moving forward. I'm really happy about the attention it's being given. When the Act came into effect 20 years ago, what ended up happening is that - at least through Legal Aid, where we had been doing a lot of these cases, we had our own review at the time, and there was a big concern about the caseload and our own liability issues.

When this Act came into effect, we were no longer involved. It wasn't court, which was our mandate: to represent people in the courts. This became a self-standing enforcement process. So they didn't have access to lawyers. Essentially, we might be representing payers who were seeking to change the orders. We continued to represent individuals who wanted to change their orders, whether they were payers or recipients.

But you could see where the system really got bogged down right at the beginning. I'm not sure that it has ever been considered to be particularly - I guess it has had some success. It definitely has had some success for sure.

Clearly if there had been the resources put into it that need to be put in - we're in these austerity times, I guess, but it's trying to wield things, shift things around and not really getting at it. The Premier says I just like to throw money at stuff, but you know what? Sometimes it's not throwing money at stuff. It's making sure the right people are hired and can do their job effectively. That is my concern with this. But I'm saying that not having a complete picture of what's happening here, and I'm sure that will emerge in time.

I'm just going to conclude my comments by saying I really want to thank the minister for your work on this. It means so much to women. It does. It has been so unrecognized and pushed under the rug. It has been like that for a long, long time. Anything that we can do to push it to the forefront - just the consultation itself for recipients would make them feel so empowered and that they're being listened to. I do believe that the minister is listening, and I'm very appreciative of that.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: I'll just be a couple of minutes. I wasn't going to get up and speak, but I wanted to tell the minister that I'm really, really pleased that this bill has been brought forward.

I do look forward to the Law Amendments Committee because it's always interesting to hear both sides. I truly believe that this is a step in the right direction and that

there's a lot of teeth to this bill that a lot of individuals have been waiting for for a long, long time.

I'm really, really pleased that the minister has also identified that it's really not gender-related. I understand that there's definitely more women. I'm one of them.

I've been divorced for 10 years, but I'm one of the lucky ones. When you do get divorced, usually you sign off that you want to have enforcement work with you to make sure that you receive your child benefits. But I didn't because I knew that my ex would follow through. I just want to give a shout-out to him. In 10 years, he has not missed a payment every Friday.

I think it's really unfortunate when marriages have to break down. It's really, really difficult, and you're only as happy as your saddest child. The stress that is brought on in a good divorce, but imagine the stress that is brought on in a bad divorce or separation, it's extremely delicate.

I have witnessed it time and time again with friends. In fact, just recently in this job we were able to see an individual who has been struggling for almost 15 years just receive an amount of \$67,000.

I really want to say that creating what the minister has brought forward and going through the implementation of this extra model to really properly monitor this and safeguard the financial security for a mother or father so they can best care for their children is definitely a step in the right direction. The adversity that people experience in this situation is so crippling at times. I've seen individuals who haven't been able to work, it's constantly on their mind, and we all know that at the end of the day it's the child who struggles.

Really, I just want to say thank you again for putting all this effort into it. It has been a long time coming. I know there's going to be - I don't know if you said 16,000 individuals out there, so I just feel this is absolutely something that's in the right direction, so thank you so much.

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

MS. JOYCE TREEN: I'm very happy to rise today to speak to these amendments to the Maintenance Enforcement Act. Actually, to be honest, it brings a smile to my face. These amendments will strengthen enforcement of the court orders for children and their families. It will make families' lives better.

These changes will increase authority to enforce court orders, expand powers to locate parents who are presently in arrears on payments, and make it easier to share and gather information from other departments and courts. Collection rates will improve so

families that depend on these payments will not struggle every month; 16,400 children and their families rely on support payments made through this program, 96 per cent of all the people in this program are women, that's sad.

Mr. Speaker, these important payments in most cases determine what people and families will eat for the month, whether their needed clothes can be bought and whether the rent can be paid. To have to worry every month, as a family, as to whether the money will be there is a terrible stress on all families involved.

My office, as well as many MLA offices, has heard the frustration of parents concerning this. I am always baffled by how and why a parent can turn away from the responsibilities of being a parent to a child. If a family breaks up, you are still responsible, as a parent, to your child to support them. Parents give them life.

As human beings we care for our young but unfortunately, in this world we live in, there are people who feel it is okay to walk away from their responsibilities and even to hide from them and to leave the other parent to bear the job of total support and care. This is why we have to strengthen the legislation with these amendments. We want to support these children and parents so their lives are less stressful and worrisome.

Mr. Speaker, the Nova Scotia Government conducted a review of the Maintenance Enforcement Program. The consultation started the end of April 2016. It involved an online survey that targeted discussions and included stakeholders such as Status of Women, the family law Bar, the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society, a grandparents association, a client consultation group, and the judiciary. There are five themes and 27 recommendations. The department accepted all the recommendations. The department has already implemented some of the changes needed for this program.

There are now bi-monthly training plans in place to ensure that the staff understand the scope of their authority. A permanent senior manager has been hired for New Waterford. Dedicated staff now respond to telephone inquiries and direct calls to the appropriate resources. Staff have been trained in client services and de-escalation skills. Key job requirements and expectations have been developed for all positions, including expecting results in demonstrating a positive client experience. These expectations are included in the interviews for new hires as well.

A file transition policy has been developed and implemented to ensure that clients are notified of new caseworkers and that there is a minimum delay associated with this transaction. The program completed an extensive file review to determine the status of files and caseload assignments to improve efficiency. This information is now included in a monthly audit report.

System reports have been developed to assist in better case management, measure productivity, and reduce errors. The benefit of electronic payments for payors and direct

deposits for recipients as preferred methods of payment processing are actively promoted. Clients can view a list online of all the enforcement actions taken on their file. The phone line has been upgraded for better monitoring and to ensure that staff are available to answer calls. As a result of these efforts, enforcement actions are up and arrears are down in cases where arrears have been enforceable.

With all the changes that have already taken place, we are seeing a lot of positive advancement in this program: 309 drivers' licences have been suspended in 2015-16, that is up from 196 the previous year; we have 28 court applications currently underway; and we are up \$1 million in the collection of payments from last year. If the payor is three months in arrears or owes more than \$3,000, there is a suspension of their passport. Unfortunately, \$13 million is not enforceable due to payors being on social assistance or incarcerated.

