



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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First Session

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2017

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 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. We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table two petitions.

The first petition calls upon the Nova Scotia Legislature to create a single province-wide noise monitoring and enforcement protocol for regulating the acoustical emissions from wind-power plants operating within Nova Scotia and to have said protocol to be enshrined in Nova Scotia regulation.

There are 139 signatures, containing my own as per the Rules of this House.

MR. SPEAKER: I'll take that one under advisement and I'll get back to you.

The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition: We, the undersigned residents of the Province of Nova Scotia, are respectfully requesting that the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly, “Enshrine in act or regulation health and well-being objectives to be achieved for those Nova Scotia residents living in proximity to wind power plants.”

MR. SPEAKER: I will also take that one under advisement and get back to you.

The honourable member for Inverness on an introduction.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we do have some guests with us today who were behind the petition. I’m not sure if they’re sitting in the same spot. I do recognize one, Kristen Overmyer, but there are also some other guests who have brought this issue to the Legislature. I would ask them to rise to receive the welcome of the House. (Applause)

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 15 - Environment Act.

Bill No. 16 - Adult Capacity and Decision-making Act.

Bill No. 17 - Solemnization of Marriage Act.

Bill No. 19 - Consumer Protection Act.

Bill No. 29 - Marine Renewable-energy Act.

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, each without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that these bills be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 7 - Workers' Compensation Act.

Bill No. 33 - Gas Distribution Act.

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that these bills be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

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

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act (IPTA) Annual Report for 2016-17.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Business.

RESOLUTION NO. 363

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

Whereas the week of October 15th to October 21st is Small Business Week in Canada, a celebration of Canadian entrepreneurs and their contribution to Canada's economy; and

Whereas small businesses in Nova Scotia continue to grow our economy every day, employing workers, investing in their communities, and serving as important social and financial cornerstones of our province and all provinces; and

Whereas the Province of Nova Scotia is supporting small businesses by celebrating their successes, reducing red tape, and helping them hire and innovate and save money;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature recognize and congratulate small businesses here in the province, small-business employees, and the families and communities that they serve.

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.

[1:15 p.m.]

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 364

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

Whereas today, October 17th, is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty; and

Whereas government recognizes the importance of helping youth at risk reach their educational goals and live independently, breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty; and

Whereas government is working with communities and people struggling to make ends meet, to combat poverty in effective, innovative ways;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly recognize we all need to work together with communities and all levels of government to help vulnerable Nova Scotians break the cycle of poverty.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 365

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

Whereas Gerry Mills, the executive director of the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia, commonly referred to as ISANS, has just announced her retirement, which will occur in March 2018, after an illustrious career and almost 30 years of dedicated service to helping our newest residents settle in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Gerry has welcomed thousands of new Nova Scotians to our province and has helped them build a life here, while also inspiring all Nova Scotians to welcome and help settle new Nova Scotians; and

Whereas the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia plays a vital role in helping newcomers build a future in Nova Scotia, and by doing so helps to strengthen our economy and revitalize our communities;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in extending our sincere thanks and appreciation to Gerry Mills for a career of loyal and meritorious service to Nova Scotia, with best wishes for the next chapter of her life, including time with her four beautiful children.

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.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. REGAN: It's a tremendous honour here today, during Foster Family Appreciation Week, to introduce to the House some of the province's foster parents, and I would ask them to stand as I call their names.

I would direct the members' attention to the Speaker's Gallery where we are joined today by Iona Smith; Bev and Rick Stewart, who are accompanied by Dominique today; and Helen and Wayne Mosher. We also have a few people here today who have been foster parents for more than 35 years. They are Viola Cain, who has been a foster parent for 35 years, and Ann Jennex-Roberts, who has been a foster parent for 37 years.

I would ask that all members of the House give our guests a warm welcome.
(Standing Ovation)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 366

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

Whereas Foster Family Appreciation Week is a time to acknowledge the amazing work of foster parents, who open their hearts and homes to children in need of care; and

Whereas numerous foster parents have been providing loving homes for children and youth for more than 20 years, with some foster parents taking on the role for closer to 40 years; and

Whereas every day, foster parents show their dedication and commitment to the children and youth in their care, often going above and beyond to ensure children have a safe, and lifelong family relationship;

Therefore, be it resolved the members of this House of Assembly recognize and thank all Nova Scotian foster families who give their love and support to children in care.

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 Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction before resolution?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

HON. MARK FUREY: I draw your attention to the east gallery, where we are joined today by staff from Sheriff Services, and I'd ask them to stand as I call their names. I'd like to introduce our Director of Sheriff Services, Fred Hildebrand; Transport Coordinator Dave Elliott; and two heroic deputy sheriffs who are here to be recognized today, Samantha Martin and Bruce Knocton.

We all know the demanding and often dangerous job that our sheriffs do every day, to help keep Nova Scotians safe. Last week, Deputy Sheriffs Knocton and Martin went above and beyond their duties. They were one of the first on the scene of a head-on collision on Highway No. 102. They acted tactfully and swiftly to assist those that were injured and involved in the collision, as well as coordinating bystanders. They did this and fulfilled this role until the arrival of EHS and, at the same time, ensuring that the persons in custody remained safe.

I ask that all members of the House join me in welcoming our sheriffs today.
(Standing Ovation)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 367

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

Whereas two heroic deputy sheriffs, Samantha Martin and Bruce Knocton, displayed incredible acts of bravery on the night of October the 12th; and

Whereas Deputy Sheriff Martin and Deputy Sheriff Knocton came across a head-on collision on Highway 102 while transporting six persons in custody, both jumped into action, directing bystanders, caring for the injured, and assisting all passengers involved in the collision while awaiting the arrival of EHS and Fire; and

Whereas they put themselves in harm's way and with their courageous actions prevented further injury or loss of life, all the while ensuring that the persons in custody were all safe and secure;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in thanking Deputy Sheriffs Martin and Knocton for their bravery and exemplary service in response to the situation.

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. 49 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 240 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Judicature Act, to Protect Education Funds. (Mr. Tim Houston)

Bill No. 50 - Entitled an Act Respecting Social Inclusion. (Mr. Gary Burrill)

Bill No. 51 - Entitled An Act to Limit Increases in Rent for Residential Premises. (Ms. Susan Leblanc)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

BAIN, KEITH (VICTORIA-THE LAKES): RECOVERY - GRATEFUL

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today with the deepest gratitude to inform the House that our dear friend and colleague, the MLA for Victoria-The Lakes, has been released from hospital and is home recovering. (Applause)

One week ago he suffered a medical emergency and we are all thankful to report that he is doing well. I want to say to my caucus colleagues, thank you for your heroic efforts and professionalism on that day during his traumatic experience. To the MLA's family, his constituency assistant Dianne, our caucus office staff and to the paramedics, doctors, nurses and all the hospital staff in both Sydney and Halifax, thank you for all of your efforts to help him along to what we hope now will be a full recovery.

Mr. Speaker, to the many people who have called our office and his, sent inspiring messages either by email or on social media, I want to say thank you to them as well. They lifted his spirits and ours during this very difficult time.

I think all members would agree that the MLA for Victoria-The Lakes is truly one of the hardest-working, kindest-hearted persons that you meet in public life. I know we are all looking forward to having him back in this House once he has fully recovered. (Applause)

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

ELLIOTT, CATHY: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I am saddened that another creative friend is gone, Mi'kmaq playwright and director, Cathy Elliott, originally from Sipekne'katik. She left us suddenly, like a shooting star that we watch blaze across the sky and our hearts race with wonder and excitement until it's gone.

But you, dear nitap, have lit the fire in a million eyes and hearts and minds. Your stories will go on and your journey will continue. Our lives are woven together, touching, separating, returning, entangled, all strands of the great sparkling web of the universe that grandmother Spider Woman Frigga and the Three Fates continue to weave because we are one, we are one, we are one. Say hello to Anna Mae for me. Hope to do her play and your play soon and see you both in the night sky. Wala'lin nitap. Journey well.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

GREENWOOD ANIMAL HOSP.: AAHA ACCREDITATION - CONGRATS.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Since 1990 the Greenwood Animal Hospital has provided compassionate care through professional veterinary services in the Kingston-Greenwood area. Recently the Greenwood Animal Hospital underwent a rigorous evaluation process by the American Animal Hospital Association, successfully resulting with full accreditation.

The accreditation process is based on evaluations of approximately 990 quality standards that go above and beyond basic regulations, and accreditation is reserved only for practices which demonstrate the highest levels of veterinary excellence.

On behalf of the Province of Nova Scotia, I would like to congratulate Dr. Teresa Speelman and the team at Greenwood Animal Hospital for receiving the AAHA accreditation in recognition of the highest levels of veterinary excellence and, furthermore, I'd like to wish Greenwood Animal Hospital all the best for continued success.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

HARMON, PAULA: GARDENS OF GRACE - RECOGNIZE

MR. TIM HALMAN: I rise today to celebrate the tenacity and courage of Dartmouth East resident Paula Harmon and her organization, Gardens of Grace. After the unexpected passing of her daughter Grace, Paula Harmon realized the lack of supports available to families who experience miscarriages, stillbirths and infant loss. Paula decided to help other families by creating Gardens of Grace. Paula Harmon is a warm, compassionate, generous person who is working to ensure that all families feel supported in a time of unbelievable loss. I admire all that Paula has accomplished in honour of Grace and cannot wait to see everything she does next. I ask the House to recognize Paula Harmon and, of course, to honour Grace.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DUNSWORTH, JOHN: DEATH OF - CONDOLENCES

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: It is in shock and sadness that I rise today to pay tribute to the great John Dunsworth, who died unexpectedly yesterday. John was a truly great actor. From his portrayal of Candy in *Of Mice and Men* at Neptune Theatre to the iconic Mr. Lahey on *Trailer Park Boys* and all his roles in between, his honesty, intelligence, and humour shone through every time. He was an amazing teacher. I have watched him in front of young actors extolling the beauties of Shakespeare and then performing a quick monologue or sonnet with arresting clarity for them. As a candidate for the NDP in 1988, his election slogan was: I think, therefore I am NDP.

It's impossible to summarize what his loss means to Nova Scotia and to Canada. Tributes are pouring in from all over, and I wish I could share them all here. Writer, director, and actor Josh MacDonald wrote today: You could make a pretty easy case that John was the heart and soul of our Nova Scotia industry. He beat so vigorously for so long at the centre of us. He kept us all going.

I would like to extend my sincere condolences to his wife, Elizabeth; children Sarah, Zoe, Molly and Jeff; and all those who feel his loss so strongly.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

SM. BUS. WK. - EMERGING BUS. AWARD: NOMINEES - CONGRATS.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: During Small Business Week, the Antigonish Chamber of Commerce hosts its annual Antigonish Business Gala and Awards Night. The chamber asks for nominations from the community for its five awards. The chamber's Emerging Business Award recognizes new profitable businesses showing excellence in new or innovative products or services, quality of merchandise, customer service, job creation, growth potential, and community involvement.

This year, nominees for the Emerging Business Award are: Antigonish Green Clean, Family First Medical Antigonish, Highland Bike Shop, and MacDonald & Murphy Inc. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all nominees for this year's Emerging Business Award. Starting a new business has many opportunities and challenges. They deserve this special recognition for their hard work and success.

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

**GREGOR-MACKINNON, SYLVIA - DEATH OF:
CIOE RADIO - CONDOLENCES**

MR. BRAD JOHNS: I rise today to express with deep regret that on Sunday, October 15th, Sackville's CIOE community radio lost their beloved receptionist. Sylvia Gregor-MacKinnon passed away after a brief illness. Sylvia was a very special person, and her death will impact the station and all who knew her. Her unselfish attitude when it came to performing her duties at the station, often went well above and beyond the call of duty. Sylvia loved CIOE radio. She was a team player who attended every function, every concert, and every fundraising event. It was for a good reason that she was named last year's CIOE volunteer of the year.

Sylvia was a woman of great faith, and it is our fondest wish that she has found peace, rest, and comfort in the arms of her God. My sincere condolences to her son, my friend Bruce, the rest of their family, and everyone who knew her.

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

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: I would like to draw the attention of the members of the House to the west gallery, where we have a very distinguished visitor today: a former Speaker of this House, a friend to all of us who are here, and a great champion of Cape Breton, the Honourable Gordie Gosse. (Standing Ovation)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

[1:30 p.m.]

REIGH ALLEN CENTRE: COMMUNITY WORK - RECOGNIZE

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise today to recognize the evolution of the youth-centred work at the Reigh Allen Centre, part of HomeBridge Youth Society. HomeBridge provides housing and programming for youth between the ages of 12 and 18. The Reigh Allen Centre is an emergency crisis, receiving centre for youth at risk, located on Pleasant Street in Dartmouth and serving youth from across the province.

Yesterday the Reigh Allen Centre held a renaming ceremony under the direction of Elder Tony Thomas. The “Male Unit” and “Female Unit” were renamed “Birch” and “Cedar.” The names were chosen for traditional Mi’kmaq healing properties of each tree and to reflect the non-binary identities of many of the youth.

“Healing begins when we listen to our children and their unique attempts to teach about unconditional love and acceptance,” said Ernie Hilton, the executive director, in his opening remarks.

Please join me in recognizing the work of the Reigh Allen Centre and thank them for listening to the youth they serve first.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

DIGGS, BOBBY: CONTRIBUTIONS - POSTHUMOUSLY RECOGNIZE

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize the late Bobby Diggs of East Preston, who passed away on October 6, 2017, at the age of 92.

Bobby was a quiet, sincere, and generous man, and was the last surviving member of his immediate family. He and his wife, Margaret, raised a family of nine and were blessed with many grandchildren.

Bobby was a man who started working at the age of 16. He worked on the Angus L. Macdonald Bridge many years ago. He was a devout member of the Lions Club and the volunteer fire department in his community.

Madam Speaker, Bobby was a good friend and a man I respected, and he will be missed. I would ask you and the members of this House of Assembly to join me in posthumously recognizing Robert Diggs for his generous spirit and contributions to mankind.

MADAM SPEAKER: The member for Pictou East on an introduction.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Sitting in the gallery this afternoon, we have Hannah Dawson-Murphy, an aspiring politician and all-around great person. When she leaves here, she's going to go home to her mother Shelly's birthday party, so she's a good daughter as well. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

SHELburne CO. ARENA ASSOC.: VOLUNTEERS - CONGRATS.

MS. KIM MASLAND: Madam Speaker, on Sunday there was a much-deserved celebration at the Shelburne County Arena. For the past 10 years, the arena has been undergoing significant capital upgrades that total almost \$1.5 million. Improvements include new boards and glass, a new sound system, dressing room, lighting improvements, and more.

The Shelburne County Arena Association is a volunteer group that is to be commended on their perseverance and dedication over the decade-long journey.

I am honoured to stand here today and offer my sincere congratulations to the leaders, volunteers, and contributors who worked so hard to make sure that the arena will be available for the recreational needs of community members for many years to come.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

WORTH, KENDALL: INFORMATION - THANK

MS. LISA ROBERTS: On the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, I want to acknowledge the efforts of a Halifax Needham constituent who strives to inform MLAs and the general public of the challenges facing those living in poverty.

Kendall Worth is an ESIA recipient who lives with disabilities. He is also a skilled writer who, in my brief time on the Community Services Committee of this House, regularly shared his thoughts on the transformation of the ESIA system by asking the clerk to circulate his letters and emails to all members.

He also publishes first-voice accounts in the *Nova Scotia Advocate* of living in poverty and is active with the Benefits Reform Action Group.

As Kendall himself has pointed out, welfare stigma is a real issue, and most Nova Scotians who do not rely on income assistance know very little about the system.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Kendall Worth for informing us and the general public so that we can move toward a more compassionate society.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

MILFORD REC. ASSOC.: ANNIV. (50th) - CONGRATS.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Madam Speaker, the members of the Milford Recreation Association have been extremely busy this year.

With funding from the Rick Hansen Foundation Barrier Buster projects, the Province of Nova Scotia, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and the Municipality of East Hants, they were able to do many upgrades to the Milford Recreation Centre and grounds.

They installed a new wheelchair-accessible ramp and platform at the main entryway to the hall, and constructed a parking area with ramp access, evenly paved the parking lot's surface, and marked out accessible parking spaces.

Signs that include trail names, distance, and difficulty of trails were installed, as well as walkways and retaining walls. A new 1,400-square foot stone patio was built to accommodate outdoor weddings and gatherings, and with the installation of three new tennis courts, new fencing, and tennis equipment, the Milford Recreation Association once again is offering tennis lessons.

I would like to congratulate the Milford Recreation Association on celebrating their 50th Anniversary and thank them for making their building and grounds accessible for everyone.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

DECOSTE ENTERTAINMENT CTR.: ANNIV. (35th) - CONGRATS.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to congratulate Darlene MacDonald and the amazing team at the deCoste Entertainment Centre, which is marking its 35th Anniversary. The doors at the deCoste opened in November of 1982, showcasing the famous Rita MacNeil. Over the years it has hosted famous artists such as George Canyon, Natalie MacMaster, the Mamas and Papas and Barra MacNeils, just to name a few.

Its success is owed to the dedicated, passionate, professional and forward-thinking staff who are always upbeat and encouraging. Pictou County is proud of the deCoste's accomplishment and also its contributions to the performing arts. I am so very proud to be able to wish them a Happy Anniversary, knowing that they will have many more years of success and achievement.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**INTL. DAY FOR ERADICATION OF POVERTY (OCT. 17th):
COMMUNITY GROUPS - THANK**

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Madam Speaker, October 17th is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Nova Scotia has the highest rate of children living in low-income families of any province, and as of this month we have the lowest minimum wage in Canada.

We know that since 2013, 20 per cent more Nova Scotians are using food banks to feed their families, and in HRM 25 per cent of households spend 30 per cent of their income on rent. Policy changes like rent control and increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour would be a start to addressing these issues. Working towards solving problems like these would go a long way to eradicating poverty in our province.

