



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

Published by Order of the Legislature by Hansard Reporting Services and printed by the Queen's Printer.

Available on INTERNET at <http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/>

Third Session

THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
GOVERNMENT MOTIONS:	
Res. 915, Estimates: CW on Supply - Referred,	
Hon. R. Delorey	2554
Mr. T. Houston.....	2568
Adjourned	2583
TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS:	
Additional Appropriations - Order in Council 2017-140 (04/27/17),	
Hon. R. Delorey	2584
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 1115, Licensed Practical Nurses College - Anniv. (60 th),	
Hon. L. Glavine.....	2584
Vote - Affirmative.....	2585
Res. 1116, Adopt-A-Hwy. Prog. - Kick-Off (05/04/17),	
Hon. G. MacLellan	2585
Vote - Affirmative.....	2586

Res. 1117, Com. Serv. - Supporting Survivors of Sexual Violence: Online Training - Encourage, Hon. J. Bernard	2586
Vote - Affirmative.....	2586
Res. 1118, Natl. Organ & Tissue Donation Awareness Wk. (04/23 - 04/29/17) - Recognize, Hon. L. Glavine	2587
Vote - Affirmative.....	2587
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:	
McMasters, Roberta - Springhill Miners' Museum: Dedication - Congrats., Hon. J. Baillie.....	2588
Fish. & Aquaculture: Licences - Moratorium, Hon. S. Belliveau	2588
Clare-Digby CTV/911 Benefit Hockey Game - Fundraising, Mr. Gordon Wilson.....	2589
Argyle Mun.: Anl. (35 th) Vol. Recognition Banquet - Recipients Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont	2589
Ahmed, Fateh - Film Tax Credit Documentary, Ms. L. Zann.....	2590
Fougere, Robert - Figure Skating Gold Medals, Hon. J. Bernard	2590
MacKinnon, Bailey - Musical Accomplishments, Mr. T. Houston.....	2591
McNeil Gov't. - Broken Promises, Hon. D. Peterson-Rafuse.....	2591
Richmond Co. Vol. Awards: Recipients - Congrats., Hon. M. Samson	2592
Pictou Sch. Options Comm. - Members Thank, Ms. K. MacFarlane	2592
Henry, John: Medical Issues - Assist, Ms. L. Zann.....	2593
Daffodil Mo. (04/17) - Anniv. (60 th), Mr. S. Gough.....	2594
Dunn, Dr. Rex - Heart of Gold Award, Hon. A. MacLeod	2594
Nova Scotians: Income Assistance - Increase, Ms. L. Roberts.....	2594
Quarmby-Bennett, Amanda: Team Diabetes Can. - Commitment, Ms. J. Treen.....	2595
Vi's Rest./Fam. - Commun. Contribution, Mr. A. MacMaster.....	2595
PTSD: WCB - Presumptive Benefits, Hon. David Wilson	2596
St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Church - Reopening, Mr. D. Mombourquette	2596

Gordon, Aimee - Speedskating Achievements, Mr. E. Orrell.....	2597
Queens-Shelburne Voters et al - Thank, Hon. S. Belliveau	2597
Choyce, Terry - Bedford Adult Vol. of Yr. (2017), Hon. K. Regan.....	2597
Hovell, Ernie: Vol. Efforts - Thank, Mr. J. Lohr	2598
Commun. Housing Meeting - Colleagues Welcome, Ms. L. Roberts.....	2598
Bolt, Sandra - Beaver Bank-Kinsac Senior Assoc. Vol. of Yr., Mr. B. Horne	2599
Chebucto Links Anl. Vol. Appreciation Luncheon - Contributions, Mr. J. Stroink	2599
Hackett, Angela - MacKay Vol. of Yr., Hon. P. Dunn.....	2600
Julian, Michaela: UN Congress on the Status of Women (61 st) - Congrats., Hon. M. Miller	2600
Horton, Larry - Commun. Dedication, Hon. L. Hines	2601
Martin, Daniel: Special Olympic World Winter Games - Congrats., Ms. K. MacFarlane	2601
Lun. Commun. College: Intl. Culinary Celebration - Congrats., Hon. M. Furey.....	2601
Dal. Agric. Campus Team: Cdn. Engineering Comp. - Congrats., Mr. L. Harrison	2602
Centennial Arena - Anniv. (50 th), Ms. P. Arab	2602
Health & Wellness - Physician Shortage, Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	2603
Cole Hbr. Rural Heritage Farm Soc. - Can. 150 Garden Experience, Hon. T. Ince	2603
Bickerdon, Taylor: Vimy Ridge Commemorations Cdn. Youth Ambassador, Mr. J. Lohr.....	2604
Hennigar, Tina - Lun. Co. Tourism Efforts, Ms. S. Lohnes-Croft.....	2604
Northside Commun. Guest Home: MacNeil Fam. - Contribution, Mr. E. Orrell.....	2605
Kynock, Vernon: Vernon's Thunderbird Diner - Congrats., Mr. B. Jessome.....	2605
Boylan, Skyler - Bedford's Youth Vol. of Yr. (2017), Hon. K. Regan.....	2606
Young, Karen: Mt. Kilimanjaro - Climb Congrats., Ms. P. Eyking.....	2606

Schurman, Noah - Soccer Achievements, Mr. K. Irving	2607
Amirault, Norman - Yar. Mun. Vol. of Yr. (2017), Hon. Z. Churchill	2607
Siewert, Elliott Wayne: IBM Master the Mainframe Contest - Congrats., Mr. S. Gough.....	2607
Natl. Vol. Wk. (04/23 - 04/29/17) - Vols. Recognize, Ms. J. Treen.....	2608
White, Chris - Bodybuilding Championship, Ms. P. Eyking.....	2608
Tholen, Dietmar/Baxter, Scott - Recycling Success, Hon. M. Furey	2609
Baylis, Peter: Natl. Pride - Applaud, Hon. L. Diab	2609
HOUSE RECESSED AT 3:54 P.M.	2609
HOUSE RECONVENED AT 4:00 P.M.....	2610
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:	
No. 406, Prem.: Health Budget - Increases Explain, Hon. J. Baillie	2610
No. 407, Prem.: Hosp. Infrastructure Needs - Underspensing, Hon. S. Belliveau	2611
No. 408, Prem.: Nursing Home Cuts - Mistakes Admit, Hon. J. Baillie	2613
No. 409, Prem.: Long-Term Care Cuts - Apologize, Hon. David Wilson	2614
No. 410, Prem. - Seniors' Pharmacare Prog.: Benefits - Details, Hon. J. Baillie	2615
No. 411, Prem. - Film Ind. Cuts: Budget Amounts - Explain, Hon. J. Baillie	2616
No. 412, Prem.: Tuition Costs - Increases Address, Ms. L. Roberts.....	2618
No. 413, Health & Wellness: Physician List - Wait Times, Mr. A. Younger.....	2619
No. 414, Prem. - Rural Roads: Neglect - Mistake Admit, Mr. A. MacMaster.....	2620
No. 415, Health & Wellness: Northside Gen. Hosp. Amputee Clinic - Reinstate, Hon. A. MacLeod	2621
No. 416, Prem. - Filmmakers/Teachers: Budget Balancing - Effects, Ms. L. Zann.....	2622
No. 417, Health & Wellness: Barrington Passage Dialysis Unit - Update, Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	2624
No. 418, Com. Serv.: Riverview Home - Plans, Mr. T. Houston.....	2625
No. 419, Prem.: Physician Promises - Failure Admit, Hon. David Wilson	2626

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING:

No. 59, Accessibility Act

Hon. D. Whalen	2628
Mr. A. MacMaster.....	2635
Hon. David Wilson	2635
Hon. J. Bernard	2637
Hon. M. Samson	2638
Hon. D. Whalen	2639
Vote - Affirmative.....	2640

ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Fri., Apr. 28th at 9:00 a.m.2641



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 2017

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. As with the tradition on Budget Day in this House, before we begin the daily routine, with the consent of the House we will commence with the motion for Resolution No. 915, respecting the estimates under the Orders of the Day. This means that the daily routine will be delayed until after the response to the Budget Speech is adjourned, and Question Period will begin one hour after the beginning of the daily routine.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

[ORDERS OF THE DAY]

[GOVERNMENT BUSINESS]

[GOVERNMENT MOTIONS]

[Res. No. 915, re Estimates - CW on Supply: Referred - notice given April 25/17 - (Hon. Randy Delorey)]

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

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the notice given by me on April 25, 2017, and the Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly, I have the honour, by command, to present a message from His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia, relating to the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018, which is:

“I hereby transmit Estimates of Sums required for the Public Service of the Province for the year ending March 31, 2018, and in accordance with the Constitution Act of 1867, recommend them, together with the Budget Address of my Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, and any resolutions or bills necessary or advisable to approve the Estimates and implement the budget measures to the House of Assembly.

Signed,

J.J. Grant
Lieutenant Governor”

Mr. Speaker, at this time I wish to:

- (1) table the message from His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor of the province transmitting the Estimates for the consideration of this House;
- (2) table the Estimate Books;
- (3) table the Government Business Plans;
- (4) table the Crown Corporation Business Plans;
- (5) table the Estimate and Crown Corporation Business Plans resolutions;
- (6) deliver my Budget Speech; and
- (7) move that the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018, being Supply to be granted to Her Majesty and the Crown Corporation Business Plans be referred to the Committee of the Whole on Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: The Estimates are tabled.

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

Introduction

Mr. Speaker, I am humbled to stand in this historic Chamber to table my second budget as Finance and Treasury Board Minister.

Last year I stood in this Chamber and tabled a balanced budget, one with a projected net position of \$17.1 million. We stuck to our plan, and I am pleased to say we are forecasting to close the year with a surplus.

I am privileged to stand here today to table this year's budget, which is also projecting a positive net position of \$25.9 million. That's back-to-back surpluses for the first time in nearly a decade. We are one of only a few provinces in Canada to be in such an enviable position.

The path to restored fiscal health was not always easy, but our finances are stronger now than they were four years ago. We got to this point by focusing on controlling expenses and making smart investments.

Along the road to fiscal health, we made key investments:

- We invested in our high-value apple and wine sectors, and now our agriculture exports are up.
- We worked with tourism operators, and we just posted the best tourism season in our province's history.
- We helped business find new markets for their product and ensured Nova Scotia seafood was sold around the world - our fisheries exports have almost doubled in four years.
- We created a program to help recent graduates get their first job in Nova Scotia, and now youth unemployment is trending down.
- We pushed to increase immigration, and in 2016 our population reached an all-time high.

We were able to achieve these things because we worked with Nova Scotians - our people and our businesses. We invested in them and in their potential.

Why was the goal of continued surpluses and improved fiscal health so important? We don't have to look far to see the challenging situation some of our sister provinces

face. The experience elsewhere in our federation shows how vulnerable provinces can be to outside events and the need to manage our finances wisely. When that doesn't happen, citizens may face tax hikes and service cuts, and their employees face mass layoffs and wage rollbacks.

We refused to let that happen here. We made smart, strategic investments to grow the economy while providing reasonable and fair wage increases to our employees.

When we came to office, we laid out a clear, strong, and reasonable fiscal plan. We stuck to that plan and are now in a position to invest in new opportunities for growth. We are in a position to make new investments in infrastructure, provide more supports to youth and young families, invest in new ideas that will create a better economy, and make investments to create healthier and stronger communities.

We have worked hard together as Nova Scotians to reach this point. Now we will work even harder to ensure all Nova Scotians share the benefits.

Infrastructure

For decades, Nova Scotians had concerns about the safety of their 100-Series Highways. Past governments refused to tackle the issue, but we consulted with Nova Scotians to hear their opinions and we worked with them to develop solutions.

We listened, and now we are investing an additional \$390 million to twin highways around our province. We will do so without the use of tolls. These investments in our highway infrastructure will make our roads safer and provide work for Nova Scotians. It will mean jobs around the province and more opportunities for people to live and work here.

Over the next seven years, we will twin 38 kilometres of Highway No. 104 - from Sutherlands River to Antigonish; twin 22 kilometres of Highway No. 103 - from Tantallon to Hubbards; twin 9.5 kilometres of Highway No. 101 - from Three Mile Plains to Falmouth, including the Windsor Causeway; and construct a twinned Burnside expressway.

Much of the feedback from Nova Scotians focused on finding ways to improve road safety sooner without relying on tolls. Government is doing just that. As part of the \$390 million investment, \$30 million will be put toward safety measures in un-twinning areas of 100-Series Highways. And, as we recently announced, we will remove tolls for Nova Scotian motorists on the Cobequid Pass. This will happen once the bonds are paid off, which is currently expected to be in 2019. A decision on commercial trucks and non-Nova Scotia residents will be made as we move closer to this date.

Investing in improved roads is only part of the infrastructure investment we are making. We are also investing in more social infrastructure - facilities that will support our efforts to make our communities healthier and stronger.

Successive governments knew the QEII redevelopment was necessary. They failed to plan. They failed to act. But our government is making significant progress on this very important project. The redevelopment involves projects at the Halifax Infirmary, Dartmouth General Hospital, and Hants Community Hospital, and a new community outpatient centre in Bayers Lake in Halifax.

All of these projects are underway, and when complete, the end result will benefit Nova Scotians province-wide. We are also investing in infrastructure so services can be in the communities that need them most. We are modernizing the South Shore Regional Hospital, building six new dialysis units across the province, investing in new health clinics in New Waterford and Shelburne, and beginning work to replace the hospital in Pugwash.

We are also ensuring students across the province will have access to new facilities by building schools in Spryfield, Tatamagouche, Bridgetown, Bible Hill, Sheet Harbour, Eastern Passage, Dartmouth, Halifax, and Yarmouth. It's not just new builds - there are substantial renovations taking place at schools in Sydney, Sutherlands River, River Hebert, Bridgewater, and Wolfville.

Our infrastructure investments include \$5 million over two years to expand skilled trades centres. This will add seven new skilled trades centres to schools around the province. We are committing to developing a five-year capital plan for school infrastructure, as the Auditor General recommended. It will bring predictability and stability to a school-focused capital plan.

Housing is another priority area for Nova Scotians. This year, \$38 million will be invested across the province to increase access to and improve affordable housing. It means creating new affordable housing units, offering more in rent supplements, and investing in home repair and adaptation programs to assist low-income home owners. New and improved health care facilities, schools, and affordable housing will make our communities stronger and healthier.

Youth and Young Families

Mr. Speaker, each budget we tabled invested more in education - we hired more teachers, capped Primary to Grade 6 class sizes, and reinstated Reading Recovery. There's more work to do. That's why we invested \$10 million this year as part of a two-year commitment to support the work of the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions. Teachers make up the majority of this council, and it gives front-line teachers a chance to be part of making real and meaningful change to the classroom.

We've acted quickly to accept and implement many of the recommendations received from the council to date. We look forward to their first full report tomorrow and are committed to keep working with teachers to create stronger classrooms across Nova Scotia.

In addition to the funds for the council's recommendations, the budget also invests \$2.1 million to continue to expand the Reading Recovery program and double the investment in coding and computer skills.

In the Throne Speech, we said we don't want any child to go to school hungry. This budget invests \$1.1 million to provide a healthy breakfast for every student in the province, through an expansion of the school breakfast program that is delivered by Nourish Nova Scotia.

To ensure better access to school psychologists and speech language pathologists, we will invest \$1.4 million. We will invest an additional \$1.8 million to connect more children and youth with community and mental health supports, for a total investment in SchoolsPlus of \$8.2 million. This is one more step in our plan to make SchoolsPlus available in every school across the province. That is on top of the recent investment with Mount Saint Vincent University of more than \$900,000, dedicated to addressing the current backlog of student psychological assessments.

These investments are important, but we also know ensuring children are ready for school starts well before Grade Primary. Young Nova Scotians need better access to affordable child care and better access to early childhood educators.

We will build on the success of the Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention program by investing an additional \$800,000 to support young Nova Scotians with autism. These funds will help Autism Nova Scotia implement the Social ABCs program. This program will provide supports to children who have not yet entered the EIBI program. It will also let us partner with Autism Nova Scotia to support families through regional autism resource centres around the province.

With more funding in our last budget, families were able to access more money to put toward child care, and we will continue heavily investing in this important public service. This year, I am very proud to announce that we will start phasing in access to fully funded pre-Primary programming around the province. It begins with this budget. Over the next year, we will invest \$3.7 million for 30 new pre-Primary sites. This will see four-year-old Nova Scotians getting access to play-based early learning programming, delivered by our province's highly qualified early childhood educators.

Our plan will expand this program province-wide within four years. Improved spending on child care and pre-Primary programs helps all our children start on a more level playing field by ensuring they get the support they need and deserve. We already see

the positive impacts of early learning programming at our current eight Early Years sites - students are more prepared entering Grade Primary, making for a more productive learning environment for teachers and students. When we are finished, every four-year-old in Nova Scotia will have access to this important resource.

This is not only helping our children get the start they need, but it will help make lives more affordable for young families. Providing the fully funded pre-Primary program could save families with children in the program up to \$10,000 per year, per child. Mr. Speaker, as you can see, we are committed to taking steps that will make life more affordable for Nova Scotians.

Another significant step we can take, is to reduce taxes for the middle class and those who need it most. That's exactly what this budget is doing.

In 2014, we received a tax report that recommended raising the basic personal exemption. We said we could start reforming our tax system once we could afford it, and we are now at that point. We are cutting income taxes by increasing the tax-free basic personal amount by up to \$3,000 for those with taxable incomes under \$75,000.

Mr. Speaker, once this tax measure is in place, more than 500,000 Nova Scotians will save \$85 million a year. What's most important is that 60,000 people will no longer pay any provincial tax at all. This is more money staying in the pockets of recent graduates, low-income and retired Nova Scotians, single parents, and working families. More for those who need it most.

In the last two years, our youth programs helped more than 4,500 young people stay and work here in Nova Scotia. In this budget, we will continue to invest so we can keep our young people here. We will continue increasing our investment in the Graduate to Opportunity program so recent graduates can find work here. This year's budget brings the total funding to \$4.9 million.

We will also launch a new program this year. An investment of \$1.7 million will fund a new Innovate to Opportunity program for employers to hire recent masters and PhD graduates for research and innovation-focused jobs. This investment not only helps to keep our youth living and working in Nova Scotia, it helps expand our knowledge economy which will pay dividends into the future.

Efforts to help recent grads find their first jobs will be complemented by our recently announced expansion of the Connector Program, which helps recent graduates to network with established professionals and find mentors throughout the province. Previously, it was available in HRM, but now it's expanded to the western part of the province and Cape Breton.

We also want to help apprentices stay and work here. To do that, through the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, we will invest \$1.3 million to eliminate the tuition apprentices pay for their technical training. We will also provide funds to expand apprenticeship opportunities for young Nova Scotians so they can pursue a career in the skilled trades here in Nova Scotia.

To help apprentices and employers, we are increasing the budget of the Apprenticeship START program by \$2 million. This program provides incentives that encourage small- to medium-sized enterprises to hire Nova Scotian apprentices from underrepresented groups or in rural areas. It helps people get their foot in the door and creates more opportunities for young Nova Scotians to live and work here. To help prepare students for the workforce, we will invest an additional \$379,000 to create 94 additional internships through the Mitacs Accelerate program.

Mr. Speaker, keeping more young Nova Scotians here also means we need to take further steps to improve the affordability of post-secondary education. We will expand student assistance support with higher weekly loan allowances and, as requested by Students Nova Scotia, extend loan forgiveness to students who complete their undergraduate programs in five years, from the current four. That means more Nova Scotian students will be eligible to have their entire provincial loan forgiven.

To keep more young people here, we also need to help them lay down roots in Nova Scotia. Buying a first home is still hard for many Nova Scotians. Saving up for a down payment remains one of the main hurdles for people wanting to purchase their first home. For those hoping to become homeowners but can't save for a down payment, government will be there to help them by providing an interest-free, repayable loan. This will help many modest-income families achieve their dream of owning a home.

When we help families, we strengthen our communities and our province. More support for young families, more support for middle-class Nova Scotians, and more jobs for recent grads. That's how we help those who need it most. That's how we keep young Nova Scotians and young families here.

New Ideas for a Better Economy

When we work together to create the conditions for economic growth, individuals, entrepreneurs, and businesses can achieve greater success starting new businesses, applying new ideas to traditional sectors, and going global with homegrown products and services.

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and we want to help them grow and hire more people. So we are reducing their taxes by \$13.9 million by increasing the small business tax threshold to \$500,000 from \$350,000. This means small businesses will be able to grow and earn more income before getting placed in a higher tax bracket.

