



House of Assembly  
Nova Scotia

## DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

**Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy**

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### First Session

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2017**

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House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2017**

**Sixty-third General Assembly**

**First Session**

**1:00 P.M.**

**SPEAKER**

Hon. Kevin Murphy

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

**PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS**

**PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

**GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

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

**RESOLUTION NO. 252**

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

Whereas 16-year-old Cheyenne Hardy from Dartmouth and 11-year-old Joshua Cochrane from Yarmouth are recipients of this year's Prince of Wales Youth Service Award and both will be recognized at WE Day in Toronto; and

Whereas Cheyenne's commitment is to reduce the stigma associated with her community by creating a video to challenge us to look at the world through a different lens; and

Whereas Joshua's work to end the stigma surrounding autism has connected him with people in more than 60 countries around the world and has raised more than \$300,000 for charity;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize the contribution to community service and social action by Cheyenne Hardy and Joshua Cochrane and congratulate both students on their achievements.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 253**

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Country Music Hall of Fame is comprised of some of the most talented singers, songwriters and instrumentalists in the history of our province; and

Whereas on September 16, 2017, vocalist Stan Taylor, fiddler Gary Greene, songwriter Blaine Henshaw, vocalist Doug Bell, and vocalist Sheila Newman were honoured as the latest inductees to the Nova Scotia Country Music Hall of Fame; and

Whereas the aforementioned musicians now join the likes of Hank Snow, Wilf Carter, and Rita MacNeil as inductees in the Nova Scotia Country Music Hall of Fame;



Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly recognize the contributions to music of Stan Taylor, Gary Greene, Blaine Henshaw, Doug Bell, and Sheila Newman on their musical accomplishments and induction into the Nova Scotia Country Music Hall of Fame.

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 Immigration.

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 254**

HON. LENA DIAB: Par la présente, j'avise que je proposerai à une date ultérieure l'adoption de la résolution suivante :

Attendu que, il y a plus de 400 ans le peuple Mi'kmaq et le Grand Chef Membertou ont accueilli les nouveaux arrivants français, les premiers immigrants de la Nouvelle-Écosse, dans un esprit de paix et d'amitié; et

Attendu que, en août, les Néo-Ecossais de l'ensemble de la province, ont honoré et célébré 400 ans de paix et d'amitié entre les Mi'kmaq et les acadiens au lieu historique national de Grand-Pré qui a contribué à façonner la province que nous aimons tous; et

Attendu que cet événement a permis aux Néo-Ecossais de se rassembler et d'apprendre d'avantage les uns sur les autres et sur le passé de notre province, de célébrer notre culture et notre diversité unique, et de démontrer un appel à l'action pour la vérité et la réconciliation;

Qu'il soit résolu que tous les députés de cette Assemblée législative se joignent à moi pour remercier les co-présidents de l'événement, le Chef Morley Googoo et Marie-Claude Rioux, et reconnaissent l'importance de leur travail et de celui de leur personnel et de leurs bénévoles dans la réussite de cet événement.

Monsieur le Président, je demande la renonciation à l'avis et a son d'adoption sans débat.

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

Whereas over 400 years ago the Mi'kmaq people and the great leader Membertou welcomed French newcomers, Nova Scotia's first immigrants, in a spirit of peace and friendship; and

Whereas in August, Nova Scotians from across the province honoured and celebrated 400 years of peace and friendship between the Mi'kmaq and Acadians at Grand-Pré National Historic Site, which has helped shape the province we all love; and

Whereas this event gave Nova Scotians the opportunity to gather and learn more about each other and our province's past, celebrate our unique culture and diversity, and demonstrated a call to action for truth and reconciliation;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking the event co-chairs, Chief Morley Googoo and Marie-Claude Rioux, and acknowledge the importance of their work and that of their staff and volunteers in making this event a success.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of the Public Service Commission.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, may I beg leave to make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. INCE: If you turn your eyes to the east gallery, we have with us today Mr. Corey Beals. He's the first African Nova Scotian to be Division Commander in the Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency department. With his wife Loretta, and his daughter Corretta, if you could please stand. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of the Public Service Commission.

**RESOLUTION NO. 255**

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

Whereas today I am proud to recognize Cortonio Tyrone Beals, better known as Corey, as the first African Nova Scotian Division Commander firefighter; and

Whereas Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency is the oldest fire department in Canada, established in 1754, and 259 years later, in 2013, Corey was named the first African Nova Scotian in a chief officer position with the Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency; and

Whereas Corey is a dedicated volunteer in the African Nova Scotian community and provides leadership and support through countless programs;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature congratulate Corey, and thank him for his volunteer work within the African Nova Scotian community and his tireless work in promoting and supporting initiatives on diversity and inclusion.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill No. 9 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 1 of the Acts of 1995-96. The Education Act, Respecting Expectations for Student Performance. (Mr. Tim Halman)**

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, in the east gallery today, I'd like to welcome some representatives from beautiful Victoria County. I'm also doing this with the blessing of the MLA for Victoria-The Lakes. We have with us Paul MacNeil, who is a councillor with the Municipality of Victoria County Council. We also have Warden Bruce Morrison with us today, but also Warden Morrison was the chair of the Joint Municipal Accountability and Transparency Committee. They're joined with us today by Mark Peck, who many people in this House know is with the Department of Municipal Affairs. Gentlemen, thanks for making the trip from Cape Breton to be with us today - thank you. (Applause)

**Bill No. 10 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 18 of the Acts of 1998. The Municipal Government Act, and Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008. The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter. (Hon. Derek Mombourquette)**

**Bill No. 11 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 33 of the Acts of 2010. The Auditor General Act. (Ms. Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)**

**Bill No. 12 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 43 of the Revised Statutes, 1989. The Boxing Authority Act. (Hon. Leo Glavine)**

**Bill No. 13 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 207 of the Acts of 1899. An Act to Incorporate Harmony Cemetery Company, in the County of Colchester. (Mr. Larry Harrison)**

[1:15 p.m.]

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

#### **NOTICES OF MOTION**

#### **STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

#### **BANNERMAN, NOVA:**

#### **BARNEY'S RIVER SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM - COLLECTIONS**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, as curator of the Barney's River Schoolhouse Museum, Nova Bannerman has collected memorabilia, records and other historical items of interest for 25 years. The schoolhouse arranged with desks, books and items is the same layout as when it hosted a teacher and students. It now houses records of the school in the community it served.

A point of pride is that there are items that cannot be found anywhere else. The building predates Confederation by three years and is a beehive of activity during the summer. The museum made its way to Facebook this year, a move that resulted in good responses and an increase in visits. Guests are amazed that such a small schoolhouse carries such a huge inventory of history.

Thank you, Nova, for keeping the spirit alive.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

### **WOODSCAMP: START-UP - SUPPORT**

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, again in recognition of Forest Week, as the NDP spokesperson on Natural Resources, I want to give a shout-out to WoodsCamp. This is a start-up run by two entrepreneurs in the Lunenburg area, begun in 2016. Will Martin and Alastair Jarvis care about the health and viability of our forests, our woodlot owners, and Nova Scotia communities. That's why they created an online platform with the goal of helping woodlot owners grow a healthy forest while generating income from logging. They connect woodlot owners with loggers who are skilled at selection harvesting and connect them both with markets for sort of high-quality, low-volume timber that grows in a mixed-age forest.

Now a team of six, WoodsCamp needs and deserves the support of Department of Natural Resources. They are innovating, and learning, and leading in an industry where thousands of Nova Scotians have said, through the Natural Resources Strategy, that we need to do things differently.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West

### **RHODENIZER, WILLIAM "BILLY": DEATH OF - TRIBUTE**

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, my community recently lost a great community leader and genuinely a great person. William, better known as "Billy" Rhodenizer, was an active member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Bridgewater, volunteered as a driver for Senior Wheels, served as fire chief of the Bridgewater Fire Department from 1984 to 1992, also served on Bridgewater Town Council from 1992 to 1998, just to give you a snapshot of the man he was.

Billy was known by many in the community and always would make time to chat. He will be sorely missed. I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to Billy's spouse, Alice, and their two children. I hope they are able to find some solace in how beloved he was to all of us who were fortunate to know him.

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

**NEWELL, DAWN: CRAFTS - ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dawn Newell of Cape Sable Island, on being acknowledged in two national magazines for her beautiful crafts.

Originally from my hometown of Pubnico, Dawn has been creating treats crafted with icing and embellishments as faux snacks.

Her love of crafting has inspired her to launch her YouTube channel called The Pink Tree. Her crafts caught the eye of *Romantic Homes*, a national magazine which features a two-page spread of her work. She will also be featured in the upcoming holiday issue of *Vintage Holiday* for her Putz Houses. She also sent her video to the Marilyn Dennis Show, hoping to have the opportunity to feature her talents.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Dawn on a job well done.

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

**SACK, CHIEF MIKE/BAND COUN. - COMMUN. CONSULTATION**

MS. LENORE ZANN: I would like to commend Chief Mike Sack and Sipene'katik Band Council who obviously understand the importance of community consultation before making decisions that will impact people and the environment. The council is holding a community referendum about the impact of the Alton gas storage project on the Shubenacadie River in Colchester County.

Band members opposed to the natural gas project are concerned it will destroy fish and fish habitat, especially the endangered striped bass and eel. They are concerned about giving up their treaty rights and rights to clean water and food security, as well as their cultural connection to the river and the land surrounding that.

I really wish them well and hope that they come up with a good decision that all will be happy with. I wish the community well in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

**MILLER, BASIL/CHENNELL, BETTY ANN: LEADERSHIP - THANK**

HON. KELLY REGAN: I would like to tell you about two devoted residents who brought music to Bedford for over 50 years.

Basil Miller and Betty Ann Chennell were founders of the Bedford Fiddlers, which is a subgroup of the Bedford Leisure Club. They have kept this group running for more than half a century - imagine the dedication and the leadership that requires. They have also been involved in organizing the Maritime FiddleFest - in fact Betty Ann has chaired it for the last 18 years.

When people describe these two, they use words like welcoming, creative, empathetic, dependable and, of course, talented. Their volunteer work has allowed for many fiddlers to perform, and many listeners to enjoy. Betty Ann and Basil have brought music to many venues in Bedford and beyond.

I would ask that the members of this House of Assembly please join in thanking them for their leadership and for bringing a song to many hearts.

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

**FITZGERALD, WILLIAM**  
**- LONG SERV. AWARD/PREMIER'S AWARD OF EXCELLENCE**

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to recognize William Fitzgerald of White Point, who has received the 2017 Long Service Award as well as the Premier's Award of Excellence.

William is a lifelong residence of Victoria County, a husband, and father of three children; he resides with his wife Janie. I recently learned that William celebrated his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday on August 6<sup>th</sup>. For 40 years he has been serving the community as an employee of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and continues to work hard. So it is fitting for me to bring forward his accomplishments and recognition of his contribution and commitment to public service.

I'd like to call members of this Legislature to join me in congratulating William on receiving the 2017 Service Award and the Premier's Award of Excellence.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

**HARVEY, CLINTON - SOFTBALL ACHIEVEMENTS**

HON. KAREN CASEY: Clinton Harvey, a resident of Valley, Colchester North, is a principal at Cobequid District Elementary School in Noel and one of the few level 5 umpires for softball in Nova Scotia. He played fast-pitch when he was growing up in Saint-Croix, Hants County and became involved in umpiring at age 14.

Clinton has received opportunities to call games at the highest level, including eight national championships, an ICS World event, a Junior Girls World tournament and a

European Men's Championship in Italy and in the summer of 2017, he called men's fast-pitch softball at the Canada Summer Games in Winnipeg. He considered these games as particularly rewarding, because they gave him an opportunity to see the talented young athletes who will become part of Softball Canada's future. Later in the summer, Clinton attended the National Under-18 Men's Softball Championship, in O'Leary, Prince Edward Island, where he supervised other umpires as the Deputy Umpire In-Chief.

I ask members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Clinton on his accomplishments in softball.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

### **CECCHETTO, CHIEF JULIA - APPT. CONGRATS.**

MR. JOHN LOHR: On September 25<sup>th</sup>, the Town of Kentville conducted a ceremony to swear in their new chief of police. This ceremony was momentous because Julia Cecchetto is not only the first female police chief for Kentville, but also for the Province of Nova Scotia.

Ms. Cecchetto began her policing career in 1990 upon graduation from the Atlantic Police Academy. She has worked in both patrol and administration, including stints in the Mounted Division, Professional Standards, Community Relations, and Crime Prevention as well as training.

During her acceptance speech, Chief Cecchetto said she is honoured to be the first female police chief in Nova Scotia and recognized the importance that holds. Her goal is to have others see her simply as the Chief.

I invite members of the House to congratulate Chief Julia Cecchetto and welcome her to the Town of Kentville.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

### **OVARIAN CANCER CAN. (N.S. CHAP.) - AWARENESS/FUNDRAISING**

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Today, I am wearing a turquoise ribbon, given to me by the Nova Scotia Chapter of Ovarian Cancer Canada, to bring attention to the disease during this month of Ovarian Cancer Awareness.

Ovarian cancer is the fifth most common cancer in women, and is known as a silent killer, because of the difficulty of early detection. Myself and other members of this House and of your own staff, are involved in an event tonight called the Lady Ball, which will raise money and bring attention to the disease that affects thousands of women living in



Canada. This year alone, it is estimated that 2,800 Canadian women will be newly diagnosed with this disease.

I would like to congratulate the Nova Scotia Chapter of Ovarian Cancer Canada for the work it is doing to spread awareness and raise funds for the research of this deadly disease and for encouraging women to show off their #LadyBalls in the process.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

#### **WESTON WOMEN'S INSTITUTE - ANNIV. (85<sup>th</sup>)**

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I would like to offer my congratulations to the Weston Women's Institute on celebrating their 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year. As a branch of the Women's Institute of Nova Scotia within the District of Kings West, the Weston Women's Institute has encouraged good citizenship through informative and stimulating programs and projects, with a history of commitment to public speaking, improved health care and literacy awareness and community engagement, the Weston Women's Institute has directly enhanced the quality of life for the residents of Kings West.

I am pleased to rise here today to applaud the Weston Women's Institute, offer my congratulations on reaching their 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, as they celebrate their proud and long-standing tradition of learning, sharing and community service, which continues to this day.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

#### **JOLLOTA, DALE: OLIVIA JOLLOTA MEM. TRUST - WORK THANK**

MR. TIM HALMAN: It's a pleasure to rise today in recognition of the phenomenal work being done by Dale Jollota, through the Olivia Jollota Memorial Trust. Following the sudden passing of her daughter, Dale has become an advocate for improved education on the dangers of prescription drugs.

The Olivia Jollota Memorial Trust has provided scholarships for numerous high school graduates, as well as donations to a number of community groups, supporting youth and animals, causes that were important to Olivia.

I thank Dale for her amazing work, to raise awareness and support her community, through many donations, in honour of Olivia.

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

[1:30 p.m.]