With these new amendments in place, we will be able to, without notice, suspend and prevent renewal of drivers' licences or vehicle registrations for those who too often are in arrears. Now we must give 30 days' notice, so they would just pay and go into arrears again, so that doesn't really do a lot.

We will have the authority to hold additional money seized or garnished from future payments even after the outstanding arrears are paid. This is for those who persistently do not pay their support payments.

We will increase our ability to locate payors who avoid paying. It will be easier to obtain certain information to find and contact parents who don't pay. We will be able to get information like SINS, photographs, ID information, and information from other government departments and courts.

Serving notice will change too. We will send a notice to the last known mailing address or email, and it will be expected to have been received 10 days after it is sent. Both parents must provide updated information. Not notifying us of a change of contact information will no longer be an excuse.

With these amendments to this important piece of legislation, it puts us in line with other provinces, but with some of the actions in the changes to this bill, it puts Nova Scotia in a leadership position. We want, as a government, to do what is necessary to help children and families on this program receive the support they deserve.

The Maintenance Enforcement Program has had some challenges with the last government relocating it 5 hours away from its former location, which caused a lot of experienced staff not to move long with the program. But the Premier and this government are committed to bringing back the quality of work that was lost from this program.

We now have better customer service, better communications with family involved, more testing for staff, better use for technology, and better use of enforcement tools. And now with these proposed amendments to the Maintenance Enforcement Act, we look forward to even better successes in helping our families enrolled in this important program to have better outcomes. I would also like to thank the staff of the program for all their hard work.

We can see the difference in your commitment with the increased enforcement numbers, and reaching out to clients. The amendments to this piece of legislation will provide you with some more needed tools to help Nova Scotians in this program receive the support payments they need to live happier lives. With that, I will take my seat. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: It's my pleasure to say a few words to the bill. I have not had a lot of experience with maintenance enforcement personally, but I have had a number of constituents and people around the province who, over the past year, have emailed about maintenance enforcement, and some of the issues they see with the program as it was.

My comments would be more of a question to the minister, maybe to clarify one issue that was brought up to me in the past with maintenance enforcement, and I could summarize that issue to be the difference in between "may" or "shall". And it is my understanding that in some jurisdictions across our country, some provinces, when it comes to maintenance enforcement, the wording of the act is "shall". In other words, the director of Maintenance Enforcement "shall" enforce maintenance enforcement.

So, it doesn't matter if the perception is that, for whatever reason, Maintenance Enforcement sometimes can choose not to go after a deadbeat spouse - a deadbeat dad - and in most cases it would in our province, but in some cases it chooses not to for a variety of reasons. I noticed here in Section 9, subsection 19(3):

"The Director may include in the amount required to be deducted and paid to the Director pursuant to subsection (1)

(a) any amount in arrears under a maintenance order;"

In other words, this is saying the director may or may not choose to go after a spouse that has not paid. That wording was problematic in the old Act, and I know I am not reading the whole Act - I am only reading the changes here.

I would like to ask the minister if this Act will come in line with some other provinces in the country, which say Maintenance Enforcement "shall" enforce the act, not "may".

The parents who brought this issue up to me also had a concern in that section in Item C “the director may include any costs and fees of the director prescribed pursuant to this act”. In other words, Maintenance Enforcement could get some cost recovery from the spouse or deadbeat dad that didn’t pay. Obviously, we would all think, that’s great. This person is causing not only grief to his own children, but also causing Maintenance Enforcement some added expenses to go after this person.

So it’s great that there is some cost recovery there and that’s all logical, but I will just convey to you the issue that was conveyed to me. This may be only one or two people, Mr. Speaker, but there is a belief that if there is really nothing there for cost recovery on the part of Maintenance Enforcement, maybe they will look up on this as a “may” and not a “shall”, and not go after that. So, if Maintenance Enforcement can see that there is not really a lot of money to be had there, they will not go after that person, knowing there is nothing for themselves, and very little for the partner who is raising children.

I would maintain that even a small amount of money to someone who is living on the poverty line makes a huge difference. My belief is this bill should be written so that the director of Maintenance Enforcement shall enforce maintenance enforcement in every case, whether it’s a very small amount of money and there’s nothing there for cost recovery for the Maintenance Enforcement division or not.

I guess my question would be to ask the minister to clarify that, and if it hasn’t been written in that language, maybe there was a specific reason why. What I see right now in this document is that this terminology of “may” has continued and is here present in the document. I’m disappointed to see that, and I know that the constituents who raised that issue with me would be disappointed to see that. I believe the language should be: Maintenance Enforcement “shall” enforce the Act and maintenance enforcement and not have the option of choosing, on occasion, not to enforce it.

Those, Mr. Speaker, are my comments about the document as I see it right now, and I realize I may not be fully briefed on that or know all the issues but that is what I see there. I think it’s a concern not only to me, but I know it’s a concern to people in the province. With those comments, I’ll take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, I have mixed emotions standing here today talking about this bill, only because it’s long overdue, and I congratulate the current and the past Ministers of Justice whom I know have both worked very diligently on this.

As the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act and as somebody who has worked with women for the last 15 or 16 years, I know the stress, the anxiety, the angst, that comes with not knowing if your ex-partner is going to fulfill their obligation at the end of the month. I know that classes, extracurricular classes, team

sports, food, and rent all get affected in the most profound ways, and the stress it causes on the custodial parent is incredibly unfair. It's incredibly taxing on families who are already stressed due to the breakdown of a family.

I'll share something personal. The day after I found out that I was expecting my son, I left my husband. When I left him, I had the expectation that he would step up to the plate, meet me halfway, and fulfill his obligations as a father. That, unfortunately, didn't happen. When I hear the member for Pictou West talk about her experience, I do so with admiration and envy because I can tell you right now that my son is 26 years old and I have never, ever, received a penny of child support in his life.

I tried to correct that through Maintenance Enforcement, and it was more stressful on my mental health than it was advantageous for me to continue with the process. It was extraordinarily stressful because he wasn't in the country. He is Dutch, so he went back to Holland, and trying to mediate that course of action and process was extraordinarily difficult. Finally I just simply gave up.

I'll tell you, on the record, what that does to a single parent - in my case a single mother raising a son - it meant there were no extras. It meant there were toys that he wanted that I couldn't afford. It meant saying no more than it meant saying yes. It meant explaining to him why his mother, in spite of the fact that she was in school or working, could not afford all of the things that his two-parent friends and their families could. That is the emotional and personal effect on 96 per cent of women in this province who do not get regular payments through Maintenance Enforcement. That's the real effect. That is the effect on children of growing up knowing that a parent doesn't care enough about them to make sure that they are taken care of, not only in their basic necessities but also in the extras that every child deserves from two parents.

