



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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First Session

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2017

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2017

Sixty-third General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Mr. Chuck Porter, Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, the topic for late debate tonight is:

Therefore be it resolved that the family doctor shortage in our province is causing real hardship for thousands of Nova Scotians and the Liberal Government's actions are making the crisis worse.

Submitted by the honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg, at the moment of interruption tonight.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 302

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

Whereas RCMP Constable Robert Kavanaugh of the Eastern Corridor Traffic Services, was awarded the 2017 MADD Canada Terry Ryan Memorial Award at a ceremony last month; and

Whereas Constable Kavanaugh was praised for his relentless efforts in reducing impaired driving throughout the province; and

Whereas he takes every opportunity possible to share his knowledge with other RCMP members and organizations, as well as training officers and being a go-to source of information on impaired driving;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House join me in congratulating Constable Kavanaugh and thank him for the work he's doing to make our province a safer place.

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 Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 303

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

Whereas in September, government proclaimed Nova Scotia's first Accessibility Act, putting a process in place to establish and meet standards of accessibility and to remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities; and

Whereas the Community ACCESS-Ability Program offers grants to help local community groups make their organizations more accessible to the people they serve; and

Whereas everyone has a role in making our province more accessible, and the grants will help community groups make accessibility-related capital improvements, such as renovations to entrances, doorways, and washrooms;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly congratulate the Community ACCESS-Ability Program grant recipients and wish them success as they upgrade their spaces to make them more inclusive, welcoming, and fulfilling for all 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 Immigration.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. DIAB: I'd like to draw everyone's attention to the east gallery, where we have with us this afternoon Mme. Greta Murtagh, a Nova Scotia French language champion. Greta was born in Croatia and immigrated to Nova Scotia at the young age of 19. Her passion and support for French second language education is well documented for over 50 years. From her first job in Sydney, Nova Scotia, in 1960 to being the French teacher at St. Patrick's High School, where she was my own teacher, to supervisor and co-initiator of the French Immersion Program with the HRSB, principal of École Beaufort, president of the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, a member of the board of governors of Université Sainte-Anne, and so much more.

I ask Greta to please rise. She is accompanied today by her daughter, Ruth. I'd ask everyone to give them the warm applause of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

RESOLUTION NO. 304

HON. LENA DIAB: Monsieur le President, a une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la motion suivante :

Attendu que le 30 septembre, j'ai eu l'honneur de me joindre à la section de la Nouvelle-Écosse de Canadian Parents for French qui marquait 40 ans de promotion du français comme langue seconde dans notre province; et

Attendu que les efforts soutenus de Canadian Parents for French sont essentiels dans le travail avec le gouvernement, les organismes d'enseignants, les parents et d'autres groupes pour garantir un soutien à l'éducation en français langue seconde; et

Attendu que Mme. Greta Murtagh a reçu cette année le prix de la Championne du français langue seconde pour sa passion et pour son soutien à l'égard de l'éducation en français langue seconde depuis le milieu des années 60;

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les députés de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi pour féliciter tous les membres de Canadian Parents for French a l'occasion du 40^e anniversaire de leur organisme, et pour féliciter tout particulièrement Mme. Greta Murtagh pour 50 ans de dévouement et de soutien à l'endroit de l'éducation en français langue seconde en Nouvelle-Écosse.

Monsieur le President, je demande l'adoption de cette motion sans préavis et sans débat.

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

Whereas on September 30th, I was honoured to join the Canadian Parents for French Nova Scotia branch in celebration of their 40th Anniversary of promoting French as a second language in our province; and

Whereas the sustained efforts of Canadian Parents for French are essential in working with government, teacher organizations, parents, and other groups, to ensure support for French second language education; and

Whereas this year Mrs. Greta Murtagh received the French Second Language Champion Award for her passion and support for French second language education since the 1960s;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating all members of Canadian Parents for French for the 40th Anniversary of their organization, and Mrs. Greta Murtagh in particular for half a century of dedication and support for French second language education in Nova Scotia.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 24 - Entitled an Act Respecting Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada.
(Mr. Hugh MacKay)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

BIG SPRUCE BREWERY/WHITE, JEREMY: MARINE RESEARCH -SUPPORT ACKNOWLEDGE

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Jeremy White, owner of Big Spruce Brewery in Nyanza, Cape Breton, not only on his success but also his collaboration towards conservation of research with the Ocean Tracking Network - the partnership between brew and sharks may not seem like a likely combination but, in this case, it's working.

Jeremy was approached by the Ocean Tracking Network in February. Big Spruce committed to donating 50 cents from each purchase of India Pale Ale to Tag! You're It!, a program to support marine research and conservation efforts. The "collabeeration" hopes to bring awareness to sharks.

I am pleased to recognize Big Spruce, and ask that all members of this Legislature join me in congratulating Jeremy White on the launch of his new brew, Tag! You're It!, and thank him for his support towards marine research. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

**INDIAN FESTIVALS CLUB (N.S.)/INDO-CDN. COMMUN. CTR. SOC.:
INDIA FEST. (6th ANL.) - SUCCESS RECOGNIZE**

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize the Indian Festivals Club of Nova Scotia and the Indo-Canadian Community Centre Society on the success of their 6th Annual India Fest held at the Halifax Forum earlier this year.

This year 3,000 people in the province attended the festival where they had an opportunity to experience Indian culture through food, fashion, dance, and music. On top of serving as an educational tool, the festival also raises money for the construction of an Indo-Canadian Community Centre here in the city.

I'd like to congratulate the Indian Festivals Club, the Indo-Canadian Community Centre Society, and all volunteers connected with them, on hosting another successful India Fest, and wish them well as they continue to work towards building their community centre for the benefit of the Indo-Canadian community and all the people of the province. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

DE JONGE, MARK: CANOEING ACHIEVEMENTS - SUCCESS WISH

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to publicly recognize an exceptional Nova Scotian and a constituent of Halifax Armdale, Mark de Jonge.

Mark represented Canada at the 2012 London Summer Olympics and won a bronze medal in the K1 200-metre sprint. Mark also competed in the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games and has placed first in two world championships.

This year Mark won Male Individual Athlete of the Year in Canoe/Kayak at the 2017 Support4Sport awards. Winners were chosen not only for their athletic performance but past successes, obstacles, competitors, and other considerations. I was very glad to have been able to attend this year's award ceremony and take part in congratulating some of our

amazing athletes. I was also delighted to see quite recently on CBC Nova Scotia that Mark was named number 14 on their Top 15 Nova Scotia athletes of all time.

That is an incredible honour and I ask all to join me in wishing him good health and continued success.

[1:15 p.m.]

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

**MACAULAY, ELLIE: BASEBALL CANADA GIRLS CAMP (CUBA)
- BEST WISHES**

MS. ALANA PAON: I would like to congratulate a young lady from the community of St. Peter's. Her name is Ellie MacAulay, and she's 15 years old. Ellie has been a member of the under-16 female high performance baseball team for Nova Scotia since she was 13 years old. Recently, she has been invited to attend the 2018 Baseball Canada Girls Camp in Cuba. This camp is a wonderful opportunity to help Ellie reach her goal of becoming a member of the Canadian women's team. This is a great experience for one of our local youth, and it is wonderful to see the support she has received from her local community. Good luck, Ellie!

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

**TIMBERLEA-PROSPECT:
KINGSMERE COURT ST. PARTY (20th ANNIV.) - BEST WISHES**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I would like to recognize the residents of Kingsmere Court in the heart of Timberlea. For the past 20 years, residents have come together to celebrate high days and holidays. July 1, 2017, marked the 20th Anniversary of their Canada Day street party. Alex MacIsaac was one of the original organizers, and he still plays a lead role alongside Linda Kay, who dedicates considerable time and energy to ensuring that everyone has fun. This year's event went from morning till night with children's activities, a pool party, a potluck supper, and a special slide show. Residents celebrated, wearing commemorative T-shirts, Kingsmere 20/Canada 150. I would like the members of the House to join me in wishing all residents of Kingsmere Court the very best as they head toward their next big community gathering.

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

**WEDGEPORT TRAIL COMM.:
NATURE TRAIL/STARLIGHT PLATFORM - CONGRATS.**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: I rise to congratulate the members of the Wedgeport Trail Committee on the grand opening of the Wedgeport Nature Trail and Starlight Platform on September 23rd. Located along the Yarmouth and Acadian shores, the trail offers five kilometres of barrier beach ponds, the Tusket River estuary, and a mix of wooded and coastal marshes. The platform area will serve as a picnic area during daylight hours and a starlight gazing platform at night. The trail will become a great asset not only to the tourism industry but also to the community, lining up with the municipality's active living plan to encourage people to become more active. This project was made possible by contributions from all three levels of government and, most importantly, through the hard work and dedication of the volunteers of the Wedgeport Trail Committee. I ask the members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating the Wedgeport Trail Committee on a job well done.

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

**COL. CO. HIGHLAND GAMES & GATHERING:
FINNEY, LINDA/JAMES – CONGRATS.**

MS. LENORE ZANN: I would like to congratulate Linda and James Finney, the organizers of the first Colchester County Highland Games and Gathering, which was held in Millbrook this summer and proved a great success. Over 1,000 people attended this first event to enjoy the sights and sounds, and the plans for next year's festivities are under way. Scottish tribal band Clann An Drumma are already booked for next year. They were huge successes, and they were the headline performers and extremely popular with the crowd - and great guys, I have to say. It was their first visit to Canada, and they fell in love with Nova Scotia. They even got to perform on the *Ship Hector*. It was their first visit, and they'll come again. Events included pipe bands, highland dancing, heavyweight competitions, historical re-enactments, a tactical assault display, tug of war, clan tents, food, and crafts. A new tartan was unveiled called the Colchester tartan, and the County of Colchester purchased the first kilt made from that tartan, a very proud moment for our community.

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

**O'HALLORAN, KEVIN: WAVERLEY COMMUN.
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR - CONGRATS.**

MR. BILL HORNE: I'm very pleased to announce that Kevin O'Halloran of Waverley was chosen as this year's adult Volunteer of the Year at the 14th Annual Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank Volunteer Awards. Kevin, a member of the Waverley

Community Association since 2009, has served as Chair, Vice-Chair, community concert series Chair, and the village green development project manager. Kevin has revived and restructured the organization's role, written grant applications, organized numerous community projects, and performed many other tasks for the Waverley Community Association. Beyond his work with the community association, Kevin also volunteered with the Frame Subdivision Homeowners Association, the Waverley Volunteer Fire Department, Skills Canada, and Waverley Gold Rush Days. I would ask the members of this House of Assembly to please join me in congratulating Kevin and thanking him for all his community work.

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

GABARUS VOL. FIRE DEPT.: ANNIV. (50th) - CONGRATS.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: I rise today to acknowledge one of our volunteer fire departments. The Gabarus Volunteer Fire Department recently celebrated its 50th Anniversary. CBRM has 33 volunteer fire departments, 16 of which serve Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg. Volunteer fire departments provide a very important service in our small communities and the volunteers give tirelessly of their time to keep these small departments viable.

I stand here today to congratulate the past and current members of the Gabarus Volunteer Fire Department on their 50th Anniversary and to thank them for their dedication to this department and to the community of Gabarus.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

DARTMOUTH: MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS - LACK OF

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Mental Health Week. In particular I'd like to draw attention to the lack of mental health supports in my own community of Dartmouth South and indeed in all of Dartmouth.

For some time now - it just came to my attention this morning - the Dartmouth General Hospital has not had any in-patient acute mental health care. Those services are consolidated for the Capital District at the QEII. I recognize that it's important to have some consolidation of service in our main hospitals, Mr. Speaker. I also think it's important for community hospitals to be able to treat the people who turn to them for care. This is especially true for ours, which serves over 100,000, many of whom have poor social determinants of health which often result in a higher incidence of mental health issues.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, someone who presents with an acute mental health issue at the Dartmouth General emergency room must be medically cleared and then wait until

there is space at the QEII for a bed. They cannot get a consult and too often they end up released with community follow-up, due to lack of space when they ought to be admitted.

It's a shame, Mr. Speaker, that we are not taking care of the mental health needs of the people in Dartmouth.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HERRING COVE DAYS: SUCCESS - THANKS

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, September 17th, volunteers, community groups and businesses came together to host Herring Cove Days at the Herring Cove Fire Department. Over 400 people came out to enjoy the barbecue, music, bouncy castle and kids' games at the festival. This was a great chance for everyone to meet their neighbours and spend a fun-filled day with their families. Through the generous sponsorship of local businesses, this was a free event and open to everyone.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Jill Hann, Matt Conrad, Katherine Morrison, Heidi Musolino, Sheri Hendsbee, Lori Hennessey, and the Munden family for all their hard work in making this event happen. I would also ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking all the businesses and volunteers that made this event possible and I look forward to working with them again next year to host our second annual Herring Cove Days.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

THOMPSON-MACKAY, DYLAN: WOODEN PENS - SUCCESS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, a young Pictou County entrepreneur is having fun with his latest idea. Dylan Thompson-Mackay enjoys making handcrafted wooden pens. To his pleasant surprise, Dylan is witnessing an incredible demand for his unique product. The one-of-a-kind pens are made from local and exotic hardwoods. His goal is to establish a social enterprise that will create revenue while addressing social issues and creating positive community change. Thompson-Mackay would like to eventually share a percentage of his sales with different non-profit organizations.

We would like to wish Dylan great success in all his future endeavours.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DARTMOUTH CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE - ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, this week is also National Family Week and this year's theme is "The Power to Play". To that end I would like to recognize the

work of the Dartmouth Child Development Centre, which has been at the heart of playing for my family for several years and for many other lucky Dartmouth North families.

DCDC, as it is known, was founded in 1979 and took up its current location and name in 2007. It is a provincially funded, not-for-profit daycare that serves children up to five. It's slogan is, "cultivating wonder" and it is truly a place where kids and educators daily discover and develop a sense of wonder in their surroundings.

The centre boasts a huge carpeted area, gym area and three wonderful outdoor play spaces where kids can play in the dirt, sand, and water. In our house a sign of a good day at daycare is when the kids come home with dirt under their fingernails and they are ready to go to bed by 7:30 p.m. because of a day of playing. Under the guidance of director Lisa Davies, the centre is a warm and welcoming place focused on inclusion and on celebrating the diversity of the families that are part of the Dartmouth North community.

I'd like to ask the members of this House to join me in acknowledging the fine work taking place at DCDC by the ECEs and all the staff who wonderfully care for the children there.

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

BLUECHARDT, DR. MARY: NEW MSVU ROLES - RECOGNITION

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Mary Bluechardt as she begins her new role as President and Vice-Chancellor of Mount Saint Vincent University. Dr. Bluechardt has 25 years of experience in the post-secondary sector with her most recent title being the Vice-President of the Grenfell Campus of Memorial University in Newfoundland and Labrador.

With a resumé which proves she is more than qualified for the job, Dr. Bluechardt, a Ph.D. in exercise science and health promotion from the University of Toronto, before becoming the Dean of the School of Human Kinetics at Memorial University. Outside the academic world Dr. Bluechardt served as the National Director of Coach Development for Special Olympics Canada for five years. Dr. Bluechardt is seen as a strong leader who implements various programs that provide students of all backgrounds with the tools to succeed, as well as a multitude of resources to boost student morale and learning.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Dr. Mary Bluechardt on her new position as president and vice-chancellor of Mount Saint Vincent University, and wish her the best in continuing to create a positive learning environment. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. HALMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery, we have Dartmouth East resident, Matt LeBlanc. Matt has been very involved in our community over the years organizing Remembrance Day ceremonies, and organizing student votes. So, I would ask all members of the House to please welcome Matt LeBlanc. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

LEBLANC, PAULA/KEITH: FOSTER PARENTS - COMMEND

MR. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am humbled today to rise to recognize two amazing members of my community of Dartmouth East.

In the past 18 years, Paula and Keith LeBlanc have fostered 27 children and adopted two. They have faced their own personal adversities but it has not stopped them from contributing to their community and province. Providing a stable home for a child in need is such an amazing thing to have done one time, let alone 29 times.

Besides doing this amazing work, Keith has volunteered with the Dartmouth Whalers and with his church of Saint Thomas More.

I ask the members of this House to join me in commending Paula and Keith LeBlanc for their amazing work in fostering and adopting children. Thank you.

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

EVERETT, QUINN: WEIGHTLIFTING ACCOMP. - CONGRATS.

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the athletic accomplishments of Quinn Everett and congratulate this young man on the sporting honours he has brought to his community and to our province.

Quinn, from Glen Haven in the beautiful riding of Chester-St. Margaret's, was a standout on the Sir John A. Macdonald High School and Mount Allison University football teams. He subsequently played for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers in the CFL.

In 2015, he began focusing on weightlifting. Quinn quickly captured the Nova Scotia heavyweight championship. In 2016, he first represented Nova Scotia in the National Weightlifting Championships. He again represented Nova Scotia in the 2017 nationals, finishing fourth in a very strong field. This past weekend, Quinn participated in

the Nova Scotia weightlifting championships where he set provincial records in the Snatch, the Clean and Jerk, and the Total Weight Categories.

I ask members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Quinn Everett and wishing him well on his journey to join the Canadian National and Olympic Weightlifting Teams.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MACGILLIVRAY, JORDYN: CHIPPER FISH FOOD TRUCK - BEST WISHES

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, today, I tip my hat to Jordyn MacGillivray who saw an opportunity and seized it.

Jordyn showed up looking for summer employment at a local food truck and now she is one of the owners. In fact, a family business was born. Jordan's mom dreamed of owning a food-service establishment and her grandmother, Mary, delivers the mail and is famous for her baking and specialty burgers.

The tri-generational endeavour, called the Chipper Fish Food Truck, is making a name for itself, attracting locals and tourists. The Merigomish Schoolhouse Community Centre is the base for the Chipper Fish Food Truck although they are mobile and travel to many, many special events. A change of name, and décor, is in the works but the good food and service will remain constant.

I wish Jordyn and her family continued success moving forward. Thank you.

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

**CUMMINGS, MARILYN:
ALL SMILES DENTAL HYGIENE CLINIC - BEST WISHES**

MR. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize the work of Marilyn Cummings and All Smiles Dental Hygiene Clinic in Hammonds Plains.

All Smiles operates as an independent clinic. Marilyn has more than 30 years of experience helping her patients stay healthy. After receiving her Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Bachelor of Science in Health Education from Dalhousie University, Marilyn set off on a career with a variety of roles. From working alongside dentists in dental offices to setting up fluoride clinics in elementary schools, she has shown dedication to her chosen profession.

As she said, “A beautiful smile brightens each day and gives you confidence.” Operating an independent dental hygiene practice is a rarity in Nova Scotia. Marilyn is currently one of six registered clinics that have established themselves independently.

I would ask all members of the House of Assembly to please join me in thanking Marilyn for her work and wish her all the success in her future endeavours. Thank you.

[1:30 p.m.]

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

**BEAVER BANK BOX CAR RACE:
CONRAD, LUKE/HILCHEY, CRYSTAL - CONGRATS**

MR. BRAD JOHNS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On August 26th, the community of Beaver Bank held its first-ever Box Car Race in the subdivision of Lost Creek in Heather Glen. Families were encouraged to sign up, build their own racers for the competition. It was well-attended and everyone there had a great time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I’d like to congratulate Luke Conrad and Crystal Hilchey on the successful event which brought communities and families together, and I’d like to thank them both for their community involvement in this effort.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

GLIMPSES THEATRE TROUPE: CAST/CREW - CONGRATS.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I’d like to congratulate the theatre troupe Glimpses’ cast and crew on their 10th Anniversary, as well as their final performance.

Glimpses is a group of performers who entertain audiences with story-telling vignettes that depict historical events in Lunenburg County, from the landing of the first settlers to the rebuild of *Bluenose II*. Glimpses combined the art of story-telling with musical performance in order to capture the viewers’ attention.

This show has been seen by over 13,000 people, including both locals and tourists. On September 8th at St. John’s Anglican Church in Lunenburg, and after 250 performances, the group’s final show took place. Over the years the group has donated their profits to various organizations along the South Shore, including Habitat for Humanity South Shore, food banks, museums, local heritage societies, and the local Legion to support soldiers with PTSD.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and all members of this House of Assembly please join me in congratulating Jon Allen, Hank Middleton, and the entire cast and crew on the success of Glimpses and thank them for their contributions to our communities.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**MORDEN, ELSIE: MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS
- RESILIENCY ACKNOWLEDGE**

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour a young lady with remarkable resilience. Ms. Elsie Morden was the victim of severe bullying and lives with depression and an anxiety disorder. She tours high schools across the country and tells her stories and experiences, performs songs she has written which relate to bullying and mental health awareness, and how to overcome tough times.

Elsie and the No Time for That tour hope to share their messages of empathy and empowerment to prevent bullying, and tackle the stigma surrounding mental illness while encouraging youth to be themselves, follow their dreams, make positive career choices, and respect, support, love, and care for each other.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to know this resilient young woman and wish her continued success in her music career.

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

MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY: PEER SUPPORTS - NEED

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to acknowledge that this week is Mental Health Week and note that mental illness does affect so many people here in Canada - at least one out of five Canadians at some part in their lives will be affected.