**SARSON, JEANNE/MACDONALD, LINDA  
- WOMEN OF PEACE AWARD**

MS. LENORE ZANN: I'm honoured to stand in the House today to celebrate two wonderful, passionate, strong women of my community. Jeanne Sarson and Linda MacDonald of Truro have been awarded the Women of Peace Award by a women's group in Tampa, Florida, for the work that they are doing and have done for many years on violence against women, human trafficking, and trying to shine a light on the fact that non-state torture exists in our world. They will be presented this much-deserved honour on November 2<sup>nd</sup> in Tampa. The Women of Peace Awards are designed to recognize individuals who are working on cutting edge programs or have created new ways of thinking about ending domestic violence and waging peace.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

**ETTINGER-O'LEARY, GWEN  
- ACADEMIC/ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS**

HON. MARGARET MILLER: It's my pleasure today to stand and celebrate another one of these extraordinary young people whom we have in our province. East Hants resident Gwen Ettinger-O'Leary was named the female athlete of the year for the 2016-17 school year and received Mount Saint Vincent University's free residence room, an athletic award, a \$4,000 basketball scholarship renewable for four years, and \$500 from Royal LePage. Gwen has enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts program at the Mount this Fall and is excited to be joining the Mount Mystics women's basketball team, where she will compete at a national level. She is a multi-sport athlete with the ability to do whatever is needed to help her team win and excels on the court under pressure. I ask members of this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Gwen on being selected to play on the Mount Mystics basketball team and wish her success in both her academic and athletic career.

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

**MATHESON, SARAH - MUSICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

MR. LARRY HARRISON: It's always heartwarming when local talent is recognized on a grander scale. Sarah Matheson of Brookfield was doubly honoured this year when she won both International Adult Vocalist and International Adult Entertainer of the Year at the 2017 North American Country Music Association's International Competition in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, home to music great Dolly Parton. Sarah earned the opportunity to compete by winning the Global Country Star Search in Halifax last summer. The competition followed three days in Nashville attending seminars, touring backstage at the Grand Ole Opry, and singing a verse of Amazing Grace in the Ryman

Auditorium. I want to congratulate Ms. Matheson on her accomplishment and wish her success in her musical career.

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

### **A TOWN THAT CARES GROUP - MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY**

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: I would like to recognize a volunteer group in New Waterford that has come together in the face of tragedy and crisis. A town hall meeting was organized by a group called A Town That Cares, spearheaded by Buddy Penney and John Bisson, after the death of Evan Webber, 29, on May 6<sup>th</sup>. Webber was Penney's nephew and best friend of Bisson's son. Our objective, they said, is to get the community involved to get some kind of platform towards saving a mental health and addiction centre in the CBRM, Penney said.

The many speakers included the Chief of Police, Peter McIsaac; Tom Blanchard, director of Talbot House; Dr. Venkata Puppala of Sydney; and Dale Jollota, who lost her 15-year-old daughter Olivia to a drug overdose. The plan of A Town That Cares is to get this mental health and drug addiction centre set up with counsellors for follow-ups, which could be paid as part of the current and future Department of Health and Wellness. It is an honour to sit in on these meetings and hear the stories that have affected so many people in my community.

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

### **CONGRESS OF ACADIENS-MÉTIS SOURIQUOIS - ANNIV. (10<sup>th</sup>)**

MR. GORDON WILSON: On the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of September, the Association des Acadiens-Métis Souriquois celebrated their 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. In 2007, the Congress of Aboriginal People through the Powley Implementation project stated that Acadian communities could qualify as Métis communities. With that impetus, the Association des Acadiens-Métis Souriquois, AAMS, whose members would share ancestries from both their Acadian and Mi'kmaq communities, was formed. The word Souriquois was a name French explorers had for the Mi'kmaq of Mainland Nova Scotia. Now Acadians want to know more about their Mi'kmaq ancestry and believe it is important to learn the traditions of both communities. I would ask the members of this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the AAMS on this important anniversary.

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

### **COMMUN. OUTREACH MEAL EVENT: VOLS. - THANK**

MR. BRAD JOHNS: I rise today to bring your attention to the Community Outreach Meal Event, or COME, as it's known, as well as Caroline Gallop and the

volunteers of Sackville who administer the program. COME is a monthly free hot meal program served by Knox United Church on the third Thursday of each month for anyone in need. Volunteers from several area churches take turns cooking and hosting the event.

The first meal, held in January, had only 15 guests but this summer those numbers have risen to over 90. I'd like to take an opportunity to thank Caroline Gallop, the volunteers of Knox United Church, St. Elizabeth Seton, St. John Vianney, St. John the Evangelist, and Gateway Community Church for helping meet this growing need in our community.

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

### **COOKE, BRIAN & MARY - COMMUN. COMMITMENT**

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize two remarkable individuals who are making 20 years of volunteer work in our communities - Brian and Mary Cooke of Salmon River Lake, Guysborough County, operate the With a Little Help Society, a non-profit committed to 100 per cent of the funds raised going to those in need.

Brian and Mary's fundraising efforts, primarily an annual fishing derby, have allowed them to support some of our most vulnerable in a variety of ways. They have provided funding to three local food banks, bursaries to local high schools, emergency funding for families, compassionate donations, and the list goes on.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Brian and Mary for their unwavering commitment to helping those in need in our communities. They truly are an inspiration, and sometimes a lifeline to those in need.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

### **MINNEY, MARGARET & JOHN - STRAWBERRY U-PICK ANNIV. (25<sup>th</sup>)**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate with Margaret and John Minney of Mountain Road, River John, on their Silver Anniversary of Strawberry U-Pick.

Originally from Devonshire, United Kingdom, John journeyed to Nova Scotia in 1969 and fell in love with the province. Shortly after, he married the love of his life. In 1988 their adventure began in Nova Scotia, not sure how they would survive but knowing they wanted farmland. They happened upon a farm for sale and quickly put down roots. John, knowing a little about horticulture and something about strawberries, cleared the land and began planting in 1992. Twenty-five years later, they are going strong in the U-pick business.

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely congratulate Margaret and John Minney on their dedication and perseverance to their U-pick and wish them many more years of success.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

**LEBRETON, GISELLE: HFX. REG. SCH. BD. - 35 YR. AWARD**

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the dedication of Giselle LeBreton a constituent of Halifax Armdale.

Giselle recently received a congratulatory pin and a milestone award for 35 years of service from the Halifax Regional School Board. For three and a half decades Giselle has worked with the school board as an administrative assistant. Today she is the friendly face at the front desk of École Chebucto Heights Elementary School and a staple of the school's staff.

Thirty-five years is an amazing amount of time to work with a single employer and it speaks to Giselle's love and dedication to the kids in our community. C'est aussi un plaisir pour moi de savoir que les enfants d'École Chebucto Heights ont une secrétaire bilingue.

I ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in applauding Giselle's exemplary and tireless service at Chebucto Heights.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

**MACNEIL, JOHN DAN "SMOKEY"  
- REC. N.S. BLUENOSE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD (2017)**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate John Dan "Smokey" MacNeil, who has received Recreation Nova Scotia's 2017 Bluenose Achievement Award.

For over 40 years Smokey has made a difference for youth in sport. His passion for baseball made memories for countless people as they played on the field in Creignish, including in 1984 team that won the Provincial Mosquito Championship.

Our communities depend on people like Smokey to create the opportunities our children need to benefit from physical activity, and to learn the values that come from participation in sport.

Mr. Speaker, may we here in this Legislature recognize Smokey's accomplishments and wish the community of Creignish well as they complete renovations to the field, with the help of some recently provided provincial funding.

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

**MOFFAT, SUZIE - CHURCH/COMMUN. CONTRIBUTIONS**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Suzie Moffat of Brookside.

Suzie is a valued and dedicated member of St. James United Church in Goodwood. Suzie is the first to remember and celebrate milestones and accomplishments. Everyone at St. James knows that their birthdays and anniversaries will be celebrated because Suzie will remember.

Besides the love and fellowship that everyone receives from her, Suzie takes on many different church roles. She is a member of the United Church Women's Group, the secretary of St. James Council, and a member of the Pastoral Care Committee. This committee reaches out to members of the congregation who are in need of some extra support, and she delivers weekly updates to those who cannot get to church. Suzie is always busy baking, serving, and cleaning at the church suppers, and she runs several fundraising campaigns on her own throughout the year.

I'd like the members of the House to join me in thanking Suzie for her kindness and generosity toward her church and the community at large.

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

**TUTTY, GREG: GRAPHIC BUS. - LAUNCH**

MS. KIM MASLAND: I rise today to congratulate Liverpool-based graphic designer Greg Tutty on the launch of his new, innovative business, ecardfoundry.com. This is the only commercial membership ecard site in Nova Scotia, and possibly in Canada. Mr. Tutty has been a graphic designer for 30 years and has won several major design awards.

Mr. Tutty is also a community-minded individual and supplies graphic design services to numerous local volunteer organizations in Queens County. It is an honour to have this opportunity to congratulate Greg on the launch of his ecard business.

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

**ABRAHAM, RYAN/TEAM: CURLING SUCCESS - CONGRATS.**

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I rise today to recognize Ryan Abraham, a young athlete who recently represented Nova Scotia at the Canadian under-18 curling championships. Ryan has competed in several different curling competitions over the course of his curling

career. As a member of the Mayflower Curling Club, Ryan competed in two Canadian junior championships, as well as the Canada Games.

Not only was he given the opportunity to participate on the Nova Scotia men's team but he was chosen to skip. This had been a goal of his since he began the sport at a very young age. Being chosen as skip for the team is a testament to Ryan's leadership skills on and off the ice. At the 2017 Canadian under-18 curling championships Ryan carried his team to the finals, where he and his team finished the tournament with a silver medal.

I ask the members of this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Ryan and his team on their success.

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

#### **MENTAL HEALTH COMMN. COURSE: PROVIDERS - THANK**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: I rise today to thank the Mental Health Commission of Canada for a recent course I took with 13 other people in North Sydney. The course, which lasted two days, teaches first-aid skills to enable people to recognize mental health symptoms and provide support until professional help is available. The course prepares people to recognize mental health problems. It increases their knowledge about the appropriate treatments, helps reduce stigma, and teaches people how to listen and not be judgmental.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those responsible for this course. It was very helpful and beneficial tool.

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

#### **ASH LEE JEFFERSON SCH.: PHILANTHROPY - THANK**

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, a devastating house fire in Fall River has touched the caring students and school community at Ash Lee Jefferson Elementary School. The Ash Lee Jefferson ME to WE group were making plans for holding a fundraiser to give back to the community. Even though the family who has lost their home has no one attending and no connection to the school, the students wanted to express to the family that they were thinking of them.

The group came up with the idea that students would pay \$1 to wear pyjamas and Easter Bunny ears to school. Instead of the \$600 or \$700 they hoped to raise, the total ended up being \$1,200. The students were very happy and proud, and said it felt like the right thing to do.

I would like the members of the House of Assembly to please join me in thanking these students.

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

**RAFTUS, MANDY/RAFTUS, KELLY-ANNE - COMMUN. CONTRIBUTIONS**

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: I would like to recognize Mandy Raftus and her granddaughter, Kelly-Anne Raftus, from Eastern Passage for their hard work and dedication with volunteering their time raising funds for many people in our community, and this time, specifically, raising funds for a tandem bike.

I alluded to this last night in my speech, but I want to remind everybody that this bicycle will give visually impaired residents in our community, as well as those with physical limitations, the opportunity to ride a bike. Once we purchase it, this bicycle will be available for the entire community to use, and will be housed at the Tallahassee Recreation Centre. Through canvassing friends and family and local churches during community fundraising events, Mandy and Kelly-Anne have raised approximately \$400, and they do not plan to quit until the full amount of \$1,700 is raised.

They both love giving back to their community and have a long history of helping out, even though Kelly-Anne herself is only eight years old. It is my great pleasure to recognize Mandy and Kelly-Anne for their community spirit. I ask the House to acknowledge their efforts.

[1:45 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

**TOPPLE, ERIK: REHAB - CONGRATS.**

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Nine years ago today, Eric Topple was living in a crack house, hiding in the dark, and getting high. The next day, Erik was in court, where he faced jail time for 48 charges of theft and breach of probation. Erik had hit rock bottom. One night during a lockdown, Erik caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror. He hated what he saw and broke down in tears. In Erik's own words, he prayed to God to "take this poison out of my body."

While incarcerated, Erik was accepted into drug rehab for his cocaine and crack addiction. Six months later, Erik was clean, and since then, Erik has gone back to school, never relapsed, and stayed on the straight and narrow. Erik believed he had to hate the drug for all it did to him and the time he lost to it in order to kick it. Congratulations to my friend Erik on nine years sober with zero relapses. Stand tall, Erik.



MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**PICTOU CO. AECON ATL. SCOTIANS  
- N.S. JR. B HOCKEY CHAMPIONS (2016-17)**

HON. PAT DUNN: I rise today to inform all members that the Pictou County AECON Atlantic Scotians were crowned the 2016-17 Nova Scotia Junior B Hockey champions. The Scotians, supported by a very devoted executive, continue to provide Pictou County fans a very exciting brand of hockey. The Scotians eliminated Port Hawkesbury, the first-place Glace Bay Miners, and Liverpool to win league honours. The team will begin this season with former Scotian scoring star, Brandon Verge as their new head coach, following the retirement of former coach Al Whidden. The Scotians' new bench boss is looking forward to another exciting competitive season in the Nova Scotia Junior B Hockey League.

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

**ST. MARGARET SAILING CLUB: ACCOMPLISHMENTS - RECOGNIZE**

MR. HUGH MACKAY: I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of the St. Margaret's Sailing Club and Nova Scotian youth sailors. From August 28<sup>th</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup>, St. Margaret's Sailing Club hosted the 2017 Canadian Youth Championship Regatta for sailors 19 years and under. Mr. Speaker, 125 sailors and 89 boats from across Canada competed for top honours and the chance to prove themselves as contenders for national and provincial teams.

Nova Scotian sailors had an excellent week. Cameron Shaw and Henry Lockyer placed second in the 29er fleet. Georgia Lewin Lafrance and Madeline Gillis took first place in 420s with Mauritz Heidenrich and David Sapp in second place. Tayte Stefaniuk was first in the laser radial class, and the top Nova Scotian result in lasers was Spencer Deazell in fifth place. I ask the members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating the St. Margaret's Sailing Club and Nova Scotian youth sailors on a successful week of sailing.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**RAND, RICHARD & YVONNE: FOX HILL MARKET - OPENING**

MR. JOHN LOHR: Richard and Yvonne Rand opened the Fox Hill Market and Mexican Deli on Robie St. in April 2017. Since then, they have seen their business expand to include seven employees with plans to hire two more. All the products in the store are from Nova Scotia, with the exception of a few ingredients from Mexico that are used in the deli.

The main idea of this venture is to supply Halifax with products that are truly, from seed to table, all locally produced by farmers who have put their heart into the product. The featured product is their own line of excellent Fox Hill cheeses from their farm in Port Williams. Suppliers for the store include Pasture Hill from Waterville, Beck's Meat of Kingston, as well as vegetables from Noggins Farms in Port Williams.

I congratulate the Rands and wish them well on their new venture.

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

### **GILLESPIE, WENDY/PAMPERED PAWS INN - RECOGNIZE**

MR. BEN JESSOME: I would like to recognize Wendy Gillespie and Pampered Paws Inn of Hammonds Plains. It's a B&B specializing for people and their dogs. Pampered Paws has been a part of the Hammonds Plains community for 13 years, offering a unique inn experience.