I want to acknowledge those working in our communities at food banks, community centres and other not-for-profit organizations that support Nova Scotians who need help. In Dartmouth North, I'd like to especially mention the Farrell Benevolent Society, the Take Action Society, the Dartmouth North Community Food Centre and Dartmouth Housing Help. The work these groups do to reduce the effects of poverty and improve the lives of those struggling in our community, is essential.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

SM. BUS.: COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS - THANK

MR. GORDON WILSON: Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate the many small businesses that are the backbone of Nova Scotia's economy. This government is working hard to ensure that small businesses are not restricted by red tape. The government has set a bold target to reduce red tape and to save Nova Scotia businesses \$25 million annually.

Madam Speaker, this government's initiative to reduce red tape has benefited many small businesses, including many wineries, farmers and apprentices. This work has saved businesses more than \$5 million each year and we plan to continue on this path.

Madam Speaker, I am proud of the work our government is doing and I'm even prouder of the small businesses that continue to grow our economy. I ask the members of this House of Assembly, and all the members of this House of Assembly, to join me in thanking our small businesses for all they do to contribute to the economy in our communities.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

AMHERST FIRE DEPARTMENT: SERVICE/HARD WORK - THANK

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I would like to acknowledge and honour the Amherst Fire Department, Fire Chief Greg Jones and Deputy Fire Chief Brian Farrow, and the more than 50 volunteer firefighters who ensure that our local communities are well served and are safe.

These men and women volunteer and are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, putting their lives on the line for their friends and families and neighbours. In addition, our career firefighters work shifts that consist of 24 hours on and 72 hours off. The department is dedicated and committed to a service of excellence to the people of Cumberland County, catering to many needs within the community.

I am proud to thank the Amherst Fire Department for their continued service, hard work and loyalty.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

INTL. DAY FOR ERADICATION OF POVERTY - ATTENTION

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Madam Speaker, I also rise today to acknowledge the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. In my own constituency of Dartmouth South, we are often regarded as well-off. We have lovely residential neighbourhoods, a thriving downtown and several new condos and rental buildings. But in Dartmouth South and across the province you don't have to look very far to see evidence of poverty. We have several buildings managed by Housing Nova Scotia that are home to low-income seniors, many of whom I see in my office each week for issues related to not being able to afford medication or food or both, or other of the myriad issues that poverty engenders.

In our downtown on any given day you'll see the same folks in the same spots, who spend their time trying to find enough change to buy a meal. With no shelters in Dartmouth, they often look for transit tickets to take them to Halifax for a warm bed. In our toniest neighbourhoods, you'll find youth care facilities where children who live in poverty by circumstance of birth do their best to attend school, have a childhood, and fight the stigma that follows them.

On this day, I would encourage all members of this House to cast an eye to their own constituencies and take stock of the places where poverty has the deepest impact. I'd suggest that these are the places to which we should first give our attention when this House adjourns.

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

**MACDONALD, MARIA/MACDONALD, ALEXANDRA:
LT. GOV. EDUC. MEDAL - CONGRATS.**

HON. LLOYD HINES: Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate two well-rounded students who work hard in service to their school and community on being awarded the Lieutenant Governor's Education Medals for Guysborough Academy.

Grade 11 students Maria MacDonald and Alexandra MacDonald were the 2017 recipients recognized for their demonstrated qualities of leadership and service in the school community and commendable performance in the courses in which they are enrolled. These two young women dedicate countless hours as volunteers in their community and are members of various committees, all while maintaining high academic standing.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House to join me in congratulating Maria and Alexandra on this significant achievement, and commend them for being such wonderful role models in their community.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**SHANG, ALICE/HUGHES, CEDRIC:
SUNNY'S DINER OPENING - RECOGNIZE**

HON. PAT DUNN: Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize two individuals who decided to take on a new challenge. Alice Shang and Cedric "Sonny" Hughes decided to create their own employment. They have completed renovations at the former restaurant Dine & Dash, and will open their doors to customers this month.

Sonny's Diner will offer traditional Canadian food along with a choice of traditional Asian food. The Main Street diner will be catering to families and other consumers. Here's to wishing them the best of luck in their new endeavour.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

DAVIS, REENA: COMMUNITY SERVICE - RECOGNIZE

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize someone who has made many unique contributions to Halifax Needham. During the two years I worked at Veith House, I would occasionally do what I call emergency yoga - yoga when I'm already a mess of stress and knots. That is how I first encountered Reena Davis who teaches yoga for a suggested donation of \$2.50 - to Veith House, not her.

I later learned that Reena is also the office manager of Dalhousie Legal Aid, a very important institution which both represents people living in poverty and also seeks to make

policy change. Much of that work is contingent on fundraising and, here, Reena is central as she organizes two annual fundraisers, the Social Justice Soirée and the golf tournament.

Recently I have been following Reena's blog where she writes about her experience as a recovered alcoholic, her struggles with depression, and her long journey with kidney disease. Despite having kidney function of less than 10 per cent, she is both back on the mat teaching yoga and at work at Dal Legal Aid. I am grateful for her inspiring example and for her service to our community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

HFX. SEED CO.: SMALL BUS. WEEK (2017) - RECOGNIZE

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, in recognition of Small Business Week, I am pleased to celebrate Halifax Seed Company Inc., a fourth-generation family business with 151 years of history in our province.

Owned and operated by the Tregunno family who have roots in Halifax Armdale, Halifax Seed Company Inc. has grown into the regional leader of horticulture products supplies and expertise. They employ 50 to 75 Nova Scotians each year, including families with multiple generations of employees with the company. They donate generously to Hope Blooms and the Common Roots Urban Farm and have been nationally recognized, having won the 2012 Family Enterprise of the Year Award from the Canadian Association of Family Enterprise.

Family businesses are a vital part of the world economy and, indeed, our provincial economy. I want to congratulate Nancy, Emily, Alison, and the entire Tregunno family on their company's success and encourage everyone to stalk up on bulbs for the October planting season.

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

MACLEOD, CASSIE: IODE FEATURED ARTIST - CONGRATS.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Cassie MacLeod of North Sydney. Cassie has been chosen by the IODE Rt. Honourable Vincent Massey Chapter to be the featured artist at the organization's annual Autumn Treasures Art Show. The show took place during the annual Celtic Colours International Festival.

As the featured artist, Cassie MacLeod was asked to complete 10 paintings, including one that would be used as a door prize. Cassie has been painting for more than 35 years and has been a teacher, mentor, and organizer for other area artists.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cassie for her passion for art and her willingness to help the IODE and their community in her work.

[1:45 p.m.]

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

JONES, EL - BLACK POETRY DAY: SPOKEN WORD - COMMITMENT

MS. LENORE ZANN: Today, is Black Poetry Day. El Jones is so committed to spoken word that some of her poems were never written down, until she published her first poetry book, poems like Black Power. I can still see El, standing in front of a banner that reads, Black Lives Matter. Her left hand is raised in a fist, her right holds a mike into which she chants:

Malcolm, Huey, Angela, Assata
Dead, prison, exile, murdered
Revolution, protest, programs, marches
Can you live up to what they started?
What do you feel in every beat of your heart?
Black power.
Now say it with me
Black Power
Now say it louder
Black power . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind the honourable member that recitations of poetry are not permitted during member statements.

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

MS. ZANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hour by hour, Black power - the struggle is continuing, so let's educate ourselves.

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

DROBOT, IRINA/EVGENY: BUS. SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise today during Small Business Week to recognize Irina and Evgeny Drobot of Halifax, owners of Drobot Automotive Centres. Irina and Evgeny immigrated to Canada nine years ago. They have worked hard and now own two Drobot Automotive Centres, one on Kempt Road in Halifax and the second in Beechville. Well-

known for their dependable service and friendly staff, Drobot Automotive Centres offer a wide range of services for all makes and models of cars.

I would like the members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the Drobot family on their business success to date, and wish them well in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. HALMAN: In the west gallery, we have a resident of Dartmouth East, Mr. Mike Sears. Mike has been a Halifax firefighter for many, many years. He has given back to his community over the years through coaching football, and he's also a member of the Union Fire Club Pipes and Drums band.

Mike is an amazing individual, like many first responders, a person who has always been there to serve the community. I ask the House to please welcome Mr. Mike Sears. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

BROWNING, GERALDINE: ORDER OF N.S. - CONGRATS.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Geraldine Browning used her early struggles against systemic racism to fuel her work as an advocate and community builder. She is a founding member of the Black Business Initiative, the Black Cultural Society, and the Valley African Nova Scotia Development Association. Mrs. B, as she is widely known, advocates for the protection of women and children from violence and abuse, promotes literacy and education, and visits schools to share her experiences with young Nova Scotians. Because of her outstanding contribution to the culture and people of Nova Scotia, she will be invested into the Order of Nova Scotia.

I invite the House to congratulate Mrs. Browning on her extraordinary contributions and in receiving the recognition she so rightfully deserves.

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

**GOSSE, HON. GORDIE:
SYDNEY-WHITNEY PIER CONTRIBUTIONS - RECOGNIZE**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I am honoured to rise in my place, as the member for Sydney-Whitney Pier, to recognize the former MLA, the member for Sydney-Whitney Pier, the Honourable Gordie Gosse. For years, Gordie has defended his community of Whitney Pier, has helped hundreds of residents who needed it the most, and one of his greatest legacies that Gordie gave to our community was the Whitney Pier Boys and Girls Club. Hundreds of kids, in the community of Whitney Pier and surrounding areas, have gone through that club under the leadership and the guidance of Gordie Gosse.

I stand in my place today, as an elected representative of this House, as the member for Sydney-Whitney Pier, to thank the former member for Sydney-Whitney Pier, for all he did for the kids in his community, for all he did for Sydney and the surrounding areas, and for what he did for all Nova Scotians. (Applause)

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

**SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT - #METOO: N.S. WOMEN
- BRAVERY APPLAUD**

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Today I rise to acknowledge a powerful call-to-action to women around the world. In the wake of a Hollywood scandal, a new viral social media hashtag, known as #metoo, is giving voice to women who have survived sexual assault and harassment.

Today I applaud the brave Nova Scotians who have joined this global chorus. This powerful two-word phrase aims to break the silence and remove the shame that too often accompanies sexual harassment and assault.

For every woman who is telling her own experiences out loud, there are likely just as many choosing not to do so. Today I want to applaud the brave Nova Scotia women who are standing up and saying “me too.”

I stand in hope that by shining a spotlight on the scourge of sexual harassment and assault that we are taking a step towards eliminating it.

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

HALIFAX PAPER HEARTS: SMALL BUS. WEEK (2017) - CELEBRATE

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, during Small Business Week I rise today to celebrate Halifax Paper Hearts, a local small business in the heart of Fairview. This company started their journey during a trip to Calgary when owner Stefanie MacDonald

created a card for two women who had recently been married, after realizing that greeting card stores had none.

Receiving praise for her design, she decided to pursue her passion and has since become a thriving local business in the heart of our community. Paper Hearts provides people with cards for every occasion and person in their lives. After their recent success, the business expanded to sell framed prints of many of their most popular designs.

Halifax Paper Hearts is committed to giving back to the community through donating to a local charity each year. This past year, their company was able to contribute significantly to Catapult Leadership Society, an organization which offers leadership opportunities to teens in Nova Scotia. They have also created various programs to raise money for those in need, including Thankful Hearts: Providing Thanksgiving Dinners to Deserving Families.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the members of this House of Assembly rise and join me in congratulating Halifax Paper Hearts and wishing the business continued success.

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

ALDRED, ADAM: ITU GRAND FINAL - CONGRATS.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize Adam Aldred of West Pubnico for crossing the finish line at the International Triathlon Union Grand Final in Rotterdam on September 17th. Adam competed at the amateur level in the men's 35 to 39 age group at an Olympic distance of 1.5 kilometre swim, 40-kilometre bike ride and 10 kilometre run.

Aldred was one of over 3,000 athletes from 78 different countries who took up the challenge. This is the second time that Adam has competed at the world triathlon championships and his ultimate goals are to compete in the legendary IRONMAN World Championship in Hawaii, and the Boston Marathon.

I'd like to ask all members of the Legislature to please join me in congratulating him on his accomplishments and wish Adam luck in his future endeavours.

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

MACLELLAN, IAN: DEATH OF - CONDOLENCES

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a great Nova Scotia businessman and icon, Ian C. MacLellan, who just passed away recently. Mr. MacLellan is survived by his wife Jane of 58 years, his three daughters Kathryn, Heather and Janet, and much extended family.

Ian is remembered as the impeccably dressed, charming and witty Spring Garden Road merchant who worked his way up from part-time staff to president and owner of Mills Brothers Limited.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer condolences to the family and may Ian MacLellan rest in peace.

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

RANDELL, JOSEPH: E&Y ATL. ENTREPRENEUR (2017) - CONGRATS.

MR. BILL HORNE: I'd like to congratulate today a constituent of Wellington, Mr. Joseph Randell, president and CEO of Chorus Aviation. He is Ernest Young's 2017 Atlantic Entrepreneur of the Year, winning in the Business Services category then being chosen overall. Joe will be one of the five who will compete in the national event to become Canada's Entrepreneur of the Year. The winner of the national award will move on to the world competition in Monte Carlo in June.

Mr. Speaker, Joe was recognized for playing a vital role in shaping the landscape of the Canadian airline industry. His strong management and entrepreneurial mindset guided him to success. Beyond the workplace, Joe was a long-time supporter of Junior Achievement in Nova Scotia, actively involved with Dalhousie's Faculty of Engineering, and currently a director of the MS Scientific Research Foundation.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud to have Joe represent Atlantic Canada at the national level, and congratulate him on his current and future success.

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

**HOUGHTON, DAVE/HOPEWELL, CHRIS/HARVEY, CLINTON:
SOFTBALL CAN. HALL OF FAME - CONGRATS.**

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, in November three Nova Scotia athletes will be inducted into the Softball Canada Hall of Fame. Dave Houghton of Halifax will be honoured for his over 40 years of service to softball as a Sports Builder inductee. Chris Hopewell of Stewiacke, who has been coaching for 15 years - including five consecutive top five finishes, one of which being a gold medal win - will be the recipient of the Home Run Sports Coach of the Year. Clinton Harvey of Valley, Colchester County, with over 10 years of dedication to the sport, will be induced as the Home Run Sports Umpire of the Year.

I ask that the members join me in congratulating our athletes on their forthcoming induction into the 2017 Softball Canada Hall of Fame.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

**MCAVOY, HAYDEN - FUNDRAISER:
COM. SUPPORT - ACKNOWLEDGE**

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: On Saturday, October 14th, hundreds of people gathered at Bubba Ray's to raise money for 11-year-old Hayden McAvoy. Hayden was diagnosed with Stage 3 cancer and is looking at over a year's worth of chemo. Hayden is one strong 11 year old.

I'm proud to say the event raised \$28,848.60 - truly our community coming together for Hayden. Thank you to Melissa Hearn; Sarah Slade; Cyndi Garrison; Ariel Flemming; Jessica Brazil; Melody Zunette; Devon Glen Witter; Kayla Wurstra; Laurenn Corkum; Courtney Spicer; Nicky Blair; Karen Cleveland; Marjorie Grey; Kevin Cleveland; Heather Jones; Brian Jones; Ryan Ackerman; Bubba Ray's; Kool T's; Nicky Grey; Paul Hunt; and all the volunteers and community members who came together to support Hayden.

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

**DOYLE, ANNE/IAN - BOSTON MARATHON:
COMPLETION - ACKNOWLEDGE**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: I rise today to congratulate mother and son Anne and Ian Doyle of Coxheath on their completion of the Boston Marathon. Ian finished in 3:06:36, while Anne crossed the line in 4:23:04. Anne began running seven years ago and started with a local learn-to-run program. She said it was incredible to share the experience with her son. Anne and her son re-qualified for next year's Boston Marathon.

I stand today to acknowledge this accomplishment for both Anne and Ian Doyle and wish them the best of luck as they continue to train for next year.

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

SMALL BUSINESSES - CELEBRATE

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Today the government reaffirmed its commitment to helping small businesses succeed by lowering taxes for more than 1,800 small- and medium-sized Nova Scotia businesses. An increase in the small business tax threshold to \$500,000 will mean over \$14 million in savings that can be reinvested and create jobs.

In addition to cutting taxes, I'm pleased to say that this year's launch of the Business Navigator Service has helped many new businesses navigate existing rules. The Business Navigator Service provides one-on-one customized service to small-business owners through the regulatory environment, saving them time and money. Nearly 800 small-

business owners have used this service since the government launched the program in February.

I ask that members of this House of Assembly join me in celebrating our small businesses, not only this week but every day of the year.

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

TAMARAC ED. CTR.: HALIFAX VISIT - SIGNIFICANCE

MS. ALANA PAON: Grade 7 and 8 social studies French immersion students from Tamarac Education Centre in Port Hawkesbury are visiting Halifax today.

Their travels not only bring them here to Province House but also to Pier 21, where they will learn about the significance of immigration to the Province of Nova Scotia. With the generous support of the Ruth Goldbloom Educational Bursary Fund, these students have been able to make this voyage to Halifax as an extension of their immigration studies. We know that fellow Cape Bretoner Mrs. Goldbloom was instrumental in the development of Pier 21, and I thank her.

I would also like to thank Lisa MacNamara, a former high school classmate of mine, and her colleague Stephanie Sampson, for instilling the importance of the democratic process, equality, and the importance of getting out to vote in their students. These students are the leaders of tomorrow. What they do today has great significance to their collective future.

I hope they take it all in and continue to put their learning into practice.

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

CDN. SCOUT JAMBOREE (2017): ORGANIZERS/VOLS. - THANK

MR. BEN JESSOME: This summer I was honoured to attend the opening ceremonies for the 2017 Canadian Scout Jamboree, the first time this event was held in Nova Scotia.

The jamboree is held every four years and offers children a chance to connect with fellow Scouts from around the world. The camp welcomed over 4,500 scouts, ages 11 to 15 - and 50 scouts from Taiwan was one of the largest contingents.

Camp Nedooae in Elderbank was the site for a full week of fun and friendship. The Scouts had the opportunity to travel our province and experience some of our culture and history. Plus, at Camp Nedooae, there were fun activities like rock climbing, mountain biking, mud runs, and bubble soccer. The kids also learned traditional scouting skills like

stamping leather and tying knots, making this a well-rounded camp. One of their greatest activities was moving in after a heavy rainstorm.

I would ask all members of the House of Assembly to please join me in thanking the organizers and volunteers for their countless hours, and wish all the scouts who attended the best success in the future.