Peer support plays a tremendous role in the recovery of people living with mental illness and when the NDP was in government we introduced a Mental Health Strategy and we embraced the peer support method which meant that Nova Scotia became the first province in Canada to introduce this province-wide certified Peer Support Specialist Program.

I'd like to say that it has come to my attention that a number of these peers have lost their jobs in recent years due to cutbacks and I would like to see some of this restored, Mr. Speaker, because we all know we need somebody to talk to when you have a mental illness.

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

WESTSIDE BEER WINE SPIRITS: GROWTH/SUCCESS - WISH

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a new addition to the Clayton Park West community, WestSide Beer Wine Spirits. This privately owned liquor store opened this past summer, offering various local products to its customers. Not only does this store support locally grown and made products, but its employees are able to provide expertise to buyers when shopping.

This store is very conveniently located, and I invite everybody to stop by on their way to Bayers Lake. It's right next to Sobeys in Clayton Park. The store has been successful since the moment it opened and continues to grow each day with innovative plans for future growth. The Clayton Park West community welcomes any new business with open arms but especially this one that is committed to supporting local products exclusively available at this store.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that members of this House of Assembly please join me in congratulating WestSide Beer Wine Spirits for their success and wishing them the best in their future and development.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**PICTOU CO. MENTAL ILLNESS FAMILY SUPPORT ASSOC.:
BRIGHT SMILES PROJ. - VOLS. THANK**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to recognize the compassion and generosity of the Bright Smiles Project.

The Bright Smiles Project is an initiative of the volunteers of the Pictou County Mental Illness Family Support Association and it is being funded in part by the Aberdeen Hospital Health Foundation. This project will provide a free smile to patients living with a mental illness.

The patients will be entitled to a dental examination and X-ray, to have their teeth cleaned, be provided with a one-year supply of dental care products, and a free drive to one of the dentist offices if required. While at the dentist office, the patient will be given information on how to maintain good oral care, which is part and parcel of overall health.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Dr. Eric Beaton, Dr. Andrew MacLeod, Dr. Shawn Noftall, and Dr. Edward Hawkins for participating in this project by providing their services.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

DESCHIFFART, CLARENCE: 2017 STU CONGER AWARD - CONGRATS.

MR. KEITH IRVING: I rise today to bring attention to Clarence DeSchiffart who received the 2017 Stu Conger Award for Leadership in Career Counselling and Career Development. This national award from the Canadian Career Development Foundation celebrates exceptional leaders in the field who demonstrate vision, dedication, commitment, the ability to mobilize others, and a willingness to work hard.

Clarence is the coordinator of Career Development and Essential Skills Services for the NSCC. His impressive list of contributions includes teaching parents how to help their teenager choose the right career path through the Parents as Career Coaches course, developing their Career in Gear website that guides Nova Scotians towards meaningful employment, and playing important roles in establishing the Nova Scotia Career Development Association and the Canadian Council for Career Development.

I congratulate Clarence DeSchiffart on his well-deserved award and thank him for his exceptional commitment to helping Nova Scotians finding full employment.

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

**CANADA 150 JOURNEY BACK TO BIRCHTOWN:
VOL. EFFORTS - RECOGNIZE**

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, in July, I had the pleasure of attending the Canada 150 Journey Back to Birchtown, hosted by the Black Loyalist Heritage Society. This two-day cultural festival celebrated the cultural diversity and significant contributions of African Nova Scotians both now and throughout history. It brought together people from across this province and featured music, spoken word, drumming, history, wonderful food, and more. There was a tribute to Canadian journalist and social activist Dr. Carrie Best.

Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that in order to make such an event happen, a strong committee and many volunteers put in many hours. I am pleased to congratulate and thank them for their efforts and a very successful event.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

JOSEPHSON, BELINDA: NATIONAL AWARD - RECOGNITION

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, this past June, Belinda Josephson, a guidance counsellor at Bridgwater Elementary School was honoured and acknowledged with the CCPA Counsellor Practitioner Award at a ceremony held in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, by the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association.

This national award recognizes Belinda for her work in the field and her dedication to her profession. She has been an executive member of the School Counsellor Chapter of CCPA since 2009 and is currently the president of the provincial chapter. Belinda loves her school and students, and this shows in her dedication to seek out new training to advance her expertise.

I ask members of this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Belinda Josephson on her national award and much deserved recognition.

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

MOORE, EARL: SPECIAL SERV. MEDAL - ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Earl Moore, a 79-year-old Florence native who was awarded the Special Service Medal in his home Legion by a respected friend and Legion member, Tremaine Sampson.

Earl served in the Canadian Guards infantry and did a six-month stint in Southeast Asia. This service was recognized by the Florence Legion with the medal. Many unsettling memories were generated by the deployment in Vietnam.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have answered the call to serve Canada, and the Royal Canadian Legion who remembers their service.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MOORES, STEPHEN - VALLEY HBR. MARATHON: FOUNDER - LEGACY

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Valley Harbour Marathon, I reflect on the life of its founder, Stephen Moores. Apart from his family, his most enduring passion was the promotion of physical fitness and recreation, primarily manifested in his love for running.

Stephen's desire was that the 1993 inaugural event, which attracted 183 runners, would grow into a signature running event in our province, as well as meeting the qualifying standards for the Boston Marathon. Stephen's dream has been realized and now several thousand runners toe the line each year, including hundreds of children.

Stephen leaves a legacy in founding and fostering - as race director for 15 years - the Valley Harbour Marathon. I miss Stephen as a running friend, as a person who possessed the best attitude and a thoughtful approach to life. His first love was his family.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**EMMERSON, STEPHEN/EMMERSON PACKAGING:
LEADERSHIP - THANK**

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I would like to bring honour to one of the largest employers in Cumberland North, Emmerson Packaging, owner and president Mr. Stephen Emmerson. At a time when our federal Liberal Government is betraying our business leaders and entrepreneurs as tax cheats, I believe it's important to give our business owners and entrepreneurs the respect they deserve. Because of Mr. Stephen Emmerson's hard work, determination, and willingness to be a risk-taker, he provides employment to over 400 people in the Cumberland North area. He values education and provides scholarships to every employee who has a student seeking higher education. Thank you to Mr. Stephen Emmerson for your leadership in growing our economy and dedication to having a stronger future for our youth.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

HALF COCKED BREWING: SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Half Cocked Brewing is a new craft brewer based out of North Grant, which is about 10 minutes outside the Town of Antigonish. The business has converted an old farm building previously used for poultry, as the base of operations for their aptly named venture. They began their first brew in March 2016 and recently opened their doors to the public for limited hours, while they finish the late stages of production and try to keep up with demand. Already finding success locally, they have taken over a tap at one local pub and have been constantly busy during their limited storefront hours. Their hopes are to continue expanding into the market, while eventually opening a more permanent storefront operation. While they're still in the early stages, I'm happy to see the company finding success.

I would ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Half Cocked Brewing on their success thus far and wishing them the best of luck going forward.

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

SQUARE ROOTS FOODS: COMMUN. INITIATIVE - CONGRATS.

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Square Roots Foods for the initiative and innovative way they help feed lower income families and help to reduce the huge amount of food waste in Nova Scotia. Since their launch in 2016, they have offered sourced, imperfect fruits and vegetables from Nova Scotian farmers. For only \$5 to \$10, you can get a 10-pound bundle of food, now available in Halifax's South End, Uniacke Square, Cherry Brook, downtown Dartmouth, Fairview, and the newest location in our very own Eastern Passage, managed by Shirley McFetters and her son, Miguel. Square Roots began with Enactus, a world-wide student leadership

organization from Saint Mary's University. Uniacke Square was the launch location. Since the launch, they have distributed over 19,000 pounds of food to many families; \$14,000 has been raised and reinvested in Square Roots.

I ask all the members to congratulate the four founders: Ross Arsenault, Mitch Harrison, Cortrell Thomas, Miguel Kelsey, and everyone else involved in this unique community initiative.

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

**THOMAS, CST. ANTHONY:
LONG-SERV./BRAVERY AWARDS - CONGRATS.**

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I would like to recognize Constable Anthony Thomas of East Preston on receiving the police long-service award for 27 years on the New Glasgow police force. Constable Thomas also received an award for bravery in 2013 after saving a man's life from drowning in the East River. He indicated that it's rewarding when later on someone says that his actions made a difference in his or her life. Constable Thomas is an inspiration to many in the community of East Preston and a fine role model for youth. Constable Thomas credits his mother for providing the upbringing for whom he is today.

I would ask the members of this House of Assembly to join me in applauding and congratulating Constable Thomas on his nearly three decades of dedication to the service of the New Glasgow police force.

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

**EAST HANTS MASTODONS (CDN. SR. MEN'S FASTBALL):
GOLD MEDAL - CONGRATS.**

MR. LARRY HARRISON: The East Hants Mastodons recently won national gold in the Canadian Senior Men's fastball championship in Saskatoon. This is only the third time that a Nova Scotian team has won nationals in the tournament's 51-year history. Being part of a championship team and representing their hometown wasn't enough. Colchester County team members Patrick Stuart and Coby Cole of Brookfield, and Jay Duffey of Stewiacke received special text messages welcoming them to the club from former members of the 1980 champions, the Brookfield Elks. In many ways, history has repeated itself as the Brookfield Elks won Nova Scotia's first Canadian crown in Saskatoon as well.

I wish to congratulate all the members of the East Hants Mastodons and their coaches on bringing home the gold.

[1:45 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

MICHAEL, ALEX: POWERLIFTING SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: From a very young age, Alex Michael of Indian Brook developed a special liking for weightlifting. When he was eight years old, his father taught him how to bench press. Between the ages of 16 and 18, however, Alex was in a dark place, and he left his love of weightlifting.

At 18, he started training to compete in powerlifting, and today Alex credits powerlifting in helping him turn his life around. Alex wants to be a positive role model for the youth in his community, he says. Before every lifting competition, he thinks about his younger peers and it motivates him to try even harder.

Alex says it's taken him a long time to get where he is, which is a Canadian powerlifting champion and the IPA world powerlifting champion.

I would like to congratulate Alex Michael on changing his life for the better and wish him continued success in achieving his hope of becoming the strongest First Nations powerlifter in the world.

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

**DE VRIES, JOYCE AND WALLY:
R.E. ROBICHEAU STORE SALE - BEST WISHES**

MR. GORDON WILSON: I would ask the members of this House of Assembly to join in wishing Joyce and Wally de Vries of Brier Island, of R.E. Robicheau, well in their future endeavours. The couple decided to sell their business, including the general store started by Joyce's father, Raymond E. Robicheau, when he returned home from the war.

Over the years, the business experienced the normal ups and downs common for small businesses, and one unexpected disaster: in 1976, it was completely destroyed by the Groundhog Day storm. In 1996 Joyce returned home with her husband to run the same store she had worked at as a girl, side by side with her parents. In the next 21 years, the couple expanded the business to include a gift shop, a café, and a hostel. As in many small communities, it has become a hub of the community, welcoming and serving both islanders and visitors abroad.

To the de Vries, we will miss you. Good luck, and safe travels.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**WALLACE AND AREA MUSEUM:
ONGOING EFFORTS - ACKNOWLEDGE**

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the Wallace and Area Museum for its ongoing efforts to collect, preserve, and display local history and artifacts from the village. Because of the museum, visitors are able to reflect on the remnants of Mi'kmaq habitation and the Acadian dikes, the visible reminders of the first Native and European settlers.

The hard work, dedication, and commitment of the Wallace and Area Museum board of directors make it possible for visitors to enjoy four kilometres of trail, which connect the museum with the newly-opened TransCanada Trail.

I would like to thank the museum today and acknowledge their vision to showcase information on the natural environment, human settlement, use of natural resources, genealogy, and architecture.

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

BORDEN, TYRESE: BASKETBALL JOURNEY - BEST WISHES

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a remarkable young athlete from Sunnyville, Guysborough County, Mr. Tyrese Borden. Tyrese is a 6'4" Grade 10 student at Guysborough Academy, and is back representing Nova Scotia on the basketball court for his second year.

Last year, Tyrese was chosen to play on the provincial basketball under-15 team. That was just the beginning of this young man's basketball journey. By the end of the summer, Tyrese's team had won the gold in the National Basketball Championship in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This year he continues to make strides on the court, holding the position of forward on the Nova Scotia basketball under-16 team.

Mr. Speaker, Tyrese is a true legend and inspiration to all of us. All of his hard work, commitment, and practice have paid off, and his community couldn't be prouder of his achievements. I ask the members of this House of Assembly to join me in wishing Tyrese much success, both on and off the court, for years to come.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

**METLEGE. JOSEPH:
RIDE FOR CANCER PARTICIPATION - ACKNOWLEDGE**

HON. LENA DIAB: I rise today to applaud an exemplary business owner, a constituent of Halifax Armdale, and my cousin - Joseph C. Metlege. On September 30th, Joe completed a 100-km bike ride from Mahone Bay to Bayers Lake in Halifax as part of the Third Annual Ride for Cancer. This wonderful fundraiser raises money to improve cancer treatment, research, and patient care for the QEII Health Sciences Centre, and to support the work of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada.

Joe trained and fundraised hard, and I'm proud to say that out of 500 participants, Joe was the first across the finish line. Although the ride is not truly a race, Joe's success is a great tribute to those he was riding for: his aunt Therese Ghosn, Leo Saba, and many other loved ones whose lives have been impacted by cancer.

Please join me in thanking Joe and all the generous donors for the contributions they've made to this very worthy cause.

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

HAAS, CHRISTINE: VOLUNTEERISM - ACKNOWLEDGE

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Christine Haas, a dedicated volunteer at St. James United Church in Goodwood, which is a point of crossroads pastoral charge. Christine is a trustee and member of the Worship Committee and she sits on the St. James Council. Christine is also the Treasurer of St. James United Church and she spearheads most of the fundraising activities.

Volunteers are the heart and soul of our communities and the dedication of individuals such as Christine ensures that our local churches are vibrant and valued institutions open to all.

I would like the members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly to thank Christine for all she does for St. James United Church and the community at large.

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

**AZZI, MONSIGNOR PIERRE, ET AL:
LEBANESE CEDAR FESTIVAL EFFORTS - ACKNOWLEDGE**

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Monsignor Pierre Azzi and the team at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church who organized and hosted the 11th Annual Lebanese Cedar Festival. This festival is an annual event that draws people from all over the city to showcase Lebanese culture. It is filled with Dabke

performances, live musical and cultural shows, as well as delicious traditional Lebanese dishes.

People of all ages look forward to this weekend every year. Countless hours are put into the planning of this event throughout the year by a tremendous team of individuals of all ages, who show dedication to their culture and heritage. It is also a highlight to the Fairview community at large and its surrounding areas. It is an event that is looked forward to by many and becomes increasingly popular each year.

Mr. Speaker, I ask members of this House of Assembly to please join me in recognizing the hard work and dedication of Monsignor Pierre Azzi and the team behind the Lebanese Cedar Festival.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

AG REPORT - FINANCIAL DATA: REVENUE VS. SERVICES - RESPECT

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, today at Public Accounts Committee we received the Auditor General's Report and some of it that was of interest was the financial data about the province. What we learned is that for 10 years, governments of this province have been feasting on additional tax revenue up almost 40 per cent over the 10-year period with what we are paying in personal income tax - huge numbers.

While the governments are feasting on increased tax revenue, Nova Scotians are left to just eat the crumbs, in terms of delivery of services. We saw that over 10 years the education budget is up only 7 per cent.

I guess the point I want to make is that if it's difficult to deliver services, it's not difficult to respect people. What we should see is governments respecting the citizens. One way we can do that is give them adequate notice of things that are happening in this Chamber and making sure that Nova Scotians are aware of the business before this House.

I urge all members to make sure that Nova Scotians are aware of what's happening in this Chamber and they can have their say.

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

WAVERLEY DIEPPE LEGION: SERV. MEMBERSHIP AWARDS - CONGRATS.

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, as an associate member of the Waverley Dieppe No. 90 Legion, I was pleased to attend the Legion's Service Membership Awards Night. Guest speaker Ken Mallet, Legion president, spoke about volunteering and giving of time. While many received acknowledgements for service and support, recognition was also

given to Diane Moore and Mildred Casey for 40 and 55 years of service to the Ladies Auxiliary. Special awards went to Ann Steele, Sheila Pickrem and Gerald Burgess, with Cheryl Sinnott receiving the appreciation award.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating all the award recipients and thanking them for their service to the Legion.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HUMPHRIES, REBECCA: IN MY WILDEST DREAMS - CONGRATS.

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, Rebecca Humphries, a resident of Spryfield, made her debut at the Halifax Fringe Festival this summer as Director of the play, *In My Wildest Dreams*. The play is based on a true story of the real life friendship between Marge Fortune, a Halifax hair stylist, and the Nova Scotia country legend Hank Snow. Rebecca is both an accomplished actor and director. She studied drama at Oxford University, has worked on over 20 shows, both on the stage and from the director's chair.

She is involved in our local community theatre, the Theatre Arts Guild - TAG. Rebecca has been associated with TAG since 1996 and most recently directed the hugely successful *Full Monty* at the theatre.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the members of the House of Assembly to please join me in congratulating Rebecca Humphries on her Fringe Festival debut and wish her continued success.

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

JOHN, BEN - HELP 2 OVERCOME: FREETOWN EFFORTS - RECOGNIZE

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the accomplishments of Mr. Ben John of Black Point in beautiful Chester-St. Margaret's, who founded the charitable organization, Help 2 Overcome. Ben grew up under apartheid in South Africa. Living in poverty meant things like clean water, sanitation and toilets were a luxury.

In 2013, Ben visited Sierra Leone, still recovering from a decade of brutal civil war, to identify ways to make a difference in the lives of children in the country. He discovered one of the most serious threats to public health was a lack of access to sanitary toilets. Upon his return to Canada, Ben established Help 2 Overcome. Within a few weeks, two new sanitation blocks were installed and ready for use in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The blocks were comprised of four brand-new flushing toilets and four hand basins with running water.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia and Freetown have a special connection; Freetown was founded by Nova Scotian settlers. The country and our province are paired as part of

refugee relief efforts. I ask members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Ben and H2O for their work on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone, thanks to the inspired vision of an African Nova Scotian who wanted to give back.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**LUNENBURG YACHT CLUB:
WOMEN'S KEELBOAT CHAMPIONSHIP - CONGRATS.**

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES- CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Lunenburg Yacht Club on hosting the Sail Canada's Women's Keelboat Championship event, which took place from September 13th - 17th.

The Women's Keelboat Championship is an event that is open to competitors across the country. It is hosted annually, rotating through western, central and eastern regions. Onlookers were so impressed by the sailing quality of the women, that it was stated that many of them should have partaken in the Sonar World Championship the week prior.

There are few women skippers who partake in the world's sailing, which is an aspect of the competition that many would like to see change through mentorship and by publicizing events like the Women's Keelboat Championship.

I would ask that you and all members of this House of Assembly please join me in congratulating the Lunenburg Yacht Club on the success of the Sail Canada Women's Keelboat Championship and wish them success in all their future events.

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

VINCENT, CORY: COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS - CONGRATS.

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Cory Vincent, a tremendous leader of the Friends of Clayton Park Society. Corey has always been an active member of our community. He was a graduate of Halifax West High School and recently graduated with a degree in Engineering from Dalhousie University. Cory was a valued member of my campaign team and his experience was very helpful. Without him, our team would not have been so strong. Cory is well regarded by many members of the community for his intelligence and passion for the citizens of Clayton Park West.

He was a recipient of the Mainland North Volunteer Award in 2017, for his contribution and leadership to Friends of Clayton Park. He was given his award by the Honourable Geoff Regan and Eleanor Power.

I ask that the members of this House join me in congratulating Cory Vincent for his hard work and contribution to our community. His work does not go unnoticed.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

BEARNE, BOB - ROTARY CLUB: 50-YR. SERVICE - ACKNOWLEDGE

MR. KEITH IRVING: There are numerous Nova Scotians who quietly and with little fanfare give so much to their communities through volunteering. Today, I rise to recognize one such citizen in Kings South, Mr. Bob Bearne, who recently celebrated 50 years of membership in the Rotary Club of Wolfville.

Over the past half century, Mr. Bearne has generously invested an impressive amount of time and energy in countless Rotary Club initiatives that have benefited many individuals at home and abroad. His commitment to improving the lives of his fellow citizens is extraordinary.

I ask members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in thanking Mr. Bearne for five decades of exemplifying the Rotary Club motto, Service Above Self.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

**STALKER, ASTA/FRIZZLE, BROOKLYN:
CONFEDERATION CUP - CONGRATS.**

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Each year the Confederation Cup brings Canada's most talented high school debaters together to debate the issues that have shaped our country from before Confederation to present day. Asta Stalker and Brooklyn Frizzle, both students at Dr. John Gillis Regional High School in Antigonish, made their school proud this past April by capturing top place in the French language classification. Both Asta and Brooklyn are French immersion students at the Regional and secured one of four slots at the Cup through an outstanding performance at the regional competition.

At the event in Ottawa, multiculturalism, the status of Quebec, justice for First Nations, and Medicare were some of the topics of Canadian interest that were debated. The duo's skills were unmistakable as they beat a team whose first language was French to take the crown. Brooklyn also garnered top individual honours at the competition.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Asta Stalker and Brooklyn Frizzle for capturing the 2017 Confederation Cup French Language Classification, and commend them for their skills in debate and interest in issues fundamental to us as Canadians.