The argument that I used to get a lot in my work - certainly not from my ex-husband, because we never had any conversations about this - was that it was money that I would spend, or money that she would spend, and she would not spend it on the children. It doesn't matter. That money doesn't belong to him. It doesn't belong to her. It belongs to kids. We as a society, we as a government - any government - should do everything that we can to make sure that parents, whether they're moms or they're dads, fulfill their obligations. That's as simple as it is.

When I have conversations with my son, who is not a parent yet, around responsibility as a man and as a parent, he understands what his obligation is if he ever becomes a father because he saw his mother struggle because of his father. He saw her declare bankruptcy twice. He saw her work long hours. He saw himself as a latchkey kid because I couldn't afford daycare or babysitting. He saw far more noes in his life than yesses, if I'd had a supportive, responsible, respectful partner, who made this child with me, step up to the plate.

I'm glad, on behalf of the many women in Nova Scotia, that we're moving forward with this. It's a program that I think, when it was started in the 1990s, had the best of intentions. When the previous government moved it, I don't think they meant any malice in that. I don't think they understood maybe what the unintended consequences of that would be. I certainly saw it on the lives of my clients at Alice Housing. I think we all want what's best for kids in this province.

With those few words, if I was in any way able to put a personal face on the effects of parents not paying their child support, I am glad to do that. In terms of what it will mean now for women going forward, we now have a mechanism. We have many mechanisms now. We have a piece of legislation that now has teeth, that now has consequences.

I think it will make an extraordinary difference in the lives of mostly women who are living without the support payments from their ex-partners. With that, I'll take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. DIANA WHALEN: I'm really pleased that other members of the House rose and spoke on this bill and the amendments as well because I think it is something that transcends any Party lines and is just about the right thing to do. I'm really pleased that there's nothing dogmatic about it or divisive. I think we see that this is the direction to go and to try to do everything we can within our power to do better with maintenance enforcement and better by those 16,400 children who are covered by this program.

There were a few comments made. First of all, I really want to thank all the members. I've said before that my favourite part of being an MLA is not the work we do in the House, but I do like it when we're here, and we're dealing with something substantive and making laws that can make a difference. I really like that. For new members, I think it does show that there's a time and a place for this kind of debate. Even if there are questions that we need to answer or things that we want to tweak, we are all trying to do the right thing and move in the right direction. I really thank you for that. It does warm my heart because this is something that we've been working on very diligently for the last 12 months and more.

The staff have been mentioned by a number of you, and I can't tell you how hard they've been working. They have really - we talked about putting your shoulder to the wheel, and they have been working so hard to change their systems to get more training to - when you're doing a lot of change there's a lot of change management involved and there's been a lot of uproar while you changed how we do things, and I can only tell you that they've done a tremendous job, they're working very hard. It's not easy, and one of the things I would definitely say about it - I want to thank them as well as others have done. They're showing great commitment in increasing the enforcement numbers, reaching out

to clients who are looking for answer, and as a result of that, in the past year, as the member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage had said, our numbers are up. I didn't mention so much how well we've been doing, but we are up. We've collected \$1 million more last year that went back to families. The number of cases in arrears is down about 4 per cent, which means we've been able to pull some of those cases into the category of paying on time and working well, and it isn't easy. Each one of those is a success, and I really do take my hat off and thank them for doing that. As I say, there has been a lot of change.

In terms of how we're doing it, we've tried to be more specialized. We've got a couple of the enforcement officers now who deal only with inter-jurisdictionals, so they've become more expert in knowing who to call in other provinces, and how their systems work, and how they can advance those cases. We have somebody who's specializing in the intake, so that everybody who's signing up for MEP gets the same, good orientation to what their responsibilities are and what Maintenance Enforcement can do, so everybody's coming in with good information. That helps.

We've tried to take some of the cases that are paying on time and are good payors. As we heard, there are those cases. Around 63 per cent are paying on time and are reliable, and we need to applaud them. Those are people who are doing the right thing, and I think it's important to note that Maintenance Enforcement is not just a program for people who are not going to be good parents. It's a great program for everybody who's gone through the courts, and got a court order to sign up for, because it does take some of the tension and some of the emotion out of those payments, it allows someone else to collect them and make sure they get into the right person's account, and it works very well for people who have an amicable separation or divorce.

So, I would recommend that we encourage all of our constituents and Nova Scotians to sign up for it, because I've had other people come to me 10 years later, and say well, we didn't sign up because we didn't think we were a family that was in that kind of strife, that we were going to be good, and you never know what's going to happen in the future - things can change - and you may need the power of Maintenance Enforcement. So, you can come in later, you can certainly sign up later but better to come in and get everything off to the right start. I really think that should be a message we take back to our constituencies. Please, use that program, it's there to help you, and I think we should do that.

As I said, we have still a long way to go in terms of how we are organizing our staff, how we get the best productivity, but the people who are paying well can really be managed by enforcement assistance. We don't need the full enforcement officer to do that, we want them to focus on those difficult cases, the ones that are more difficult to keep up-to-date and in the right category. So, for that, they're working very hard, and that means that all of them are working on difficult cases really, all the enforcement officers.

So, a lot going on, and, again, my hat's off to the director of the program who has been driving that change and doing her very best, it's been a big, big difference, and we can't take our eye off the need to do this. It requires persistence, and it requires a lot of effort.

So, I appreciate that members said the changes before us are substantive. They're really not window dressing. This has got some real change, and I'm excited that we're able to bring this in.

Somebody mentioned about people leaving their job, and the garnishees, and I think it is important, going back to that 20 per cent who just don't want to pay, and account for 80 per cent of the arrears. We should, again, keep in mind that employers that allow people to do this illegally, to work illegally, or condone that - there should be some way that we hold them accountable as well, because it isn't right that people can do that, and we know that when we begin to garnishee on the persistent people that don't want to pay, they leave jobs, they feel so strongly about not co-operating that they will leave their job just because they have been found. So we have a big job to do in all of that.

At the same time I appreciate what the member for Inverness said. There is sympathy for people whose circumstances change, who don't have the same amount of money. I don't want to suggest that we don't listen, but the courts have a mechanism to look after that. If you go back and apply to the courts you can have your court order changed.