They offer various services, including cage-free sleepovers, and a daycare available to all dogs of all sizes, as well as puppies. A team of experienced dog handlers in pet first aid are on hand to watch over the furry visitors while they make new friends, play in the pool, dig through the sand box, and hang out in the indoor play area. Owners need not worry while being away from their dogs, as they can catch all the action on the various webcams throughout the facility.

Wendy and her team have created a special place for our best friends. I would ask you all to please join me in sending our appreciation for the services they offer and wish her success in business in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

### **CREERY, RAY: VESSEL LAUNCH - CONGRATS.**

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: I would like to congratulate 93-year-old Ray Creery of Oakland on the launching of his sailing dinghy, *Pamela G.*, which he started building 10 years ago. Ray is a retired Navy man who named the four-metre-long vessel after his late wife, Pamela, who passed away in 2015.

On August 26<sup>th</sup> many generations of Ray's family gathered with dozens of friends as he launched the vessel near Creery's Oakland Road Boat Shop. Initially the celebration was intended to be a small group of family and friends, but Ray happily noted that things got a little carried away when the number of guests had spiked. In the tradition of good luck, a bottle of champagne was broken over the hull of the boat after it was launched into the waters of Mahone Bay.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and all members of this House of Assembly please join me in congratulating Ray for the launch of his beloved vessel, *Pamela G.*

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

**EAST. PASSAGE-COW BAY LIONS CLUB - ANNIV. (45<sup>th</sup>)**

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to advise the Legislature that last Saturday night our Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Lions Club celebrated its 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and we had one charter member there in attendance. In addition, we also celebrated the citizen of the year, who were John and Jody Keizer, who own the Keizer Foodmart in our community. Together they have raised over \$80,000 for our community.

We also honoured all of the board of directors who serve with the Lions Club, many of whom are in their 70s and 80s and we raise hundreds of thousands of dollars every year for our community. I'd just like to thank all of them and all of their efforts and we look forward to the next five years.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

**HARRINGTON, LOGAN/TEAM: CAN. GAMES - CONGRATS.**

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Logan Harrington, a native of Clayton Park West, who represented Nova Scotia at the 2017 Canada Games. Logan is a highly-accomplished soccer player who has played for Halifax Dunbrack Soccer Club, Team Nova Scotia and the Halifax West High School team, where he helped the team win the provincial title.

He also trained with the Vancouver Whitecaps. Logan demonstrates exemplary leadership qualities on and off the field. Logan has also volunteered his time to coaching young soccer players for a number of seasons.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Logan and his team for placing seventh at the Canada Games and wish him the best in his future endeavours.

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

**SYDNEY RIVER KINSMEN CLUB: DONATIONS - THANK**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the Kinsmen Club of Sydney River and area, which disbanded four years ago. This group has come together for one last act of charity for its community. The Club had a sum of \$30,000 left over after selling its building, the majority of which was distributed between groups like

An Cala, Palliative Care Unit of the Cape Breton Regional Hospital, Special Olympics and local fire departments.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to thank the Kinsmen Club of Sydney River and area for their generous gesture which has been put to the best use for our local community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

### **ROSS, CONNOR: ACHIEVEMENTS - CONGRATS.**

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the hard work and dedication of a young man from Coldbrook, Connor Ross. He received his first football helmet when he was five years old and began playing a few years later with the Valley Bulldogs. He continued his career at Central Kings High School where the team won the provincial championships in 2017. He was chosen as Captain for Team Canada at the first under-18 North American football championship in Florida in early 2017.

He has been a division 3 all star twice, 2016 NSSAF division 2 MVP, 2015 MVP and a 2014 NSSAFFL rookie of the year. He was recently recognized by Sport Nova Scotia as Cleve's male athlete of the month in January.

He realizes the valuable life lessons of dedication and hard work and is now playing university football for St. F.X. as he studies human kinetics. I ask the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Connor Ross on his many achievements.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

### **MALAGASH SALT MINE MUSEUM: CONTRIBUTION - RECOGNIZE**

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Malagash Salt Mine Museum, for their dedication and perseverance to the collection of history and culture of the Northumberland Shore. This museum is the site of the first rock salt mine in Canada and it showcases displays of local industries, including salt mining, farming and fishing, as well as providing information on the Malagash area.

The community memories exhibit gives visitors a sense of the early days of Malagash, history of the salt mine and the impact that the mine had on the community. I wish to applaud the museum for their collection of stories which will keep our history alive for generation to come.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**CROSS, ANNETTE - STARKEY HEARING FDN.: WORK - THANK**

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge and to recognize the ongoing work of Annette Cross. Annette has owned and operated Provincial Hearing Aid since 1997 and has built her business up to five locations province wide.

Annette has also taken her expertise abroad as a member of the Starkey Hearing Foundation, enabling children from El Salvador, Jamaica, Panama, Turkey, Egypt, Kenya and China who have hearing loss to be fitted for hearing devices. Because of Annette and her colleagues with the foundation, thousands of children around the world have benefited, who would not have otherwise had the opportunity to receive hearing aids.

I would ask members of this House of Assembly to join me in thanking Annette Cross for her hard work and dedication to those in need.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

**SHIP'S CO. THEATRE - MERRITT AWARDS**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ship's Company Theatre of Parrsboro, on taking home six Merritt Awards from Theater Nova Scotia this year. *Chasing Champions*, the Ship's Company Theatre play that tells the story of legendary Nova Scotian boxer Sam Langford, was the play that won the Outstanding Production award, while Jacob Sampson, who wrote the play, won the award for Outstanding Performance by an Actor in a leading role, for his portrayal of Langford, as well as the award for Outstanding New Play by a Nova Scotian.

Other awards for the production included Marty Burt for the Outstanding Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Male Role. Leigh Ann Vardy for Outstanding Lighting Design and Garrett Barker for Outstanding Scenic Design.

I am proud to congratulate Ship's Company Theater for this amazing achievement and proud of their accomplishments in Parrsboro and in Cumberland South.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

**ROSS, JOSEY:  
ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN CHURCH (BEDFORD) - SERV. THANK**

HON. KELLY REGAN: Josey Ross joined Bedford's All Saints Anglican Church when she arrived in Canada as a war bride back in 1946. She has been volunteering there ever since. She has been an active member of the Anglican Church Women for 30 years, 15 as president. During that time, Josey was a leader and supporter of many volunteer

projects including some for Adsum House and Bryony House, as well as yard sales, auctions and dinners. Josey is an amazing baker and always contributes to any call for parish sales and prepares meals for Hope Cottage and St. George's soup kitchen.

Josey is a skilled knitter. She has made prayer shawls for those who can use some healing comfort and also knits socks, sweaters and hats for those in need. She recently instigated a finger puppet project for the IWK, in which she and other volunteers crafted over 1,000 finger puppets. Josey is also very involved in worship services at All Saints.

I would ask members of this House of Assembly to join me in thanking Josey Ross for more than 70 years of service to All Saints Anglican Church.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

**POTTIE, DARRELL: PUBLISHED AUTHOR - CONGRATS.**

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, sometimes when a person's dream comes true, it surpasses all their expectations. Darrell Pottie, an East Hants resident and fan of Sidney Crosby's, placed his Pittsburgh Penguins jersey on a plywood sign that read, Sid sign my jersey, and put it on his front lawn and left it up for about two weeks.

The result was a visit from Sidney a few weeks later. He missed that visit but he received three jerseys, a T-shirt and a photograph signed by his idol. Darrell posted photos and his story on Facebook and it went viral.

He was contacted by author Janet Matthews, who after discussion wrote about the experience and his story was included in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: The Spirit of Canada*, a collection of Canadian stories. To further add to his experience, he was invited and attended the book signing in Toronto.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Darrell for becoming a published author and sharing the realization of his dream and showing us that no dream is unattainable.

MR. SPEAKER: I thank all members for all those thoughtful member statements. We will pause for a few seconds and reflect on all the good news that was brought to us.

[2:00 p.m.]

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

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

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

#### **PREM.: C.B. HEALTH INFO. - ACCURACY**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. This past summer the Nova Scotia Health Authority announced publicly that 16 new doctors would be coming to Cape Breton Island. It turned out that announcement was false; it was fake news, Mr. Speaker. The number is not 16; it was later corrected by Dr. Mike MacDonald to be 13. Now we understand it's 11, and some of those doctors have not yet signed contracts compelling them to go to Cape Breton. Both myself and the member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg have raised this issue in recent days.

I would like to ask the Premier, what is he doing to ensure that the health information that Cape Bretoners are getting is accurate?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to acknowledge to him that the Minister of Health and Wellness has been travelling across the province meeting and working with our sister organizations across the province to hear from them directly, continuing to work with them to ensure that we can bring together all of the health care delivery models across the province, and to continue to make sure that those Nova Scotians who are looking for access to primary health care in their communities can get access to that.

MR. BAILLIE: None of that matters if Nova Scotians can't trust the information they're getting from this government about what's truly going on in their health care system. Cape Bretoners were given information that was designed as public relations spin to give them hope when in fact the information was false. Now they are losing confidence in the information they get from this government about what is truly going on with the number of doctors coming to Cape Breton Island.

This is exactly why, three years ago, the Auditor General recommended that the government provide accurate information and the efficient use and collection of information about surgical wait times in other parts of our health care system. That was three years ago.

I'll table that Auditor General's Report and ask the Premier, why has his government failed to act on this important recommendation from the Auditor General?

THE PREMIER: Again, I want to thank our sister organizations for continuing to work to make sure that we recruit health care providers across the province. In the current budget, there are 70 collaborative care units that will bring together health care providers of all disciplines to ensure that the primary care focus in communities across the province is being met. We know there are pockets in the province where there are real challenges. We want to thank those communities that continue to work with us, with the minister, and with the Health Authority. We will continue to make sure that we make every effort to ensure that those health care teams are in place as quickly as possible.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, 100,000 Nova Scotians today go through their daily lives without a family doctor. They are crying out for more family doctors so they can get the family health care that they need. The least they should expect from this government is to be given truthful information about the number of family doctors that are out there, but they are not getting that truthful information. That is why the Auditor General recommended that a system be put in place that is independent and accurate, so we can get the truth about what's going on with family doctors in this province.

I would like to ask the Premier now, in light of the heightened crisis in this area, will he agree to implement the Auditor General's recommendations to make sure we get independent verified information on the state of our health care system, and make it public?

THE PREMIER: I know the honourable member would know that in this budget there's an additional 10 resident seats for Canadian-trained physicians. There will be another 10 for foreign-trained physicians to come into our province to get Canadian competency. That will bring our discipline up to 56 doctors trained annually in our province. We're continuing to work towards a long-term solution for what has been a decade-building problem in this province under successive governments. It's not unique to Nova Scotia. It is a phenomenon that is happening across the country. We're seeing it, and what we're putting place are long-term strategic investments that will provide us with a long-term supply of health care providers.

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

### **PREM.: QEII P3 MODEL - CONCERNS**

HON. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, the government sent out a request for supplier qualifications for P3 advisory services related to the QEII redevelopment project. This is a major concern in light of the fact that the province, having followed a P3 model in educational infrastructure, has recently paid \$216 million to buy back 37 schools approved under a previous Liberal P3 scheme.

I think it is incumbent on the Premier to answer the question, given our province's terrible experience with P3s in education, why does he think we should consider at all reopening that door at this time?



THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we are looking at all options of how we ensure we provide the infrastructure that Nova Scotians want and deserve in their communities and this will be one of the options that we'll explore.

MR. BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has often expressed the view that it is prudent stewardship of the province's resources to examine a whole range of alternatives, but I wish to ask him this question: After all the work on health care infrastructure that has been delayed in the last four years in order to save money, why in the world would he now consider turning all this public money over to private developers?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I would encourage him to go look at the amount of investments that have been made across the province in health care infrastructure to ensure that we continue to make the transition of the facilities we have to make sure that not only do we have the bricks and mortar but we have the equipment inside of them to provide the services that Nova Scotians have come to expect.

We'll continue to work with those communities and those Nova Scotians, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that infrastructure is in place and we'll look at all options on how we can best do that with the precious tax dollars they have.

As the honourable member would know, the government that he was part of also entered into a P3 arrangement on other pieces of infrastructure. We have not made a commitment to that but I think it's the only responsible thing to do - look at all the options about how we build these facilities.

MR. BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, it was painful for the people of the province to hear the report of the Auditor General on P3 schools with its wholesale condemnation and rebuke of the project and to know, as we heard it, that it was too late now, that these decisions were all in the past and the money had all been spent.

I ask the Premier, will he commit himself today to establishing an independent review under the Auditor General before any final decision is made on whether or not to redevelop the QEII on a P3 model?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, here's the review I can give the honourable member - not a single community has asked to return a school built under a P3 model.

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

### **PREM.: N.S. DOCTORS - WORK SATISFACTION**

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, over 100,000 Nova Scotians today live without a family doctor. Now we find out that the existing doctors are feeling burned out,

overextended, disengaged and feeling ineffective in their jobs. A recent survey by Doctors Nova Scotia of the doctors in the province shows that 70 per cent of them describe their work life using those words, and the reason they give is the feeling they are constantly subject to administrative hassles, billing problems, and constraints on their ability to operate as doctors without undue influence from the Health Authority.

I'd like to ask the Premier, why is the government making it harder for our existing doctors to live and work in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As he would know, health care providers across the province - physicians, nurse practitioners, dietitians, physiotherapists have all said they want to work in a collaborative environment. This budget actually provides an opportunity for that. At the same time, we've said that if a physician wants to practise in this province they can practise wherever he or she wishes to practise. That opportunity is there for them and we'll continue to work with all our providers to provide a complement of ways they can provide services to Nova Scotians.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess that 70 per cent of the doctors in this province are wrong and the Premier is the only one who is right when it comes to their work satisfaction here in the Province of Nova Scotia. (Interruptions)

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

MR. BAILLIE: It's hard to ask questions in this House, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier and the NDP are being so negative all the time.

Mr. Speaker, it is not lost on the people of Nova Scotia that this is the same Premier who promised that every one of them would have a family doctor if he was elected as their Premier. Now we have 100,000 people without a doctor and 70 per cent of the doctors we do have report that they are overextended and that there is too much control on their autonomy and their ability to practise as a doctor. They specifically point to their deteriorating relationship with the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

I will ask the Premier, why has the relationship between our doctors and the Health Authority deteriorated so badly?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, at any time when transition change happens in an organization there is always a period of time where those partnerships need to be rebuilt. We know that in our first mandate we made substantive change in terms of the administration and delivery of health care in this province, tearing down barriers and ensuring that we have one Health Authority to provide services across the province. We know there is some work that has to be done, and it will continue to be done in terms of working with our organization so that everyone feels part of that.

We have heard from physicians who have felt their voice had not been heard. The Minister of Health and Wellness has been engaging with them. We're hearing from physicians across the province, talking about that. We want to continue to bring them to the table to make sure their views are being heard. We will continue to work with all of our partners to ensure that we provide primary health care in communities across this province.

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

### **HEALTH & WELLNESS - WAIT TIMES**

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: Since the Spring of 2015 wait times for community-based adult mental health services at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital have more than doubled. Back then, 90 per cent of those seeking treatment were seen within 203 days. Now it takes 425 days.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health, how many days does he think is acceptable for people in industrial Cape Breton to wait for mental health treatment?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member opposite for asking a very important question. It's no secret - I think every member in this Legislature and indeed all Nova Scotians recognize the importance of providing mental health services to Nova Scotians in a timely fashion. That's why the Health Authority continues to recruit to fill positions that are currently vacant in that region, in the Cape Breton area. They're doing their best to find qualified personnel to provide those services in that community.