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM. - COFFIN ASSAULT CASE: WOMEN'S CENTRES CONTACT - CONFIRM

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Last week I asked the Premier if he had reached out to women's organizations as the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island said he did last May. The Premier replied, and I quote directly from Hansard, ". . . the minister of our government who was responsible for that file, . . . not the Premier who would have reached out." The Premier was referring to the then-Minister responsible for the Status of Women Act, Ms. Joanne Bernard.

I would like to ask the Premier today, does he still stand by that statement?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding yes.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, we contacted the women's centres that were referred to by the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, as did reporters from *The Coast* magazine and they confirmed that no one - not the Premier, not his office, not the minister or anyone - contacted them about the matter in question. That directly contradicts the statements made by the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island that day in May to Ms. Coffin and now it contradicts the statement made by the Premier in this House on Friday.

I'd like to ask the Premier to explain the contradiction between what we are hearing from women's centres and what his minister and what he has said in this House.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't know about the conversation that my minister would have had during the election campaign. I can tell you it was my understanding that the former minister reached out to those organizations when it came to this issue.

I also want to remind the honourable member that we were the first government to put in place a sexual assault strategy across our government. We've done it in the first term, we've committed \$1 million in this current budget that we're voting on and we're going to continue to work with organizations across this province so that everyone feels safe in their home, in the workplace, in their environment in this province.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious matter. I think it's fair to say that all members of this House support the sexual assault strategy, the domestic assault strategy that has been brought forward by this government and others. None of those strategies suggest it is okay to tell a story to a survivor of a domestic assault in the middle of an election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is now saying that as far as he is aware, someone contacted the women's centres. We know for a fact that that did not happen. Will he at least admit the obvious now: no one from his government - either himself or his office or the minister - contacted the women's centres of this province, as was stated by the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island that day.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with the member that every member of this House takes this issue seriously. I want to remind the honourable member this is the only government and the only Party that has actually taken the issue seriously with money to put in place a strategy to deal with the issue and we're very proud of the work we're doing with women's centres, the sexual assault strategy, across this province.

In this current budget, if he supports it, I hope he votes for this budget because there's money in there to continue that process.

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

PREM. - DOCTORS N.S. LAWSUIT: GOV. POSITION - AGREE

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday morning we heard that Doctors Nova Scotia is bringing forward a law suit against the province over an alleged breach of contract. Later in the day we heard from the Minister of Health and Wellness that in his view the work of the Department of Health and Wellness on this file has been exemplary. In the meantime, from then until now, we've heard many questioning that opinion.

I wish to ask the Premier directly, does he in fact stand by his government's decision to take a contribution holiday from the Doctors Nova Scotia benefit payment fund?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Our government is continuing to work with Doctors Nova Scotia. As he knows, there are benefits that government would pay and continue to pay, that we want to pay, to ensure that physicians have health benefits, dental benefits, maternity leave, and other benefits that would be associated with that.

We continued to pay for those benefits even when there were negotiations. Even through those negotiations, those benefits have been paid each and every day. But we do not believe it's reasonable that \$4.4 million of taxpayers' money be taken from that and stashed in Doctors Nova Scotia when that money could be used - as the honourable member

would know - to begin to eliminate wait-lists that we have in this province. As he knows, there's money in this budget to go forward.

We said to Doctors Nova Scotia as they continue to draw down on that, that money to go back into where it would be to pay the benefits that all Nova Scotians are paying for, we would continue to make sure that we paid in future dates.

MR. BURRILL: The Premier's use of the word "stashed" in this context gives some indication of why it is the government has failed over and over to successfully negotiate a single major health care labour agreement over the last four years. This current debacle with Doctors Nova Scotia is but the latest in a long, sad negotiating incompetence string.

I would like to ask the Premier, how can the people of Nova Scotia have any faith in the government's ability to deal with the health care crisis when their record is so very weak in the area of taking the right approach and the right attitude to negotiation?

THE PREMIER: I would agree with the honourable member that we have a different approach than he does; there's no question about that.

Nova Scotians want a government that is going to stand up for all Nova Scotians. Every union member supports their own union. What we're here to do, Mr. Speaker, is make sure the benefits that doctors across this province deserve and have come to count on, that are paid for by the taxpayers of Nova Scotia are paid for. It's not to stand here and support Doctors Nova Scotia with an additional \$4.4 million that this health care system requires on a daily basis.

MR. BURRILL: The decision to not offer to support the doctors of Nova Scotia is one that we have lots of evidence of. The Premier has often touted doctors as an example of government's capacity to negotiate, but people today are able to see the difference.

I want to ask the Premier, does he not see that his government's unfortunate negotiating record has significantly worsened the health care crisis in the province?

THE PREMIER: Again, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I also want to thank him for recognizing the negotiations we have with Doctors Nova Scotia. He would also know that part of that negotiation was the drawdown on the \$4.4 million of taxpayers' money that is there in an account. That is over and above all the benefits that the taxpayers have paid for physicians, which they deserve, which they've negotiated, and which our government has continued to pay for.

Even when there wasn't a contract in place, there has never been a single day when the benefits associated that doctors deserve in this province were not paid. We paid them. It is not unreasonable that the \$4.4 million that belongs to taxpayers come back to taxpayers

so we can continue to reduce wait times. This current budget has additional money for orthopaedic surgeons. We want to continue to do so.

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

PREM. - WOMEN'S CTRS.: PHONE CALLS - CLARIFY

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: It has been reported, without dispute by the way, that the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island told Ms. Coffin that the Premier had called, and I directly quote, "all the women's centres of the province and that they were unanimous in supporting the rehiring decision that the Premier had made." That is not true; that did not happen. We have talked to the women's centres themselves. I can add, Mr. Speaker, that they do not appreciate being used in this way as part of a story to justify a decision that that member knew would be unpopular and cause distress to Ms. Coffin.

For the women's centres of the province, will the Premier clear this up and just admit what we all know - no one made any such calls?

THE PREMIER: Again, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to thank women's centres across the province for continuing to work with our government to ensure that we put in place the services that are required in communities across this province. We're grateful for the work that we have been able to do, and I look forward to continuing the work that we're going to continue to do over the next four years.

MR. BAILLIE: It's clear what's going on here - we have a blatant coverup of a deliberately misleading statement made to a woman in this province, Ms. Coffin, who asked a legitimate question, and that is not acceptable. She deserves the truth, and women's centres deserve the truth so that people will know what really happened.

I would like to ask the Premier one more time, will he take this opportunity, when we know it's obvious what really happened, to apologize to Ms. Coffin for what she was told that day and apologize to the women's centres of this province whose name was taken in vain?

MR. SPEAKER: Before we get to the Premier, I would just like to remind the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition that the term "coverup" has been ruled unparliamentary on a number of occasions in this Chamber.

THE PREMIER: Again, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. We're going to continue to work with women's centres across the province and work with second stage housing for women and children who are fleeing domestic violence. We're going to continue to make sure that we bring light to the issue that's in this province. We're going to continue to make sure that we're a resource with finances and strategy that will continue to help eliminate domestic violence in this province and continue to create an

environment we all want, the same thing we all want for our own wives and daughters and women that we know in our lives, that they feel safe in their own homes and their community and their workplace and we'll continue that great work with our partners across this province.

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

C.B. ISLAND – NORTH OF SMOKEY: DOCTOR SHORTAGE - CRISIS

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, CBC interviewed Rob MacDonald, a resident of Aspy Bay, who has been working to recruit more doctors to Cape Breton, particularly North of Smokey. Mr. MacDonald spoke about how in his home area soon they're going to be left with just one full-time doctor and two part-timers who are looking to retire. He spoke about his worry that the doctor shortage will prompt emergency closures in Neils Harbour, leaving residents literally hours away from emergency health care.

So, I'd like to ask the Premier, doesn't the prospect of having to drive three hours to get to an emergency room qualify in his mind as evidence of a health care crisis?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As I've said many times in this House, I've said over the number of months there's no question, we know there are communities across this province where there's a shortage of health care providers who continue to work with our partners to ensure that we put the appropriate and the right health care team together to provide primary care access in communities across this province and, as he would know, the community he speaks of obviously is one of those communities, and there are others in the province. We're going to continue though to work hard to ensure that we provide them with that primary care access.

MR. BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, as a number of members of the House have spoken repeatedly and strongly about, doctors at the moment are leaving Cape Breton at a rate that this government simply can't keep up with and, then, yesterday's announcement of the pending Doctors Nova Scotia lawsuit.

So, can the Premier please answer the question, doesn't he agree that the dispute his government is engaging in with Doctors Nova Scotia is going to have, is bound to have, a serious negative impact on rural recruitment and physician retention?

THE PREMIER: No.

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

GOV'T. (N.S.): FEDERAL TAX INCREASES - WINDFALL

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, as Nova Scotians are now learning, the federal Liberals are not the only ones who will gain a windfall if the proposed tax increases on our small businesses and doctors goes through. The provincial government will obviously also be a financial winner and get a tax windfall from those same changes.

I would like to ask the Premier, does he know how much money the province expects to gain from these small-business tax increases that are proposed by the federal government?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to first of all thank the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board for their work with the federal Minister of Finance when he was in town. I had the opportunity to meet with him as well.

I just got back from Ottawa where I met with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance and fellow Premiers. We were very grateful to hear the federal Minister of Finance recognize that the proposed legislation would have to change. He recognized the transition of family farms and family businesses needing to be transitioned from generation to generation, recognized the challenge of women in the workforce being able to save for maternity leave, and he recognized that every Nova Scotian and every Canadian needs the capacity to be able to save for retirement, and I'm looking forward quite frankly to seeing the final piece of legislation when it comes forward.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe what the federal Finance Minister said is he's going to "tinker" with the proposed tax changes. And I want to be clear - this is a massive tax increase on our small businesses, the biggest one in 50 years. It's a massive tax increase for the doctors of Nova Scotia. We're already struggling to get more doctors to the people that need them. I guess the Premier thinks we should be happy that there might be some tinkering with it, but we're not happy with tinkering when the devastation to our economy and our health care system is so clear.

But Nova Scotians would be comforted to know that the Premier does not want any part in the proceeds from those tax increases. So, I will ask him to clear that up - will he commit to refunding the extra taxes that will be paid by Nova Scotia businesses - the provincial portion at least - back to those taxpayers when these tax changes go through?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Again, I want to tell him the federal Finance Minister very clearly identified the changes that would be coming forward. He said as of today there would be changes to the piece of legislation before it comes forward.

I want to thank all those Nova Scotians and Canadians who came forward, and I want to remind the honourable member, regardless of what the federal government does,

because we believe that the changes that we've outlined, that a physician should be able to save for retirement, a physician should be able to save for maternity leave, we believe small business owners should be able to keep capital in to reinvest.

[2:15 p.m.]

I also want to remind him without those changes, Mr. Speaker, this government has given the largest single tax cut to Nova Scotians in our history, and at the same time, we are giving the small business community in this province tax relief to reinvest in their community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - AG REPT. (10/04/17):
IWK/NSHA - INTERNAL CONTROLS**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Today in Public Accounts Committee we learned that the Auditor General has long held concerns about the internal control weaknesses at the IWK and the Nova Scotia Health Authority. In fact, the Auditor General was so concerned about the control weaknesses that he had to modify his audit strategy for the year ended March 31st. The audit took place in the summer.

These weaknesses were known to the Auditor General, they were known to the management, presumably they were at least known to probably the former Health and Wellness Minister. The Auditor General stated that he had reached out to the current Minister of Health and Wellness to discuss the internal controls, but that meeting didn't take place until after the IWK spending story broke in the media.

I'd like to ask the minister, can the minister please tell us when he knew, and from whom he first heard, about the spending issues at the IWK?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I appreciate the question from the member. I would have to go back and look at my calendar to see exactly when I would have received specific briefing notes. I'd hate to provide incorrect information but, indeed, by my recollection, it would have been right around the time the story broke. If memory serves, I think that was back in June or early July, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HOUSTON: If the management knew about the internal control weaknesses and the minister - two ministers, I guess - knew about the internal control weaknesses, why did we have to wait to read about the IWK situation in the paper, before the new minister reached out to the Auditor General to talk about the weaknesses and controls? These are things that should have been top of mind, straightaway. There should have been some sense of urgency to address these weaknesses. Instead, they carried on year after year.

I'd like to ask the minister, why wait? Why not get involved in trying to get these weaknesses cleared up before we have the unfortunate situation that has occurred at the IWK?

MR. DELOREY: I appreciate the question from the member. I think it is important to recognize the work of the Auditor General and his team that they provide when they assess the performance and the operations of, not just our health authorities, but government agencies, the government itself, that they do look for opportunities for improvement. That's what these recommendations are, Mr. Speaker, the recommendations to improve the controls within these organizations. It's an important part of the work of the Auditor General and his office and I believe it's quite clear that we're going to be moving forward on those recommendations within the health authorities.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**AGRIC.: N.S. CROP & LIVESTOCK INSURANCE COMMN.
- MEMBERSHIP VACANCIES**

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. On September 28th during Estimates in the Red Room, I asked the minister about vacancies on the Nova Scotia Crop and Livestock Insurance Commission since October 2015. The minister told me there were two vacancies, and I will table that exchange from Estimates.

According to the Auditor General's Report today, I was not the only one worried. The vacancies on the commission put the commission at risk of not being able to fulfill its mandate with another position due up at the end of this year.

I personally know of at least one person who applied to be on that commission. My question for the minister is, when will the Minister of Agriculture take his responsibility seriously enough to make these vital appointments, made for the agriculture industry?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I indeed do take the responsibility very seriously. Unfortunately, we have a very difficult time finding qualified people to sit on these boards. We've advertised, we've re-advertised, and people don't come forward.

MR. LOHR: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know at least one qualified person who applied and I'd be happy to share that personally with the minister. He then went on to blame the process as being slow and cumbersome and finally stated that it took four or five weeks to get things on the Cabinet's agenda.

My question for the minister is, can the minister tell this House if he has been able to get any of his appointments on the Cabinet agenda since election? Or has the Cabinet just not sat enough for him to get his agenda items on?

MR. COLWELL: Definitely, the Cabinet sits enough. (Interruptions)

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

MR. COLWELL: It's important that - there's a process behind this, a long, complicated process, mostly through the bureaucracy. I'm told that until the bureaucracy changes, which I can't see happening because all the rules around appointments to boards have been well structured over the years, because of abuse of that in the past. It will take that long and longer sometimes to get it done.

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

PREM.: POVERTY/FOOD INSECURITY - CRISIS ADDRESS

MR. GARY BURRILL: Our province has the single highest rate of child poverty anywhere in Canada. Last year, our province had the fastest-rising rate of food bank use anywhere in the entire country. In a letter just recently to the *Cape Breton Post* and then again today in *The Chronicle Herald*, Mr. Nick Jennery, who is the executive director of Feed Nova Scotia, said that he was deeply disappointed by the recent budget's failure to, in his words, significantly address this crisis. I wish to ask the Premier, does the Premier agree with Nick Jennery that, when it comes to poverty and food insecurity, Nova Scotia is in a crisis?

THE PREMIER: I believe it was a member of the former Progressive Conservative caucus that was here - I think it might have been the member for Inverness, along with the Minister of Agriculture - who brought forward a bill that was ensuring that farmers could have access to provide food into the food banks across the province. That was a wonderful gesture by the entire House, which passed that piece of legislation. At the same time, we know there are challenges being faced by those who are on income assistance. That's why we're working very hard under the leadership of the minister to transform income assistance into one that helps people get to work. It's why we're investing in breakfast programs across our province. It's why, when we had an opportunity to cut taxes, it was directed to low-income Nova Scotians.

I hope the honourable member will recognize the good spirit behind that gesture and behind that piece of public policy and will vote for the budget that's before him.

MR. BURRILL: It is not a question of spirit. It is a question of the actual financial capacity of a person to be able to buy their groceries. I ask the government to consider these two facts. Fact one, one in six people in Nova Scotia who lines up at a food bank is a person who is currently or has very recently been employed. Fact two - and members of the government may wish to take a moment to register their shame about this - on October 1st, three days ago, Nova Scotia became the province with the lowest minimum wage in

Canada. So, I want to ask the Premier, when can the people of Nova Scotia, like those in B.C. and Ontario and Alberta, expect to have a minimum wage of \$15?

THE PREMIER: I thought the honourable member and I had this debate a few months ago. The fact of the matter is, the budget that's before him increases the basic personal exemption for low-income Nova Scotians by \$3,000, which will leave more money in their pockets and give them more buying power. If the honourable member had had the kind of energy he just showed when he was in Opposition, he might have prevented his government from raising power rates by 35 per cent and driving families into energy poverty. We have finally got to a place where we're stabilizing the cost that folks across this province have, and we're going to continue to work with families to ensure that they can afford the basic necessities.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**COMMUN. SERV. - HOUSING N.S.:
INTERNAL CONTROLS - DEFICIENCIES**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Minister of Community Services. As we know, today in Public Accounts, the Auditor General expressed significant concerns over the internal controls at a few organizations inside the government. His use of the word "significant" is in itself significant. It's very important, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board just referred to the Auditor General's observations as opportunities for improvement. They're much more than that. We know that the Auditor General has cited year-over-year deficiencies in the internal controls at Housing Nova Scotia. These internal controls speak to poor monitoring and insufficient rigour around journal entries. It has been known for years. My question is, can the minister explain why Housing Nova Scotia continues to have these internal control deficiencies?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to assure the honourable member and the Auditor General that we take his recommendations seriously. We're in the process of implementing his recommendations, and they will be complete by December of this year.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the response. These are year-over-year deficiencies, they shouldn't have been there to begin with but yet they stayed year after year, and now there's something that has happened that has spurred some activity. I wonder what that might have been - might it have been something happened at the IWK to get people to spring into action?

The people of Nova Scotia deserve better. If these controls can be fixed by December, why did we wait year after year after year? That's my question for the minister.

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I think the honourable member would understand that I have been the minister since May/June. I can assure the honourable member there's a

project under way to identify the security levels - that's under way and it will be completed very soon. We are also hiring a person who will oversee the people who make the journal entries. I want to assure the honourable member that this is being taken care of.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**EECD: LAW AMENDMENTS COMM. (BILL NO. 8)
- TIME EXTENSION**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for her response and maybe she can give the Minister of Health and Wellness some advice on how to clear up the internal control deficiencies.

My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Yesterday, Nova Scotians were given 29 hours' notice to make their way to Province House to discuss an important piece of legislation and give their thoughts on something. For interested Nova Scotians, especially those who live outside of the HRM, the short notice makes it impossible for them to make appropriate arrangements to travel to Halifax and have their say on something they should be entitled to have their say on. In the case of the specific bill, for parents with young children the problem is exacerbated.

My question for the minister is, will the minister commit to extending the time that Bill No. 8 is before the committee so that all parents of all children in all areas of the province have an opportunity to speak to the bill?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we do have to recognize the geographical accessibility issue that having the Committee on Law Amendments on site here does create for Nova Scotians. That is a legitimate challenge for every government who sits on this side of the House, simply because of the location of this building and where it is. That said, we also do allow Nova Scotians to reach out through email, letters, phone calls, and any means of communication possible so they can voice their opinion on these important pieces of legislation that we bring forward to the House - and, of course, their voices are also represented here in this Chamber.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister. We do acknowledge that for the disabilities legislation out before this House there were some changes made, extending the consultation time, and pre-Primary education is an issue that will have long-lasting effects on this education system, on the children and the system itself.

Those people who are impacted by it should have the opportunity to speak to it. I just don't think 29 hours is sufficient notice. There should be something more. I would ask the minister again, will the minister commit to extending the Committee on Law Amendments for perhaps an extra day at least so that people have an opportunity to come and have their say should they choose to?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, a couple of thoughts on that. We know Nova Scotians support this piece of legislation because they voted for it in the last election when they returned us to a majority government. We are on the verge of having an extensive consultation with the sector (Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has the floor.

MR. CHURCHILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are on the verge of extending a major consultation with the sector, with the parents to discuss further phases of this particular program. I actually wonder if the member opposite talked to parents who would benefit from a free pre-Primary service before he actually committed to getting rid of it if he were the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. I would like to know where he got his information from.

[2:30 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: LIFEFLIGHT HELICOPTER - LANDING BAN

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. When the Nova Scotia LifeFlight helicopter was banned from landing on our hospitals' rooftops last year, in April, due to federal regulations, an interim measure was put in place to land at Point Pleasant Park. We were told that the helipad would be able to be used by August 1st. That hasn't happened - August 1st has come and gone.

We all know the people who need LifeFlight are in critical, critical condition and 15 to 30 minutes can be a matter between life and death. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, why did the government miss their targets on resuming the landings by August 1st?

MR. DELOREY: I appreciate this important question from the member. Indeed, as August approached, I did address this with the media for the public. What transpired was there's an opportunity to secure enhancements, improvements in the cabin of the LifeFlight helicopters. These were recommended improvements to benefit the health care professionals, the patient and the crew members on these helicopters. It was enhancements that were being made at no cost to the taxpayers of Nova Scotia.