We can also do financial - we do something, I think they call it investigation, but you are obliged to come in with your financial information and at that time we can look at it and give them advice on the next step, if they have less. But keep in mind that sometimes things change for the better and you don't see people running in to increase the court order to give more money to their families. So bear in mind there's always that flip side. I'm a little bit of a skeptic, I guess.

I think we need to remain compassionate on both fronts. Life is complicated, there are changes that come in our lives and we need to have systems in place that recognize it, so I will continue to look at that.

One of the questions raised by the member for Dartmouth South was about the ability for a recipient to begin enforcement efforts themselves. What's really behind that is that in the past, if a recipient chose to go to court or to take any action like that or anything that was I guess interpreted as enforcement action, they would no longer be eligible to be in the program, you would have to be out of the program and essentially it was up to the director - if they felt they saw any enforcement action, they could kick you out of the Maintenance Enforcement Program. It was that cut and dried.

There have been some high profile cases where people have gone to court and therefore no longer had the services of maintenance enforcement. I think that's really what's behind it, I don't think it will happen often but now, working with maintenance enforcement, it would mean - I'll give a good example - if we withdrew our services we might give back the passport to the individual who was involved, give back a driver's licence, we are no longer involved anymore. We would stop all our enforcement actions and that would be the consequence.

I think it makes sense that if we allow somebody to take other action on their own that we would still keep those garnishees or garnishments or the powers that we've already exercised in place. So I think it is the right thing to give the director now the power to say that a person could stay in the program. I'm happy to see that and I think it's the right thing to do.

Again, I want to applaud the percentage of people who are paying. It's interesting, it's close to 63 per cent who pay on time and we saw, again, 63 per cent recovery of funds, roughly. I questioned that and said it's terrible. I'm told it's the national average, that across Canada it's about 63 per cent, and it isn't good enough. I think we've said that here today, none of us believe that's good enough. In Nova Scotia we want to be leaders and we want to take the best of what we've seen across the country, bring it here, bring it to bear and do our best to lead the country in showing how we can improve that. That is my aim - having 35 per cent of the payers in arrears or not keeping up to date on their obligations is too high.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I also look forward to the Law Amendments Committee and what we might hear. I really hope we do hear from some payers as well as recipients, if people come out, because it is hard for us to often get that input. As I said, we have tried in our consultation. We also have a client consultation group that we speak to and we wanted it to be a mixture of payers and recipients. Right now it's all recipients because we couldn't find anybody who would like to come forward and be that consultative group that we could speak to about these changes which we have used their input as we've gone forward.

I think often it seem to me it's the Family Bar, the lawyers who work in family law who are a good source of information. They give us both sides of the story. I found our consultation evening with them very informative and a good number of them came out, so it was very helpful.

Mr. Speaker, as I say, I look forward to the Law Amendments process and to seeing this hopefully move through and finish. With that, I would like to close second reading on Bill No. 44. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 44. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that the adjourned debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be now resumed.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: It's my privilege to once again stand and speak for a few moments in Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. As we know, the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne comes in a whole bunch of different varieties. Some are critical of the information that's held within that document. Some are critical of the government. Some just want to talk about their constituencies and how government affects it, its concerns and how it wants to move forward in the future. I will take the last example and use it to talk about issues that are important to Argyle-Barrington, ones that I hear about in my constituency office, when I'm out and about at different functions, or when I'm having a coffee at Tim Hortons.

First of all, in the beautiful constituency of Argyle-Barrington, of course, we need to talk about the great summer that we have had. We had a beautiful summer. For a constituency which prides itself on its beaches, I can tell you it was one that was second to none when it came to being able to get out and about, to enjoy our natural habitat, to be out on the beaches, or to be out at the cottage. This was the summer for it. We had a number of days in sequence of really nice sunny and warm days, which is not something that happens quite often in southwest Nova Scotia. As a matter of fact, I know the member for Queens-Shelburne can probably agree that many summers, you really can't even see your neighbour's house because there's so much fog and dampness. So this was a special summer for that.

The unfortunate side effect of that great summer is the drought that we are still experiencing in many communities in southwest Nova Scotia. I'm not a meteorologist, but I do have a number of friends who profess to be. There's been a very interesting phenomenon that's been happening in southwestern Nova Scotia. There's really a line. Clare-Digby is on the other side of that line, even though they did experience some dryness,

and there are some wells that have been negatively impacted by it. But there's a line there that I would say is even below Yarmouth and sort of crosses over to about Shelburne. Everything on the south side of that line didn't get rain. When rain has been forecast, communities above that line seem to be getting three or four inches of rain. The line before it, which would include the communities of Wedgeport, Pubnico, Woods Harbour, and Cape Island - those communities maybe got half of that rain, even less in some cases.

Today, we still have a number of our constituents who are experiencing the drought. Their well is not rebounding quick enough in order for them to use it, so therefore they are availing themselves of the help of the community and availing themselves of the help of the fire departments and the other groups that have provided water to those communities. Slowly we're seeing some changes. Will it change enough that these households will be able to use their wells when the winter season comes? I know over the last couple of days we've had a definite change in season where it did get a lot colder. I would suggest that maybe over the next number of weeks, we will be experiencing far colder weather and maybe even some icing up. I hope not because I do love the Fall. The Fall is definitely my favourite season of the year. It gets cooler, the leaves are beautiful, and we get to experience a different time of year. But should the drought continue to go on when the land gets frozen, it will be Spring before some communities will truly get through this drought season.

I've called on the departments of government. I've called on the Premier. I had a couple of conversations with him here in the House and of course on the phone. I've talked to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, my neighbour, the member for Yarmouth, and I've asked them to maybe provide data. I'm not asking them for going to drill wells and do those kinds of things, but to at least to provide data to those communities, to those municipalities on what will be realistic responses by those government agencies.

We could say that we could go drill a number of wells or dig a number of wells in those communities, but if the water table really still isn't there and if the hydrology of the area doesn't support it, we'd actually be throwing bad money over good money - it would be a bit of a waste of time. So, I hope that that information becomes available to this House of Assembly, to those communities, so that they can make their decisions on how they're going to weather the winter.

