



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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First Session

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2017

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2017

Sixty-third General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr. Chuck Porter

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table some petitions from a number of constituents of Colchester County, with the operative clause reading:

“We oppose the burning of tires for fuel at the Lafarge Brookfield cement plant. We call upon the Nova Scotia Legislature and the Minister of Environment to reject the current proposal by Lafarge and ban tire burning in Nova Scotia.”

There are 2,816 signatures in total, of which 635 are on this hard copy, Mr. Speaker, and I have affixed my signature.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition on behalf of the residents. The operative clause is:

“Whereas the residents of Long Island and Brier Island access their homes via highway 217 and Government ferries at Petit Passage and Grand Passage, we the citizens of Digby Neck, Long Island and Brier Island ask the Provincial Government to eliminate the tolls on both Government ferries.”

Mr. Speaker, I have affixed my signature. There are 609 signatures to this.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 290

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

Whereas one in five Canadians is living with mental illness; and

Whereas mental health is important to everyone, which is why we're always looking for ways to improve how mental health care is delivered and accessed to Nova Scotians; and

Whereas October 1st to October 7th is Mental Illness Awareness Week, which focuses on raising awareness about mental health illness and promoting conversations among Canadians so that no one feels alone on the road to recovery;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize October 1st to October 7th as Mental Illness Awareness Week, and do what they can to support this cause and keep the conversation going.

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.

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction first.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw everyone's attention to the east gallery where we have with us today Mark Bannerman, directeur général de l'office des Affaires acadiennes et de la francophonie; aussi Melany Close, senior translator; and Sylvain Filion, traducteur. Both are part of the dedicated team of translators at Communications Nova Scotia qui fassent un travail essentiel pour que notre gouvernement puisse joindre et servir la communauté acadienne et francophone de notre province.

They both do something that is very crucial in ensuring that our government can connect and serve the Acadian and Francophone community of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask everyone to please welcome them to the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 291

HON. LENA DIAB: Monsieur le Président, à une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante :

Attendu que l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies a adopté à l'unanimité une résolution reconnaissant le rôle de la traduction professionnelle dans l'union des nations et dans la promotion de la paix, de la compréhension mutuelle, et du développement; et

Attendu que le 30 septembre a été déclaré Journée mondiale de la traduction des Nations Unies; et

Attendu que le gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Écosse compte sur le travail ardu et sur le dévouement d'une équipe spécialisée de traducteurs professionnels afin d'offrir des

services gouvernementaux à la communauté acadienne et francophone ainsi qu'à d'autres communautés linguistiques et aux nouveaux arrivants dans la province;

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les députés de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi pour remercier tous nos traducteurs et pour souligner l'importance de leur travail qui nous permet de nous rapprocher des Néo-Écossais et de mieux les servir.

Monsieur le Président, je demande l'adoption de cette résolution sans préavis et sans débat.

Maintenant en anglais - in English now.

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

Whereas the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution recognizing the role of professional translation in connecting nations and fostering peace, understanding, and development; and

Whereas September 30th was declared United Nations International Translation Day; and

Whereas the Government of Nova Scotia relies on the hard work and dedication of a devoted team of professional translators to make government services available to our Acadian and Francophone communities, but also to other language communities and newcomers to this province;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking all of our translators and acknowledge the importance of their work in allowing us to connect to and better serve Nova Scotians.

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 Labour and Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 292

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

Whereas October is Canada's Healthy Workplace Month, a time to celebrate and increase awareness of the need for a comprehensive approach to workplace health; and

Whereas this month provides an opportunity for us to reaffirm our collective commitment to help organizations create healthy workplaces with benefits for employees and themselves; and

Whereas it is my hope that by promoting and celebrating healthy workplaces this month and throughout the year we can help Nova Scotians improve their physical and mental well-being and continue the momentum in this province to make workplace health a priority every day;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House applaud the tremendous efforts of the many Nova Scotians who have and continue to build and create healthy workplaces, and encourage all citizens to make and help keep their workplaces healthy.

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 Education and Early Childhood Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 293

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

Whereas the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions is composed of nine teachers, a guidance counsellor, a parent, a student, and co-chaired by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union; and

Whereas the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions is a first for our province and has already acted to reduce the demands on teachers and improve the learning conditions for our students; and

Whereas the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions has invested funding that has brought almost 140 more new teachers into our classrooms;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize the important work of the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions and the dedication of its members - teachers Sean Barker, Mélanie Belliveau, Cheryl Bourque-Wells, Michael Cosgrove, Jennifer Field, Reagan O'Hara, Kerri Lynn Power, Cheyanne Tolliver, Denise McKean - guidance counsellor Pamela Doyle, parent Amy MacKinnon, Grade 10 student Myles Fox, and co-chairs Sandra McKenzie with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Joan Ling with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.

[1:15 p.m.]

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. 19 - Entitled an Act to Amend Various Consumer Protection Statutes. (Hon. Geoff MacLellan)

Bill No. 20 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 217 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Income Tax Act, to Prevent an Increase in Provincial Income Taxes Payable by Small Businesses as a Result of a Federal Tax Initiative. (Hon. Jamie Baillie)

Bill No. 21 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 1 of the Acts of 1994-95. The Environment Act. (Ms. Lenore Zann)

Bill No. 22 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 32 of the Acts of 2014. The Health Authorities Act. (Ms. Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

Bill No. 23 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 7 of the Acts of 2007. The Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act. (Ms. Kim Masland)

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 Colchester North.

MEMBER FOR PRESTON-DARMOOUTH: 70th BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

HON. KAREN CASEY: I rise today to recognize one of our colleagues, who celebrates his 70th birthday.

The member for Preston-Dartmouth has been a tremendous asset for this community for 24 years. In 1993 he began his political career as MLA for Eastern Shore, and was re-elected in 1998. In 1999, the member was elected to the Halifax Regional Municipal Council, but soon returned to the world of provincial politics in 2003 as MLA for Preston.

Mr. Speaker, 20 years of re-election is no easy feat. It is clear that his constituents appreciate him and trust him to represent their community's interests.

Serving as Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture for the past four years, he has made long-lasting relationships with many people from these industries. His commitment to growing Nova Scotia's economy through these sectors and his passion for helping people succeed should be applauded.

I ask members of this House of Assembly to join me in thanking the member for Preston-Dartmouth for his service and in wishing him a very happy 70th birthday. (Standing Ovation)

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

SARMU (40th YEAR): SURRETTE-MUISE, JOANNE - TRIBUTE

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: SARMU is into its 40th year. The show began in 1978 at SAR High School, and organizers kept its name over the years even though the school closed in 2001.

This year André Surette of Ste. Anne du Ruisseau, a member of the last class who graduated from SAR, was one of the producers for this reunion. He chose to dedicate the whole show to Joanne Surette-Muise, who passed away in December 2016.

André was assisted by producers Renette Bourque and Alexa and Lauren d'Entremont, as well as unofficial producer Karmanda Murphy.

This was a great tribute to the school, and also to our friend Joanne Surette-Muise, who is still missed today.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for that, and of course, we pass on our best wishes to SARMU.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS: FOOD SECURITY - UNACCEPTABLE

HON. GARY BURRILL: I rise today to draw attention to the recently-released First Nations Food, Nutrition and Environment Study. This report shows that across the Maritimes and Newfoundland and Labrador, 31 per cent of Indigenous households are food-insecure. This is significantly higher than the rate of food insecurity for the general population in Nova Scotia, which is still, shamefully, the highest in Canada at 17.3 per cent.

Nova Scotia has the fastest-rising food bank use in the country, which has increased by 20 per cent since the present government took power. Households living on reserves face additional barriers to food security, such as limited access to traditional foods or clean water.

Ensuring all Nova Scotians have secure access to food must be a top priority, and I call on all members of the House to join me in recognizing that is unacceptable that almost one-third of Indigenous households do not.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

WALDEN VOL. FIRE DEPT.: CLARENCE & CARROLL DOREY - RECOGNIZE

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Many fire departments rely on both members and volunteer firefighters to ensure that the needs of our local fire departments are met. It is vital that these volunteers are recognized and thanked for their contributions to ensuring that our communities remain safe.

I would like to recognize long-time members of the Walden Volunteer Fire Department, known to many in the Mahone Bay area as the “Dorey Boys.” At ages 89 and 92, Clarence and Carroll Dorey have been members of the Walden Volunteer Fire Department for more than 25 years.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and all members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing Clarence and Carroll Dorey for their long-time membership with the Walden Volunteer Fire Department and thank them for their contributions to our community.

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

LAYBOLT, PRISCILLA: COMMUN. DEDICATION - THANK

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Today I would like to thank Priscilla (Pat) Margaret Laybolt for making three crocheted beds for the homeless out of plastic bags that she got from the shopping centres. Pat is 90 years old and lives in Cole Harbour.

The process for making these beds requires many long hours cutting plastic bags into strips, tying the strips together, and then crocheting the pattern of the bed. Each bed contains over 1,000 plastic shopping bags.

She first came across the idea from a YouTube video and was inspired to help the homeless and recycle and repurpose plastic shopping bags. Pat anticipates that these beds will each serve a homeless person in our community and keep them off the ground and dry.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Legislature to please join me in thanking Pat for her compassion and dedication to our community and for those less fortunate.

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

MS SOCIETY: CONTINUING WORK - CONGRATS.

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the accomplishments and hard work of the MS Society in research and innovation into multiple sclerosis.

I was recently invited to attend a multiple sclerosis research tour hosted by the MS Society of Canada, Atlantic Division. Accompanied by the Minister of Immigration and the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, we visited the Dalhousie Life Sciences Institute and had the opportunity to look inside the MS lab of Dr. George Robertson, which is funded in part by the MS Society. Dr. Robertson's work is focused on finding ways to block some of the damaging events responsible for the neurodegenerative disorders like MS.

We also visited the Maritime Brain Tissue Bank with Dr. Sultan Darvesh, where scientists and researchers are using brain tissue to understand the causes and mechanisms of neurodegenerative and neurodevelopmental diseases like multiple sclerosis. Along the way we witnessed some of the province's best and brightest young minds who are helping to find the cause and cure for MS, another demonstration that Nova Scotia provides a great home for innovation and forward- thinking.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating the MS Society for their continuing work.

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

ROBERTS, WILLIE: HEALTHY LIFESTYLE REMINDER - THANK

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, life is busy and sometimes we forget how important our health and well-being is. Willie Roberts from Baddeck is a role model we all can learn from. Willie is an 87-year-old "young gentleman" who walks and cycles every day. Willie retired from Nova Scotia Power approximately 28 years ago. He decided he needed to keep busy to stay healthy. For the summer season, he usually cycles between 15 and 20 kilometres a day; in the winter, he walks about eight or nine kilometres.

I rise today to ask all members of this Legislature to join me in thanking Willie Roberts for reminding us how important it is to stay healthy, and wish him many more years of many more miles of travel, and a long and healthy life.

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

LITTLE DYKE: GRAVEL PIT EXPANSION - UNACCEPTABLE

MS. LENORE ZANN: A local citizens' group in Little Dyke have filed a formal complaint with the Nova Scotia Ombudsman, asking them to look into their concerns about the lack of support from the provincial government in their bid to stop a proposed gravel pit expansion near Little Dyke, the Glenholm Pit No. 4 Aggregate Extraction Project owned by the John Irving Company. Their concerns centre around environmental issues related to area water sources and protected bird life, as well as noise disruptions on a 24-hour basis.

I met with these citizens last week, and it is my opinion that they have very good reasons for their concerns. The residents state they have received no public consultation and have received no response to their requests to meet with the minister.

The company plans to expand the existing operations from 3.9 hectares to 75 acres. Madam Speaker, this is not acceptable.

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

EAGLE BEACH CONTRACTORS - WELL WISHES

MR. BEN JESSOME: I'd like to recognize the Webbink family and Eagle Beach Contractors of Hammonds Plains for the exemplary work they do throughout the province and beyond. Eagle Beach is a family owned and operated marine construction company. When founded in 1984 Eagle Beach began with a single pickup truck and a handful of tools for small jobs and simple wharf repair.

Today that small beginning has developed into a fleet of marine equipment and three crews travelling the coast, completing projects of all sizes. They have various avenues of expertise, including wharf construction, marine construction, floating docks, and marine salvage. They also provide engineering services, designing marine structures - an example being the sea bridge that was a popular addition to the Halifax waterfront this summer.