The impact, of course, was a delay. Those helicopters arrived in the province just a week or so ago and now the training and so on will be taking place here in the province to get those helicopters up and running as soon as possible, ideally within about the next month.

MS. SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, a quick Google search shows us that this service, unfortunately, is very important to the people of Nova Scotia. As we see specialists leave across this province, it's even more important that the people from Cape Breton and the people from Yarmouth and Amherst have a service that is reliable and 15 to 30 minutes is an important period of time.

I'd like to table these documents that show a number of people who, unfortunately, sometimes have not resulted in good outcomes.

Will the Minister of Health and Wellness today give us an actual date when we can expect this service to be back in place?

MR. DELOREY: I appreciate the member's question and the preamble. There's an important community that the member missed and that's Antigonish. I want to assure the member that I had a constituent who had two occasions this summer when their child required LifeFlight services. That individual spoke to me this summer to advise how fantastic the service was, despite the current structure and setup, but the service of our emergency professionals, as well as the services provided by the front-line health care professionals at the IWK.

I want to assure her and all members of this Legislature and indeed all of the public, Mr. Speaker, that the emergency services they are continuing to provide for Nova Scotians are top-notch. The other important thing is, we're replacing one LifeFlight helicopter with two, to ensure that we enhance those emergency services for all Nova Scotians.

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

LAE - SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICY: CFS REPORT - NON-COMPLIANCE

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I have to say it has been interesting and rather frustrating for the women of the NDP caucus to sit here listening quietly this week as the Premier and Leader of the Official Opposition, both men, argued back and forth on the issue of women's sexual health and safety.

Last year this government assured Nova Scotians that our universities would implement stand-alone sexual assault policies to combat gender-based violence on campus. But according to a report released yesterday by the Canadian Federation of Students, half of our post-secondary institutions do not meet the government's requirement to maintain these policies.

My question today is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. Does he believe that this situation is acceptable and, if not, what does he plan to do about it?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: I had the chance yesterday to meet with student organizations from across the province. One of them was CFS, whose report the member tabled. CFS presented me with the report. In the report, they have found that five universities do not have stand-alone sexual assault strategies.

Mr. Speaker, in my view this is unacceptable. I have asked the department to reach out to the universities and if, in fact, they don't have stand-alone sexual assault strategies, to make sure that they put them in place.

The current MOU does have a section where they have to have stand-alone sexual assault strategies. I've also indicated to the department that in the upcoming MOU next year, which we're negotiating now, if universities do not have a stand-alone sexual assault strategy, we will hold back their 1 per cent increases.

MS. ZANN: I appreciate the response, Mr. Speaker. for the past several years the NDP caucus has been working to ensure adequate institutional responses to sexualized violence on campus. We've tabled legislation time and time again, because we believe that these policies should not be optional. However, rather than use their legislative authority to hold our public institutions to account, the government insisted that a clause buried in the memorandum of understanding would be enough to guarantee the safety and well-being of our students.

My question, Mr. Speaker, it has been a year since the MOU was signed and still half of the universities are without these crucial policies. Given that the MOU doesn't seem to be an adequate incentive and you're saying that you would take away 1 per cent from these universities, can the minister explain what the consequences will be for those schools that have failed to implement the policies already?

MR. KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, the MOU that's in place right now was signed back in 2008. What I do want to point out, in terms of universities not following a sexual assault strategy, it's very important that they do and that's something that is important to all Nova Scotians. Every Nova Scotian going to university or working at a university or anywhere in the public, needs to feel safe in their institution. The 1 per cent holdback would be quite significant to universities as it would be over \$3 million.

I can assure the member - one of the conversations I had yesterday with student organizations from across the province was, if the 1 per cent holdback is not effective in terms of having a proper sexual assault strategy on every campus in the province, then I would lobby my government to bring legislation forward as well.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

AGRIC. - FORMER PERENNIA CEO: EXPENSES - DISCLOSURE

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. In accordance with the administrative directive issued under Section 14A of the Public Service Act, Perennia Food and Agriculture Inc. is required to disclose travel and hospitality expenses of senior management. According to the Perennia website, the expenses of former CEO Jo Ann Fewer are shown as a total amount per quarter, with no explanations, and I'll table that. Can the minister please explain why he has not required Perennia to fully disclose the travel and hospitality expenses of the former CEO?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I'm not aware that that hasn't been done and I will investigate.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, interim chief executive officer Lynne Godlien has continued with the same practice as her predecessor. However, that is better than her counterparts at the Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board and the Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board, who the Auditor General rightly pointed out do not publish reports at all. While the expenses for travel do not seem extravagant, they are far from transparent and we are left to wonder what the taxpayer paid money for.

Can the minister please reassure us that his department is monitoring the expenses of the heads of the Crown Corporations under his responsibility, and require that the details be posted going forward?

MR. COLWELL: That question is a very important one, actually. At the time the Auditor General did the audit on the department, the financial reporting on expenses wasn't in place. It's on the website now and will be from now on on a regular basis.

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS: STAFF VACANCIES - ADMIT

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Last week, I asked a question about 11 nursing positions in the emergency room at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital that were unfilled. We were told the 11 positions were taken from the outlying hospitals during the summer closures to fill that void. To date, to my knowledge, these positions have not been returned to their local hospitals.

My question to the minister is, will the minister admit the practice of moving emergency room nurses to the Cape Breton Regional Hospital from our rural hospitals is preventing communities from receiving emergency care at home where they deserve it?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. The decisions around the staff assignments within our health care system, of course the work that gets

done is to ensure the best health care services for people in a region, that's the work and the focus to make sure that that service is available. We do have, and I assure the member opposite and all members, when we continue the recruitment efforts to bring health care providers, be they physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, family practice nurses, other care providers to the communities, those recruitment efforts continue and are ongoing.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, with respect to emergency room closures, we're told that some of them are due to the lack of doctors and others are due to a lack of nursing staff. These staff are being moved to the Cape Breton Regional Hospital and not able to serve their home hospitals.

Will the minister admit that this practice is to starve out emergency room services in rural areas, and will he commit to restoring emergency services at hospitals like Northside General Hospital, New Waterford Consolidated Hospital, and Glace Bay Hospital?

MR. DELOREY: I certainly do assure the member opposite that every effort when it comes to recruiting our health care providers - as I said, be they physicians, be they nurses of any variety, nurse practitioners, family practice nurses - those efforts are ongoing.

As part of my tour of the province, I met with nursing students at St. F.X. and CBU and the Dal campus in Yarmouth to talk to those students about their graduations, where they want to practise and provide their services, and how excited they are at the prospect of staying here in Nova Scotia to provide those services in our communities.

We do hire most of those nurses who want to stay and work here in Nova Scotia.

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

EMO: FRAMBOISE/FORCHU - LANDLINE ISSUES

MS. ALANA PAON: I'd like to direct my question to the minister for the Emergency Management Office, on behalf of residents of Framboise and Forchu who have been struggling with inconsistent landline coverage and service for years. In Framboise, residents did not have phone service for over a month, and for months before that, the phone lines would cut out or be full of static, making them essentially unusable. Imagine not having any phone service for over a month. The calls would be dropped, have static on the lines, or the lines would be dead for hours and sometimes days.

These rural communities are home to a high percentage of seniors, who need to be able to dial 911. In fact, that's their right through the CRTC. I'd like to ask the minister why there were no actions taken to assist these residents in their time of crisis.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I thank the honourable member for the question and the correspondence that I received this morning. It's true, the CRTC does control regulations over phone companies, but EMO is always concerned when we hear about situations like this.

Upon seeing the initial media in the Cape Breton Post, I asked EMO to reach out to the emergency management coordinator in Richmond County. The counties are really the first line of defence when it comes to situations like this, and EMO plays an active role in it. We are monitoring the situation, and I offered to the member to sit down with our EMO officials to make sure we address the concerns coming from your residents.

MS. PAON: While some of the residents have seen some recent improvements, they continue not to have a secondary source of communication. There's no cellphone service in this area, either. They've been fighting for a cellular tower for years, but have had no luck. When the landlines go down - and I can tell you, in winter it's even more of a problem - they don't have a secondary means of communication.

I would like to ask the minister if he would be willing to commit to securing the approvals and perhaps some provincial funding necessary to assist these residents in finally getting cellphone tower coverage in that area.

MR. MOMBOURQUETTE: I'd like to thank the member for the question again. Of course, EMO always tries to build strong relationships with communities across Nova Scotia, in working with our emergency management coordinators.

Again, in any situation like this, the first line of defence is with the communities, and they reach out to us to activate any kind of support. We're always engaged in those conversations with the communities. I would be more than willing and interested to sit down with the member and EMO staff to talk about her concerns further.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

NAT. RES. - TOBEATIC SANCTUARY: CLEAR-CUTTING - CONFIRM

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I again asked the Minister of Natural Resources about plans for a clear-cut inside the sanctuary in the Tobeatic. While on Friday she said she believed I was mistaken, I believe yesterday, when time ran out, she was about to confirm the proposed harvest.

The minister has also told this House that she has final eyes on every cut that is happening in the province. I can table the Hansard record.

So I'll ask the minister, will she commit to ensuring that no clear-cutting happens inside the sanctuary?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: I thank the honourable member for that question once again. It's certainly been repetitive in this House.

We had a discussion after the House session, or after Question Period, yesterday where I outlined to her the procedure for actually determining what forest practices would take place in specific areas. I also previously offered her the ability to come to the office - as I'm going to offer to all members of the House - to see exactly what takes place and how different forestry harvesting methods are determined in all practices.

That said, as the member has alluded to, I will eventually be getting the report that will show me all the scientific data behind any determination that's made. I haven't seen that yet, and no decision has been made at this point.

[2:45 p.m.]

MS. ROBERTS: As time goes by, there are fewer and fewer habitats in the province where wildlife can live undisturbed. One would think that a game sanctuary would provide this type of undisturbed setting, however, we also hear that Crown lands inside the Liscomb game sanctuary, which is home to the endangered mainland moose, continue to be heavily clear-cut.

So I'd like to ask the minister, does she have any concerns about clear-cutting happening inside the Liscomb Game Sanctuary?

MS. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, that first comment actually really threw me for a little bit of a loop because the notes here I have show me, when you talk about areas available for wildlife, we have the Kejimikujik National Park, the Tobeatic Wilderness Area with 464 acres, that's almost 10 per cent of all the land base in the province.

We're talking about Liscomb Game Sanctuary and game sanctuaries are not exempt from harvesting, but we do use sound harvesting processes to determine whether harvesting will be done in the area.

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

**HEALTH & WELLNESS - ROSEWAY HOSP. EMERG. (SHELBURNE):
CLOSURES - EXPLAIN**

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. During the months of July and August there were approximately 80 hours of emergency department closures for the Roseway Hospital in Shelburne. These closures were due to physician unavailability. On August 29th, a spokesman for the Nova Scotia Health Authority attributed these closures to it being a summer month. Fast forward from that day to one month and a day later on September 30th, this past weekend, the

emergency department at Roseway was closed yet again between the hours of 6:00 p.m. on Saturday and 8:00 p.m. on Sunday.

My question to the minister is, can you please tell me why these closures are still happening and what your department is doing to keep the Roseway Emergency Department open.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. As I believe I mentioned to the member previously, I had the opportunity to visit that site and the medical staff and tour the site. One of the things I took away hearing the concerns with the closures and about physicians in the emergency room, was to learn that in fact in the community they actually have more physicians than they've had in decades. Unfortunately, part of the challenge is the way the physicians choose to practise; there are fewer physicians interested or willing to take on the practice in the emergency room.

The way we serve these community emergency rooms in cases like that, like at Roseway, is through locums, temporary allocation of physicians. That's the approach that's being taken right now in that community.

MS. MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, on Friday, September 22nd at around 11:00 a.m. a woman was hit by a vehicle in downtown Shelburne. She was transported to Yarmouth Regional Hospital, over an hour away from Shelburne, because Roseway Emergency Department was closed yet again. Is the Minister of Health and Wellness able to tell the constituents of Shelburne why they should have to travel over an hour to access emergency health services.

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. Nova Scotia has a top-notch emergency response system in the Province of Nova Scotia that serves all of our communities. That service is really, in many cases, the envy of our sister jurisdictions, provinces and territories across the country. When they respond to an emergency situation like the member referred to, a car accident or any type of emergency situation, individuals are receiving excellent care and service and support as they get them to a more permanent location in a hospital emergency room, to respond to the situation.

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

ENV. – CARTER'S BEACH: ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION - STATUS

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Environment. Carter's Beach is both historically and culturally valuable in my constituency. Over the last year, the inaction of this government has put the ecosystem of the area at risk. There have been rumours for years that the area will be protected and a plan put in place to preserve this sensitive area for future generations. My question is, can

the Minister of Environment please tell me the current preservation status of Carter's Beach and what his department plans to do before next summer to help this sensitive area.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for the question. There's always a balance of considerations when we're looking at protecting land, this is in the pending status area. The officials from the Department of Environment have engaged the community, the broad community, in a community meeting to see what we could do to find solutions in terms of the human impact to the area. It is commonplace for people to go and enjoy the area there. There have been some challenges in terms of setting up the appropriate infrastructure. As of yet, we have to compile the information we got from the community and move forward with a balanced approach.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Members' Questions Put to Ministers has expired.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 11.

Bill No. 11 - Auditor General Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North on an introduction.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce a friend and mentor in the gallery today, Mr. Terry Rhindress. Mr. Rhindress is one of the longest-standing town councillors from Amherst, Nova Scotia. He's serving his fifth term, I believe. That's correct? I would like to introduce Mr. Terry Rhindress and welcome him to the House. Please stand up, Terry. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I would like to speak to the purpose of Bill No. 11, which introduces having a health outcomes auditor.

Why do we need a health outcomes auditor? It's a good question. I think we all know here in the House the problems that we have had with accountability in our health care system. I would like to make reference to a couple of documents.

When we look at an effective management model, we know that we need strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and evaluations and control. I would like to table this document that outlines proper strategic management. Accountability and measuring outcomes are part of a strategy that does an evaluation and controls. I do believe, and I think many of my colleagues on all sides would agree, that right now that is missing in our health care system.

One example that I have heard is that our Nova Scotia Health Authority board of directors have been quoted as saying that they don't fully understand why people are disappointed in their results. One of the reasons is because they have been very focused on financial controls and not looking at actual health outcomes.

I would like to give an example of why health outcomes are an important part of our evaluation of our health care system. If someone comes in to see their physician or family practice nurse, and we find out that they have high blood pressure, we come up with a treatment plan for that patient. The patient is put on blood pressure medication, and they return in a week's time. What would you say, Mr. Speaker, if we said to that patient, "Unfortunately, your blood pressure is not any better controlled, but we're going to keep you on that medication and treatment regime because that's what you can afford?"

We would never do that. We measure health outcomes. If our health outcome is not effective, then we change the intervention. We change the treatment plan to something that is actually going to produce effective health outcomes.

I would like to read from a document that talks about measuring health outcomes, from Michael Porter. "Achieving good patient health outcomes is the fundamental purpose of health care. Measuring, reporting, and comparing outcomes is perhaps the most important step toward unlocking rapid outcome improvement and making good choices about reducing costs." It is likely "the single most powerful tool in revamping the health care system." I would like to table this document.

We know that measuring health outcomes is currently not being done. After three years, we have not seen any improvements in our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, since I have been elected as MLA, I have had people contacting me daily, both in my role as MLA and as Health Critic - people who can't access care, people who have waited too long for diagnostic tests only to find out that their cancer has spread and now is not treatable. I've had people come in - I think we all have - who haven't been able to access proper mental health care services. We have people who are waiting in pain and suffering up to two years waiting for hip and knee replacements.

I know I'm not sharing anything with this House that people don't already know. What I'm suggesting to you today and presenting with this bill is that by instituting a health outcomes auditor we can make effective change. It's only by measuring our outcomes, our health outcomes, not just the financial outcomes, that we will be able to know what changes should be made to produce more effective outcomes.

I believe this is possible, Mr. Speaker, because of the people who work in health care - the doctors, the nurses, the physiotherapists, and other health care workers who go into health care because they care. Day after day they do everything they can for their patients.

Mr. Speaker, if we found that this person with high blood pressure, if it wasn't treatable and they couldn't afford their medication, do you know what doctors and nurses do right now? They find ways; they find creative ways. They contact the pharmaceutical company and most pharmaceutical companies have a benefit, a compassionate benefit. So, we are creative, we find ways so that finances are not a barrier to effective health outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, I know sometimes in this House politics play a big role in the decisions made and I'd like to suggest that when it comes to health care, politics should not play a role. What should impact our decisions is what is right and what is going to produce the best health outcomes for the people of this province.

I implore every MLA who is here, and the ones who aren't in the House, to vote in favour of this bill because that is what is right - not because you are a Liberal or a PC or an NDP but because that is what is right. We need to be measuring our health outcomes to produce better results for the people of Nova Scotia.

There's no room for egos in health care. It's time for us to be humble. We all know that what's happening right now in our health care system is not okay. It's not okay for people to be waiting and we all know that people are dying without the help they need and they deserve.

Again, I implore people to set their egos aside; I implore people to set your political stripes aside and help to put a health outcomes auditor in place so that we can do a better job at measuring our health outcomes, measuring and holding some accountability to people who are making the decisions.

It's not all the fault of the Nova Scotia Health Authority Board. The reason I say that, you know sometimes people don't know what they don't know. Right now, our Nova Scotia Health Authority Board of Directors have no clinicians on the board. I've had directors tell me to my face that they do not feel they have the knowledge or background to be making the decisions they are making because they don't know the implications of their decisions, Mr. Speaker. They don't have a full grasp and that's why we also need to have clinicians on the board of directors.

By having a health outcomes auditor, Mr. Speaker, at least now we would have some controls put in place so that this health outcomes auditor could report to the Nova Scotia Health Board, as well as the IWK, making recommendations of how to improve the health care system for Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read from another document I will table as well, and it is called *What is Value in Health Care?* One of the quotes says, "Achieving high value for patients must become the overarching goal of health care delivery, with value defined as the health outcomes achieved per dollar spent.¹ This goal is what matters for patients and unites the interests of all actors in the system. If value improves, patients, payers, provider, and suppliers can all benefit while the economic sustainability of the health care system increases." And I'll table this document, Mr. Speaker.

[3:00 p.m.]

This bill is so that the health outcomes auditor can independently attest to the performance of the IWK Health Centre and the Nova Scotia Health Authority Board. The health outcomes auditor will oversee standards of care outcomes and governance with respect to the IWK Health Centre and the Nova Scotia Health Authority board.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for this time to discuss this important bill. I hope that each MLA will look at the importance of measuring and evaluation and accountability, so that we can make needed improvements to our health care system here for the people of our province.

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

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise for a few moments to speak to the bill before us, Bill No. 11, the Act amending the Auditor General Act. I appreciate the comments from the member for Cumberland North who has introduced this bill, brought it to this Legislature. I believe perhaps it's the member's first piece of legislation, so congratulations on that milestone to the member.

In the remarks of the member for Cumberland North introducing this bill and starting debate, much of the focus has been on the health care system. I think the underlying desire which I believe we do share across this Legislature, and indeed perhaps across the province, in the public, and all providers of our health care system, is that we want to continuously improve the services being provided in our health care system to ensure we are getting value for the money that is invested into our health care system, and that value, of course, being an aspect associated with, again, the services being provided, the care being provided by our health care professionals.

The member referenced some examples, the challenging examples we hear from Nova Scotians. I want to take a moment, though, to highlight and stress and perhaps I can't

imagine that I'm unique - getting a few comments that perhaps I am in certain ways. What I mean is that as a member of this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, I don't think the feedback that my constituents provide is unique. Of course, there are instances of individuals, as the member for Cumberland North highlighted. I believe we've all heard of individuals, whether it's accessing primary care or other parts of our health care system, that we work diligently as members and within the health care system to ensure those citizens get access to those services that they need.

What I want to highlight, and I hope I'm certainly not unique there, those instances where I also have constituents and people in Nova Scotia who come up to explain to me how well the health care system has served them, whether it's them as an individual or their child. Earlier today during Question Period, I had the opportunity to make reference to feedback provided to me by a constituent. Their child, a young child, with health challenges throughout his young life, in the summer unfortunately had taken a turn, had to be airlifted from Antigonish to the IWK hospital to receive services and support that was provided, spoke extremely highly of the services and the supports, from the emergency responders right up to and including the supports within the IWK centre.

The child received the treatment, was released and, unfortunately, at a later point during the summer again, given the nature of the lifelong illness that this child is afflicted with, Mr. Speaker, had to be airlifted again at another point during the summer to receive the fantastic services and treatment at the IWK. That's just one example.

I've had others who have been receiving cancer treatments throughout this province and yes, again being from Antigonish from a community that does have to travel, whether it's to Sydney or to Halifax to receive radiation services. That has not been the complaint or the concerns that I've heard. That's not the message that I've heard from those patients in Antigonish. Indeed, it has been about how phenomenal the services being provided are, by those providing the cancer care services to them, Mr. Speaker, how pleased and privileged, they recognize, that we are in this province and across the country to have such quality health care being provided by the phenomenal health care providers - the physicians, the nurses, nurse practitioners, our medics throughout the system, but also our other health care support providers, including physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and our pharmacists. We have a wide range of health care providers throughout the system.