In a number of cases, Mr. Speaker, what we have seen are individuals who have sort of adopted the cistern method of watering your house, where they've had the opportunity to put a tankage into their houses or next to their houses so that they can fill water into those so that they can use it later on. That's all well and good, but if you have a plastic tank outside supporting your pump, I guess is what most people would do, the wintertime will provide a problem where of course things will freeze and they won't be able to use that kind of system. We're not advanced enough in this problem to actually have infrastructure in place so they actually deal with it correctly - not like maybe in the area of Hants West, or even up in Victoria County, where there is contamination due to the

different geology in those areas where people do have cisterns on a regular basis and they do depend on them.

We don't have that infrastructure built into us yet and maybe if there's going to be some study by government departments to provide us with the right kind of infrastructure so that we can weather this problem should it be a more long-term problem. But, again, I want to thank the organizations who have stepped up. The municipalities have done a phenomenal job; the office of EMO has definitely stepped up in this situation; but more and more are the community members who have truly helped in this particular case where if your neighbour had water they of course have been more than welcome to share that water for our seniors who aren't able to bring in the big tanks of water or don't have the muscles enough to bring in those four litres, that community members have been supporting them as well to make sure that they have access to water. And in a lot of cases you have community members, not even relatives, who have come in and connected these water systems to their pump systems so that they can do very basic things.

Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, not being able to flush the toilet in your house, not be able to run your tap to make ice, to be able to run your tap to cook supper? They're all things that we do take for granted especially those who are in urban areas who have experienced a little bit of the drought, especially the people on the Dartmouth side of things who use the Lake Major watershed where they had to slow down on their water consumption. But in these cases, my mother-in-law would be a good example of that who every year experiences some kind of dry well, especially as September or end of August, September rolls around. But normally by now things are starting to pick up - again, she's not experiencing that pickup. So, I am concerned about my community on how they're going to weather this drought.

I want to congratulate all the new municipal councillors, all the people who put their names on the ballot during this municipal election. We had very little turnover in southwestern Nova Scotia or at least in Argyle-Barrington. I think there's one new member in Argyle; there's one new member in Barrington; and I think there are three new members in the Town of Clark's Harbour. All of those individuals who put their name forward, I thank them for participating in their civic duty, and I look forward to working with them over the next number of years.

They're in for four years. Of course, we have an election coming, so I'm not going to presume that I might be here after the next election. But I do hope that I'm here to continue working on behalf of our communities. Municipal partners are extremely important when it comes to how we do our job.

Monsieur le Président, j'aimerais aussi féliciter le nouveau, les nouveaux/nouvelles sénateurs, qui sont à Ottawa.

I want to congratulate the new senators who will be finding their way to Ottawa in the next number of days. Dan Christmas, a phenomenal individual who has participated in a number of issues facing the Province of Nova Scotia and, of course, his Aboriginal rights, as a member of that community for many years. I congratulate him for that work, and of course, for Wanda Thomas Bernard, who has been a force within the African Nova Scotian community but also here, across Nova Scotia, so congratulations to them.

Félicitations à Monsieur René Cormier. René vient juste de participer comme le président de la Société nationale de l'Acadie qui vient juste d'être mis comme sénateur au Sénat du Canada qui va représenter les acadiens dans s't'a scène là, donc je lui félicite et je lui donne mes meilleurs vœux de faire une job exceptionnelle. Mais, Monsieur le Président, je veux dire une chose quand ça vient à ça. C'est la première fois qu'on a pas de représentant acadien Néo-Écossais qui siège au Sénat du gouvernement, le Sénat d'Ottawa et j'espère dans le futur qu'on aura l'opportunité d'avoir un acadien de la Nouvelle-Écosse parce que si tu sais, Monsieur le Président, c'était le Sénateur Gerald Comeau qui a pris sa retraite quelques années passées déjà qui était notre ministre, qui était notre sénateur acadien Néo-Écossais et on a encore pas remplacé c'te position là. Donc, j'espère dans le futur que le gouvernement va prendre des détails, des informations de la communauté acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse pour faire sûr qu'on va avoir de la représentation Néo-Écossais.

Quickly in English on that one, Mr. René Cormier was also appointed to the Senate of Canada to be the Acadian representative in the Senate of Canada. This is the first time, and I congratulate him, he's a wonderful individual who is the President of the Acadian Society of Acadie, and is a phenomenal individual, and I wish him very well. But this is the first time we've had a true Acadian representative in the Senate of Canada since the senator Gerald Comeau took his retirement. I do hope that in the future, that we see an appointment of a Nova Scotian Acadian because the experience is different, whether you are an Acadian in New Brunswick or an Acadian in Nova Scotia. We're kind of the same, but we're a little bit different, and I hope that representation will continue into the future as well.

Southwest Nova Scotia is just like all regions of this province that need doctors. I know we talk about it a lot in this House of Assembly, and I don't envy the position that you, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, the member for Clare-Digby, is in when it comes to communities that so dearly want doctors but are unable to get one. I'm not going to speak about the situation there, we've talked about it in Question Period. What I want to talk about is what happens on the other side of Yarmouth. We know what's going on in Clare, we know what's going on in Weymouth, we know what's going on in Digby, so let's talk about the other side for a little bit that affects the constituents that I represent.

From a doctor standpoint, we're on the edge, I would suggest. We do have a number of doctors who are taking care of our constituents, but we are a breath away from all of that

falling apart. It only takes one retirement to truly affect the doctor representation in that area.

I have a number of doctors. If you look at - I don't think they mind me mentioning them - Dr. Blair who is 70-some years old, who is still seeing patients. He just has to say, "Listen, I'm done with this," and there's a number of thousands of patients who would be without a doctor.

We have Dr. Loveridge, who is looking at retiring but feels that he still has stuff to offer, and since his community is unable to truly replace him, he's there, but we're on the edge. If he leaves, we're in a bit of a pickle.

If we look at what's happening in Shelburne, it has a direct effect on what's happening on the Barrington side, or even on the Argyle side, of my constituency, with the rampant closures - actually, the last few weeks haven't been terrible, but there have still been a number of closures at the Roseway Hospital.

The people in Argyle-Barrington have a decision to make when they get sick or when they get hurt. They can go to Yarmouth, which is always open - thank goodness that's not ever closed, that I'm aware of - but we know that if you go there, you might be waiting there for eight or nine or 10 or 12 hours, waiting to see a doctor, depending on what your ailment is. So people in southwest Nova Scotia or in Argyle-Barrington make a decision, whether they go to Yarmouth and wait a long time or take a chance that Roseway is open and maybe not wait such a long time. It has been my experience at Roseway that within a couple of hours you're in and out of there with your stitches or the right drugs for your chest infection or whatever happens to be the problem for you. (Interruption) Yes, I can talk about that a little bit later too.