[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. - N.S. POWER: CARBON PRICES - PASS ON COST

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Confusion seems to be growing every day about what the Premier's cap and trade scheme actually entails. Will it help the environment? We don't know. Will any polluter have to pay? Nobody knows. Will we all have to pay more? There is no answer. No one seems to know, but it's time to get some answers.

I'd like to start with the issue of electricity pricing, Mr. Speaker. Can the Premier confirm that Nova Scotia Power is an emitter and subject to the new carbon pricing rules?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Again, I want to thank all those Nova Scotians who, for the last decade, continue to ensure that GHG reduction in this province leads the country. Through some very tough regulations, we'll continue to reduce and lead the country.

I want to let the honourable member know that if he looks at the cap and trade system in this province, the credits that are in this province belong to all Nova Scotians, Mr. Speaker, and those Nova Scotians will be able to use those to smooth them across so we make sure we protect the pocketbooks of all Nova Scotians.

MR. BAILLIE: Well I don't know if you heard a "yes" or "no" there, Mr. Speaker, but we certainly didn't.

Nova Scotians deserve straight answers to these questions. They already pay the highest power rates in the country. The Premier is congratulate them for doing that work appropriately because it is because of those power rates that Nova Scotia is in the better

position that it is in the environment today. Yet they deserve to know if they are going to be asked to pay even more - in straight, plain language.

I'd like to ask the Premier if he can confirm that if Nova Scotia Power exceeds its caps under the cap and trade system, will those credits have to be purchased by the power company to stay in line with his new rules?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to thank all those Nova Scotians who continue to work with our government to continue to improve the economy across the province.

As the honourable member would know, the bureaucracy in the federal government announced last week that we were the only one of two Canadian provinces that is on a path to sustainability. That's because of the hard work of so many Nova Scotians.

I want to continue to assure the honourable member that we'll continue to make sure that this province is affordable. As he would know, he ran not the last election but the one before talking about all kinds of things around power - saying we couldn't do what we actually promised Nova Scotians. In actual fact, Mr. Speaker, we delivered and will deliver on this program.

MR. BAILLIE: No, Mr. Speaker, they did not deliver. What the Premier told Nova Scotians is that he would break the monopoly, that there would be competition for power, that there would be multiple power companies for them to purchase their electricity from. But every Nova Scotian today still has only one choice. He broke his promise to the people of Nova Scotia on power. And do you know what? They are also very aware that that power company, unlike other companies, passes all its costs on to its customers. It continues to live under the cost of service delivery model, something the Premier promised to change and did not.

Nova Scotians deserve to know a straight-up answer. Will Nova Scotia Power be able to pass on its carbon prices to its ratepayers under his plan, yes or no?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As he would know, renewable energy producers can sell in this province - very much what we committed to in 2013. The honourable member would also know that under his Party and under the NDP, that power rates were increasing around 30 per cent through their term. Under this government, Mr. Speaker, power rates have gone down.

We're going to continue to operate and work with Nova Scotians. At the same time, we're going to make sure that this province is affordable and at the same time we're protecting the environment.

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

PREM.: POVERTY ERADICATION - MEASURES

MR. GARY BURRILL: My question today, Mr. Speaker, marks the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Today Nova Scotia has the highest poverty rate in Atlantic Canada. We have the worst child poverty in all of Canada. We have the fastest-rising food bank use of any province in our country.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier of Nova Scotia acknowledge that these are facts?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank the honourable member for the question. He would know that in the most recent budget 60,000 Nova Scotians will no longer pay income tax. He would also know that there was a change to the HARP program, that we will see 5,000 more Nova Scotia families with access to support (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, he would also know that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development in this government has introduced a pre-Primary program - only one in four children had available to them. He would know there's a direct socio-economic reason for that. Our program will give 100 per cent coverage for all four-year-olds in this province, to give them a better chance, Mr. Speaker, to continue to support those families.

MR. BURRILL: Members of this government have offered the view on various occasions that the problem of poverty eradication is so enormously complex that solving it is more difficult and intricate than anyone could hardly imagine. But there is vast research and literature on this subject that says that what is required to end poverty is really very simple: (1) affordable child care; (2) a \$15 minimum wage; (3) social assistance rates high enough that people can buy their groceries; and (4) rent control, so that everyone can afford a roof. Is there one of these four measures that the Premier will commit to?

THE PREMIER: I'm very proud that in our first term, we had the largest single increase in income assistance in the history of this province. That followed four years when he had an opportunity to make an impact for low-income Nova Scotians and didn't.

I also want to remind the honourable member that housing rates for those waiting for affordable housing in this province have dropped 20 per cent in our first term. We're committed to continuing to work with organizations on rent supplements. We're going to continue to make meaningful change for low-income Nova Scotians.

I would encourage the honourable member - actually, sorry, Mr. Speaker. He did vote for the budget, so I don't want to be too critical.

MR. BURRILL: The Premier should show greater respect for the people whose difficulties and sufferings we're speaking about, than to tie up the time of the House with his reflections about a government that was elected almost 10 years ago. Since this

government took office, which is the subject that is before us, we have 7,500 more people in Nova Scotia being fed from food banks, and 2,500 of them are children.

Will the Premier acknowledge the downward spiral Nova Scotia has been in on poverty these last four years? Does he take responsibility to do something about it in this second term?

THE PREMIER: Again, I want to thank the honourable member for giving me an opportunity to continue to remind him that the single largest increase in income assistance happened under this government. I want to tell him that. I also want to tell him that while people were languishing on wait-lists for affordable housing when they were in government, we have reduced that by 20 per cent, and we're going to reduce it even further.

We're going to continue to work on the tax system, so that when we make adjustments in the tax system, the working poor in this province are going to get the largest single decrease in their taxes in the history of this province; 60,000 Nova Scotians will actually be taken off the tax rolls, which means we'll be leaving more money in the pockets of those families.

I want to remind the honourable member that when he had a chance to be in government to do something for Nova Scotians - those very children he spoke about, he ignored for four years while he was in government. The pre-Primary program will give those kids hope for the future.

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

PREM.: CYBERBULLYING LAW - ENACT

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: For almost two years now, Nova Scotia has been without new cyberbullying legislation to protect the victims of this horrible crime, including our own children. It's now time for this House to put new legal protections in place for the victims of cyberbullying.

The current plan that the government has brought forth may not be perfect, but quite simply doing nothing is not an option. I would like to ask the Premier if he will commit to passing new cyberbullying legislation during this session of the Legislature.

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to congratulate the minister for the introduction of this piece of legislation.

We'll continue to work through the process, as with all pieces of legislation in this House. We'll make sure that we hear from all Nova Scotians and all stakeholders when it comes to making sure this piece of legislation is in place. We're very proud of the hard work we did. Like we did on a number of other occasions, we'll make sure that if there are

people out there who want to come in to speak to this bill, then we'll make sure that happens.

MR. BAILLIE: We find ourselves in the odd position of asking the government to pass its own bill. That's how important this issue is.

The fact of the matter is, there is time in this session, in committee, to hear from more Nova Scotians about cyberbullying. I would like to encourage the government to make sure that that happens later this week.

There's also time to tweak some of the things that have come forward, like the powers of the CyberSCAN unit, and we are in favour of making those changes in this session, Mr. Speaker. I want the Premier to reconsider his position to leave that plan unpassed this session and tell the House that he will allow MLAs to vote to enact a new cyberbullying law before this session concludes.

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. He knows, as I've said to him many times, we'll continue to allow the bill to move through the process. We'll ensure that we hear from all Nova Scotians and every MLA will get an opportunity to vote on the piece of legislation at some point in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

COM. SERV.: AFFORDABLE HOUSING - GOV'T. RESPONSE

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Services. Chantal Keiser is a single mother, who saw her rent increase by \$40 a month this year. With each rent increase she, like many others, has to make choices about buying food or maintaining housing for herself and her child.

Mr. Speaker, rents in Halifax have increased more than 10 per cent since last year alone, and yet the government has made no increases to the shelter allowance for those receiving income assistance. Will the minister admit that the current shelter rates are completely inadequate and agree to an immediate increase?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for her question. I would note that under this government, we have increased our investments in affordable housing. In fact, we've increased the number of rent supplements this year alone. We've seen the wait-list come down, and we're committed to continuing that work.

MS. LEBLANC: It's not just income assistance clients who are being priced out of appropriate housing. Most adults living in poverty are employed. We have the lowest minimum wage in the country, and 32 per cent of workers in Nova Scotia are earning \$15 an hour or less. Yet Halifax is one of the top ten most expensive rental markets in Canada.

What is the minister doing to ensure low and moderate income people have access to quality, affordable rental housing?

MS. REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As I indicated earlier, we are increasing the number of rent supplements, Mr. Speaker, and we have uncoupled the deferred federal contribution, so that we can make investments in housing across this province, unlike what they did.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

H&W - NSHA: DOCTORS LEAVING - SOLUTIONS

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. A family in my constituency is currently facing a challenge many Nova Scotians know all too well - about eight months ago, their family doctor retired. They were fortunate to have found a new physician and paid to have their records transferred.

That doctor has recently announced that he is leaving the province. He is leaving because he was not permitted privileges at the nearby ER and wanted to split his time between the hospital and his practice. This doctor was Canadian-born, Canadian-trained, and ended up moving back to his home province.

My question, Mr. Speaker, for the minister is, why is this government making it so difficult for doctors who want to work in Nova Scotia?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. As the member would know, the work that goes on in the province to attract and retain the physicians and the other primary care providers from one end of the province to the next is ongoing. You have to recognize the work that needs to be done in certain communities may vary, so the work that gets done when the NSHA is identifying where they need those resources allocated and the focus there. That is done with an eye to ensuring that we provide the best services we can to Nova Scotians for the primary care and emergency care.

MR. LOHR: I thank the minister for that answer, Mr. Speaker. The province did not have to lose this doctor, but the Health Authority denied privileges for him to work in one of our emergency rooms here in the province. The family has had to spend hundreds of dollars twice in one year to get their medical records, and two of the individuals have serious medical conditions that require regular blood work and exams. They have now lost consistency in receiving their health care.

My question for the minister is, will the minister commit to finding a solution for families like this one, so that they are not constantly shopping around for doctors when they have serious illnesses that need immediate attention, and have to pay each time their records are moved?

MR. DELOREY: I thank the member for the question. It's an opportunity to let the member know that, indeed, that is something that is on our radar as well to address, Mr. Speaker. One of the ways to address these concerns around records is through the use of technology - it also supports the opportunity to have collaborative teams come together providing the services. That would be work that's ongoing to identify and implement one patient, one record, that would be an electronic health record that's available to the service providers. That could help address this concern around the information and the personal medical records.

[2:15 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

BUS. - AIRBNB/UBER: REPORT COMPLETION - TIMELINE

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Business. In February 2016, this government quietly engaged Fred Morley to lead a study analyzing the place of sharing economy companies, like Airbnb and Uber, in the Nova Scotia economy. The province said at the time that the report would take up to one year to complete; that has come and gone.

I'm just wondering, can the minister give an update to this House as to when they can expect to see Mr. Morley's report?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I thank the member for the question. I don't have an updated timeline on that. I'm assuming it's coming relatively quickly, but I'll certainly check with our folks back at the Department of Business and get back to the House tomorrow.

MR. HOUSTON: I thank the minister for that answer. He might be able to check on a few other reports that are past due at the time too.

This is an important report. This is a report that's going to look at the uneven playing field, according to the then Minister of Business, going to look at the uneven playing field between traditional businesses and those that operate more informally. The report is going to look at the revenue that the province may be losing, i.e., some additional taxes, Mr. Speaker.

This is a report that's going to look at lots of things and Nova Scotians are anxious to have a look at this report. I wonder if the minister can give this House a little sneak preview today - will this report give us a glimpse into how this government looks at how Uber and Airbnb operate in this province?

MR. MACLELLAN: I thank the member for the question. It certainly is a challenging one in some regards and an opportunity in another. On one hand, speaking to Michele Saran and the folks at Tourism Nova Scotia, there's a tremendous amount of new business, new potential with respect to Airbnb and Uber and how it fits into our tourism complement in the province.

On the other hand, we're certainly concerned about some of the issues that TIANS, the members of the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia, are raising because obviously it could jeopardize their business model and impact on their revenues. Of course, they are taxpaying citizens and they provide local work and employment to Nova Scotians and drum up the tourism sector which, as everyone knows, we're going to double by 2024. It is a two-way street and we'll get back to the member.

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

TIR - MIRA GUT BRIDGE: DEPT. PLANS - UPDATE

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of TIR. Recently we've had a failure in some infrastructure in our community. It's known as the Mira Gut Bridge, and it is between the communities of Main-à-Dieu and Port Morien, and is a major transportation link. The bridge itself is about 124 years old and it has finally failed.

My question to the minister is, could he provide the House and the members of the community an update as to what his department's plans are for that piece of infrastructure?

HON. LLOYD HINES: I thank the member opposite for the question. Yes, indeed, it's a three-span former railway bridge and we're close on the age - our numbers are saying that parts of it could be as old as 140 years old.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to say how grateful I am to our department staff who, on August 10th, made the decision to close that bridge because of safety reasons - a difficult decision because you know how important it is to the people of the community. But as we saw on the weekend, with additional failure, that was the right decision to be made in the interests of safety. An in-depth engineering study is currently under way.

MR. MACLEOD: I want to thank the minister for that reply. I guess what I understand is that this is a project that could take a fair amount of time to find a solution to and again, I appreciate that, but the community is concerned about the amount of time it might take for emergency vehicles to make responses.

Of course, the detour that has been caused by this is almost 20 kilometres long. I was wondering if the minister, in the consultation process, would look at upgrades to the

roads that make up the detour area because again, it's a 20-kilometre detour and it's quite a large detour, and they don't even have to go on the New Boston Road.

MR. HINES: I thank the member opposite for the question. I'd like to say that we have actually instituted an emergency procurement to take the old structure down. Once we take the old structure down, which is currently an impediment to marine traffic - and we know the traffic is important to the fishermen in the area, so we're hoping to get that completed very quickly. Then we'll solve that particular problem and we'll look at the analysis of the replacement. In the meantime, I'll speak to department staff about the condition of the detour roads.

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

H&W - NURSING HOMES (NON-PROFIT) - FUNDING CUTBACKS

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Valley View Villa is a non-profit long-term care facility with 112 beds. Between 2015 and 2016, this government cut more than \$8 million from nursing homes across this province. About \$40,000 of that funding was cut from Valley View Villa.

Is the minister satisfied to balance this budget by taking funds from non-profit nursing homes?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: The work that we've done in this budget, that we just passed on Friday, the member would know, sees increased investments in our nursing homes. These investments are targeted investments for nursing home residents. These are targeted investments, based upon feedback that we had heard from the community, to ensure that food budgets are secured. That's where a significant amount of the investment, as well as recreational services, is for the residents.

MS. MARTIN: I think it's disgraceful to talk about a food budget when we're talking about seniors' long-term care facilities. However, you'll have to excuse me if I don't feel like applauding a government that cut money from vulnerable seniors and then wants to get credit for only putting half of it back in. The main budget item for nursing homes is salaries of the hard-working people who care for the residents of the home.

Valley View Villa has told the department they are operating at a deficit, and the department's response has been to ask the facility to try to reduce staffing. Does the minister think it is reasonable for this government to hold back money from nursing homes, when he knows it is negatively affecting staffing levels for our valuable and vulnerable seniors?

MR. DELOREY: I think the member opposite would be aware, if she looked into the situation, that there are multiple facets to Valley View Villa and the services that they

provide. The member might recognize that the challenges there, which have been recently reported in the media, rather than the financial situation, is not something explicitly looked at in the nursing, long-term care side. But there are additional services and supports outside of the public system, for services being provided, that go above and beyond the services covered by the provincial government. It's a combination of factors there.

What we do know is that the unions and the employers are working together. I know that the department let them know that the department is here to work with them as they go through this process. But always, the care of our seniors, and population of long-term care, is a priority.

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

COM. SERV. - CHILD ABUSE REG.: APPLICATION PROCESS - EXPEDITE

MS. ALANA PAON: Many organizations and businesses across Nova Scotia require security checks when adults are working with youth - through coaching, fostering, hosting student youth groups, and for numerous other reasons. It's important that these checks are done, and imperative to keep our children safe. Nova Scotians see criminal record and vulnerable sector checks, to be completed through the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and can receive those sometimes the same day or waiting a week if fingerprint verification is required.

The Child Abuse Registry in Nova Scotia, through the Department of Community Services, can take weeks, and sometimes months, for the individual to receive clearance to work with youth, sometimes causing the opportunity to coach, advise youth, or host . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Does the member have a question?

MS. PAON: Is the minister aware of the time frame and backlog for processing these applications, and what actions will her department take to expedite the process of clearing Nova Scotians?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. In fact, I do believe there has been additional staff added to that particular unit so that those can move through quicker.

MS. PAON: The RCMP completes the vulnerable sector checks of Nova Scotians who apply, and again, Community Services does the Child Abuse Registry check. I would like to ask the minister - and thank you for your response for saying that more people have been added - I would like to know, would your department be prepared to work more closely with the RCMP, to streamline the process, and permit these adults to get their checks a little bit more expediently?

MS. REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I do want to assure her that we take this matter very seriously and it's not something I would want anything to be rushed - so expeditious, yes; rushed, no.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

BUS. - DEANS: MARKETING LEVY - ENDORSE

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Business. Cape Breton Island has a marketing levy. Halifax Regional Municipality has a levy. Yarmouth Marketing and Promotions has a levy. Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores, no levy.

I've stood in this House now for four years asking the same question over and over, when will this government endorse a levy for DEANS?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. That's certainly not something that the Department of Business would decide unilaterally. I know that there was a long discussion in Cape Breton before the levy was implemented. It included all stakeholders, tourism operators. Tie-ins were involved. Destination Cape Breton and all tourism operators had their ability to say. Obviously, there are mixed feelings on that.

If there's some way that there was a collective effort in the member's area to move to a levy, obviously we could be part of that discussion. But from my understanding, obviously, the push has to come from municipal units and it has to be a mandate for them. Of course, we'd be willing to enter into that conversation as well.