Again, I stand here in my place recognizing the challenges being expressed from Nova Scotians - the concerns being raised by physicians and other health care providers about how we can do better - opportunities to improve our health care system. But I also stand here in my place recognizing the phenomenal work that is being done, and I want to assure those members of our health care system that those efforts and the work they're providing are being recognized by Nova Scotians from one end of this province to the other.

So despite the frequent use and reference of the challenging examples highlighting the opportunities for improvements in our health care system, as important as that is - nobody is suggesting we turn a blind eye to those challenges and those opportunities to improve our health care system, but I do think it is equally important when we stand in this Legislature, when we're in our communities engaging and talking to our constituents, that we also remind them of the stories that we hear of the great work being done from our health care providers.

On several occasions, individuals in this Legislature have stood up and touted and referenced the report released recently by Doctors Nova Scotia about the challenges and the burnout and the diminishing morale of - in this case physicians, but I suspect that that may not be limited to just physicians in our health care system. I can't help but wonder about the extent to which hearing only constant criticism of the services that they provide, and the workplace and the environment that they work in, is contributing to the challenges and frustrations of those individuals on the front line, providing such critical services.

At no point am I suggesting that that means we turn a deaf ear or a blind ear or stick our heads in the sand when individuals are bringing legitimate concerns about the health care system - be they concerns or just a recognition of opportunities to improve our system, which I believe is fundamentally what the member who brought this bill forward is concerned about, or rather, the intention of the bill being brought forward here is in an effort to improve our health care system. I think it's clear when you read through the bill that that is the overall intention and objective, fundamentally.

When you do read through the bill, the concerns being raised by the member in the opening remarks to this debate are about the need for tracking information, accountability, and transparency so we can assess these things. What wasn't acknowledged and hasn't been acknowledged in this proposed amendment to our Auditor General Act is that there are many organizations outside of - not just including the Auditor General - that do provide some of these services. There are accreditation processes in our health care system for the services being provided. There are organizations like Accreditation Canada, which goes through a process in our health care system to ensure that these organizations are actually tracking and providing those services and are being assessed on best practices within the health care system.

There's the Canadian Patient Safety Institute, which of course assesses from a patient's perspective and that lens to ensure that the health care services are being assessed there.

There have been several occasions where information has been cited from a recent CIHI report. That's the Canadian Institute of Health Information. They released a recent report that focused on the availability of physicians in our health care system across the country. That's a national organization that collects data about the performance and the status of various aspects of our health care system and reports that. It allows not just our

jurisdiction to assess, as discussions and debate taking place in Question Period here in the Legislature - the work of these organizations ensures that we have access to information to assess our performance not just internally but cross-jurisdictionally.

Specifically, when you look at the proposed amendments, there are a couple of items that I think are worthy of consideration by the Official Opposition Party that has tabled this.

One of the first things is Clause 2 in the proposed amendment which proposes that this addition of Section 6A to the Auditor General Act, immediately following Section 6, and Section 6A(1) states, "On the advice of the Auditor General, the Governor in Council shall appoint a Healthcare Outcomes Auditor who holds office during pleasure." And what I am curious about is clearly, really if you read through all of the amendments and the implementation of what is proposed here, which is instituting a health care outcomes auditor, is dependent on the advice of the Auditor General. Before considering voting on this piece of legislation, I think it would be incumbent on the members of this Legislature to know if the auditor has been engaged and what the auditor's position is on the establishment of such a position within what is the Auditor General's Office.

I think another thing is under the proposed 6A(2). I think it is important to recognize under the proposed amendment, the introduction of 6A(2), it indicates that, "The Healthcare Outcomes Auditor must be an individual qualified to be a licensed public accountant in a jurisdiction in Canada."

I guess as you go through the proposed amendment and the description of the actions and the responsibilities or the duties of the proposed position for the outcomes auditor with that focus, as the member highlighted, on not the financial piece but on the delivery of the health care services, whether it's a public accountant that is best qualified for that nature of work or rather as we have heard time and time again being raised by the Opposition, by the media, and indeed by health care professionals themselves, by the clinicians, the health care providers perhaps being in the best position to identify and provide. So, again, it's an important question that I think deserves to be asked and considered when pursuing and looking at this proposed piece of legislation.

Furthermore, as you take a look and go through the proposed legislation, Clause 3 would be proposing to add Section 25A immediately following Section 25 of the Auditor General Act. Subsection (3) of the new section, and subsection (4) - really, these two sections essentially highlight that it's not just going to be the work of the health care outcomes auditor to perform, as the member has referenced about the focus on health care outcomes, the actual delivery outcome, but rather as the member had referenced earlier, the concerns that so much focus on the financials, these two subsections, (3) and (4), make it very clear that this amendment will be taking some of the responsibilities from the Office of the Auditor General.

That means that the health care system indeed through the NSHA and IWK, the two health authorities, any audit action that would normally fall under the purview of the Office of the Auditor General, the Auditor General, would no longer fall under that responsibility but indeed be transferred to this health care outcomes auditor. Again, if we're looking for the auditor that has the focus on outcomes and so on, you know the achievement of achieving a qualified person to provide both the outcomes, which I think is the underlying objective of this, but also the financial and traditional role of the audit being conducted - are you able to do both?

[3:15 p.m.]

If the member's position is yes, you can have both, then I would direct the member to Section 21(1) of the existing Auditor General Act which states, "The Auditor General may audit the performance of an auditable entity or any activity, program, process or function of an auditable entity." - which fundamentally, I proposed to you and members of this Legislature, ultimately covers all the activities that are being proposed to be performed by the new role being identified here of the health care outcomes auditor. It makes it very clear in Section 21(1) that that work can be done.

Again, if one is submitting that the proposed health care outcomes auditor can perform both the traditional audit duties as well as the outcome duties, I submit perhaps that the existing Office of the Auditor General can also do both under the existing legislation and this proposed amendment is redundant.

MR. SPEAKER: Before I recognize the next speaker, after some review, I just want to remind all members that we're supposed to be speaking generally to the bill, not quoting separate clauses or parts of the bill. Although, in this case, the entire clause was not totally given, partially given, I will show some leniency on all sides to be fair. But I do want to remind members of this House of the Rules; please note.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that we're here talking about this piece of legislation, brought forward by my colleague, after the IWK scandal that has been present in the news for the last little while. I don't know why anybody would go against this legislation.

I think with a budget the size of the health care budget and the accountability that should be available to all Nova Scotians, I can't see why we would object to this, to have somebody overseeing a budget of this size. I wonder would we be in this situation with the spending scandal at the IWK if this piece of legislation was already enacted.

Sometimes the truth is a hard pill to swallow. It certainly seems so for the Liberal Government when it comes to dealing with the situation of our health care crisis in this

province. Fewer and fewer family doctors, we've heard it week after week in this House, that I believe we're down more than 20 family doctors in the province since this government took office. We had a promise from this government in 2013 that every Nova Scotian would have a doctor - now more Nova Scotians are without a doctor. The number has been thrown around back and forth but the actual number is in excess of 100,000 people.

The billions and billions of dollars that's spent on this budget and we have people in Nova Scotia going without necessary primary care. We need to be accountable as government, we need to be accountable to the residents of Nova Scotia, and I believe this piece of legislation helps to do that. We know what's going on in this province regarding health care. When I have a single parent, who can barely afford to feed her children and get medication, comes to me with a sick child and tells me she doesn't have a family doctor, that's a crisis. When I see at any given time the three rural sites in Cape Breton, their ERs closed time and time again, to me, that's a crisis. It makes me wild.

My colleague Eddie talked before about the ER closures and the fact that it's a nursing shortage and that the rural hospitals - I believe he said they are being starved to death and that's exactly what's happening. I don't know if this government is aware, but in the New Waterford Hospital we lost our lab services on Monday, with no notice given to the public. Just all of a sudden one day, I believe, Gary and I were at the hospital and somebody came up to us and told us, did you know that New Waterford Hospital doesn't have lab services any longer on a Monday? That makes me mad as well.

There are four retirements in the lab in New Waterford that weren't filled. Does anybody in government know about that? Does anybody in government pay attention to that? Is this part of the starvation process that's happening to our rural hospitals in Cape Breton? I absolutely believe it is.

When I get a call on a Friday afternoon from a mother who is frantic because her 18-year-old daughter is talking about committing suicide and I have to tell her to get to crisis before 7:00 p.m., because after that it's closed - let's hope that if you're going to try to kill yourself, you do it between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. After that, you're on your own. To me, that is disgraceful and I can't believe that this government is okay with that.

The Liberals keep telling us that they've heard the concerns of Nova Scotians. If that was the case, we wouldn't be talking about this. We wouldn't be talking about this mother whose daughter was about to commit suicide. We wouldn't be talking about the over 100,000 Nova Scotians without a doctor and we wouldn't be talking about the need for accountability because of the spending scandal at the IWK.

The Liberals were too concerned in 2013 with the merger of the health authorities than to worry about the state of health care for Nova Scotians. I believe I stated in my

maiden address to this House that over half a million dollars was spent on office furniture for new executive offices within the NSHA. I'm sorry, but I think that is atrocious. If this legislation had been enacted at the time, would that have happened? Is that acceptable to the members of this House that \$600,000 can be spent on furniture when we're asking people not to commit suicide after the hour of 7:00 p.m. That is disgraceful.

Again, my colleague talked about starving rural ERs, when in fact the information that's coming forward from staff is completely different. In fact, I've just recently learned that in New Waterford, two emergency room nurses have been displaced because the government - through the NSHA - have closed the mobile care team. So they had two emergency room nurses there that had no work. Rather than keeping the mobile care team going, they displaced two nurses.

This government repeatedly talks about hearing from Nova Scotians, after talking to Nova Scotians, that both Opposition Parties - probably me in particular - are fear-mongering. I don't believe we're fear-mongering at all. We're telling the truth. We're not just telling the good stuff. It's reality. If you want to come to my office and listen to the phone calls that I get from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. about, what am I going to do, I don't have a doctor, what am I going to do my daughter's going to commit suicide - I'm not fear-mongering. I'm trying to tell this government the truth. I'm trying to be both pretty open and forthright. However, that doesn't seem to go both ways.

The Liberals have said that the Opposition Parties are discouraging new doctors from coming to Nova Scotia. We didn't pick a fight with Doctors Nova Scotia. We didn't break the collective agreement with Doctors Nova Scotia. This Liberal Government broke their agreement with Doctors Nova Scotia. Maybe you could say I'm a bit too negative, but I just think I'm a realist. I don't think that the doctors who are leaving Cape Breton in the numbers that they are - my colleague spoke to it earlier - I don't think we're fear-mongering about that. I don't think we're lying about that. We're telling the truth.

Somebody in this government needs to be accountable for what's going on with the health care crisis. This government repeatedly tell us there is no crisis. Maybe if we had this auditor, they would agree. I wonder if the residents in New Waterford believe that they were over-serviced by the mobile care team. I believe they would tell us, no, that I'm not exaggerating, that they are actually under-serviced, that they are receiving a substandard level of service to that of the rest of the province.

It's possible that when the Canadian Institute for Health Information published a report showing Nova Scotia lost 20 family doctors between 2014 and 2016, that they misread the direction of these numbers. Again, I think it's pretty clear. I don't believe it's fear-mongering.

I wonder why there was no increase in the primary care funding in this budget. In the last health budget, in fact, the funding was actually under-spent. Does this government

have that much assertion that we don't need those services that that money was set aside for? I find these questions that we can't seem to ever get answers on, that are just clear - I think we'd work a lot better together if we could just get some clear and concise answers. Maybe with the addition of an auditor specifically for health care, that would come to fruition. For that reason, I stand in support of this legislation.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: I want to thank the interventions that we've heard to now on Bill No. 11, which is adjusting the Auditor General Act when it comes to creating an auditor for health outcomes.

Off the top, I'd like to acknowledge that there are a number of people watching this with interest and wanting to know where people stand when it comes to transparency, when it comes to health outcomes, when it comes to health care accountability. I hope that maybe at least they see some hope for our health care system. Mr. Speaker, I've spent too much of my career in this House of Assembly helping patients trying to navigate the health care system. I don't want to see it fail, and that's the truth.

I listened to the NDP member and she is correct in that the government seems to want to lay blame on Opposition Parties for being too negative on bills. Do you know what? Sometimes we have to be negative. That's part of the job of being in Opposition, but it's also trying to come up with ideas that could or should make the lives of Nova Scotians better.

With this specifically, this is something that discussions with doctors, discussions with health care groups, discussions with the Auditor General would make better. That's without talking of what's going on at the IWK or all these things that come to the forefront when there are challenges within our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, nearly half of the provincial budget overall is allocated to health care spending. So quite honestly, if we're seen to be spending a lot of time talking about health care, there's a good reason for it. It is that important to the fabric of our communities in Nova Scotia.

We can spend lots of time talking about wait times, about people coming to our offices, looking for hip, knee, ankle, or shoulder replacements and having trouble accessing those services. We can talk about seniors' care and how that's affecting our health care system by having these people in our hospital system when they should be moved into a more appropriate level of long-term care. We can talk about what I continue to call the dirty little secret of Nova Scotian health care, which is travel - most times, in our case, to either Kentville or to here in Halifax to receive those services they cannot receive in the Valley or in the South Shore.

The most recent example I have from our family is travelling here to the IWK after my 15-year-old son broke his arm playing soccer. We would hope that we could move off to Yarmouth and get an arm set so that he could have a relatively good rest of the summer, but we arrived in Yarmouth with his broken arm - it looked kind of gross, too, the way he broke it. He fell on it playing soccer, and that's just the way it went. He's a good soccer player and sometimes you fall on things when you're not supposed to, when you are actually being aggressive and trying to get that ball.

He was given the drugs to put him to sleep while they tried to set his arm. They tried their best in Yarmouth, and I want to thank the doctors for the work they did, but after X-raying it once it had been set, it was not of an acceptable level for them. Then the next day we received a phone call from the IWK so that we could come up to Halifax and get him put to sleep again and have it reset and re-casted at that time.

[3:30 p.m.]

Luckily, we're of a family that can afford to travel here to Halifax to receive that service, but how many of our constituents don't have that capability to just pick up, get on the road, and get to the IWK when they need that service? Those are the challenges of everyday Nova Scotians in our health care system.

That's without talking about the unacceptable number of Nova Scotians who don't have a family physician. Those are just the day-to-day access issues that people have. Access to cancer services. How many of our constituents end up here in Halifax staying at the Lodge that Gives in order to receive radiation, oncology, or other specialty chemotherapy? Travel is a big issue that we should be accountable for in this province.

The Nova Scotia Health Authority is unable or has been unwilling to tell Nova Scotians what the actual plan is with respect to recruitment and retention of physician resources or whether we'll have it in the upcoming years. It sounds bureaucratic and incredible but Ms. Knox, the Health Minister, and the Premier defend it, saying that they do have a plan and echo the associated talking points when they bring it up. Quite honestly, we haven't seen it yet. In the simplest of terms, it means the Premier, minister, Nova Scotia Health Authority, and the IWK quite honestly don't have a clear idea of the current needs of Nova Scotians, let alone a picture of the impending problems in physicians retiring or simply leaving Nova Scotia in flight from a new federal Liberal tax grab.

Adding fuel to the fire, Doctors Nova Scotia is suing this government for alleged breach of contract. The negativity doesn't come from the Opposition Parties. It comes from everyday Nova Scotians and Doctors Nova Scotia.

The IWK, I don't know where to start there. Vacant board positions, I think we had 36 opportunities to appoint new members to the IWK board. They have a lack of internal controls. The board is being unfairly painted by the haphazard approach of government.

There are so many fingers in the health care - I guess we could call it a health care dyke, trying to hold back that water, keep everything from just spilling out all over the place.

Is any member of this House confident that there is currently adequate audit capacity to ensure results for nearly half of the money collected from taxpayers? Who is making sure that the money goes to health care and not to administration, like nice furniture and new buildings? Who is holding the leaders and managers to account for having an actual plan and delivering adequate health care and sticking to it?

It used to be the minister's responsibility, but we have seen the cross-finger-pointing that happens now. That's not my responsibility, that's the NSHA, and the NSHA saying that's not my problem, and the buck continues to be passed on. If anything, it seems ad hoc and scandal driven.

The Auditor General released his report today. It was a damning report of a systematic lack of key controls across government. The independence and impartiality of the Auditor General's office is vital to making improvements. Somebody has to be in the centre trying to get changes to happen. Acting to remedy deficiencies is critical to maintaining public trust. The AG should be empowered to fully resource, to be regularly and fully ensuring our health care spending is appropriate, assigned to goals, and that there is real accountability for the results. I am hard-pressed to imagine that anyone could stand in this place and dispute that health care does not need more oversight from the Auditor General's office.

While the PC caucus is highly frustrated with the Liberal Government and the Nova Scotia Health Authority, the call for a health auditor general capacity is not a partisan move, nor is it a gotcha. All three Parties in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, have been accountable for governing Nova Scotia. Health care is complex, and the consequences of poor planning, inappropriate spending, and no real accountability for results are not going away. Unless all Parties in this Chamber work together to create impartial, ongoing, and result-driven oversight of the delivery of health care of Nova Scotians.

The genesis of this bill has come from Nova Scotians, themselves, especially those physicians who are exhausted by rhetoric and inaction, burning out from a growing feeling of being undervalued and disrespected. So, Mr. Speaker, you know, to the Government House Leader, to the members of the government, I ask that you commit to calling the vote on this at some point. If it's not going to be today, later on, maybe the government can call this in their business as the procedure goes.

Allowing this bill to proceed through all stages of this House, you know, only the government and the Government House Leader can do that on behalf of the entire 51 constituencies affected. I'm also calling on members of this Chamber to decide whether maintaining the status quo, or putting the politics of partisanship ahead of health care. It's too important. As much as we continue to rale on and ask questions about health care and

I know the minister is forthright and wants to make a difference in the health care system and, quite honestly, I believe has been given a bag of problems that he has to get a handle on, but I know he can't do it alone. He needs to have the processes available to him to be able to understand what can be measured.

We can look and debate these things here in the House of Assembly when it comes to estimates or other issues. Looking at line items, we can ask silly questions of, you know, why did this line cost this and why did they spend this much money on a new chair, but that's not the issue that we want here today. There has to be a clear set of outcomes put forward by government, a clear set of planning, plans that everybody can follow along, and having an independent third party look at saying that government is doing a good job or government is not doing a good job and here's how they're going to be able to remedy this situation.

Quite honestly, I'm tired of standing here and hearing from government, basically, the politics of blaming someone else. You know, that's not my problem. That's someone else's problem. Quite honestly, it's all of our problem here in the House of Assembly. We should be finding ways to work together on these things rather than, you know, taking the partisan shots that sometimes happen in this House.

In closing I just want to say, health care in southwestern Nova Scotia has not necessarily gotten better over the last number of years. Quite honestly, we continue to hear concerns on the availability of emergency room doctors and physicians at Roseway Hospital, the challenges that we continue to have in Digby which overloads the problems that we're having in Yarmouth. I mean I don't know how many more people I can hear from coming to my constituency office saying, you know, my wait time in Yarmouth is eight hours, and those people who have been unable to secure a family physician ending up in the emergency room in order to have a basic prescription filled. That's not the best use of a health care system.

So, again, it's too important to get wrong and it's too important not to have those clear outcomes. I would be remiss if I didn't spend a couple of moments talking about dialysis and availability in southwestern Nova Scotia, and the issues that we continue to have on access to those services in Barrington Passage; the problem that we have in diabetes and renal failure. All of those things if we had good plans around us, with measurable outcomes that an auditor can truly look at, would seriously make a difference that we as legislators could truly make informed decisions on the success or the non-success of the health care system so that we can all work together to make sure that those changes happen.

So, with those few words, I want to thank the government side for listening. I respect the minister has a few questions, and I know that the Health and Wellness Critic for the PC caucus as well as myself would be happy to sit down and discuss this with him

further. Maybe the Government House Leader could bring it forward another time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East. I believe there are about 11 minutes left.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Opportunities for improvement seems to be the theme today on this day that the Auditor General released his report covering three chapters - not a good day for the government in those three chapters, on any of those chapters.

The one that was of most interest to me was the chapter on the significant internal control weaknesses across the government. "Significant." The Auditor General went through great lengths to explain to the Public Accounts Committee this morning what the choice of the word "significant" means. It's not a word that he used lightly. It's a word that had a lot of thought go into it. He and his staff in the end reached the conclusion that they should use the words "significant internal control weaknesses."

We know these weaknesses have existed for years. In fact, the Nova Scotia Health Authority - a brand new organization, only two years old - when it was established, you would think it would have the best internal controls, when you're setting up a brand new organization. It has amongst the worst. They were the worst in the first year, and then, heading into the second year's audit, the Auditor General's staff thought, maybe when we show up for the year two audit, they'd have taken the time or bothered to fix some of the significant weaknesses that had existed. The answer was no, they hadn't. They hadn't gotten around to that. It wasn't important to them.

I say all this in the context of, if you don't want to know, you will never know. If you don't want to know, you will never ask the question. What we are trying to do on this side - I know the Premier has often said, well, gee, you're just being negative. He doesn't like to hear the realities of what's happening in this province. I've heard some of his ministers fall into that same little trap: oh, stop being so negative, don't talk about reality. Let's not talk about reality in this Chamber.