It's also why we have set a bold target to reduce red tape by \$25 million. This will build on the success of the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness that is making government more responsive to the needs of business. In just 18 months, we cut red tape to help restaurants, local wineries, farmers, apprentices, and more.

We also launched a new service - the first of its kind in Canada - to help businesses navigate what can be a complex regulatory environment. We have people now dedicated to answering questions and providing advice to help businesses.

Improving rural Internet is a priority for our government because it helps our rural businesses grow and hire more Nova Scotians. Recently, we announced 22 new community-based projects that will improve access to high-speed Internet throughout rural Nova Scotia. All combined, the projects will reach up to 5,400 homes and 420 businesses. We will keep building on this success by investing \$14.5 million to further improve access to high-speed Internet around the province.

When we work together to create new ideas or find new markets, it means more jobs here in Nova Scotia. That is why we are focused on increasing our exports and increasing funding to support research. We are investing \$1.3 million to help more small businesses find customers outside of Nova Scotia. This funding will create a new export accelerator program, it will double the support for Nova Scotian businesses traveling to foreign markets, and it will invest in trade programs under the Atlantic Growth Strategy.

One of our biggest export success stories comes from our fisheries sector. Since 2012, our fisheries exports have nearly doubled to \$1.8 billion. This budget will invest more to further develop our province's seafood markets in Asia, Europe, and the United States. It also invests \$2.8 million to develop our aquaculture sector, and that support will mean a total investment of \$12.2 million by 2019-2020.

Agriculture exports have also grown - in large part due to the growth in popularity of our Honeycrisp and other high-value apple varieties. We can point to many successes across this sector and know there is room to keep growing in areas like vineyards to support our award-winning Nova Scotian wines. We previously launched a \$13 million, five-year Vineyard and Wineries Investment Program, and last year, created the wine lab at Acadia University.

This budget will continue to invest in this success story and create more jobs throughout rural Nova Scotia. We want to work with farmers and fishers over the coming year so that, by next year, we can create the Building Tomorrow Fund. It will provide funds to these key sectors to create new products and enter new markets to further drive export growth.

Over the next year, we will work with the mining industry to create a co-funded mineral resource development bank to increase prospecting and mine development, invest

in mineral research, and improve cooperative education opportunities. And to provide support to the sector, we will create a rebate for the tax on fuel used by the mining and bedrock quarry industries.

A successful and sustainable forestry industry is important to our success as a province. We want to work with our businesses in the forestry sector to ensure their long-term success. This will help them deal with changing markets and consumer demand. That is why we are investing an additional \$250,000 to foster forestry innovation, bringing our total investment to \$1.2 million.

Government will also appoint an independent expert to review our forestry practices to ensure we strike the right balance for our forests. This review will get underway as soon as possible, starting first in the western region. No future long-term timber harvesting licences will be awarded on Crown land until the work is complete. These investments will help businesses in our traditional fisheries, forestry, mining, and agriculture sectors capitalize on new ideas and find new markets for their products.

While our fisheries and agricultural sectors sent more products abroad, our tourism sector attracted more people here. The last tourism season was the best in our province's history. We want another record-breaking tourism season, so we will invest \$2 million to upgrade key tourism sites across the province and \$500,000 to attract more tourists from China. And for the first time, we are treating our culture as the competitive advantage it is. Through the Culture Action Plan and an investment of \$2.1 million this year, we will celebrate, expand, and export our cultural resources, driving growth in our communities and people.

We want to keep funding creativity, keep fueling entrepreneurs, and find new ways to create a better economy. That's why we are investing \$10.7 million in the Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship. COVE, as we've come to call it, is a centre focused on finding new ways to capitalize on our closeness to the ocean. It is a place where experts in ocean tech and ocean sciences can come together to find new opportunities to create jobs and businesses here in Nova Scotia. This will continue to build on and take advantage of Nova Scotia's global opportunities in the oceans sector.

We recently approved funds to support innovation hubs and districts around the province - collaborative spaces like Volta in Halifax, Navigate Start-up House in Cape Breton, CO3 in Bridgewater, and virtual incubators like the one created for social enterprises. We want them to be strong, and we want to build upon their success.

Since 2013, Volta has been home to over 40 tech companies. Most are still going strong, collectively raising more than \$32 million in equity financing and employing over 200 people. We recently invested \$8.4 million to build upon the great work that is already underway. It will help create innovation districts in our urban centers of Halifax and Sydney, and encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in rural communities.

The budget also contains funds to invest in social innovation and to help social entrepreneurs across the province. By providing funds and working with the Social Enterprise Network of Nova Scotia, we will help more social enterprises start and expand, so that they may be able to provide jobs and invest their profits in social improvements in their communities.

With this budget, we will continue to pursue and develop new ideas for a better economy by investing \$4 million to support innovation initiatives, including more support for business start-ups through incubators and accelerators and a new rebate program. The new innovation rebate will help businesses invest in capital projects that support the development of products and value-added products. The rebate will be set at 15 per cent, and project costs must be between \$3 million and \$15 million.

New ideas come from the brightest minds, and we want to keep our best and brightest. We also want to attract the world's top researchers here to Nova Scotia. That's the goal of Research Nova Scotia, which will be in place this year.

Government is reinforcing its commitment to develop a strong research and development environment in Nova Scotia, having recently created a new \$25 million Research Nova Scotia trust. The trust will help create a research environment that leverages federal and industry funding and partnerships, and attracts and retains highly qualified talent.

One of the areas Research Nova Scotia will focus on is health innovation. We are already advancing creative solutions in health care, like MyHealthNS and a vaccination registry, but we want to support the creation of other new ideas in health care that will help make people healthier, reduce wait times, and create jobs.

Our businesses cannot grow unless they have access to the workers they need. This budget invests to better connect more people to the workforce.

We have recently provided \$10 million to the Centre for Employment Innovation to design and deliver a new employment program in co-operation with Nova Scotia Works. The program will provide hiring incentives to employers, as well as training and other supports to Nova Scotians who identify as a member of an under-represented group. It will also be available to those receiving Employment Support and Income Assistance. We expect the program to launch this summer.

We welcome diversity into our communities and our workplaces, and new immigrants need our support. This year, we will enhance settlement programming and employer liaison supports, and provide funding for the new Atlantic Immigration Pilot.

Support for an Aging Population

Mr. Speaker, diversity of age is also an important consideration when you look at our demographics.

Older Nova Scotians have a lot to offer. That's why we launched SHIFT, our action plan for an aging population. Budget 2017-18 supports this action. For example, this year's budget contains more than \$500,000 for initiatives that will support social innovation and digital literacy, and promote entrepreneurship for older Nova Scotians.

To ensure communities are accessible and able to meet the needs of our population, we will increase funding to grant programs, such as the Seniors Safety grant and the Age-Friendly Community grant, by more than \$200,000.

We also recognize that, as our population ages, there is a need for our communities, social programs, and workplaces to adapt. Part of that means investing so older Nova Scotians can stay in their homes longer.

We are increasing investments in affordable housing that will benefit older Nova Scotians, and we are increasing the budget for the seniors' property tax rebate.

This government made investing in home care a priority. By increasing funding and taking a new approach, we slashed wait-lists throughout the province. This budget continues building on our success by increasing our investment in home care by \$5.1 million.

As part of this investment, we are expanding the caregiver benefit program. This program provides eligible Nova Scotians with \$4,800 per year, and we expect this investment will mean more than 2,200 people in total will now have access to this benefit.

We want older Nova Scotians to thrive, stay connected, and feel empowered. We are committed to making that happen. Supporting our aging population is just one of the things we can do to build stronger communities throughout Nova Scotia.

Healthy People and Communities

This budget invests to ensure more people across the province will have better access to primary health care, home care services, mental health services, orthopaedic surgeries, and dialysis treatment. We are focused on reducing health care wait times.

Our investment in collaborative care teams will increase by \$6 million in this budget, and we will continue to increase investment in these teams for years to come. This improves access to family doctors, nurses, and other primary care providers for thousands

more Nova Scotians. It builds on the \$3.6 million previously announced for additional family practice nurses and nurse practitioners that will be in place this year.

We want family practice nurses and nurse practitioners to play a central role in health care in this province. They also make it easier to recruit and retain doctors. New doctors want to work as part of a team, and they want to work with these specialized practitioners because they tell us it improves patient outcomes.

In addition to building more collaborative teams, we are spending additional money to recruit and retain more doctors. We are adding \$2.4 million to create 10 new seats in the family medicine residency program and 10 spaces for a new practice-ready assessment program for doctors who were trained internationally and want to come and practise here in Nova Scotia. (Applause)

Because of this investment, we will have more than 50 new family doctors ready to practise in this province every year. With one province-wide health authority we can also do more with our human resources to fill gaps in service to avoid unnecessary closures. We want to create a new, improved system that makes it easier and more attractive for doctors and nurses to fill emergency room and CEC shifts. Part of that will be to transform our existing locum program. Doctors and nurses will continue to be part of the conversation and the solutions.

By increasing access to primary care and minimizing closures, we will help Nova Scotians stay healthier and feel more secure.

Over our first three budgets, we increased spending for orthopaedic surgeries to complete 2,000 additional surgeries. We will continue investing in this important public service. This budget will add \$3.7 million for more surgeries and better access to pre-rehabilitation services. This investment will let us complete as many as 400 additional surgeries per year, and help patients prepare for a successful operation.

We are also investing to cut wait times for mental health services. This will happen because of a \$3.2 million investment. It improves intake, adds supports for community-based mental health services in Cape Breton, and expands crisis services across the province. These investments fit well with the recommendations put forward by the Mental Health Innovation Advisory Panel chaired by Dr. Stan Kutcher and Starr Dobson.

Over the next year, we will work with the panel to implement more innovations to improve mental wellness in Nova Scotia, including important work to develop a standard model for mental health care offered in our schools through youth health centres and SchoolsPlus.

An expert panel chaired by Dr. Robert Strang is also working to develop an action plan to combat opioid addiction. We recently announced \$1 million to improve access to

safe needle exchange and naloxone to address overdoses. Over the coming months, we expect the working group to make further recommendations for a longer-term solution.

Stronger communities come not only from investing in health care, but by helping those who need it most. The Heating Assistance Rebate Program will be updated to ensure more Nova Scotians can access this valuable program. By increasing the income thresholds, we will help as many as 5,100 new applicants get support with their heating bills.

Because we are committed to helping those who need it most, we are increasing support for foster families. This budget contains a \$1.2 million increase to help foster parents meet the day-to-day needs of the children in their care.

There is also a \$440,000 increase to the Maintenance Enforcement Program so more families get the money owed to them. This money will go towards hiring more permanent positions to help collect on payments that are in arrears.

We are increasing the amount we spend to support Nova Scotians in long-term care facilities by \$3.2 million. This will increase food budgets and provide more recreational opportunities for residents of these facilities.

And we will spend \$1.8 million more this year to increase employment support services for youth at risk, helping them prepare for and connect to the workforce, giving them a much better chance of success.

Over the last two years, the Department of Community Services has engaged in First Voice consultations with over 1,800 clients, staff, and advocates on a simpler, enhanced approach to delivering income assistance.

In 2019-20, Nova Scotia will introduce a transformed income assistance structure. This year, we will start the work needed to introduce a Standard Household Rate that will substantially increase benefits for our clients in all household types and introduce a new work incentive so those who can work can keep more of the money they earn. (Applause)

There is further progress we can make to reduce poverty in Nova Scotia, and we are willing to invest to do just that. This budget contains \$2 million to fund a plan to address poverty in Nova Scotia. This \$2 million investment is part of a four-year, \$20 million plan to fund innovative approaches, including projects with community groups, to find new ideas to tackle poverty.

After forming government, we created and launched the province's first Sexual Violence Prevention Strategy. And we've made investments to support the victims of sexual assault. For example, we recently hired two special prosecutors to handle sexual assault cases.

This budget invests to continue combating sexual violence in our province, with \$1.1 million. We will continue to work with community groups and women's organizations throughout the province as they provide important services to support victims of sexual violence.

To support women at risk, we will expand Domestic Violence Courts. We will spend \$836,000 to expand the Domestic Violence Court to the Halifax region and make permanent the court pilot in Sydney. These programs will make our communities safer and stronger.

An Accessible and Inclusive Nova Scotia

We will also invest to make our communities more accessible and inclusive. While creating the Accessibility Act, we took new measures to ensure Nova Scotians from all parts of the province had the chance to provide input.

People across the province provided constructive suggestions to improve the Act. We listened. This legislation moves us closer to the larger goal of making our province more accessible for all our citizens, and government will do its part, and lead by example.

New funding, this year, will be seen in communities across the province. We will increase ACCESS-Abilities grants by \$1.8 million. This will provide more grants for community buildings and launch a new grant program for small businesses to make their enterprises more accessible.

In addition, we have undergone considerable work to improve the kinds of supports we offer people with disabilities in our communities, to help them live more independently. Now, we are investing an additional \$3.9 million for more small options homes, improved access to day cares, and more independent living options. (Applause)

These investments will make us a leader in the country. When we become healthier, more accessible, and more inclusive, we make our communities stronger.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, I stood in this Chamber one year ago and said we wanted to work with Nova Scotians to make our province stronger. And we are stronger than we were last year. This is the first time in nearly a decade that a government will have tabled back-to-back balanced budgets in this province. (Applause)

We are coming off the best tourism season in our province's history, our fisheries exports have nearly doubled in four years, and we are actively combating youth unemployment.

There is more work to be done. We have the resources to do it because of the hard work of Nova Scotians. Our province's finances are now healthy enough to make even more investments in opportunities for the growth that will make Nova Scotia more prosperous.

We will invest in infrastructure projects to create jobs throughout our province. We are investing in education and working with teachers to improve classroom conditions for our students and teachers. We are moving toward a fully funded Pre-Primary Program for every four-year-old in Nova Scotia. We are cutting income taxes for the middle class and those who need it most. (Applause)

We are expanding youth employment programs to keep more of our sons and daughters here in Nova Scotia. We are cutting wait times for doctors and nurses, surgeries, and mental health services. We are investing to create safer, healthier, more inclusive communities.

We are able to do these things because Nova Scotians stood with us. They worked hard over the last three years to restore our province's financial health. They worked with us to build a stronger Nova Scotia.

We will continue working with Nova Scotians, investing in new ideas and creating a better economy that can provide more opportunities for us all. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and give some comments about Budget 2017. Opportunities for Growth, it is entitled. When you see a budget of this magnitude - \$10 billion in, \$10 billion out - we know there was a lot of work that went into it from the staff working in the departments. We certainly appreciate that.

When you see \$10 billion in spending, there is obviously going to be some good in there. There are going to be some bad things, some terrible decisions, and there will be some things that are just confusing. That's certainly the case with this budget. As we dig through it over the next few days, we'll find more of those things that are a little puzzling.

Some things jumped out. There were some good things, and it turns out that many of the good things are small. They might be small and mighty. In time we'll see. But, when I see more money for maintenance enforcement, that's something that makes me happy. I certainly get a lot of people in my constituency office who are struggling with deadbeat spouses, and maybe some money towards that may help, and more money for foster care. These are good things. SchoolsPlus, the personal exemption, these are things that I am happy to see.

However, when I first got these documents this morning, Mr. Speaker - as you may know, you go into lockup at 8:30 a.m. and they bring the stack of documents in and you start to work your way through - it was the very title Opportunities for Growth that gave me pause for thought. I thought to myself - and my colleague made the comment - that we have been waiting four years for growth in this province and now we have a budget that might have some opportunities.

Inside these documents are pages and pages of hopes, plans, guesses, and estimates. Will they happen, who knows if they'll happen or not?

[2:00 p.m.]

I know that the government is pushing the narrative of good fiscal management, is pushing the narrative of back-to-back balanced budgets. What we need to do is we need to ask ourselves, is that really the case? We need to ask ourselves, is this what good fiscal management looks like? What does good fiscal management look like to this government?

If we look back at how they have performed over the past couple of years - and we'll do a bit of that this afternoon - we need look no further than last year's budget. We were in this Chamber last year, and we were advised the government was projecting a surplus of \$17 million, and we now know today that they're telling us that that surplus is now \$40 million, and we would say, well, maybe that's - is that a good thing? That sounds like a good thing on the surface, doesn't it? But with this government we always need to kind of dig a little, look a few layers down below and see what's happening.

First, we know that we've seen \$130 million-ish of electioneering spending over the last seven weeks. I guess that implies the surplus might have been that much higher - it could have been a \$170 million surplus, but that was a decision they chose not to make. They spent that money and left and came to the House today and said the surplus is \$40 million. Is that good? Is that good fiscal management?

My initial assessment is no it's not, because when you look at what actually happened last year, you look at personal income tax revenue, down; HST revenue, down. When you see those are indicators of what's really happening in Nova Scotia, those are not good signs. And, then, you can flash forward and you can look at this year where they're projecting a surplus of \$25 million, and just look beside the personal income tax revenues and you see very rosy projections.

So they projected something last year - the reality was different; it was down. This year they're suggesting to this House that it's going to go up again. It's those types of rosy projections that you need to dig down and find out what's happening, because if you just listen to the talking point, back-to-back balanced budgets, that has a meaning to people, but what you need to understand is what's really happening. But even still, even still, with

the \$40 million surplus this year, we look at what happened, and many of the things have nothing to do with good fiscal management.

Some of them are just how things unfold, and I don't want to use the word "luck", but it certainly had nothing to do with this government. If you look at a line item on the Income Statement called the Pension Valuation Adjustment, Mr. Speaker, I probably could live to 100 and not know exactly what means, but I'll tell you this - the budget for that was \$66 million and the actual was \$30 million. So that was a nice little pickup for the government; it was a nice little "good guy" we use in accounting terms. That's \$36 million right there.

Same thing happened with the interest expense in this province, lower than expected - absolutely nothing to do with this government - lower by \$11 million. Another nice little pickup. So when you start to say does this have to do with good fiscal management, is this good management? Not those, not those two. Then the other thing that really strikes me is when you look at last year's budget there was a restructuring line item - it's called restructuring costs. I refer to it as a bit of a slush fund.

The folks in the accounting department say no, no, no, it's not; it's an envelope but we can't tell you what's in it because what the restructuring fund is - and it was budgeted for \$190 million last year - that is four things that maybe the government is planning to do. You know, maybe it's a wage, maybe it's wages, they don't know how the wage patterns are going to settle out with their negotiations; maybe they're planning on doing a computer upgrade, and they don't know if it's going to happen. So they put these kinds of contingencies into a restructuring reserve, and last year it was \$190 million. That's what they set aside.

Now, do you know how much they actually spent of that? They spent close to \$90 million, and I think we know why that fund was so underspent, because when you look at how the wage pattern was set in this province - we can talk about that a bit later on - there weren't too many wage patterns in this province that were negotiated. They were legislated.

There is a lot of assumption around the wages this province will pay - will that pattern be accepted, will they be challenged in court, how much we are going to pay, millions of dollars to defend, what if we lose - all kinds of uncertainty around that. But in coming with the desire to come to this House with back-to-back balanced budgets and of course they needed last year's to be balanced - if that restructuring allowance would have been a little higher, it wouldn't have been balanced. If there was a consolidation adjustment and that consolidation adjustment was \$8 million or \$10 million - if that wasn't there, you don't have your surplus. If your interest rate - you don't have your surplus.

So there was a desire to come to this House and announce to Nova Scotians that is back-to-back balanced budgets and from an accounting perspective, you need to do a couple of things to make that happen, which they did. We could have a whole other

discussion about how they got to that and the social implications of the decisions they have made, but do they have back-to-back balanced budgets? I mentioned the personal income tax is down, HST revenue is down but forecast to go way up next year, but think about something like the exports of this province.

I think if you were a consumer of news in this province, you would assume exports in this province are just through this roof and maybe that's because this government would have you believe it's because of their good fiscal management. One time, the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture basically came just a tiny bit short of saying he caught all the lobster we exported. It's amazing the amount of credit this government would take for things now.

If you look at the charts in these things - there are a number of charts in these documents, and a couple of charts around exports jumped out at me. The first chart is entitled export pause. Pausing doesn't imply some tremendous growth is about to hit us from their good management as they would want you to believe - exports are paused, is that one. The next chart says exports are poised for slow and stable.