MS. MACFARLANE: I appreciate the minister's answers. There has been a push. In fact, in 2014 - and I'll quote the previous minister who said that there is a province-wide strategy being worked on, so I'll table that. However, we have learned that there is no advantage - TIANS doesn't want to have a province-wide levy. This is why we have to go with individual municipalities.

I will ask today, would the minister please come to Pictou and sit with the director, Cindy MacKinnon, and ensure that DEANS will be prepared to put a marketing levy in place for next year so we will not be disadvantaged like the rest of the province is advantaged over us with the levy/

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm always happy and very welcome when I come to Pictou. It is a serious question. I can recall - and I know the members opposite who are Cape Breton MLAs can recall this - there was certainly a fair bit of reluctance for the original levy that was implemented in Cape Breton. Now when you look at the fruits of the benefit that have been borne by that decision, it's a collective compilation of money

that really adds to the marketing complement. We're lucky to have it in Cape Breton and I know other places obviously benefit from that.

I don't know if any of those levies should have been, or should be in the future, imposed if they're not fully accepted by the people who are going to be paying those levies and responsible for collecting them. I would certainly be more than happy to have the conversation and anything we can do as a province to facilitate, we would be delighted to do so.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**H&W - VALLEY VIEW VILLA/HAVEN BROOK MANOR:
STAFFING CHANGE - EXPLAIN**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Residents, families of residents, and staff are all worried about changes to staffing levels and services at Valley View Villa and the adjoining Haven Brook Manor.

The minister referenced some targeted investments that are being made and the minister also indicated - I don't want to read too much into his words, but he said there are other services that are provided. Perhaps the minister was implying that too many services are being provided to the residents of these facilities.

I'd like to ask the minister, can he share with this House the reasons necessitating the changes to the staffing levels at the Valley View Villa and Haven Brook Manor?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as the member would know, the operation is a third party. I think if he was to review the FOIPOP legislation he'd be aware that I wouldn't be in a position to disclose the details of a particular operation's financial situation in any level of detail without violating aspects of that information that they would have but, indeed, there has been some public information about this organization and some staffing restructuring that they're working on.

This is my understanding and I've had some conversations with some union leadership on this as well and they've assured me that they are working and have been working with the administration of this organization to work through this process.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the residents and their families are worried and, quite frankly, I'm worried, too, because when you have changes to staffing you have the possible impact, if nothing else, to services. We all should be worried about that.

[2:30 p.m.]

I heard the minister say earlier that client care is always of paramount concern to the minister, as I'm sure it is to the members of his department. I would like to ask the minister, what is being done to make sure that the quality of care, access to services like a bath a week, and meals are not being impacted by the cuts to the staffing levels?

MR. DELOREY: Again, there is a licensing process for large long-term care facilities that are licensed by the Province of Nova Scotia. There are rules and criteria that must be adhered to by operators that are licensed facilities. Of course, the staff within the department of continuing care will continue to monitor and assess, to make sure that there is adherence to those regulations and the rules governing the licensing of the facility. We will continue to move forward and ensure that that is the case, not just at Valley View, but all long-term care facilities across the province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

JUSTICE: BILL NO. 16 - ADEQUACY

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Justice. As we all know, the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia struck down the Incompetent Persons Act in June 2016, and gave the province one year to redraft legislation in this area. I have spoken with several stakeholders who are disappointed with the government's consultation process on this issue since the court's decision. They said that after initial conversations last Fall, they were not consulted until August of this year, 2017, and at that time were only given a few days to provide a formal response to this complex bill.

I would like to ask the minister if he is satisfied with the level of consultation undertaken by his department in redrafting the Incompetent Persons Act.

HON. MARK FUREY: I thank my colleague for the question. There have been a number of elements to the consultation process in 2016 and again this past Fall. The feedback that we have received has informed the decisions. There are differing opinions and views in some areas, but we are advancing a piece of legislation that we believe is in the best interest of all Nova Scotians.

MS. CHENDER: In 2010, Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with the full support of the Government of Nova Scotia. However, Canada has had an ongoing reservation to Article 12 of the convention, which recognizes equal recognition before the law. This reservation remains in part due to the fact that certain provinces, including Nova Scotia, fail to have in place adequate supported decision-making legislation required by Article 12.

I ask the minister, is he not concerned that the government's attempt to redraft the Incompetent Persons Act will only continue to hinder Canada's ability to meet its international commitment to the UN convention?

MR. FUREY: I appreciate the question. This is the very area where there are differing opinions and views. We have advanced a representative decision-making model that has elements of supportive decision making. We believe that our work and the bill that we have introduced, are compliant with Canada's reservation on the UN declaration. We believe that the input we have received from stakeholders has informed the bill, the piece of legislation. As my colleague knows, we look forward to further discussions here in the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

EECD - DARTMOUTH EAST: BUSING CONCERNS - ADDRESS

MR. TIM HALMAN: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. In late August, my office received a call from a mother who had found out that her two young daughters were not eligible to take the bus to school, so they would have to walk 47 minutes to their junior high, crossing Portland Street, one of the busiest streets in our province. There is a bus that picks up students outside this woman's house for the elementary school that shares a property with the junior high, but her daughters aren't allowed on it. She has contacted the school, the school board, and Stock Transportation and has received no response. My question is, will the minister commit to ensuring rules around busing are flexible so that all students can safely get to school?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Of course the health and safety of our children, getting them to and from school safely, is paramount for all partners in the education system. I would be happy to receive more information on this specific case because, if indeed there are safety concerns that are being expressed by parents, they do need to be properly addressed by the school board.

MR. HALMAN: I appreciate the minister's response. Since the beginning of the school year, my office has received a number of calls about busing. I have a situation in my constituency at an elementary school where a bus has gotten students to school late every day this year, bus routes being changed or cancelled mid-year, with no explanation - and the list goes on and on - and when parents try contacting Stock Transportation often they receive no answer.

My question for the minister is, what is this government doing to ensure that Stock Transportation is properly fulfilling the requirements of its contracts and getting students to school safe and on time?

MR. CHURCHILL: Indeed, if there are specific cases that do need investigation we're happy to do that. It is appropriate for parents to reach out to school boards directly if they are having challenges in terms of getting responses, that is something the department can help them with.

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

H&W - ROSEWAY HOSP.: ER CLOSURE - PRIORITY

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

In the annual accountability report on emergency departments for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016, the Roseway Hospital in Shelburne was closed for 1,330 hours - that's 55 days. Last weekend the Roseway Hospital was closed the entire weekend, a total of 50 hours for just one weekend.

My question to the minister is, can the Minister of Health and Wellness please explain why the people of Shelburne can't rely on their local emergency room to be open?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for the question. I believe we've talked about this in the past, Mr. Speaker. I've been to the Roseway facility, I've had the opportunity to speak to staff there, and to tour the facility.

One of the things, information, that I came away with was recognizing that although the community has more physicians than they've had in, really, many, many years, Mr. Speaker, it is about the way that these physicians are choosing to practise. Those physicians in the community are not as interested in working the emergency shifts in the emergency department. That means relying on other forms of staffing, including locums. Sometimes, especially over a long weekend, it becomes more difficult to staff in communities like this, and that would be the situation taking place at Roseway right now.

MS. MASLAND: I thank the minister for his response but, sadly, we've been talking about this since I've been in the House now. Yesterday I checked the Nova Scotia Health Authority physician recruitment site to find that Shelburne needed a full-time family physician for the Shelburne Collaborative Family Practice. The ad says that the physician will be expected to provide office space, comprehensive primary care, as well as in-patient care at the Roseway Hospital, and be open to providing long-term care facility coverage as required. Emergency room coverage would be a great benefit to the community, but not essential - and I'll table that document.

My question to the minister is, can the minister please tell this House and, most important, the people in Shelburne County, why emergency room coverage at the Roseway

Hospital is not a priority when recruiting a new physician to the Shelburne area? In the words of a predecessor, "to be continued."

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I think the members here appreciated the throwback to your predecessor. Give him our best if you see him in your community there.

Mr. Speaker, again providing care throughout our health care system to all Nova Scotians is indeed a priority. We know that when you look at the calls that come in to our emergency departments often what we're seeing is that many of the demands there - and we've had conversations about this through Estimates at times as well - that really people are going to the emergency rooms because of the primary care needs that they have. That's why we're really focused on improving our primary care access and services that provides and the supports that people in communities are most in need of.

I want to remind the member that there are emergency services across the province that are still available.

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

H&W - MED. RECORDS: COPYING COSTS - ADDRESS

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. We all know how difficult it is when you don't have a family doctor. I had a call from the family member of a constituent who is now about to lose her family doctor and that doctor has a practice of approximately 2,000 people. This person was told that their charge for getting a copy of their record was going to be \$100. It didn't matter whether it was one page or 100 pages, it was a flat rate of \$100. So I did the math, 2,000 x \$100 is a lot of money that these people can't afford.

Since there's no place to store the records once a doctor leaves, my question to the minister is, would he agree to cover the cost of copying the medical records for those who don't have a family doctor moving forward?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, there are actually rules in place that govern two things for physicians. One is their responsibility for maintaining the records, even if they retire or move away, that they do have to maintain the records for a period of time for their patients. In addition, there are rules restricting the amount that can be charged for providing the service, for providing those records to patients. Indeed, I'd like to let the member know that there are aspects of their medical records that are available through the Department of Health and Wellness as well, not necessarily those records that are on file with the family physician.

MS. ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I am quite aware of the rules around photocopying of records because I've had to do that in my own private practice. But there are those who

cannot afford this cost, so they have to go without access to their medical records. So when they go to talk to other specialists or other people they're involved with, when they're asked about their medical history, they don't have it.

Again, there's nothing stopping the government from paying for the copying of those medical records; there is something stopping the physician from charging too much. My suggestion is, and I'll ask it again, would you commit to paying for the records or giving a tax credit to those who have to pay for it out of pocket?

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, the colleague of the member asked a similar question earlier. I'd like to let the member know that one of the motivations of a project we're pursuing as a province, is establishing one-patient/one-record. That would be an integrated system for the health records for Nova Scotians which is an investment. It's obviously a very large project to integrate and provide that type of access, but that's the path we're going down, to address in part this very issue and concern.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MUN. AFFS. - MUN. OFFICIALS: PAID LEAVE - ACCESS

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Today CBC highlighted the story of two municipal councillors, Megan Hodges, a Kings city councillor who found out a few days before she was elected in 2016 that she was pregnant and Deputy Mayor Emily Lutz, who is pregnant and due in March. When I had my three children, I was grateful to have the option to take paid leave. Elected officials in this province currently do not have that option. Will the Minister of Municipal Affairs agree to amend the Municipal Government Act to ensure that women who are elected to municipal councils have access to paid leave?

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for bringing up that very important topic. I had the opportunity this morning to speak to both the councillor and the deputy mayor and I also want to stand in my place and thank them for bringing this very important issue forward for us to discuss. I also had the opportunity to speak with the UNSM president this morning; she's very interested in having this conversation in partnership with our department and that's exactly what we plan to do.

MS. CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my second question is for the Premier. I am proud to be part of a Legislature that is one-third women. However, as I mentioned in Budget Estimates, I'm both happy and slightly depressed that it takes the presence of women in this House to acknowledge the needs of women. It wasn't that long ago when Alexa McDonough was first elected, that there were no washrooms for female MLAs in the Legislature. Currently, if a member wanted to take maternity leave, they would need to seek permission from the Speaker.

Clearly there are still many barriers to women's full participation in the decision-making and political life in this province. I'd like to ask the Premier, will he commit to making the changes necessary to ensure that sitting MLAs have access to paid leave?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I've had the good fortune at different times seeing young men on this street that I've invited into this House to give them the tour, and I often tell them the story that Ms. McDonough came here and there was no washroom for her. This is important for these young men to understand this happened in my lifetime and in the lifetime of many of the members in this House. It's critical that we continue to make sure that our daughters and our mothers get an opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of our society.

The question brought forward by the honourable member, we will take under advisement and we'll move forward to make sure there are no barriers for anyone to participate in this House.

[2:45 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

AGRIC. - CHETICAMP ISLAND: PROP. DISPUTE - GOV'T. INTENTIONS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. There is a property on Cheticamp Island - a beautiful property that for years was used by a co-operative of farmers. There was some agreement with the province, but the agreement, I believe, is in dispute.

I would like to know, could the minister indicate - through you, Mr. Speaker - what the province's intention is with that property?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear the question. Can you get him to repeat it?

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if I get a third question here, but I think we can get this done in one question.

It's a piece of property on Cheticamp Island, and for years it was used by a co-operative of farmers. They put a lot of effort into the property. They put up electric fences and they have at least one well on the property. They've had meetings over the years. It was important for them to have use of the property over the years.

I understand that ownership of that property is in dispute. There had been an agreement between the province and the co-operative, and I understand that is in dispute.

I'd like to know, could the minister explain what the province's intentions are with that piece of property?

MR. COLWELL: It's a very important question. It's one we've been reviewing for some time now. There is a property dispute there between the co-operative and the province.

In our view, the property is owned by the Province of Nova Scotia. There was never any intention of it being owned by anyone else. It's an extremely valuable piece of property. We want to make sure that it stays agricultural land and doesn't go to development at any time in the future. We're afraid of that, and we intend to maintain ownership of that property.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

TIR - OHVs: TRAILS PILOT PROJ. - UPDATE

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Off-highway vehicle enthusiasts in this province have often approached the government looking for support in the field of trail connectivity. In other words, you might have a trail that approaches a highway, and you have to go down the side of the highway for a certain distance to get on the trail or go into town for fuel or something.

There was an expectation that a pilot project would be started, maybe as early as this Fall, for nine or 10 sites around the province to improve trail connectivity. I wonder if the minister can update the House on the status of that pilot project and when it can be expected.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for this very important question. The off-highway vehicle pilot will provide an opportunity to promote off-season tourism and to provide connectivity for the trail users in the province. The rules in the pilot will follow the existing rules that are currently in place, which require individuals to have a valid driver's licence in addition to an off-highway vehicle licence.

I want to thank both the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal for the work that's being done. Recently we reached out to the OHV folks and indicated to them that we'd be moving forward with rolling out the pilots in the beginning of the new year.

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

H&W: DAL RESIDENCY POSITIONS - CRITERIA DETAILS

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, in the most recent budget the government announced 10 new residency positions for Dalhousie for students in Nova Scotia - or so we understood. I think what I heard during Budget Estimates is that they still have to go through the CaRMS judgment and passing and so on and so forth.

I want to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness, is this actually 10 new positions at Dal for students who are from Nova Scotia?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: As I've mentioned previously, there are the residency positions for family practice and there are specialist residency positions as well. Then on top of that, there are the international practice-ready assessments that were identified, and on top of that, there's the clerkship program for third-year medical students.

The member had raised questions during Estimates. I've committed to documenting the criteria for those positions in more detail. If the member hasn't received that yet - again, I just want to make sure he knows that . . .

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

Just before we move on to Government Business, I'll present a ruling on the two petitions that we tabled earlier today by the honourable member for Inverness.

The request in the first petition or, pardon me, the request in any petition to this House of Assembly must be something within its constitutional powers to deliver on. The honourable member's first petition asks this House to create a noise-monitoring and enforcement protocol to convene a panel of experts to monitor the protocol. This is not within the powers of this House of Assembly but, rather, should be directed to the minister responsible for such matters. Therefore, the first petition cannot be tabled and will be returned to the honourable member.

The second request to the House of Assembly asks that it pass legislation regarding the health and well-being of residents living close to wind-power plants. That petition is within the constitutional powers of this House of Assembly and, therefore, that petition is tabled.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The House will now recess for a few minutes while it resolves into a Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

[2:51 p.m. The House resolved into a CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft in the Chair.]

[3:15 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Kevin Murphy, resumed the Chair.]

MR. SPEAKER: The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole House has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 8 - Pre-primary Education Act.

Bill No. 10 - Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

Bill No. 12 - Boxing Authority Act.

without amendments, and the chairman has been instructed to recommend these bills to the favourable consideration of the House.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 13.

Bill No. 13 - An Act to Incorporate Harmony Cemetery Company, in the County of Colchester.

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

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a couple of comments. The original Act dates back to the 19th Century, so I guess it does need a little bit of updating.

The bill is calling for the committee to be able to make amendments to the procedure for giving notice of and the running of meetings, and also remove certain powers of the trustees and give them the authority to make bylaws with respect to the management and the care of the cemetery, subject to the approval of the members, and then addresses the responsibility and liability of members. That's basically what the Act is about, Mr. Speaker, so I would recommend that that pass.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 13. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

Just before I go back to the Government House Leader I neglected to refer the previous bill - the Pre-primary Education Act - to be read a third time on a future day.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 18.

Bill No. 18 - Congregation of Notre Dame, St. Joseph Province Dissolution Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I now move Bill No. 18 be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, just to let the members know that all assets and liabilities of the Congregation of Notre Dame, St. Joseph Province, were in fact transferred to its successor, the Congregation of Notre Dame Visitation Province Inc., as of September 20, 2001. I was contacted by their lawyer who requested this change. I'll see if there are any comments. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 18. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 24.

Bill No. 24 - An Act Respecting Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada.

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

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 24 be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, like my colleague across the floor in his references, this name change dates back to 1879, to the Atlantic Baptist Mission Board of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, so I see this as a very efficient move on the part of the Baptists. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 24. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 36.

Bill No. 36 - Lunenburg Common Lands (2017) Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 36 be read for a second time.

First, I would like to thank my colleague for Chester-St. Margaret's for introducing the bill last week in my absence. This bill is well researched, it has been looked at by the town's solicitor and for some time now it has been with Municipal Affairs and also the Legislative Counsel. This bill originally dates back to 1785 with King George II, when dividing up Crown land.

It's very forward-thinking, too, for the town and there seems to be confusion over common lands and lands owned by the Town of Lunenburg. The sole purpose, really, of this bill is to provide legislation that would vest in the town all remaining common lands owned by the Town of Lunenburg within the boundaries of the town, and free it from all trusts contained in grants and legislation.

Currently, from previous amendments, the town can only give five-year leases out to organizations. I'll give you an example. A group came to the Town of Lunenburg

requesting town lands for use as a dog park and the town was only allowed to give a five-year lease. A lot of volunteer hours and time-in-kind work was invested in this park by many businesses, and the town was only allowed to give them a five-year lease. This would allow the Lunenburg Town Council to be trustees.