The reality is that there are very real problems in health care in this province. This province is not alone, but there are very, very real problems in health care in this province. There are some success stories, and I often tell people that those who are seriously ill or injured will get the care they need at the time. We are very good at that, in my opinion. But in all of the other things, we're not too good. The wait-list and the access to primary health care is not good.

What we need to do is, yes, acknowledge the phenomenal people who are working in our health care system. I would submit to the members opposite that that goes beyond standing up in Question Period and thanking them. I would suggest that it goes towards showing them. The people who work in the system are human. They are human and they

are doing the very best they can to meet the needs, but they're not feeling very loved. They're not feeling very supported. That is the shame, because if the government can't appreciate the people working in the health care system and can't appreciate the people working in the schools and can't appreciate the people working for the actual government, then we have serious problems.

What we're trying to do - and I applaud my colleague the member for Cumberland North for bringing this forward to shine the light on. There is something we can do that can increase the level of accountability. This goes to that. We're trying to say, hey, we can all do better, we can all recognize an opportunity for improvements, and let's take it. Let's stop talking about opportunities for improvement. Let's actually start making improvements. This is something that could go a long way to doing that.

[3:45 p.m.]

But we don't have that. We have a culture of disrespect. Less than an hour ago, the Premier stood in this Chamber and answered a question about payments to Doctors Nova Scotia. The Premier said - and I will quote the Premier on this, because at the time I was pretty taken aback. I could recognize these alternative facts just as soon as they came out of his mouth.

The Premier said these are benefits that the government wants to pay to ensure that physicians have health and dental, paternity, et cetera. We continue to pay for those benefits, even continued through negotiations. Those benefits have been paid each and every day. We don't think it's reasonable that \$4.4 million of taxpayer money be taken from that and stashed with Doctors Nova Scotia.

There are so many things that are inaccurate in this statement, but I would be remiss if I didn't point out the biggest of them. It says we continue to pay for these benefits even through continued negotiations. Now, if the Premier didn't realize that wasn't true, we have a much bigger problem. I suspect he should know that in fact in the middle of the negotiations, in December 2015, the government stopped paying. Do you know when they started again, Mr. Speaker? In December 2016, a full year later.

Now, let's put that into context. That's the same time, that's the same Premier who went to the front of the newspaper and said, doctors are greedy, they're asking for 40 per cent raises. Not true, Mr. Speaker, it was a complete misrepresentation. But do you know what? I can't for the life of me understand why doctors don't want to come here. Can anyone help me understand why maybe doctors don't want to come here?

I think back to the famous exchange between Jessup and Kaffee, otherwise known as Cruise and Nicholson, I believe it was, when Nicholson said, "You can't handle the truth!" He told Tom Cruise that, you have the luxury of not knowing what I know.

I know oftentimes the members opposite believe that they have the luxury of not knowing what we know. It doesn't make it right. What we're asking for with this piece of legislation is we're asking for more accountability. That's all we're asking for. We're asking for the government to accept what we know and what presumably they know, but do not want to acknowledge, and that's all we want.

I'm looking through some of the literature here, *The New England Journal of Medicine* talks about the importance of measuring, reporting and comparing outcomes. *The New England Journal of Medicine* said perhaps the most important steps towards rapidly improving outcomes and making good choices and reducing costs is actually just acknowledging where we're at, and that's all we want to do.

Now, I will commend the minister because I do appreciate that he has done some research on this bill, and I do appreciate that he took it seriously enough to do some research. He referred to the Auditor General's responsibilities and suggested that maybe this is already in there. Okay, even if we were to concede on that, then maybe let's say, well, let's shine the light just a little brighter and pull that out in another department or something. But the minister did say that there are various organizations doing this. He referred to CIHI and he referred to the accreditation process. Yes, those are important, respected organizations that are looking at these very things. The problem is that accreditation is once every five years, a point in time. I'd like to see that a little more continuous.

The problem with CIHI is we don't - with CIHI it's always planned. That's right, my colleague is right, it's always planned. We hear the minister refer to CIHI maybe when it's a little favourable, but not too anxious to refer to it when it's not. We need a person with appropriate responsibility to say the words.

Now I said all that, realizing that we could have this bill passed and we could have this special Auditor General, but I have zero faith that this particular government would - I was going to use an expression about a rat's behind there, but I decided maybe not.

I don't think this government would care what that Auditor General said, because I know that this morning the Auditor General reported on significant internal control weaknesses that have existed for years and years and years, and nobody cares. But there will come a day when there is a new government, and I would hope that we would have it set up so that that new government would respect an Auditor General's findings and would want to know what is really happening on the ground in health care. This is our opportunity to acknowledge to the people in health care that we do care.

I know they're muzzled. The minister said he did his tour and everyone said that everything is great, and it's not. They are muzzled. They are afraid. So we're bringing voice to their concerns on the floor of this Legislature, and I know that the minister would want to know what the concerns are. Yes or no?

I believe that the minister would want to know that, and I believe that as a group of individuals we can support the minister. This is all about supporting the minister and giving him the information he needs to do his job. I am in favour of this piece of legislation because it supports the minister.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Bill No. 11 debate has expired.

Before I call on anyone else, I do want to remind the members of this House, and I will remind the honourable member for Pictou East, that the terminology “alternative facts” is unparliamentary. I request that you withdraw that statement.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: I apologize to the House and withdraw that statement.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D’ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 20.

Bill No. 20 - Small Business Tax Protection Act.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: It is a pleasure to kick off debate on this bill, a PC bill which actually assures the small businesses, the doctors, the farmers of Nova Scotia, among other small businesses, that their provincial government will not profit from the federal tax increases that are proposed for them.

Let me just say, you’ve got to know that a government is going down the wrong road - as the national government is, in this case - when even Rick Mercer, in one of his rants, weighs on how out of touch they are with the reality of modern life. Just last week Rick Mercer dedicated one of his famous rants to the proposed federal tax increase on our small businesses. He said, in part - I quote directly - “Really Justin? Farmers? You want proof that government is starting to lose its way, see if they’ll pick a fight with farmers. Why would they do such a thing? I have no idea.”

Well, many Canadians - in fact, the vast majority of Canadians - are wondering the same thing: why would a government suddenly decide that the biggest, most pressing issue is that our small businesses, our farmers, are not paying enough taxes? The people that actually put their house on the line, mortgage it, borrow from family and friends, aspire to hire a few of their neighbours and create employment, are the problem according to the

federal Liberal Government. That also includes the doctors who provide health care services and many others who we rely on every day to get by in our modern society.

Rick Mercer has figured this out. Canadians are speaking up about this. This has become a gigantic issue, but nowhere is it a bigger issue than right here in Nova Scotia.

We are on the front lines of danger because of these tax increases, for some pretty obvious reasons. We are the most reliant in the country on small business for jobs - 70 per cent of Nova Scotians work for a small business. We have the weakest economy. The last thing we need is another reason for someone to give up on a small business.

We also have a health care system that is in crisis because we don't have enough family doctors, and yet Doctors Nova Scotia surveyed their own members; 41 per cent would consider leaving if these tax increases go through. Will all of them leave, Mr. Speaker? I hope not. I hope none of them do. I would like us to be a good place for doctors to come and practise medicine.

But on top of everything else, now we have this second threat from these tax increases to small businesses, which is that doctors will be incented to leave or not come here in the first place. We have brought stories to this House of doctors getting calls from American recruiters every day. Nova Scotia is getting a bad reputation as a place to practise medicine. That's the last thing we need now. Doctor recruiters are targeting us for that reason, Mr. Speaker.

We wonder why then do we have a Liberal Government in Nova Scotia that has been so docile on this major issue that is a threat to jobs and the economy and is a threat to our health care system? The Premier in control of a majority Liberal Government, including the health care system, including the Department of Business, and all the things that we look to the government to use to help boost the economy, that Premier has limited his involvement to merely passing on to Ottawa any concerns he hears. He won't take a stand against these tax changes. He won't stand up and defend the health care system in this province. He won't stand up and defend the small business people of this province. Instead, he merely passes on concerns as he hears them.

It's bad enough that we have 11 federal Liberal Members of Parliament who are refusing to meet with their own constituents, who instead direct them to a website where they can fill out a form to electronically express their concerns. It's unforgiveable that an elected member of any House - federal or provincial - would merely turn their own voters away and direct them to a website.

But ultimately, that's what the Premier of Nova Scotia is doing. He is acting as if he was the website - I will pass on your concerns. We have websites for that. What we have a Premier for and what we need a Premier for, is to stand up for this province, its economy,

and its health care system when it is under threat, whether that threat is from Ottawa or anywhere else. This is what Nova Scotians expect, Mr. Speaker.

People wonder why. Why won't the Premier go to Ottawa, use his connections - his fellow Liberal connections - and say, no, these tax changes are wrong? Why won't he even stand in his place in the Legislature and say no, these tax increases are wrong? It is not lost on the people of Nova Scotia.

His motives are clear, and so are the Liberal Government's. They got elected on the Liberal brand. The last thing they want to do is tarnish it, even if it's coming from Ottawa. But there comes a time when this Premier and this government have to decide who comes first, the people of Nova Scotia or the Liberal Party of Canada. When the Premier publicly refuses to condemn the tax changes and fight them, but instead merely passes along people's concerns, people see that that choice has in fact already been made, and the choice is in favour of the Liberal Party of Canada and not in favour of the people of Nova Scotia. That is wrong, Mr. Speaker.

[4:00 p.m.]

We also today brought to this House a second motive, which is that the provincial government will gain a windfall when these federal Liberal tax changes go through. This is not a matter of opinion. It is a matter of fact. For example, if doctors, small business people, or farmers who are earning income inside their small business are forced to pay all of that income out to themselves, that becomes personal income and is taxed at the highest personal income tax rate. That would be new. The province of course is the beneficiary of that extra tax income. The province gets its share of that extra tax income. That one change alone is worth millions of dollars in new taxes for the Province of Nova Scotia.

It's ironic that this is being discussed today because the Auditor General's Report today actually pointed out that over the last 10 years, the average taxes paid by individual Nova Scotians when they file their return is way up over the last 10 years.

It is not up because there are more Nova Scotians because, in fact, there aren't more Nova Scotians; and it's not up because they're making a lot more money than they used to because, in fact, wages have been stagnant in this province for the last 10 years. In fact the same number of people making pretty much the same income are paying a lot more in income taxes to the province and getting less in services from them because of things like bracket creep, which keeps pushing them into higher tax brackets and paying more in tax, a hidden tax every year, because the higher income earners already got slapped with an extra surtax by the previous NDP Government which the Liberal Government opposed in Opposition and then kept when they went into office as the government, four years ago.

It's why it's so hard to pay the bills in this province today. It's hard to pay the power bill, it's hard to pay the oil bill - and it's going to get harder to pay the oil bill for other

reasons, including the cap and trade costs that are coming down on Nova Scotians in this very session. It's getting harder to pay the rent, it's getting hard to pay the groceries, in part because taxes have gone up by hidden amounts year after year, for 10 years. That's what the Auditor General told us today.

Now, if you happen to earn money through your business, these tax changes are going to push it out into your personal income. You're going to be taxed at the highest rates, in Nova Scotia taxes at the highest rate in all of Canada and the provincial government will get a windfall, Mr. Speaker.

Now the Premier says that's irrelevant. Well, prove it. Prove it. Pass this bill if you truly want to protect the doctors who are under threat and the small business people who create those jobs and are now under threat, then show them that we'll refund as a province, the provincial share of that tax increase back to those very taxpayers. It is not a complicated thing to do. They'll have to pay these increased taxes. We'll know exactly how much more they are paying because of these tax changes and we'll know exactly who is paying more and we can refund it back to them.

Then, Mr. Speaker, the government will have proven that they are not being so quiet because they're going to get a windfall. Until the government actually makes this statement, passes this bill, returns that money, everyone is going to think, correctly, that they are content to just quietly reap that windfall - and creating jobs will be harder and recruiting doctors will be harder, Mr. Speaker, because of it.

Now that's another choice the government can make - they can renounce the extra taxes that they are about to get in the windfall and protect Nova Scotia doctors and Nova Scotia farmers and Nova Scotia small-business people from the federal increase, or they can sit back and do nothing and get the windfall and watch as jobs are lost, as farms do not get passed on to their own sons and daughters, and as doctor recruitment and doctor retention gets worse, Mr. Speaker.

So, who comes first in this situation? Is it the provincial Treasury or is it the 100,000 people without a doctor who are praying that at least the government does no further harm. Who comes first? Is it the provincial Treasury? (Interruption)

Mr. Speaker, see how bad it is, the alarms are already going off outside this building. (Laughter) That could be one of our small business people right now beeping in frustration. It could be a doctor making a house call to the House of Assembly.

I'll tell you this, it's not funny the dangers that we face here in Nova Scotia on the very front lines. One of the more bizarre outcomes of these small business tax increases actually falls on the farmers of Nova Scotia. Unbelievably, if a family farmer wants to pass on his farm to his children he is taxed more heavily under these proposals than if he or she actually sold out to a multinational corporation.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shameful.

MR. BAILLIE: That is shameful; I'm glad to hear that from a member on the government side. No one should be in favour of that. The last thing we need to do is to see multinational corporate farms here in Nova Scotia when we are struggling to support the family farms that we have, hoping to become food secure as a province where we actually have local farmers who own their own land, who have the means to produce enough produce, meats and other things to supply Nova Scotia shelves.

How can you say you're in favour of Buy Local if you stand back and watch as we actually use the tax system of Canada - or not we, but the government in Ottawa - to punish farmers who want to pass on their farm to their sons and daughters? I've had the great honour to meet with a group called the Young Farmers of Nova Scotia. They are already having trouble raising the financing to buy out a farm because of the high capital costs. They're already worried about whether they'll have the labour to actually harvest the produce from their own farms. They already wonder about the interest rates they're getting charged now by the Farm Loan Board and other places for the loans they take out.

We should actually be making these transfers of farm properties to sons and daughters easier. We're all winners if those farms can be transferred easily, not harder. The best thing we could send to everybody today - the small businesses, the farmers, the doctors - is that the Government of Nova Scotia has no interest in its share of the tax increase that's been proposed by Ottawa. This bill allows every Party in this House to make that statement loud and clear so that they know we're all sitting up for them and we will do everything we can to protect the jobs that come from small business, the farms that want to sell to the next generation and the doctors that we so desperately need so that every Nova Scotian truly can have the health care they need. That's why this bill is so important. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Business.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, It's my pleasure to rise and speak on behalf of the government side to Bill No. 20, the Small Business Tax Protection Act. Certainly, it is my pleasure to be here today. As the MLA for Glace Bay, it's always a privilege to stand in my place in the Legislature and with a number of different responsibilities I have from the Government House Leader role to four portfolios under the Government Cabinet, speaking on bills, speaking on a number of different things in those functions.

It's great to get up here and speak freely on something that the Opposition has tabled that I certainly will defend, as it relates to government policy and the government position on many things. I am first and foremost the Glace Bay MLA and I'm proud to be here in that function and no matter what happens over my seven years here in the Legislature, it's always Glace Bay first. It's great to be in our Legislature but I'm a Glace

Bay boy and I'm happy to represent the people where I call home; for me, it's first and foremost.

I'm also proud of my role in government and what our government has accomplished. Obviously, in the Legislature, in public consumption across this beautiful province opinions obviously vary about some things that government do. They could do less and spend less in some areas, spend more and do more in other areas. That's the natural ebb and flow of government and Opposition. Having spent three years on the government side, I get that role as well. Of course, being a proud member of the Liberal caucus and the Liberal Government, I know that we've done some great things.

Everyone thinks about their personal role when they come into this place and regardless of how long you're elected and how long you have the honour of assuming one of these seats, you always think about your impact and your legacy for your own people, for your Party and the colleagues that turn into friends and family and for the province as a whole. For me, I can say without question on the high level and the grand scale, I'm extremely proud of the balanced budgets that we've accomplished and achieved as a government. For me, that will be the legacy piece. Not only do I think that's a sign of discipline and respect for taxpayers, it shows that we're committed to balancing the books and making good decisions. Tough decisions, but good decisions.

It's how we spend on social programs and it's how we do the things that Nova Scotians want us to do. Obviously, education, health care, infrastructure including the roads, bridges, schools and hospitals - all those things are critical in Nova Scotia and you've got to pay for them. You know, you liken it to a credit card and personal expenses that every Nova Scotian has. You've got to have the money to spend on the things that you need and then you follow with the things that you want.

For me, coming into Cabinet and having the ability to really have a good, close look at the provincial budgets and how they operate, it's staggering to me and unacceptable, Mr. Speaker - and it should be unacceptable for any member of this Legislature - to continue adding to the provincial debt. To think that we spend \$850 million a year servicing our debt on a total budget of \$11 billion is staggering and that's money that, again, as many people can relate, that's your interest on a credit card. So, it doesn't pay the principal. It doesn't knock it down. It's just paying the debt you've already racked up on wild spending. That costs almost 10 per cent of our budget so, that's a heavy hit and we're wasting it.

So, any time we can stop that flow at least, and the last two years, the last two fiscal rounds, we've been able to do that and, obviously, this budget which we've tabled will reach the same finish line and hit that same goal. I'm proud of that, so that's the legacy that we have as a Liberal Government.

The Premier has always, since I met him when I came in this Legislature with my colleague, the member for Yarmouth in June 2010 - that was always the plan and we're

there now. It matters to people and, again, for me, that's something that I'll always be proud of. People should be enraged by that number, that \$850 million per year. It's a staggering number. That's twice the transportation budget in this province. It's a significant portion of what we would spend on Community Services, for example. Service Nova Scotia and my department - you could do so much transforming of many social programs, many aspects of our society if we had that \$850 million back, or even half of it would be a big difference.

So, although we have balanced the books, we've also paid attention to the things that matter the most and I think that our approach to small business and medium enterprises which is the conversation today, I'm proud of what we've done. We didn't pick winners and losers and, again, in my time as Opposition it was mindboggling to see the amount of money that we spent that we didn't recover and never had any return on that investment and to see where we're at today with respect to the discipline, to the fact that we've always committed to setting the business environment and then getting out of the way. We're not picking companies. We're not picking to avoid companies. We're looking at environment, the environment to business, the business sectors, the industries and, then, we're keeping out of the way and I think that some of the measures we have taken does exactly that and, you know, that, to me, is commendable.

Just to remark on some of the comments of the Leader of the Official Opposition, I know that the Leader knows that the consultation period for the federal legislation isn't done. The conversations are still taking place. I understand the politics of it. I'm not new to the game and I'm not new to this Legislature but it's interesting that the Leader in the caucus opposite - they want to cash in on the politics while they can. There's no question about it that there is concern. I don't deny that at all. I've heard that myself. I've had conversations with many federal representatives, not only my own, in Glace Bay, Rodger Cuzner, but many of the MPs across the province and it is a concern that we're hearing. That is not something that's lost on us.

Again, we've got to give the federal government, the federation, time to have these consultations, to have these discussions with the public and understand the implications and what's being brought forward so that they're on the table. I know that what the Leader opposite said, that the Premier should go to Ottawa and talk to the Prime Minister, talk to the Minister of Finance. Well, that's exactly what he did and he said that specifically in Question Period today just coming back from the federation of Premiers and meeting with the national government, that's exactly what was on the table with respect to this proposed taxation legislation. So he did have that conversation and the Leader of the Official Opposition had said that he knows that that's the case. He is aware that they had that discussion. So, he knows that our Premier has taken that forward and it isn't just about bringing the concerns forward, it's about making an effort based on what we've heard here in the province and in the Atlantic Region.

You'll notice something that the Leader of the Official Opposition didn't say. This would have been a great opportunity for the Leader of the Official Opposition to bash us on the fact that we ignored small and medium businesses in this budget, but he didn't do that because he can't do that, because we have invested in small and medium enterprises.

I know that deep down the politics involved are real and it's part of the environment that we have here but I know that there are a number of members in the Progressive Conservative caucus in particular that do respect some of the decisions we've made - of course, not everything - but when it comes to fiscal management, when it comes to our ability to make decisions for small businesses, for medium enterprises, for taxation for low-income Nova Scotians, that matters, and it's very much relevant to the proposed legislation we have here today.

[4:15 p.m.]

You look at the tax threshold - this was one for me that is of incredible value. When you change the threshold for a small to medium enterprise here in this province so that they keep more of their money from \$350,000 to \$500,000, so that extra \$150,000 is only taxed at that 3 per cent business rate, that's a big difference.

That represents \$85 million to our small and medium businesses here in this province. It's a whopping number, and 1,800 businesses will benefit from that. Think about that. That's the money that's reinvested in Parrsboro, in Pictou, in Glace Bay, in Bedford. That matters. It matters to those small and medium enterprises.

I can tell you - I know that many members would share this when I talk to business owners in Glace Bay. It's a weekly, monthly endeavour to keep the doors open and make sure that the revenue is covering the expenses. So any time you can have a threshold increase that allows you to keep more of that money - keep it as profit, keep it to reinvest in your business, keep it to hire another Nova Scotian - that's a good thing. I think that's the largest part of our measure for small and medium enterprises that's going to make a difference.