So what's happening with exports in this province? Yes, our seafood exports have gone up and that's a great thing. That's the kind of export increase which is from volume, from actually selling more things - that's a good increase in exports. But in the years we had tremendous exports, it was because of the dollar. The dollar was low and that's why the value went up so tremendously, but guess what? *The Economist* told me this morning that the dollar has normalized, so all of the bravado around exports increasing is just that. It's not good planning, it's not good fiscal management. It's in many cases good luck, and this is not a province that should be governed based on good luck.

We know what happens when this government starts to believe its own spin - look what our lumber industry is facing right now. I was told that the Minister of Energy was at a conference this week, I think on Monday, and he talked about having no concerns with the tariffs. That's what I was told from a person who was at that conference. Hours later, the news came out and guess what? Tremendous concern with the tariff. What does that suggest to me? It suggests to me that this government was not actively managing that file, wasn't actively protecting our interest, and instead relying on their cousins in Ottawa.

So what we actually need if we want to grow exports in this province is some good leadership. We can look at the numbers and we can say back-to-back balanced budgets. But we can peel back and start to share the concern about where we are going, and we are not going on a path that good fiscal management would lead us. In most ways, this budget today is a damage control budget. There is very, very little vision in this budget. There is a lot in this budget that is damage control, to try to fix things, put band-aids on the mistakes they have made over the past couple of years. We haven't seen much good fiscal management, even if at first blush it may seem so. The headline screams it: back-to-back budgets. But now we know what really is behind them.

There are really two key facts that will mark this term of this government. One fact is that this is not a government that has focused on growing the province. This is not a government that has focused on growing revenues and getting more money to pay for the services we need. This is a government that is focused on cutting and trying to get people to make do with less. That's what this government is focused on. In this province, we need more people working. We need more people paying taxes. We need to raise the standard of living.

Again, if you think about the talking points you hear from this government and their communications staff - we know they have a very large communications staff - you might think that things are okay. I went back, and I looked. When this government came in, there were 491,000 people in our labour force. Today, there are 486,000. They've managed to shrink the labour force during their tenure. Despite what they would have you believe, things are not better in this province.

This is a government that will be remembered for cutting and showing no vision, no leadership, on how to grow. I think it might have been overshadowed by what I originally thought would be the second thing - but that will be the main thing I will remember them for.

The second thing that they will be remembered for is the return of, or at least the ramping up of, old-school, backroom politics. We have seen many, many election miracles over the last six weeks, right up to yesterday, with the highway. Surprise! We don't need to toll the highways. We can do it anyway. We've got an election coming, folks. The many election miracles we have seen from this government are an absolute return to backwoods, backwater Nova Scotia politics.

This is not what we need. This is a damage-control budget. This is not a visionary budget. There are many ins and outs of a budget this size, of course. But, what we needed was a little bit of vision from the leadership, and we didn't get it.

We know that lurking inside the details of these nicely bound documents are a lot of painful things for Nova Scotia. When we get down in the details, lurking below the surface, if history is an indication - which it is with this government - there will be a lot of painful things. You can't hide them with band-aids. A balanced budget is supposed to be a good thing, and this government has managed to tarnish the meaning of "balanced budget."

The first question we have to ask about this budget going forward is, is it really balanced? There's a lot of election speculation. The Premier is a very brave man if he does not call the election this weekend because he will not want Nova Scotians to go line by line through this document. In fact, I would say he can't afford for us to go through it line by line because the only question is what colour is the lipstick that they put on this this year? We know it's on there. What flavour is the lipstick, my colleague might say.

We heard about last year's budget. I just told you that the \$40 million surplus that's being reported today is a little bit suspect. We can extrapolate that to these numbers as well. I will be surprised if we have the opportunity to go through this budget line by line. When you think about the rosy forecasts around the revenue - we know that even in this document, with personal revenue supposed to go up, and corporate revenue supposed to come down - some of that will be the changing of the limit. But, you can't have personal revenue go up without growing companies and creating jobs. Where are the jobs going to come from?

We know - these budget documents aside - that we have to take these numbers at face value, and that's difficult because of what we've seen from this government in terms of misplaced priorities. The priorities of this government - I'll go through a number of examples and everyone in this House today will have their own examples - have certainly not been consistent with the people on this side of the House, nor with the people of this province. There's a real disconnect between the priorities that this government has pushed forward and what matters to Nova Scotians.

Under this government, our seniors have suffered. Our roads have suffered. Nova Scotians have suffered. The minister can give as many one-hour speeches as he wants, and get rounding applause and handshakes, but he can't rewrite the record that we have seen for three and a half years. It is not a rosy picture for this province.

This is not leadership. The way they've governed is not leadership. We can see the results today from the accounting, but we know that this province has been devoid of leadership. What types of decisions have been made that show leadership? What are the decisions that this government has made that show leadership?

We can go through the list of closures and cutbacks that they have made, but ask yourself what their legacy will be when this is a government that closed satellite courthouses and land registry offices in rural areas. This is a government that eliminated jobs in child protection and closed the Dayspring, a treatment centre for at-risk children. This is a government that closed visitor information centres that are crucial to promoting local businesses. This is a government that slashed funding to a wide range of non-profit and community groups, groups that help families cope with everything from developmental disabilities to eating disorders. Cut, cut, cut.

This is a government that forced the Health Authority to dip into restricted funds to cover their payroll, even though the Department of Health and Wellness owed them about \$70 million at the time. Now just imagine, squeezing the Health Authority. Then we can say, "I wonder why we see what we see in health care?" This government is squeezing the Health Authority for funds that are due to them.

We know what this government is all about. Meanwhile, everybody in the Premier's inner circle gets raises and new jobs. The Premier's principal secretary gets \$160,000 a year. I could go on about the hiring of communications staff. They're not cheap

resources, but that's where we're at. We're cutting groups so we can fund this. The Liberal platform in 2013 was "Nova Scotians First". But, we've mentioned in this House numerous times, it was Liberals First.

The thing about a government budget is that it is an opportunity for people to see what matters to the government. It's an opportunity to see into the soul of the government. We are seeing into the soul of this government when we see them give \$400,000 to Engage Nova Scotia, and Engage Nova Scotia works with communities around the province to help improve social and political engagement. They got \$400,000.

Do you know who else around the province works within their community to improve social and political engagement? Pretty much everyone. Everyone is a volunteer in this province. They didn't get \$400,000, but Engage Nova Scotia did, and while Engage Nova Scotia gets it, cuts to the community organizations that are trying to help people get through life.

That's not my priorities, Mr. Speaker. That is a view into the soul of this government. We can see it time and time again.

Engage Nova Scotia didn't need \$400,000 to do what they're doing. There's already a not-for-profit organization funded through private money that does all of that and a lot more, and that's an organization called the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia. If you don't know who they are, shame on you. Look them up.

We can see into the soul of this government. We can see what matters to them, and we know the disconnect that exists. If you look at what's happened to the funding of Feed Nova Scotia - Feed Nova Scotia, where it's reported that 30 per cent of the people who visit are children - if we look at meal programs and soup kitchens, they serve another 177,000 people.

You know what this is? What we heard in this budget today is called damage control. For three and a half years these people completely neglected it - trying to damage control it in a budget today is offensive to me and it's offensive to everyone.

Ask yourself, do you believe this is good fiscal management? Do you believe we have a balanced budget? (Interruptions) The most stunning example of the misplaced priorities of this government is that they cheer, while kids are going to Feed Nova Scotia and soup kitchens, and stand up today and try to claim the victory of putting a band-aid on it. Shame on you. (Interruptions) Damage control. It's certainly not a vision. There's no vision in this budget today. It's damage control for the pain they've caused this province. Damage control.

Back on February 6th - I'm going to remember this day forever - I heard some of the most profound words I've ever heard, and I heard them from my colleague, the member

for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley. He gave a little talk, and he said, when you lose sight of what is possible, you lose your ability to compete.

Those words were ringing in my head when I was reading this budget, which showed no vision and no clue what's possible for this province. They just folded their hands and said, we can't compete. Let's try to fix what we've done over the last three and a half years.

There are opportunities for growth, Mr. Speaker. We're getting a little tired of waiting for them, and there's no clue from this budget that we have an end in sight for that.

On this side of the House, we haven't lost sight of what's possible. We know what's possible, and we're willing to compete to get it, instead of electioneering weeks before a budget - days before a budget - trying to change the tune of what's happened.

We know that people know what's possible. It's easy for the government and the Premier - he has his own talking points. We know what he's like when he gets his talking points in his mind. The teachers heard his talking points a lot. We hear his talking points a lot. We hear his talking point that we're negative - that's his talking point, that we're negative. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? "Negative" is their word. My word is "concerned."

I'm concerned about this province. I'm concerned about the decisions that this government has made, because - with good reason - we should all be concerned. This government is a short-sighted government, an extremely short-sighted government. If you need an example, look at the last couple of weeks - \$65 million of spending in March, over \$100 million now. That is not vision. The word for that is a "reaction." It's not a plan; it's a reaction to what's happening. It's damage control. This government can try to stamp out the worry that is engulfing Nova Scotia, but they won't do it with this type of a document today.

There is a lot of stress in this province right now. People are worried about health care; people are worried about their job; people are worried about how they are going to feed their family; and they are worried about whether their government respects them. We didn't cause this worry, Mr. Speaker. We're concerned; we share their worry; and we're concerned about where this province is going. And instead, this is a government at every opportunity, whether it's through missteps or misreading or misunderstanding what's going on, just piles on the worry.

I met with a group of people a couple of weeks ago and I heard about their concerns and worries, and I was surprised at the things they were worried about. Mr. Speaker, 104 years ago, in 1913, in Salt Springs Pictou County, the first branch of the Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia was organized - in 1913. Since that time the goals of Women's Institutes have always been to support and improve the quality of life for Nova Scotians, primarily in rural communities.

If you go and talk to the Women's Institutes, Mr. Speaker, they will find it very hard to believe, they will find it very hard to accept the fact that this government told them they were going to cut their funding, didn't say they'll cut it in a couple of years, but that this government is even toying around with the idea of playing around with the funding to the Women's Institutes that have been around for 100 years. Do you know what the funding is, the funding that's at risk? It's less than \$30,000.

What short-sighted government would not understand the value that that \$30,000 is generating in community support, for free, from these volunteers in the Women's Institutes who care about their community. You don't have to take somebody in a rural area and say we'll give you \$400,000 to care about your community. The Women's Institutes have done it for 100 years. (Applause) They do it for \$27,000 a year, and this government tells them that's it, we're cutting you off. That's a misplaced priority, Mr. Speaker, that is not a vision. It shows me into the soul of this government. Why would this government cause so much stress for Women's Institutes?

Seniors are worried, Mr. Speaker. Government, through their actions, imply that seniors have it easy. Remember what happened with the Pharmacare debacle? They told seniors you have it easy, you have to pay more. Slashing of funding to long-term care facilities throughout the province, \$8.2 million. Forcing those people in long-term care facilities to eat off \$5 a day. Guess what? Help is on the way, damage control budget, \$3.2 million is in this budget to help with meals at long-term care facilities. This government said it's not our fault; they said we can't direct where the money goes. We didn't know they were eating off \$5 a day. We just thought we could cut and cut and cut and there would be no ramifications to people, I guess. Well now in this budget, damage control. Let's put a little bit of money, let's say it goes to meals - maybe that will fix it, maybe people will forget. It's a damage control budget. No wonder Nova Scotians are so stressed.

[2:30 p.m.]

If you look at what's happening in health care, health care workers are stressed. Nurses are worried and stressed. Doctors are worried and stressed. Think about the amount of Code Censuses that happen in our health care facilities. But guess what they do? This government stands up today and pats themselves on the back and says Nova Scotians stood with them. No, no - Nova Scotians are standing in spite of this government. If you talk to the doctors and they talk about the Code Censuses and the pressure cookers in the hospital, they say it's the new normal: we only care about the patient in front of us, we do the best we can. They're trying to solve the problems. Nova Scotians are resourceful. They try to solve the problems despite a government that leaves them hanging to dry.

Nurses, doctors, health care workers, and Nova Scotians feel disrespected by this government. This government stands up today and says thank you, Nova Scotians, for standing beside us. Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you that this government was standing on top of those Nova Scotians, not beside them. But Nova Scotians are resilient.

We have an issue with primary health care in this province. I received a note about a month ago from a doctor who asked, did you know that the Department of Health and Wellness owes us doctors money for services rendered like home visits, nursing home visits, baby care - in general, things you would want family doctors doing? Some of the services go back to 2015. The doctor says that this is usually paid out in January each year. Doctors perform the services, and they're owed money under their contract.

This doctor says it's usually paid out in January. He said, at this time - about a month ago - the Department of Health and Wellness has chosen not to pay us yet. Our contract year ends March 31st, meaning that if I don't get paid by March 31st, the Department of Health and Wellness is not living up to their contract with us. This is significant money owed to doctors. We later found out it's \$6 million owed to doctors.

The doctor had a poignant assessment of what was going on. He said that withholding money that's due to doctors for months on end seems like a very stupid move. He said it seems very stupid to delay payment to our current family doctors at a time when recruitment of family doctors is such a priority. He said that this isn't the Health Authority - it's the Department of Health and Wellness.

Again, we already heard about the Department of Health and Wellness squeezing the Health Authority on its cash flow. We know about the Department of Health and Wellness squeezing doctors. Good fiscal management? Very, very short-sighted government.

Mr. Speaker, everyone in this Chamber today is familiar with the issues in health care in this province, whether it's waiting in an emergency room, whether it's trying to find a family doctor, whether it's waiting for surgery, whether it's trying to get tests done but not being able to get the results. We're all familiar with the issues.

It completely floored me this morning when I went through these documents and I saw that the Department of Health and Wellness underspent its health budget last year. The Department of Health and Wellness underspent its health budget last year. That is an extremely short-sighted decision. That is not something that I would put my name beside and say, congratulations, I've balanced the budget. Guess what? I underspent on health care.

You can't balance the budget by just refusing people access to services. It's lost on this government. They don't understand that concept. It's a shame that the Department of Health and Wellness would underspend its budget. It blew me away this morning when I saw that.

We had a rousing round of applause earlier in the House as the minister claimed victory on the health care file, all the wonderful things he's going to do on health care. Look over here, folks; don't look back at what we've done, look at what we're going to do.

The largest round of applause was for the statement that there would be 50 new family doctors coming to Nova Scotia. Fifty new family doctors. Congratulations, Minister. Guess what? Yesterday, Doctors Nova Scotia told a committee in this House we need 100 per year. But congratulations on getting 50. In 2013, they told us there would be a doctor for every Nova Scotian. We're not anywhere near that. There's a complete disconnect. It's damage control. If we look at what's happened in our school system, teachers are worried. Students are worried. Families are worried.

I remember back in December, this government made the bold statement that your kids won't be safe with teachers if you send them to school. Some members of the House may remember that. They said your teachers won't keep your kids safe. We have to close the schools for the day, because your kids won't be safe in school. It's one of the most deplorable things I've seen a government say. Your kids won't be safe in school. That's exactly what they said.

Now, the Premier is very fond of saying that the NDP Government cut \$65 million from education. I don't dispute that the NDP made cuts to education. But what I find interesting is that the Premier made up the number of \$65 million. He said it enough that it stood as fact. It became a fact in the Premier's mind and in the media's mind. Numerous times in this House, the government was asked to support that number. They could never, ever support it. It was a made-up number. There were cuts, but it was a made-up number. Then, this government claimed victory time and time again and said that they put \$65 million back into education. That is also a made-up number.

But the most telling thing I heard in that whole situation of "who took what out and who put what back in" was that the Premier said he had been investing in health care all along and that perhaps he had missed the mark. How do you spend \$65 million and miss the mark? That's a reactionary, short-sighted, band-aid government. It's remarkable. It was an incredible admission from a Premier of a province. But when it was all said and done, we made our way to the first labour action in the history of this province under this government - another one of their milestones that they left out of their Budget Speech today. The Premier said in reaching his conclusion that he had done quite a bit of soul-searching as he prepared on which action to take. He did some soul-searching.

Often, soul-searching results in a better outcome. So, help us if he hadn't have done that soul-searching, because what he did was run our train right into the wall. In his last move on that whole fiasco he legislated a contract. There were three tentative agreements. And after negotiating each tentative agreement, guess what contract he legislated on the teachers? He rolled it back to the first one in his last punitive act towards the teachers of this province. That is a small-minded government. It is a government that does not have a plan for the people of this province, to roll it back in his last act on that.

Well, actually, I should be fair. There was one final thumbing of the nose at the teachers and students of this province, and that is the one-day strike that "saved" the

government over \$3 million. Guess where that went, Mr. Speaker? Not into the classrooms. It went into another special kind of grant. That money could have been used for different purposes, but the Premier certainly wanted to get his point across as to who was in charge on this one. It was a short-sighted move.

It's a damage-control budget - today we heard from the minister today in his speech about twinning of the highways. That's a good thing, Mr. Speaker. It's actually something we have said all along - you can twin those highways, you don't need to reach into pockets and take tolls. I found it a little entertaining that that was included in today's Budget Speech, but guess what it's not part of? It's not in this budget at all, it won't even be in the capital budget that comes in December or January. It will be in the capital budget the year after - it's not part of this budget. So it tells you how big a band-aid they are reaching for to put onto things, when they are grasping for straws about things that far into the future.

The decision to twin highways without a toll was a true election week miracle. What a complete miracle, Mr. Speaker. We have been saying this can be done, we can figure it out. (Interruptions)

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

MR. HOUSTON: We've been saying for months on end that a twinned highway is a safer highway. Nova Scotians don't have to pay more for safe roads. They can get it in a budget. Guess what, we've been saying it for months and months - talk to Ottawa, get some cash. Yesterday we hear, oh, we can talk to Ottawa and get some cash. I guess we should have told them earlier. It's an election week miracle. (Interruptions)

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

MR. HOUSTON: Now isn't it ironic, Mr. Speaker, without a March madness spending spree, without spending all this money - they probably wouldn't have even needed to go to Ottawa to get the money. We already had the money to begin with. The money existed to twin the highway. They put Nova Scotians on edge, they put them on edge. (Interruptions)

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

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the government manufactured worry in the hearts of Nova Scotians. They told them that you can't have a safe road, we can't deliver a safe road unless we pay. They manufactured worry that caused stress on Nova Scotians who went to the consultations, some of them in storms. They went to consultations, and it never

was necessary. The money could have been there to twin those highways, as it was. Today, on the eve of an election, we found it.

Misplaced priorities, Mr. Speaker, short-sighted decision making, manufactured worry. I won't even start to talk about how this Chamber was managed over the past three and a half years. More all-night sessions than the last 20 years altogether, more chaos around this Legislature, more emergencies. Terrible management of this House of Assembly, terrible management of the People's House, terrible management of the files under their control. Manufactured worry, short-sighted decision making, contempt for ideas and suggestions from the Official Opposition Party.

If you look at the bills on the order paper from this Official Opposition and you think about the number that have been passed, I think an ordinary Nova Scotian would be embarrassed. If you think about the bill of my colleague from Pictou West about the Coast Guard, a well thought-out piece of legislation, where is that bill? It will probably come back to this House under a different wrapper, under a Liberal wrapper. If you look at the Caylee's Law legislation, if you look at what is happening with Lyme disease in this province, this government, no action on any of that stuff. No action because it's a short-sighted government.

[2:45 p.m.]

If you think of just those examples - every member in here and every person in this Chamber today will have their own examples of where this government has showed contempt for Nova Scotians and contempt for the Opposition in this House. Think of those things. Think of all those things that are in your own minds right now and look down at these budget documents that are in front of you and ask yourself, what little gems are buried in the details of this document? What little gems are waiting for Nova Scotians? Is there more money in there for the *Bluenose II* build? We know how this government manages big files.

Now I don't know, Mr. Speaker, if this budget will be passed - I don't know if this budget will even be reviewed, but I would say that if it is reviewed that it will have a hard time passing the muster. Even if it does, Nova Scotians will realize there's no vision in these documents here. There are some good ideas, as I said, a couple of good things, smaller things, but going on four years of history has shown us that we need to look two, three, four times at something to see if it is as it seems. We've had lots of things come out of this government that seem like well maybe that's a good idea, and when you dig down it's not well thought out. When you get into the details, it doesn't pass.

The minister referred to the red tape, that he is going to save Nova Scotians \$25 million on red tape this year. I sat in the Public Accounts Committee and I asked the witness about the \$25 million. Is it a real number, can you show me where that comes from, can you give me some sense? I believe that day there was no answer, but I believe that day they

claimed some kind of Cabinet confidentiality on where the savings on red tape were going to come from.