I close debate on Bill No. 36.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 36. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 41.

Bill No. 41 - Digby Water Commission Act.

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

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I move Bill No. 41 be now read a second time. This is basically a housekeeping bill. The Town of Digby reduced the size of their council prior to the last municipal election and that meant the number of elected representatives for the water commission also should have been reduced.

At the request of the CAO under the direction of the town council, they asked if this could be done. They also had some housekeeping legislation, things around the language of the Municipal Government Act.

With those few words, I take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 41. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 39.

Bill No. 39 - Financial Measures (2017) Act.

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

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I move Bill No. 39 be now read for a second time.

The Financial Measures (2017) Act provides the legislative authority for the measures in the Budget of 2017-18. On September 26, 2017, in this House I tabled the government's second balanced budget. It is the first time in a decade a government has introduced back-to-back balanced budgets. Together, government and the people of Nova Scotia worked hard to put the province on a reasonable and sustainable fiscal path. We laid out a clear, reasonable and sustainable fiscal plan and we have stuck to that plan and we are making progress.

We have been able to achieve this by controlling expenses and focusing on the priorities of Nova Scotians. The results are clear - last year's surplus allowed us to make a payment on our debt. Nova Scotia has not been in that position, to reduce the debt, since 2011.

Making the payment on the debt was fiscally responsible, and it eases the burden on future generations. Also, our net debt to GDP is declining, and trending to meet the OneNS target of 30 per cent by 2024.

The hard work of Nova Scotians is being recognized. Last week, the Parliamentary Budget Officer noted that Nova Scotia is one of only two provinces that has a fiscal plan that is sustainable. Secondly, Standard and Poor's, a bond rating agency, has improved Nova Scotia's long-term outlook to A+ positive, from A+, citing improved fiscal performance.

This recognition is welcome, but there is still more work to do. I am committed to working with my colleagues to stay on the road to restore that fiscal health of our province. In 2015, the House of Assembly Act was amended to freeze MLA salaries. Financial amendments 2017 continues that freeze until after the next election. As elected officials, we must lead by example to show our resolve to keep expenses reasonable.

Being on the path to sustained finances allows us also to reduce taxes for those who need it the most, and for small- and medium-sized businesses. The basic personal

allowance will increase for those who have a taxable income under \$75,000, and this means that more than 60,000 Nova Scotians will now no longer pay provincial income tax. It increases the number of people who do not pay tax by 28 per cent. When it comes into effect on January 1, 2018, more than 280,000 Nova Scotians will no longer pay any provincial income tax.

Small-business owners are looking for ways to grow and to give back to their communities. To help them we will reduce their taxes by \$14.1 million with this budget, and we will do this by increasing the small-business tax threshold to \$500,000 from \$350,000. This means small businesses can earn \$150,000 more income and still be taxed at the lower tax rate of 3 per cent. This change will benefit 1,800 small businesses that want to be able to invest back into their business, and into their communities, and to create jobs.

These two tax provisions contained in the 2017-18 budget will be made possible through this Financial Measures (2017) Act. They are consistent with our government's commitment to begin to address tax reform for Nova Scotians once we had achieved stability and sustainability in our fiscal health, and, I am pleased to say, we have achieved that. We have achieved that, we have included two major tax reforms in this budget, and this Act gives the legislative authority for those measures to be implemented.

I look forward to comments from members of the Opposition.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "The power of accurate observation is commonly called cynicism by those who have not got it." That is a quote by George Bernard Shaw. "The power of accurate observation is commonly called cynicism by those who have not got it." - and that may ring true oftentimes in this Chamber, as we frequently hear, we frequently hear the Premier and the ministers say, don't be negative, you're always so negative. No, it's actually "accurate observation" that's taking place at that time.

As we look at this budget - and I know the government is hailing the back-to-back balanced budgets - we just have to think about a couple of aspects of that. First, we need to ask, is it actually back-to-back balanced budgets? And then we need to think about, at what price, at what cost? On is it accurate, is it actually a balanced question, I have no doubt, I have confidence in the people in the Department of Finance to do the accounting, to do the debits and credits. And I'm sure that those are accurately portrayed in the financial statements, but as we know with accounting, many times there's more than meets the eye.

Just off the top of my head, we know that there are many, many lawsuits that have been taken out against the province because of actions of this government or inaction of this government in some cases. We wonder, what would the result be to the financial statements if those lawsuits were booked in here?

[3:30 p.m.]

I'm thinking specifically of the HST situation, where the province has been levied HST for gaming revenue on certain bands, gaming that has taken place on certain bands. The province actually received an HST assessment, and it was that the province or somebody owes money for the HST on the gaming revenue there. The number is in the tens of millions of dollars. The province said, we don't accept that assessment. We're challenging that assessment. Okay, that's fine, and now it will go through the courts.

But the fact is that the initial assessment is there but not represented in these financial statements. That one single transaction could flip that talking point on its head. It would flip it right over. It would no longer be back-to-back balanced budgets. In that one transaction, the government has been assessed an amount of HST and is disputing it for probably a whole list of reasons, one of which might simply be that it would put the balanced budget at risk. We don't know that. That one transaction and that talking point is gone. We're no longer talking about back-to-back balanced budgets, and we know how important that phrase is to this government. We start to ask, is it really that important? What else might be lurking?

We know that the wage pattern that was legislated is going to be challenged in court. I think maybe three or four different unions are challenging that in court. What will be the outcome of those? It could be very, very big numbers in terms of the cost to the province to right the wrong should the courts determine there's a wrong. We're talking in the hundreds of millions of dollars, I would suspect, for that. What about the legal fees to defend the province in all these instances? It's big, big numbers, so we have to ask.

When we look at a set of financial statements, they tell a big part of the story for sure. To me, they do tell a big part of the story. As an accountant and as a businessperson, I know that financial statements are important. But I also know that they don't tell the full story. We don't have to look very far in this province to find out a little bit more of the story that is untold by the financial statements. I just touched briefly on some of the legal actions that there are against this province.

When I stand or sit in this Chamber and I listen to the government, they're very quick to applaud themselves on a number of issues. But it's very shallow, many times, what they're applauding themselves for. When you go around this province and speak to people, people don't feel that energy that this government would want you to believe exists. Maybe in certain pockets you do. Probably in metro, you feel it a little bit more than out in the rural areas. But on balance, people aren't feeling great. They're not feeling great about their financial prospects. (Interruption)

The member for Timberlea-Prospect says maybe tonight we'll see how great people are feeling about their financial prospects. Tonight is a big night, Mr. Speaker. There's a health care town hall in Timberlea-Prospect. My colleague, the member for Cumberland

North and I will be there to talk about health care in the province. There's a few people who won't be there. The member for the area won't be there, and the MP for the area won't be there. But there will be a discussion about health care in the province. Maybe my friend and colleague will join us for that discussion at some point.

But we have to think about the impacts (Interruption)

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

MR. HOUSTON: We have to think about the quality of life. We have to think about some of the announcements that the government makes. We know we had an election campaign here and we just have to look at some of the statements that happened there by members seeking election, on environmental situations, what they were going to do and what would be done immediately. In one case, in Harrietsfield, they said, oh, this will be cleaned up and the city quickly said, we don't know anything about that. You wonder about those statements. Then in health care, we did have a big announcement about moving health services out into that Bayers Lake area and the city quickly said, we don't know about that. We don't know how we're going to get people there.

So, there are always questions and, when you think about some of these things and you look at the budget that's presented and the financial statements, you always wonder what else might be lurking below that and those are the things that need to be explored. Those are the things that we, on this side, would call accurate observation but others might refer to as cynicism. That's the lens that I look at this budget through. The numbers presented by the government don't support the level of optimism that the members opposite would want you to believe exists.

The very first number I looked at when I was presented with the budget documents, hundreds of pages, was the forecast, per personal income tax revenue. I was looking at the current forecast for personal income tax revenue, obviously, the amount of personal income tax paid by Nova Scotians to the province, a signal of the real financial health of the people of the province. If things are going well and you have a job, you're going to pay some tax. If you're earning more and you're getting more hours and you're getting promoted and stuff, you're going to pay a little more tax than you paid last year. So, we try to look and see what - that's a good barometer for me on what's really happening.

I looked at the budget that was tabled in this House before the election - obviously, it didn't pass, it wasn't debated - but I looked at that budget. I picked out the personal income tax number from that budget and I said, let's have a little look-see at what the personal income tax number is in this budget that was before us and has now passed in this House, and guess what? Would you imagine in that short period of time - I think it was in April that the budget was tabled and the new one was introduced in September - in that short period of time, the forecast for personal income tax revenue dropped, it dropped by

about \$26 million, which is not chicken feed. It's a real number, and what does that tell you about the Department of Finance and Treasury Board's feelings of where things are going in this province?

I would submit to you that it would suggest that the people on the ground preparing these numbers, running the financial models, are acknowledging that things are not maybe as rosy as we might be led to believe with a Question Period outburst of applause. Maybe they're not quite as rosy. Then, we look at some of the federal tax changes and I just wonder what the impact will be on this economy in terms of corporate tax revenue and personal income tax revenue, as the corporate tax changes are pushed through by the federal government. What's going to happen to jobs? What's going to happen to health care?

I had the good fortune to be at a taping last night of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and they had a lot of skits last night about the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister, pretty much non-stop as you can imagine. There was one that particularly struck me. They were poking a bit of fun at the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister for the way that these changes were rolled out and the complete public relations disaster it's been, and not just a public relations disaster but what they're promoting is just a bad idea. Even with all the resources available and the charm of the Prime Minister, with the spin, they couldn't polish it. In one of the skits that Mark Critch was doing, he was saying that the changes were designed to go after the 1 per cent, which would be the 1 per cent wealthiest people in the country, obviously. They are designed to go after the 1 per cent.

The irony of Justin Trudeau and Morneau going after the 1 per cent, even allegedly going after them, is not lost on many Canadians at this point. But Mark Critch said that Justin Trudeau was in the top one one-hundredths per cent of the 1 per cent and Bill Morneau was in the top one one-thousandths of the 1 per cent. So, both gentlemen, with their family fortunes - as Mr. Trudeau refers to his wealth - pretty fully entrenched in the 1 per cent. In fact, Mark Critch said that the club was so exclusive, they are members of such an exclusive club, your name has to end in "eau" to be part of it, was the point that Mark Critch was making, and he was right.

These changes will have serious ramifications to things in this province. While many Canadians are standing up and speaking out against them, do you know who is not, Mr. Speaker? Do you know who is not speaking out against these changes and is not recognizing the impact of these changes on our Nova Scotia economy?

AN HON. MEMBER: Who?

MR. HOUSTON: Well I wasn't going to say, but my colleague was wondering who it was that I was thinking about, who is not speaking out. And the Premier is somebody whom I have not heard really speak out against these federal changes. The Premier hasn't spoken out against them. The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board hasn't spoken out against them.

I do want to talk about health care when I come around to it, but since I'm on these changes, these changes are the single biggest threat to health care in this province. But the Minister of Health and Wellness hasn't spoken out against them and it just makes me wonder who is standing up for Nova Scotians.

My other colleague wants me to answer that question. I will answer that question. We're standing up for Nova Scotians because we have the power of accurate observation and we are standing up for Nova Scotians on this issue.

We can't talk about this situation without talking about health care. Health care, we all know the statistic, 42 per cent of the provincial budget, a big, big number. If you break it all down, there are only three things that influence health care. The level of funding, the amount of money that is actually invested in health care is number one, a big determinant of the quality of the health care provided. Number two is efficiency of delivery of health care, so, how efficient is the system. Number three is prevention.

[3:45 p.m.]

When we think about \$4.2 billion spent on health care in this province, we're speaking about funding. When we speak about the crisis that is happening in health care, that we acknowledge, many times we're talking about the efficiency of delivery - can't access primary health care, waiting lists too long, inappropriate level of services in long-term facilities. Many of these speak to efficiencies and funding in conjunction, but efficiencies in delivery.

That's not a new one. This government said well, we have the answer to efficiency, we know how to make things more efficient. In many cases they said, we're not going to do it. We're just not going to do it. When you look at the budget from last year, the health care budget, it shocks many Nova Scotians and continues to shock me even to this day, that the health care budget wasn't even fully spent last year. They left money on the table.

Now, imagine with the situations that we hear about in our MLA offices - the heartbreaking situations that people approach us to share with us - and just imagine, the government didn't even spend the budget they had allocated last year. They didn't even spend it. So often you hear them say, well, it cost too much - they didn't even spend what was on the table. I guess you save money in health care by not providing the services that people need, and certainly not providing them when they need them.

That is what we have with the doctor shortage. People can't get to the doctor. There's no cost to the province if you can't get to a doctor. People can't get the services they need, so there's no cost to the province if they can't get the service. Maybe that's the way you make it more efficient: you just don't do it. You say we're not going to do it anymore.

The third prong of health care is prevention. There is a lot more that could be done in this province in terms of prevention. Last week a couple of colleagues and I attended a conference on obesity put on by the Canadian Obesity Network, the Halifax chapter. They were looking at obesity as a situation - it's a chronic disease that impacts 27.8 per cent of Nova Scotians. So 27.8 per cent of Nova Scotians struggle with obesity.

I made an observation that day at the conference: that's almost the same as the voter turnout in this province. Those are two numbers that should never be anywhere close together. We know that obesity is the leading cause of type 2 diabetes. We know that obesity can lead to heart disease, sleep apnea, infertility - I could go on and list things, but here's the point. Obesity is taking away from the quality of life of many Nova Scotians.

There are ways to treat obesity - counselling and supports, medication, surgery, or all of those together, depending on the personal situation - and yet none of those are really accessible, even the bariatric surgery aspect of it.

In this province we're doing about 60 to 80 surgeries a year. Mr. Speaker, it just blew me away to hear that there are 1,800 people on that wait-list - 1,800 people, for a surgery that we're doing 60 to 80 of a year. People who have the surgery will lose weight. It will improve their quality of life. They'll live longer, and probably if you're losing weight, you aren't going to need those orthopaedic surgeries - knees and stuff, or maybe you can access it. We know a lot of people are in the situation where they can't get the hip or knee replacement because they're told they have to lose weight. It's a vicious circle that we're trapping people in in this province, and I don't think we should take any measure of pride in trapping people in that vicious circle so that we can turn around and say, but we save money in health care.

These are very complex issues. We know that there are a lot of people in this province who want to be working, who can be working, but can't work because they need a hip or a knee - I'll use that example. Imagine if we could get that surgery to them, and then they could go back to being happy, healthy, successful members of society - paying taxes. We need to think about these things. We need to step back and say, "Are we really doing the best we can do around the quality of health care that's being delivered?"

Of course, you can't talk about health care without acknowledging the issues around mental health care that we have in this province. I know there's some money in this budget to try and improve access to mental health care and it's a situation probably of something is better than nothing, for sure, but we know there are many, many people in this province who are waiting for access to mental health care and they really deserve the right to have that.

Let's think about how we are going to deliver proper health care in this province and what are some of the solutions. The solutions are broad and complex, but I will tell you one thing that is not a solution to improving health care in this province - anyone

dedicated to improving health care in this province knows that you don't go about it by declaring war on front-line health care workers. Anyone dedicated to improving health care in this province knows that picking fights with doctors and calling down doctors is not the solution. Yet what do we see here? We see very confrontational language from the Premier, very dismissive language from the Premier towards doctors.

If you look at Doctors Nova Scotia, they did their own study on some of their suggestions on how to start moving in the right direction, and one of the things they point out is that health care professionals in this province do not feel respected by the government. That was before this session of the Legislature started, and if they didn't feel respected before, Mr. Speaker, imagine how they feel now after seeing video of the Premier and some of the things he is saying, and hearing his words about basically how greedy doctors are - just continuing the theme of greedy teachers and greedy nurses and greedy doctors. It's not helpful to resolving some of the things in this province.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague would like to make an introduction.

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. PAON: In the west gallery, I'd like to acknowledge the presence of the Grades 7 and 8 French immersion class from Tamarac Education Centre that I spoke about earlier. I'm very pleased to have you all in the House with us, very pleased that you made it today. I hope you enjoyed your time as well at Pier 21, as I understand that you were there as well. Welcome. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. HOUSTON: Perhaps this would be a good time to speak about the Education and Early Childhood Development Budget. We have a situation now in this province where last year families, students and teachers went to great lengths to stick their hands up in the air, basically, and say we need help, we need help in the education system. We had the first teachers' strike, we had marches around this Legislature, Mr. Speaker - I'm sure you remember them as well as I do. The end result was that everyone acknowledged that we need to be able to support those students in the education system, we need to support those teachers working in the education system and, basically, we need to do better.

When you look at the percentage of graduates in this province who have gone through our entire school system and are still functionally illiterate, they are not prepared for the world; they are not prepared for the workforce. In fact I had a friend who teaches at a college and he had a student in his class who showed up a couple of days the first week

and a day the next week and a day the week after that. He sat the student down and said, you're not going to pass. The student looked at the instructor and said, what do you mean? You can't fail me. A first-year college student in Nova Scotia - that's how they see the world. I'm sure that that same person would then get a job in the workforce and say, you can't fire me. That's what the system is producing.

Teachers said, help us, we need some support here. Everyone said yes, we understand that, and time goes by. You say, we're going to do a few studies and we're going to look for a commission on classrooms and we're going to look at this and all these studies are out there. Then, the government comes up with a bright idea, they said, we have a good idea: we're going to introduce pre-Primary. Everyone was scratching their heads saying, well, hold on a second. Didn't we just go through labour disputes? Didn't we just go through stress and anxiety and you imagine the pressure on the communities. Nobody was talking about, let's add pre-Primary to the mix because surely that'll fix everything. It wasn't something that people asked for, and it's not something that has fixed the issues in the P-12 system.

Many, many families and many Nova Scotians including myself - I'll stand in my place today, Mr. Speaker, and I say that I feel terrible for those kids in Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. They need support. They need access to an EA or they need access to counselling. They need support, but it's not there for them, but we do have pre-Primary.

I am not ready to turn my back on all the kids in the education system to try and change the channel to another show, and the other show is the talking point about early education now. Everyone believes in early childhood education. Everyone believes in supporting children. But I also believe in dealing with the mess that's before you, before you start something else.