In addition, for all Nova Scotians who are looking for mental health services, we have made significant investments in the budget tabled earlier this week.

MS. MARTIN: On Tuesday, the Finance and Treasury Board Minister said that \$3.2 million budgeted for mental health would help to provide additional support for Cape Breton. I have been hearing from many people on the Island that folks aren't sure what to expect from this additional support. In order to see whether or not there has been an improvement, we need to know where we're starting and where we would like to go.

I think it's reasonable to ask the minister, have any targets been set to reduce wait times and to improve the access to community-based mental health services in Cape Breton?

MR. DELOREY: I thank the member opposite again for raising this issue, although each time the question is raised, it's about the people of Cape Breton, and I agree the people of Cape Breton are very important. But as a government, we are indeed responsible for providing services for all Nova Scotians.

The investments that we're making in mental health services are indeed for the people of Cape Breton, but they're also for all Nova Scotians. We're investing to expand mental health crisis services, \$1.6 million to go to those services. We're centralizing the intake to speed up the delivery of services for a single point of entry in the health care system to ensure people who are struggling or need supports here can get navigated and directed to the right services at the right time.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

### **EECD - PRE-PRIMARY PROG.: DIVERSE NEEDS - ASSISTANTS**

MR. TIM HALMAN: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Yesterday at Public Accounts Committee, the Deputy Minister of Education confirmed what parents and guardians and teachers in this province have been saying for quite some time, that there are not enough teaching and program assistants to support students with diverse needs. At the same time, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is standing up and proclaiming that the pre-Primary program is inclusive and safe for all four-year-olds in Nova Scotia.

My question is this, if we don't have enough supports, as was acknowledged by the Deputy Minister of Education, how can we assure parents and guardians of four-year-olds with diverse needs that they will be safe in the pre-Primary program?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the question, and we do actually face challenges. In light of the fact that we have increased the number of TAs in the system, we still recognize that it is not keeping up with the need of a diverse student body in the P-12 system. That tells me that there are systemic challenges that we need to overcome.

One of those major challenges is the model of inclusion that we have implemented in this province and has been around for 20 years. We are taking it upon ourselves to review that model so that we can have a transformative impact on our classrooms and how they operate so that it isn't just an issue of hiring more teachers to keep up with a need that is very difficult to keep up with from a resource perspective, but changing the system so it's better serving all students.

MR. HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, families with children with diverse needs are feeling vulnerable. They were cautiously optimistic when the Inclusion Commission was announced, then understandably felt let down when this government rolled out the pre-Primary program before one single recommendation has been made by the Inclusion Commission. This rushed rollout sends a message that students with extra needs do not matter.

My question is, Mr. Speaker, is the minister so determined to push through with pre-Primary while the needs of our most vulnerable students go unaddressed?

[2:15 p.m.]

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, in fact pre-Primary is part of the solution to the challenges that face our teachers in the classroom. The reason why, and the research demonstrates this, is that we are actually able to screen, at an earlier age, before these students enter into the academic learning environment, for special needs. We are actually able to screen at an earlier age for special needs, for learning disabilities, and that will help us better prepare for these children as they enter the academic learning environment.

We are basing this model on the Early Childhood Centres this government and the previous government have implemented in the province, models of inclusive early learning that have actually proved to be very successful, for which we have evaluated and received positive feedback from teachers and the educators that are participating in it, Mr. Speaker.

I want that member to have a broader perspective and understand that early learning is part of the solution to challenges we face in our education system.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

### **JUSTICE: MARIJUANA LEGISLATION - CONSULTATIONS**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Justice. Yesterday I asked the Minister of Justice how he intended to consult with Nova Scotians about the many issues surrounding the legalization of marijuana. His answer in the House was “stay tuned.” Later that evening he told reporters that face-to-face public consultations were not going to be in his plans - and I can table that.

My question is, will the minister commit to holding face-to-face consultations with Nova Scotians, as they so deserve, just like this Liberal Government did when they held meetings regarding highway twinning and taxes?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague. What I spoke about yesterday was engaging Nova Scotians through an online opportunity. Every Nova Scotian will have the opportunity for input. We will reach out to stakeholders to hear from them on the issues that are important to all Nova Scotians. We believe that platform is the best medium, given the time pressures that the federal government has identified, to achieve our objectives.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I realize the time pressure, that's why we were saying this should have started a long time ago. Earlier today at the Human Resources Committee, George McLellan was appointed chairman of the Nova Scotia Liquor

Commission Board. He is known for helping government navigate through difficult situations, such as the amalgamation of the health authorities and ending the Film Tax Credit.

My question is, is Mr. McLellan's appointment a signal from this government that they've already decided to retail marijuana at the NSLC before any kind of consultations happen with stakeholders?

MR. FUREY: Let me first acknowledge, as my colleague has, that Mr. McLellan has demonstrated his skill sets across government, Mr. Speaker. But let me also advise my colleague that no decisions have been made on the retail model, the age or consumption of any of these requirements.

We continue to engage our provincial colleagues; we continue to be informed by the work that other provinces have done; we continue to be informed by the work that Justice staff have committed to this file; and we will continue, with those efforts in mind, to provide the best services to Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

#### **JUSTICE: BULLYING CONFERENCES - FREQUENCY**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Justice. Speak Up, an Action Plan to Address Bullying and Cyberbullying says that this Liberal Government will organize and deliver an annual conference on bullying, and I can table that. The conference was intended to promote awareness of issues such as homophobia, sexual violence, poverty, race, disabilities, and mental health. A FOIPOP request from the PC caucus shows that the last conference was held in 2013, and that was tabled as well. My question to the minister is, has the minister abandoned the Liberal commitment to hold a bullying conference each year, which is desperately needed in this province?

HON. MARK FUREY: What I can say to my colleague is that we will be introducing legislation around cyberbullying in the very near future, that we will seek all opportunities to provide supports to Nova Scotian youth and adults, so they can overcome the issues and challenges faced by bullying in today's society.

MS. MACFARLANE: A promise that was made in 2013. It's 2017. Once again, we're waiting years upon years. Nova Scotia has not had anti-cyberbullying legislation since December 2015, when the legislation was struck down by the Supreme Court. Despite that, the government has gone back on its commitment, again, to hold an annual conference. This government has denied the experts and the stakeholders who want to speak up, an opportunity to meet and discuss all the measures that could be taken to protect

kids until there is a valid law. Why has the government washed its hands of this responsibility when it comes to protecting our young people from cyberbullying?

MR. FUREY: I think it's important to recognize the cyberbullying unit that was brought in previously and continues to do its work to identify and address the areas that my colleague has identified - how important it is to reach out to subject matter experts and seek their input, how important it is to reach out to victims and seek their input. Those are the steps that we're taking. Those are the steps that the cyberscan unit continues to make. We will introduce legislation in the near future, so that we can continue to engage Nova Scotians to resolve and address this issue that is having such a negative impact on our province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

#### **NAT. RES. - KEJIMKUJIK NATL. PARK: CLEAR-CUT - DETAILS**

MS. LISA ROBERTS: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Last October, her predecessor was asked here in this House whether Parks Canada had any concerns about a proposed clear-cut next to Kejimikujik National Park. He said at the time, and I have the Hansard record here, that his department was in constant communication with Parks Canada and that they had no concerns about the proposed harvest. However, since then, a Parks Canada briefing note has surfaced in the media indicating that DNR did not inform Parks Canada about the clear-cut, and in fact, they do have and they did have a number of concerns about the harvest.

The question is, would the minister like to stand and clarify why her department kept Parks Canada in the dark about the proposed clear-cut?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: I thank the honourable member opposite for the question. I have certainly heard about that situation with the clear-cut next to Kejimikujik National Park last year, but I'm not aware of the report that she has. I certainly will look into that. I would like to inform all members of this House that all clear-cuts or any cuts in Nova Scotia - any kind of harvest, whether it's partial or total harvests - are very well planned by the department before they take place.

MS. ROBERTS: Being forthright about forestry policy has been a challenge for this government. Last Fall, they walked away from the natural resources strategy, which was informed both by science and by consultation with thousands of Nova Scotians, after saying the province was on track to meet the strategy's targets. More recently during the Spring election, the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, now the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, placed an ad in *The Coast* saying that the Liberal Government froze clear-cutting on Crown Land. As we heard, when the Premier tried to table a petition against a clear-cut on Crown Land in Annapolis County earlier this week, this is clearly

not the case. I ask the minister, why has the government repeatedly misled Nova Scotians about the plans for our province's forests?

MS. MILLER: I'd like to clarify something that I think is extremely important. We have been following the recommendations of the report. I'm happy to report that the department has already followed almost 91 recommendations, and as of this morning, the numbers on the western-area clear-cuts are 53 per cent. We are almost to the point that the strategy recommends.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS: HEALTH AUTH.  
- PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, this question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. The Department of Health and Wellness is responsible for monitoring the health system's performance. Since the centralization to one central health authority, the wait times for many services have worsened, including for mental health - both outpatient counselling services and in-patient acute care beds.

I recently asked the Health Authority's leadership team for mental health for a plan to address the current problems. I've asked them to share their vision, timelines, and expected outcomes, and I was told they have no plan.

Mr. Speaker, it has been three years since this leadership team was put in place. The question is, when will the Department of Health and Wellness do its job and hold the leadership team of the Health Authority to task for the job they have been hired to do?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. The area of service under question here - mental health services being provided to all Nova Scotians - clearly is an area of concern and priority for all Nova Scotians and I believe for all members of the Legislature, and certainly of the government.

That's why, in the budget that was just tabled, we continue to invest more and expand our investments in providing community-based services (Interruption)

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

MR. DELOREY: . . . providing community-based clinicians to help us address these very issues in communities. I believe we've budgeted about 73 clinicians providing health services across the province, and that's on top of investments that are being made in our education system to expand SchoolsPlus and provide additional clinicians and supports



in those areas in our communities. We're really putting resources in as part of the plan to get these services out to the people where and when they need them.

MS. SMITH-MCCROSSIN: It's been three years since the central Health Authority was formed. We have one central board and leadership team. The government stated that the change will ". . . result in enhanced patient care and safety and more timely and consistent access to care." This has been a failure.

One of the benefits of centralization should be a more coordinated, organized approach. In the past, the teams leading our health system used a clinical-services health plan. This plan would lay out a framework for clinical services across the province. Our Health Authority has no plan. It's been three years. This lack of planning and accountability is a large contributing factor to poor health service outcomes.

My question is, will the Department of Health and Wellness take your responsibility to govern the Health Authority seriously and hold them accountable to provide a clinical services plan so that we can have measured health outcomes?

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you and the member opposite that, indeed, I personally and this government do take seriously - as do the members and the staff within the Nova Scotia Health Authority, our front-line care providers - providing health care services to the people of Nova Scotia.

In terms of the planning and the ability to provide services across the province, there are lots of examples where individuals are seeing improvements in the wait times. We're seeing the ability to spread like we've never had before, providing MRI services (Interruption)

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

MR. DELOREY: . . . whether they're providing surgeries or MRI scans, the ability to see the wait-lists for physicians making referrals to refer to those communities with the least amount of wait time, distributing that across the province. This is what we talked about: the benefit of having a single Health Authority. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

#### **AFRICAN N.S. AFFS. - LAND TITLES: CONSULTANTS - DETAILS**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs. The residents at the minister's announcement around land titles yesterday have questions unanswered. Not having legal title to land that has been in a family for generations means not having the financial stability that being a landowner can provide.

Some residents, like Evangeline Downey, want to pick their own lawyers to be sure that their interests are being protected. I'll table that.

[2:30 p.m.]

Families in African Nova Scotian communities have been waiting decades to have this issue settled. Unfortunately, the minister was unable to provide some detail they wanted yesterday. My question to the minister is, what experts did he consult with, and how did he arrive at the model he unveiled yesterday?

HON. TONY INCE: Thank you very much for the question. The Nova Scotia Legal Aid Commission is partnering with Nova Scotia Justice to provide legal services and to have those conversations.

MR. DUNN: Instead of answering questions from community members, the Minister of Agriculture promised a meeting sometime down the road. Residents want to see action after years of talking.

My question to the minister is, will the minister reveal today when and where the consultations with community members will begin?

MR. INCE: Let me tell you, first of all, that issue - this is not a joke. That issue has been ignored by several governments over successive years. (Applause) It's an issue that the community has dealt with, and that I've dealt with. So let me tell you, we are consulting with the community and we will get it done right.

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

### **EECD: C.B. SCH. PSYCHOLOGISTS - FUNDING ENSURE**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: On Tuesday I asked the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development about the school psychologists promised to Cape Bretoners after the horrific, horrible tragedies faced by families. The minister made it clear that it was the school board who was in control of what funds were and were not spent on services for students.

The minister said he did not understand the question, but it's very simple, Mr. Speaker. The budget for these mental health professionals did not change, and the government gave no directive to the cash-strapped school board. The government is taking a pretty casual approach to issues that are too serious to treat in such a manner.

My question to the minister is, will the minister ensure that there is new, additional funding and give the school board a directive to spend it on psychologists?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In response to an incredible tragedy in the communities of Cape Breton - a tragedy that I know all of us can empathize and sympathize with - we did our best to be responsive and thoughtful. We did send Dr. Stan Kutcher, a youth psychiatrist of national renown and credibility, to the area to assist that community and family members to the best of his ability and to provide recommendations to us and the board - which did include for the board to reinstate positions for guidance counselling and social workers.

The board indicated to us that they needed funding to do that, and we did oblige and follow through on the recommendations that were made to us.

MR. ORRELL: So I guess the money wasn't new money, as they claimed it was. Those positions were already in place and had to be cut because they didn't have enough funding in their budget to make sure that those positions stayed.

It's unfair. While Nova Scotians understand that the school board has authority, this is another situation where the provincial government remains hands-off while at other times taking very direct control. This is one of the times that Nova Scotians expect the government to come through with more funding and programming to help individuals. We need a government to make mental health a priority and provide students with the services they need.

We know Dr. Kutcher made some recommendations. We hope that they get taken. Can the minister guarantee Nova Scotians that each school board has been provided with additional funding in its budget that is specifically for mental health services?

MR. CHURCHILL: Yes, and I do want to clarify, for the record, that there have been no reductions to funding for special needs or student psychologists. I can table the budgetary documentation for that.

Of course this is a priority for us. These moments of personal and community tragedy and suffering should be moments that unite us all in this Legislature and provide us with some perspective on what's important in each of our communities.

I fail to understand how politicizing this issue, which mental health experts say  
(Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. CHURCHILL: . . . which mental health experts say can inflame these situations and impact the decisions of other young, vulnerable people.

This is not about me not wanting to answer questions in this House. I will always do that. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I think situations like this need to call upon the better parts of our nature.

This is the first time that that member and the member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg have actually brought this matter to my attention. They never even took the time to talk to me . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

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

#### **ENVIRON.: ENVIRON. ISSUES/CLIMATE CHANGE - PRIORITIZE**

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, the lack of attention to environmental concerns in the budget and Speech from the Throne was frustrating but not surprising. After all, this government has shown no interest in holding consultations to give Nova Scotians a greater say on environmental issues that impact their communities, like herbicide spraying, quarry expansions, or Alton Gas or Northern Pulp's failing emissions tests, nor have they actually shown any interest in environmental racism or dealt with the biggest challenge of our time: climate change.