Remember that this is a government that when they first came into office, self-proclaimed the most open, most transparent government in history. We have seen the exact opposite of that from this government. We are seeing Cabinet confidentiality used to hide partisan decisions. We've seen it on the schools, we've seen it in the red tape - we see it over and over.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians don't expect a lot from their governments, they really don't. What they do expect from their government is compassion, they expect aggression on growing revenues and growing the economy, and they expect thoughtfulness. Above all, they expect thoughtfulness. I wonder how many Nova Scotians are wandering around today saying, gee, that sure is a thoughtful government, in the face of all these things. They are looking for leadership and they are not finding it.

Now the Premier is three and a half years into his mandate. I think it was Walt Disney who had an expression - it's a famous quote and I think it was Walt Disney - there was an expression which said it's not my fault, but it's my problem. Now, how many times - just yesterday, and we'll hear it again today in Question Period, three and a half years in we still hear this Premier blaming other people for everything - well that has been happening before, the health infrastructure problem has been decades, the education problem has been decades. Guess what, sir? Yes, it has, but congratulations, you are the Premier, do something about it. Instead we see, pass the blame, point the finger. If it's Walt Disney, there are no Walt Disney characters in (Interruptions) I stand corrected, Mr. Speaker.

I would be okay with the Premier pointing his finger across and saying you did this, the Tories did that, the NDP did that. But what I would like to hear one time, just one time I would like him to say, but I'm the Premier and I'm going to address it and I'm going to take responsibility for it. We don't hear that from this government. Many of the things in the discussions we have had - especially around health care, infrastructure, health care delivery, and education - are worse now than they ever were. If you don't take responsibility, if you don't try to solve the problems, they get worse. While the Premier and his Cabinet blame other people, things continue to get worse.

The doctor shortage in this province is as bad now as it ever was. It was described to me as almost as bad as in the early 1990s. Mr. Speaker, we remember who was governing in the early 1990s, don't we? There is not enough openness. There is not enough transparency. There is not enough accountability.

As we head into a campaign, we are seeing a lot of election miracles in the last couple of weeks - I don't know how many more we'll see. Let's remember that history is often an indication of the future. Let's think about some of the things that the members in

this House said they were going to do when they stood on doorsteps. They talked about fixed election dates - the Premier himself talked about them many times. I think he introduced five bills in the Legislature calling for fixed election dates. He didn't do it. You know why? Because of the electioneering we've seen over the last six weeks.

Look what happened with the film industry. This province made an investment of about \$25 million in the film industry before this government set it back on its heels and knocked it off stride. Guess what it's going to cost the province this year? Over \$23 million. We're back to the same cost, and the industry is nowhere near where it would have been if it had been left alone to grow. It's probably the largest oopsy we've seen from this government. That industry would be so big if not for this government's blunders. Guess what we see today? A band-aid saying, we were wrong, we're going to put the budget back up and see if we can rebuild the industry that we knocked off stride. It's a shame. (Interruptions)

The members opposite can heckle me all they want. I dare them to go and talk to the film people who are without jobs, who left this province because of a poor policy decision. People in the film industry voted for this government. The Premier said he was going to extend the credit. He didn't do that, Mr. Speaker. He didn't do that at all.

Members opposite knocked on doors and said they were going to break the Nova Scotia Power monopoly. Today we see a band-aid in this budget. They're increasing the home heating rebate. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? Because power rates are so high since they've done nothing to control them. It's a band-aid. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. HOUSTON: We know what happened with Seniors' Pharmacare. There are two things in this budget today that caught me: \$50,000 for training for seniors' Internet training, and \$30,000 for positive entrepreneurship for older adults. Isn't that wonderful? It's \$80,000 in total. Guess what? The Premier spent \$135,000 to apologize to Nova Scotians for messing with them on Seniors' Pharmacare.

A doctor for every Nova Scotian - I could go on and on about the things that were said. Guess what, Nova Scotians? Be on high alert. These same people are coming to a doorstep near you very soon. Remember what they said.

I'm going to leave with this little dandy here, and I want to let this one linger for a little bit. On May 28, 2013, before the election, at 7:49 a.m., the now-Premier tweeted, "We support the collective bargaining process and the right to strike and will continue to do so." Guess what, Mr. Speaker? They haven't negotiated a single meaningful contract,

and this province will pay millions in legislation to clean up their mess. It's a complete band-aid. Shame, shame, shame.

Back-to-back budgets? Not a chance, folks.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I move to adjourn debate for today.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate.

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

The motion is carried.

Before we begin the daily routine, the honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board on an introduction.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity. I just want to direct the members' attention to your gallery, the Speaker's Gallery. I'd like to acknowledge a former colleague and former professor of mine. Perhaps the member for Pictou East, as he started his comments with some criticism of my performance - perhaps my professor of finance in my undergraduate studies might like to (Laughter)

The current dean of St. F.X. University's Faculty of Business, Dr. Tim Hynes, if he could stand up and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw the members' attention to the west gallery. We have someone with us from Sydney today who's very well known across the Island; you would have heard him on CBC Radio for many years. He's an author and he's one of our greatest ambassadors.

I'd like to introduce Ian MacNeil to the Legislature. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We'll now begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

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

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a copy of the Order in Council No. 2017-140, dated April 27, 2017, with respect to additional appropriations.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, joining us in the gallery today is Janet Gallant, the Legacy of Life program manager for the Nova Scotia Health Authority. I would ask members of this House to join me in giving our guest a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1115

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

Whereas licensed practical nurses are an essential part of the nursing profession in Nova Scotia and provide safe, competent, and compassionate care to a wide, diverse clientele in a variety of settings; and

Whereas the College of Licensed Practical Nurses maintains a commitment to excellence in regulatory leadership; and

Whereas the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia has reached the milestone of 60 years as a regulatory body;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House join me in thanking all licensed practical nurses for their valuable contributions to our health care system in Nova Scotia and congratulate the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia on their 60th Anniversary.

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 Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

RESOLUTION NO. 1116

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

Whereas each year, thousands of hard-working volunteers participate in the Nova Scotia Adopt-A-Highway program by cleaning litter from hundreds of kilometres of Nova Scotia's highways; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Adopt-A-Highway program continues to recognize the volunteer spirit of its participants, who strive to keep our highways and environment clean and litter free; and

Whereas May 4, 2017, marks the 24th Anniversary of the Nova Scotia Adopt- A-Highway program;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature recognize May 4, 2017, as the kickoff to the Adopt-A-Highway program here in Nova Scotia, and drivers are to be reminded that they do their best to support these volunteers by not littering.

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

[3:00 p.m.]

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 Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1117

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

Whereas April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and since the province's Sexual Violence Strategy was introduced, we have seen many initiatives emerge from communities to help people understand this very difficult subject; and

Whereas a complex issue like sexual violence requires multi-faceted, creative solutions for people to work together to raise awareness and support survivors, such as the online training modules that just became live 48 hours ago and already have 167 people signed up with interest to take the modules; and

Whereas it takes courage to start conversations about rape culture, misogyny, missing and murdered indigenous women, and the many issues around sexual violence that need to be dealt with in our society;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly join me in encouraging Nova Scotians to take the free online training, Supporting Survivors of Sexual Violence: a Nova Scotia Resource, that is accessible on the Community Services website.

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

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

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.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce in the gallery today two guests from the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia.

Could they please rise as I introduce them and receive the warm welcome of the House - Alfred MacIntyre and Jaylene Simmons have waited patiently for the last hour. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1118

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

Whereas nearly half a million Nova Scotians have signed up to be an organ and tissue donor, because they know it is the most meaningful gift they can give to others after they are gone; and

Whereas last year, 52 Nova Scotians received an organ transplant that changed their lives; and

Whereas there are still 126 people on the waiting list;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House recognize National Organ Tissue Donation Awareness Week, April 23rd to April 29th, and urge all Nova Scotians to talk to their families about the desire to be an organ and tissue donor.

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 member for Lunenburg on an introduction.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: I would like everyone to turn to the gallery. I would like to introduce my new constituency assistant, Ruth Wawin. She hails from Mahone Bay and is the goddaughter of the late Honourable Michael Baker. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

**MCMASTERS, ROBERTA - SPRINGHILL MINERS' MUSEUM:
DEDICATION - CONGRATS.**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Roberta McMasters on 25 years of dedication to the Springhill Miners' Museum. The Springhill Miners' Museum is internationally known for its mining heritage, and Roberta has been an ambassador to an international audience for those 25 years. She has worked tirelessly, promoting the museum's mining heritage and managing its day-to-day operations.

It is an honour to congratulate Roberta on her 25 years of dedication and hard work, and on making the museum one of Springhill's big tourist attractions.

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

FISH. & AQUACULTURE: LICENCES - MORATORIUM

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Earlier this year we learned that Nova Scotia's seafood industry is seeking a moratorium on new plants and lobster buyers'/processors' licences. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture appears to be non-committal on this industry's request. May I remind the minister that most present lobster processors had humble beginnings with their start-ups, like having a wheelbarrow on the end of a wharf, or selling lobster from the back of a half-ton truck on the Bedford Highway. These are humble beginnings, and look where these examples are today.

I cannot understand the minister's hesitation to say no to their request for a moratorium on new licences. It may be wise for the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture and the Nova Scotia seafood industry to recall these stories of humble beginnings and agree that today's industry would not be the same if these policies were in place back in the day.

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

MR. GORDON WILSON: Thank you. May I make an introduction, the gallery behind me?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. WILSON: I would like to direct everybody's attention to the east gallery. It's a habit of my wife to attend the Budget Speech every year - I don't know if anybody has noticed. She stays throughout it, even for the honourable member for Pictou East's conversations. (Laughter)

I really want to thank her. I think that shows the perseverance and support of a spouse. (Applause)

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

CLARE-DIGBY CTV/911 BENEFIT HOCKEY GAME - FUNDRAISING

MR. GORDON WILSON: By mid-Spring, most rinks in our communities are closed and the kids' hockey equipment is safely stored until Fall. In my area, this past hockey season was marked by some great hockey, as well as by another successful Clare-Digby CTV/911 Benefit Hockey Game fundraiser for the Clare-Digby Minor Hockey Association. This association encourages all children to adopt an active lifestyle, and fundraises so that hockey fees do not become prohibitive for parents.

Since 1983, the benefit includes a hockey game during which a team of local emergency service providers plays a team of CTV News personnel. Initially, it was supposed to be a one-time benefit, but it is now an expected event every March and is the association's biggest fundraiser. Thankfully, CTV personnel look forward to coming down each year, and this year they arrived with a cheque of \$1,000 for the association. The rest of the \$22,500 raised was from ticket sales, 50/50, and money at the door. This benefit is only possible because of the generous support of the community and its businesses. Well done, and thank you very much.

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

ARGYLE MUN.: ANL. (35th) VOL. RECOGNITION BANQUET - RECIPIENTS CONGRATS.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, on April 28, 2017, the Municipality of Argyle will hold its 35th Annual Volunteer Recognition Banquet to honour 21 individuals for their past and current volunteer work within the municipality.

Receiving certificates are: Joan d'Entremont, Pauline Bourque, Stephen Jacquard, Loretta Pothier, Payton Doucette, Simon LeBlanc, Lynette Doucette, Dora Atkinson, Rita Doucette, Bryann LeBlanc, Jody Spinney, Ian MacIntosh, Ward Cunningham, Lorna d'Entremont, Annette Comeau, Amelia White, Pamela d'Entremont, and Sharon LeBlanc.

École Secondaire de Par-en-Bas nominated Suzanne d'Entremont. Drumlin Heights nominated Julia Conrad and Kirkland d'Entremont. They were all recognized for their work within their schools and their communities. Jill Surette, of course, was named the Provincial Volunteer of the Year.

I congratulate them and thank them for all their work and dedication to their communities. What you do really makes a difference to our communities.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw everybody's attention to the west gallery and I would like the House to please welcome Mr. Fateh Ahmed, his daughter, Omayma, and Colin Hampsey. Please give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

AHMED, FATEH - FILM TAX CREDIT DOCUMENTARY

MS. LENORE ZANN: It is my great honour to congratulate and to thank documentary filmmaker and film teacher Fateh Ahmed for his courage and his ethical approach to telling a story in film. This is exemplified by his latest documentary, which recently premiered at the Emerging Lens Festival in Halifax - called Without Consultation, it's an unflinching look at Nova Scotia's Film Tax Credit fiasco, which I noticed was conspicuously absent in the 2017 budget, leaving our film industry in the lurch.

His film covers the full length and breadth of this homemade disaster, from the very first Budget Day - when it and the Nova Scotia Film and Creative Industries were cut - to the adverse effect it had on our lovingly-nurtured and once thriving film and TV industry.

Mr. Ahmed's documentary is the only film of its kind that truly stands up for the industry and for the creative community. For that, Fateh Ahmed deserves our praise and our recognition.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: On an introduction, Mr. Speaker. If we turn our eyes to the east gallery - and I thank them so much for being patient for two hours. We have Robert Fougere who is a resident of Dartmouth North and a recent three-gold-medallist in Special Olympics in Austria. His coach next to him who has been a volunteer coach for the past 33 years, Mary Ann Crowley, is here as well. (Standing Ovation)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

FOUGERE, ROBERT - FIGURE SKATING GOLD MEDALS

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: So, Mr. Speaker, Dartmouth North has quite a few champions and I am honoured to stand in my place to recognize some of them. Through this statement today I would like to recognize Special Olympian Robert Fougere. Robert recently returned home after participating in this year's Special Olympics which was held

in Graz, Austria. This year with the help of his skating partner Kailey Stewart of Halifax, Robert has brought home three gold medals for Team Canada - two in figure skating and one in solo dance. I would like to point out, Mr. Speaker - as much as we love Sidney Cosby, he has only managed two.

Robert has been involved with Special Olympics for the past 10 years and is excited to be figure skating at the first World Games. Robert is proud of his skating ability and to be named to Team Canada is a dream come true. He worked very hard, with his amazing coach Mary Ann Crowley who has been a volunteer coach for 33 years, to reach this achievement.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask members of this House of Assembly to please join me in celebrating this victory for Team Canada, and congratulate Robert Fougere on a job well done in representing our Dartmouth North community in the Special Olympics World Games. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MACKINNON, BAILEY - MUSICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, a young lady from Westville is on her way to becoming a household name since opening two gigs for Brett Kissel - one in New Glasgow and the other in Port Hawkesbury, Bailey MacKinnon has been thrilling crowds at numerous venues in Pictou county and beyond. Bailey was selected from many contestants vying to perform with Kissel at his concerts. Local residents are fortunate to have many opportunities to hear Bailey and may remember her for being the lead signer with The Third Step. She studied piano and is now learning to play guitar and is now giving singing lessons. Music is her passion and she is certainly a talented young lady. I wish Bailey continued success. I was lucky to have her with me in a Westville parade at one point. I will be watching your progress Bailey and cheering you on.

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

MCNEIL GOV'T. - BROKEN PROMISES

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, this Liberal Government has broken so many promises it is hard to keep track. They promised to be fair to workers and respect the collective bargaining process; they promised to maintain the Film Tax Credit; they promised to break Nova Scotia Power's monopoly; they promised a doctor for every Nova Scotian. Then there is the biggest broken promise of all and that was the Premier's promise to put Nova Scotia first.

This Liberal Government needs a promise tracker similar to those that have been created to track the promises of the Trudeau Government. Mr. Trudeau's flip-flop on

electoral reform was disappointing but he has a long way to go to match the many, many broken promises of this McNeil Government here in Nova Scotia.

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

RICHMOND CO. VOL. AWARDS: RECIPIENTS - CONGRATS.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, on Friday, April 28th at Louisdale Parish Hall, 124 of Richmond County's most dedicated volunteers will be honoured at a banquet hosted by the Municipality of Richmond. People from all corners of the county, of all ages, from many different organizations, will be celebrated for everything they do to improve their communities and make life better for their neighbours.

Every year, this event is one of the highlights on my calendar, something I always look forward to. It's great to see some of the same faces annually, knowing they are still hard at work, but even more exciting to see new faces doing their part. So many events I go to and funding announcements I'm privileged to make were the direct result of volunteers putting in so much time and effort.

Mr. Speaker, join me in thanking these 124 hard-working volunteers for everything they do and all the sacrifices they make for our county.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

PICTOU SCH. OPTIONS COMM. - MEMBERS THANK

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: I am pleased to rise today to thank the school options committee, comprised of volunteers from the Town of Pictou, who were involved with the local school review of the town's schools. Their hard work and dedication should not go unrecognized.

Pictou Academy was founded in 1816 by Dr. Thomas McCullough and is the only school in Nova Scotia - perhaps the only school in Canada - that has legislation protecting its existence within the town. Pictou Academy is not simply a school, it is an institution.

I thank the members of the school options committee for their commitment to the children of Pictou and for their participation in a challenging and somewhat exasperating process.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: I would like to do an introduction before I do my statement, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. ZANN: I would like to draw everybody's attention to the west gallery, where I have my constituent Mr. John Henry and his beautiful wife, Bent. Please give them the warm welcome of the House.

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

HENRY, JOHN: MEDICAL ISSUES - ASSIST

MS. LENORE ZANN: John Henry is a constituent who has a desperate need for hip surgery since the Fall of 2013. In his own words:

"I have endured a debilitating three-year-and-counting journey through the abyss that is our current health system.

I used to be a healthy, outgoing, happy, high-energy guy. But the long wait and ineptitude showed by a succession of administrators have had an immeasurably negative impact on my life - physically, emotionally, and economically. I have a business with up to 20 employees that I can no longer manage properly, I need to sleep 10 to 12 hours a day, as the 24/7 pain zaps my strength. My wife even had to quit her job that she loved and our happiness as a couple has been severely tested.

In the beginning we understood and accepted that wait times are longer than they should be. But I did not expect to be misled and lied to. My family doctor has expressed deep concern that this situation is robbing me of my health.

I know I feel closer to death than to life, and I am a very, very angry tax-payer. My goal is now to do everything possible to ensure this never happens to another Nova Scotia resident. Ever."

I would like to request that the Minister of Health and Wellness grant Mr. Henry and his wife . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. You're well past time.

The honourable member for Sackville-Beaver Bank.

DAFFODIL MO. (04/17) - ANNIV. (60th)

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: April marks the 60th Anniversary of Daffodil Month.

In the Spring of 1954, Lady Eaton held what was called a Daffodil Tea in Toronto. The flower was said to be a symbol of hope and courage. Each table displayed a centrepiece of daffodils. At the end of the tea fundraiser, many of the women would purchase the daffodil centrepieces, and that's how the idea of selling the daffodils came about. The Spring of 1957 was the first national daffodil fundraiser, and because of the funds collected by these campaigns, the cancer survival rate increased to over 60 per cent from 25 per cent in the 1940s.

Today, prostate, testicular, and some childhood cancers are approaching or have a survival rate of over 90 per cent. Undoubtedly, we still have a long way to go when we think of various cancers that researchers continue to battle.

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

DUNN, DR. REX - HEART OF GOLD AWARD

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: I rise today to congratulate Dr. Rex Dunn of Sydney River, as he recently was presented with the Heart of Gold Award during the QEII Health Sciences Centre's Heart of Gold Celebration.

Dr. Dunn has been practising medicine for more than 35 years, and he has dedicated his career to advancing vascular care and saving the lives of those touched by heart health in the region. Dr. Dunn played an important role in establishing the vascular surgery program at Cape Breton Regional Hospital in Sydney and recently participated in his fourth annual surgical mission to Guatemala.

I stand here today to thank Rex Dunn on behalf of all the residents of Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg for his dedication to his patients, and all that he has done for everyone over his 35 years of service.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

NOVA SCOTIANS: INCOME ASSISTANCE - INCREASE

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, time is a funny thing. The fact that better days are coming is of little comfort when one is suffering in the present moment. The promise of a different approach carries less weight than evidence based on past experience.

For Nova Scotians who rely on income assistance - many of whom have been consulted for more than four years on the best ways to transform that system - today is the

time to raise the rates. One cannot find an apartment at the shelter rate, one cannot feed or clothe oneself with the personal allowance, and one cannot participate fully in our society without transportation. When one is hungry, homeless, or stressed, a budget promising that the government will start to work to increase benefits rings hollow.

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

**QUARMBY-BENNETT, AMANDA:
TEAM DIABETES CAN. - COMMITMENT**

MS. JOYCE TREEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to tell you about Amanda Quarmby-Bennett, a resident of Eastern Passage. Amanda will be the only representative from the Halifax area that will be participating in the Great Wall of China Marathon in Beijing, on May 20, 2017, with Team Diabetes Canada. Amanda will run her first half-marathon across the wall and climb approximately 3,000 man-made stairs to complete her event.