We are very proud to have Eagle Beach as part of our community and for what they have to offer in our province. I would like to ask that all members of the House please join me in thanking them and wish them well in the future.

[1:30 p.m.]

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

MS. ALANA PAON: Madam Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

MADAM SPEAKER: You may.

MS. PAON: I draw the attention of the members to the west gallery, to the fine lady and the extraordinary gentleman who are in the front row, Mr. and Mrs. MacLean - Don and Rosemary. They enjoy being called by their first names, although I probably will never get to chat with them in the first person in that way. Mr. and Mrs. MacLean are from Cape Breton-Richmond, from Isle Madame specifically. They are an extraordinary couple, huge role models in my life, and I am so pleased to have them here with us today. They continue to volunteer their time to the community - endless hours - in the Scouting movement and the Guiding movement. They have touched so many people's lives including my own, and I would not be the person that I am today without them. They're like second parents to me. Please stand and give them a round of applause. (Applause)

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

**STRAIT AREA SOCCER CLUB (GIRLS UNDER 13/UNDER 15):
GOLD MEDALS - CONGRATS.**

MS. ALANA PAON: I would like to congratulate the Strait Area Soccer Club. The under-13 and under-15 girls' teams both captured gold medals in the Nova Scotia Provincial Championships. The under-13 team was successful with a 3-0 win over the team from East Hants. The under-15 team had a 1-0 victory over Upper County (South Shore) to earn their gold medal. It is also fantastic to hear that over the summer, more than 100 young players participated in a program that is focused on children aged 3 to 10. It is because of dedicated coaches and parents that these opportunities can be provided to the youth of our communities.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

CENTRE FOR LOCAL PROSPERITY: ACTIONS - THANK

MS. LISA ROBERTS: I have been struggling to find meaning in the work we do in this House. I can still hardly believe that the words "climate change" didn't appear in the Throne Speech. On transitioning to a low- or no-carbon economy, the message I hear from the government is, Nova Scotians have done enough; and from the Official Opposition, too much, in fact. Meanwhile, I have this pent-up sense of anxiety and urgency to work together to do more.

So, I am grateful to the Centre for Local Prosperity, which last weekend brought people together at the Thinkers' Lodge in Pugwash, to get to that work. A friend who attended shared this thought afterwards: ". . . the kind of radical change that we need to avert catastrophic climate change is going to come from municipalities and local communities, not the feds or provincial government." Thank you to the leaders outside this House and in communities across Nova Scotia for giving me hope.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

**BIRCH COVE BAPTIST CHURCH: TIDAL IMPACT
- PARTICIPATION RECOGNIZE**

MS. RAFAH DICONSTANZO: I rise today to recognize Birch Cove Baptist Church and many other churches in the area, for their planning and participation in a youth engagement event known as Tidal Impact. Every other year, Tidal Impact is hosted in Nova Scotia, bringing youth from various churches in the Maritimes together, providing them with volunteer opportunities in the community. This year, the event had spread even to the South Shore and had over 730 people in participation. Youth and their leaders participated in various activities, such as picking up garbage, building playgrounds, serving meals in food shelters, and visiting seniors at retirement homes. This week-long event was life-changing to many of those who received help.

Madam Speaker, I ask that members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing those who participated in and planned Tidal Impact and their contributions to communities across the province.

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

DOCTOR SHORTAGE: STATS. - SHOCKING

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Today, many Nova Scotians don't have a doctor. The polling firm CRA says 13 per cent of Nova Scotians don't have a doctor. The population of Nova Scotia is 945,842 people, so 13 per cent of that number is more than 122,000 people. In March, Statistics Canada said 106,550 Nova Scotians don't have a family doctor - three times the number the Minister of Health and Wellness is desperately clinging to. Just last week, the Canadian Institute for Health Information said Nova Scotia was the only province in the country to see a net loss of doctors last year.

These are all shocking numbers, Madam Speaker, especially since this Liberal Government promised that every Nova Scotian would have a family doctor. No matter which number you choose, too many families don't have a doctor.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

DARTMOUTH SENIORS SERV. CTR.: ANNIV. (41st) - CONGRATS.

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise today during Seniors Week to recognize and congratulate the work of my neighbour, the Dartmouth Seniors Service Centre on their 41st Anniversary. In particular, and in a time when many seniors live in isolation and without doctors, as my colleague just pointed out, I'd like to recognize five long-time supporters of the centre that will be celebrated this year: Gloria McCluskey, Harry Chapman, Marilyn Keating, Terry Cooper, and Ellen Latter.

Hot meals and meal delivery, physical fitness and art programs, transportation to medical appointments and other errands, computer access, and a plethora of social events are a few examples of what the Dartmouth Seniors Centre has been providing to the Dartmouth community and beyond for decades.

As you know, Madam Speaker, isolation is one of the most insidious threats to the well-being of our seniors. Please join me in congratulating the Dartmouth Seniors Service Centre for 41 years of breaking the isolation and serving seniors throughout our community.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

ELSSNER, BIRGIT: POWERLIFTING CAREER - SUCCESS WISH

MR. KEITH IRVING: Madam Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to Birgit Elssner a world-class powerlifter from Wolfville. Ms. Elssner is a relative newcomer to the sport but through a tremendous amount of hard work, dedication, and natural talent, she has quickly developed into one of the premier competitors in the country in her age and weight class.

In 2016, Birgit captured three national titles at the Canadian Powerlifting Pro Nationals championships and placed a very impressive second in her category at the World Powerlifting Championships, where she had the honour of being part of Team Canada, truly amazing achievements. In addition to powerlifting, Birgit participates in strongwoman events where she is challenged with a variety of tests of strength, including pulling trucks.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Birgit on her outstanding powerlifting career thus far and in wishing her continued success. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

CONNORS TRANSFER LIMITED: VOL. EFFORTS - THANK

HON. PAT DUNN: Madam Speaker, there are many ways companies can help their local communities. Connors Transfer Limited from Pictou County is a responsible corporate citizen that promotes the greater good rather than focusing only on profit.

For many years, Connors Transfer Limited has been committed to improving and helping different organizations. Their volunteering and charitable donations have provided support to many organizations in Pictou County. Connors has been a saviour for transporting books from across the country to a depot in Pictou County. These books are used for the Reading Challenge, which began in 2006, and has proven to be extremely successful. Without Connors' generous assistance, this very valuable reading program would not exist.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Connors Transfer Limited for their dedication and commitment to this educational program. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

MAPLE HILL MANOR - BUDGET CUTS

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: This week marks Seniors Week in Nova Scotia and I am proud to have Maple Hill Manor in my constituency. Sadly, the seniors of this facility are not treated with the respect that they so deserve.

Madam Speaker, over the last two years they have been faced with budget cuts in excess of \$48,000. As well, staff and community have been faced with the challenge of fundraising to provide lifts for safety for patients and those who work there.

Madam Speaker, this is sadly wrong. This is wrong for seniors who have to live there and for staff who must work there. This is wrong today and, in fact, every day in Nova Scotia.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**MACDONALD, JAKAH: PRIDE FLAG-RAISINGS
- EFFORTS ACKNOWLEDGE**

HON. MARK FUREY: Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to participate in two Pride flag-raising ceremonies in my constituency this summer. Bridgewater resident Jakah MacDonald, along with the help and support of his mother, Coleen O'Neil, have worked tirelessly to organize and promote the two events in the Town of Bridgewater and the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg.

It was wonderful to see so many community members come out in support of the LGBTQ community. The local business community stepped up to offer contributions to ensure the Pride flag-raising was a fantastic celebration.

I would like to acknowledge Jakah's hard work and determination in ensuring that the LGBTQ community is recognized and celebrated. Congratulations on two wonderful flag-raising events. I look forward to joining him again next year.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**DAWE-WEBB, HELEN:
DARTMOUTH SKATING CLUB - SUCCESS THANK**

MR. TIM HALMAN: Much like politics, amateur sports rely heavily on volunteers to make sure that things happen.

I rise today in recognition of a dedicated volunteer in Dartmouth East, Helen Dawe-Webb. Helen has been president of the Dartmouth Skating Club for many years. She grew up skating in the club and returned as president when her own daughter enrolled in lessons.

Helen played a substantial role in the rebranding of the annual Skate Dartmouth competition, renaming it the Robert McCall Memorial, in honour of Dartmouth's favourite skating Olympian.

I would like to thank Helen for all that she has done to help make the Dartmouth Skating Club one of the most successful figure skating clubs in the province.

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

**MAKKAR, DR. ANIL: SPORT SAFETY
- ACHIEVEMENT ACKNOWLEDGE**

MS. LENORE ZANN: I would like to congratulate Dr. Anil Makkar, a Truro dentist who, with his partners, is currently in the process of finalizing a deal with members of the CBC reality show Dragon's Den. Not only did they get an offer from one dragon for their New Age Performance Mouthwear, a mouthguard for sports, but they had offers from all six dragons. In the end, the partners settled on a deal with three of them for \$100,000 and 7 per cent of the company's royalties over a seven-year period.

Dr. Makkar notes that his real interest extends beyond the monetary results, but rather to change the way that sports are played - safely. That is yet another example of the excellence, creativity, and vision that is putting our Community of Truro in the news and on the map.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

ISSA, JAD: VOL. EFFORTS - THANK

HON. KELLY REGAN: I would like to tell the House a bit about one of the super young volunteers we have in Bedford.

Jad Issa has been volunteering at the Bedford Public Library for two years. He has taken on a variety of roles, including working as a summer program assistant. Jad is fluent in both English and Arabic so, as you can imagine, his linguistic abilities have been of enormous benefit to the Bedford Library in its work with newcomers to Nova Scotia.

Jad is very mature, and he is a team player who can also self-direct. He's comfortable in a room full of small children, assisting in a program with other teen volunteers his own age, or teaching a senior citizen how to use a computer. Jad also volunteers as a peer tutor at Charles P. Allen High School, and he is a peer tutor for Syrian refugees as well. He's also involved with the Me to We "We Scare Hunger" campaign and the "Light the Night" leukemia and lymphoma walk.

Jad Issa is an impressive young man. I would like to ask the members of this House of Assembly to join me in thanking him for making a difference in our community - I must say I can't wait to see what this young man does when he grows up.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. Earlier, when I was doing my statement about doctors and the lack of doctors on Cape Breton Island, the former Minister of Health and Wellness, the current Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, said that 91 per cent of Cape Bretoners had a doctor. I would ask that he table that information . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: This is not a point of order.

MR. MACLEOD: . . . so that it can be shared with the 10,000 Cape Bretoners . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: This afternoon, when the members came into the Chamber, they received notice of the Law Amendments Committee taking place tomorrow evening at six o'clock. Maybe that might be within the rules of the way this committee is constituted, but that's pretty short notice for a Law Amendments Committee meeting - it's less than 30 hours for Nova Scotians from Yarmouth to Sydney with an interest in these bills, particularly the pre-Primary bill.

I just think that this House, if they're really interested in using the Law Amendments Committee for the purpose that it's intended, which is to let Nova Scotians have their say on legislation before this House, then they should give them proper notice. If this is within the rules - I understand the chairman of that committee could have come in and said the committee is going to meet at two o'clock today. That would also be within the rules, but it would not be fair to Nova Scotians.

I just think this House should look at the rules and properly advertise Law Amendments Committee and make sure that Nova Scotians . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. Member statements are not to deal with committee matters.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

[1:45 p.m.]

**LINDSTROM, DAVID - GORDON B. ISNOR MANOR:
BARBEQUE - APPRECIATION**

MS. LISA ROBERTS: In July, I spied a hand-written sign for a community barbeque behind the Gordon B. Isnor - that's a 16-story Metro Regional Housing building in Halifax Needham. My constituency assistant tried to call the number on the poster but it was out of service, so I really didn't know what to expect but we put it in my calendar.

Well, there was a kicking R&B band with three vocalists, people dancing, about 100 neighbours and a barbeque. A man in a scooter did laps through the crowd, offering freezees. I biked out for some hot dog buns when they ran out, but otherwise I just enjoyed myself tremendously.

Afterwards I got an email from David Lindstrom thanking me for my support. But this one is all his. For 10 years, Mr. Lindstrom, who lives in the building, has organized a barbeque just to bring his neighbours together and make them happy. Please join me in expressing our appreciation.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**WEST KINGS DIST. HS: AMANDA FORSTER MEM. TOURN.
- ORGANIZERS THANK**

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Over 10 years ago, tragedy struck the communities of Kingston and Greenwood, with the sudden and unexpected passing of Amanda Forster, a Grade 9 student and athlete at West Kings District High School.