Also, quite frankly, when you look at the staggering impact of cutting taxes for half a million Nova Scotians - over half of our population will experience a tax decrease, a break in taxes because of this budget that we've tabled here in 2017. That's a big difference. Any time you can reduce taxes on a family - on a low-income family, on small-business families - it makes a huge difference. People will then have the ability - you look at income tax time. That's a great time of year for many people who I represent, because that's the difference of a few hundred, maybe \$1,000. It's paying down a Visa or it's getting work done on the vehicle. It's doing something at the home and supporting one of your children's programs that you couldn't afford before.

It's a difference maker, and every Spring, Nova Scotians, when they receive that money back, I have absolutely no doubt that for the most part that's not put into savings - that's spent. It's regenerated in the economy. Low-income Nova Scotians use it to buy groceries. They use it to buy gasoline. Again, they make investments in their home. That's a difference maker for small businesses, so that's going to help on the small business side.

We are doing things that directly and indirectly impact and affect small businesses. That's a good thing.

Quickly, before I move on, \$25 million in red tape reduction - that's a direct impact for small businesses. One of my portfolios, Service Nova Scotia, obviously oversees the idea of the program for Registry of Joint Stocks - how you register a business, how you renew those licences each and every year. We hear from businesses. We do that consultation that says they need more support, they need more help, and they need us to reduce that red tape. These are the investments that matter to small and medium enterprises.

Again, one of the big pieces for us is our ability to invest in hiring programs for youth. You've got the Graduate to Opportunity Program, which is an incredible boost. Two hundred employers in this province hire 350 people through this program. Over four years, 1,200 Nova Scotians will gain access to employment through these small and medium enterprises because of this program and this investment for us. It's a big investment. It's a major part of our economic development platform and it's going to make a difference for small businesses.

When we do those types of things - Innovate to Opportunity is another program. We're going to put Ph.D. students, master's students, into the workforce in critical areas of research and innovation, like oceans, which is a tremendous opportunity for us.

So we are doing things to help small and medium enterprises - there's no doubt about that. When you look at the impact we've had on tourism, having our best year ever - \$1.4 billion in revenue; 1.25 million people visited Nova Scotia. That's an amazing number. That impacts businesses from Yarmouth to Meat Cove and all points in between. That matters to us. That's a significant part of our industry growth. Tourism is a big component of what we're doing in the future.

Again, I mention the ocean strategy. We've made tremendous investments in infrastructure. You look at our roads, our hospitals, our schools - a gravel roads program, which is the first of its kind here in the province. These things are big.

Our exports, our trade - we tout a number of aspects of our economy that are impacted by trade. The CETA conversations and the NAFTA conversations. They are all important for our small and medium enterprises. Mr. Speaker, \$1.8 billion was the amount of seafood that we exported last year. It is staggering number. There was \$1.1 billion in tires vis-à-vis the investments and the work here done by Michelin. Look at Stansfield's in

Truro and what they do with textiles. A huge portion of their exports goes to the United States directly. Supply management - of course, our farmers rely on that program. They rely on our ability to help them export. All these things are significant. We are making big investments in our oceans, and that is about research and innovations. That will build businesses. It will help entrepreneurs.

When you talk about small and medium enterprises, you are talking about start-ups. You're talking about entrepreneurs. You're talking in particular about the young people here who want to stay here, who are trained here at NSCC, at our universities, at vocational schools, and at private career colleges. They want to remain here, so we are doing our part. Again this is the opportunity for the Opposition, and I quite frankly think it is a limited window, to score a few points on this taxation plan.

Again, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance are doing their consultations. They are hearing what we are hearing. There is no doubt about that. When they make a final decision, obviously, we will all understand what the final results of those consultations are, what the reactions have been. All the business that are impacted by this have been speaking loud and clear to all of us. The Premier has brought the concerns of this province directly to the Prime Minister and directly to the Minister of Finance. This is the idea of fear-mongering to make sure that they score a few points before the federal government makes the final decision.

One thing that small business know for sure in the great Province of Nova Scotia is that the current provincial government, our Liberal Government, stands behind small and medium businesses. We support their families. We will continue to balance the budget so we can invest in the people of Nova Scotia.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: I listened intently to the previous speakers and to the minister across the aisle. I think the minister and the government missed the point. They missed the point of the legislation that the Conservatives introduced and I think the importance of being able to stand up and defend and protect Nova Scotians.

Nova Scotians who are small business owners, farmers, and doctors contribute immensely to our economy. This is the second week now that I have had a chance to stand up and I believe the second time in Opposition Business that the topic is trying to get across to the provincial Liberal Government that they need to stand up for Nova Scotians. If the federal government continues down the path of changes to the tax system that we will probably see happen, that will have a negative impact on Nova Scotians.

We heard, either today or yesterday, the federal minister indicate that they may tinker - I think the Leader of the Official Opposition used this word - with the legislation that they proposed earlier this summer. Tinkering with it won't address the issues we have

been hearing about from those small business owners across Nova Scotia. It is often argued small businesses form the backbone of the Nova Scotia economy. We know that. Just look at the statistics about that: over 97 per cent of those small businesses in this province employ under 50 people.

It is no secret that the entrepreneurial spirit is our biggest asset as we try to tackle the challenges related to our aging population, which is scary if you look at those numbers and what we are facing in the future, but also out-migration, which we know that has plagued especially rural communities here in our province. One of the most important things that drives not only our ability to meet services but also invest in social programs in our province is the economic growth of our province. We know as a caucus and understand the importance of small businesses and to our overall economy here in Nova Scotia. That's why, when we were in government, we did reduce the small business tax by over 40 per cent. This was the first time a small business tax rate had been reduced in over 20 years and that's 20 years, quite some time.

As I noted last week in my comments from the previous Opposition Day, the federal government's decision to propose broad-based tax changes without consulting Canadians in a manner that I think is truly engaging, has created a public backlash as doctors, as farmers, as other incorporated professionals and small business owners have been extremely vocal in their reaction to these proposed changes over the last number of months, Mr. Speaker. It seems like the physicians of our province are getting a double whammy when it comes to governments and going after their living and their ability to make sure that they are able to continue to work and practice here in Nova Scotia.

Some of Mr. Morneau's initial comments, Mr. Speaker, that basically label small business owners in Canada and in Nova Scotia as tax cheats, did not help the situation. When you are one of these owners and you hear the federal government's proposed changes that will affect you and the use of terms like, tax cheats, what are they supposed to think? Of course, they're going to be up in arms, they're going to be protective and they're going to be vocal. I think we've seen that over the last couple of months.

Many small business owners remember, Mr. Speaker, and I remember the release of the Panama Papers. I think these small business owners have the right to be upset that the federal government would lump them in as tax cheats in the same way that they labelled those who move money into offshore tax havens, that I know many have heard about over the last number of years and now many of them are facing criminal investigations. So it wasn't helpful for the federal minister and the federal government to take that tone.

I think what's behind the legislation in front of us today is to, hopefully, encourage the government to stand up to that type of labelling and show small business owners that we are supportive of their work here in Nova Scotia and it shouldn't matter if they are in the same political Party, Mr. Speaker, it's going to affect the people of our province, our provincial government should stand up for them.

Now just yesterday, as I mentioned, Minister Morneau announced that changes will need to be made to the initial proposal after, I believe, the outpouring of opposition to the original plan, Mr. Speaker. Quelle surprise, I think some may say, watching news, watching social media, watching reports from one end of this country to the other. This begs the question of why Minister Morneau would not have, I think, consulted Canadians and Nova Scotians and done their homework before announcing the initial changes and really engaging in a way and in a manner that I think wasn't helpful.

Perhaps this is all part of their plan to make a big splash at the start. We know that that has taken place in the past on legislation and policy change, and then make some amendments to make it seem like they were listening to Canadians or Nova Scotians. I hope this is not the case in this particular incident. Governments should not be playing politics when it comes to people's livelihoods. We heard from a number of members who have been contacted by those people who are working every day.

I have to say in areas like farming and health care and our physicians, often long hours, they shouldn't be treated in that way, nor should they view public consultation as simply part of their grand political scheme, Mr. Speaker.

[4:30 p.m.]

I know our federal caucus has been asking for the federal government to extend consultations so that the federal government can hear from Canadians and I know Nova Scotians will be part of that group if they choose to do that. It's not too late to put the brakes on this, Mr. Speaker. It's not too late to allow for that proper consultation.

If the federal government wanted to go after the tax cheats, Mr. Speaker, then they have an opportunity to change direction and truly go after those individuals or those corporations if that's who they think are the tax cheats of our country.

As I mentioned last week, we know that there are people out there who do think that the current tax system should be amended in the name of fairness. There are people who agree that yes, we should be looking at the tax system here in Canada and are trying to move forward on changes that would make it fairer for every Canadian. But they don't want the changes, and I said this before, at the expense of their ability to find a doctor.

Will these federal changes impact Nova Scotians' ability to find a doctor? There's data on that today, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think they want these changes that will have a negative impact in their neighbourhoods. Those people who own businesses throughout communities in Nova Scotia are working hard and work hard to maintain those businesses and, most importantly, create jobs.

I don't think Canadians and Nova Scotians want to risk taking farms out of the hands of local families. We have a long tradition of supporting and encouraging farming in our province. I think all of us would agree that we want to see that stay in local hands, stay in families, as they move forward and try to address what we have in front of us over the next couple of months.

These are types of conversations that the federal government should have had with Canadians before announcing the proposal back when they did. They clearly did not do this or they would not be in the mess they are in now, and having the federal minister say yes, we are going to change it a little bit. We need a government that works with small-business owners to understand their challenges and successes.

Here is an opportunity for the provincial Liberal Government of Nova Scotia to stand with those small business owners to clearly indicate to the federal government that they were wrong in their approach and that we need to slow down to make sure that tax change is fair for everyone. We need good public policy that fosters the growth of small businesses, especially in the Maritimes and Atlantic Canada.

Announcing changes that could seriously impact small business owners without consulting them first is not the way to go. Hopefully, as I said earlier, the federal government has learned their lesson. We have seen them blink here now in the last 24 hours or so. I hope that they truly have time to reflect on their approach so far. I encourage the federal government to do the work of consulting Nova Scotians and Canadians, and small-business owners about what they want to see in terms of tax reform in our country.

I also want to encourage the provincial government that Nova Scotians want them to stand up for them. I think the government can do a lot more than what they have indicated they have done so far. It's unfortunate that we have to take the steps that we have over the last little while, now twice in two weeks taking time in this session to talk about federal issues.

I'm often one to allow the different levels of government to manage their affairs, but I think it reflects a bigger issue and it reflects the importance of Opposition Parties. I say that in relation to - maybe one of the reasons pushing the Progressive Conservatives bringing this forward is that we're not seeing the Members of Parliament who represent our province standing up for those small businesses and those entrepreneurs who are here in Nova Scotia - those farmers and doctors - because they're all in the same political Party. It's a challenge to do that, but it's needed. I encourage all those who are going to be affected by this change when it goes through to get out and vote and make sure that there is a voice in opposition.

We all strive to get to government, Mr. Speaker. I was one of them. But it's just as important to have people to stand up and show the error or some of the challenges that will take place when we have public policy changes, legislative changes, or tax changes. I hope

in 2019 we'll see more of a reflection of that here in Nova Scotia. I know I'll work hard to make sure some of my federal colleagues will, hopefully, get back and have an opportunity to have a seat in the House of Commons.

I would like to at this point congratulate Jagmeet Singh, who just recently won our leadership race in Canada. I know he'll be working hard, he comes from our ranks as an MPP in Ontario and I think we'll be well served by him. I know that his competitors, Niki Ashton and Charlie Angus and Guy Caron worked hard, but I'm encouraged by their remarks after Jagmeet's victory, that we'll work together to ensure that the voices of Canadians from one end of this country to the other, no matter what political Party is represented in the House of Commons, those voices and concerns will be heard and we're more than happy to lend our support in doing that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, what the right hand giveth the left hand taketh away. That's what we're here to talk about today.

The member for Glace Bay talked about all the wonderful things in the budget and the tax cuts - by the way, the small business rate, we introduced that bill four times - so we're so happy to see it finally in this budget. The timing is not lost on me because when I think about the fact of the right hand giveth and the left hand taketh away, I am reminded of the timeline of events here. We have the federal Party introducing their tax changes at the end of July. Of course, that's where you normally do these things, in the heat of the summer, at the end of July, and the provincial budget coming down at the end of September. I think to myself, hmm.

AN HON. MEMBER: What a wonderful world.

MR. HOUSTON: Sometimes I think it's a wonderful life, but I think to myself, did the provincial Liberals - the member wishes I'd think to just myself a little more often.

But I think to myself, I wonder if the provincial Liberals felt empowered to present tax cuts in their budget because they know they're going to get the cash right back from the Liberal changes. (Interruptions) Just ponder that for a minute. Just ponder that for a minute. Every time we raise the issue of, this is going to be a tax windfall for the provincial coffers, as the Premier used to say, please, no, let's not talk about that, let's not talk about that. It makes me wonder if it's all smoke and mirrors.

It's a massive shell game and that is maybe why we don't see the provincial Liberals, who have been elected to represent the interests of this province - let's not forget 38 per cent of the people asked them to please represent our interests in all matters, including those where you may find yourself on the opposite side of the federal Liberals. They should be representing us but nobody will stand up, even the member for Glace Bay

who I have great respect for from time to time, spoke for 15 minutes but he didn't really touch on the federal tax changes other than to say he was concerned. I know he's concerned because we should all be concerned about it.

But what we would want to see is those concerns really raised. Just last night in the House of Commons in Ottawa, there was a vote to extend the consultation period. They do their votes a little differently in Ottawa. They don't stand individually and say yea or nay. If you're a yea you all stand and the Speaker will call off the names as you're standing. There was a vote to extend the consultation time and all of the Opposition members stood and I think my colleague is right when he says the NDP were even on board as well with extending the consultation. There was only one lone soul, one courageous person on the government benches in Ottawa, Member of Parliament Wayne Long, stood in his place and said yes, we should extend the consultation period. And good on him for doing that because that's the time when he can stand up for his constituents.

I will say how disappointing it is to the people of this province that none of the federal Liberal MPs for this province even thought extending the consultation was a good idea. My own Member of Parliament whom doctors have been after to meet with - they offered to meet with him last weekend, they offered to meet, but he couldn't meet with them until the 7th, which ironically is after the consultations end. We'll meet on Saturday. I thought maybe that's one person who, in the interests of his constituents, would say, do you know what? Gee, I haven't had a chance to really meet with people. I promised I'd meet with them on the 7th, maybe I should stand up and say let's extend the consultations, but no.

So, we can talk about balanced budgets, which I'm a big fan of, particularly when they are really balanced - and this one here, we have a lot of questions. There are a lot of issues before this government. I only have limited time, I don't think I can list all the people who are currently engaged in lawsuits with the province, including even the HST matter that the province has been found wrong and is trying to appeal - but if they don't win they'll turn that over. Guess what? The budget is not balanced. It's a \$53 million swing. These are very, very real issues.

I am a fan of balanced budgets and it's nice to talk about balancing the budget, it's nice to talk about respecting taxpayers, but let's actually show them. We've talked in this Chamber and everywhere else so much about the offensive way in which the "Sunny Ways" advocate approached this with tax cheats and cheaters and loopholes and stuff like that. We know that's not true; every member in this House knows that's not true. We should all stand up to that; we should all stand up and say that's not true. You want to change the tax laws, okay, but let's not approach it that way. I would have hoped that we could all stay to that.

In this province we have the Auditor General's Report this morning that over the last 10 years personal income tax revenue has gone up 56 per cent in 10 years - in 10 years Nova Scotians are paying 56 per cent more taxes. That's quite a jump, Mr. Speaker.

We can say we're going to make changes over here to help people and that's great, but when you do things to try and improve the lives of Nova Scotians, like the tax cuts which I respect and appreciate, when you do that, if somebody comes along the next day and threatens to wipe that right out, you stand up and you say, that's not helpful. You stand up with Wayne Long and the other people who have the courage to stand up and you say, I'm going to respect my constituents, I'm going to respect my taxpayers, not by saying and thanking the taxpayers and thank this and that, you actually do something to respect them.

We know what this is about. The federal - oh, permission to make an introduction, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

[4:45 p.m.]

MR. HOUSTON: I just noticed my lovely wife has joined us. Thank you, Carol, for joining us. I will now put my nice face on, Mr. Speaker. (Laughter)

We know what these federal tax changes are all about; we know exactly what they are all about. We should call it for what it is. The federal Liberals campaigned and said they're going to have to run a couple of small deficits for a couple of years, not to exceed \$10 billion. Just \$10 billion, Mr. Speaker, that's all we're going to do, just for a couple of years.

Now recently they announced some good news, some super, tremendous, spectacular good news. The deficit for this year is not as bad as they thought. It's actually much better than they anticipated, it's down by \$6 billion - it's only going to come in at \$22 billion, not \$28 billion. And next year it will be a deficit and the year after will be a deficit, and the year after will be a deficit, and the year after will be - all the way to 2050, deficits running.

We know this is a tax grab. We know they're trying to grab money. We know where they're trying to grab it from. They're trying to grab it from small business owners. They're trying to grab it from doctors.

It's like I have said to some of the folks back home: if you think these tax changes are pointed at somebody else, you're wrong. If you work for a small business, which most Nova Scotians do, or if you need a doctor or think you ever might need a doctor, these tax changes aren't pointed at somebody else. They're pointed at you. These tax changes will hurt our economy. They will hurt our health care system.

We are just saying that if this is really not about money - and the Premier would say, oh, it's not about money, we're not interested in that - then pass this bill and tell the companies in Nova Scotia, the small business owners and the doctors, we're not going to try to profit from this little act of our cousins in Ottawa. We don't want to profit from that. In fact, we're going to protect you from that. That's what this bill does. That's an opportunity for this Chamber.

If this Chamber does not take that opportunity, then they are just saying what we already know. They want the money. I go back to where I started. They felt empowered to make the tax changes as a sham because they knew they would get the tax revenue back from their good buddy in Ottawa. That's what this is about.

Otherwise, they have a chance to stand up today and say, member for Pictou East, you're wrong, and I'm going to show you you're wrong and pass this bill.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I also would like to speak for a few minutes (Interruption) five minutes - on this bill that our Leader has proposed today. I think we all know that this bill that has been presented by our federal members is just a tax grab for overspenders.

I think it's probably safe to say that every person in this House campaigned that small business owners and entrepreneurs are the backbone of our economy. I don't see how any of us could not stand up and speak out against these proposed federal tax changes. We know that entrepreneurs and business owners are the backbone of our economy. They employ over 70 per cent of the people in this province.

Fundamentally, I disagree with the proposed federal tax changes. I will say that it's disappointing to not see our Premier stand up and clearly speak against these tax changes.

Personally, I have owned a corporation for 18 years. I can tell you, it's not easy being a business owner. There are good years in business, and there are years when people struggle. The current tax changes allow business owners to plan. They allow business owners to save money within their corporation to plan for those down years and also plan for retirement.

It's the business owners that take all the risk. Do you think the government takes any risk? No. Do you think the banks take any risk? Absolutely not. If you can't meet payroll, you end up taking a credit line out on your home. The entrepreneurs and the business owners of this province take all of the risk. At this point, when we see the Leader of this country trying to hurt our business owners, Mr. Speaker, I believe we need to stand up with them.

I also want to echo the comments of my colleague, the member for Pictou East, who applauded MP Wayne Long. When I saw him speak out on the news, I was so proud of him for the courage for him to stand up and do what is right, as opposed to my Member of Parliament who held a private meeting and told the organizers, our chamber of commerce, that he would only have this private meeting with business owners of our area if I was not allowed to attend. (Interruptions) Disgraceful.

We all know these tax changes are wrong. Even the federal Minister of Finance is in complete conflict of interest, when his family business, Morneau Shepell, is actually currently offering tax strategies to the people of this country to deal with the tax changes he's proposing. It's unbelievable, and I believe that it's wrong.

It is for these reasons, Mr. Speaker, that I support the legislation that our Leader has brought forth to refund the financial windfall that this province will get from these tax changes and give it back to the people of this province - the business owners and entrepreneurs - where the money belongs.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: That concludes Opposition business for today. I want to thank everyone for their thoughtful interventions and hope that we can do it again pretty soon.

With that, I will let the Government House Leader call hours and business for tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Thank you to the Official Opposition House Leader for the ability to call the hours and the business for tomorrow. We will meet tomorrow, Thursday, October 5th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Following the daily routine and Question Period, we will return to the Committee of the Whole on Supply, and following the Committee of the Whole on Supply, we will call Public Bills for Second Reading, Bill Nos. 15, 16, and 19.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet tomorrow, Thursday, October 5th, from 1:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

We have now reached the moment of interruption. The Adjournment motion, as submitted by the honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg, is:

“Therefore be it resolved that the family doctor shortage in our province is causing real hardship for thousands of Nova Scotians and the Liberal Government’s actions are making the crisis worse.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

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

GOV’T. (NS): DOCTOR SHORTAGE - CRISIS

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: I have to say that it’s an honour to be able to stand to speak about the problems with our health care system. Maybe what the resolution really should have said was “and the Liberal Government’s inactions are making this crisis better in the Province of Nova Scotia.”