Amanda joined Team Diabetes Canada to run her first half-marathon in honour of the people in her life: her husband, who was diagnosed in 2014, her father, who was diagnosed in 2009, and her grandfather, who has been living with diabetes for many years. On top of the challenge to train and complete the half-marathon, Amanda has raised \$9,000 for the Canadian Diabetes Association.

I ask that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Amanda on her commitment to this important cause. Best wishes and good luck on her half-marathon in Beijing.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

VI'S REST./FAM. - COMUN. CONTRIBUTION

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Fifty-nine years, Mr. Speaker. Vi's Restaurant in Whycomogah served the public for 59 years. In a world where only two in five restaurants survived beyond three years, Vi's has stood the test of time and the test of different generations of tastes. Trucking and good food go hand in hand, and as owners of a long-standing trucking business, Viola and J.P. MacInnis saw the need for a restaurant. With a prime location on Highway No. 105, Vi's became a place everyone knew and trusted.

April 15th marked the last day for locals and travellers to enjoy a piece of modern history. Earlier this month, Vi's daughter Beatrice, her husband Robert MacLeod, and their daughter Beverly were honoured for their business achievement by the Whycomogah Development Association. May we in this Legislature extend applause to this family for their contribution to our economy, for the employment they gave to so many, and for creating a signature place of rest and refreshment on Nova Scotia's roadways.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Before, we begin I would just like to remind all the members - not the previous one but all members before that - that reading letters directly from a constituent and referring directly to the McNeil Government is not proper.

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

PTSD: WCB - PRESUMPTIVE BENEFITS

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, in October 2014, I stood to introduce legislation about presumptive coverage for WCB benefits for first responders who are diagnosed with PTSD. I've worked extremely hard with a number of groups and organizations over the last four years to ask the government, the Premier, and the ministers that are involved to ensure that we do the right thing. One hundred and twenty-seven first responders and 54 military personnel have died by suicide since 2014.

I hope that the government recognizes that it needs to do everything it can to support our first responders and our military personnel who are diagnosed with PTSD, and bring forward legislation about presumptive coverage for WCB here in Nova Scotia. I hope that we will see that happen here in Nova Scotia.

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

ST. MARGUERITE BOURGEOYS CHURCH - REOPENING

MR. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: This month has been one of celebration for the parishioners of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys in Sydney. The parish was one of the many community facilities that was affected by the Thanksgiving Day flood, and in the last two weeks they've been celebrating the reopening.

The St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish in Sydney does a number of wonderful things in the community to support those who need it the most and, just recently, sponsored and took in a Syrian family and continues to support that family in their transition into our community.

I rise in my place today to congratulate all the parishioners of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys in Sydney for their perseverance in enduring the extreme damage that they had to their parish during the Thanksgiving Day flood. I congratulate them on their reopening and I thank them for all they do in the community to support our citizens.

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

GORDON, AIMEE - SPEEDSKATING ACHIEVEMENTS

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Aimee Gordon of Sydney Mines. Aimee was a gold and bronze medallist in speed skating at the recent World Games Special Olympics in Austria. At the age of 46, Aimee was the first Cape Bretoner to ever participate in these games that had over 3,000 athletes from over 110 countries.

It's a true honour to have this opportunity to say thank you to Aimee "Flash" Gordon for her achievements in making all Cape Bretoners so very proud. Please congratulate Aimee and her Canadian teammates on a job well done.

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

QUEENS-SHELburne VOTERS ET AL - THANK

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, today as I move closer to my last comments in this House, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the voters and the residents of Queens-Shelburne for their support during my time in this Legislature. I would also like to thank the staff and the members of the NDP, my CAs, Linda Symonds and Courtney Wentzell, and my caucus colleagues for over the past 11 years.

My special thank you goes out to my family, especially my wife, Luella Jean - we will be celebrating 44 years of marriage this summer.

Mr. Speaker. I've often stated that politics is like a roller-coaster ride - it surely has its ups and downs, its highs and lows.

Mr. Speaker, most Nova Scotians will never have the opportunity to sit in these chairs or to stand in this place, and I am truly grateful.

In closing, I just want to say to all the MLAs in this House, thank you for the ride. (Standing Ovation)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

CHOYCE, TERRY - BEDFORD ADULT VOL. OF YR. (2017)

HON. KELLY REGAN: I wish to take a moment today to congratulate Terry Choyce on being named Bedford's 2017 Adult Volunteer of the Year.

Terry was nominated by Bedford United Church where she has held numerous leadership positions and coordinated projects for 11 years. Among her accomplishments with the church are leading a program that focuses on inspiration and meditational well-

being for adults; providing counselling services to people in crisis; and providing love, support, and guidance to children she has taken under her wing.

Terry's other volunteer activities are many and varied. She was on the board of directors of Macdonald House Association for 14 years, including seven years as its chairman; she was a member of the Board of Trustees at Atlantic View School, as well as a member of the board of directors at the Women's Theatre and Creativity Centre; and she currently sponsors a family from Kosovo and she has taken a keen interest in helping Syrian refugee families.

I am proud to have Terry as a member of our community. I hear from her often. She is an outstanding volunteer who is an inspiration to many. Congratulations.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

HOVELL, ERNIE: VOL. EFFORTS - THANK

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, Ernie Hovell is an exceptional volunteer in his community of Port Williams.

He is active in many roles and organizations including being a charter and life member of the Port Williams and District Lions Club; treasurer and grave lot marker at St. John's Anglican Church Parish of Cornwallis; Village Commissioner of Port Williams for 11 years; life member and past national director of the Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employees; and, as well, a member and past director of the Associated Alumni of Acadia University.

Ernie was named a Melvin Jones Fellow by the Lions Club International Foundation in 2015 and received the Democracy 250 citizenship certificate and medallion in 2008 from the Province of Nova Scotia.

Please join me in thanking Mr. Hovell for his many years of dedicated service.

[3:30 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

COMMUN. HOUSING MEETING - COLLEAGUES WELCOME

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, a great number of homes in Halifax Needham were built with public, non-profit and co-operative efforts. Think of the Hydrostone, built by the Halifax Relief Commission. Think of all the post-war story and story-and-a-half homes. Think of the co-operatively-built developments of the 1970s along Barrington, North and Agricola. Think of Northwood and Almon Place, and think of Mulgrave Park,

Uniacke Square, and the seniors' manors - from Richmond and Samuel Prince to Sunrise and Ahern.

Next week, Halifax will host the Canadian Housing & Renewal Association Congress, the major annual gathering of non-profit and public agencies that work in the area of affordable housing. Few people from Halifax will attend, because the fees are too great. But, this Monday, at the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre, I am hosting a community conversation about housing, including some speakers from the conference. I welcome any colleague from the House to join me. Housing is a human right for all that we must work together to ensure.

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

BOLT, SANDRA - BEAVER BANK-KINSAC SENIOR ASSOC. VOL. OF YR.

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, the Beaver Bank-Kinsac Senior Association nominated Sandra Bolt as their Volunteer of the Year. Sandra has been a member of the Beaver Bank-Kinsac Seniors for the past five years. She has been Assistant Treasurer, Secretary, and a Garden Club member, leads the Dining Out group, is on the Bus Trip Committee, and is a member of the Pot Luck Group.

Sandra is also involved with the Beaver Bank Community Awareness Association and helps at their Monte Carlo Casino Night, selling tickets. Sandra is a dedicated and committed member of the seniors' group. She is a good listener with a sense of humour and a contagious laugh, which makes her a valued member of the group. Congratulations Sandra, and thank you for helping our community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

**CHEBUCTO LINKS ANL. VOL. APPRECIATION LUNCHEON
- CONTRIBUTIONS**

MR. JOACHIM STROINK: Mr. Speaker, last week I had the great pleasure of attending the Chebucto Links Annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon. The theme this year was Volunteers Make Canada and we certainly know that volunteers make their communities a better place to live.

Chebucto Links is a community outreach association that endeavours to enable older persons to live independently and safely, and maintain the quality of life they desire in their community.

There are several ways that Chebucto Links volunteers contribute to their communities, such as through the Lunch Bunch Program, knitting for Hope Cottage and the IWK, and through the Active Living for Seniors Program.

I'd like to extend my sincere appreciation to all the volunteers, as well as the Chebucto Links Board of Directors, for all of their individual contributions to making their communities better places to live.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HACKETT, ANGELA - MACKAY VOL. OF YR.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the efforts of one person can truly make a difference in their community. Volunteering has many positive benefits, both for the volunteer and the community. Angela Hackett has been chosen as the Francis "Bud" MacKay Volunteer of the Year in Stellarton.

Angela has offered her time and talents to the La Leche program, as a leader in supporting breastfeeding programs. She was instrumental in assisting in the establishment of a roller derby association in Pictou County, becoming the organization's first president. She is a volunteer at the G.R. Saunders Elementary School, assisting with the breakfast and fluoride programs, and helping with class trips.

I encourage all members of the Legislature to join me in thanking Angela Hackett for her volunteer work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

**JULIAN, MICHAELA:
UN CONGRESS ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (61st) - CONGRATS.**

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Michaela Julian of the Sipekne'katik First Nation in Hants East is part of Canada's delegation to the United Nations 61st Congress on the Status of Women in New York. Michaela Julian and Shurenda Michael presented a workshop on March 15th about indigenous girls' leadership. It featured the story of Nova Scotia's Peaked Cap Project, which is a Mi'kmaq approach to the United Nations Girls' Round Table model. The Peaked Cap Project provided Michaela and Shurenda with the opportunity to find their voices, share their ideas, and embrace Mi'kmaq culture. They also created a YouTube video.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Michaela Julian for her participation in the Peaked Cap Project and for being chosen as part of Canada's delegation to the United Nations 61st Congress on the Status of Women. Thank you.

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

HORTON, LARRY - COMMUN. DEDICATION

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a long-time resident of Sheet Harbour, Mr. Larry Horton. Larry has been an invaluable volunteer since moving to the area. He has a passion for the growing technology of Internet access, and he has been the driving force behind the establishment of the Bridge to Bridge Internet Society which he helps provide Internet access to all area residents.

Larry is also a past-president of the Sheet Harbour Lions Club and currently is still involved with their many committees and events. He also volunteers with the local ground search and rescue, community health board, and Capital Health in Sheet Harbour. Larry is the type of person that when he sees a job that needs to be done he rolls up his sleeves and gets it done in a quiet, unassuming manner.

In honour of National Volunteer Week, I want to thank Larry for his unrelenting dedication to his community and for continuing to make a difference each day. It's volunteers like himself that continue to make our communities and province so remarkable.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**MARTIN, DANIEL:
SPECIAL OLYMPIC WORLD WINTER GAMES - CONGRATS.**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to congratulate Daniel Martin of Lyons Brook for his double-medal performance at the 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Austria. Daniel is the first athlete since 1987 to represent Nova Scotia at a world game. Daniel earned a gold medal in the 1,600-metre snowshoeing race and a silver medal in the 4x400 snowshoeing relay. He has been an athlete with Special Olympics Pictou County for eight years taking part in swimming and snowshoeing; however, he particularly loves to distance run.

I congratulate Daniel on his performance at the Special Olympic World Winter Games, and I commend him for his hard work and dedication to his training.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**LUN. COMMUN. COLLEGE:
INTL. CULINARY CELEBRATION - CONGRATS.**

HON. MARK FUREY: Recently, the Lunenburg Campus of the Nova Scotia Community College hosted an international culinary celebration. Those who attended were treated to international cuisine prepared and served by some extremely talented culinary students and also included Nova Scotia craft beer, Nova Scotia distilled products, and Nova Scotia wines. Mr. Speaker, no one left hungry or dry.

This well-attended event was all in support of the Health Services Foundation of the South Shore and was a great opportunity for the Nova Scotia Community College to showcase the skills of their culinary students. Congratulations to the organizers, the Nova Scotia Community College instructors and students for putting together such an amazing evening.

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

DAL. AGRIC. CAMPUS TEAM: CDN. ENGINEERING COMP. - CONGRATS.

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, can mousetraps or triangular pieces of cardboard win an engineering award? An innovative team of students from the Dalhousie Agricultural Campus thought so, and it paid off.

The team of second-year engineering students first won the Junior Team Design competition at the Atlantic Engineering Competition in Moncton in February by designing an amphibious vehicle that could move up a ramp; their design was propelled by a mousetrap. Next, they won the national competition in March by designing a vehicle and track to transport a marble on Martian-like landscaping. Their track was made out of triangular pieces of cardboard.

So, congratulations to Alec McOnie of Truro, Patrick Wells of Stewiacke, Alex Place of Harmony, and Nathaniel King of Vancouver on winning the junior design challenge at the Canadian Engineering Competition.

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

CENTENNIAL ARENA - ANNIV. (50th)

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Centennial Arena on their 50th Anniversary. Centennial is more than just an arena in our community; it's a second home to all who enter its doors. It's a place for all ages to gather and be welcomed.

Many great hockey players have gotten their start playing for or even against the Centennial Hawks in the early days, now the Halifax Hawks - players such as Stephen Dixon and Liam O'Brien of the Washington Capitals.

The Halifax Skating Club has called Centennial its home for many years as well, and it was on our ice that Canadian figure skating champions Marie McNeil Bowness and the late Robert McCall logged many hours preparing for competition. The Sunday night free skate has been the site of many first dates, marriage proposals, and even some wedding photo shoots.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and all the members of this Assembly join me in recognizing Centennial Arena on their 50th Anniversary and wish them continued success looking forward.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS - PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker the chorus of doctors' voices is getting louder in Nova Scotia. What started as a few, brave vocal physicians has grown into a movement, and their message is clear: the doctor shortage in Nova Scotia has been more acute in the past two years. It's at a crisis level that has not been seen since the early 1990s.

There have been large public meetings in Cape Breton, in Weymouth, and in Pictou. Our caucus has been laser-focused on giving Nova Scotians directly impacted, a voice.

Here's a message they want to send - we are sick with no doctors and we are sick of the government talking points. Do something. Doctors, patients, and staff, are at a breaking point. They need more than an occasional government band-aid.

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

COLE HBR. RURAL HERITAGE FARM SOC. - CAN. 150 GARDEN EXPERIENCE

HON. TONY INCE: I rise to acknowledge the excellent work being conducted by the Cole Harbour Rural Heritage Farm Society. This organization is dedicated to the preservation of rural heritage in our community. Its successful operation of the Cole Harbour Heritage Farm and its involvement with the preservation of the Bell Homestead and its vista plain are fine examples of this effort.

The Cole Harbour Heritage Farm Museum is enjoyed by local residents and tourists alike, with its interactive farm experiences and programming. The upcoming Feed the Farm benefit on June 11th is a great example of community fun for this activity.

The farm's garden has been chosen as one of the Canada 150 Garden Experience gardens to visit over the summer. The society and the volunteers have been very hard-working in doing that. The society's work in the Cole Harbour Heritage Museum is interpreting the continuum in agriculture - teaching about its place in rural heritage, offering hands-on learning, and helping build a prospective farm.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**BICKERDON, TAYLOR:
VIMY RIDGE COMMEMORATIONS CDN. YOUTH AMBASSADOR**

MR. JOHN LOHR: Taylor Bickerdon, a Grade 12 student at Northeast Kings Education Centre in Canning, was one of only three Nova Scotia students selected by the EF Educational Tours as a Canadian youth ambassador for the 100th Anniversary Commemorations of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Candidates were asked to consider an issue in their community and share one idea that would help solve the issue and make a greater impact at a national and global level.

Taylor's essay was about creating a sexual assault and violence awareness week at her school. Taylor and 29 other EF Canadian youth ambassadors will travel to Ottawa in May to meet with MPs, senators, and community leaders to help make their ideas a reality.

I congratulate Ms. Bickerdon on receiving this once-in-a-lifetime experience and encourage her in all her future endeavours.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

HENNIGAR, TINA - LUN. CO. TOURISM EFFORTS

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: I would like to wish Tina Hennigar of Mahone Bay well on her cross-Canada mission to build the population of Lunenburg County.

In order to promote the opportunities and lifestyle of Lunenburg County, Tina came up with the idea to cross the country in a 1976 Boler Trailer plastered with images of Lunenburg County. Sharing both employment opportunities and real estate information, Hennigar hopes to bring 150 families to the area. Her plans include partaking in festivals in rural communities and urban centres on her month-long adventure during the celebration of Canada's 150th Birthday.

Exposing the beauty of our county to those who are not familiar with both the opportunities and the beauty of our surroundings is a way to build our population and strengthen our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and all members of this House of Assembly please join me in wishing Tina success in her cross-country travels.

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

**NORTHSIDE COMMUN. GUEST HOME:
MACNEIL FAM. - CONTRIBUTION**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: I rise today to thank the family of Dr. Robert MacNeil for their generous contribution to the Northside Community Guest Home that created a memorial library.

Ann is a nurse at the guest home and was the wife of Dr. MacNeil. He was the first house doctor in the Community Guest Home 40 years ago.

Dr. Robert was an avid reader, and it's so fitting that this memorial has the name, Pactus Otium, which is Latin for peace and quiet. Dr. MacNeil was also a Latin scholar.

It's a true honour to have this opportunity to thank the MacNeil family for their contribution that will enrich the lives of so many.

[3:45 p.m.]

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

KYNOCK, VERNON: VERNON'S THUNDERBIRD DINER - CONGRATS.

MR. BEN JESSOME: I'd like to recognize Hammonds Plains native Vernon Kynock for accomplishing his dream of becoming a restaurateur as Vernon's Thunderbird Diner nears completion. Vernon's love of antique cars is an inspiration for the name and design of the diner. On the roof is a replica of a 1955 Thunderbird.

The diner is described as an old-school dining experience in a new-school diner. He loves antique Fords and hosts a car show every year in our area. He encourages owners of antique cars to drive out and enjoy the diner once it's open.

Excitement for the opening is growing in the community, and the Thunderbird on the roof adds to the anticipation as commuters drive daily to check for progress. Vernon's Thunderbird Diner is sure to be a gathering place for families and residents of Hammonds Plains-Lucasville and beyond.

I would also like to recognize Randy Jones for his efforts in support of this project.

I would ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Vernon and our community, and look forward with us to the opening of Vernon's Thunderbird Diner.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

BOYLAN, SKYLER - BEDFORD'S YOUTH VOL. OF YR. (2017)

HON. KELLY REGAN: I'd like to congratulate Skyler Boylan on being named Bedford's 2017 Youth Volunteer of the Year. Skyler is described as a warm, outgoing, and highly-committed young woman who makes a difference both in her church and in the world.

Skyler was nominated by Bedford United Church, where she's been volunteering for 10 years. She's taken a leadership role in the worship life of the church, serving as presider during a Christmas Eve service, which entailed reading poetry and scripture. She's also an active member and participant in the Teens United group, and she's a ferocious fundraiser - on Sunday she sold me tickets to an event I'm not even sure I can go to.

Skyler has also offered up her time to the Big Brothers Big Sisters Bowl For Kids Sake. She was a member of the We Day committee at both Basinview Drive Community School and Rocky Lake Junior High, and among her biggest accomplishments was selling chocolates and raising funds for Treasures of Youth, an organization ensuring that cultural skills based on Gaelic arts and traditions continue to flourish with the young people of Nova Scotia.

At Sunday's award ceremony, Skyler said that being involved with the Make-A-Wish organization and being on hand when a child learns that their wish will be granted is an incredible experience and a rare gift.

I want to congratulate Skyler Boylan.

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

YOUNG, KAREN: MT. KILIMANJARO - CLIMB CONGRATS.

MS. PAM EYKING: I rise today to congratulate Karen Young of Boularderie, who recently completed the gruelling task of climbing the world's highest freestanding mountain and Africa's highest point as she reached the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro.

Ms. Young, who is a Tim Hortons franchisee, decided to do the climb in February as part of a charity challenge. She and her group raised more than \$627,000 for the Tim Horton Children's Foundation. The trek up the mountain took six days and required climbers to go through five climate zones while going up and down the 19,341-foot mountain. At times the temperature dropped to -20°C.

I wish to congratulate Ms. Young on her amazing accomplishment and wish her continued success in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

SCHURMAN, NOAH - SOCCER ACHIEVEMENTS

MR. KEITH IRVING: I rise today to recognize the tremendous talents of Coldbrook soccer player Noah Schurman. Noah is only 15 years old, but his list of accomplishments in his sport is already impressive. He has been selected to participate in the Vancouver Whitecaps Academy program, has played for the Nova Scotia provincial team, and has participated in the Montreal Impact Showcase events.