Everyone in this province, most Nova Scotians - they appreciate it when somebody takes a swipe at somebody good natured or otherwise if it's intelligent. What we watched unfold here in this very discussion on this issue, with some embarrassment - when you think about the communications staff available to the government and all the resources that they have, many people say they have the biggest newsroom just in the Premier's Office, of any media outlet in the province. But we look at how they misconstrue stuff and purposely mispresent stuff and misrepresent - it's embarrassing to the government, and people see through it.

So, we know that we need to accept the problems that are in front of us and we need to support the families and the students and the teachers in the system. Then we can maybe add another year. Then we can maybe do some add-ons but first, let's think about those kids who are in high school. Let's think about those kids who are in junior high. It almost seems to me that the plan is in many ways just to give up on them and say, well, they'll work their way through the system and we have 818 new pre-Primaries and they'll come

through and - 818 families in pre-Primary. There are 9,000 four-year-olds in this province. It just doesn't jive with me.

It never was driven home to me more than during Budget Estimates, when I sat in this Chamber and I listened to the member for Dartmouth South ask questions about the commission on inclusion - would the recommendations be implemented? The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development stood in his place and he said, well, of course, we would want to implement those recommendations but we have to be realistic about the financial situation of the province - we're probably not going to have the money.

I don't think that, even to this day, the irony of that situation occurs to him. He spent all this money on pre-Primary - it'll be \$50 million over the next couple of years - but then turns around and says, well, do you know that commission that we put together on inclusion and were really going to transform education, well, you know what, we probably can't do that because we did this other issue over here. It's called changing the channel. It's called, don't look here, look over here, and it's what's happening in our education system.

I feel terrible for those people working in the system. I feel terrible for those students relying on the system and those families relying on the system. It's absolutely not that I don't think pre-Primary is important, but it absolutely is that I think that how you roll it out and that the whole P-12 system is important.

[4:00 p.m.]

That's the situation on the education budget. I don't know that the situation in schools around this province is any better now than it was before the labour strike. In fact, as I visit schools in my constituency quite often teachers stop me in the hallway and say, Tim, it's worse. That is pretty sad. That's pretty sad considering what we went through, it's pretty sad that not only have things not gotten better, they've actually gone backwards. That's a big deal to me and, hopefully, to most members of this Chamber.

One thing that's not in here and when you think about the finances of the province and you think about what's coming our way on July 1st, marijuana will be legal. There's nothing in here that even acknowledges that. There's nothing in the budget with money for training of drug enforcement specialists, drug identification - nothing in the budget. I've heard from law enforcement that training could cost \$15,000 to \$20,000 an officer. We're going to need some officers, but yet there's nothing in the budget which will take us through until the end of March. Are we going to train those officers after July 1st when it's legal? Are we going to try and rush out some training in June? It blows my mind that we have a government that knows this is coming and we haven't made any progress as to how as a province we're going to handle it.

Where is the product going to come from? Where is it going to be sold? Are you going to be able to consume it in your apartment, in your place of work? There are so many things, so many unanswered questions and the only thing we've heard from this government is the Minister of Justice said one day in here that he didn't like how a couple of provinces were doing it and he didn't like how at least one province was doing it - but he didn't offer which province that was and he didn't say what he did like. He was being very negative on some of the things that are happening out there.

But we need to have a plan. If marijuana is rolled out in this province like the pre-Primary was, we have some big, big issues that are going to hit us square, because we're not prepared for this. Perhaps the preparation is starting with an online survey. My colleague for Pictou West has pointed out some of her concerns, which I share and our caucus shares, and every single Nova Scotian should share about the quality of that survey.

When the minister stood in here and said that 22,000 Nova Scotians responded to the survey, he has no way of knowing that's the case. It could have been one Nova Scotian doing a program in which he filled out the survey 22,000 times. Gee, I wonder if people who would have a vested commercial interest in marijuana might find a couple of teenagers to program something for them to respond to as many surveys as they can. Gee, I didn't think of that - oh boy I wish somebody would have thought of that.

These are silly things that you shouldn't see from a government on a serious issue. We should have a proper plan, a public consultation. But we don't know what the future will hold for Nova Scotia in the sale and consumption of marijuana - except that it's coming, that's all we know about it, that it's coming. That's a shame, that's one of the biggest issues that will face us as a province certainly in the next year and for years and years after that.

It's hard to say how it will work, there are lots of models out in the world, there are lots of things - we could be having an actual discussion about what's the best way to do it, what's the safest way to do it? But those discussions aren't happening. Just an online survey. Purely, more of a poll than a survey, to be honest. Kind of slanted towards a given outcome. It can be filled out by as many people as they want, and maybe I should go and program something tonight, and we can come tomorrow and say 356,000 Nova Scotians filled it out. Somebody will probably do that. What do we do when we have over 1,000,000 submissions to that survey? Do we then acknowledge, whoopsie, we've got an issue here? The point is well-made. It's a lackadaisical way to approach a serious issue. We can do better than that, and we should.

Now, of course, we couldn't have a budget discussion without talking about transportation, and some of the issues around the transportation file. We know that it wasn't exactly a banner year for the Yarmouth ferry. I've been quiet on that situation, because the facts speak for themselves. Up until now I've been quiet on that situation, but the facts speak for themselves. Bad, bad deal, bad deal, and the ridership numbers aren't getting

there because they probably won't. All the money we paid to the U.S. Navy, to get one of their vessels up to standard, I'm not sure how many days it was supposed to run this year and how many it did run. I don't think those numbers are the same, though. It's time to look at what's happening in that situation.

In the budget reply, the issue of roads, I think there were only five words that mentioned roads, and they all had to do with the twinning of the highways. Our roads are important, our roads are in rough shape in many parts of this province, and not just in the rural areas. So, it will be interesting to see what priority they're given, how we prioritize, how we spend the money on the transportation budget. It surprises a lot of the people that I talk to, in different parts of the province, that the amount that's spent on the Yarmouth ferry every year, is pretty much the same as the amount that's spent on the RIM fund on all of our rural roads that everyone in rural areas drive - everything we spend on brush-cutting, and bridges, and patching, and shouldering. It's almost as much as what's spent on the ferry. Those are priorities that we need to look at.

I know that the government side champions the tourism numbers, and I'm glad that the tourism numbers are going up. But, again, it's not because of this, it's not because of this investment. They're going up for a number of reasons, which we're all thankful for. We all like a strong tourism industry, but we can't cloud facts and say one is because of this, when it's clearly not. So, roads are a big issue. We'll have to see what happens to the provincial coffers with respect to the cap and trade legislation that's before the House. I don't actually know if it'll have any impact on the provincial coffers, mostly because I don't think it will have any impact on the emissions.

Just as much as we have a Liberal government in Nova Scotia that doesn't want to speak out against the federal Liberals on the federal tax changes, we have a Liberal government in Nova Scotia that's very quick to try and please on the carbon tax, and that extends to this cap and trade legislation. It's designed to appear as if something's happening, because the Prime Minister wants his talking point that in every province, something is happening. Just like this government wants the talking point of back-to-back balanced budgets, the Prime Minister wants his talking point on something happening in every province, and we can't have it all ways, except maybe when we do.

The Premier says, this won't cost Nova Scotians anything. That's a good thing, but the flip side of that is, it won't have any impact on greenhouse gas emissions - it can't. So, we will see what happens with that in due time.

I think I would close where I started, Mr. Speaker. I think there's only one or two times in a politician's life where they get the chance to really stand up for the people they represent. When a politician recognizes that opportunity and seizes that opportunity to stand up for the people they represent, that's when they build their reputation.

This government has a chance to do that for Nova Scotians right now, as does every federal Liberal MP in this province. They could stand up for Nova Scotians and say that the federal tax changes will hurt our economy, they will hurt the delivery of health care in this province, and we don't accept them. They all have that opportunity to stand up for it, but none of them are taking it. I am quite surprised that none of them are seizing that opportunity. Sometimes Party and partisanship means more than people, and those are the times when politics fail.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my place. Thank you.

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

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, when last Friday I inadvertently said "yes" when I intended to say "no" on the recorded vote of the budget here, there were a number of people, while we were all laughing, who said a number of different things to me. Some of them were pretty funny and some of them were pretty telling. The one that I thought was most insightful was what was said by my great friend the MLA for Cape Breton Centre who said, oh Gary, you know you are tired when you are voting for a Liberal Budget.

We come today to the Financial Measures Act codifying into law and formalizing the legislative changes created by this budget, and I want to take the opportunity to present and put on the record some thoughts about the budget and about the overall context of the government's program in which the budget has appeared. The primary thought I would like to register today about the budget that was passed Friday is that it is, in my view, a discourse of disappointment.

It is a discourse of disappointment that arrived here in September, not at the usual time that budgets in the year arrive - usually in the Spring - this budget arrived before the Legislature, in fact at what is often the real season of budgets for many people in Nova Scotia, and that's the Fall, the time when we look at the patterns of living that we're going to be able to afford for ourselves and for our families in the coming season, especially September. That's when kids come home from school every second day with a note in their backpack from the school about something else you have to purchase - an extra pair of sneakers or some or other kind of calculator, et cetera. You get the note out of the backpack and you wonder how in the world you are going to fit that in the budget.

It's the time of the year, the Fall, when families are thinking through what they are going to be able to afford for the kids this year. There's one who is dying to go into the band program but then there are the considerations about the rental of that instrument. And there's another one who is just full of a burning desire to go into hockey, but we know that that's a very difficult matter to afford. So, the whole thing comes to us every Fall in our household - how are we going to fit the things that we know are needed into the budget?

Then there's a young person with four roommates who is working 25 hours a week for \$12.35 an hour and she is thinking about how she has to take some kind of a course to get into a better situation, but she already owes a ton from the course she took before. She is having a hard time envisioning a better future based on the facts of her present budget.

Now, none of these people, nor the thousands of people in our province like them, woke up on the Liberal Government's Budget Day, September 26th, and said, oh, I can hardly wait to see how big a surplus the government will be able to project today.

[4:15 p.m.]

As they heard that that day was Budget Day, they were much more likely to have asked themselves quieter questions like, will this budget help us replace our family doctor who is retiring this Fall? Or, will this budget help my friend who's being tortured with depression and addiction get in any sooner to get some help? Or, will this budget make it any more likely, if my mother should happen to take a bad turn in the night and I take her to emergency, that the emergency department will actually be open?

The answer to all of the above from this budget was no.

The Physician Resource Plan says we need 107 new doctors a year to keep from going backwards. This budget has ensured us eight new family physician positions. The budget for in-patient adult mental health services for 2017-18 is frozen in the budget that was passed here on Friday. The total number of Collaborative Emergency Centres provided for by this budget was zero. The whole thing was, is, and continues to be . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would just remind the honourable member to address his comments to the Chair and keep focused on the Chair. Leg. TV is having trouble picking up your comments when you're turning your back on the Chair. If you could stay focused, I would appreciate it.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party has the floor.

MR. BURRILL: Thank you. I assure you that I am entirely focused, but it is one of the primary lessons one learns in theological school, not simply to preach to the choir.

There are several dimensions that I want to outline about this core sense of disappointment that there is about this budget. One is simply the number of essential things that in the government's program, as we find it in this budget, are absent.

Absent in particular is any indication that the government has registered with any depth or any effectiveness the financial emergency facing growing numbers of people in our province. Last month in September, for example, it was revealed that Nova Scotia has the highest rate of children living in poverty of any province in the country.

Christine Saulnier of the Centre for Policy Alternatives, one of the leading authorities on this subject in the province, spoke to the media the day these numbers were brought forward from Statistics Canada about how the best way to address this crisis is a system of adequate, affordable child care. When interviewed about this, the Minister of Community Services said she, too, is in favour of that, and then she added the words, if we could afford it. People may be forgiven if they take no more comfort from the minister's words than might hungry peasants at predictions of a brighter future that come from a tower in a distant castle.

In the midst of our Budget Estimates and the debate surrounding them, on October 1st, while the budget and all its various departments were being bandied back and forth, Nova Scotia became the province with the lowest minimum wage in all of Canada. Asked about this the next day in Question Period, our Premier replied simply that he thought he and I had had this debate a few months ago. The 130,000 people making less than \$15 an hour in Nova Scotia may be forgiven if they didn't find the Premier's response overburdened with empathy for their situation.

It was in the second week of debate on the Estimates for the budget that Nick Jennery, executive director of Feed Nova Scotia, wrote a letter published in the *Cape Breton Post* and *The Chronicle Herald* decrying the budget's failure to address the fact that food bank use is rising in Nova Scotia faster than any other province. Asked in the House about Mr. Jennery's concern for the 44,000 people being fed from Nova Scotia food banks, the Minister of Community Services raised questions about the accuracy of the number, thereby inventing the new and troubling category of food bank-use denier.

As the Budget Estimates began on the subject of education, that day Nova Scotia students were settling into paying the fastest-rising tuition in the country and the Nova Scotia Community College announced a new bursary program, a bursary program they said would address the need which was demonstrated by the fact that, in the previous year, Nova Scotia Community College Foundation bursary awards had been only able to be presented to 1,000 applicants out of the 16,000 students at the NSCC who had applied.

In the midst of all of this need, the response that we've heard from the Government of Nova Scotia has been the response to congratulate itself on the triumph, on the glorious achievement in the midst of this concrete daily hardship of a projected \$21 million surplus for 2017-18 and who wouldn't respond fairly with the thought, oh, for heaven's sake, these people must be on a different planet. And absent, too, from the government's present program is any improvement from the budget tabled in April in the amount of money the government is restoring of the \$8 million they had cut from the budgets that sustain diet, programming, and staffing at Nova Scotia's nursing homes.

In 2015-16, the government cut \$8 million from nursing homes around the province and, at the time, the government insisted that these cuts would have no impact on the day-to-day lives of residents of long-term care in the province. However, many people came

forward to say that this wasn't so, amongst them a group of unaffiliated nursing home administrators and amongst them, too, groups of nursing home employees. From Port Hawkesbury they came, from Halifax, from Glace Bay, Sydney, and many other places to speak about the concrete conditions of their work. Of all the delegations that I, since I've been in this work, have received, I was never moved more than the delegation of nursing home workers who came here to speak about what they had observed as a result of the cuts in their own working lives.

I was particularly moved by the presentations that were given by people who work in Sydney at The Cove Guest Home where, in a pastoral context, I have visited many, many times. People spoke about what it concretely means, because of the cuts, to work short. So, prior to the cuts, from time to time, we would come to work and be told today we have to work short and we would accept that. Someone couldn't be replaced. It would happen every three, four weeks but, since the cuts, they said, we work short all the time and those who work in environmental services spoke about how they wanted me to know what it really meant for them in their work.

It meant that although they could get their work done they would never be able to stop and spend 30 seconds interacting with the person whose apartment they would be cleaning, and they spoke about how when you take that 30 seconds of interaction with the person whose apartment you're working in out of the work, how their sense of being able to offer what they've come to offer to the people that live there is deteriorated so much.

I remember so clearly people there speaking about environment. There were people there who had in environmental services in the nursing homes they were working where, in many years, some of them had been there in the high 20s, low 30s number of years and they had never experienced it until the cuts of the last two years that in the middle of a shift they would be told you're going to have to stop working at what you're working at, because the facility has run out today of cleaning supplies.

So, then, in the April 2017 budget, the budget that was never passed, in a plain acknowledgement that what the administrators and the employees had been saying, in fact, had been right, in a plain acknowledgement of the truth of this in April, \$3.2 million of the \$8 million that had been cut was replaced for the purpose of - and this is what the budget document said this Spring - enhancing programming and diet and, throughout the election that followed the tabling of the April budget, we, in our Party, stressed the importance of replacing the rest of that \$8 million that had been taken away over the previous two years from the funds that sustained the lives of people who live in nursing homes.

In personal conversation with the Premier over the summer, I stressed how enthusiastic our Party would be to support a budget measure of this kind. A mere 3 per cent of the total surplus declared in the budget that went through this House on Friday would have replaced every single cent that was taken away from Nova Scotia nursing homes in the past two years. But the rectification of this scathing injustice, I was very sorry to find,

as were my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, was absent from this discourse of disappointment.

It's so disappointing too. What was present in the budget was in such an inadequate and piddling supply. This is particularly the case with the \$6.2 million that the budget newly allocated for health care. It's particularly inadequate in the face of the crisis being experienced by the over 100,000 people in the province without a family doctor. Let us just take the measure of the urgency of the situation that is before us. It's a measure that is indicated in the figure published just last week or the week before by the Canadian Institute for Health Information in which they set out that there are now 20 fewer family doctors in Nova Scotia than when the Liberals first made their commitment of a doctor for every patient in the province.

It is a disappointing level of health investment, particularly a disappointing level of health investment because the government announced just a few days before that September 26th budget that they had heard - that was the word they used - people's sense of the need for stronger health care investment. They had heard, they said, and they would be responding.

A \$6.2 million investment on a \$4.2 billion health care budget is a response, all right, in the same sense that arriving with a water pistol at a wildfire is a response. It's the right idea maybe, but it's so lacking in a sense of scale, so lacking in a realistic sense of the present need, as to indicate a total failure to grasp the scope, a total failure to grasp the proportion, a total failure to comprehend and act on the base of an understanding of the urgency of the situation that is before us. The government is such a "capital d" disappointment, particularly, in my view, from the point of view of the opportunity that has been missed by them in these just recent months.

Successful organizations have in common that, when they experience a setback or they experience a challenge, they interpret it in a way that provides an opportunity to them to renew themselves, renew their project, renew their overall effort and mandate. For example, in business, it's not at all rare that a successful business will come to a period of very challenging downturn. A successful business will respond to this with a dynamic reorganization. Maybe part of that will be a re-envisioned marketing plan. Maybe part of that will be a whole new dose of innovation. But in any case, a setback is taken, in a successful organization, as an opportunity to change direction and to re-establish and renew.

The situation with the government is parallel. This government experienced a setback, a chastening, in the May 30th election. In my view, if it were led by people of greater stature, it would have come into its second mandate saying something like, we acknowledge that there are areas where our work has not been as good as we would have liked it to have been and where people have judged us critically. We have registered this, and we are going to set out now on a new path of improvement and adjustment.