My question for the Minister of Environment is this, can he please tell us why addressing environmental issues and climate change is not a priority for this government?

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to serve with this government that has stood up for the environment. We have a very ambitious legislative agenda before us. We have cap-and-trade legislation for which I look forward to the support of the members opposite.

We also have a coastal protection bill that we'll be bringing to the House in this mandate, as well as a biodiversity bill. I can't remember the last time a government has come in with an agenda like that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. ZANN: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the member was not around when the NDP introduced their environmental changes in this House, which were very progressive.

There has been a revolving door of Environment Ministers since this government took office - four ministers in four years, with each departing minister passing on their rubber stamp to the successor. Time and again we've seen Environment Ministers pass off their responsibilities to the department staff or respond to frustrated citizens by regurgitating the phrase, "We're just a regulatory body."

I ask the current minister, is it acceptable that while other governments are making climate change a priority and setting new targets for a more sustainable future for their citizens, this government is still busy trying to decide which is worse for the environment, burning tires or coal?

MR. RANKIN: I note that the member references that we are a regulator, which is indeed the truth. But we also are looking at climate change reductions, and we still continue to lead the country in reductions by 30 per cent. (Applause) (Interruptions)

You can yell "NDP" all you want, but what you didn't do is look at the . . .

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

MR. RANKIN: The members opposite stood by while effluent continued to go into Boat Harbour, which is a historical injustice that happened in this province for four years. The prior government extended it to 2030.

This government will keep our commitment to the First Nations communities. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

### **TIR: CANSO CAUSEWAY - DELAYS**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. The big topic of conversation, the hot topic of conversation this summer in the Strait area, was the delays at the Canso Causeway.

We know that the province is responsible for the swing bridge. It certainly affected motorist traffic, but it also affected boat traffic. In fact, the Coast Guard had to issue notice 12 times in June and July whereby boats could not cross because the bridge could not open at those times. Since then there have been spans of time that lasted two to three days where the bridge could not be swung.

Mr. Speaker, motorists have been affected and commercial boat traffic has been affected. Can the minister provide an update of some improvement for the swing bridge so that people know that this is going to be improved?

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. The care and control of that facility recently transferred from the federal government to the provincial government and we spent a pile of money and I'm very, very grateful for the patience of the people of the province while we had to detour around the existing swing bridge for some length of time until we could rebuild that facility. It has been upgraded, there are obviously some bugs that need to be worked out and we have a special team of people who have been assigned to that to investigate and minimize those delays.

We apologize for the delays, but we're very grateful for the patience the people have shown.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, people are losing their patience and it is time that something be done about this; this is important for our economy. This doesn't only affect the Island of Cape Breton, it affects the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Most of the truck traffic that's going through, a great deal is going to Newfoundland and Labrador. It's a big problem, we need something more on this and I know the minister will work at it, but we do hope to hear more about this before the end of this sitting, a concrete plan for improvement.

My next question is the rotary. The rotary gets clogged up when the bridge is open or stuck open. Has the minister given any consideration to the idea posed of perhaps adding a lane, where necessary, on the routes that are entering into the rotary to keep the rotary clear so traffic that's not intending to cross can get through and make it to its destination – whether it's Port Hawkesbury, Whycomagh, or Inverness?

MR. HINES: Mr. Speaker, again I thank the member opposite for the question and those are very valid observations. The reality is in Nova Scotia, Cape Breton is an island and we have a causeway that gets to it. We have a great sea channel that has to be kept open there too. We need to find the right compromise to enable that to occur.

Out of the realization that these delays that were cropping up after we put the new system in place, then the second problem with the wait times showed up and we're actively looking at ways to alleviate that by diverting some of the traffic around the area.

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

#### **COMMUN. SERV. - SHELburne CO.: OUTREACH WORKERS - PLANS**

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Community Services.

Tuesday a former colleague of mine was on CBC Information Morning talking about the fact that she has become the de facto outreach worker in Shelburne for homeless men. This senior safety coordinator states one of her biggest challenges is that the Nova

Scotia Department of Community Services has no outreach workers in the County of Shelburne to help with homelessness. While Shelburne has many resources there are no facilities, shelters, or organizations that focus on homeless men.

My question to the minister is, can the Minister of Community Services please tell the homeless men of Shelburne what plans she has to address homelessness in that area?

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question and I do want to acknowledge that housing affordability and having appropriate housing is a challenge in many areas across this province. It is a challenge in Shelburne and homelessness looks different in rural areas than it does here in metro.

I do want to assure the honourable member that the Western Region Housing Authority has been working closely with the other members of the Shelburne and Area County Housing Coalition to identify some challenges and solutions, and I do want to let her know that if she's aware of cases where people are not being appropriately housed, we would like to know where they are.

MS. MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for that response. Until my election to this Chamber I was the senior safety officer in Queens County and I know first-hand the personal tragedies that exist in Queens County. Sadly, I do believe that senior safety coordinators whose job is to work with seniors should not be focusing on the work that is not being done by Community Services.

During my time, I discovered a man in his late 50s who lost his home to foreclosure. He was forced to leave his home in the middle of winter and this gentleman was a paraplegic. Many calls to Housing resulted in the response, we simply do not have enough affordable, accessible housing.

Can the minister please tell me her plan to address the need for affordable, accessible housing for those who so need a proper roof over their head in Queens-Shelburne?

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, in fact, last year we were able to invest \$75 million to make sure we in fact do have affordable and safe housing throughout this province. There is no doubt there is a shift in our caseload. What has happened is, in the past, we had a lot of family units in social housing. Now we are seeing a need for single unit. As part of transformation, the work we are doing with Housing Nova Scotia and CMHC, we are moving to make sure we have more units for single adults.

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

[2:45 p.m.]

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - C.B. REG. HOSP.:  
NURSE SHORTAGE - REMEDY**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. It has been brought to our attention that 11 nursing positions at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital's emergency room have been vacant. To fill those position over the summer, the Nova Scotia Health Authority have been using nurses from rural parts of Cape Breton, New Waterford, Glace Bay, and the Northside General. We were told that those nursing positions would go back after the summer and closures were done. This leaves those areas which are already short-staffed worse off.

My question to the minister is, why is the minister taking staff from underserved areas and not hiring new nurses? When will these new nurses be in place?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I appreciate the member's question. I'm pleased to say that I was down in that area, in Sydney, earlier this summer. It was a great opportunity to see the facility and to talk to the nurses on the floor as well as the other health care providers.

I also took the opportunity during that visit to meet nursing students at Cape Breton University. There were a large number of students who came in for meetings before classes started. I had the opportunity to hear first-hand from them their plans and intentions and their desire to come in and work within their community. So we continue to graduate those nurses and hire those nurses when we can, when they are available. That recruitment effort is ongoing, and I think there is a great crop coming from CBU in the very near future.

MR. ORRELL: In the past, the nursing students from CBU have all been offered jobs to work in the Cape Breton health authority. In the last couple of years, that has not been the case. In fact, when my daughter went through there, they were told that not all of them would be offered nursing positions. The Nurses' Union has told us that, under the new hiring program, it takes at least 78 days to fill a nursing vacancy.

The Health Authority tells us the closures are due to a lack of nurses or doctors in our emergency rooms. If we are not filling these positions, it appears to those living in rural Cape Breton that this government is looking for an argument to close our rural emergency rooms.

My question to the minister is, will the minister give Cape Bretoners some clarity and tell them, is he using staff shortages at the regional hospital to make a case for closing emergency rooms in New Waterford, Glace Bay or at the Northside General? Yes or no?



MR. DELOREY: I can assure the member opposite that that is not the case at all. The staffing situation and the availability of nurses to hire are part of the recruitment process. Those vacancies that are there are posted, and the Health Authority continues to do that recruitment. As I had indicated, much of the recruitment for new positions comes in line with the graduating classes out of these programs. As I said, the vast majority of those nursing students who graduate - not just from CBU, but from St. F.X., from the Dalhousie program, and from the Dalhousie program in Yarmouth - do get hired. Most of them do choose to stay here in Nova Scotia. So we will continue to do those recruitments in Cape Breton and across the province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North

### **COMMUN. SERV.: SOCIAL WORKERS - HIRING INFO.**

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: My question is for the minister of Community Services. Data that we obtained through a freedom-of-information request shows that burnout among social workers in child protection and Child, Youth & Family Supports has increased 60 per cent since 2013. High levels of poverty in our province have led to large and more complex caseloads for social workers who are on the front lines of supporting children, youth and families.

Will the Minister of Community Services tell this House how many additional social workers will be hired this year to help address this crisis?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. In fact, what we do know is that our social workers are dealing with a complement of what I would call more complicated cases these days. So that is taken into account when we do look at their caseload. We look at what the caseload is and what standards are, and they meet those standards.

MS. LEBLANC: The 2017 survey of Nova Scotia Government employees found that only 35 per cent of employees at the Department of Community Services were satisfied with their department, down 12 points from 2015. Only 32 per cent said they felt valued as a Nova Scotia Government employee, and I can table that.

Does the Minister of Community Services agree that this government's . . .

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

Just before we go into Government Business, I'd just like to remind everybody that it is strictly prohibited to use electronic devices on the floor of the Chamber during Question Period.

**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take just a few minutes on the debate going into Supply and return to the major topic of the budget from a few days ago, which is the lack of help for the 100,000 Nova Scotians who exist today without a family doctor. The number one issue that Nova Scotians told us, and I believe they told all Parties, in the run-up to this session and, in particular, to the budget, was that they wanted to see the shortage of family doctors addressed in their neighbourhoods, in their communities and across the province. In fact they heard the Premier say that he had heard that message and that there would be new programming, new money, new plans for doctor recruitment because they have been crying out for it.

Mr. Speaker, their hopes were sorely dashed on Budget Day when there was not one red cent in new money for primary care and, literally in government terms, pennies for doctor recruitment. In fact, here we have a Premier and a government that promised a doctor for every Nova Scotian four years ago, watching as the number of Nova Scotians without a doctor increases, now come forward with a plan that is so thin that the first of the 10 doctors from the Dalhousie Medical School that the Premier is referring to will not be in a position to practise medicine for at least six years. Of the 10 of them, when they start to graduate and get licensed six years from now, there is no guarantee that any of them will stay in the Province of Nova Scotia. I hope they all do, some probably will but it is a stretch to say that 10 doctors are coming when the first one is six years away and when none of them actually have to stay in the province. That is such a far cry from what Nova Scotians expected and from what they deserve when there are so many who are going without a family doctor.

Mr. Speaker, every day in the election campaign, every day this summer in our travels, mine and my colleagues' around Nova Scotia, we would hear more and more stories from Nova Scotians who are hurting because they don't have a family doctor. I can only assume that members on the government side are hearing the same thing, whether it's a young, 26-year-old woman in Springhill who came to my office earlier this year, six months pregnant, on her own, scared for her own health and for the health of her unborn child because she could not get a family doctor and was worried she would not get the family care she needed. That should not happen in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, then there are the seniors who have a number of prescription medicines who do not have access to a family doctor to renew those prescriptions. There

has been story after story of our fellow citizens who call up the clinic or the collaborative centre and ask to see a doctor so they can fill a prescription or renew it and are told, we are not taking appointments this month, we are not taking appointments next month either. It's going to be November, the latest one that I've heard, before you can get in to see a doctor. You should go to your pharmacist and ask them for a 30-day top-up.

Mr. Speaker, what good is a 30-day top-up, if you can get one, when there's no doctor for at least 60 days to renew your prescription? People are hurting, people are scared. Their own health is on the line and they are not getting the family care that they need. They're crying out for help.

That's what this budget was supposed to be all about, Mr. Speaker. It was supposed to be about a real move forward to recruit more doctors, a real move forward to maintain the doctors that we have, a real move forward to fix the broken relationship between this government and the doctors of the province. None of that happened. This is a terrible, terrible missed opportunity, in the light of such hardship.

As if the current situation wasn't causing enough stress, now we have the looming threat of the federal Liberal tax increases on our small businesses and on our doctors. That is going to make matters worse. It is going to cost jobs in our economy. It is going to make health care worse, particularly family medicine.

Just this past Saturday, hundreds of Nova Scotia doctors showed up at a rally here in Halifax to express their concerns. They were very clear. They're stressed out as it is. They're overwhelmed as it is. They're trying to pay off their student loans and establish a working life here in Nova Scotia, and that is about to get harder. You would think that this government would take steps to stop this tax increase from happening to at least keep things from getting worse. But that is not happening. In fact, we see that we have a government here that is quite prepared to just pass on the information they're hearing to Ottawa and then stand back and let it happen. If that happens, our health care system is going to go from the current stress that it already obviously has to even worse stress.

There are doctors in this province who are getting calls from American recruiters every day. I tabled in this House a recent survey by Doctors Nova Scotia of their own members. In it, 70 per cent say it is getting harder and harder to practise medicine in Nova Scotia, that they are feeling stressed out overextended, overwhelmed. They don't have enough autonomy to practise medicine because of the dictates of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and they can't take it anymore. That survey is a public document.

You can be sure that people who are paid to take doctors and recruit them to other provinces and states know exactly what's going on. In fact, Mary Jane Hampton, an expert on our health care system, a very wise woman with years of experience, said on CBC Radio the other morning that Nova Scotia in the last four years is getting a reputation as a place that is unfriendly for doctors to practise. That is the last thing we need, Mr. Speaker.

We can't win doctors on pay. We're one of the lowest-paying provinces. We can't win them on taxes. We're one of the highest-taxed provinces. We can't win them on the great relationship they'll have with the Health Authority. That's one of the most broken working relationships in the country. We hope to attract doctors because it's a beautiful place with a great quality of life. But that's not going to get us to where we need to be all by itself.

We actually need to stop the tax changes; fix the broken relationship between this government, the Health Authority, and the doctors of the province; address the real gaps in our health care system; and bring into this House a real plan to recruit more doctors starting in the areas of the most urgent need. That's what this budget should have been about, and it isn't.

The primary health care budget in the Department of Health and Wellness this year is exactly the same as it was in the budget tabled last April. This should be the number one priority. It's got no new money, Mr. Speaker. The government can say they got the message all they want. They can say it's a priority all they want. They show whether it truly is a priority when the budget gets tabled in the House. That's where the proof is. The proof shows that doctor recruitment, family care, and primary health care are not a priority for this government. That is not good enough.

It would have been great if this budget was being referred to by the government and by all sides as the health care budget. We needed a health care budget. We did not get a health care budget. We got a very little change budget.

[3:00 p.m.]

That's why, when we get into Supply, and we are getting into Supply now, we are going to examine very carefully why the government has ignored the number one concern of the people of Nova Scotia. It's why the Department of Health and Wellness is the first department that the Progressive Conservative caucus is calling for examination. It's why we're putting one of the brightest thinkers in health care today - our Critic for the Department of Health and Wellness, the MLA for Cumberland North, a super nurse, and a wonderful small business person - in charge of this effort. Now we have someone who can really dig into where things have gone so horribly wrong and why.