The young midfielder and striker attended the U15 Canadian National Team ID Camp in Montreal in March and was scheduled to attend a Vancouver Whitecaps Showcase in April. Despite his rigorous training schedule, Noah manages to excel academically at Central Kings Rural High School.

On behalf of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, I congratulate Noah on his achievements in his chosen sport of soccer, and I wish him the very best in his future endeavours both on and off the pitch.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

AMIRAULT, NORMAN - YAR. MUN. VOL. OF YR. (2017)

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the province recently presented its annual volunteer awards, and Norman Amirault was named the 2017 Volunteer of the Year for the Municipality of Yarmouth.

Norman Amirault has been an active volunteer with the Yarmouth Fire Department for 50 years, and has been a member of the St. Ambrose Cathedral choir for nearly as long. He has helped with the local Meals on Wheels program for 13 years, and in the winter, he is known to plow many of his neighbours' driveways.

I'd like to recognize Norman Amirault for decades of volunteering. We are all truly blessed to have people like him who so generously and happily help out their community and neighbours.

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

**SIEWERT, ELLIOTT WAYNE:
IBM MASTER THE MAINFRAME CONTEST - CONGRATS.**

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: I would like acknowledge and congratulate Elliott Wayne Siewert on his accomplishment in the IBM Master the Mainframe Contest.

Mr. Siewert scored in the top 1 per cent in North America. Over 4,000 people competed from 400 schools across Canada and the United States. Mr. Siewert is a

programming student at Nova Scotia Community College and has been invited to do his summer work placement at IBM.

There were two other ranking students from NSCC and I think this speaks well to the level of technical talent in this province, as well as the technical educational standards that exist in Nova Scotia.

My best wishes, Elliott, for your continued success.

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

NATL. VOL. WK. (04/23 - 04/29/17) - VOLS. RECOGNIZE

MS. JOYCE TREEN: With this week being National Volunteer Week, I would like to take a minute to recognize all our great volunteers in Nova Scotia. Volunteers give selflessly of their time and talent to non-profits, schools, clubs, churches, and many organizations, to enrich our communities. Volunteers provide valuable services that truly make a difference.

Nova Scotia communities benefit from the efforts of 5,820 voluntary sector organizations, and 453,000 volunteers work the equivalent of \$1.8 billion worth of services each year.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House of Assembly to join me in thanking the many volunteers for giving of themselves to make our province a better place to live.

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

WHITE, CHRIS - BODYBUILDING CHAMPIONSHIP

MS. PAM EYKING: I rise today to congratulate Chris White of Bras d'Or, who recently won the men's heavyweight competition at the Nova Scotia Amateur Bodybuilding Association Provincial Championship on April 8th. Mr. White has been a gym regular for 15 years, but only started to get into the competitive side of bodybuilding in January 2014.

His dedication sees him spending up to seven hours in the gym a day in preparation for the provincial championship. Mr. White credits the discipline he has shown to the 11 years he spent in the Navy.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate Mr. White on his tremendous accomplishment and wish him continued success and the best of luck in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

THOLEN, DIETMAR/BAXTER, SCOTT - RECYCLING SUCCESS

HON. MARK FUREY: In an age where we must all do what we can to help reduce the waste making its way to our landfills, any ideas to help reduce waste must be given favourable consideration.

Dietmar Tholen and Scott Baxter from Newcombville, Lunenburg County, have created a company called BDT Polystyrene Recycling Inc., which recycles Styrofoam. Their company and vision recently won them funding through the Clean Tech Accelerate Program, which will help Dietmar and Scott further develop their innovative business.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dietmar and Scott for their success thus far and to wish them much success in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

BAYLIS, PETER: NATL. PRIDE - APPLAUD

HON. LENA DIAB: I rise today to pay tribute to the patriotism of a constituent of Halifax Armdale, Mr. Peter Baylis.

As many may already know, in this 150th year of Confederation, Peter is on a mission. Peter's personal tribute to Canada is to put his powerful pipes to the test by singing our national anthem 150 times at different events and occasions.

As those who have heard Peter sing the anthem at Halifax Mooseheads games can attest, he puts all of his heart and soul into it. He performed at one of the citizenship ceremonies I've attended as minister, and I can tell you just how much more special that moment was for the new citizens joining our Canadian family.

Since announcing his intentions, community groups of all types have stepped up to invite Peter to their events. I was fortunate to help Peter mark anthem number 77 at one of my campaign volunteer sessions and it was quite a moment.

I ask all members of the House of Assembly to applaud Peter's exceptional national pride and cheer him on as he approaches 150 anthems. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much for those thoughtful members' statements.

I guess the House will recess for a couple of minutes and we'll be back.

[3:54 p.m. The House recessed.]

[4:00 p.m. The House reconvened.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM.: HEALTH BUDGET - INCREASES EXPLAIN

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Premier said that there is no crisis in health care. Well we thought he just misspoke. But with today's budget it appears that he really believes that. The health budget is flatlined, going up less than 1 per cent. I'd like to ask the Premier why he continues to squeeze the health budget, when the health care needs of Nova Scotians are so great?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank all Nova Scotians who continue to work hard with our government to bring us back to a position where we continue to make investments and as the honourable member would know we've invested \$3.5 million to hire 22 nurse practitioners, family practice nurses, and in this budget, you'll see there's an announcement of 10 resident seats for doctors who are trained in Canada, and another 10 that will be put in place for foreign-trained doctors to be able to make sure we provide those health care teams across our province to continue to provide primary health care to the citizens of this province.

There was an investment in orthopaedic wait times to continue to make sure that those who require that surgery are getting it in a timely fashion. I'm encouraged as we work with one Health Authority - that we began to use capacity inside of the health care system across the province, with those 800 surgeries that will move into the Windsor area, and the fact that Nova Scotians regardless of where they live are finding access for surgical services in communities as quickly as possible.

MR. BAILLIE: Yesterday, Doctors Nova Scotia reported that we need 100 new doctors each and every year just to keep the status quo. But in his budget today, the Premier offers only 20. That is not a plan to make sure Nova Scotians get the health care they need, that is nothing but damage control. When people want a vision for better health care they get one-fifth of the need just to make things the same next year as they are today, and we know there's already 100,000 Nova Scotians without a doctor. And that problem, apparently, is only going to get worse under this government. So I will ask the Premier why he is allowing the doctor crisis to get worse.

THE PREMIER: Actually, what Doctors Nova Scotia said yesterday was that we require about 50 primary care doctors and about 50 specialists across the province. Actually, Mr. Speaker, what they said was there were 50 primary care and 50 surgical

specialists required. If you look since July of last year there were about 170 - 70 primary health care doctors, about 100 specialists – to come into the province. But I want to ensure the honourable member that the 20 seats that were announced in this budget are on top of the seats that were already made available, which means Nova Scotians will have access to more than 50 primary health care physicians every year in our province.

MR. BAILLIE: There are 118 doctor vacancies on the Health Authority website right now, and the Premier's offering 20. We're going to be falling further and further behind because this government has no vision for better health care, and that's ironic because that's the same Premier who promised a doctor for every Nova Scotian. Well, we already knew that promise was thrown in the trash can a long time ago. Now it's officially broken, not just for one more year, but forever, under the life of this government. They've given up on trying to make sure that Nova Scotians get the doctors they need. So, I would like to ask the Premier why he is abandoning the 100,000 Nova Scotians who need a doctor today?

THE PREMIER: Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for his question. I want to remind him of what Doctors Nova Scotia said yesterday, that we require 50 primary care doctors in the province and another 50 for specialty services. I'm very proud of the fact that we were able to hire 170 physicians - about 71 of those are primary health care and the remainder are specialty care.

The fact of the matter is we know there are communities across this province that require more health care-providing teams. It's why on top of the residency seats, we are adding another 20 which will take us over the 50 complement that Doctors Nova Scotia were talking about yesterday. We are excited about that fact. We are really encouraged by the fact that when you look at the international students, that's an avenue or path back home to our province for sons and daughters medically trained elsewhere. That is a positive sign.

We are looking forward to continue working with them to build those collaborative teams but they also said - and we've heard it loud and clear from doctors across the province who are currently practising - that they want to be part of a team. They want a nurse practitioner, a family practice nurse, in some cases they want a social worker to be part of that team. We are continuing to deal with the issues that face Nova Scotians, and we continue to work with them in a positive way.

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

PREM.: HOSP. INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS - UNDERSPENDING

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier also. It's no secret that this government is balancing its books in part by starving our hospitals. In today's budget we have learned that the Liberal Government underspent the hospital

infrastructure budget by more than 50 per cent again last year. In the last three years, this government has underspent the hospital infrastructure by \$82 million - I repeat, by \$82 million.

I ask the Premier, why has this government ignored the hospital infrastructure needs of this province for three and half years and put the health and safety of our patients and workers at risk?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question, Mr. Speaker. We are proud of the investments we are making in health care infrastructure across the province - the investments we are making in New Waterford, the investments we are making in Pugwash, the investments we are making in Shelburne. All of those are being made with plans and a foundation around them.

One of the challenges we were faced with when we came into government - the former government made a number of promises to communities with no plans, no vision about how they are going to build the infrastructure. We had to go out and work with those communities to put it in place and we are continuing to work with those communities. I was so pleased to be in Shelburne on the weekend when I heard municipal leaders in that community touting the praise of this government because they said finally a government is listening, put money where their mouth was, and invested in the community.

MR. BELLIVEAU: This Premier simply does not get it. The Auditor General has identified a \$85 million funding gap in the hospital infrastructure needs of the province. The needs are there, yet for three and half years the Premier has told Nova Scotia there is no money - the cupboard is bare. In fact, the money has been there all along but instead of addressing the needs, the Liberal Government has been putting the health and safety of patients and workers at risk so it can stand here today and beat its chest on the eve of an election.

I ask the Premier to explain to the patients and workers why this government has underspent the hospital infrastructure by \$82 million in the last three years.

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to remind him that every budget we have introduced, we have continued to invest in health care infrastructure. I am proud of the work that is taken place in Dartmouth - we are continuing the third, fourth and fifth floors and looking forward to the operating theater going in.

I am very proud of the investments we are making in West Hants Hospital to open that second OR, I'm very proud of the announcement our government has made on the South Shore Regional Hospital. We are talking about a health clinic in New Waterford and Pugwash. We are proud that we have made a commitment in the honourable member's riding of Shelburne.

Let me reassure the honourable member it won't be like when he was in government when they made announcements with no plans and no money to back it up. We have made a commitment to those communities and we will be able to do that because we struck a balance. We paid what we believe is a fair wage increase to the entire public sector at the same time creating job opportunities in Nova Scotia.

MR. BELLIVEAU: I am certainly looking forward to the next 40 hours of deliberation on the health budget.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Government has not opened a single CEC - zero. Meanwhile, ERs are closing at an all-time high. Some hospitals have resorted to hallway medicine because of overcrowded ERs.

We have a crisis in the health care system. This Liberal Government does not seem to care, as long as it can save money along the way.

Will the Premier admit today that he has put his obsession with balancing the budget ahead of the health and safety of patients and health care workers in our hospitals?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I completely disagree with the preamble. The question is insulting to all health care workers across this province who are working each and every day to ensure that when a Nova Scotian arrives at the health care communities in our province, they continue to provide the top-quality care. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER. Order, please. The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, they provide the top-quality health care they are known for, and we're going to continue to work with our partners across the province to ensure that the infrastructure that was neglected by the NDP when they were in government gets improved in every community across this province. (Interruptions)

We're proud of the fact that we continue to work with our partners, and we're going to continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

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

PREM.: NURSING HOME CUTS - MISTAKES ADMIT

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, over the last three years this Premier cut nursing home budgets to the point that our seniors were eating on less than \$5 a day for three meals. Today, the Premier is reinstating half of that cut. That's not a plan to provide dignity to our seniors who live in nursing homes, that's damage control. It's an admission of failure to look after our seniors in our nursing homes.

I'd like to ask the Premier, will he now admit that his cuts to the nursing home budgets were cruel and wrong?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Last year we reduced the administration across health care budgets by 1 per cent. In some facilities, they chose to do it another way. If the honourable member reads that budget, he'll understand that the funding that is going into long-term care facilities is being targeted directly to the needs of seniors - exactly where they told us they wanted it to go. It's going towards ensuring that the food budgets are where they should be, and it's an investment directly back into recreational facilities and opportunities in the community. This is targeted funding, and it will make a difference in the lives of the people living in that facility.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, every nursing home operator in this province will tell you that the Premier's cuts over the last three years got to the point where they were forced to cut the food budget. They didn't want to. The people who look after our parents and grandparents didn't want to go there. They were forced to go there by this government, to the point that three meals had to be provided on less than \$5 a day.

Today, the Premier is putting back half of that cut, Mr. Speaker. I thought that he might stand in his place today and say, "Do you know what? We went too far, that was a mistake, and we'll put that money back in." That would have been the right thing to do, but he didn't do that.

In light of that - knowing that seniors are being forced to eat on so little - if the Premier really cared, why didn't he reinstate the whole cut instead of just half?

THE PREMIER: As I said in my first answer, this funding is targeted. It will be spent directly on the food budgets and special needs diets of seniors in those facilities. It will also be directly targeted towards recreational opportunities in those facilities, for those patients - the very things that we were told about.

We believed there was room for a 1 per cent reduction in administration in long-term care facilities across the province. They chose to cut elsewhere. This funding is targeted and it will go directly towards seniors - no options, no choice - directly towards seniors.

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

PREM.: LONG-TERM CARE CUTS - APOLOGIZE

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, this government cut \$8 million over the last two years from long-term care facilities. At the time, the Premier said that these cuts had no impact on the quality of life of some of our most vulnerable seniors.

Now, on the eve of an election, the government is telling us that they are giving half of that money back, to improve food budgets and recreational programs in long-term care. So, let's give the Premier the opportunity to apologize to Nova Scotians, and admit that he went too far by cutting \$8 million from nursing homes across this province.

THE PREMIER: As the honourable member would know, I've had the good fortune of travelling this province. I've been in many nursing homes, seen many residents, people who work in those facilities. I want to congratulate and thank all of those who are working there. I want to reassure the honourable member that those residents are getting top-quality care that we have become known for in many of these facilities. I also want to reassure the honourable member that the investments that we're making in this budget are targeted directly toward the food budget and recreational programs, directly to programs for seniors themselves. I want to reassure the honourable member that we made sure in this budget that that would not go into administration.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Top-quality care, I can agree with. Top-quality governing, I can't agree with. They've forced nursing homes all across this province to make difficult decisions. Now we see the government giving back half the money that they took from these long-term care facilities, many if not all of them not-for-profit organizations running on a shoestring budget. They care about the patients and the residents that they provide care for. Why does the Premier refuse to invest in long-term care to ensure that our seniors and those vulnerable Nova Scotians who live in long-term care facilities get the care they need and deserve?

THE PREMIER: I want to encourage the honourable member to read the budget. We've invested in long-term care facilities across the province with targeted funding. This is the third or fourth budget where we've invested in home care. We continue to make sure that seniors who require support and want to stay at home as long as possible. We're making those investments. The honourable member should also know, this budget today, with one of the largest tax cuts in the history of our province, will impact those seniors in a positive way. We're going to continue to work with seniors across the province to make the contributions that they've always made to continue to build this province.

One of the things that has become very evident in this province, Mr. Speaker, is that the negativity on that side of the House is not garnering support in the Province of Nova Scotia.

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

PREM. - SENIORS' PHARMACARE PROG.: BENEFITS - DETAILS

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Nova Scotia seniors remember full well when the Premier tried to jack up their Pharmacare premiums in many cases by 200 per cent. Today, the Premier is telling them, and I quote from the budget, that he wants to spend \$7.9 million to

“meet the needs of seniors enrolled in the Pharmacare program.” That is just more damage control, trying to fix up mistakes of the past. That’s not a plan to look after our seniors. I would like to ask the Premier, can he tell the House what extra benefits are seniors in Pharmacare going to get from this \$7.9 million?

THE PREMIER: The honourable member would know that when we went through the Pharmacare issue a year ago, we were making sure that fewer Nova Scotians would be paying no premium. That was a positive thing. We also realized that we were solving one problem for one group of seniors and creating another. I said at that time there were unintended consequences. We made that change. There has been no change for those seniors. What we’re seeing now is there are many, many more Nova Scotians who will not be forced to pay a premium.

The honourable member would also know that we’re looking across the region of Atlantic Canada to potentially build a Pharmacare system. Our hope is that will be the impetus to build a national Pharmacare program. We’re continuing to work with our partners and work with seniors across the province. I’m very proud of this investment. I would tell the honourable member and all of this House what I said to seniors - if we made a mistake, we’ll correct it. That’s exactly what we did when it came to the Pharmacare premiums.

MR. BAILLIE: The question was, what new benefits are seniors getting from the \$7.9 million? We got the answer. There’s none. The mistake the Premier made was misleading seniors in the first place about the Pharmacare changes he was going to make two years ago. Now they’re making the same mistake again. They’re trying to tell seniors there’s \$7.9 million in enhancements to Pharmacare. In fact, there are none. That is just the normal increased usage from an aging population. There is no extra benefit today in this budget. The Premier is misleading our seniors again. Why is the Premier telling seniors today they’re getting something new when in fact nothing has changed?

THE PREMIER: I want to tell the honourable member there will be fewer Nova Scotians paying that premium. There will be more things added to the formulary. The honourable member should know that from his time in government. The challenge is, he was presented with a real plan to move this province forward, and he’s now looking desperately to find some way to fearmonger across the province, and continue his journey of negativity from one end of this province to the other.

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

PREM. - FILM IND. CUTS: BUDGET AMOUNTS - EXPLAIN

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I do keep looking for a real plan. For four years, I’ve been waiting for a real plan from this Premier, and I’m still waiting today. This, on the eve of an election, was their chance to show us a real plan, and do you know what

we got? We got damage control to try to cover up all the mistakes that they made in the last four years. That is not a plan.

[4:15 p.m.]

I'll give you an example. We have a budget today, with an amount set aside for the film industry of about \$23 million - almost exactly the amount that they cut two years ago. We have a much smaller industry today, but we have a bigger fund. How is that a plan - for the government to spend the same amount, while the industry is half of what it used to be?

I'd like to ask the Premier, how can he justify having a smaller film industry and spend just as much money as ever before?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. If he had been paying attention at all he would have realized that in the plan presented to him today, there are more seniors who will not pay a premium. If he had paid attention to the document he would realize that four-year-olds will have pre-Primary from one end of the province to the other. He would recognize that there's a breakfast program. I'm looking forward to his support to move this document forward.

When he talks about the film industry, he talks negatively. He's going to be the doom and gloom of the industry. We've seen one of the largest films in the history of our province. We've seen an industry come and work with government, unlike the Opposition, which continues to spread fear across the province. There are people working in the industry, and we're looking forward to that.

I also want to tell the honourable member that that is a labour subsidy for the industry, and the subsidy is broad-based across a number of sectors. It's open and transparent.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, we see what happens when groups come to work with the government. The film industry came to work with the government, and the government slashed it. They are half the size that they were, today. Doctors came to work with the government, and they provide one-fifth of the doctors that our own Doctors Nova Scotia says are needed. Teachers come to work with the government, and they get legislated back to work. That's what happens when you work with this government. You get slammed down. That's not a plan.

Today, they want to paper that over. My question was about the film industry. The Premier's answer had nothing to do with the film industry. No wonder: it's one of the biggest blunders that cost real jobs, and now they're spending just as much money anyway. I will ask the Premier if he will at least do this: with this budget putting the fund back up

to the expense from before, will he at least admit that that was a mistake that cost too many Nova Scotians their jobs, and that this budget confirms it?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the honourable member that he should get outside of his office periodically and engage Nova Scotians about what is actually happening. We're seeing one of the largest films in the history of this province come in under this program. We're seeing activity all across the province when it comes to this. We're seeing the public money that was invested in this industry being spread across a number of sectors. We're seeing economic growth. We're seeing more young people attached to this economy, and we're very proud of the fact that the film sector of Screen Nova Scotia came to work with us. We made adjustments for them. They are working with the program, creating good jobs across the province.

At the same time, we have been able to make investments by working hard with Nova Scotians to put us in a fiscal position where we can invest and create more jobs to keep young people here; where we can invest in classrooms across the province; where we can ensure breakfast programs for young people; where we can continue to grow the economy of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, one thing is sure: Nova Scotians are more optimistic today about their future than they were four years ago. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

PREM.: TUITION COSTS - INCREASES ADDRESS

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, the Premier must know that Nova Scotia has the fastest rising tuition in the country. Post-secondary education is out of reach for many young people and getting further away every year. There is nothing in this budget to get those costs under control.