Prior to her passing, Amanda became a West Kings Wolverine, quickly establishing herself as a skilled member of the high school girls soccer team. A natural athlete, Amanda's abilities were of no surprise to those who knew her as both a member of the Kingston Greenwood soccer club and a competitive level gymnast.

In honour of Amanda's memory and her passion for sports, a soccer tournament in her name was established and on the 14th of July 2017, her friends honoured her with the 10th annual Amanda Forster Memorial Tournament in Greenwood.

I'd like to close by recognizing the community engagement and leadership displayed by Alxys Chamberlain and Amy Spurrell, who organized this year's tournament in commemoration of the life and the memory of a beloved friend.

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

CIOE COMMUN. RADIO: ROBSON, JIM - THANK

MR. BRAD JOHNS: I rise today to congratulate Chairman Jim Robson in the CIOE Community Radio for its opening of its art gallery. The gallery offers local and other Nova Scotia painters the opportunity to show off their work to a greater audience in the community.

CIOE Community Radio is a volunteer-driven, not-for-profit radio station, located in Sackville area whose mission it is to deliver information, education, stimulating and entertaining programming to its listeners.

The station produces 78 original programs every week and is broadcast by the radio to HRM. In addition, CIOE can be heard provincially and globally, through the internet. I'd like to thank Jim Robson and CIOE Community Radio for helping promote local artists and providing cultural access for the residents of Sackville and Beaver Bank.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

SHAE, BART: BLUENOSE II JOURNEY - CONGRATS

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: I rise to recognize Bart Shae of Pictou for being accepted for the second time as a deckhand on board *Bluenose II*. Bart's journey aboard this Nova Scotia vessel began in the early part of April when the tasks of repairs and painting began. He stayed on for sailing training, and then to sea.

The season ends in October. Mr. Shae is obviously no stranger to hard work, love of history, and the sea. Mr. Shea was fortunate this past summer to return to his hometown of Pictou on *Bluenose II* during the Tall Ships Festival. He was ready to greet neighbours, friends and visitors with a kind smile, a welcome aboard, and, a tour of the vessel with a history lesson.

I extend my appreciation and congratulations to Bart on a job well done and for taking part in keeping our history flourishing.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

**CONRAD BROS. LTD. - CONRAD, KIM:
COMMUNITY SUPPORT - CONGRATS**

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I would like to recognize Kim Conrad, owner and president of Conrad Brothers Limited, which the family started in 1956. Kim was recently designated Citizen of the Year 2017 by the Lions Club of Dartmouth for his meaningful involvement in many community organizations and initiatives.

Kim credited his family for instilling in him the golden rule as a code by which to live and support others. Kim, for example, recently raised \$140,000 for the Dartmouth General Hospital. As an active member of the Foundation of Canada, Shriners and the Owls Club, he continues to contribute to significant community work.

I'd ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Kim Conrad on his success as a businessman and for his ongoing support for the community.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

BRUCE, CYNTHIA: PH.D. - CONGRATS.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Madam Speaker, I rise in my place to congratulate Dr. Cynthia Bruce of Kentville. It has taken six years of hard work but on May 15th she achieved her long-time goal and became the first person to receive a Ph.D. from Acadia University. This is the first time in 178-year history that Acadia has presented scholars with this prestigious honour. Her dissertation, *Precarious Possibilities: Disabilities, Self-Advocacy and University Learning*, involved interviewing 30 students with disabilities from three Nova Scotia universities about their experiences as they tried to set up accommodations and the faculty members who helped them succeed.

Madam Speaker, I commend Ms. Bruce on her passion surrounding disability activism and her historic accomplishment.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

**CARMICHAEL, BRENDA/BROWN, DAVID:
GYMNATION - RECOGNIZE**

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Madam Speaker, Brenda Carmichael is a trained and certified recreational and competitive gymnastics and trampoline coach and personal trainer, with over 30 years experience. Her friend David Brown is a technical director for Gymnastics Nova Scotia, and have been providing trampoline and tumbling classes for the Maple Ridge Elementary School in Lantz on Monday nights for the past 10 years.

Because of their shared love for gymnastics and trampoline, earlier this year Brenda and David finally opened GymNation Gymnastics and Trampoline, located in the Elmsdale Business Park. All programs offered here have a set of specifically-chosen skills from the National CANGYM Program designated for that developmental age.

One of the special things about these programs, Madam Speaker, is that because children all learn at different rates, that there is no pass or fail, but it's a celebration of accomplishments.

Madam Speaker, I ask members of this House of Assembly to please join me in thanking Brenda Carmichael and David Brown for providing the wonderful opportunity for the children of Hants East to stay fit and healthy while having fun.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

WEST MABOU: COMMUNITY - ACKNOWLEDGE

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Madam Speaker, here is a story of what a community can do with a can-do attitude. The West Mabou Sports Club started in 1973 to give children the opportunity to play sports so they could have something to do for the summer. Land and gravel was donated by Mack Beaton and men, women and children began clearing the land to prepare the site for what became a tennis court, playground and dance hall. Mack never did have children but think of how many children he impacted with his generosity.

In the summertime there were regular Sunday afternoon ballgames in the field in front of Donald Johnny Murdock's house. They needed a proper field so Donald Johnny Murdock MacDonald stepped up to the plate and donated the land and the sod. Years later the home team West Mabou Tigers went on to win the Provincial C Men's Fast-Pitch Championship.

Today the dances in West Mabou are highly regarded in the world of Celtic music and a place for many young step dancers and violin players have been given their chance to start performing. Let us acknowledge the community of West Mabou for over 40 years of working and playing together as an extended family.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

BOUDREAU, HAROLD: PARK - RECOGNIZE

MR. GORDON WILSON: What does a busy dentist who loves to build things do with his free time? Well if you are Dr. Harold Boudreau, you build a park for children. After returning to Clare to open a dental clinic, he was made aware of limited options of places where local children could play and be physically active. So in 2008, Dr. Boudreau proposed to build the municipality a park for family-oriented recreation on the site right in the middle of Meteghan.

Over the years with the help of the community and different levels of government, the park was opened and expanded. Parents appreciate having a place where they can bring their children to run around and have some fun.

I would ask the members of the House of Assembly to join us in recognizing the efforts of Harold Boudreau in developing this unique park for children. Dr. Boudreau recently retired and this will give him more time to new projects in this park.

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

KING, THOMAS: ACCOMPLISHMENTS - RECOGNIZE

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Thomas King of Shelburne on being the grand provincial champion of the environment in an essay contest held by Divert Nova Scotia. Thomas's essay entitled "*A Study on Commercial Food Waste and Mitigating Its Effects in Nova Scotia*" won him the \$5,000 scholarship this past June.

Thomas is now studying architecture at McGill University and intends to focus on the areas of sustainable architecture and green design. This young man's passion for the environment is both evident and admirable as it's a great honour for me to recognize his accomplishments here today.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

MURRAY, CINDY: SUPREME COURT APPOINT. - CONGRATS.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I am happy to rise today to recognize the recent appointment Madam Justice Cindy Murray to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia. The announcement was made this past July by the Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

Justice Murray is an Antigonish native who completed her BA in Sociology at St. Francis Xavier University before completing her law degree at the University of New Brunswick. She joined the Nova Scotia Barristers Society in 1992 and began working with Nova Scotia Legal Aid in 1993. It was here she spent most of her career as a lawyer, serving the diverse needs of her community and an advocate for justice.

As managing lawyer and senior staff counsel with Nova Scotia Legal Aid, Justice Murray demonstrated leadership through her involvement in continuing legal education, and her commitment to providing outreach to the communities served by her office, in particular to Nova Scotia's First Nations communities.

Mr. Speaker, I think I speak on behalf of all Antigonishers when I say I am very proud of the achievements Justice Murray has made during her career in Antigonish and wish her all best in her new role. I would like to ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Madam Justice Cindy Murray on her appointment to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia.

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

ROYAL CDN. LEGION BR. 19: DECORATION SUNDAY (SEPT. 10th) - THANK

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute the North Sydney Armstrong Memorial Branch 19 Royal Canadian Legion who celebrated their 90th Decoration Sunday on September 10th.

Legion members, police, fire services, air and sea cadets marched to Lakeside Cemetery for the service to decorate the graves of the deceased service people. The service attracts around 300 people each year as candles are lit and placed on graves. Later in the evening, it is very moving to walk or drive through the graveyard which is illuminated with hundreds of candles.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that is involved in the organization of Decoration Sunday this year and for the past 90.

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

CANSO BREEZE SALON AND SPA: OPENING - CONGRATS.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, we often underestimate the big impact of small business in our communities after overlooking their value and contributions. A business like Canso Breeze Salon and Spa is a shining example of the importance of entrepreneurs and the small business that they create.

Janna O'handley-Mackenzie is the true definition of the hard work entrepreneurs contribute to our communities every day. She is a young mother of three, and travelled well over an hour each way to NSCC for two years to complete her cosmetology course all while balancing her family life, and recently opened the doors to her new salon and spa in the lovely community of Canso.

Mr. Speaker, to Canso Breeze Salon and Spa and all our small businesses across this great province, I say thank you. Thanks to the small businesses for investing in our communities and our future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

DOCTORS NOVA SCOTIA: CONTRACT - HONOUR

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, as a new MLA, I am disappointed by the lack of spirit of co-operation from the Department of Health and Wellness with our province's physicians. Today, we learned that our government has

allegedly breached the contract with Doctors Nova Scotia, and Doctors Nova Scotia has taken legal action against our government.

I don't understand, Mr. Speaker, why our government is not willing to work with the organization that represents our doctors in this province. As MLA it is our responsibility to represent and serve our people and our people need physicians.

Nova Scotians expect us to honour the contract we have signed and expect us to be a government that has a spirit of co-operation.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you for those member statements. We will pause and reflect on those for a few seconds while we await the commencement of question period.

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: DOCTORS N.S. CONTRACT - RENEGE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Today, 100,000 Nova Scotians are without a family doctor. They heard their Premier promise that they would all get one. They certainly did not expect a government that would make things worse. Today we learned that the doctors of Nova Scotia have taken to the courts to sue this government for breach of contract.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness: How can Nova Scotians trust this government with their health care when he keeps making things worse?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I believe the circumstance here is very clear. The concerns being raised by Doctors Nova Scotia relate to benefit payments. I would like to make it very clear that we value the role that physicians play in this province - we believe they are deserving of the benefits identified in the master agreement, and we continue to make those payments.

That's what's very clear - Nova Scotia has made the payments for the benefits that are afforded to physicians across the province, and we will continue to honour those commitments.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, the circumstances here are very clear. This government put its signature on a master agreement with doctors in 2016, and then they reneged on that very same agreement in 2017, Mr. Speaker. It's as simple as that.

When there are so many Nova Scotia families looking to recruit doctors to this province, this government went out of its way to make things worse. That is what happened. It came up in the election. The Premier met with the doctors of Nova Scotia in May during the election, and it was brought to his attention then that there had been a breach of the contract. Yet the government did nothing.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness, why did this government sign a contract with doctors that it had no intention of honouring?

MR. DELOREY: We have every intention of honouring the contract, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, we are of the opinion that we are honouring that contract, as I have already mentioned. We recognize the importance of the payments for benefits for physicians. Indeed, I would like to bring to the attention of the House the fact that it's this Government of Nova Scotia that went above and beyond our contractual obligations through the negotiating period in between the current and the previous master agreements.

We continued to pay benefits for physicians through that process because we recognized that that was important and our physicians deserved those benefit payments, and we will continue to honour those commitments.

MR. BAILLIE: If this government's signature meant anything with the doctors of Nova Scotia, they would not be being sued today for breaching the contract.

Nova Scotians expect you to work this out, not to bring such petty details to the courts. Listen to the minister, Mr. Speaker, talking about funds of a few million dollars when there are 100,000 families without a doctor. Everyone else works it out. The government has never been sued by the doctors before; only under this government are they being sued. Every minute they spend on that lawsuit is a minute not spent recruiting more doctors.

So, I will ask the minister: When the health care needs of Nova Scotia families are so great, why is this government going out of its way to make it harder to recruit doctors to Nova Scotia?