Unfortunately, in June, July, August, September, and the first 17 days of October, the opposite has happened. Instead of moving on a path or road of renewal, the government has doubled down on the very approaches and the very attitudes that led to the setback in the first place. Exhibit A, the first major policy - self definition - of the government's second term, the proclamation of that Bill No. 148 with its legislative imposition of a two-year wage freeze and the removal of a previously bargained retirement severance package.

[4:30 p.m.]

Now with Bill No. 75 last winter, the government set back teacher motivation and morale in Nova Scotia more than has happened under any government in our lifetime, but with Bill No. 148 they've doubled down the same road now, towards the entire Public Service.

Exhibit B, the government's current mishandling of the disagreement over the benefits fund of Doctors Nova Scotia. Asked about this in this House on more than one occasion, the Premier has referred to the fund with words like 'stash' and 'hoard' - the clear and deliberate connotation of which is that doctors are narrowly motivated, self-oriented, greedy people.

I think back to last winter. One wonders if last winter a path to an agreement could have been found with teachers, had the Premier not used every microphone available to be denigrating teachers' work ethic and professional commitment. One wonders now, how this government proposes to address the great challenge in front of us to engage doctors in dealing with the Nova Scotia health care crisis, when the opportunity presented by a new mandate to renew a relationship and work in a new, less dogmatic way has been so disappointingly squandered. A person can't help but ask, why would the government go down this path? Well, what would be the cause, what would be the foundation, what would be the source of such a comprehensive disappointment?

Part of the problem it appears is simple hubris, self-satisfaction of the sort that prevents one from thinking reflectively about one's situation because one has become dangerously preoccupied with one's own personal excellence, but that's just one component of the problem. The core difficulty which is at the root of the Liberals being on their way to becoming such spectacular two-term failures, is their fundamental confusion in the area of fiscal policy, their fundamental confusion in the area of development and of economics.

At the root of the entire enterprise that is represented by this Financial Measures (2017) Bill and attendant budget, is an approach to these crucial areas of our road forward in Nova Scotia, that is backward and discredited now, and wrong. It is an approach that can be characterized as cut back, prune back and take back. Cut back, prune back and take back first came on the economic screen about 40 years ago with the rise internationally of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan.

Cut back, prune back and take back has as its central thesis that, if taxes can be lowered and the public sector can be diminished, then the market can be counted on to create a rising tide that will improve everyone's situation. At the dead centre of this approach, is the idea that a good government is simply one that can therefore balance its books and produce a surplus budget.

Here, in my view, we have the one real thought, the only real idea that defines the present Liberal Government of Nova Scotia, and herein lies our present problem. The truth about cut back, prune back, take back is that, although it is simple and hence in this way appealing - and hence for many Liberals and Conservatives it provides an attractive framework - nevertheless, cut back, prune back, take back in reality is now an absolutely discredited approach in the field of economics. It is devoid of sustaining evidence and it is an idea whose time has gone.

It's not hard to see why this is the case. We can just think about the practicalities of our economic situation in Nova Scotia. How can our economy thrive when we have one-third of our wage earners earning less than \$15 an hour and another third, the public sector, living in a wage freeze. From where is the money supposed to come to provide customers for the businesses of our province? How can our economy thrive when we know there is no question about the fact that the road to improved lifetime earnings is a post-secondary education? How can our economy thrive when, unlike Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Ontario, Quebec, we here in Nova Scotia do not make the investments to remove the financial barriers for people so that they can get themselves along this better road?

How can our economy thrive when we know that the key to a thriving economy is an increased labour force participation rate, but we do not make the investments in adequate, affordable child care that are required if we are going to get there? It is a visionless vision that this Financial Measures (2017) Bill and budget have presented before the people of the province. It is an empty vision that is before us, it is a fraudulent vision that we have been presented with and it has brought us to this place where we have a government singing hallelujah to itself about balanced budgets back-to-back, when right before our eyes we have the price that our people are paying to get there. The worst child poverty, the fastest growing foodbank use, the lowest minimum wage and the fastest-rising tuition in the country.

Let me just close with reference to a place in the New Testament tradition. There is there a parable about a surplus, which is often referred to as the parable of the barn. In it, Jesus speaks about a farmer who is in a strong position and has had a crop good enough to produce a surplus. So great is the farmer's surplus, in fact, that it exceeds his capacity for storage, so the farmer says, oh, great, a surplus, I'll build bigger barns so I can store up more and more. The Creator says to the farmer, you fool. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I would just like to remind the honourable member I detected some inference there that the government was presenting a fraudulent budget, which is unparliamentary. I will ask the member to retract that term and then we'll move on.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I retract that and I would replace it with a sentence which says that the government's budget is deliberately lacking in that which constitutes veracity. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to speak to the Financial Measures (2017) Act. I'm new, so I'm not as polished as some of my colleagues, but I will just add a few minutes of my perspective on the Financial Measures (2017) Act. The last couple of weeks has been an exercise I found very interesting. Some of my veteran colleagues were surprised, but sitting through the Estimates provided myself with a lot of knowledge and background to all of our 19 government departments.

There was one thing that I thought was missing and that was discussion on revenues. If you look at our budget, we're looking at over \$10 billion in revenue for this province and I believe we should be focusing more on growing our revenues rather than just critiquing our expenditures. Currently I'm the Health and Wellness critic for the PC caucus, so I'll use our health care budget as an example.

We're currently spending 40 per cent of our budget on health care, which is approximately \$4,500 per person in Nova Scotia. The national standards for health care are \$6,300 per person. If we were spending the national standards on health care for our Nova Scotia people, we would be spending about \$5.8 billion for health care here in Nova Scotia. Based on 40 per cent of our budget, our general revenues in Nova Scotia should be \$14.5 billion.

What I would challenge all of us - including our sitting Liberal Government, but all of us who are elected MLAs - is to focus more on growing our economy and growing our revenue base so that we can better afford the services that the people of Nova Scotia both want and need.

It's a big stretch to go from \$10.5 billion to around \$14.5 billion, but I believe it's possible if we make that our focus. Just think if we'd spent the last 40 hours, instead of critiquing every government department, focused on creating and building a strategy for Nova Scotians and our economy. We need to look at growing our economy not through taxing people more but rather through supporting our businesses and growing our economy that way.

As Health and Wellness Critic, I will focus for a few minutes on the health care budget. I believe this is important because I'm sure the Liberal MLAs are the same as the PC and NDP - it's the number one issue that we're hearing about from our constituents every day, every week. The lack of access to care, to family doctors, to mental health services, to emergency rooms that are consistently being closed, and also the long eight- to 10-hour wait times in the emergency rooms that are open. The issue of our nursing homes and our seniors, and the poor care - I know of a nurse who was recently let go because she had the courage to speak up about the poor working conditions.

We need to address some of these issues, and through Estimates I was able to ask some questions and learn more about how our health care budget was spent over the last year. One of the things that really stood out to me is that the health care budget was underspent by \$27 million. It was underspent in all areas of the health care budget. One of the roles of the Department of Health and Wellness is to monitor performance of the health care system. System Strategy and Performance was underspent by \$1.5 million. The overall Strategic Direction and Accountability area was underspent by \$7.7 million.

I believe that this lack of spending led directly to the problems and the poor clinical health outcomes that we're seeing in our communities. I encourage the leadership of the Department of Health and Wellness to really look at the mandate and how we can look at making sure we're spending the money that is allocated to our health care budget and using it wisely.

One of the things I noticed in the budget was the Chief Medical Officer of Health. That department was underspent significantly at a time when the opioid crisis is running rampant throughout our country. We don't seem to have a problem calling the opioid crisis a crisis. I'm not sure why there's so much criticism of people who are working at a leadership level when we identify that there is a health care crisis right here in Nova Scotia.

How do we define a crisis? All I know is that every day I'm getting emails and phone calls from people who are dying because of either lack of access to care or inadequate care. That is a concern, and we do need to take it seriously and do a better job as leaders here in this province.

Through examination of this budget I found it very interesting, the potential conflict of interest between our government Department of Health and Wellness, the Nova Scotia Health Authority, our Nova Scotia Health Authority board of directors, and the IWK board of directors with Medavie Blue Cross. The relationship with that private company - even though it is non profit, it is still private - is growing and growing. I think we need to be careful and cautious about how much money is being spent and who are making those decisions to continue the business working relationship with this private business.

[4:45 p.m.]

I have concerns about the collaborative practice even though I used to have a collaborative practice health clinic. I think that we need to ask questions, Mr. Speaker. Will the collaborative practices indeed increase and improve access to care? Can we afford it? Those are a couple of questions that I don't know, I haven't seen the answers.

So, moving forward, I have some recommendations that will influence the health care budget and the first one is that we see stronger leadership at the highest level in health care. I do believe it is, and it states right in the mandate of the Department of Health and Wellness, their responsibility and role is to oversee the health care service delivery in this province of NSHA and the IWK. So, it's not adequate to place the blame on those authorities; we have to take responsibility and ensure that they are, in fact, doing the job that they have been hired to do.

I believe that a health outcomes auditor would help to examine the clinical health outcomes and act and provide an avenue for Nova Scotians to provide feedback and the experience that they are currently having in our health care system. People need to be able to have a voice and to be able to evaluate. We need to make sure that we're measuring performance and making sure that we're getting value for the money that we're putting in.

I believe we need to examine closely the governance models that we currently have for both the IWK Board of Directors and the Nova Scotia Health Authority Board of Directors. When we look closely at effective board governance levels of health organizations throughout the world, there always are medical professionals on the board of directors and, on our Nova Scotia Health Authority board, we have no medical professionals and I know first-hand that this is leading to decisions being made by the board that they just don't understand the clinical health outcomes of the decisions that they're making. They may understand the financial outcomes but those financial outcomes may not, in fact, be giving us the proper clinical outcomes that we need. So, I think it's important that we look at our governance models and make some changes to incorporate to make sure we have experts at the decision-making level.

I believe if we looked at all four of these areas, even with the budget that we have, it would lead to improved patient care and health outcomes to our people. I encourage all of us in the government to look at revenues.

So, in closing, I want to just emphasize the need for us to grow our economy. My main observation of this budget is that we should be growing the revenues and not be focusing on expenditures. We need to be growing our business community so that we can employ our youth and bring them back from the West.

I look forward to a budget in the Spring and I hope that it offers hope for a brighter future for our Nova Scotia people.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, it does give me pleasure to rise today to speak to the budget bill. I have to say that I was disappointed in this budget and also in the Throne Speech when there were a number of very important issues that seemed to be neglected and completely left out.

One of them I have brought to the attention of the House in this session before and that is the environment and climate change. In this day and age when we are seeing uncontrollable forest fires, floods, hurricanes, droughts, and, in some cases in Nova Scotia, droughts and floods at the same time - not too long ago, I find it unconscionable that this government isn't even talking about it and doesn't include anything in the budget to try and address this very, very important issue.

We are not down in the United States dealing with a Donald Trump for President. We are in Canada where our Prime Minister has signed an agreement in Paris about trying to do something about climate change and, yet, here we have a budget where there's absolutely nothing to try and mitigate further damage to our very important environment.

The other thing that's not in here is anything of major resilience or anything that will help to build our creative economy. In particular, I'm speaking about the film and television industry. In fact, there's no mention, and on this day, I think it is incredibly strange - it feels strange to be standing here at a time when a dear friend of ours, of mine, somebody I knew since I was 16 years old and my first Neptune Theatre show, has suddenly died. He was a champion to this industry and of this industry.

Of course, I speak about John Dunsworth. The fact that he fought to try and build the industry in Nova Scotia for the last 30 years, and was here and witnessed how, with a stroke of a pen, a government with very, very short sight could just decapitate the industry, get rid of the Film Tax Credit - which is what we needed in order to bring us up to speed in the world of entertainment, to be able to try and put us even on the map in comparison with other jurisdictions.

Then to also, with the stroke of a pen, totally demolish our Film and Creative Industries agency, which was so helpful in bringing productions to Nova Scotia and in supporting our young filmmakers, our writers, and trying to get them out there into the world, to be able to have their works known, to be able to take them to Los Angeles every year in the springtime to be able to meet with producers, to be able to meet with other filmmakers, and also the people who could get their films known and have more films produced here.

I have to say, shame, shame, that this government has not mentioned that in either the budget or the Throne Speech. I know that I am not the only person here who is just

insulted by the fact that this is a slap in the face to many of our hard-working Nova Scotians who have been trying for years to build up an industry that has, by one government, been almost squashed. Yes, they are trying to rebuild, but guess what? In order to rebuild, they would need to have some help, and there's nothing in this budget document, and in the bigger budget document, that does one thing to help them.

They brag on about what they're doing for the wine industry and beer and all of these kinds of things. Well, there's a lot more about life, and to life, than just alcohol and drinking. I mean, yes, it's great that the wine industry is growing. Yes, it's great that Honeycrisp apples are doing so well. Meanwhile, of course, our blueberry producers are suffering terribly, because there's a glut on blueberries and there are too many here in Nova Scotia right now. Where's the help for them? Do I see any help for the blueberry producers in this? No. Nothing.

I'm also hearing about sheep farmers and how they're receiving no help from this government at all. I asked the Minister of Agriculture questions during Budget Estimates to see whether or not programs that were promised by this government in 2013 have actually come to fruition. Things like growing the farms here in Nova Scotia, getting more young people to come to Nova Scotia and start farms, getting people from overseas to come here and be immigrants, which we need, and also put down roots and start farms - but in fact, we've stopped.

Under our government, we grew our farming industry, and we were the number one province in Canada for growing farms. I am very proud of that effort. But it's stopped. Nothing else has happened.

The other thing that we did under our previous government was we improved the Film Tax Credit, and we increased the money coming to the coffers for the film and television industry. We had a banner year, we made \$180 million to the GDP under the NDP Government, until this government came in power and wiped it all away.

Mr. Speaker, the same can be said with the greening of Nova Scotia, with our projects to improve our greenhouse gas emissions reductions and, also, for efficiency. When we were in government we increased efficiency, we gave Efficiency Nova Scotia the go-ahead to try and do as much as they could to make Nova Scotian and government buildings more efficient - and guess what? It was working. Then this government came in and I think it was the second Environment Minister, since there have been four Environment Ministers in this government so far, the second Environment Minister tried to demolish it. That was Mr. Andrew Younger, who is no longer here. All of a sudden, the idea that big polluters should pay went right out the window.

What happened, Mr. Speaker? Why is there nothing about that in here? Instead we've got the cap and trade program which basically does nothing - as we call it, it's the do-nothing bill, and is basically just treading water. It's resting on the laurels of past

governments - the NDP and, in fact, the Progressive Conservatives who introduced the EGSPA bill and had an all-Party support for that bill. Then we went on and pushed Nova Scotia and gave hard caps which we lived up to and now we're doing what? We're doing nothing. In fact, if with the cap and trade any of these big polluters, these big industrial industries, if they have too much of a good thing and they have extra room, they can just give it away.

Well, I don't like that idea, Mr. Speaker. They can just give it away to the next polluter to use to keep polluting and, if they eventually want to, they can sell it for a private profit. What good does that do to the Province of Nova Scotia? What's the Green Fund for if not to be able to put money in the Green Fund to try and make Nova Scotia even more green?

Mr. Speaker, there's nothing of imagination, there's nothing of vision in this budget. I, for one, am somebody who believes totally in trying to green the homes of Nova Scotians. I believe that we need to make it easier for people to have efficiencies in their homes and to turn their oil furnaces into something else - get rid of the oil furnaces and use solar, wind, waves, clean electricity, get off coal. But with this government we're going to be the last province in Canada to get off coal. We don't have to get off coal now until the year 2030, which is ridiculous. We were a leader and we could still be a leader, and I don't see why this government doesn't want to keep going with that.

They are also resting on their laurels of the wilderness protected areas which our government received an incredible response from CPAWS for the job that we did of getting wilderness protected areas. Now what are you doing? This government is going up there and clear-cutting in the wilderness areas. They are clear-cutting right up to Kejimikujik Park, they are clear-cutting in the Tobeatic region, they are clear-cutting right across this province - and I have been travelling and driving from one end of the province to the other on my business to go and speak to different groups about many different environmental topics and I'm shocked, I'm appalled, and I'm saddened, just like many other Nova Scotians are.

When you see a field that was once a thriving forest, a thriving Acadian forest with colours, you see now nothing but a spindly little tree in the middle of devastation and you see one poor sad looking eagle or hawk sitting on that tree, looking around as if it didn't know what the "H" happened to it because everything around it, its habitat, its friends, its family are gone.

I have visited Mattatall Lake, where people who were my constituents brought me out to take a look at a green lake that is so toxic, you cannot even swim in it. You can't drink the water. You can't even boil the toxins out of the water. They told me that there was a family of loons on that lake earlier in the Spring. They had a baby, and the mother and father had to fly away when the baby wasn't ready to fly yet. They had to leave that baby there, and it died in that toxicity.

[5:00 p.m.]

This is Canada. This is Nova Scotia. What are we doing to it? We're destroying it. We are looking at this province as if it's nothing but natural resources that are there for the taking, or for the giving in some cases - just give it away to these multinational corporations from outside the province. That is not what's going to help this province succeed. That is not going to forward the vision that Nova Scotians are dying for.

Yes, this government just got in with another majority, but barely. It will only take two seats, and you won't have a majority any longer. This side of the Legislature is now all Opposition members. I remember standing here in the House last year before the election telling the members on the other side, don't laugh too hard people because you may not be there tomorrow. You may not be there next time. In fact, we could be all right across this side, and some of you will be out. Guess what? Some of the ones who laughed the hardest are gone, Mr. Speaker. They are gone, and I'll bet you anything they remember my words on the floor of this House.

Actually, we in the NDP have managed to keep the seven members that we started with back in 2013, and we are proud that five of the members are women, young women, young women who are bright, progressive, and passionate. We are the future. We are the future, and I enjoy going to our caucus meetings and having discussions about what we believe is the right direction for Nova Scotia. I enjoy talking with our Leader, who is now in the House and doesn't have to be up there in the gallery anymore. He can be here in the House, and he can speak his mind. Mr. Speaker, that is progress.