But for right now, I just want to point out, before we get into the details in the estimates, that recruiting doctors in primary health care and family care is not even a priority for the government. You don't need to look through the details to know that. You just need to see whether they put any new money into this great cause or not. The answer is no. For the government to say, well, we have plans for 10 doctors starting six years from now, if they stay, is unacceptable at a time when we have 100,000 Nova Scotians without a family doctor today - not six years from now, not projected in the future, right now. We can't leave them behind.

We in the Opposition won't leave them behind. We won't let this go. We won't stop fighting for them. We won't stop holding the Premier accountable for the promise that he made to them that every one of them would have a doctor. I want to say to the Minister of Health and Wellness that it's great that he's travelling around the province. I hope he sees the hardship in our health care system. But he won't be judged on the number of kilometres he puts on his car. He will be judged on whether he actually makes positive change in health care delivery.

We're bringing forward solutions on this side of the House. I'm very proud that the member for Cumberland North, our Health Critic, brought a bill to this House today to appoint a health outcomes auditor, someone dedicated to making sure Nova Scotians get the straight goods about what's going on in their health care system, someone dedicated to measuring not the number of dollars going in - that's what the budget is for - someone who is dedicated to independently, accurately attesting to and verifying the actual outcome in our health care system. How many people have family doctors? When you go to the hospital, do we make you better? How long do you wait for long-term care? How long do you wait for those important surgeries?

Quite frankly, we can no longer trust this government or the Health Authority to be straight with us about those important things. They have already been caught sending false information out to the people of Cape Breton about family doctors. They've already been called out not just by us but by doctors themselves, like Dr. Mike MacDonald for trying to spin the number of doctors.

You know what? No more spin. That's really what the member's bill about a health outcomes auditor is all about, no more spin. Give us the straight goods. It's only when we can actually get the truth out there that we can begin the road to fixing the problems.

I encourage the Minister of Health and Wellness and I encourage the Premier to drop the smoke and mirrors and actually let the real truth come out. That's how we'll start to repair the broken relationship between the health care providers and the government and, just as importantly, between the people of Nova Scotia and this government because their faith has been shaken. They don't know what to believe.

I'll tell you this. I was actually in Sydney the day that that infamous press release went out that claimed all these new doctors were coming to Cape Breton. You would think it would be greeted with some excitement, but Cape Bretoners knew better. It was greeted with a wave of cynicism. How has this reporting relationship deteriorated so badly that when our own government puts out a release that people are skeptical on day one?

Sadly, it turned out they were right. The release was false. We cannot move forward in our health care system until we get truthful information from this government and a budget that makes their health their number one priority. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

The House will now recess for a few minutes while we resolve into a Committee of the Whole on Supply.

[3:05 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CW on Supply with Deputy Speaker Mr. Chuck Porter in the Chair.]

[7:13 p.m. CW on Supply rose and the House reconvened. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Kevin Murphy, resumed the Chair.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole on Supply reports:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole on Supply has met and made progress and begs leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

### **PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 8.

### **Bill No. 8 - Pre-primary Education Act.**

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

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride and honour and hope for the future that I move second reading of Bill No. 8.

I'll begin by explaining what this bill will accomplish. This bill provides explicit authority to the boards of our school system to operate the pre-Primary programs from one

end of the province to the other. It will ensure there is consistent application in each of our regions.

This bill will also allow boards and the government, particularly the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, to enter into agreements with the child care sector providers to new organizations and other levels of government to ensure the full implementation of this program. I was very pleased to announce earlier this week that government had reached its targets of having 53 pre-Primary classes open and available this week to accept classes.

It was a very exciting moment for me to be with one of these classes who will be graduating in 2031 with, I think, a set of skills that will be instilled in them because of this program. It was really nice to get feedback from the kids in the room and their parents about their encouragement and excitement for this program.

[7:15 p.m.]

It is important that we do ask ourselves why we're doing this. The evidence is absolutely conclusive - there have been multiple studies done in North America and in the U.K. on the effects of pre-Primary education in the lives of our children.

I'll read some excerpts from some of these studies, for the benefit of the House today: Children who attended pre-Primary fared better in reading, writing and number knowledge and higher vocabulary scores. They are more likely to meet provincial academic expectations. Children who attended early childhood education on average perform better than other children, by age 15. In a universal early learning program that is a high quality, play-based environment, guided by well-defined curriculum and trained educators, this is a major game changer.

These are all findings from documents and studies that I will table today. Mr. Speaker, in the U.K. these studies point to clear academic, social and emotional benefits. Pre-Primary education for four-year-olds has also been linked to lower anxiety levels for our children, which we know will go a long way in supporting them.

In the Nordic countries that do offer these programs that are play-based, similar to the one we have, they actually lead the world in literacy, numeracy and science outcomes in later school years. In Nova Scotia, we have a challenge in that there is currently in the regulated child care sector only a capacity to provide these services to about 25 per cent of our students who are pre-school aged. As I mentioned the other day in the House, for four-year-olds specifically, in full-time enrolment that number is actually reduced to about 19 per cent. When you look at the part-time enrolment numbers that is back up to 25 per cent. So no more than one in four of our children are currently accessing these critical early-learning programs, Mr. Speaker, and it is an issue of capacity because we do not have spaces in every region of the province to accommodate this.

I do think that it is important that I also provide some commentary on the opposition that has been presented in this House to this program, Mr. Speaker. The Progressive Conservatives have indicated very clearly that had they been in government, this would not be a program they would continue or see value in. That is extremely problematic. The member for Pictou East has argued in this House that the regulated sector provides a more affordable, accessible option. The fact is that right now that isn't true, because there isn't the capacity to take on the volume of students that we have. There isn't the physical space to do that in our province at this particular time.

I do want to provide some follow-up to that member's question on the numbers - the per student cost of early learning programs in the province. He referenced a \$33 to \$32 comparison, between what the pre-Primary program will cost the government, and the \$33 which families pay to enter into that system. Those numbers are not exactly reflective of the per student cost, Mr. Speaker, because the number that families pay - the cost for each student - is actually at that level because of heavy government subsidies. So the government does provide - all governments have provided funding to our child care sector to the tune now at about \$55 million a year. That is to ensure there are more spaces available for low-income Nova Scotians and that the rates for families stay low and so that we can provide better wages to early childhood educators because they are valuable.

The NDP, I believe, is supportive of this program in principle. They have argued that we should delay the program because of negative impacts to the not-for-profit and private sector, Mr. Speaker. I will say that had we delayed this program, 818 children may not have been able to access these early learning initiatives this year. That's why we were so ambitious with our timelines. We think that is absolutely important that these students are able to access early learning initiatives because we know it will have a positive impact on their lives.

We have moved forward in a thoughtful way on this. We have heard that we couldn't do it, we couldn't find the early childhood educators to actually meet the commitment that we made. That's not true. We heard that if we did, we would put a number of businesses out of business. That has proven to be untrue. Out of 384 early learning or child care providers in the province, there have only been three who have indicated they have had staffing issues. We've reached out to them directly to assist them with recruitment efforts.

We do know that based on the labour market numbers that we have, that there does seem to be enough early childhood educators in the labour market who can actually fulfill the needs in the private and not-for-profit sector as well as in the pre-Primary program, even at its full capacity.

We've had encouraging news coming out of the Mount and NSCC. Enrolment is actually increasing for our early childhood education programs, which is exciting. I think that's because early childhood educators now see a viable future here in the province, with



the institution of this new program. We are expecting another hundred to graduate this year, and they will be of great value to our children and to this program.

We recognize that, once it has reached full capacity, this is going to create an impact on the private sector. There is going to be an adjustment to the business model. We are fully committed to working with them to assist them in this transition to a new reality. We are at the early stages of embarking on a meaningful consultation with that sector. They have already come in and taken a look at the model of consultation we are going to be moving forward with, and the feedback from the sector has been very positive.

I expect some good data to come out of that, which will help us identify how to best move forward with the sector as we move to make this program fully accessible to everybody.

When you're going to make a decision that's going to have an impact on people's businesses, of course you do have to ask important philosophical and practical questions - namely, will this have an immediate benefit to individuals and families, and will there be a long-term benefit to our society and province as a whole? I think the research does speak for itself in both regards.

I know the impact that every single early childhood educator has on the lives of the children they serve, and to whom they provide these supports. (Applause) I know they recognize that only serving 25 per cent of our preschool-age children isn't enough and isn't doing our best to achieve the greatest public good possible in this regard.

I ask that members reconsider their positions and support this piece of legislation. I think we can all agree that a better start for our children means a brighter future for us all. With that said, Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 8, the Pre-primary Education Act, be now read a second time. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about perspective. Let's have a conversation about the public good.

Only seven months ago, teachers, parents, and guardians in this province were marching around this House of Assembly, our beloved Province House, and telling Nova Scotians - telling elected officials - that there are profound structural issues that exist in our public school program.

In many respects, I witnessed those issues in our public school system. For 13 years I saw issues grow in our system that got to the point where teachers felt they had no choice but to speak up. We have some profound issues in our education system. Is it right to add a new program to a system that is already destabilized?

I know that all members of this House want to set our students up for success, but we have to recognize that timing and execution are very important. In my time in the classroom, I saw two rollouts of various programs: the IB program and the O2 program. Time was built in: time to develop the curriculum, time to hire staff, time to build capacity. Why the rush, Mr. Speaker? Would it make sense to build a roof when there are profound cracks in the foundation? That is where we are in our education system. This government is putting politics ahead of good education policy.

We are not opposed to pre-Primary in principle. We are opposed to the sloppy, messy rollout that has happened these past few months. Rushing a program without proper planning, without proper execution, is simply not in the public good. We need to ensure when our students are sent to school, they have the right capacity at the building, that they're not waiting for furniture to arrive. Rather, that they are ready to start learning right away.

The minister said, have a broad perspective. I have a broad perspective. I spent 13 years in the classroom and I know fully well the problems that are being experienced by our classroom teachers, by our administrators, by our program assistants. So let's take a broad perspective. The broad perspective is, we need leadership on this issue. We need the member for Yarmouth to act like a Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and not a minister of political spin.

We need leadership on the inclusion model. MLAs are hearing stories about shortages and staffing when it comes to core French and French immersion. We're hearing stories around our province (Interruptions)

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

MR. HALMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are hearing stories across our province time and time again of some of our most vulnerable learners not being supervised because there's simply a staff shortage. We need to focus on the identified problems, the problems that parents and guardians expect us to do.

We need more supports for mental health. There are identified problems in our schools. We've encouraged our youth to talk about their mental health, but often those supports are lacking. As I've outlined, we need to examine the academic standards we have in our province, we need to review why students are being promoted when they don't have the necessary skills to navigate at the next level. So, I'm taking the minister's advice - let's take a broad perspective. Let us have a broad examination and, if we do a broad examination, the timing is not right to add a new program to our public school system that has been destabilized.

We need profound curriculum reform in our province. We need to have discussion about how it is we're educating our youth, yet we see a government time and again that is putting politics ahead of a good education policy.

The rollout of pre-Primary has been very messy; it has been very sloppy. It has been initiated in a reckless manner coming at the cost of our not-for-profit daycares and coming at the costs of some community groups. If proper planning had been put in place, those issues could have been mitigated and those issues could have been dealt with. Why the rush? Politics ahead of good public policy.

The timing, the motivation, and the execution - these things matter. I've witnessed very good rollouts of changes in our education system. I think we would all agree that the IB program and the O2 program, the Options and Opportunities program, are very good programs that should be preserved and strengthened. Why the rush? Why the hurry to implement this? Would you do renovations if the house was on fire?

Make no mistake - 9,300 teachers in this province stood up and said there are problems. Can we get to work on those identified problems related to the inclusion models, related to our curriculums, related to attendance and behaviour? This province doesn't need more committees; this province needs leadership. This province needs a Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development who understands the grassroots problems that exist in our classroom. I have grave concerns that this is a government and this is a minister that is unaware of those issues.

It breaks my heart and I know it breaks the hearts of other MLAs in this Chamber when we hear stories of students in our classrooms who aren't being challenged, when students aren't given the supports that they need to find success. If leadership is about setting priorities, our priorities must be focused on these identified problems.

[7:30 p.m.]

I understand and agree with the studies and reports that have been done on pre-Primary and how it closes the achievement gap. I will not dispute that. But I openly challenge the manner in which this program is being implemented. I ask again, Mr. Speaker, why the rush? Why is this government moving so quickly to implement a program that, yes, is very important to the development of our youth? It's so important that we have to get it right.

Why is it that there are other examples going back nearly a decade - when IB and O2 were implemented, time was built in to make sure those programs were implemented correctly. Why have they deviated from those precedents? Politics ahead of good public policy.

I believe Nova Scotians have a lot to say on this issue. Nova Scotians want to continue the discussion of their public school program. So let this go to Law Amendments. Let the people come to Province House once again and tell us their views on the education system.

This rollout of pre-Primary has been profoundly messy. It has been profoundly sloppy. It has been poorly executed. Execution is just as important as the idea itself. I learned from serving many years in the classroom. You could have the greatest lesson design, but if you don't have proper execution of that lesson, if you don't have proper timing, or if you don't have proper planning in place, that lesson could fail your students.

That's my greatest concern here, Mr. Speaker, that this program is being rushed. It's being implemented too quickly. There are many examples where we've implemented programs in a more timely manner. Why all of a sudden do they wish to move so quickly?

Let this go to Law Amendments. Let people come to Province House and have their say on the pre-Primary program. Let them have their say on our education system. Parents, guardians, teachers, program assistants, and early childhood educators - let them have a say. Law Amendments is a mechanism in our province that allows the people's voices to be heard.

I agree with the minister: broad perspective is important. It is essential, when we go to add new programming to our system, that we have taken care of the details. The details matter, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you as a former teacher, they really matter. Our concerns, our criticisms, are rooted in the desire to make sure that our kids have the best start possible. I have great concerns, as do my colleagues, that we aren't setting our students up for success.

I encourage this government to put good public policy ahead of politics. Stop playing games with the education system. Remember the thousands of people who were outside of this Assembly. It was democracy in action, a grassroots revolt that reminded the politicians in our province that education belongs to parents and guardians. I advise that we listen.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Thank you to the member for Dartmouth East for an impassioned speech with lots of very good points that I know we'll continue to hear about in the days to come.

I want to take a moment before speaking to this bill just to acknowledge the hard-working senior staff in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. We can criticize this all we want, and we will continue to, but those are the folks who have

been working around the clock for this hasty rollout and I know that they are doing the best they can.

I'll say off the top that we have supported the need for significant investment in early childhood education and child care sector forever - through the campaign, from when we got here, and to that end we will support these amendments despite the fact that they do appear to be a public relations exercise, so I'll just note from a detailed point of view that this legislation has been in force for over a decade. This is not a new Act - we have a pre-Primary Act, it exists. In the time that it has existed successive governments have, in fact, operated pre-Primary programs under the auspices of this Act, via school boards.

Mr. Speaker, there's nothing in here that looks to me like it in fact needs to come before this House, other than to give the minister an opportunity to stand up and tell us how exciting this day is and what a good job he is doing.

The minister said publicly on a few occasions now, that the reason for proposing these amendments was so that future governments could not undo this work without debate in this Chamber. Again, Mr. Speaker, I respectfully suggest that this is somewhat erroneous. The legislation exists. In order to undo it you would come before this House anyway.