MR. DELOREY: The Leader of the Official Opposition may think over \$4 million is not worth taking care and control of for the people of Nova Scotia (Interruption)

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

MR. DELOREY: But I believe Nova Scotians would think differently. In fact, the provisions of (Interruption)

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

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The master agreement does provide provisions to have the auditors go in and take a look to see what, if any, amounts should be held in reserve in the third party, Doctors Nova Scotia. That would be taxpayers' money paid in advance, held in a surplus account (Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. If I have to call order again, honourable member for Pictou East, we'll deal with it.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

MR. DELOREY: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, I share the opinion of the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, that we should continue to work through these issues rather than going through the courts. My door has been open, as has the department's and the auditors from the internal audit group, to address the concerns that are outstanding with Doctors Nova Scotia. We look forward to continuing those discussions to work through these concerns without going through the courts.

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

ENVIRON.: LAFARGE TIRE BURNING - OUTRAGE

HON. GARY BURRILL: I wish to direct my question to the Minister of Environment.

The minister's decision, over the summer, to allow tires to be burned for fuel, by the major multinational Lafarge, instead of being recycled here in Nova Scotia by a local business has, in Colchester County, been met with outrage and disbelief and, I think, contempt.

I want to ask the minister, how can he possibly defend his decision to allow a company to burn tires instead of ensuring that these tires are recycled here in our own province?

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. What I can say is that Divert Nova Scotia awarded a competitive tender where the majority of tires will continue to be used for tire-derived aggregate - 25 per cent will go to Lafarge for tire-derived fuel. This is common practice across the world and in some of the provinces, in Quebec and British Columbia.

I gave that approval for the environmental assessment for a one-year pilot study to verify the results that came from the evidence provided in that application. They have not yet applied for the industrial approval for the one-year pilot study, but when they do, we will make that decision based on the science and evidence in that application.

MR. BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, the minister makes it appear as though the burning of tires for fuel is a widely, unanimously accepted practice. In fact, it's a highly contentious practice, and there are jurisdictions in Canada which entirely don't allow it. That's why, ever since this announcement was made this summer, residents of South Colchester have held community meetings, have written letters to the media, and have just currently initiated a judicial review. In light of all this resistance to the minister's announcement, one can't help but wonder who the minister was consulting with in coming to this decision.

I want to ask the minister, is he satisfied with the level of consultation that has been undertaken by his department prior to the decision to permit the burning of tires for fuel in Pleasant Valley?

MR. RANKIN: Let's be clear: the evidence in the application shows that there would be reductions in overall emissions with tire-derived fuel. There are 30 per cent reductions in carbon and 15 per cent reductions in nitrogen, and there's a pilot study that's on the table. They have to apply for that industrial approval. We'll be watching that closely with strict conditions that came from the 30-day period for public submissions, which I personally read through. I expect that the evidence in that application will be verified with that pilot study, and then we can move forward.

MR. BURRILL: Once again, the minister speaks as though this were an entirely established matter, whereas in fact whether or not greenhouse gas emissions are reduced by this measure is highly contended over. There is a considerable body of opinion which suggests that the amount of quarrying that will be required to replace the TDA from recycling will have more greenhouse gas emissions.

We on our side of the House have been very concerned about the lack of consultation. That's one of the reasons why, not long ago, we introduced an Environmental Bill of Rights to ensure that there would be more consultations in situations like this.

I ask the minister, is he willing to stand with the growing body of people in Nova Scotia who are concerned about places of inadequate environmental consultation? Is he willing to stand with them to support the passage in Nova Scotia of an Environmental Bill of Rights for our people?

MR. RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment has to continue to look at the evidence that is provided in the application. In this case, there is external evidence provided. Our internal experts within the department and our public health officers offer the information to me. I evaluate that information, as did other jurisdictions

in Quebec and British Columbia. They do it in California, which has very strict air emission consultations. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Environment.

MR. RANKIN: They do it across, as I said, and all over Europe, including . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. If I have to speak to the honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River again.

MR. RANKIN: Again, I can go through the list where this is successful across the world. I have heard the member opposite mention the Scandinavian countries many times in this House. They do this tire-derived fuel practice there, in Finland, in Germany, and all over the world.

What's important, though, is that the parameters in the operation are there. We're monitoring it, and it will be minute by minute by an independent body. That's what we're going to do. We're going to continue to make decisions based on the evidence and the science, not based on emotion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

DOCTORS N.S.: N.S. GOV. REPUTATION - DAMAGE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Earlier this week on CBC Radio, independent health care expert Mary Jane Hampton stated that Nova Scotia is getting a reputation as a bad place to practise medicine. No wonder, when we've reached a point where the doctors in Nova Scotia have to sue their own government to honour its signature on their contract.

This is a serious situation. The reputation of the government is at risk. One hundred thousand Nova Scotians who want a doctor see the connection between the way this government acts and the fact that they don't have a family doctor.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness, will he admit that the actions of his government dishonouring its own contract with doctors is making doctor recruitment harder in Nova Scotia?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I believe you would rule the member's position there a "dispute of facts." I maintain that we continue to honour our agreement, the master agreement, with Doctors Nova Scotia. Indeed, as I've said previously, we continue to ensure that all benefit payments continue for physicians across this province.

We believe that those payments to physicians for their benefits through Doctors Nova Scotia are an important part of the services they provide and the compensation for that important work.

We continue to take steps in this budget to invest in collaborative practices and to expand our residency program to attract more physicians to Nova Scotia and to improve primary care services for all Nova Scotians. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, we do care.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, you do not look after the health care needs of Nova Scotians by breaking your word to the doctors of Nova Scotia. That is the problem today. Now the doctors are suing the government because they want them to honour the signature that this government put on the master agreement with our doctors. That is unprecedented.

I want to say this again, very carefully: the reputation of the government as an honest broker in its dealings with doctors is now in dispute before the courts. That is wrong when so many families need a doctor in this province. They want the government working on their needs, not on these disputes.

If the minister truly wants to fix this situation, will he commit to honouring the master agreement with the doctors of Nova Scotia and end this latest debacle before real harm is done to our health care system?

MR. DELOREY: The Leader of the Official Opposition referenced a CBC interview with consultant Mary Jane Hampton. I believe in that interview the reference that she made in terms of the issues had much to do with airing our dirty laundry in public. I think the member opposite (Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

MR. DELOREY: I think the member opposite, if he'd paid attention to that entire interview and the recommendations being made, might consider his approach to dealing with the situation.

Again, we continue to honour our agreement. We recognize the importance of the benefit payments - and indeed, have gone above and beyond our requirements under the previous bargaining master agreement to provide benefit payments even while the contract had expired. There was no obligation for us to do that.

We very clearly take the benefit payments of physicians seriously. We'll continue to honour those commitments.

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

DOCTORS N.S. CONTRACT - TRUST

HON. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to continue this line of questioning about the lawsuit against the province from Doctors Nova Scotia, about which we learned earlier this morning. In connection with this, the chair of Doctors Nova Scotia says publicly that the atmosphere of trust between doctors and the province is at risk.

In my judgment, the responses that the Minister of Health and Wellness has given up to this point are somewhat glib. I wish to ask the minister, is he not alarmed, as we are on this side of the House, by the damage that has been done here to the province's relationship with our doctors?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to clarify for the member opposite, the Leader of the NDP, that the situation here - I want to clarify the role of Doctors Nova Scotia and the physicians. Again, our obligations to ensure that the payments and the benefits that are provided to physicians throughout this province continue to be honoured.

In terms of the concerns being raised by the organization Doctors Nova Scotia pertaining to the establishment and maintaining a surplus fund of taxpayer money within that organization, a process was established in the master agreement to have auditors review that process and come up with recommendations. Those auditors are continuing those meetings, and I look forward to the recommendations so we can move forward on this.

We continue to remain committed to that, Mr. Speaker.

[2:15 p.m.]

MR. BURRILL: Many times here in Question Period and throughout the Budget Estimates, we have heard the Minister of Health and Wellness speak of how he's listening to doctors, how policies are being changed to reflect the concerns of doctors, and how government is working with doctors, but the lawsuits being spoken of this morning suggest something very different. In fact, they suggest that the government's approach is deepening the crisis we face in health care.

Mr. Speaker, on this day when we have learned that the doctors of Nova Scotia are anticipating suing the Province of Nova Scotia, I want to ask the minister what I have several times asked the Premier before, will the minister acknowledge that there is a health care crisis in this province?

MR. DELOREY: I thank the member for the question. Indeed, we continue to invest in primary care services. This budget that's being debated through Estimates outlines a number of investments in important areas including primary care and improving wait times for surgeries. These are important services that Nova Scotians believe they want to

see moving forward in our health care system. I believe that's far more important than having \$4.4 million of taxpayers' money held in a third party bank account.

But we remain committed to the master agreement. When the auditors come back and say what, if any, surplus of taxpayers' money should be held, we would honour that establishment. To date, the auditor is continuing those meetings, and I look forward to receiving the recommendations.

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

NAT. RES.: WESTFOR ALLOCATION REDUCTION - SURPRISE

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Late last week, 13 mills working with WestFor received notice that their timber lease was up for renewal and would only be extended for 30 days. You can only imagine the shock and concern this posed to mills that employ thousands of Nova Scotians in rural Nova Scotia.

After the mill owners met with the minister, the minister advised that the agreement would be extended for six months, but it came with a catch. There has been a reduction in allocation, and elimination of unused allocation. This has serious impacts to mill operations in Nova Scotia.

Does the minister think that catching industry off guard with a surprise reduction is any way to do business in Nova Scotia?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: I thank the honourable member for the question. I think we are all aware in this House that part of the campaign was a promise that there would be no more long-term commitments for mills until after there was a forestry review. Unfortunately, the forestry review could not be completed and won't be ready until the end of February.

But we are standing by our word. There are no long-term commitments. The mills were aware of that. WestFor was aware of that (Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would respectfully ask the members of the Opposition Parties to respect the Chair. You may not agree with what you're hearing, but please respect the Chair.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. MILLER: The mills have all been aware that there were no more long-term leases until after the forestry review was completed. They knew exactly when the expiry was coming up, when it would come. They were not aware of the conditions of continuing

with a new agreement, and since that is a contractual thing that hasn't been addressed yet, I don't want to talk about the details of the contract.

MS. MASLAND: Just because you can't get your work done, does that mean you're going to handcuff the mills in Nova Scotia? (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member for Queens-Shelburne not to refer to members opposite directly.

The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

MS. MASLAND: My apologies.

One of these mills is in my constituency, Freeman Lumber mill. They employ over 150 people. The owners are telling me that this decision will result in the loss of their biggest white pine customer and layoffs. Would the minister be prepared to sit with my constituency and sit with these 150 families and tell them what the future holds for them?

MS. MILLER: Better than that, I actually met with Mr. Freeman yesterday and discussed his challenges.

Currently, the contract is still being discussed. It hasn't been finalized. We're trying to find the right balance, Mr. Speaker. All members of this House have heard about challenges in the west with lumber harvesting, what was happening, and the practices. There were many questions.

That's why we ordered the review. We will be living up to our commitment. We're looking forward to the recommendation from Professor Lahey at the end of February, and we will be moving forward with specific items.

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

EECD: DAYCARE LICENCE - TIMELINE

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: My question is to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Last Friday, a large private daycare centre in Eastern Passage closed suddenly, leaving the parents of over 50 pre-school children, several with special needs, and 30 after-school participants, without any care for their children.

We have 13 staff who are suddenly unemployed. A new operator who has worked there has contacted the Department of Community Services and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development because she'd like to open a new daycare, starting as early as tomorrow. She was told there would be a three- to six-month wait to obtain a licence to do so; in the meantime, these families are left with no care.

My question, Mr. Speaker, will the minister advise us how long it typically takes to get approval to start a daycare centre and get a licence, as well as to offer subsidized daycare spots, and can his department expedite this on an urgent basis to give them their licence now?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate that question and the concern that has been created in that community with the closure of this facility. Our staff have already reached out to our current licence holders to see if they are actually able to fill that void immediately. Our staff is working on this diligently to make sure that families and our children in that member's area do have the service as quickly as possible.

MS. ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that response, but the majority of the parents who are calling the alternate locations are not being given subsidized daycare spots so they can't afford to go to those spots. The question now is - there's a potential new owner who has advised us that she has purchased 510 of the 1,000 shares of the incorporation that had the licence, so they want to keep the licence and continue with the same grant funding and subsidies that they were given originally. It's all the same staff so we're not sure why there would be a delay because it is not bringing in a bunch of new people.