But we're on the edge, and those of us who don't have the problem today, I think we're worried about what the problem is going to be tomorrow. Once you have a problem, it's very difficult to bring yourself back to a place where everybody has a doctor.

I hope, as things continue along, that the government continues to take this seriously. I have no doubt that the government and the minister and the Premier take the doctor shortage seriously, but what I do hope is that maybe they take a better handle on it and work with the district health authority, not just pawn off all that information on the shoulders of the district health authority. They have a lot to deal with, and I believe this is one of those issues that gets put to the side sometimes as they're dealing with large issues.

I call on the minister and the Premier to keep their eyes on the ball on this one, to make sure that those communities that are represented will continue to be represented, and that communities that are not represented get the services they need. I understand where the minister is coming from when he talks about primary care, and that it takes a primary

care team in order to take care of those constituents, but what are those going to really look like?

We've already lived the experience of the previous government when they went around and started setting up the community emergency centres, or whatever you called them eventually - the collaborative practices that they - what were they called? (Interruptions) The CECs. There we go.

When the Collaborative Emergency Centres were set up, we had that experience of the change. All of them were a little bit different, and some of them worked really well, and some of them are still struggling to fulfill their mandate. My comment on that to the minister is that when he sets up these collaborative practices across the province, he has a model that's going to work - to take the experiences from other jurisdictions to ensure that we're going to have them all work, not just half of them.

It is going to be a challenge, and the gap is the part that we criticize the most - that when he says, and when the district health authority says, that this is going to be a five- to 10-year process, it's not good enough. My Leader, the member for Cumberland South, brought up an issue during Question Period this afternoon where somebody who requires care - she's expecting a baby, and she doesn't have a doctor, and she needs the help today, not five or 10 years down the road.

While I'm still on the health care side of things, I do want to underline something that's very important to the constituents of Argyle-Barrington, especially those constituents who are on the Barrington side of things, and even the Shelburne side of things, because they would all use that same service, and that's the issue of dialysis. I've asked that question a number of times in this House of Assembly. I've written a number of letters. We've had the minister come down and talk to the group that is interested in this, and we still don't have a solid answer on how things are. We do have a solid answer, and the answer is no. We continue to have a no. I don't think no is good enough on it.

Dialysis is something that continues to grow in our province, unfortunately. That is a response to the level of different kinds of illnesses we have in this province. We have diabetes, and we have cancer. It just goes on and on, the chronic diseases that we have, and a lot of those diseases break down the internal organs. Diabetes tends to be the biggest one that affects the kidneys and, therefore, puts people into renal failure, and they require dialysis. That continues to happen.

Yarmouth, which is the nearest dialysis unit to that area, I think is already on its third shift. There are actually three shifts happening there on a daily basis. They have a morning shift, an afternoon shift, and an evening shift. I forget the number of beds there. I think it's eight, but it could be actually more than that. If you do the multiplication here, there's a lot of people going through that facility on a daily basis. Quite honestly, in some

cases, they are looking at doubling up so there are actually two people sitting side-by-side in those units.

Wouldn't it be better if we looked at a more community approach to dialysis? Mr. Speaker, I think it would actually cost us just about the same we are spending today because of what's happening in Yarmouth. If they're going to be expanding, why wouldn't we expand it in another location? Why wouldn't we utilize the human resources that we have there?

There's a number of nurses who are travelling actually from Cape Island to Yarmouth to work at the dialysis unit. Why couldn't we just stop them there a couple of times a week in Barrington Passage or at Bayside or wherever that dialysis unit is going to be, and allow them to treat patients there, so those patients don't have to travel to Yarmouth, which is 100 kilometres away in some cases? One hundred kilometres away on a good day is one thing. One hundred kilometres when you're feeling good is good. But can you imagine, on a bad day, trying to travel that 100 kilometres, or if you've just received it or going to? Those patients feel like crap. They are not well. They're not well before they start their treatment, they're not well after their treatment, and they end up in a situation that they probably shouldn't be in.

Lee Goreham's husband, Artie Smith, is my example. Artie said I could talk about him any time I wanted to and so did Lee. Number one, Lee Goreham-Smith, who is the chair of the Barrington Dialysis Support Group, has done a phenomenal job and deserves a positive answer because of the work that she is doing. She is also doing it because of her husband, Artie. I don't know how long he has been on dialysis now, but for some time he has been travelling back and forth to Yarmouth. He is the example that I use.

I believe last winter or last Fall - I can't remember when I started talking about this; it has been so long now. He is the one who has to leave Woods Harbour at probably six o'clock in the morning, let's say, before the snowplows get going. I think the snowplows get going somewhere around seven o'clock in the morning. So he is beating it along Highway No. 3, through Charlesville and East Pubnico, trying to get to Highway No. 103. He got stuck in a snowdrift last year. Not only is he in a situation where he's stuck in a snowdrift, which would be a pain for anybody, he has the added problem that he's got to get to that life-saving treatment in Yarmouth, and the roads were impassable that day. It wasn't until a number of hours later that he was able to continue on his way. I think it was a tow truck or someone who came and pulled him out of it and got him home.

Home was not where he needed to go. He needed to go to Yarmouth for dialysis. Had it been in Barrington, that situation might have not happened. He might not have had to leave so early to receive that service.

I already had another problem - not so long ago, I believe it was in the Spring he was on his way home after receiving his infusion or whatever you call it, receiving his

treatment. As he was going down East Pubnico he sees a couple of children walking along the side of the road with a dog. The dog was sort of weaving in and out on the road. Artie, being the really nice guy he is, decided that he really didn't want to hit the dog - either the kids were a bit in the way or he couldn't avoid it that way, the dog was over here - so the only thing he could do, so he wouldn't hit the dog and the kids wouldn't see him hitting the dog and killing the dog, he decided to ditch his car and he did - totalled the car.

Can you imagine an individual who had just received dialysis with the PICC lines in his chest, who can't wear a seatbelt, ditched his car? Crushed himself into the steering wheel - luckily he was not seriously hurt, but can you imagine what could have gone wrong with Artie because of his travelling back and forth for dialysis?