I want to get all of that out of the way so that I can take a slightly different tack and talk about the things that I think we should be discussing here, which is the child care landscape as a whole. We've heard a lot about how wonderful pre-Primary education is and, unlike my colleague for Dartmouth East, I don't dispute any of that, I think it's true. But why the focus on four-year-olds, Mr. Speaker? Four to five-year olds, or in this case three and a half to five-year-olds, depending on the age cut-off, I'm not quite sure why they have pride of place at this moment over the zero to three and a half-year olds, whom the minister has said a couple of times just this evening, are under-served by our regulated child care system. There are not adequate spaces. There is not adequate investment. That's what I'd like to talk about for a minute.

The minister says that consultation is coming, that consultation has begun. I won't beat a dead horse by going into what I think about consultation, but suffice it to say that consultation ought to have happened some time ago. In fact, I would point to some consultation that happened in 2016, where there was a review of regulated child care that was initiated by this government. That review identified the following issues: there's a shortage of child care spaces, the fees are too high, the wages are too low, the quality is inconsistent, the structure of the governance - there are issues with that. At the end, it found that the current model of funding child care is not effective or sustainable.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to draw our attention to those issues which have not been solved but have been exacerbated by the introduction of this program at this time in this way.

Just to go into that a little bit more deeply, regulated child care centres were recently in response, I think, to this report, have mandated a wage floor for early childhood educators. They wanted to make sure that that recommendation of this report was met, I suspect, and kudos to my colleagues across the aisle for that. However, when they mandated a wage floor for early childhood educators, they also put a freeze on the fees that they could charge parents. I would point out that, although there has been some investment in this sector, parent fees still by far form the majority of the income that these centres receive.

I think you can see where I'm going, Mr. Speaker. If there's a wage floor and there is an income ceiling, you then have a funding gap, so many of these centres already are running at a deficit every single month and depend on whether or not they happen to have a parent who is good at fundraising in their current crop of kids. This is for those very few children who actually have access to these spots.

These regulated child care centres have been promised and have been waiting for a new funding formula to ease this burden. Now I look forward to discussing this further with the minister in Estimates, but from my initial reading I don't see that formula forthcoming in this budget.

Child care fees in Nova Scotia today are more expensive than university tuition and as the mother of three children, six and under, who was paying regulated child care fees for three children at the time, I can personally attest to that. I many times, in the last four years, have had people ask me the question - which I'll just flag as problematic in a number of ways - can you afford to work? Which I believe is a question that no mother should have to answer. My cheeky answer to that question is, can my husband?

But my real answer to that question is, well, it depends; it depends on what the value of work is. For me, on a personal level, it was important to be able to participate in the labour force, to be able to move forward in my career, to be able to derive meaning from the world around me, beyond just my role as a mother. But I know that I can count myself lucky to have the opportunity to do that, which many, many don't. The median monthly cost for a licensed child care spot in Halifax is \$873. So, that's \$10,000 a year for a toddler, that you're paying. A family of two children in care, \$1,600 a month.

I want to note on the topic of affordability, for government, which my colleagues here have raised, expansion in the early learning and care sector in Nova Scotia specifically would provide more short-term economic stimulus than investing in lots of other sectors of our economy. A 2011 report on Nova Scotia found a GDP multiplier in the early learning and child care sector to be \$2.23. The employment multiplier is 46.8 jobs per \$1,000,000 of initial increase in expenditure. And the economic returns can of course be higher in rural communities.

We haven't seen anything from this government to address any of that and I haven't even gotten beyond my personal story, to the impact on labour force participation for women.

So, to summarize, the benefits of investment in early learning and child care are myriad. Job creation, labour market participation, skilled work force and productivity, GDP and tax revenue, reduction of poverty and income equality, women's equality, early childhood development, social inclusion, immigrant and population retention and growth, rural and regional economic development.

In Nova Scotia, we've heard a lot of numbers and percentages, so I'll throw out some of my own. In Nova Scotia, the regulated child care spaces for children aged zero to two, 11 per cent; 11 per cent of children aged zero to two are in regulated child care spaces. Regulated full- or part-time centre-based spaces for 39 per cent of children aged two to four. So, yes, for 4-year-olds, we are increasing that number. But I ask what happens to all the other children? You know, especially for women wanting to return to the labour force, if they're lucky enough to take a maternity leave, which we know lots of women with precarious work are unable to do, but, if you can, if you can take advantage of that, then what do you do?

It's very difficult to go back to work and these lack of spaces make it that much more difficult. To that end, child care is a service with multiple goals. There are all the child development goals for children that the minister has spoken about, but it's also a program for mothers who rely on child care. Workforce participation of mothers with the youngest child, zero to 5 years old, 78.7 per cent, which is a shockingly high statistic given how few spaces there are. So, what's happening? Well, we've got friends and family, like we have here in Nova Scotia, filling the gaps. But, what's the impact of that? Well, we have people who are then not in the labour force, who are missing out on economic opportunities, particularly senior women. We also, you know, are doubly impacting women who are marginalized or isolated due to poverty, if they're recent arrivals in the country, or any number of other situations where they're not networked in such a way that they can take advantage of those extended families and other situations.

In closing, what is needed is for government to work in consultation with parents and the child care community to implement a universal system of high-quality child care in which children are nourished, parents can enter the workforce and pursue their passions and early childhood educators receive fair wages. It's not just the early childhood educators and the education centres who suffer when we don't have this system. It's the children and the parents too. We need to eliminate the patchwork of grants and subsidies and instead fund a system with an increased number of spaces that can meet the needs of all families. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

[7:45 p.m.]

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I'm more than pleased to rise to speak to Bill No. 8.

Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board said in her Budget Speech an investment in education is an investment in the future generations of Nova Scotians - and I wholeheartedly agree. Since the child care review in 2016, the Liberal Government has pledged to invest \$6.6 million into making child care more affordable for families, improved programming for school readiness, and improved wages for early childhood educators.

We've seen subsidies to parents and guardians and we saw them increase in this time between the review and the present day - we didn't hear that from across the aisle - and we've also developed a world-class curriculum which is being piloted today and it will be the curriculum that is going to be used for the pre-Primary program, and centres that receive provincial grant funding are required now to pay their trained early childhood educators a wage ranging from \$15 to \$19 an hour, depending on the level of their qualifications.

It pleases me to say that this week 818 4-year olds will make Nova Scotia history as they begin their pre-Primary program. It's a free program for early learning and it will give them a good head start.

Nova Scotia has become the third jurisdiction in Canada to offer this type of program. It was ambitious and I agree with the members from across the aisle - it was ambitious. The original commitment of 50 classrooms in 43 locations has been fulfilled and I attribute that to the staff at the department, the deputy minister, and the minister who have shown fabulous leadership.

I've become the ministerial assistant for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and I've spent a bit of time in the department. I've had quite a few briefings and I can tell you I am impressed. I come in from a background in early childhood education and I must say I might have been a little bit skeptical about this "ambitious plan", as some like to call it, but I can tell you the professionalism that was shown by the department and their leaders in this program was remarkable and they reached out to the communities and to the school boards and they've put this in place. And I know we're used to government being slow, aren't we? It always takes so long to get anything done in government and I hear people constantly say that, but look at this, we've put a program together and we should be glad; we should be glad that government is being efficient.

These classrooms are going to be open by the end of this week and the pre-Primary program will be available in communities, province-wide, by 2020. Due to demand,



additional classrooms were added in the Halifax Regional School Board and Chignecto-Central Regional School Board. These classrooms will open in mid-October. This is good news for Nova Scotia.

The minister has said that the research for pre-Primary program shows all the benefits. He talked about it earlier when he gave his opening remarks and it will provide every family with free, equal access to pre-Primary. It levels the playing field for all children and gives them a good head start in learning.

I've seen families who would love to have an early childhood program for their children before they go to school. I know parents who just can't afford it. It's not accessible to them, but every parent has hopes and dreams for their children and one of the biggest dreams every parent has is that their child receives a good education and this will be a start. This will change the landscape for child care in early childhood education here in Nova Scotia and we recognize that.

That's why we want to work with daycare providers, to identify opportunities for them in the new landscape. We will work with the industry to address potential impacts to their businesses. Our shared goal whether you are a private operator or you are in one of these pre-Primary classrooms or you are in the department - our goal is to help more kids get better prepared for Primary.

Unlike regular classrooms, Mr. Speaker, children will learn through play. They choose where they go and what they work on, exploring various activities, from water tables, art, reading and building. They will not be sitting at desks.

I'd like to read an excerpt of a poem that I was given very early in my education as an early childhood educator at Mount Saint Vincent. I checked it out with the Clerk, I can read a portion of it so I'm only reading an excerpt. It's about a play curriculum and what children learn in a play curriculum because I sometimes hear parents say, all they do is play all day. But early childhood educators are finely tuned to creating play opportunities which are actually learning opportunities:

You asked me the value of blocks and other such play,  
your children are problem-solving and will use that skill every day.  
You are asking what's the value of having your children play.  
Your daughter is creating a tower, she could be a builder some day.  
You are saying you don't want your son to play that sissy way.  
He is learning to cuddle a doll. He may be a father some day.  
You are questioning the interest centres, they look just like useless play.  
Your children are making choices. They'll be on their own some day.  
You are worried your children aren't learning and later they'll have to pay  
but they are learning a pattern for learning for they will be learners always.

Mr. Speaker, this definitely was written by an early childhood educator because they know what happens in these pre-Primary classrooms and early childhood programs every day.

Although the 50 new classes will all be in schools, teachers are not expected to assist with the pre-Primary program. Children will be supported by trained early childhood educators and, Mr. Speaker, they are trained. All children participating in preschool programs will have the same access to special needs supports that four-year-olds currently receive in regulated child care. For example, pre-Primary children will have access to the Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention program, a program that provides treatment for young children with autism spectrum disorder.

Pre-Primary will operate the same hours in which the school is located. The schedule is similar to the hours of other grade levels and will help pre-Primary children to move into student life next year.

Pre-Primary is an option, Mr. Speaker. No one is being asked to have to enroll their children. It is free, it is totally voluntary. Nova Scotians can take advantage of it if they choose and I know that many are choosing to do that. Pre-Primary attendance is not required to enter school either.

As an early childhood educator, I am really excited about Bill No. 8. I am excited for children like my granddaughter Ronnie who will be eligible to enroll in a program next year and I can't wait to see the look on her face the night before she goes to big school and when she comes home at the end of the day and I hope I'm present that day in her life because it will really be something.

I'm excited for the families, Mr. Speaker, who cannot access early childhood programs otherwise and there are many. I come from rural Nova Scotia and early childhood programs are few and far between. I know I don't have an early childhood program in my community. Parents have to take their children to Bridgewater or Lunenburg if they want to go to nursery school. It's not accessible for parents. These programs by 2020 will be more accessible and there will be communities who are living today without early childhood programs, they will be there and children from all around Nova Scotia will have these opportunities.

I'm especially excited for the early childhood educators who have waited more than 30 or 40 years to be recognized for their profession. When I started out, I certainly didn't get into it because of the money, because there was no money. Early childhood educators, if they got minimum wage they were lucky, and many worked overtime without any pay. I can tell you, they worked in dark basements, in cold buildings, in church halls. The opportunity was there but they didn't have the nice facilities that public school teachers have in their schools. They had to make lots of adaptations in order to teach their classes

and be creative. There were times there was no money for paper, so early childhood educators learned how to work with nothing and create a wonderful program for children.

When people say about not having all the equipment in one day when they walk into a classroom on starting day, that's not going to bother an early childhood educator, because we've been doing it forever. I can tell you, I've worked on recycled paper many times and now it's the popular thing to do.

It's going to be nice to think that early childhood educators aren't going to have to fundraise for their own salaries now. Their time has come. This is a positive step forward for the early childhood education profession and early childhood educators all over Nova Scotia. This government recognizes their profession, their education, their qualifications and their professional developments that they've done on their own time, on weekends and in the evenings, and not with any pay.

The pre-Primary staff will now be school board employees. Pre-Primary will also create more job opportunities for early childhood educators, especially in rural Nova Scotia. Conversation between labour and advanced education and the department are taking place to ensure that there are training opportunities for upgrading qualifications and for new recruits to the profession. I think the minister spoke about that earlier today, about how some programs are already stepping onboard.

I am so encouraged that this program will be implemented by highly qualified early childhood educators who will be delivering a world-class curriculum. This curriculum recognizes that children learn best through play, and it helps educators to create responsive learning environments for children.

I'd like to quote Professor Christine MacLean from Mount Saint Vincent Child Studies Department:

“Young children benefit from developmentally appropriate play-based early learning programs and this is especially true for the year prior to school entry” - that will answer why four-year-olds. “Through play-based learning, facilitated by qualified early childhood educators, young children have the opportunity to develop skills in early literacy, numeracy, socialization, self regulation, all of which will support their later academic success.”

This changes the landscape for child care and early childhood education and we want to recognize that. Research shows early learning is beneficial. Education-based pre-Primary initiatives like we're putting forward, have been shown to improve social, health and emotional outcomes, and these benefits will last a lifetime. It will also offset child care costs for parents. We know that having pre-Primary programs supports an earlier transition into the Primary classroom.

[8:00 p.m.]

For those of us who were in Public Accounts yesterday, we had a wonderful story about this from the executive director of the program, Ms. Janet Lynn Huntington. She talked about being at this new site - in Sackville was it? - on Monday that members have talked about. She saw a mother there who was so excited and came over to her. She said that her son had autism and she was so excited about this program because her only other opportunity was a program two mornings, but because of his issues with transitions, by the time she got him there, it was time to leave. The child was going to benefit from the time period of this program, from the start at 8:00 a.m. or 8:15 a.m. - whichever it is - till the two o'clock closure. This child will finally have a program that suits his needs, and he won't be rushed. When he goes to school next year, he will know the principal, he'll know the hallways, he'll see friendly faces. These kinds of transitions are so beneficial to four-year-olds, and we know that.

As we continue to roll out the program, we know that in some schools, space for a pre-Primary class is not available. We're going to find that in rural Nova Scotia especially. The demands will be greater than some schools can accommodate. School boards will have options on how to delivery pre-Primary. We have always said that as we continue to expand the program, we will look at alternative arrangements for those areas that lack or have limited space in school to deliver the program. In a situation where a third party arrangement is required, the department would work closely with school boards to determine the best approach and suitable partners to deliver the program. We will rely on the advice of school boards during this process, as they are the most familiar with the potential partners in their own communities.

I would like to thank the members for Dartmouth East and Dartmouth South for their comments. I know they're both passionate about education and early childhood education. But I have to disagree with the remarks that they made. This is the right time. It's not about rushing to get it done. This is the right time. Our children need to have a good start. I have been an EA in a school. I have been an early childhood educator. I know the children coming into Primary. I know what some of those children are lacking.

I have been a Home and School president. I have sat down with principals and asked, what can we do for you as a Home and School? Their big thing is, if only you could do something before they came to school because children are coming in not ready for school. Their biggest issue is that they have no social skills to get along in the classroom environment. They said if there was one thing that we could have, it would be some kind of program that transitions kids so that they are ready for school. It would solve so much - the behavioural problems and the social problems - that interferes with learning in the school. Anyone who is a public school teacher knows what I'm talking about.

We are consulting with the child care sector now. It has started. We're learning what opportunities may exist for the delivery of pre-Primary programs across the province.

Part of that will be working with the sector to ensure that they are sustainable. We want to help them remain sustainable and competitive by funding the sector with the \$53 million per year of federal money that we are expecting to come forward this Fall. We are not forgetting them, Mr. Speaker, not in any way.