They were advised that if they required a new licence, they are not eligible for funding. They are actually at a location right at this exact minute, so they could possibly have a spot to start tomorrow.

Again, I ask the minister, Could they not expedite a licence and grant them their continued funding so they can get back tomorrow?

MR. CHURCHILL: I do want to assure the member that staff have reached out to a number of current licence holders to see if they are able to provide a service in that community, because we share that member's stress over this issue. We want to make sure that our families have access to these critical services and we will continue to work with our partners in the private sector to make that happen as quickly as possible.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: IWK BD. OF DIRECTORS - APPOINTMENTS

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians are disappointed with the expense scandal at the IWK. There have been vacancies on the IWK Board of Directors since 2014. The missing directors are the Nova Scotia Government's representatives on the board.

Last week the Standing Committee on Human Resources convened for the first time since the election and the job there is to review appointments to agencies, boards and commissions. There were no appointments to the Board of Directors for the IWK.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Health and Wellness, why has the Department of Health and Wellness not ensured there was a full board of directors for the IWK that would lead to ensure proper management of the IWK board?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to assure you and the member opposite, indeed all members of the Legislature and all Nova Scotians, that I do have every confidence in the board at the IWK and their handling of this situation.

In terms of the outstanding positions on the IWK board, I've spoken to this publicly - I indicated that with the Fall advertising I would be considering all applications.

I take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to encourage the member, if she knows qualified individuals, to look at the ABCs that went out just a couple of weeks ago, encourage them to apply for the position if that is more prudent to go through this Fall review in light of circumstances that took place since the last consideration to find appropriate candidates, so we'll go through that process.

[2:30 p.m.]

MS. SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, the two vacancies have been there since 2014. There have actually been 33 different opportunities, different meetings, to appoint the two directors who represent the government. Now we are seeing - you can't deny - we are seeing governance problems with the IWK Board of Directors.

Why has the government failed to live up to the obligations to having these two directors representing government on the IWK board?

MR. DELOREY: I thank the member for the question. I would want to assure the member opposite, and indeed all members of the Legislature and all Nova Scotians, is that the board currently has 19 active members on that board, overseeing the operations of the executive there. As the questioning started with reference to the concerns of the executive expenses at this institution, remain confident that the board chair and the board have taken the appropriate steps to engage the Auditor General, and a third-party accounting firm to review those expenses and, indeed, even passed the information on to the police; I think all steps that Nova Scotians would expect in a situation like this. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

EECD - SSRSB: PRE-PRIMARY PROG. - TIMELINES

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

On Friday, the South Shore Regional School Board issued a request for proposals for the onsite provision of pre-Primary, after-school program services. Site visits for intended providers put out Friday are scheduled for 10:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. today, times when most child care providers would obviously be busy with the children in their care, and proposals are due October 11th. We began raising concerns about the need for wrap-around care for pre-Primary programs months ago but, again, the government has dropped the ball on implementation. I understand the role of school boards here, but my question for the minister is, does the minister have concerns that child care providers have been given less than two weeks to develop proposals for providing wrap-around care.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is of course key to having a full and complete child care sector in our province that includes universally-free pre-Primary care for four-year-olds. This is going to be a key question in the consultation that we will begin by the end of this month with the sector. I intend, based on the feedback I've had, actually from the sector, that this consultation will yield some very positive results for the sector and create some really important labour-market information that they'll be able to use for their own benefit.

MS. CHENDER: With respect, Mr. Speaker, my question was not about consultation. The Day Care Act and regulations are in place to protect the safety and well-being of children in regulated care and to cover the work and environment of regulated daycares. This RFP that I am asking about states that the school board is looking for a licensed provider. Licensed providers under the Act are required to operate within its provisions and, as we've just heard from my colleague, that process can take three to six months. We know, however, that pre-Primary classrooms will not be licensed under the Day Care Act and are currently not subject to any regulations. So, will the minister confirm that this RFP is asking licensed child care providers to operate outside of the Day Care Act?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we've brought forward the pre-Primary Education Act in this House. That will be the legislative framework that we will be operating the pre-Primary program under and, as she stated, it is correct that it is separate from the Day Care Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

N.S. HEALTH AUTHORITY: PHYSICIAN POSTINGS - MISMANAGEMENT

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, there are several emergency departments that have been closed around this province. For example, this past weekend, Springhill was closed, Tatamagouche, Glace Bay, New Waterford, Pugwash, also blood collection in Barrington. More than a year ago, the government announced a change in the locum program for physicians. I was very disappointed this weekend to go on the NSHA website under physician opportunities to see, if I was a physician looking for work, what would I see. The locum section was not updated. In fact, the postings on there for physicians were from March and there were zero postings for current openings. Will the Minister of Health and Wellness address this serious mismanagement by the Nova Scotia Health Authority?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Indeed, you know, in communities that have their emergency departments not open 24/7 and the concerns that they have there and the services provided, I want to remind that we do have for the critical emergency situations, a top-notch EHS program. We continue to work through the Nova Scotia Health Authority to fill the vacancies to ensure they have staffing in place whether they be permanent staff in the community to provide those services or locum positions which would be staff who come in to the communities to provide those services. So, those efforts and that work continues across the province where appropriate. I know as part of my tour, I did speak to individuals who actually prefer to work on a locum basis, going to different communities to provide services.

[2:30 p.m.]

MS. SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Perhaps the minister didn't understand my question. The website that advertises positions, what opportunities are available in this province, has not been updated since March. It is that outdated. When is he going to address the mismanagement by the leadership of the Health Authority?

MR. DELOREY: I thank the member for the question. I think the member opposite would know full well that the NSHA continues to recruit physicians and primary care providers right across the province. Indeed, the Leader of the Official Opposition even tabled, I think, on the first day of the Legislature about 150 job postings for positions across the province, Mr. Speaker. Again, those efforts, the work continues, not just by the NSHA but indeed communities across this province, to recruit physicians and primary care providers to our communities, because we all know that Nova Scotia is a fantastic place to come and work, despite the negative statements. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

WCB - CASEWORKERS: MEDICAL EVIDENCE - DISMISSIVE

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Act. The very wording of the Workers' Compensation Act of Nova Scotia, Section 167, is entitled: Immunity from suit. In this section of the Act, any person remotely connected to the investigation, through to the hearing and appeal process, falls under this section. Over time, this immunity from suit has translated into agents, employees, or representatives of WCB not being accountable for their actions while on duty to the WCB.

My question to the minister is, is the minister aware that when agents, employees, or representatives of a service or organization are not held accountable for their actions while on duty or employment of said services or organizations, that unacceptable practices can become common place?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: I'd like to thank the member for the question. The way the question was phrased was a bit in a general area, but I will say that I would expect that all workers and Workers' Compensation Board employees would be abiding by the Act that rules them, and I would expect that they are not engaged in any activities or any type of work activities that are not under that Act.

MR. DUNN: My constituency office has witnessed many incidents of caseworkers with no reportable medical education or practical experience, completely disregarding or dismissing medical evidence having been made by medical specialists; in many cases, evidence consisting of several medical appointments, supporting the injured worker's position. My question to the minister is, does the minister recognize that when unqualified personnel disregard, or totally dismiss professionally-provided evidence with respect to ongoing WCB cases, would this not place the individual outside anything that could be considered good faith?

MR. KOUSOULIS: I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. I'm familiar with the case the honourable member is speaking about. He has spoken to me with regard to that. I have asked staff to look into that situation. Within the Workers' Compensation Board, there are medical professionals and we all saw medical professionals out in Nova Scotia. Myself, I would not be a medical professional. I would rely on the expert testimony of the medical professionals to actually come to the conclusion as to whether the individual worker is capable of going back to work, a partial type of work, or if that individual does require Worker's Compensation benefits for a short period of time or a long period of time.

MR. SPEAKER: On a new question, the honourable member for Pictou Centre.

WCB CASE: GOV'T. (N.S.) - ACTION

HON. PAT DUNN: My question is for the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Act. I would like to have all members of this House aware of this situation. I have never been so disappointed and disgusted with WCB caseworkers, following numerous attempts, including tribunals to assist an injured constituent.

Darrell MacKinnon slipped and fell at his place of employment, injuring himself, on February 13, 2012. Mr. MacKinnon has been examined by more than one specialist in Halifax, who have rendered very convincing reports in his favour. However, it has been quite obvious to us that the goal of the WCB is to have Mr. MacKinnon examined by other doctors, in order to grab some piece of medical information that they think might allow them to deny his rights.

My question to the minister is, will the minister agree with me that what is happening to this 53-year-old Nova Scotian is simply morally wrong?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: I'd like to thank the member for the question. The member has spoken to me in regard to the case and I have asked the department to engage WCB to actually look into that specific case.

My hope, as is the hope of all members in this Legislature and in Nova Scotia, is that if there is an individual who can't perform their job duties, and that's the result of a workplace accident, the WCB is there to support them. That's what WCB is there for. It's to support our individual workers when they can't work, in terms of insurance and covering their pay.

MR. DUNN: With all due respect, that's the problem. WCB are not always there for the injured workers. The facts of this case are simple and straightforward. Prior to his fall, Mr. MacKinnon had absolutely no issues with his balance, tremors, or muscle weakness. In fact, he loved his work and his employment record was impeccable.

MRIs, extensive bloodwork, and several visits to well-known neurologists in Halifax proved that his problems with his gait and dexterity were caused by his fall. The WCB sent Mr. MacKinnon to a doctor who handles numerous cases for their organization - in other words, not exactly independent. The hearing officer agrees with this third party, ignoring the first two findings and recommendations of two independent neurologists.

My question to the minister: someone in government has to step up to the plate. I'm asking the minister or any member on the government side to right a wrong and help this very polite, mannerly, and honest man. It is simply criminal what the WCB are doing to him. He lost his life's savings and is becoming desperate because he can no longer work due to his injuries.

MR. KOUSOULIS: I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. As I stated earlier, the member has brought that case to my attention. I told the member in discussions with him that I would definitely have our staff at LAE look into it and engage Workers' Compensation.

I'll go a step further and say that if in these discussions we find that there could be an area where the gentleman has been treated unfairly, I will ask the department to request from WCB to engage a third-party doctor and have somebody independent review the case file.

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

**ENVIRON. - NORTHERN PULP: COMMUN. LIAISON COMM.
- EFFECTIVENESS**

MS. LENORE ZANN: My question is for the Minister of Environment. To comply with their operating terms and conditions, Northern Pulp established a community liaison committee that's supposed to provide an opportunity for community members to voice their perspectives on the company's operations, but many Pictou County residents are questioning the effectiveness of this committee.

I'd like to ask the minister, does he think that Northern Pulp's community liaison committee has allowed for effective community input into decisions that will affect their environment and the health of their families?

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. I've recently met with a group in the Pictou area, the Clean the Mill group. They brought this very concern to my attention, and staff are reviewing it. Usually there is constant communication between the community liaison committee and the residents surrounding the community. If the quality of that connection is not there, then we will make a change.

MS. ZANN: I'm glad to hear that response. We also met with them yesterday. Community members want to be provided with some level of assurance that any plan to replace the Boat Harbour treatment facility is actually reviewed by someone other than government officials and Northern Pulp.

The minister has the power to make that happen. Pursuant to the Environment Act, the minister has the power to refer a Class 1 environmental assessment to a review panel. This review could help increase transparency and accountability in the decision-making process.

My question to the minister is, will he commit today, on the floor of this House, to referring the environmental assessment report for replacing the Boat Harbour treatment facility to an independent review panel for public discussion?

MR. RANKIN: I'd like to thank the member for that question as well. The Class 1 environmental assessment has to do with when an industrial site makes a modification. In this case, the Northern Pulp mill is asking for a modification, by way of an effluent treatment facility. We've deemed that a Class 1.

One of the things the ministers can do when they receive information is, if they're not satisfied with that information, to ask for additional information, so there actually is more flexibility. Again, going back to any approval process, we look at the science and evidence provided in the application. That's what we're prepared to do.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: LYME DISEASE - TREATMENT AVAILABILITY

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. My constituent and lifelong friend, Donald Blenus, was ill and near death a year ago when he discovered he had Lyme disease and started going to Maine for treatment. He states that that treatment saved his life. He states that all the antibiotics in the United States are legal here, the catch is that I have to take eight twice a day for three or four years, noting that this long-term treatment method is not prescribed by doctors here in Nova Scotia - and I will table that.