He is just one example of a number of them who are going back and forth, and I know my community is not the only one that is being affected by this kind of situation. I know that Hants-Windsor has been looking at dialyses units for years of people having to travel all the way into Yarmouth or all the way into Halifax or driving all the way to either Kentville or Berwick, when you have a perfectly good hospital sitting in Windsor. We have to make a better decision. We have got to be working, we have got to have a better plan for these things. Being aware of chronic disease in this province, some of the things we would suggest are expensive and costly to do, but are costly not to do because they already ended up in the hospital - can you imagine the cost that it would have been to take care of him there? Or somebody is in a situation that they are sick, it is a huge situation for them to end up in hospital which is the most expensive place for them to be. So that is dialysis.

Please Mr. Minister, please Mr. Premier, and please Mrs. and Ms. Governance, please, the man I don't know who it is that makes this decision, but please find a way to provide dialysis services across this province in an equitable way.

My next topic is not necessarily directly in my constituency. It is my neighbouring constituency of Yarmouth. Listen, I have no issues with the member for Yarmouth, I have no issues with him; I think he is a pretty good guy. There are a few situations once in a while that we get into where we disagree. So that's fine. In this one here I know he agrees with me and I hope that he gets to stand and talk about it as well, which is the issue of cancer treatment in Nova Scotia. (Interruption) What do you mean? The cancer issue in southwestern Nova Scotia has been one that we have been at a disadvantage for many, many years, where our constituents, our families, have to come to Halifax to see the specialist or sometimes to do the chemotherapy, depending on what kind of chemotherapy they are receiving - and more specifically to receive radiation therapy.

Now Yarmouth does have visiting doctors, they have a number of doctors who can help treat and operate on those individuals who do have cancer, God forbid that they do. We have a beautiful cancer centre that provides chemotherapy treatment, but we don't have the radiation treatment, so the way it's going these days is it seems like every individual who has cancer seems to be going through some kind of radiation. Our constituents have

to come to Halifax, and for those who have experienced it or have family members who have experienced it, it's not that it hurts. It's a bit of a pain. You go into the unit, they lay you down on the bed, they put you in the traction or whatever they put you in, they zap you a few times, and then you go on for the rest of your day.

But you can't leave. You're away from your family. You're incurring different costs because you're staying here in Halifax. There are people who can get to the Lodge That Gives, and some people can get to Point Pleasant Lodge, but some people actually take on the cost of staying in a hotel or staying with family, or travelling back and forth to receive their radiation treatment.

I know that right now the hospital in Yarmouth, with the foundation and with individuals there, is starting to lobby government there to see if they can start the project or at least continue the discussions on having radiation therapy in Yarmouth. That would benefit the people of Argyle-Barrington, and the people of Yarmouth, and I would say the people of Queens-Shelburne, and the people of Clare-Digby because all those people in that catchment area have to travel here to Halifax, which is a couple of hours away at least. If they could all come to Yarmouth to receive that service, it would be a tremendous benefit to their lives and to their health.

You've heard of individuals who require radiation treatment for palliative reasons. They get a little bit of radiation to try to take away some of the pain because of their palliative situations. There's a group of them who decide not to get that treatment because it's just too hard on them to travel back and forth to Halifax.

I know the member for Yarmouth, the minister, and the hospital and the foundation have sat down to discuss this. I have a number of letters that I've been copied on as well. What I would do as well here is impress upon the Premier and the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board to listen closely because it's not a cheap issue that we're asking for here. This is probably the biggest ask I'll ever make in this House of Assembly because the issue of a radiation therapy machine - by the time you put the bunker, the linear accelerator, and all the pieces into it, it's in the tens of millions of dollars, if not \$30 million to \$40 million. I don't know what the cost is. I know when we replaced the one in Sydney and the ones we replaced here in Halifax, they were in the \$30 million range. It's not a cheap endeavour.

This is the biggest ask I will ever have in this House of Assembly, to try to find a way to treat the people in southwestern Nova Scotia when it comes to radiation therapy. I offer the member for Yarmouth any support that he needs from me. I will be there for him on that issue. It would be important to all of us.

I said I was only going to go 25 minutes, but I know I'm already there. I've still got three issues that I do want to make sure that I talk about here before we head off for the evening.

Fishing Districts 33 and 34: we have a lobster season coming up upon us, in about a month's time. The Digby one is already open, and prices are good. Catches are a little down, but catches are good; the quality is okay. We're hopeful that that will translate into our fishery as Districts 33 and 34 get going. But it is, I would say, the largest fishery that we have in Nova Scotia that gets going on that last Monday in November and go for six months' time. I wish all the fishermen - all the fishers, I guess I should say "fishers." "Fisherman" is the wrong word now because I do know a number of women who are fishers today, who go out with their husbands or go out on their own and run their own rigs. I wish them all another great year.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that southwestern Nova Scotia, Argyle-Barrington, has had probably one of the best years it has had when it comes to income directly because of the fishing industry, because of the lobster fishery. The prices were good. The catches were phenomenal. The fishing enterprises made lots of money. When they make lots of money, when they pay down their debts, there's lots of money to go around to our communities, to the stores that provide the fishing supplies, to the car dealerships, and to the furniture stores. That wealth continues to roll over within our community. That is why our communities did so well over the last months.

So I wish them all the luck, and I hope they catch lots of lobster and that the price stays really good, because two or three years of good cash flow in a row is phenomenal for our communities in southwestern Nova Scotia.

An issue that I know the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture would be interested in, and I hope he helps me with it - I've talked to him about it a couple of times already - is the issue of clam harvesting in Cape Island. Clam harvesting is not the responsibility of the province, I just want to say that up front - I don't expect him to be the guy who waves the wand and gets it fixed. But I do hope the minister listens a little bit when it comes to clam-harvesting in our area.

What has happened is - we do have a number of beaches, so of course there are soft-shelled clams, hard-shelled clams, what's the larger ones that they have a little further offshore? All of that has been basically closed when it comes to Barrington Bay and over Shag Harbour way, so everywhere around Cape Island has been closed for a number of years now. I think there was one beach that's open, but I forget which one it is. For the most part, it's closed.

The reason it's closed - the excuse we find on the little orders paper that DFO puts up - is because of a water event, a heavy-rain event that happened in 2014. The closure has been there since 2014.

I guess the question we ask is, well, how come it hasn't been lifted? The reason is because of a bureaucratic quagmire. In 2014 there was a change - or it might have been just before that - in who's responsible for the harvesting program, or the safety program.