Mr. Speaker, why is it not a priority of this government to address the rising cost of tuition?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to thank Students Nova Scotia, students across the province who continue to come in and work with government, made positive suggestions about things that we could do to help them, and we accepted those.

One of them is that we'll give tuition relief for anyone who finishes a degree in five years. That means, for those students who have a Nova Scotia student loan required to further their education, if they complete their degree in five years they will not have to pay any Nova Scotia student loan.

MS. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia students have the highest average levels of debt upon graduation in Canada. In this budget the government wants to pat itself on the back for allowing students to take on more debt.

Mr. Speaker, telling students who already owe tens of thousands of dollars that they can borrow more is cold comfort - will the Premier explain to students, and their families, who need tuition relief how taking on more debt is an improvement?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Students Nova Scotia worked very hard to come in and work with us. I do want to read to the honourable member part of a release I put out today: Today students are happy to see the Nova Scotia Government investing in students through the 2017-18 Budget. The budget announced \$3.4 million for expansion of student assistance programs, the introduction of Innovation to Opportunity Program.

We are thrilled to see the budget release, said Collette Robert, chairman of Students Nova Scotia. Although we recognize there's more work to do, we acknowledge that the provincial government is committed to investing in students and we look forward to continuing to work with them.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: PHYSICIAN LIST - WAIT TIMES

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Joe Brigg is a Canadian Navy veteran and a 45-year resident of Dartmouth. His family doctor retired and the replacement left without anybody to pick up the patients. Mr. Brigg was told to register for a doctor by the Health and Wellness Department but was told the shortage in Dartmouth is particularly acute. He is on insulin and has had to rely on the pharmacist to temporarily extend his prescription and that puts his life at risk.

Mr. Speaker, why is it okay that Mr. Brigg and thousands of others in Dartmouth and across Nova Scotia are without family doctors, and how long should people like him be expected to wait?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that recent conversations with Dr. Lynne Harrigan, in terms of how recruitment is going for this particular year, and yes, we've had many people who for years had relied on walk-in clinics and now that many of them are needing or have reports coming back from specialists, it has put a surge in the Dartmouth area as one of our reasons to recruit for this year. Dartmouth is one of the areas that will have doctors added and nurse practitioners have been announced that will be added to existing clinics, not waiting for new collaborative care practices to develop.

MR. YOUNGER: The minister may have noticed that yesterday the Premier said, "I completely disagree with the fact that the health care system is in crisis." Then he went on to say that "Health care is not in crisis in this province."

Now we have tens of thousands of Nova Scotians without a family doctor. The ERs are in crisis, with the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians saying that there is a "... distinct level of human suffering associated with crowded emergency departments and crowded hospitals."

Does the minister agree with the Premier that there is no crisis in the province's health care system?

MR. GLAVINE: We know that the member opposite is quoting from a national report. We know that in terms of even for family doctors, we're much better off than the Canadian average of 85 per cent. We have 91 per cent of Nova Scotians who have a family doctor, a primary care provider. We've already taken measures in our ERs at the VG, the Halifax Infirmary, and Dartmouth General, to look after surge capacity.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

PREM. - RURAL ROADS: NEGLECT - MISTAKE ADMIT

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: If it is one thing that this government will be remembered for it is for neglecting local rural roads. You look at the budgets back in 2009 and 2010. This government has removed the equivalent of about \$6 million suggested for inflation each year from the rural-road maintenance budget. Now, on the eve of an election, they're trying to pretend that they're doing Nova Scotians a favour by giving them half of that back here in the budget today. We're catching this, and we're telling Nova Scotians. Would the Premier admit that the decision for this new gravel road, and to issue it as part of this budget, is admitting that neglecting rural roads over the term of this government was a mistake?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest in rural roads all across the province. For the last four years, we have continued to make investments from one end of this province to the other. We were fortunate to be able to come in and get rid of the fool plan that the former NDP Government had when they bought a paving plant to compete against the private sector.

We've seen very positive signs and very competitive rates. We're seeing lots of activity and we're very proud of the fact that the minister brought forward a \$10 million plan around gravel roads within the capital plan. It's the first time in the history of our province that this has taken place. It's shown great leadership on his part. He's gone around and listened to communities, and we're going to continue to work with hard-working Nova Scotians to continue to improve the infrastructure in their communities.

MR. MACMASTER: I think about the hard-working Nova Scotians that work in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Those are the people that are living with the stress; hearing the complaints day in and day out about the state of the roads. They are the ones who have had to deal with this budget cut over the last number of years, and now, the government is trying to tell people that they've got it all fixed and to hand half the money back. Well, we see through it.

In 2014, I introduced a resolution - the government members voted against it - that resolution called for the restoration of that RIM budget. This is putting stress on the people. I had somebody tell me the other day, the roads are so bad, why not take the trails? Why is the government treating roads and the people who live on them this way, by pretending that they're doing them a favour before an election, when over the past number of years people have been let down by this government?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to reassure him that when I travel across this province, Nova Scotians do not feel let down by this government. They feel fully supported. They say that they finally have a government that has continued to make investments in communities across this province. We're looking forward to continuing to make those investments. This budget reflects the hard work that Nova Scotians did over the last number of years. This budget is a document that's optimistic about the future of our province. As long as the Opposition continues to be negative about the future of this province, Nova Scotians will continue to respond to them the way they're responding to them now.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS:
NORTHSIDE GEN. HOSP. AMPUTEE CLINIC - REINSTATE**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. The month of April is Amputee Month, and it is not unusual for an above-the-knee amputee, AK as they call it, to make 15 to 25 trips to Halifax a year, and stay for four days or more in a hotel, to tweak the knee each trip. The higher the amputation, the more complications and tweaking that are involved.

My question for the minister is quite simple. Would the minister please reinstate and reopen the satellite amputee clinic that was located in the Northside General Hospital, so that Cape Bretoners and others do not have to travel so far to get their service?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the very important question he's brought to the House today. One of the things that I am very proud of, as a member of this government, is having raised the BTO - the Board/Transportation/Ostomy Program - which hadn't been improved upon in about

twenty years. We've not only about doubled the amount given out, but also we've dramatically improved the threshold.

This is an important service for Nova Scotians, and I will take that under consideration. I met with Bob Locke recently, who does a phenomenal job in the QEII rehab, and people like him can give us great insight on what we should be doing in other parts of the province.

[4:30 p.m.]

MR. MACLEOD: I agree with the minister; there is no question that this is a very important issue. As a matter of fact, I've had conversations - and had the opportunity to use the facilities that are available to us here in Halifax.

The issue for a lot of people is not coming here for rehab, not having your leg built. It's actually about the tweaking that has to go into it. Sometimes you have a four-hour drive for a 10-minute appointment to get something tweaked, and then you have to go back, and it takes time. Sixty per cent of the people who travel to this clinic are from Cape Breton Island. They need the service. We have the facility in place.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question. We have the facility in place. It was there before in Cape Breton. I've talked to the director. I've talked to the minister and some of his staff members about this before. There is a need. There's a financial burden on people if we don't open that clinic. I am going to implore him, his Premier, and his Cabinet to please open that clinic for the people of Cape Breton Island who need to get their prosthetics tweaked.

MR. GLAVINE: I thank the member opposite, who I know on many occasions brings very important and sensitive topics to the floor. What I will tell the member opposite today is that I will assign this to my deputy minister to do an immediate review of that particular program. I have a great deal of hope that something can be accomplished.

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

PREM. - FILMMAKERS/TEACHERS: BUDGET BALANCING - EFFECTS

MS. LENORE ZANN: The Premier wants Nova Scotians to believe this is a good-news budget. Well, I'm sorry to burst his bubble, but I would have to say a huge number of citizens are not exactly jumping for joy right now.

As NDP Critic of both Education and Film and Television, I would be remiss if I did not use this opportunity to ask the Premier if, when he goes to knock on doors this next election cycle, can he honestly look into the faces of Nova Scotian filmmakers and tell

them how much he has improved the creative economy, specifically the film industry? Can he actually tell teachers he's proud to have balanced this budget on their backs through a legislated contract?

THE PREMIER: Governing is about making choices, Mr. Speaker. We came into government following an NDP Government that destroyed the finances of this province. We had to make some difficult choices. They made a choice, when they were in power, to provide a 7.5 per cent pay raise across the entire public sector and cut \$65 million out of classrooms.

We took a different approach, Mr. Speaker. We took a balanced approach. We went in and provided what is a reasonable increase in salary across the entire public sector, at the same time making investments in classrooms, investing in home care, making sure we're going to invest in a breakfast program, investing to continue to make sure the important services Nova Scotians want are there, at the same time making investments in innovation and creativity to provide economic opportunity and job opportunities in this province.

MS. ZANN: I love to hear how the Premier changes the course of history afterwards. We actually got a triple-A credit score for the first time in the history of this province. That was an NDP Government that did that. And we balanced the budget (Interruptions)

Budgets are about choices. Budgets are about priorities. If this government really wanted to improve classroom conditions, we would have seen it in this budget. My question for the Premier is, why did he choose not to invest in classrooms by capping class sizes, as teachers have been asking for?

THE PREMIER: While the NDP has been huddled up with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, we've actually been talking to classroom teachers. We provided them with funding to make changes in classrooms. We are looking forward to a report that will come out tomorrow with the recommendations that will come forward - we've made it very clear we'll accept those recommendations. We're very encouraged by the fact that those teachers are so positive and optimistic about the future of this province because they've seen investment in classrooms.

They also see that their students have a future in this province. They see job opportunities being created. They see economic opportunities being created. They're very lucky. I'm sure they're going to welcome the breakfast program when it comes in. I'm looking forward to continuing to work with Nova Scotians going forward.

She is absolutely right. Governing is about choices, and so are elections. Nova Scotians are going to get a chance to make a choice.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: BARRINGTON PASSAGE DIALYSIS UNIT -
UPDATE**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Over the last number of months, there have been a number of announcements that have happened, especially when it rolls around to the Kentville dialysis unit, the new dialysis unit for Digby, the renovated dialysis unit - an expansion of the dialysis unit for Bridgewater - so there's a bit of change in the way government is treating the Nova Scotia dialysis program, moving some of those services around.

He knows that over the last number of years I have been asking for the community of Barrington Passage - looking for the possibility of a satellite dialysis unit. I was wondering if that might be in the plans, hidden somewhere in this budget document.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: What I can tell the member opposite is that, yes, we've made a considerable (Interruptions) My friend who occupied this role jumps on every word.

We looked very seriously at some of the deficits we have in the provincial program. The goal is for somebody who has that burden of three times a week to at least be within travel distance of about an hour. As a result of our investments, the Halifax Infirmary, Dartmouth, Kentville, Digby - another satellite site - it's now four centres closer to that goal.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think what the minister is telling me is that I need to find a way to move Yarmouth closer to one of those centres. I don't think I can do that, so what I'm asking the minister again is, in his deliberations within his department - because it fits under that one hour of travel on good days. If you're living on the Hawk or you're living in Clark's Harbour, you're over an hour to get to Yarmouth - and that's on good days. Bad days make it worse. You can only imagine the human toll that happens when these individuals have to travel for extra amounts of time.

So, Mr. Speaker, once again, I will ask the minister - he had the right answer there, but he did fluff it a bit. Could we make sure that a dialysis unit at a one-hour point in the Barrington area would be considered in the future?

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. I've been in Barrington and in those communities that he's referencing here, and met with some of the residents who want to see an improvement in dialysis.

First of all, we had to look at places like Long Island, Brier Island, and realize that they had, without question, the longest travel of anywhere in the province. This Fall, that project will be under way.

The member opposite is making a great point. It's another one of those geographies that pose a challenge. We'll certainly be having the department continue to work on resolving that issue.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

COM. SERV.: RIVERVIEW HOME - PLANS

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Minister of Community Services. I have a question about the plans for the Riverview Home. We have a number of people who make their home there, and for many of them, the staff there are a family. The staff are pretty concerned about what the future is for the Riverview Home. They read the headlines about the move to small community homes.

I wonder if the minister can update the House on what, specifically, the plans are for Riverview Home. Will there be smaller option homes built on that property? Maybe the minister can enlighten us a bit.

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: I thank the member opposite for the question. As he knows, when we came into government, we committed to the road map, the transformation for persons with disabilities of moving out of larger residential facilities and having folks move into the communities of their choice. It was all about choice. It was all about better outcomes.

We've worked very hard - the department staff and folks from Riverview and Sunset and Kings rehabilitation - to work out a plan of how that decade-long change is going to look. They are coming with us in every step of the way. There will be capacity that will be built. I am so pleased to announce that there will be at least four new small options built from this budget in communities all around Nova Scotia. (Applause) It really is a process that will bring choice to persons who are in those larger institutions.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister. It sounds like it's a decade-long process and we're somewhere in that stage for Riverview.

Riverview is a 90-bed or 90-room facility. They make their money when people are in those beds. That's how they get paid. Their budgets are always tight, but people are concerned that they're seeing it taking a little longer to fill the beds when they become vacant.

There have been some policy changes around when somebody moves in. They have to have a plan within six months to move them out within three years. The long and the short of it is that there are lots of policy things that are happening at the moment. At the moment, I think there are three or four beds vacant at that home. That is 3 or 4 per cent of their budget that they're not getting, so it's tight - a tight time for the budgets, and the staff are concerned.

Maybe the minister can just comment to bring some relief and ease the distress for the people who are working there as to what the plan is.

MS. BERNARD: The member is quite correct. There have been policy changes. We committed last June that there would be no more long-term placements in larger residential facilities, in keeping with the spirit of the road map. We are moving into community-based options for living.

We are also working very closely with the Department of Health and Wellness, because at the end of the day we have a lot of infrastructure that will be left in these communities that could perhaps be repurposed into other areas - perhaps into longer-term care for communities. There are all kinds of options that are open, but please rest assured that we are working with people who are living and working in these long-term facilities. We are all moving along with this together.

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

PREM.: PHYSICIAN PROMISES - FAILURE ADMIT

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, this Liberal Government was elected on a promise of a doctor for every Nova Scotian. They've had three and half years to do this work, and what do we have to show for it? Approximately 100,000 Nova Scotians without a family doctor, and a medical student tuition relief program for 25 students that has never been fully utilized.

I will give another chance for the Premier to stand up and admit that he has failed to deliver on his election promise in 2013.

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. He knows that there have been a number of programs available to recruit physicians across the province. As he would also know, when he was Minister of Health and Wellness prior to the last election, there was no human resource plan around physician recruitment or the physicians we currently had in terms of retaining.

When we tore down the walls in the health care system, we began to realize that there were nine different programs out there and how they were happening. We now have one plan for the entire province.

The budget today was announcing that there would be 20 additional residency seats on top of the residencies that we currently have, which will add 50 physicians that would be made available. It will also build on top of the other recruitment activity that is taking place across the province.

He also knows - I know he is a big proponent of this - that we provide other health care providers access to primary health care, so we provide a team around nurse practitioners, family practice nurses, paramedics - the honourable member was a member of that profession. They were doing work now; they do some work at the community health centre that I live near.

We're continuing to make sure that we deal with solutions that are creative and unique to each individual community so that all health care providers have access to providing us primary care.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I am well aware of the rural residency program, because it was our government that brought it in - and it has been fully utilized since it started, unlike the government's program of 25 medical student tuition program that has not materialized.

We know that the Premier is going to expect Nova Scotians to believe his promises this time around. In Public Accounts Committee, we heard from Doctors Nova Scotia that Nova Scotia needs 100 doctors a year for the next 10 years. This budget provided for 20 family doctors. Three years late, and a few hundred short.

[4:45 p.m.]

So I'd like to ask the Premier when will he commit to ensuring that Nova Scotians in this province have access to care, and really make sure that he follows through on it?

THE PREMIER: It's not uncommon for the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party to use numbers inappropriately, but I'm surprised that the honourable member, who was the former Minister of Health, would quote Doctors Nova Scotia inappropriately. What they have said was that we would require 50 family practice physicians, as well as about 50 specialists in the province. If he goes back and looks at the number of residencies we have now, this is building on another 20 to get us over and above the 50. Mr. Speaker, I'll be back tomorrow and we can finish this question.

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

We will now move on to Government Business.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 59.

Bill No. 59 – Accessibility Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. DIANA WHALEN: It seems like a sudden changing of gears, doesn't it? We're here today - let me just begin with the proper sentence - Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 59, an Act Respecting Accessibility in Nova Scotia, be now read a third time and pass. (Applause)

With that, Mr. Speaker, that really sets out our goal for today. We had our Committee of the Whole House on Tuesday, an opportunity for us to review the many amendments that had come through from the consultation with community advocates, with the Disabled Persons Commission, with our staff, and so many others, who brought us to this very historic day, so that we are here today to be looking at the bill in its amended form, and as I said in our Committee of the Whole, it's a very historic point to be here today to be looking at this bill, and to be celebrating the many changes that were worked out because of good work together.

There are many people I would like to acknowledge by name, if I could, as we get going. I know a few are with us in the gallery and I know many are watching at home. This has been a long process, and we heard that from the Minister of Community Services, when she got to say a few words a few days ago about this Act. This was a commitment from 2013. I know that for many people who have worked in the community, who don't think just in electoral cycles, this has been the culmination of work for many years, maybe decades.

I think, Mr. Speaker, in your own life, before politics, you worked on this for many years yourself, with others, with people in the community. So many people have had a hand in bringing us to the point where our province is finally adopting a framework and a way forward to make our province more accessible. There are so many standards and changes that are needed. We do need to settle this framework that will allow us to get to

work on the heavy lifting of individual standards that are going to improve the work life and the livability of our cities, our towns and our province for people with disabilities.

Among the people I'd like to recognize first and foremost is the Minister of Community Services, because she and her staff began this work on behalf of our government to see this bill brought forward most recently. They began that work three and a half years ago. They worked closely with the Disabled Persons Commission, and we owe a word of thanks to Brian Tapper, and the other members of the commission. It would be very nice to acknowledge that they have done such great work. (Applause)

Brian is with us today, with other members of the commission, in the gallery. They have worked diligently to see this happen. This has been very important to them, as well, to be advocates and spokesmen for the need for change, to challenge government and to encourage us. They have done a significant piece of work in setting government in the right direction to see this historic legislation today.

The commission played an integral part in developing the minister's advisory panel which, as you know, we needed to consult widely. We believe that you have to go out and listen and talk and learn from the people who know best. You can't just sit in an ivory tower and come up with the answers that we think might be best. So there was a minister's advisory panel formed and led, in large part, with the leadership of the Disabled Persons Commission to take us around the province and ensure that we were able to do the good work that was necessary and learn. It provided the basis for the work before us today.

The minister's advisory panel was co-chaired by Joe Rudderham and by Anne MacRae. Again, they provided excellent advice, which you can see in today's bill before us. I think that relates back to the credibility of the process, that you can actually see the recommendations that came back through the minister's advisory panel.

As we know, there was a lot of work done after the bill was introduced as well. Several things happened. Of course, we know that the bill changed from the Department of Community Services to the Department of Justice, which was an acknowledgement of the nature of this bill, which relates more to human rights and to the rights of people to have these accessibility standards addressed and have a liveable environment and an environment that can be accessible in all ways. That is a tall order. It may be an ambitious project, but we're under way today, and we're proud of it.

From my own department, I would like to thank Katherine Berliner, who came in to help lead this and has developed such a great relationship - she and Adriana Meloni, our legal adviser, have really worked so hard to develop a rapport and understanding, and to listen to the concerns and great suggestions that came from the community first at Law Amendments Committee in November and then through a process that I think we should all admire.

We should be giving kudos to the Bill 59 Alliance because they did something that's seldom seen in our province. One of the other ministers that I spoke to on our side said what a terrific process. We haven't seen that. You don't always see that happen, because what you need is leadership in the community that brings together different voices, different interests and concerns, but overall a concern to see this bill be the best it could be and to be passed.

The Bill 59 Alliance have asked us to get going and pass this bill because it is the start of the work getting under way. Without it, we can't start to work on those standards. It's giving us the framework to do that work. We really owe them a great debt for coming together and working out some of their differences because there are 35 organizations there and a lot of different viewpoints. It isn't always easy to hammer out that cohesiveness. They did that and they allowed government and our staff - Katherine Berliner and Adriana Meloni - to meet regularly with them to hear their ideas and to work out wherever possible where we could come together and reflect their concerns in this bill.