The funds we are negotiating with the Government of Canada now are directed to the actions in the child care plan that was spoken about earlier today and will offer assistance to recruit staff as well. I am really excited about how this program will help our children and our families here in Nova Scotia. I am really looking forward to seeing what it will look like in 2020. When we invest in our children, we are laying the foundation for a stronger Nova Scotia, and we are creating more opportunities for all Nova Scotians. Thank you.

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

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I heard a few groans over there. I don't know what that meant but I will be short and to the point.

First, I want to thank the minister very much for what he has done to bring this forward. I am not going to belabour the remarks that were said by my colleague, the member for Lunenburg West, I think she certainly did touch on all the points that were out there.

What I do want to talk about, though, is good government. You know I stand in this House a few times and everybody knows that I am not a person to react to things. I think I have a pretty sensible head on my shoulders, but after listening to the Opposition speak I couldn't sit here, I had to stand up. I didn't plan on it but I do have a couple of things that I'd like to say.

I sat through Public Accounts Committee this week and I listened and listened and there was a lot of discussion about wait, wait, wait. At the end of it, the point-blank question was asked of the deputy minister - and I'll remind everybody that when they are in here at the Public Accounts Committee they are testifying in a place where they are under oath - and she very clearly stated that yes, we are ready, everything is in place, people are hired.

The question about wait, wait, wait, I don't know what they're waiting about and that's where I want to tell them a quick story to finish. I have a community I represent in Nova Scotia that I don't think they completely understand or are lost on - and that's the Village of Weymouth, a village that has had a lot of challenges, a village that has been asking me personally for this kind of service for some time now, a village that represents (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Clare-Digby has the floor.

MR. GORDON WILSON: A village that I don't think the Opposition completely understands. Let me just tell you what that community is like. It's a rural community that has some of the highest EDI scores in Nova Scotia. It's a community that is part of a study that has been going on since 1948.

I hear the Opposition members talk about mental health - do they realize that mental health is tied to poverty, which is tied to education? I don't think they do. It upsets me (Interruptions)

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. If he is going to dictate what we know or what we don't know, I would suggest that he sit down.

MR. SPEAKER: It's not a point of order, that's a disagreement of facts.

The honourable member for Clare-Digby has the floor.

MR. GORDON WILSON: I was surprised, I thought the Official Opposition House Leader over there would know what a point of order is. I want to simply state very clearly that I (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington will come to order.

The honourable member for Clare-Digby has the floor.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to be able to speak for the families of the 15 children who are currently enrolled in Weymouth and I would like to ask the Opposition what I would tell them today if that program wasn't there. I would like to know what to tell those 15 children who would never have the opportunity to move through that. I would like to have that question answered because that's truly the question that we're here facing today - wait, wait, wait. Wait for what? Another 850 kids to miss this opportunity? Come on, what are we missing here?

This is good government and I think good government is the most challenging thing . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

MR. GORDON WILSON: . . . a lot of people are concerned . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg will also come to order.

The honourable member for Clare-Digby has the floor.

MR. GORDON WILSON: I said I'd make it short. I'm trying. I think my point's been made. I want to thank the minister very much again. This is a game changer in my community. For me to go back to that community and tell them, no, sorry, you're going to have to wait another year, and those kids never had that opportunity. I'm sorry, I could never do that and never would, and I feel very strongly that that is being missed on this. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thought I'd take a few moments to speak as well, since we're being told what to think or not to think from the member for Clare-Digby. You know, we have lots of warm debate in this House of Assembly. Sometimes we have some pretty hot debate in this House of Assembly but I don't like being accused of something either, and that's what the member for Clare-Digby was doing. He's putting words in the mouths of people and I don't appreciate that either. I don't appreciate that from that member or any other member, members even on this side. I don't like it when it happens in this House of Assembly. We have said, the member for Dartmouth East has said, quite clearly what our position is.

If it was our choice before the election, before this all happened, that would not have been our focus. Our focus would have been all the other ills that are in our education system. I think the education system was well explained here in the House of Assembly, here at the Red Room, by the thousands of people that came and protested to talk about the things that were right or not right with the education system. A lot of those things had to do with the mental health of our students, the access to mental health services, the access to the health that they needed and that they were not getting. So, maybe the 15 kids who are getting the service - I commend them and I commend those families, because they are going to get what I would say is a valuable program.

Yet, there are hundreds of other students, if not thousands, who need the help of this government and they're not going to get it because you're too proud to look at the other things that are so important in our health care system. So, if you want to prove to us that you really understand what education is, then, it's time to start listening to parents, it's time to start listening to educators and making sure that we put into place the things that are important for my kids, for your kids, and everybody else's. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BRAD JOHNS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's sort of ironic that this is coming forward today, because at about four o'clock this afternoon I got off the phone (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Sackville-Beaver Bank has the floor.

MR. JOHNS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, it's somewhat ironic that this is coming forward tonight, because at four o'clock this afternoon I got off the phone with my 9-year-old's resource teacher who told me that it's going to be up to a year or a year and a half to get the psychological assessment done as to why she's reading at a Grade 1 level instead of a Grade 4 level. Then it's going to take up to a year, maybe a year and a half, to get that assessment done.

You know what? I totally, 100 per cent support the concept of a pre-Primary program but, I tell you, I look at it like this. It reminds me of the analogy of adding on to your house when your roof is leaking and falling apart. We need to fix the system that's there now before we move on to something new, and that's what the problem with this has been, is that there are too many holes in the roof right now that need to be fixed. Once we patch them, once we put some new shingles on, then, I think it's time to look at whether or not we want to do an add-on, but until that time I think we need to fix the house.

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

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I think what's been made very clear tonight is we're all very passionate about our children and our education system, and I do want to thank all the members for their thoughtful commentary in helping us move this discourse forward. I do appreciate the comments from the member for Dartmouth South. They were very thoughtful, and I do see that there is a willingness in that Party to work on this program and ensure that it's to the best benefit of all of us.

[7:15 p.m.]

I want to take the opportunity to provide some commentary in terms of some of the concerns. In terms of this legislation being a PR exercise, I want to assure the House that it is not. There was a pre-Primary bill brought forward previously - ironically, by a Progressive Conservative Government - in 2005. I guess that's not ironic when you consider that the former Minister of Education brought that forward.

The amendments we're making right now are important in order to give authority to the boards explicitly, in law, to enact this program and to ensure that it's applied consistently from one end of the province to the other. Also, what we need that was missing in this bill is the legal and legislative authority to enter into agreements with the child care sector, with community groups, or with other levels of government to ensure the full implementation.



This is not a PR exercise. These amendments are necessary to move forward with this program, and also to protect it and preserve it in law. We know that there are those in this House who are opposed to this, and I feel that if any government - because all of our Parties have had turns here, and that cycle will continue. But if there are any changes in the future that a government has, that they do need to debate those changes here in the House - I believe this program is that important.

I want to also take a few moments to provide some additional thoughts in relation to the commentary from the member for Dartmouth East, who has accused us of moving forward recklessly and sloppily and in a way that has led to the severe damage of the child care sector. None of that is accurate. We have moved forward in a thoughtful way that has minimized the impact to the child care sector for phase one. We have gone to areas where we knew there was a high need, from an EDI perspective, as the member for Clare-Digby mentioned, and where there is a gap in services. That's why less than 1.5 per cent of our child care sector has indicated they've had any staffing issues related to this.

The member has accused me of being the "Minister of Political Spin" - talk about political spin, Mr. Speaker. I've never seen members try to talk their way around the fact that one of their number has said they would get rid of this program if they had the chance. That's political spin, the best I've ever seen in this House.

I want to recognize, though, that there are some significant challenges in our education system, which we all know and have all recognized. I do not believe that we can't tackle all of these challenges together. In fact, I think they are dependent on one another. For the first time, thanks to the leadership of the previous Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development - the current Minister of Finance and Treasury Board - we are now tackling the issue of inclusion. We're having a public conversation about the model and the challenges it has created for our teachers, our students, and our system, for the first time in 20 years. We're doing that because of the courage of that minister, and I thank her for that.

We had a difficult labour dispute with teachers. There's no way of getting around that. But the fact is, all Parties need to choose where they spend their money. In Opposition, I watched as the NDP purchased labour peace by cutting money from education, by raising taxes, by cutting a ferry in Yarmouth that was critical to our economy and the economy of southwestern Nova Scotia. Everybody has the same bill to pay, Mr. Speaker, and while that Party argues that we should add to the debt of future generations, I fundamentally disagree. These things are tied. The single greatest costs to any government that sits on this side of the House, that is privileged enough to see here, are the costs of those collective agreements - 52 cents on every dollar.

Now we have choices to make. We can either cut services or raise taxes, as the previous government did, or we can add on to an increasing, mounting, insurmountable level of debt, which other governments have done as well. But as we have inherited the

costs of decisions made by governments past, so too will future generations, and we refuse to pass on a debt burden to our kids and their kids and their grandkids, because we know we can do better in decision-making in this House.

This is about our kids. If we are to accept the analogy of our education system being a home and being on fire, the member has argued that pre-Primary or early learning would be the roof. How do you put a patchy roof on something that has a weak foundation?

I would argue, in fact, that early learning is the foundation of our education system. With one in four of our children accessing it right now, that's one wall on a foundation for a house. How is a house supposed to stand on a foundation with one wall? We have very different understandings of leadership. I do not believe that leadership is providing embellished commentary or rhetoric. That is not reflective of the facts.

What I believe leadership is, is allowing the highest ambitions that we have for our children to guide the ambitions of this government and our Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. I do want to issue one warning to the Party opposite - if you do not support this program, if you do not see the value of it, I do believe you are on the wrong side of the evidence and I believe you will be on the wrong side of history.

With that, I close debate on second reading of Bill No. 8.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 8. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. We will meet tomorrow, Friday, September 29<sup>th</sup>, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Following the Daily Routine and Question Period, we will move to the Committee of the Whole on Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for adjournment, for the House to rise, to meet again tomorrow, September 29<sup>th</sup>, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 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 at 9:00 a.m.

[The House rose at 8:22 p.m.]

**NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)****RESOLUTION NO. 256**

By: Hon. Keith Colwell (Fisheries & Aquaculture)

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

Whereas Alexa Skeir-Glasgow retired on June 30, 2017 from the East Preston Daycare Centre after 42 years of dedicated service; and

Whereas Alexa has nurtured countless children through her many years of work at the daycare centre; and

Whereas she has made a significant contribution to our community and our province over the years;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House recognize and congratulate Alexa Skeir-Glasgow for demonstrating there is no higher calling than working with children to ensure their growth and development.

**RESOLUTION NO. 257**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Finance and Treasury Board)

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

Whereas Megan Wynn from Belmont, Nova Scotia first became involved in woodsmen events through 4-H and now is a member of the Dalhousie Agricultural College team and a competitor in the Rick Russell Woodsman Competition; and

Whereas the sport requires dedication as the team practices for two hours a day, five days a week for about three and a half months a year; and

Whereas Wynn does not have a large body build, but is physically fit, has developed technique and has great motivation and drive;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Megan Wynn for being the winner of the Rick Russell Memorial Scholarship for 2016-17 and wish her continued success with her sport.

**RESOLUTION NO. 258**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Finance and Treasury Board)

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

Whereas Clinton Harvey, a resident of Valley, Colchester North played fastpitch when he was growing up in St. Croix, Hants County and became involved in umpiring at age 14 and today is one of the few Level f umpires for softball in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Clinton has received opportunities to call games at the highest level, including eight national championships, an ISC world event, a junior girl's world tournament, and a European men's championship in Italy; and

Whereas in the summer of 2017 he called men's fastpitch softball at the Canada Summer Games in Winnipeg and also attended the national under-18 men's softball championship in O'Leary, Prince Edward Island where he supervised other umpires as the deputy umpire-in-chief;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly wish Clinton Harvey continued success in his umpiring.

**RESOLUTION NO. 259**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Finance and Treasury Board)

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

Whereas five years ago Peter and Lorna Scott who had moved to Nova Scotia with their family from Norwich, England bought Big Al's Restaurant, a well-known and popular eating spot in Tatamagouche, Colchester North; and

Whereas since then they have renovated the restaurant, hired more trained cooks, introduced technology to improve wait times and even created a wall where children are encouraged to draw; and

Whereas in May of this year they hosted a celebration to honour Big Al's for being a thriving business and asset to the community for 30 years and also celebrated Al Symes, the former owner, who has been a loyal community supporter throughout his years in business;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Peter and Lorna Scott and the staff at Big Al's Restaurant and wish them continued success.

**RESOLUTION NO. 260**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Finance and Treasury Board)

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

Whereas Tracy Snyder of Debert, Colchester North played catcher for the Free Spirits, a team made up of women from Nova Scotia and Ontario in the women's 45 and over elite softball division at the World Masters Games in Auckland, New Zealand this past Spring; and

Whereas this was amazing because Snyder had not played ball for the last 16 years, even more so because six years previous doctors had found a stage three tumor in her left breast and cancer had spread to her lymph nodes; and

Whereas after many rounds of chemotherapy and radiation, Tracy worked all winter with a personal trainer to prepare herself for this competitions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Tracy Snyder for not only winning gold with her team, but also winning her battle against cancer.

**RESOLUTION NO. 261**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on August 24, 2017, Krista and Gilles d'Eon welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Krista and Gilles on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

**RESOLUTION NO. 262**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on May 7, 2017, Alanna and Tyler Bourque welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Alanna and Tyler on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

**RESOLUTION NO. 263**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on July 9, 2017, Amy Doucette and Jessen Helin welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Amy and Jessen on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

**RESOLUTION NO. 264**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on June 29, 2017, Charlotte Stevens-LeBlanc and Jordan LeBlanc welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Charlotte and Jordan on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

**RESOLUTION NO. 265**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on July 17, 2017, Monica and Jeremy Pothier welcomed their son into the world;



Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Monica and Jeremy on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

**RESOLUTION NO. 266**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on April 16, 2017, Shelby Peters and Matthew Corporon welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Shelby and Matthew on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

**RESOLUTION NO. 267**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on August 5, 2017, Veronica Parker and Gerard Muise welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Veronica and Gerard on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 268**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on June 7, 2017, Sara Nickerson and Charles Jacquard welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sara and Charles on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 269**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on June 24, 2017, Renette Bourque-McLaughlin and Yan McLaughlin welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Renette and Yan on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 270**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on August 7, 2017, Marissa and Ryan Bourque welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Marissa and Ryan on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 271**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on April 16, 2017, Deidre and Leo d'Entremont welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Deidre and Leo on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

**RESOLUTION NO. 272**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on July 12, 2017, Simone and Julien Surette welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Simone and Julien on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

**RESOLUTION NO. 273**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on May 14, 2017, Tiffany Nickerson and Jordan Doucet welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Tiffany and Jordan on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

**RESOLUTION NO. 274**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on June 24, 2017, Jessica and Jeremiah Nickerson welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jessica and Jeremiah on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

**RESOLUTION NO. 275**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on July 12, 2017, Jenny and Martin d'Eon welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jenny and Martin on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

**RESOLUTION NO. 276**

By: Hon. Christopher d'Entremont (Argyle-Barrington)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on April 20, 2017, Cassandra and Martial d'Entremont welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Cassandra and Martial on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.