My question for the minister is, when will Donald Blenus and hundreds of other Nova Scotians like him be able to get the treatment they need here in Nova Scotia?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for bringing this important question about Lyme disease to the floor of the Legislature. I'd like to remind the member, I believe my colleague the Minister of Community Services has often been referred to as a strong advocate, even predating my time here in the Legislature, for Lyme disease.

Mr. Speaker, the conditions and the treatment of Lyme disease in the Province of Nova Scotia adhere to the recommendations of research that is done by clinicians and the physicians in the community, and the Public Health Office assures me that the processes that are followed in this province do adhere to those national guidelines.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, earlier this year Donald Blenus had his antibiotics seized at the Canadian border by Canada Border Services for no other reason than this was a prescription acquired in the United States. He is in a Catch-22 - the drugs are legal here but the lifesaving U.S. treatment protocol is not permitted here - no Canadian doctor can prescribe the treatment for fear of losing their licence.

The Canadian federal government no longer allows prescription drugs to cross the border. Mr. Speaker, caught in this treatment limbo, what does the Health and Wellness Minister suggest that Donald Blenus, and hundreds of other Nova Scotians like him with Lyme disease, do?

MR. DELOREY: Thank you again for this important question and topic. Again, I assure the member opposite that the protocols and the approach by which physicians in the Province of Nova Scotia adhere to the national guidelines and practices for this and other treatments, Mr. Speaker, follow those practices. Those practices are developed by the clinicians, the clinical reviews. I trust the member opposite would agree with me that deferring to the clinical expertise of our front-line health care professionals and physicians is the appropriate course of action in treatment.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

ENVIRON.: INDEPENDENT REVIEW PANEL - IMPLEMENT

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Minister of Environment. I'd like to follow up on my colleague's question about - the minister has the ability to constitute a review panel to look at the application for the new effluent treatment plant, I'd like to ask the minister, is the minister considering constituting an independent review panel to look at that application when it comes before him?

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the question from the members opposite. It's a very important project. Again, it was deemed a Class 1 environmental assessment because of the pulp mill asking for a modification to the mill by way of the effluent treatment facility that they intend to create in Pictou County.

It is important that we listen to the submissions during the process of the public consultation process - so there's a 30-day period. Again, there is more flexibility within the minister to ask for additional information if they're not satisfied, so I will be looking at all the information that comes in and make a decision corresponding with that.

MR. HOUSTON: I didn't hear an answer on the very specific question about the review panel.

I don't want to imply too much from the minister's answer, but it seems like he is implying that at the end of the 30-day period the minister could review the information that comes in and then, at that time, determine hey, I would like an independent review panel to help me review it.

If that's the minister's position, that he could constitute the review panel at the end of 30 days, I'd just like to know that; if he could constitute it at the beginning, I'd like to know that as well. I'd just like to know that the people of Nova Scotia, and indeed the

people of Pictou County, can have some assurance that there could be an independent review panel reviewing the application. It's well within the minister's means and I just want to make sure he exercises everything that is within his means.

[2:45 p.m.]

MR. RANKIN: What I can tell the member opposite, and all members in this House, is I will look at the decisions based on what's in the Environment Act, and in the Environment Act when there's a modification to an existing industrial site, it's a Class 1 that does not include the independent panel.

I've met with the Clean the Mill group, and this is one of the items that they brought up to my attention, so I have spoken to staff in terms of what we can do to ensure that we have a two-way communication with the community throughout the process. But again, we will look at the science and evidence based in the whole process, from our internal experts to the experts from the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture and from the Department of Environment and Climate Change Canada, as well as the public submissions.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: DOCTOR RECRUITMENT - EFFORTS

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: My question through you, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Once again, we are back here for another session in the House and once again there are serious questions about what the government is doing to attract and retain doctors.

Polls released recently, confirmed that 13 per cent of Nova Scotians are now without a family doctor, and that is up by 9 per cent from when this government first took office. I will table that. Across from us sits a government who spoke at length about doctor recruitment during the election campaign, but has spent this summer silent on the matter.

My question to the minister, will the Minister of Health and Wellness admit that his department is not getting the job done when it comes to recruiting and retaining doctors in Nova Scotia.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for this question. Obviously, access to primary health care services to the people of Nova Scotia is a very important and timely topic. Indeed, this government's commitment to recruitment and creating an environment that is conducive to attracting primary health care professionals, to encourage them to set up in our communities across the province, continues. This budget that is before estimates shows investments in collaborative care practices, a new way that physician and front-line health care providers practice, as well as other initiatives that we believe will assist us in expanding primary care access.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, Doctors Nova Scotia has published a new report entitled *Healing Nova Scotia: Recommendations for a Thriving Physician Workforce*; I will table that. This report points to poor doctor recruitment efforts and the danger of taking local communities out of recruitment, which has largely been the case since the NSHA was established. Despite years of promises, nothing has happened.

Will the Minister of Health and Wellness accept the recommendations of Doctors Nova Scotia to help turn around doctor recruitment? The crisis in the Province of Nova Scotia is getting worse, and this government is sitting in their glass towers and doing nothing about it

MR. DELOREY: I thank the member opposite for the question. I do fundamentally, however, have to disagree with the premise of the question he is putting forward. The suggestions being made, I believe, are fundamentally and factually inaccurate. This government and the NSHA have been taking steps to improve recruitment and, indeed, shown commitment to adjust the plans they put forward.

For example, the notion of collaborative care practices. Early on the intention was to have a cookie-cutter approach, a fixed structure and a configuration of employees providing collaborative practices services. We learned that wasn't the appropriate path and it wasn't going to work for physicians and primary care providers. They wanted flexibility and we provided that flexibility.

The same can be said with respect to where physicians practise in the Province of Nova Scotia. We are listening and we are creating a better environment for the service providers.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

NAT. RES.: TOBEATIC AREA CLEAR CUT - ATTENTION

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, on Friday I asked the Minister of Natural Resources why she is allowing a clear cut to take place inside the sanctuary called, as it is widely known, the Tobeatic Wildlife Management Area. Can she confirm if she has looked into that matter?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: I thank the member opposite for that question. Certainly I have looked at the area and know and appreciate, certainly, what that area has. The Tobeatic area and the Kejimikujik area comprises almost 500,000 hectares in Nova Scotia, that primarily is wilderness area. There is a small area of that land that is, however, available for harvesting purposes. Now it's only a small area of that land. Decisions are made on any harvest plan . . .

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

The House will now recess for a few minutes while it resolves itself into the Committee of the Whole on Supply.

[2:50 p.m. The House resolved into a CW on Supply with Deputy Speaker Mr. Chuck Porter in the Chair.]

[7:03 p.m. CW on Supply rose and the House reconvened with Deputy Speaker Chuck Porter in the Chair.]

MR. SPEAKER: 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 some progress and begs leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the House take a short recess.

MR. SPEAKER: We will take a brief recess, just for a few minutes.

[7:04 p.m. The House recessed.]

[7:08 p.m. The House reconvened.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

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 please call Bill No. 7

Bill No. 7 - Workers' Compensation Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 7, entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 10 of the Acts of 1994-95, the Workers' Compensation Act, be read for a second time.

Mr. Speaker, it brings me great pleasure to bring this bill to the House. It was introduced in the Spring of this year by the previous Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. This is a great bill. We all agree in the House, on both sides, that our first responders do great work for the citizens of this province. In doing so, they see situations or are witness to situations that are very tough on them. As an individual, I could not imagine what they go through. We recognize the work and I hope that this bill will help some of them who do require more supports through our government.

I'd like to take some time today to share some of the changes that we will make to the Workers' Compensation Act, changes that will make it easier for front-line and emergency response workers diagnosed with PTSD to access Workers' Compensation benefits. Our government is committed to addressing workplace mental health, including PTSD. Over the summer we talked to employees, employers, and mental health experts about barriers to coverage and treatment for workers diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. The amendments reflect what we heard.

The consultations involved nurses, first responders, correctional services, paramedics, health sector workers, mental health experts, and other organizations. Their feedback helped shape these amendments and will inform the upcoming regulations. The amendments ensure covered front-line and emergency response workers no longer have to prove their PTSD diagnosis was caused by a workplace incident. They also gave us the

ability to develop regulations that will define the workers included as front-line and emergency response workers. The regulations will allow for new occupations to be added without the need for legislation every time and, as well, the expansion of who can diagnose and establish time limits for eligibility of the presumption.

We know there is interest and concern around what the eligibility timelines will be. The regulations provided us with the flexibility we need to address this. Previously there was no timeline for retroactive changes; this can be different in the future.

We will ensure that regulations take that into consideration. We will develop them with WCB over the upcoming year. Front-line and emergency response workers often put their lives on the line when others are in danger. Unfortunately, too many have witnessed great tragedy, sadness, and loss. In fact, evidence shows that front-line and emergency response workers are at least twice as likely as the general population to suffer from PTSD. Occupational stress due to traumatic events has always been covered for all workers under the Workers' Compensation Act, but it currently requires workers to prove their diagnosis is a direct result of a workplace incident.

Some PTSD sufferers avoided seeking assistance because of this; workers suffering from PTSD may be reluctant to make a claim because of the stigma attached to mental illness. Government is also helping address this through education. We are currently working with the NSCC on a pilot course entitled Strategic Resilient Program for First Responders. This course will equip front-line and emergency response workers with the skills that help them remain resilient when faced with traumatic situations and, also, care for their colleagues who have experienced them.

We need to continue to work together to make it easier for people to come forward and seek support. The proposed amendments will clarify that PTSD is presumed to be a result of an injury during employment. The changes will also define who is eligible for presumptive PTSD coverage - they are police, paid and volunteer firefighters, paramedics, nurses, continuing care assistants, emergency dispatch workers, and provincial and federal correctional officers with Workers' Compensation coverage. We are also fixing some grammatical errors that exist in the current Act around medical terminology, as well the deadline for WCB annual reporting will be extended from April 1st to April 30th of every year.

We are grateful for the difficult work our front-line and emergency response workers do every day. We recognize this sometimes means being faced with heartbreaking situations. These amendments are an important step in ensuring those suffering from PTSD get the care they need as quickly and as early as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise this evening to speak to Bill No. 7. We know that first responders are asked to respond to the most traumatic situations. These situations are part of their everyday job. I can just imagine what they see and what they don't see, compared to what the rest of us do in our daily lives in our own job.

[7:15 p.m.]

We know that emergency responders are two times more likely to develop PTSD than the average citizen. It's good to see this government has brought forward a bill that was introduced by the member for Sackville-Cobequid a number of years ago - to finally bring this forward, to presume that PTSD was something first responders incurred on their job.

We know, Mr. Speaker, it may take many years for this PTSD to develop, for a number of reasons. One thing is that the person may not work in the job any more and they may have something in their life trigger their PTSD long after they finished in their emergency responder's position. We worry about people not coming forward because of the stigma that's related. Then we had problems with the lack of professional diagnosis.

We know, Mr. Speaker, as members of the Progressive Conservative caucus, we've made mental health a priority. We know that one in five Nova Scotians suffers from mental illness and we know that too many of them go without the treatment they need and deserve or they wait a long time to receive the treatment they seek. The wait-list in Cape Breton is now up to around 14 months.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that this bill doesn't come out like the Limitation of Actions bill did a couple of years ago. On the face it appeared to be a good bill, which it does this time, but on reflection we learned survivors of sexual assault wouldn't be eligible to seek justice as a result of the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the one concern I do have is the fact that this bill - the timelines that are involved in it. The person has to be diagnosed within two years after leaving their job, which I think is not fair, according to the bill here, and it's going to go back to say that they can't make a claim after 12 months of the diagnosis.

Mr. Speaker, we know those limitations are going to hurt a lot of people. What about the people who were diagnosed with PTSD prior to the bill coming into play, who weren't eligible at the time because the presumptive case wasn't there? Is that going to be made up in the regulations?

We know that some of this is enshrined in law and some of it is in regulations and I look forward to seeing this move through Law Amendments Committee to see what the

people who are actually going to be affected by this law - the Nova Scotians who are affected - have to say on it and we'll reserve judgement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by correcting the minister on a few comments he made. The minister indicated that this bill was introduced in the Spring. Three years ago, on October 1, 2014, a bill was introduced that would support our first responders, that would recognize the traumatic experiences and scenes that our first responders see in this province. There was a lot of support at that time to try to change - I think by no one's fault - the present policies and procedures of workers' compensation.