As I think was mentioned the other day, we were told by Gerry Post at Law Amendments Committee on behalf of the group that we got about a B-plus, I think for this Act. I think that's good because politics is the art of compromise. It's the art of creating something where there's a lot of division.

With that, I think we did a really good job to bring it up from what was seen as being inadequate to a bill that covered it all. It wasn't so much that I felt there was anything missing before. I think the intent was always to do what we're setting out to do now, to create that framework to allow the work to get under way, to be ambitious and set timelines. What was missing was, we didn't spell them out.

I've been in Opposition myself. I see Opposition members are watching and listening. That's great. I know you sometimes want to see it spelled out too. I always felt some concern when things were left sort of up in the air, and it was just said, we'll get to that don't worry - it's going to be in the regulations. Or you'll see it soon.

I appreciate that, and I think members of the public, too, want to see things clearly spelled out so that there is no question that not only our government but also future governments for as long as this bill is in place will all be held to the same high standard. The dates are laid out, and we know that we're going to get there.

I was speaking about the Bill 59 Alliance, and I would like to mention a few of them who have been so helpful all along. Gerry Post has been a spokesman for them. Claredon Robichaud is known to many of us from the League of Equal Opportunities, Barb LeGay, Will Brewer, Linda Campbell, Amy Parsons, Barry Abbott and Steve Estey and there were others and they were not alone. Five members were chosen to meet regularly with our staff, the two members I mentioned who were drafting the bill. They would meet weekly. I think they met four times since we had Law Amendments Committee, which was

in March, so that's pretty much weekly getting together. Then the larger group would meet so they could hear where we were at, what changes we'd made.

You can understand that it is a pretty exhaustive process and yet everybody was happy to be part of it. We're supportive of our staff and everybody was finding it to be a very positive process.

We learned a lot, Mr. Speaker, and that is exactly what this is about. The Bill 59 Alliance were able to share everything along the way and often it's communication that is so important. They kept the broader group of 35 and others very much in the loop so that there was no misunderstanding about where we were at, what changes were being accepted, what changes we had some concerns with or felt weren't necessary.

We spoke about a few things the other day where there was a concern about duplication, that we don't want to create new obligations or bureaucracies within government if we feel that things are already covered.

Mr. Speaker, that really gives an idea of the process which I think has been something that all of us in government should be very proud of to see the community and giving credit to the community to come together and work with government so they can get their concerns addressed through legislation.

As well, I would like to again thank members of the Opposition. I believe that along the way you've also received some briefings or kept abreast of what came up at Law Amendments Committee and certainly in the more recent bill briefing that you received. What we've all learned and I think that every member of the House has learned as well is a greater appreciation for the difficulties and the obstacles that are in not only our built environment but in other ways.

At Law Amendments Committee, we heard from so many people. We heard about different kinds of disabilities, we heard about the kinds of daily challenges that people experience. I think I could speak for all of us in saying it was a great lesson to us about having a greater understanding. Really, that brings us to why the understanding is that we need to take action today and we need to work together to do the best we possibly can.

Again, I think it would be worthwhile to mention the great strides that were made at Law Amendments Committee. That is something we've never seen before at the Law Amendments Committee and that was the help we received to make our committee more accessible and the Legislature more accessible to people with disabilities.

In anticipation, as those of you will remember, when we brought the bill in in November, we did not do anything different. As we normally do, we moved straight from second reading here to the Law Amendments Committee stage. We didn't make even a

realization that people might depend on Access-A-Bus and need two weeks to make an appointment and be able to attend. That just hadn't been considered.

We've worked with our Clerks and Legislative Counsel and others here at Province House to make sure that was addressed, so the next time we scheduled Law Amendments Committee we allowed over two weeks so there was time. We arranged for American Sign Language to be available.

Before I can go into everything, I must say we took some direction from the book that was put together by the Disabled Persons Commission to help us in what was needed - how could we make the Legislature better? That was a very great resource which I know we'll continue to rely on and try to open up more of our meetings, our committee meetings and so on, to be accessible in the fullest way.

I mentioned that we had American Sign Language, we also had transcription so everything that was being said was being transcribed and put on the screen. We allowed for people to go to other sites in the province, if they chose, so they could speak to the committee via video conferencing. We also have done live streaming of the meeting so people could follow along that way.

I think we've set a new standard. I know it will be difficult in every case but I think we've set a standard that should be our goal, that we continue to open this Legislature and be aware of all of these issues and we do really need to thank our staff here for understanding and learning with us. This has broken new ground and is something that we can all be proud of.

During the time - I mentioned a lot about the Bill No. 59 Alliance and our meetings. I personally met with the Disabled Persons Commission just a couple of weeks ago when they had their meeting here in Halifax. I had the opportunity to thank them and to work with them and to assure them that we've learned and we will continue to learn from their work, and that I'm sure they will be helping to guide us as we put in place the new structure that is outlined in this bill.

The new structure is the development of an accessibility directorate that would be staffed and would be doing a lot of this work, as well as an accessibility advisory board. The board will be people that are appointed to help advise the minister and work on this as well. So there is a bit of a parallel. It's a new organization, but it will benefit by the work of the Disabled Persons Commission in the past and the advice that we receive going forward.

At the same time, in addition to these many advocates and advisers that I've been pleased to have the benefit of listening to, we have also reached out and our staff have reached out to the business community because you'll remember in the beginning there was some concern about the balance that we would create in this Act. As much as we want

it to be the best that it can possibly be, and it will be, we need to be cognizant of other players who are going to have to help us enact these changes. Government is one of them. We have many buildings and we're responsible for the delivery of services. We have websites that could be more accessible. We have means of interacting with government that could be improved, not only in the built environment, but through communications. So government has to be very aware and willing to change and so does the business community and so we all need to be partners as we come to the table.

In the interim time between the Law Amendments Committee and now, we've also reached out - we've spoken to the Retail Council of Canada, to the Restaurants Association, Canadian Federation of Independent Business and our Internal Office of Regulatory Affairs just to make sure that communication is good all the way around and there are no surprises. I think that's the most important thing, that people are aware and kept in the loop and understand their role because that's what it is about. It's all of us playing a role.

I wanted to just go very quickly through some of the highlights of the changes because I know there are a couple of speakers and we will hear from members of the Opposition on this bill. There are a few things I wanted to highlight. One of them, as I said earlier, was that we have to remember that the bill is about creating a framework. It's for developing and implementing standards to prevent and remove barriers that are preventing people in a range of ways from getting the services they need and living their lives fully, from having opportunities to work and shop and enjoy life in our province.

With that in mind, we are looking at the Act and standards that will be needed to change. This is creating the framework and the governance to do that. We've made some pretty significant changes, as I said, in trying to fill in the gaps and being explicit rather than implicit in the wording that we used.

One of the things that we've done right off the bat, and I'm pleased about, is that we have set out the timeline. We have said in this bill - and this has been added - the goal of achieving an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030. That is only, believe it or not, just 13 years away, so we're not far away from that. Ontario allowed themselves 20 years when they introduced their bill. I think Manitoba set 10 as a goal. So we think 13 is still ambitious and it's going to keep us busy. We're very pleased to have been able to articulate that as our goal of achieving an accessible Nova Scotia.

In order to assure people that we will get going on this and we'll be setting out the work plan, the minister of the day will be sure to make public a work plan, which is really a strategy for implementation in the first year. That's very important that we lay that out. Within one year it will be made public and that means that work has to begin right away so that we know that.

Once we know what the work plan is, that's really good because it has taken up to two years per standard in Ontario. They have 10 years now of experience with this. We

want to make sure that we use every month, every week, to move forward and not delay, so that we can do better than every two years for standards. We'll lay out the work plan, and we'll have people in place to do the consultation and work required.

On some of the changes, we improved language to make it stronger. For example, we're using "achieve accessibility" rather than "improve accessibility," because we want to achieve the goals, not just approach them. We've used that stronger word "achieve," rather than the aspirational "improve."

Some of the other standards - we've added more flexibility. Well, we actually name six of the standards that we want to go and work on. Manitoba and Ontario had five. We already added education to make it six, and there's a seventh one on the list if you're looking at the bill, that says other prescribed activities, which means there's still room for the accessibility directorate, the minister, or the board that's advising us to add more in the future.

We also moved all of the Act to the Department of Justice, which we think is a good move to recognize the link to human rights.

We are also changing the makeup of the accessibility board. This was an important one. If members remember, at the Law Amendments Committee, there was a concern that there should be a majority of people on the board who have disabilities - because it is an accessibility board - that their voice might be lost if they didn't have that majority. We have made that change. The bill now says the majority of the members will be persons with disabilities. I think that is a good compromise to say that they are right. I think that we need to have that voice be the predominant voice that we hear. I trust that people are always going to use their roles very responsibly, but we need to ensure that we never lose sight of what this bill is about.

We've added a lot more transparency. There will be a lot of documents and reports made on a regular basis. I think another important change, maybe the last one I'll highlight, is the added part on compliance and enforcement. It was felt that there wasn't a system that was articulated in the bill about how we would be seeking compliance and where people could go with complaints. We've added that in as well.

We should all be aware that one in five Nova Scotians has some form of disability. That is the highest rate in Canada. Knowing that means we want to be leaders, and we should be leaders in responding. We know as well that by 2030, which is our deadline for achieving our goal, we will have one in four Nova Scotians over the age of 65 at that time. That also means that there are more people who need to be recognized. We know that as we get older, we have mobility issues and other issues that become important (Interruption)

Okay, I'll hurry it up. I'm getting a little signal. I'll hurry it up. I'm almost finished, Mr. Speaker.

There's one thing I would like to mention because the budget was read today. There were two budget items today relating to accessibility, and I think this is the time to mention it. In today's budget, we saw a commitment of \$1.8 million dollars to increase accessibility grants for community buildings. We have added a new program of grants for small business to make them more accessible. I think that's very important. We also increased the budget for the accessibility directorate to \$896,000, an increase of \$424,000. That's close to double the amount that was there before.

So I'm looking forward today to hearing Opposition members speak on this. I think that you will agree with me that the Bill 59 Alliance has reached out strongly to all of us. They've asked us to recognize this as a widespread need for all of our constituents. None of this Act is about partisan politics. It will serve the people throughout our province, in every community. I hope you will agree with me that this is the right way to go, and we should get the work under way.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the third reading on An Act Respecting Accessibility in Nova Scotia.

When this bill first came forward here in the Legislature, we spoke up because the community that this legislation supports asked us to speak up. The bill was changed. Now the community has asked us to be silent. We will.

We support greater accessibility for all Nova Scotians, and we do hope that this bill will help. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, in my new capacity as Justice Critic - as I mentioned in the Committee of the Whole after the retirement of my colleague, Marian Mancini from Dartmouth South, who I might add has put a lot of time, energy, and expertise in working with not only government, the ministers, and the organizations that have gotten us to this point - I want to thank her for that work. It's taken a lot of work to get to this point, and to get this bill on the floor today. The commitment of the accessibility committee to see this bill through to the very end is an example for everyone who wants to make a difference here in our province and in Province House. I want to thank all the members of the accessibility community for their hard work and dedication in making Nova Scotia a more accessible place to live and work.

I know the first version of this bill highlighted the differences of opinion between the government and the accessibility community about the purpose of this bill. Clearly, the government was looking to provide enabling legislation, leaving many of the details to be ironed out at a later date. However, the community was looking for something more,

something that while being somewhat aspirational also laid out a clear target for where we needed to be. Unfortunately, after conducting consultation, the government isolated itself from the accessibility community. The government drafted this piece of legislation on their own terms, and it showed in the resulting bill. Luckily, the accessibility community was persistent in ensuring that their concerns about Bill No. 59 were heard.

We are very fortunate to have the Law Amendments Committee and that process here in Nova Scotia. Not all provinces have the opportunity for the community and their residents to have input on government policy and legislation. The community came to Law Amendments Committee and made it known that the original bill simply missed the mark. To be fair, the government recognized that they had missed the mark and committed to improving the bill. I think including the accessibility community in the restructuring of the bill after the first attempt was one of the main reasons that this bill is here today.

Our caucus is truly happy about the improvement to the accessibility law that will result from the passing of this bill. That being said, we know that this bill could be improved. I know our caucus, along with the Progressive Conservatives, supported a number of amendments during the Committee of the Whole that were suggested by the Bill 59 Community Alliance.

One amendment would have committed the government to developing standards that cope with the critical need for better access to assistive technologies and accessibility services - such as interpreters in courts. Throughout this process we have seen how valuable accessibility services are in helping people with disabilities be fully engaged with the world around them. As I said in Committee of the Whole - we are joined by some of those professional interpreters who are here providing care in our gallery, which is not something I've seen in the past - it shows where we can go and where we should go in the future.

This amendment would have also committed the government to preventing and removing barriers associated with housing options. We all know how important it is to have choices regarding where we live. Choices can often be limited for those with disabilities. I think working to break down barriers associated with housing options is a worthwhile goal.

The second amendment would have allowed people other than those directly affected by the Director of Compliance's decision to appeal it. A person with a disability may be overwhelmed by the appeal process. By making this change, others would be able to help bring that appeal forward. It can be a daunting task. I have to say that even as an MLA trying to guide people through appeal processes is not a simple task. The government decided, though, to reject those amendments and I respect that. I understand there is a lot of give and take with regard to this bill and I respect the decision of the government not to move on these amendments.

[5:15 p.m.]

That being said, I think these amendments would have strengthened the bill. Mr. Speaker, we know there are other changes that could be made to improve the bill, and hopefully the Accessibility Advisory Board that will be made will now be made up of a majority of people with disabilities and will find a way to overcome any shortcomings in this bill as we move forward. Furthermore, any future government may revisit this bill to see where improvements can be made and I hope that can happen.

Again, I want to thank the government for recognizing that they did miss the mark on the first attempt on this bill. Hopefully they've learned that drafting legislation in isolation is simply not the answer.

Finally, I want to thank and congratulate the accessibility community for their efforts in this process - truly, Mr. Speaker, an example for all of us. The year 2023 is not as far off as people may think and there's a lot of work to be done to achieve an accessible Nova Scotia by that year. However, I know the accessibility community will be there every step of the way to help us, as legislators in the province, encourage and adapt to the new way that we really should be providing support for people with disabilities in our province.

Again, thank you for those who have been involved, our caucus supports and the Bill 59 Community Alliance. We'll continue to make sure that we hold not only this government but any future government to account, to ensure that we can improve those situations that we can, through legislation like Bill No. 59.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: I won't take much time because this is an historic day. I've said it before and I'll say it again, this is historic legislation. I thank both Opposition Parties for not being political or partisan on this because it's simply the right thing to do. I said that the other day.

One thing that I would like to reiterate, there's lots of advocates in the gallery today and they've worked hard and they've waited a long time and it has been a strong push and we're here today. I would be remiss, and I mentioned it the other day, Mr. Speaker, but you weren't in your Chair, the work that you have led in bringing the political will into the Province of Nova Scotia in making sure that this happens. (Applause)

I know that you have been a strong advocate in a field of many strong advocates and you really brought it to the political agenda. There are many people in this province who owe you a debt of gratitude for that, so I'll just take my place. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I will be brief as well but I want to take the opportunity certainly to extend my thanks to primarily the Opposition House Leaders for the Progressive Conservative Party and for the NDP who are my primary contacts when it comes to trying to see the smooth operation of this Legislature, which some may describe at times it may not have been that smooth, but this bill really changed that.

I think it sent a message to Nova Scotians and it really is the accessibility community that allowed us the opportunity to show to Nova Scotians that our democracy does work, our legislative process does work. There are opportunities where we can set aside differences in order to be able to put together the best type of legislation to help the lives of Nova Scotians, and I think this was an example.

I look back at the fact that it was this bill that allowed us, for the first time, to have the type of accessible Law Amendments Committee that took place at the Red Room just across from our Chamber here. In my 19 years of being in office this had never been seen and it took the accessibility community to show us what it is that needs to be done in a modern Legislature when dealing with this type of legislation. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, we'll have to have further discussions as to what changes we make. Looking in the gallery behind me and seeing that there is sign interpretation that's taking place as we speak, again, it's the first time in my 19 years that we've seen this take place. Bill No. 59 has had a big impact on all of us. Seeing the smooth passage of this bill is something that I think everyone deserves credit for, all members of the House.

Seeing how bills get drafted, the work that goes into them, I certainly want to extend my thanks as Government House Leader and on behalf of our entire caucus to staff both at Community Services and the Department of Justice who worked so hard on these bills. Bill No. 59 certainly came with challenges, and they are the ones behind the scenes who were doing all the work to find the right language, to find the right changes, to be able to address the concerns that were being brought forward to us as the elected officials. Many times, they are people we don't see here in the Legislature, but they are in the departments, and they are the ones who are doing the work to have that legislation in front of us to debate. I know there's at least a few of them who are here in the gallery. I'm sure they're anxiously waiting for all of us to stop talking and to see the vote just in case something else might happen. I certainly want to recognize all of them for what they've done.

The Bill 59 Alliance as well did a lot of work behind the scenes with all caucuses trying to improve this legislation and see its passage. For us to be able to get this done so quickly during the session is certainly a testament of how seriously we all took this matter, that it wasn't a political debate. Everyone had the right intentions of seeing the best possible legislation.

My primary contact was Parker Donham, who I know is a very passionate advocate and gives a lot of his time to support the accessibility community. I certainly want to thank

him for staying in touch and for strongly encouraging us to make the changes and to get this bill passed and get it into law as quickly as possible. That is what is going to happen.

I want to take the opportunity, on behalf of our entire caucus as well, to recognize the Minister of Community Services, who came with such a passion for having this legislation brought forward to start off with. It certainly took her leadership at the Cabinet Table to have this bill come forward as strong as it is today. Her fingerprints are all over this bill, and I certainly want to recognize her for her passion on this issue. (Applause)

Our Minister of Justice was tasked with taking over this piece of legislation and responsibility for it at a difficult time and was able to take this with her staff and work with all interested parties to make this the best bill possible. Again, this is certainly a great legacy piece for her in the extraordinary career that she's had here in the Legislature. I want to recognize our Minister of Justice for everything she has done. (Applause)

I would be remiss if I didn't add that the budget we were able to table today was because of many of the difficult decisions, the support, and the guidance that the Minister of Justice provided to us in the first couple of years of our mandate. They weren't always easy decisions, but they were being done to get us to where we're at today fiscally. I certainly want to commend her for all the work that she did on behalf of our government to make this a reality.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my thanks to all members of the Opposition, certainly the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader in the House of the New Democratic Party, who were also part of making this a reality today, seeing this legislation passed. It is proof, for those who say that our Legislature is not working or that our democracy is not as strong as it should be. Bill No. 59 is a great example of how we can work past our differences, we can see what the end goal is, and we can pass legislation as strong as Bill No. 59. I think it's something for all of us, that we can all look at our political careers and be able to say that on this day we did the right thing. Merci. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 59, the Accessibility (Interruptions)

Of all bills, I get this one wrong? (Applause) I'm anxious to get it there.

If I recognize the honourable minister, it will be to close the debate.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I understand why you'd be anxious to get to this vote.

I would just like to thank everybody again for their comments in speaking about this bill, and to particularly acknowledge our Opposition members, who have followed the debate closely and been involved in the amendments. I thank you for your support. This is very important. (Applause)

The process has made me proud. Being part of the two ministers and the two departments and the many community members who have brought it to today has been a really gratifying and important part of my work. I'm very pleased that it is something I could see through to this final vote today. I think it reflects the best in all of us.

I think our Government House Leader, the Minister of Energy, has said that as well - that this is an example of how we can work together. Ultimately, all of our jobs are to make Nova Scotia better for the people we serve, and this is a perfect example of something we've done that will do just that.

I want to thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. I want to particularly acknowledge your work and how much you've inspired us to get at this work. Your commitment and your determination to see change is refreshing and helpful to all of us, and I thank you because today is a very important day.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we close debate on Bill No. 59. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 59.

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

The motion is carried. (Applause)

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. We will meet again tomorrow, Friday, April 28th, from the hours of 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

I wish to advise the House that following the daily routine and Question Period, we will be recessing from 11:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon due to the Day of Mourning ceremonies that are taking place downstairs, so that all members can participate in the ceremony. We'll resume following that, and we will have the reply from the NDP to the budget. That will conclude our business on Friday.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now rise to meet again from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. on Friday, April 28th.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to rise until tomorrow, April 28th, from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

The House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, April 28th, at 9:00 a.m.

[The House rose at 5:29 p.m.]