Earlier today, we heard our Premier - when he was asked the question, is there a crisis in Nova Scotia, he said no. He said there was no crisis in the Province of Nova Scotia when it came to health care. There are a number of people across this province who would disagree with that statement.

The first thing that a government has to learn when it takes office is compassion, compassion for the people that we all sit here to represent. When it comes to health care, the word “compassion” seems to have been lost on this government.

People on the opposite benches will say, he’s up there only fear-mongering. He’s creating issues that aren’t true. He’s saying things that are not accurate. But all you need to do is look across this province and in particular at Cape Breton Island. When you can get thousands of people coming out to meetings expressing their concerns about what’s not going on in health care, I think, Mr. Speaker, that you will have to agree that there is a crisis.

The crisis didn’t start with this government. This crisis has been going for awhile, and I would be the first to acknowledge that.

This government, when it ran four years ago, said, vote for us, and there will be a doctor for every Nova Scotian. That was their line. That was in their campaign strategy. That’s what people listened to, and that’s what people were expecting.

In this last election, health care became a very serious issue. The people of Cape Breton Island expressed their concerns and their issues when it came to health care. The member for Sydney-Whitney Pier and the member for Glace Bay heard those messages

very loud and clear, especially on election day, when the people said they wanted health care to be the major product of this government.

Now the new tag line for the government seems to be, we'll have a doctor for eight out of every 10 Nova Scotians instead of every Nova Scotian.

We had meetings in Sydney, as I said earlier, that had hundreds of people show up. We had a meeting where over 50 doctors signed a letter saying they were concerned about what was taking place in health care. So it's not the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, that is talking about the issues and the challenges that are in the health care system, it is actually the people involved in the system.

I know in my constituency office we are getting, as I've said many times in this House, more calls about the health care system than we are about even local roads. Anybody who represents a rural area would understand how significant a statement that is. Mr. Speaker, they call and they want to talk about how do I get a doctor? A lot of these people are seniors who can't travel great distances.

One of the things I ask people when they talk to me about the health care system is, is your doctor older than you are? A lot of times even our senior citizens will say, well as a matter of fact yes, they are. That also is an indicator of the issue that is going on with health care.

Mr. Speaker, there are things that can be done to help the system, that don't require big gobs of money but do require common sense and compassion, things need to be done so that people will have access to a doctor at any stage in their life. And whether that is for family health care or surgeries or specialties or mental health, compassion by a government has to play a role in where we're going in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Some of the things we need to look at are local decision making. We've seen since the amalgamation of the health authorities that it is harder and harder to get a decision made at the local level. As we've heard different times in this House and earlier today, half an hour sometimes can make a difference in whether a person is going to have a successful outcome or not a successful outcome. If you have somebody on the ground that is allowed to make decisions, allowed to make sure that the best health care is available, there is no cost to that other than making sure that that person is allowed to make decisions and is responsible for the decisions they make. That's not an outlandish request, Mr. Speaker, that is compassion and that is reality.

Having rural specialists who can actually do work in our rural hospitals - and I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, I can only speak about the Cape Breton Regional Hospital but I know from personal experience that the quality of care, the people who work there and the services that are offered by the people within the system are quality, they are top-notch. But we, this entire House, the government, has to make sure that the people working in the

system have the ability to do their jobs. Having a specialty doctor available, a specialist available in a Cape Breton hospital where you don't have to have a four-hour ambulance ride or get on a helicopter to fly to Halifax, could mean the difference between life and death. Maintaining specialties in rural areas of the Province of Nova Scotia is an integral part of making this system work the way it needs to work.

What does that mean? That means that we have to find a way to recruit and retain specialists, right across this province. I know the government takes great pride in saying that on a per capita basis we have the most doctors of any province in Canada, but the government will also tell you that there is an inequity of where those doctors are located and what it is that they actually do.

[5:00 p.m.]

There are so many small things we can do to make this system better for the people of the Province of Nova Scotia. The people that we were all asked to come and represent. The doctors, the nurses, the lab technicians and all of the people within the health care system are not a problem. They are part of a solution, a solution that wants to help but yet it falls on deaf ears when it comes to dealing with this government. I understand that we have to be careful with the finances of the province, but I also understand that we have to be compassionate to the people who made this province so great that we can live in it. If there's a failing of this government, I believe that is where it's at.

That's not even getting into the challenges that are with mental health care. In Cape Breton Island, do you know if you go to the emergency room after 7:00 p.m. you cannot obtain the services you need? Do you know that one out of six young people that have a challenge with mental health will not get their service? So, if there's anything that we can do as a government, as I implore this government to do, it is to become compassionate and listen to the people within the system who can and will make a difference given the ability to let them work with the government and not at odds with them. Thank you.

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

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to give some examples of what it feels like for Nova Scotians to not have a family doctor. If you don't have a family doctor you don't have a health home, no continuity of care, nobody sees your charts from one year to the next so if something's going on, nobody is following it through on an ongoing basis.

No family doctor, long wait times for appointments at a walk-in clinic, you have to take time off work. Many Nova Scotians don't get paid to take this time off work and end up being punished for attending to their health needs. No family doctor, what happens when your kids are sick? You have to take them to a walk-in clinic or to emergency. This poses another difficulty for working parents, especially with knowing in Cape Breton that three

out of the four emergency rooms are closed most of the time and you must be prepared to sit there for eight to 10 hours.

No family doctor, some prescription medications aren't available through a walk-in clinic. I'm currently dealing with a constituent who is in honest, chronic pain and not one of what some medical professionals would call a frequent flyer. This gentleman has severe chronic pain and can no longer get his medication because he doesn't have a family doctor. To me, this government should be ashamed of those stories that come forward from constituency offices.

No family doctor, no referral to specialists. We have many constituents specifically with knees and hips that have problems, but they can't even get on the waiting list for a new knee or new hip because they don't have a family doctor to refer them.

No family doctor, you have no other choice but to show up at an emergency room and hope you're going to get your prescription filled, which means you're clogging the emergency room for not a good reason, resulting in a lot of hallway medicine that's taking place in emergency rooms in Cape Breton and I'm sure all over the province. Hallway medicine is somewhere I wouldn't want to see a loved one being treated, in a hallway on a stretcher because the emergency room is so overcrowded.

No family doctor, you don't do anything. You can't be bothered, nobody is following up on you, so by the time you do either find a family doctor or end up in emergency because you are so sick, most times it's too late.

No family doctor, you're being prevented from ensuring you are looking after your own health, looking after your primary care, thus actually having less of an effect and less of a cost on health care in the province. This government is not being proactive and preventative in the health issue, we are being reactive. Reactive doesn't solve the problem; we need to be proactive going forward.

As my colleague said about mental health, and I said it earlier, after seven o'clock in Cape Breton I hope you don't want to kill yourself, because if you do, there's no service available, so you have to wait until it opens again the next morning at nine o'clock - which is disgraceful, in my opinion - or the weekend.

I keep saying this - how do we have a surplus in the budget at the expense of Nova Scotia residents' health? That makes absolutely no sense to me. You need to invest money in order to make money and those investments need to be in the health care of Nova Scotians.

How can this government say that they are not, or that Stephen McNeil gets up and pats himself on the back because of the - Sorry.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind the honourable member not to refer to members of the House by their proper names.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you. My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

How can the Premier pat himself on the back when he gets up to talk about his recruitment and retention while getting into a huge court battle and argument with doctors? To me, that's not going to sell Nova Scotia as the place to come to work.

It hasn't gone unnoticed by the residents of Cape Breton, particularly Cape Breton Centre, that the Minister of Health and Wellness couldn't be bothered to meet with me to discuss issues and/or to show up at the meeting to discuss the issues last Sunday. The residents of Cape Breton feel forgotten by this government.

I called New Waterford Hospital a couple of weeks ago for a constituent and said, what psychiatrists do we have there now? They said, oh Tammy, you don't know? I said, know what? They said, oh, they're gone. I said, gone where? They said, they're just gone. We don't have any. So that adds to the 400-plus days that somebody may need to see somebody about mental health. Again, I hope it's not a pressing issue, because in 400 days you are either dead or hopefully fixed.

I said the other day, too, about a constituent of mine who we've been pushing to try to help to get a family doctor, because he really needs one. When I called the doctor's office, they said, he is in the pile of over 300 applications. He wasn't buying a car. He was trying to get a doctor. Mr. Speaker, since when do you need to apply for a doctor? There's a complete disconnect here. Why is this government not getting it?

Some people talk about, well, if you work in the system, you're fine. My daughter is an emergency room nurse. She can't get a doctor. There are no doctors out there. The government is doing nothing to recruit them. They are definitely not doing anything to retain them, if they come. As my colleague talked about yesterday, adding the new seats and talking about international seats - sure, they'll come, we'll train them. Then it's a free-for-all, wherever they want to go after that. There's no guarantee to this province that we are going to get to retain those doctors.

How can anyone on the other side of this House say the words "We are not in a crisis" when you have to come to your MLA or other government official to try to get your prescription refilled? To me, that's a crisis.

We have a doctor in New Waterford, I've just been recently told, who wants to do emergency room work, but doesn't want to set up a family practice. The NSHA said, no thanks, we want somebody who is going to do emergency room work and family practice.

To me, do you know what? Let's take whatever we can get at this point. However, the NSHA - through direction, I'm sure, from this government - doesn't feel the same.

Until the day I am either unelected or decide to leave on my own, this will be my forefront. This will be my focus: the health care of Cape Bretoners, of Nova Scotians. (Applause) Thank you.

At some point, I have to believe that we can work together to resolve this issue. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to discuss this very important topic. I'd like to recognize my colleagues from both Parties and, of course, colleagues from Cape Breton. We're all here to do our very best for Nova Scotians, but I appreciate the work and advocacy that you do on behalf of the people you represent and on behalf of our Island.

I'll start with thanking all of the health care providers across Nova Scotia who, day in and day out, support the residents we represent and the families across the province. We have some of the best health care in the world. I want to start my comments by thanking them for all the work that they do on a daily basis to support all of us. I will also say this - I take this very seriously as an MLA. I hear the same stories that the two speakers previous hear from their constituencies. I know there is a lot of work to do in supporting doctor recruitment across Nova Scotia, particularly Cape Breton Island.

But I do see a lot of promise in some of the work that has been done by the Nova Scotia Health Authority and, now, what we are seeing is some of the partnerships on the ground in Cape Breton to support that work. As we have seen over the past four months, we have seen new physicians start in Cape Breton. We have seen 12 physicians start, with commitment for more to come. That is the result of a strong recruitment drive by the Nova Scotia Health Authority. That is also in partnership with the Cape Breton Regional Hospital Foundation. That is also in partnership with Doctor Rex Dunn and the local recruitment team. That is also in partnership with Stuart MacLeod and the business community that came forward to provide a recruitment video, to show physicians and to show specialists what it means to live in Cape Breton, what it means to work in Cape Breton. That work is very seldom recognized in this House. So I have the opportunity and I was honoured to have the opportunity to speak tonight, because we don't recognize that.

There is a lot of debate that happens in the House but there are a lot of good people on the ground and in communities. There is a lot of good work happening at home and around the province by volunteers, by business leaders, by hospital foundations, that we never talk about. Those are the organizations that will last long after we are in these seats and the next politicians come after us.

They are the ones on the ground every day, who are working hard to help support government and support the Health Authority to recruit those doctors. So it is important that all of us, regardless of political stripe, recognize the work that those organizations do, so I am honoured to be here today to be able to do that, to say thank you, thank you for that work, thank you for what you do for our communities, and we want to do whatever we can to support you in that.

As we have seen, Mr. Speaker, we have seen the results in Cape Breton. We have seen the results and the support for new physicians who are coming in, specialists who are coming in. I also had the opportunity to be involved with the announcement of a new collaborative centre at the regional hospital just prior to the election, and I had the opportunity to talk to the nurse practitioner who is starting there, whom Cape Bretoners would know, and the excitement she had to be operating in that centre, and to be told that that is the reason why we are recruiting new doctors. It is because it's about work/life balance. That is the environment that they want to work in. There are graduates I went to university with who are telling me that. That is the environment they want to work in.

I had the opportunity to make that announcement and be there that day. That is the way of the future for health care in Nova Scotia. That is the way we are going to recruit new doctors and I am very honoured and excited about the investments we have made in nurse practitioners and the role that they play. I also believe that they don't get enough credit in this House for the work and the support that they provide to Nova Scotians. The nurse practitioners, many of them are from Cape Breton, who have taken positions on the Island to support health care. Thank you for the work that you do, thank you for the health care support that you provide to Cape Bretoners and to Nova Scotians. These are investments that this governments has made and are going to continue to make, and will continue to make a big difference in supporting health care across province.

So I want to take a few minutes to talk about - and I don't want to get too political with the conversation - but this is a debate and I appreciate that this is the third time, I believe, that the member and I have had the opportunity to stand here and talk about doctor recruitment and health care in Cape Breton. And as I said, very similar stories with the member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg in particular, we have had these conversations many times. I was at those meetings. I had those conversation with families in Cape Breton; they are calling my constituency looking for family doctors as well. But I can stand in my place and say that for all the challenges that we face, and for all the work that still needs to be done, here is my plan.

My plan is, I believe, that collaborative centres are going to help us with the health care needs of Cape Bretoners. I believe that collaborative centres and hiring more nurse practitioners to support emergency services and to support those doctors, will allow them to take on more patients and will allow us to recruit more doctors on Cape Breton Island. That is my plan.

[5:15 p.m.]

This is something that is very near and dear to my heart and we've had the conversations - I believe that the local MLAs from Cape Breton can play a larger role in supporting mental health supports in communities across Cape Breton. I think that that's a conversation, as Cape Breton's elected representatives, we need to have, we've been trying to have it, and I hope that we can have it in the very near future.

I believe that some of the investments that we're making to support wait times are going to help Cape Bretoners and Nova Scotians succeed. We've seen a major investment in a new MRI in the Cape Breton Regional Hospital and that's going to help support services not only accessed by Cape Bretoners but by Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, the point that I'm making is this - and I made this point the last time we had this debate - of standing in my place today with a plan. Will the plan work completely? I'm not sure about that, but I see the promise. I see the local organizations coming together to support the government to bring those doctors to the Island. We're seeing that with 12 physicians to start it, but what I have not seen yet (Interruption) what I will say is this, I am presenting a plan, but I have yet to hear a suggestion on how we help to support health care in Cape Breton from that side of the floor.

Like, in the comments from my colleague - in the comments from my colleague he used the term "things to be done and small things that can happen." I don't disagree with him, but what are they? What are they? I have not heard them yet. I am standing in my place today saying collaborative care works; I am standing in my place saying we need to support the work of nurse practitioners to support our positions; I am in my place saying today that we have supports that are in place to help recruit specialists go to underserved areas across Nova Scotia; and, again, I'm standing in my place in a debate and I've yet to hear from the Progressive Conservative Party what their plan is.

I believe that's one of the reasons why I'm still standing here - because I was honest with the residents of Sydney-Whitney Pier about what my plan was moving forward for health care, and I had the willingness to make some tough decisions to try to help Cape Breton move forward.

So I'm honoured to stand in my place to be part of this debate, and I take my job very seriously. I also take the job, that I have my hands full now as a minister in this government, to support all Cape Bretoners. My message to home is this: Here is my plan, I tried to express it in the last ten minutes but I'm more than happy to continue to have this conversation at home, and across Nova Scotia for that matter, but we've got a lot of work to do. We're going to do the work; we're committed to do it. We're committed to you. We're committed to the health care of your families and, in my capacity as MLA of Sydney-Whitney Pier, here's my plan and I'm going to do whatever I can to support home and to support all Nova Scotians. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much for the thoughtful debate on the topic as submitted by the honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg.

That concludes late debate for today.

The House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 5:18 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 305**

By: Hon. Keith Colwell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas the McGowan Lake Fish Hatchery has served to sustain the stocking program of the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Halifax and Western Nova Scotia by annually stocking nearly one million speckled trout in 200 lakes and streams; and

Whereas the stocking program at McGowan Lake Fish Hatchery has supported departmental initiatives such as trout derbies, Learn to Fish, research projects, and educational programs; and

Whereas Michael McNeil has been the manager of the McGowan Lake Fish Hatchery since the hatchery was established and has exhibited exceptional service, resourcefulness, and leadership throughout his career;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Michael McNeil and the staff of the McGowan Lake Fish Hatchery for their important work to support the sport fishery of Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 306

By: Hon. Keith Colwell (Agriculture)

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

Whereas the fish and seafood industry, which is the largest commodity group in Nova Scotia, with exports totalling \$1.8 billion last year, is successful because of the tenacity, talent, and dedication of many hard-working people; and

Whereas Gary Dedrick, recent chair of the Nova Scotia Fisheries Sector Council for 15 years and tremendous example of an active leader in this integral industry, stepped down on March 8, 2017; and

Whereas the Council is dedicated to planning and implementing human resource development strategies for the fishing industry, and Gary consistently demonstrated his ability to advance this mandate with steadfast commitment and determination;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Gary Dedrick for his achievements and contributions to the Nova Scotia fish and seafood industry, thank him for his positive impact and wish him continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 307

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Lower Sackville's Jaden Griffin is a now-17-year-old who gained attention in August 2015 when he was selected to represent Nova Scotia at the Baseball Canada Cup; and

Whereas Jaden played for Team Atlantic in the 2016 Tournament 12 High School Baseball Showcase in Toronto and is now a member of Canada's 18U Junior National Team; and

Whereas the left-handed pitcher recently represented Nova Scotia at the 50th Canada Games held in Winnipeg and will be completing Grade 11 at Vauxhall Baseball Academy in Alberta;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lower Sackville's Jaden Griffin on his accomplishments in baseball and wish him future success.

RESOLUTION NO. 308

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas scientific research teaches us so much about the many viruses that threaten our health and safety; and

Whereas Browyn MacInnis, Ph.D., from Lower Sackville is the associate director of the malaria and viral genomics focus areas of the infectious disease program at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard; and

Whereas Bronwyn MacInnis was part of a team whose work with genome sequencing led to the discovery of the Zika virus's actual arrival point in affected countries;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lower Sackville's Bronwyn MacInnis on her many accomplishments in scientific research and wish her success in future endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 309

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Alyssa Casey is a 13-year-old Lower Sackville resident who was introduced to logrolling at the age of eight by her father, Darren; and

Whereas logrolling requires competitors, known as birlers, to maintain their balance on a floating log and to manoeuver the log in such a way as to put their opponent into the water, called wetting; and

Whereas while still a full year younger than the top competitors, Alyssa participated for the second time in the Lumberjack World Championships, held in Hayward, Wisconsin, from July 20 to 22, 2017, where she placed 5th overall and was the top Canadian in the junior division;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize Lower Sackville's Alyssa Casey for her accomplishments in logrolling and extend best wishes for future success.

RESOLUTION NO. 310

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Elizabeth Purcell is a resident of Lower Sackville who provided loving care to her brother John "Alex" MacInnis during his lengthy struggle with Alzheimer's; and

Whereas Liz was a strong advocate for Alex's care and well-being when he transitioned to long-term care before his passing in 2016; and

Whereas the Alzheimer Society invited Liz to be one of 28 participants from across Canada in a workshop held in Toronto on June 8 to 9, 2017, to identify the top 10 dementia research priorities as part of their Canadian Dementia Priority Setting Partnership;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge Lower Sackville's Elizabeth Purcell for her participation in the Alzheimer Society Research Program and for her contributions to the advancement of Alzheimer's research.

RESOLUTION NO. 311

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Raymond Doucette is a resident of Lower Sackville who has been a volunteer with Scouts Canada for 36 years and is a member of the 12th Canadian Fellowship of Baden-Powell Guilds Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Ray was involved in the 13th Canadian Jamboree, which took place for the first time in Nova Scotia from July 8 to 15, 2017, hosting approximately 5,500 scouts and leaders from 16 countries around the world; and

Whereas Scouts Canada has recognized Ray with the Silver Acorn Award for especially distinguished service to scouting;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize Lower Sackville's Ray Doucette for his dedication to scouting and extend sincere best wishes.

RESOLUTION NO. 312

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Zachary Sperry is a graduate of Sackville High School and a member of 3036 Lower Sackville Royal Canadian Army Cadets; and

Whereas Zachary was one of two cadets from Lower Sackville who took part in Exercise Sub Zero in Goose Bay, Labrador, from March 18 to 25, 2017; and

Whereas this was Zachary's second time participating in Exercise Sub Zero, which tests survival skills, physical fitness, and personal endurance during a challenging hike up Dome Mountain in frigid winter conditions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lower Sackville's Zachary Sperry on his accomplishments in the Royal Canadian Army Cadets and wish him future success.

RESOLUTION NO. 313

By: Hon. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Chelsea Dicks attends Sackville High School and is a member of the 3036 Lower Sackville Royal Canadian Army Cadets; and

Whereas Chelsea was one of two cadets from Lower Sackville who took part in Exercise Sub Zero in Goose Bay, Labrador, from March 18 to 25, 2017; and

Whereas Exercise Sub Zero tests survival skills, physical fitness, and personal endurance during a challenging hike up Dome Mountain in frigid winter conditions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lower Sackville's Chelsea Dicks on her accomplishments in the Royal Canadian Army Cadets and wish her future success.