It's no secret that I've been very supportive of trying to get the changes needed in our province, to recognize the sacrifice that many women and men make who provide care in our province, who encompass being a first responder. When I say first responder, I'm not only talking about those who kind of come to mind at first, like the firefighters and the police officers and the paramedics. First responders in public safety services is broad and that's why I indicated when this bill was introduced not only in the Spring but just recently, that I had some mixed emotions about this piece of legislation.

I'm definitely glad, grateful, happy to see it on the floor of this Chamber tonight, but I have to think about the barriers - and the minister mentioned barriers - of people who are suffering with PTSD and what they face. Our caucus was told, and I think first responders in Nova Scotia were told, that there wasn't a need for this legislation at the time. My only regret is, I wish I was more informed when I was the Minister of Health and Wellness in this province, knowing the challenges that first responders see every day and the impact it has on people, Mr. Speaker.

As I said many times, first responders can't un-see the things that they see when they respond to emergencies and it was brought to my attention in the summer of 2014 around the need to address the services that we have and the ability for first responders to get coverage under WCB. I just wish I knew prior to that that we weren't, I think, providing the support for our first responders as we should have been and that's why I introduced legislation a number of years ago. That's why I try to support organizations that support first responders and I mean that from military right down to children's aid services - people who see things that most Nova Scotians don't want to see and hopefully never do see.

I just have to reflect on the people that are no longer with us who were diagnosed with PTSD, who for whatever reason, decide that they can't get the support they need and they take their lives and it happens. It has happened here in Nova Scotia and it happens in every jurisdiction in Canada. It's only since about 2014 that organizations like the Tema Conter Memorial Trust started to track suicides of first responders and in the public safety occupations, and it's scary to see the numbers.

I would hope in this day and age that with the amount of discussion around mental health and trying to break the stigma that is associated with that, that we would see those numbers decline. Unfortunately, that just hasn't happened over the last number of years.

So, as I said, I'm glad that we're here today. I do wish that the government had made a decision to change this three years ago and it's interesting to reflect some of the data that's out there and to understand those professions that are impacted by this. In our general population, for example, about 9 per cent of our population is diagnosed with PTSD for some reason or other but the first responders and those who are in what you would call public safety occupations, it climbs dramatically. Almost 8 per cent of police officers are diagnosed with PTSD. Military personnel - about 8 per cent of those men and women are diagnosed with PTSD. Seventeen per cent of firefighters in this country are diagnosed with PTSD, and professions that are very close to your heart and mine, paramedics and correction officers, about 25 per cent of those individuals are diagnosed with PTSD.

What's more concerning is the number of those individuals who don't find that they have the help that they need, who decide to take their own lives. That's what so hard to understand - to try to ensure that we do whatever we can to help those individuals get the support they need. I've said right from day one that passing a piece of legislation like this that allows first responders to gain access to a benefit like WCB is not the answer to their issue, the ultimate answer to the issue, but it does eliminate one of those barriers.

I've stood in my place for years now talking about how much I made as a paramedic when I started. It was \$6.50 an hour - I think you recall that - at 84 hours a week. We worked 168 hours every two weeks so we could make \$29,000 and people ask me how I ever did that and I said I would do it in a minute again. I loved every minute of it. There's something inside a person who decides to get into one of these occupations that they want to help. That was inside me and I know it was inside you, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, even though I questioned some of your decisions sometimes when you were precepting me. I know you're passionate about the profession.

I count myself as one of the fortunate ones and you and I know a number of medics who are no longer with us, who, for whatever reason, decided that they couldn't handle the things that they saw. They decided that it would be better for them to leave us and take their own life and I want to do everything I can to make sure that that doesn't happen, that we bring policy forward as MLAs that can help improve the situation for residents in our province.

This is one piece that I think is well-deserved of support of this House. The minister is correct, that I believe that we have full support in the House on this legislation and I hope - and I said this in April when I first saw the government introduce this, three days or two days before the call of the election - I hope they're genuine on their attempt. But I am frustrated that it has taken so long. In my mind, the barrier over the last couple of years has been the government and I hope that this moves along over the next year. It concerns me.

I want to bring a few of my concerns, because a lot of the details in this legislation - it's great that we can stand up and speak about it and lend our support to it, but a lot of the important details will be left to regulation, which often - depending on the issue - you don't want to see. You want to make sure that the government's commitment to a law or legislation is well-defined in the legislation so that everybody knows exactly what the responsibility of the government is.

I have to say that the way the bill is structured, I think it would be quicker, and I hope this is the reason why - the ability to change the legislation and the services, and to address the needs that we'll hear from the community that this supports, would be a better fit under regulations. But that does concern me because it's not written down on a piece of paper, it's not something that we can debate right now. I know my colleague from the Progressive Conservatives touched on a few issues that are areas I have concern with.

Over the last couple of years, I've tried my hardest to help first responders, when they call me and call my office, to try to get access to benefits, not only for WCB but health care services. I have to say over the last couple of years - in the last year - those individuals have been able to gain some access to WC benefits, but there have been a number of people who have been denied.

In this legislation, one of the areas that we need to make sure that we allow for the women and men who are working today, but more importantly who might not be working today, to gain access to benefits if they are diagnosed in the future with PTSD. That's around how far back this legislation will allow for someone to put a claim in.

Presumptive coverage is something that we shouldn't look at lightly. If that's truly the essence of this piece of legislation, then it shouldn't matter if you're out of the work force for a year or five years. If you've worked in an occupation that is recognized, you see things that most people shouldn't see, and that the percentage of diagnoses with PTSD is increasing and I gave you the stats - 9 per cent general population, 25 per cent for corrections officers and paramedics - it shouldn't matter if you've left the profession or not. It should be presumed that you have been impacted by the profession that you worked in.

I know I've been off the trucks for 14 years and I don't know if it's part of how you deal with it, but I've been very fortunate to be able to deal with the things that I saw in my career. Every day, I can go through my community and remember a house that I have been in where a seven-year-old died or where an 80-year-old had a cardiac arrest and his family were around, or I drive on the highway and remember that was the site where I saw someone whose head was cut off their body. It's not stuff you want to talk about, but I think we need to talk about it. I have been fortunate that so far, I've been able to deal with that.

[7:30 p.m.]

But there are so many people who can't, and I hope that this legislation, in some way, allows them to start the healing. From what I have read about PTSD and from what I have learned about PTSD, I don't know if you can be cured from it, but you can learn to deal with it, learn to live with it, and potentially return to work. But often that's not the case. I know there are members across the way who know exactly what I'm talking about.

Far too often, many people leave the profession because they haven't been diagnosed with PTSD, but they know it bothers them. They know that they can no longer work in that environment and place themselves in that position.

I said earlier that getting WCB benefits is not going to be the end of the challenges that person has. Heck, it's probably going to put them in a more negative financial position because you don't recoup the wage you make when you're working. Hopefully, it will give that individual an opportunity, even just a break for a moment, to figure out how to move forward.

Those first responders and people who work within the public safety occupations deal with that on a regular basis, deal with asking if they can continue on in an occupation that exposes them to things that will have an effect on them. I haven't met one person who has been a firefighter, police officer, corrections officer, paramedic, children's aid society worker, nurse, or doctor who can say that the calls that they see, the patients that they treat, and the accidents that they witness don't have an impact on them.

You and I, Mr. Speaker, go back some time. We bridge the old system of EMS to the new system. It's no secret that we used to go out and have a bunch of beers to try to deal with a bad call. As time goes on, we know that's probably not a good thing to do because there is a likelihood of using that as a crutch, using that to be able to figure out what you're going through.

There's much more evidence than ever before about how we can help and support those individuals who are diagnosed with PTSD. I'll give the federal government and Veterans Affairs Canada credit, and it started a number of years ago. They have started to put more money into research, which is so important, trying to figure out exactly how we do support military personnel, firefighters, and those who are in these professions that are exposed to some terrible things - terrible things that kind of just burn in the back of your brain.

Some of us who try to suppress them and try to move through them have been successful, but there are many who can't do that. I want to just say to those individuals who might be in that position today that there are people, there are organizations, and there are - and I hope I'm genuine in saying this - governments that are moving forward in making changes that will support them. The changes will hopefully get them the tools that

they need not only to address being diagnosed with PTSD but also to deal with the stigma of standing up and saying “I need help” or “I can’t handle this.”

So, I hope that, especially, that the regulations will take a year from now, or the passing - I think the bill reads, a year from the passing of the bill to come into effect, that the regulations reflect that it doesn’t just happen overnight sometimes.

Yes, there are times when you will go to a traumatic event that it will have a lasting impact on an individual immediately, but far too often, it’s the cumulative exposure to these traumatic events. I just think back to Swissair, I don’t recall the year but it wasn’t yesterday, Mr. Speaker. There are medics whom I know for sure, and others who were volunteers, who were firefighters, who were military personnel, who are just now grasping that disaster and what was seen.

It’s not talked about a lot, Mr. Speaker. A lot of people know Swissair 111 crashed off the shores of Nova Scotia by Peggy’s Cove. There were so many people involved in what initially was hopefully a recovery effort but ended up not being that, and are affected today, and that just didn’t happen yesterday. A lot of people leave the profession that they work in because they just can’t deal with it anymore.

I hope that through the regulations, it reflects that, and there can’t be hard parameters around timelines because it’s not like breaking your arm, Mr. Speaker. If I break my arm today and I have an X-ray of it, I know that in 10 years if I have arthritis in my arm that you can point to that. PTSD is not like that, it’s very difficult at times to pinpoint a single event that triggers or causes that diagnosis and PTSD overall.

I know organizations like Tema Conter Memorial Trust that I talked about earlier has been working across Canada, want to just keep track of what’s going on in our country and keeping data on the fact that there are people who are committing suicide who were diagnosed with PTSD. But they do much more than that, Mr. Speaker. They do a lot of education to providers of first responders who can recognize symptoms and signs of PTSD. They give out bursaries to people who might not have coverage so they can go get the psychological help they need; but more importantly, they try to break the stigma around PTSD.

There are people I talk to on a weekly basis, who continue to struggle. I hope this legislation is just one small, little component to allow them to get the support they need, to get the treatment they need, so that organizations like Tema, who keep track of PTSD diagnoses but also keep track of suicides in the country, that maybe we’ll see those statistics and those numbers go down. I pray that’s the result of just this one piece of legislation but, more importantly, an awareness around the fact that people are placed in situations that sometimes are unbearable and they need support and that it’s not a shameful thing to say you have an issue, it’s not a shameful thing to say you have a mental health issue. I think

we need to do everything we can to break that stigma and I do support this legislation going forward.

I want to remind the government that I hope they get it right and that they need to make sure that those restrictions are not in place, so that we can support first responders here in Nova Scotia. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to be here today to speak on this bill, which I had the honour of tabling back in April, before the government called an election.

It's interesting - PTSD has been around for a long time, but for a long time no one would acknowledge it. People knew PTSD existed, but no one was dealing with it. The issue sort of burst into the collective consciousness in 2014, but I was working in a newsroom back in 1988 when we heard the horrific news that Tema Conter, a young Nova Scotian woman, had been murdered in Toronto. We followed the trial and what had happened. What we didn't know was that the paramedic who had responded to that particular case, Vince Savoia, would go on to develop PTSD.

Fast forward all these years later, and I must say that, as the former Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, we were able to reach out to the Tema Conter Memorial Trust, and to Vince himself, as a resource throughout this process. We had a conference on PTSD. We looked at wellness. Vince was there. So many people came forward to help us on this journey to better understand what was going on with our first responders.

I just wanted to take a few minutes today to talk about some of the people who impacted this particular piece of legislation. I mentioned Vince Savoia, who was always there for the department if we had questions. He was so supportive.

Dr. Howard Conter, who's the brother of Tema Conter, has been a moving force. The Tema Conter Memorial Trust continues to raise money for this issue and routinely has fundraisers. Sean Conohan, a paramedic who does a podcast, came and spoke to me and we did a podcast together. Dr. John Whelan, a psychologist who treats some of our PTSD sufferers here in Nova Scotia. Some of my colleagues in this House - the member for Hants West, who talked to me about the issue, and the member for Sackville-Cobequid. Our chief of police here in Halifax, Jean-Michel Blais, has spoken at length in various places about PTSD.