What we've been able to find out over a number of discussions and a whole bunch of letters is that where DFO used to be the organization responsible for animal safety, I guess fish safety - I don't know what it was called at that time - mollusk safety, it is no longer them. They're the enforcement guys, and that's it.

They enforce whatever order happens to be happening. They're not the guys anymore - or girls - who go and check the water or check the quality of the product. The water is the responsibility of Environment Canada. Somehow they found a wedge to get into that situation, so they're the ones who need to test for that, and CFIA is the other one that makes sure the mollusks themselves are safe to eat.

Here's what's happening, which is bizarre, and I hope the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture is listening to this. I hope he brings this forward to his federal counterparts.

What's happening here is that CFIA apparently is doing this testing. They go in every once in a while, pick a few clams out of the beach, test them, and deem them safe or whatever - I'm sure there's data on that somewhere. But you can't lift the order because of theirs. They're there, they've done that test; Environment has to come in and do a water test. Environment does not have the staff or a vessel or anything to actually do the testing, and I don't even know which office would do the testing. I don't know if they're out of Bridgewater or they're out of Halifax - I don't know where Environment Canada resides, or who should be responsible for it within that department.

Here's the problem that I have. If CFIA is actually doing testing on the mollusks themselves, why in the Lord's name can't they just test the water while they're at it? Why can't they be enabled by the bureaucratic quagmire to allow them to make the determination of whether that product is safe to eat or not, or safe to harvest or not? But for three years now, this has been going on. I don't see an end in sight.

I hope the minister does bring this to the table of ministers and find a solution to clam harvesting in Cape Island. The locals used to like going and getting a feed of clams or even - you talk to a number of them, and that was part of their bait program. They're lobster fishers and they went and dug clams they could use as bait to catch lobsters or other products.

So please, Mr. Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, fix that problem.

Two more quick ones. Chase the Ace - thank the community of West Pubnico for putting on a phenomenal Chase the Ace. Many of us have had Chase the Aces. We've heard of the Inverness one; they did a phenomenal job on that one. We've heard of the Sydney one; they did a phenomenal job on that one. Pubnico is stepping up on this one and doing phenomenally as well.

So for three nights a week the volunteers in Pubnico and surrounding areas get together to put on this Chase the Ace. The first two nights they need to get together to get the tickets ready. It takes that long to take them off those rolls and get them ready so people can buy them in \$20 strips. That takes two nights to get it ready. Then of course Chase the Ace night, which is on Friday night. So tomorrow night will be Chase the Ace in Pubnico at the Legion.

They have sold as of the Friday before, I think, 1.3 million tickets. In a night, they're actually selling - I think last Friday it was \$45,000 worth of tickets in that one night - sorry, I'm actually wrong on that number. I'll have to get back to you on that one. Maybe someday I'll get a chance to stand and talk about it. It's like \$125,000, I think, if I'm correct. It's a phenomenal amount of dollars in a one-night period in the community.

What they are doing is different than what they would have been doing in Inverness or in Sydney. I think Sydney had a couple of locations where they were doing Chase the Ace, and I think Inverness was using the rink and maybe one other location. I'm not sure. (Interruption) There you go, so the concert grounds in Broad Cove and the rink.

In our community, because we don't have a facility that's big enough for this, we're using the Legion, the fire hall, the Lions Club, the East Pubnico fire hall, the golf course, the Red Cap restaurant, the Ye Olde Argyler restaurant, so it's seven or eight locations where they're selling these tickets to have them all together for Chase the Ace.

Right now, for that Legion itself, Branch 66, that branch now has enough money to fix all the things they needed to fix and has money in the bank to take care of things. They've got like \$800,000 sitting in a bank account today that they didn't have when this started. As a matter of fact, I think that was one of those Legions that would probably be at its end, that there was really nothing else to do than to let its charter go and close its doors. Today it's a vibrant community place with lots of money in the bank.

Thank you to my constituents who volunteer at that and make it a success and the participants who show up there. The drawing is not until nine o'clock and people are there at four o'clock in the afternoon so they can get their seats and see what's going on. They are having a wonderful time at Chase the Ace.

I would be remiss if I had a speech like this without talking about my family. This is sort of the close-down of what I'm talking about today. I could talk about roads and I could talk about overpasses and stuff, but I'm not going to because the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal knows full well my list of wants and needs.

I want to say to my family how much I do love them, because we can't do this without their support. I wanted to say we've had an up-and-down year. We've had good things happen, and I congratulate my wife for graduating with her master's from St. F.X. University. That was a wonderful situation.

The terrible stuff that happens, of course, is health-related. I know I talked about this before, as my son was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes back in March. It has been tough for him. It has been tough for all of us to learn how to be a diabetic family, and I see the effects on him. He is doing phenomenally well; I'm so very proud of him. He had a great summer, he kept his sugars well, he hasn't had any lows, but all the things you end up worrying about as a parent are absolutely - it's a horrible learning process when you have a child who gets a disease like that.

He didn't ask for it. He's 17 years old - he was 17 and a half on March 17th when I had to bring him into the hospital because he wasn't doing well. He had lost weight and we just couldn't figure out what was going on with him.

To get a diagnosis of diabetes at the age of 17 has to be the worst thing to have to deal with as a kid. A lot of us remember when we were 17 - I think the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal is still 17 sometimes - but can you imagine having to deal with that kind of thing, on top of all the other things you have to deal with as a 17-year-old?

I know he knows we love him - I love him dearly and he gets really mad at me sometimes when I ask him what his sugars are. He'll probably be mad at me for mentioning it in the House of Assembly, but when I ask him it's because I love him and when Anne asks him it's because she loves him, and when the whole family gets together it's to help him along, so as he finishes off Grade 12, that he has the best opportunity at the end of it, that he has been able to manage that disease and it is not going to hold him back one bit.

I want to thank everyone for listening to this. My constituency means a lot to me and I'll do anything possible to make sure their lives are better, hopefully better when I leave than it was when I started. I think that all of us continue to make sure that happens in our constituencies.

I know we're going to work really hard over the next number of months and years to ensure that, but I want them to know that I'll continue to try to do my best for them in this House of Assembly.

Monsieur le Président, merci beaucoup pour l'opportunité de le faire.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Acting Deputy House Leader.

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. We will meet again on Friday, October 28th, from the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Following the daily routine we'll continue with the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now rise to meet again on Friday, October 28th, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until October 28th at 9:00 a.m.

[The House rose at 5:33 p.m.]