Earlier this week, the Deputy Premier spoke about what happened in Las Vegas and talked about the first responders, who run towards danger, as my colleague did on Sunday night, when he came upon an accident. The training kicks in, and they do what they need to do.

So to my friends who have PTSD, who took the time to explain to me; to Janice Landry, my former colleague who wrote a book on the subject; to the members of this House; and to all those people who have PTSD who came and spoke to us about what the issues were, about what we could do, what we shouldn't do, I want to say thank you very much. I am so pleased to see this finally happening.

I would also like to mention John Garth MacDonald, who is a medic from Antigonish. He organized a PTSD conference last year. And we have a young man here from Nova Scotia who's written a song. There are so many people, when we stop and think about it, who have contributed to this day, to making it happen. I am so glad that we were able to do this at last. Thank you. (Applause)

[7:45 p.m.]

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

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank everyone for their comments. I would like to point out to the member for - I rise to close debate on Bill No. 7.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 7. 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, would you please call Bill No. 17.

Bill No. 17 - Solemnization of Marriage Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 17, an Act to Amend Chapter 436 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Solemnization of Marriage Act, be read for a second time.

It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to amendments that will modernize the legislation to better meet the needs of Nova Scotians. As the formal union of two people is a significant milestone in the lives of many, it is important that our

marriage legislation meets the needs of those getting married. Currently, the Solemnization of Marriage Act is outdated and contains unclear content and language that could be offensive to some people. These amendments will make significant improvements to the Act and how Nova Scotians and visitors are served when getting married.

As part of the amendments, the Solemnization of Marriage Act will have its name changed to the Marriage Act. By simplifying the name, we will be aligning ourselves with other jurisdictions and making it easier for clients to reference the Act. Both parties in a marriage will now have to sign the affidavit instead of just one. This will provide greater security to the pair by reducing the risk of having incorrect information stated.

The language within the Act will be modernized to better reflect societal norms, will be more inclusive and better representative of all individuals marrying in Nova Scotia. Also, references to specific religions within the Act will be removed to be inclusive of all religions. Outdated terms that today are considered offensive will be removed while other terms will be updated. For example, the gender-neutral term “spouse” will be added. There are a number of housekeeping amendments that will also be made to the Act.

To bring our legislation in line with already-passed federal legislation, the authority for people under the age of 16 to marry will officially be removed from the Act. As well, the reference of Chief Judge of the Provincial Court will be removed to align with the Justice of the Peace Act. The Act references the term “minister” throughout, but it does not specify which minister. Where the legislation refers to authority that is held by the Minister of Justice, this will be made clear.

As well as improving clarity to create better understanding of the Act, the Minister of Service Nova Scotia will be given the authority to prescribe and change Vital Statistics forms associated with the marriage process. Lastly, any changes that are made to Vital Statistics forms are typically done to enhance customer experience and make processes more efficient. This will allow Service Nova Scotia to make changes more quickly to benefit Nova Scotians and deliver service excellence.

These amendments will make the Act easier to understand, provide greater security for those marrying in Nova Scotia, and make the Act more inclusive of the people getting married in the province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks and I look forward to listening to my colleagues opposite.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, having looked at the legislation and hearing the words from the minister, these changes seem to be very reasonable and we can certainly see why the government is putting them forward.

I do recall this past summer getting a call from somebody in a panic hoping to have a marriage licence available before the day of their wedding - a couple of days in advance. One of the challenges they faced was their spouse-to-be was coming from the United States and they had to check to make sure that that person was not married already. It was a panic for sure and I would like to thank the minister's department because while they can't usually do things in a rush at people's will or at people's behest, they were able to get the licence in time. You can imagine the stress of the couple about to make their vows before their family and friends - it wasn't me. (Laughter) But you can imagine the stress they faced.

I don't know if these changes - I did note that the minister mentioned about the requirement for both parties to swear an affidavit. I don't know if that will help to fix that particular type of situation - maybe not. I think anything that can be done to make things better for the people who are applying for these licences is a good thing, and we look forward to passage of this legislation.

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

HON. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, having conducted a few million weddings myself, I'm happy to make a few comments on the Marriage Act as we have it before us.

First, on the requirement that both parties being married swear the statement before the licence issuer, the statement that they are not already married or that they are not related to one another in any of the prescribed ways and so on - this of course is a sensible amendment. Any Justice of the Peace or minister can tell you that the first thing you need to do when a couple of people come to you and wonder if you might conduct their wedding, you need to say to them look, number one, go and get a licence because you can arrange a presider at your ceremony and the presider can disappear but you can get another presider.

You can arrange a venue for your wedding and the venue can burn down, you can get another venue, but Mr. Man, if you come to the eve of your wedding and if you haven't got that little piece of paper, you are in serious trouble. And when you tell this to people and they say okay, that's job one, go and get that licence, then they say well how do you do that? You tell them well, people have a licence - this is in a rural area - to issue these papers and here's the person you go and see them and, by the way, you only need one of you to go and see them - you don't have to get a time when you are both off, just one of you can go and get it. Almost always the people are surprised to find out that only one of them needs, as is under the present rule, to go and sign the paper.

I remember myself being surprised that this would be the case, that I could speak to my fiancée's situation without her being present - 38 years ago. I was as surprised at that as the clerk in City Hall here was when the oath was being administered to me on my fiancée's behalf and she got to the part where it said that I needed to swear that we were not in a relationship that was consanguineous. I had to stop the oath and get the clerk to go

and get a dictionary because she also didn't know what the word meant. Of course, this is a small change, but it's a change that accords to common sense.

In the same category are the provisions here that remove references to specific faith traditions, or to denominations, so as to be more respectful and inclusive - there really is no need for the Act to have been as complicated on this front as it has been in the past.

Having, for a number of years, dealt with the complexities of our rules in Nova Scotia in order, as the minister, to get a one-time licence to go and conduct a wedding ceremony, which is the kind of licence you need to get when you are, as I am, not in a relationship with pastoral responsibilities in a church, I can attest to how complicated that can be and I was struck a few years ago by how simple it is in other jurisdictions.

I was asked to perform a wedding ceremony in the State of Maryland and I was concerned, having been used to how difficult it was to get a licence to do this in Nova Scotia, how I was going to do this because my denomination is the United Church of Canada which of course doesn't exist in the United States. So, I called the Vital Statistics equivalent in the State of Maryland to ask how you do this. They said well it's no problem, you just come and have the wedding and then send in the papers.

I said well, how do you know that I am, in fact, who I say that I am? Oh, he says it's very simple, we don't have any bureaucracy for that. It's a very serious offence and a stiff penalty to impersonate a member of the clergy. So, a simple problem simply fixed. Sometimes a simple answer is the right way to go. Of course, here, too, it's a simple answer to get rid of the offensive language in the Act, especially those words like "illegitimate" and "spinster."

I would like to note that Nova Scotia hasn't been quite as backwards as we might think looking at this bill. In fact, the forms that are used by the province for people to fill out and for JPs or clergy to fill out on their behalf have fixed this problem a long, long time ago, and the words were removed several years ago, even the words "husband," "wife," and "spouse." This is simply a matter, in a common-sense way, of our Act catching up to what we figured out already how to go about doing.

I will just close by saying that there is one significant area of improvement under the operation and regulations of the Marriage Act that is still before us, although it's not exactly a matter of just the Act itself. This is the fee that people in Nova Scotia are charged in order to acquire a marriage licence. Currently this fee is \$132.70. This has more than quintupled in the years since the early 1990s, when I began to conduct weddings. One could say that a wedding is a very expensive operation and that \$137 is a modest part of that. I think that any clergy person, JP, or anyone who conducts weddings in the province would be able to tell you that a long piece from all weddings are operated on this kind of high-dollar operation basis and that it is often the case that \$137 is an obstacle and a barrier to

people. In my view, it would be a significant and sensible improvement to see to this in addition to the sensible and common-sense improvements that are suggested in this bill.

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I do thank the members opposite for their comments. This is about updating really, really antiquated and somewhat archaic legislation, so I do appreciate those comments. With that, I would like to close second reading on Bill No. 17, the Solemnization of Marriage Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 17. 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: That concludes government business for today. We will meet tomorrow, Wednesday, October 4th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Following the daily routine and Question Period, we will cover Opposition business and then hold Law Amendments Committee. I now turn the floor over to the Opposition House Leader for tomorrow's agenda.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Tomorrow, in Opposition business after the daily routine and Question Period, we will be calling Bill No. 11, the Auditor General Act, and Bill No. 20, which of course is the tax rebate Act that was just introduced today. Hopefully after that, we will have time for the late debate.

I do move now that the House now rise and we meet again tomorrow between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet tomorrow, Wednesday, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 7:59 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 294**

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Nova Scotia's craft- and microbrewing scene has exploded in recent years, with many new and exciting start-ups opening across the province; and

Whereas the Sober Island Brewing Company, founded in May 2015 in Sheet Harbour by local resident Becky Atkinson, continues to grow and thrive; and

Whereas Sober Island Brewing has worked to support and sponsor local community initiatives, such as this year's Trunk 7 Highway Music Festival, held in Musquodoboit Harbour this past July;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend Ms. Atkinson and her team at Sober Island Brewing for their hard work in building a successful and growing business in Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore and for their work in supporting the community.

RESOLUTION NO. 295

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas the Third Annual Trunk 7 Highway Music Festival was held this past July in Musquodoboit Harbour; and

Whereas more than 30 talented local artists, including the Stanfields, Hillsburn, and Mike Trask, gathered to perform over the course of the summer weekend to excited concertgoers; and

Whereas the festival provides an opportunity to showcase the diverse musical talent of the Eastern Shore;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking all of the organizers, volunteers, and sponsors who helped make this festival such a success that continues to grow each year.

RESOLUTION NO. 296

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas the 2017 Canada Summer Games were held this past July 28th - August 13th in Winnipeg, Manitoba; and

Whereas over 300 athletes from across the Province of Nova Scotia competed in some 745 events, medalling in 49; and

Whereas young athletes such as Blake McNeil from Halifax, who competed in men's indoor volleyball, demonstrated the athletic talent and ability of our young Nova Scotians;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Blake and all the other athletes who proudly represented our province through the course of the games this past summer.

RESOLUTION NO. 297

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas the 2017 Canada Summer Games were held this past July 28th - August 13th in Winnipeg, Manitoba; and

Whereas over 300 athletes from across the Province of Nova Scotia competed in some 745 events, medalling in 49; and

Whereas young athletes such as Emma O'Brien from Mineville, who competed in women's softball, demonstrated the athletic talent and ability of our young Nova Scotians;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Emma and all the other athletes who proudly represented our province through the course of the games this past summer.

RESOLUTION NO. 298

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas the 2017 Canada Summer Games were held this past July 28th - August 13th in Winnipeg, Manitoba; and

Whereas over 300 athletes from across the Province of Nova Scotia competed in some 745 events, medalling in 49; and

Whereas young athletes such as Evan Hopkins from Oyster Pond, who competed in men's wrestling, demonstrated the athletic talent and ability of our young Nova Scotians;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Evan and all the other athletes who proudly represented our province through the course of the games this past summer.

RESOLUTION NO. 299

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas the 2017 Canada Summer Games were held this past July 28th - August 13th in Winnipeg, Manitoba; and

Whereas over 300 athletes from across the Province of Nova Scotia competed in some 745 events, medalling in 49; and

Whereas young athletes such as Jake MacKinnon from Mineville, who competed in men's baseball, demonstrated the athletic talent and ability of our young Nova Scotians;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Jake and all the other athletes who proudly represented our province through the course of the games this past summer.

RESOLUTION NO. 300

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas the 2017 Canada Summer Games were held this past July 28th - August 13th in Winnipeg, Manitoba; and

Whereas over 300 athletes from across the Province of Nova Scotia competed in some 745 events, medalling in 49; and

Whereas young athletes such as Jenna Leadbetter from Mineville, who competed in women's softball, demonstrated the athletic talent and ability of our young Nova Scotians;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Jenna and all the other athletes who proudly represented our province through the course of the games this past summer.

RESOLUTION NO. 301

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas the 2017 Canada Summer Games were held this past July 28th - August 13th in Winnipeg, Manitoba; and

Whereas over 300 athletes from across the Province of Nova Scotia competed in some 745 events, medalling in 49; and

Whereas young athletes such as Noah Hawes from Spry Bay, who competed in men's softball, demonstrated the athletic talent and ability of our young Nova Scotians;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Noah and all the other athletes who proudly represented our province through the course of the games this past summer.