We intend to keep speaking our minds, and we intend to keep asking the hard questions. We intend to keep reminding people what is in this flimsy document, this budget document, the do-nothing bill, the environmental stuff that you're not doing, the creative economy things that you are not doing. Also, you're just resting on your laurels of things that have been done by other governments while we were in power and trying to take credit for it.

I'll tell you another one that's in here, Mr. Speaker, that is very similar. That is the mental health strategy. There's not enough about mental health in here, and we started the mental health strategy.

We also started the violence against women strategy. Marilyn More led that. She led a huge committee on that. They did a lot of work, and I would like to see more done for women.

The Cyber-safety Act, yes, I'm waiting to see it. I was there in Law Amendments Committee waiting to see it yesterday, and I'm still waiting to see it. I'm still waiting to see what will happen.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, if they take away the CyberSCAN unit, shame on them. That CyberSCAN unit is the best thing that Nova Scotia has ever seen when it comes to standing up for the victims of cyberbullying and sexual harassment online. I have had all kinds of letters from people telling me what a great job they have done and how saddened they would be if it wasn't there anymore for teachers to be able to call, for parents to be able to call, and for young people and older people to be able to call. It's a 1-800 number, and those people know their stuff. They do their job. They are empathetic, and they look after people who are suffering from cyber-abuse.

I know that, Mr. Speaker, because I was one of them. I didn't know what to do when it happened to me. It took a police officer in Truro to say, Lenore, call the CyberSCAN number, the one that your government introduced. Call that number. They're going to help. I was like, really? Okay.

My sister who is a guidance counsellor said, oh, that's what we tell our students, and that's what we do as teachers. We call the CyberSCAN unit.

So I am very concerned by what I'm hearing because they're not here, Mr. Speaker. They're not in that bill, and they had better be, or you're going to be hearing from me. You're going to be hearing from me until you're sick to death of hearing from me about it. Everybody else out there who has been abused and had to put up with all kinds of online harassment, you'll be hearing from them too.

The other thing is the early childhood development program. We're highly in favour of early childhood development. We started it. We're the ones who changed the title of the Department of Education to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. We started working with Margaret McCain, who is from Truro originally, on ideas about how to improve early childhood development. It was our government that actually moved what was called department of the early years from the Department of Community Services to the Department of Education because we thought, this is in the wrong place. This should not be with Community Services. This is about education. This is about the education of our children from a very early age on.

My own father was an expert in early childhood education and, in fact, was one of the first professors at the Teachers College, along with a couple of other incredible ladies, who started those programs and trained teachers in Nova Scotia to be early childhood educators. One of the things he always said was that those early years are so important to the rest of a child's life. They're important to who a child becomes.

They are important also for the teachers who are spending the time with these young kids. At the time, for 40 years, they were treated like babysitters basically. They weren't paid properly. They weren't given the respect that they deserved. I'm glad to see that we are moving in the direction of respecting and paying these educators better.

But I'm also concerned about the fact there are many daycares in Nova Scotia run by women who are now scared and suffering because they don't know what's going to happen to them with a very sudden and quick rollout of this four-year-old program. Many of them have met with me to tell me that, even before the rollout happened, they were struggling because they had to pay the workers more, but they weren't given any more by the government. So they were having larger and larger deficits, and they didn't know how long they could stay afloat. It wasn't sustainable.

The other thing I would like to talk about is the fact that clear-cutting is still going on. I'm glad to see that they're going to have some kind of a public consultation. That would be about the first, one of the first. I hope it's not just going to be an online thing where there's thousands of people writing in to some online number. That's not really a consultation, and that's what I'm hearing from people. But I'll tell you, the clear-cutting, the glyphosate spraying, the quarry creep - they're killing this province.

In fact, you and we and this government have a natural resource right under our feet, right in front of our eyes, which is so valuable. It is underrated, it is underappreciated, it is underpaid, and it is underfunded. That is the talent and creativity of our people. That is Nova Scotia's biggest natural resource.

Also green energy, and I would like to see us go in that direction. I do not see that in this budget.

With those few words, I'll take my seat.

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

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: It's a great honour to be able to stand and discuss the Financial Measures Act, the provisions of the budget of 2017. It's a little bit of déjà vu because, as we all know, this is the second budget of 2017. The first one was in April; it lasted two days and then this House was dissolved and we went into a general election.

I raise that because the election went the way the government was hoping on that very day the Premier dissolved the House and issued the Writ, or asked the Lieutenant Governor to. The government thought that it had a winning budget and that's all they would need. As we know, the people of Nova Scotia watched as the campaign went on and they have a way of actually saying what they think. What they thought of the first budget in April was, it didn't do enough in the things that mattered to them. In fact, it didn't do anything in the things that mattered to them.

All of us spent 30 days listening to Nova Scotians who were crying out for more family doctors, who were worried about getting the health care they need in their own communities, who were frustrated by the emergency room closures, who were driving further and further for emergency care. People on dialysis that had to go up to an hour back

and forth to the nearest regional dialysis centre three, four times a week, even in the middle of winter, people who are 60, 70, 80 years old. These are not acceptable conditions; the people of Nova Scotia had a way of making that point.

On mental health, I am so impressed with how many Nova Scotians spoke up that they wanted more done in mental health, most directly to help people who are suffering from mental illness, to make sure they get the counselling they need, particularly young people who as of today are waiting over a year in some parts of our province for basic mental health counselling services. Cape Breton being a very real example.

The budget's first incarnation in April did not address those things. I think, as we all know now, the election turned into an examination of the government's health care record and people found it wanting. The budget they had been given, which they see as a real test of what the government means and whether they actually mean what they say or not, where they put their money where their mouth is or not, they saw it's a government full of lip service on health care, lip service on doctors, lip service on mental health, but no real money, no real plans, no real actions to actually get Nova Scotians the treatments and care that they need. That's why there are so many fewer government members sitting in this House. That's why there are so many more Opposition members sitting in this House.

Nova Scotians were not happy with this budget the first time around, and health care was one of the biggest reasons. They also were not happy that they continue to pay the highest taxes in the country, they continue to pay the highest sales tax with the HST, the highest personal income tax. In many parts of this province, the highest property tax, the highest corporate tax and they wonder, how do we get to a point where we pay the highest taxes and have so little in the way of health care services to show for it?

Yet here we have a government bringing in their second version of the same budget. Did they get the message? That's the question that Nova Scotians wanted an answer to when they saw the budget the second time. Did they learn the lesson? Did they hear what the people were saying in the election about health care, about doctors, about mental health? We were waiting to find that answer out ourselves when the budget was presented a few weeks ago.

When you got the budget that day and you opened it to the Department of Health and Wellness and you looked at primary health care, the increase was exactly zero from April. Clearly the answer to the question, did this government get the message on doctors - the answer is no. There is not one dollar more in this budget for doctors, for primary care, than there was in April. They did not get the message.

Even though there are 100,000 people without a doctor, crying out for help, looking to see what the plan is, this government made a tweak to their April budget to find 10 new ones sometime in the next eight years. That is not right. That is not fair. Surely people see now, no, they didn't get the message. If that's the best this government can do after having

listened to 900,000 Nova Scotians day after day for 30 days, is 10 doctors sometime in the next eight years - if those 10 actually decide to stay - well, Mr. Speaker, this budget is really found wanting.

[5:15 p.m.]

Yet they are so proud to claim that they think it is balanced - at the highest taxes in the country, with 100,000 people without a family doctor. You know what, Mr. Speaker? I say this as a Progressive Conservative: big hairy deal. Who couldn't balance the budget if they charged the highest taxes and nobody has a doctor? How hard can that possibly be? If you squeeze the health care system enough and you charge the highest taxes, anyone can do that. That's no accomplishment.

Now imagine McDonald's. McDonald's has this great new plan: they're going to increase their prices to the maximum to their customers, but they're going to take all the beef out of the Big Macs. That's what this government's approach to running this province is.

Would that be a good business plan? Let's raise our prices, take the beef out of the hamburgers - we'll still provide them with a little piece of bread and maybe a piece of lettuce to go on that bread. Ketchup you have to pay extra for now, by the way. Apparently at McDonald's, you don't get it unless you ask.

Would that be a good way to run the business? No, of course it wouldn't be a good way to run the business. How long would McDonald's last under that plan - give your customers the least and charge them the most? They'd be out of business.

That is exactly the plan that this government has put before us and before the people of Nova Scotia. You're going to pay the highest taxes. By the way, there's the secret hidden tax increase of bracket creep, which they refuse to do anything about. There's tax on tax on our gasoline. We actually pay the HST on top of the gas tax. They won't do anything about it. Our taxes are going up and up. They are squeezing the health care budget so no one has a doctor.

Mr. Speaker, the health care budget is the beef in government services. It is the one big thing that people want to get right: looking after our fellow Nova Scotians; making sure they have a family doctor; making sure that when they suffer from mental illness, they get the help they need. That is the beef that government is supposed to deliver.

I know that anyone over 40 years old is waiting for me to use that old line "Where's the beef?" from the commercial. Mr. Speaker, I know you're older than 40, so I can see you giggling already.

I get it, because that is the question: what are we getting for all these taxes? We're not getting family doctors to people who need them. They are throwing a few pennies at people who are suffering from mental illness and patting themselves on the back for that. That's no way to run the province, any more than that would be any way for McDonald's to run their business.

Yet here we have a government that seems like they are proud of the fact that they have, in their own view, balanced the budget by making sure taxes stay high and leaving people without the basics of health care that they need, like a family doctor. Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough.

I will say this: I actually don't accept that they've even managed that meagre accomplishment of balancing the budget, not when they're being sued left, right, and centre for literally millions and millions of dollars with no provision for the payouts that will be coming.

Let's go back to our McDonald's analogy for just a second. Imagine that, on top of charging the highest prices and taking the beef out of the burgers, McDonald's - do you know what else we're going to do? We're going to take our employees and we're going to sweep away their ability to actually negotiate fairly for their wages. We're going to sweep that away and we're going to dictate to them what they are going to be paid.

Let's imagine if McDonald's did that. Well, what would happen? What would happen to the quality of service? What would happen to the working relationship you want the employer and the employees to have? It would be wiped out.

So in addition to the silliness that we see already, we add a whole other layer, which is that the government has exposed itself - and taxpayers, more directly - to millions and millions of dollars of costs that they refuse to account for in the budget itself.

We're not just talking about employees of the government, the bargaining units like the NSGEU and UNIFOR and the others, who have already launched their own lawsuits, who are already challenging the constitutionality of what the government is doing, who are already out there counting on the decisions that the courts will eventually make.

Doctors have joined in the parade of lawsuits against this government. Teachers, under Bill No. 75, have joined in the lawsuits against this government. Now, if they want to say that the budget is balanced, and they want to say that in a way that accounts for everything, where is the provision for all these lawsuits? The legal costs alone are going to be in the millions of dollars. Did they ask Nova Scotians if they would rather the government spend millions on lawyers defending their actions, or millions on more nurses and doctors? I don't think so, because Nova Scotians would be very clear, spend it on the doctors, spend it on nurses, get us the psychologists and the psychiatrists that we need for people with mental illness so they get the help they need.

But that's not going to happen. So, yes, I'm being critical of a government that charges the most and provides the least, and yes, I'm not going to give them credit for having a balanced budget when so much of the real costs of this government's actions are off the books and have been kicked down the road into the future, and it will be taxpayers, some day, who will have to pick up those extra costs and spend it in places that they did not want to spend it, which is somewhere other than doctors and nurses themselves.

The government, of course, wants to champion their tax cuts for low-income Nova Scotians, and I want to say that I support it. I supported it in the election. The PC platform had a very similar tax cut, implemented by raising the basic personal amount for the people who are on the most modest incomes, lifting many of them off the tax rolls altogether, so they have the money to spend on rent, or to spend on housing, to spend on food, and not on taxes, I support that, Mr. Speaker - we have very good Pages in this House, you don't even have to ask and sometimes they just know what to do, and this is the vodka that I ordered earlier - just kidding.

Here's the thing: lowering the cost of living for people who are on the most modest incomes is a good thing to do, and we support it. Raising the basic personal amount and limiting it to people with \$75,000 of income or less is a very direct way to implement a tax cut that goes to those that need it the most, and that's why we support it.

We had the same plan in our own platform. On the televised Leaders' Debate in the election, on CTV, each Leader was asked about something you like about the other Party's plan, and I sincerely said, I'm glad the government's going to take some steps, if they're re-elected, or if we're elected, or if the NDP are elected, to actually bring down the cost of living to people who need help the most.

What the Liberal Government did not tell people at the time is they were going to give with one hand and then take away with the other. Our platform was all in. Their platform was, here's the good stuff and then after the election, to roll out the other side. So, yes, there is a modest tax cut for low-income Nova Scotians, that is good. But it is not good if it gets overwhelmed by other government-directed increases in the cost of living. For example, the Liberal platform was silent on the cost of the cap and trade system that they're bringing in. Silent on the cost to industry, silent on the cost to polluters, and silent on the cost to the everyday Nova Scotian.

Somehow the environment is supposed to magically get better - and it won't cost anybody anything. Well, Nova Scotians know better than that. They do want the environment to get better, and they do want to keep going on reducing emissions into our atmosphere and protecting our pristine forests, and lakes, and rivers, and we support all that. But what they were not told by the Liberal Party was here is your tax cut but, by the way, it's not going to last long, when the cost of driving your car to work goes up 7 cents. And, by the way, that's on top of the 15.5 cents provincial excise tax, the 10-cent federal excise tax, and the 15 per cent HST which is on top of all of that.

What they did not say was that the cost of heating your home, if you use home heating fuel, which most Nova Scotians do, is going to go up by 9 cents a litre. For the average homeowner that heats their home with home heating fuel and drives an average amount to work, that is a \$1,200 increase in the cost of living. From the study I tabled in this House last week, done by the Economics Department of Saint Mary's University, sponsored - not by the government, not by us - but by the CBC, so Nova Scotians would know.

We have been asking in this House just about every day, if the government will just be direct with the people of Nova Scotia about who will have to pay more and how much, but they won't answer. You know why not? Why not just tell people, why not tell them? Is it because the government doesn't know and is recklessly taking us down this road without knowing or caring about the impact on the everyday Nova Scotia pocketbook? Or do they know and they just don't want to say? Those are the only two possibilities. That is disrespectful of the taxpayers of this province who deserve to know.

I want to make this point, that \$1,200 more to drive to work, to heat your home, those are not luxuries. Those are not things that people can just cut back on. Those are the everyday essentials of life that Nova Scotians are going to have to pay more on. They are going to pay more, because they're not going to stop their car when they get 80 per cent of the way to work, they're not going to only heat 80 per cent of their home. They have to do those things, so they will pay more. You know what? The emissions into the atmosphere, greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, mercury, they will continue at the same amount.

All of this hardship and the environment doesn't get better. That is the most bizarre plan that could come forward at this critical time in the life of this planet. It's exactly why we have brought forward alternatives that don't rely on taxing people more and hoping they cut back on the essentials of life. We don't want them to cut back on essentials, we want them to live full and prosperous lives. That includes living in a clean environment.

That's why the critic for Environment, the member for Queens-Shelburne, has brought forward a real plan like the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act of 2017, to meet our Paris commitment, be part of this country's signature on the Paris Accord, break it down into Nova Scotia targets and regulate directly the things that we care about, like emissions into the atmosphere.

That is a non-tax way of actually improving the environment. They're not going to take it up on the government side, I accept that unfortunately. They are determined to go down this way, with the cap and trade plan which raises the cost of living. Even today in this House I asked the Premier, is Nova Scotia Power included? Will they have to pay their carbon pricing targets, which are mandated in this government's bill to start at \$10 a ton and go to \$50 a ton? We didn't get a straight answer. One of the more sensitive cost of living issues is power rates, as we know. Nova Scotians are still in the dark from this

government about what that means. The big question, if Nova Scotia Power does have to pay those kinds of carbon prices under this plan, will they be allowed to pass those cost increases on to their own customers?

Unlike most businesses, they don't have to compete. They get to pass on their costs to all their customers, plus the 9 per cent guaranteed profit. It appears no one on the government side thought through how this works with electricity where there's only one provider. They're actually elected to think through these things, from the point of view of their constituents who pay that power bill every month, but it didn't happen.

[5:30 p.m.]

So, yes, there is a tax cut for low-income Nova Scotians on the one hand, but there is also a whopping increase coming on the other, on power rates, on home-heating fuel, on gasoline, on all the products where those inputs are embedded in them. It is a much bigger increase, and the environment won't get better.

Of course, the government doesn't acknowledge this, but there is a hidden tax increase in their plan as well, which is that, through the power of inflation, Nova Scotians pay more in tax secretly every year, even though they are not better off. This government allows that to continue. It is a sneaky tax increase. It is a tax increase that people pay, that doesn't require an Act of this Legislature. It doesn't require a budget measure or a Financial Measures Act to implement. They just get the windfall year after year after year.

The spending power of the Nova Scotia family taxpayer does not go up. In fact, because of bracket creep, their spending power and therefore their quality of life goes down without any Act of this Legislature to make it happen, and this budget continues to embed that kind of quiet increase inside. It would be nice if the government at least would acknowledge in their budget bulletins that they put out, yes, we're providing you with a small tax decrease here - by the way, \$40 million in new taxes is coming in without us having to say a word on the other side. But that does not happen.

In fact, I think it should be the law that the government has to disclose how much of a tax increase is happening because of bracket creep anyway, because then Nova Scotians would have all the information, not only which taxes are being cut but which ones are going up. Then, when they see their government pat itself on the back, they'll know whether it's deserved or not.

Of course, it's pretty hard to take this tax cut at face value with all the debate that's going on about what the federal Liberal Government is doing to increase the taxes on small business people, on the family business. Actually taking a family business where the family itself is engaged in the business - mom and dad - and saying that they're tax cheats if they both participate in the business and they both draw a salary from the business or they both contribute to the business.

One of the silliest things I've ever seen happened yesterday when the Prime Minister of Canada and the Finance Minister announced they were going to simplify the changes by requiring mom and dad now to actually prove they actually contributed to the business and, if they can prove that, they'll be allowed to maintain their small-business status. Well, that's not simplifying things. That's complicating things even more, and how insulting and downright sexist in many cases, to have a national government say he contributed to the business, that I can see, but she has to prove that she contributed to the business, or vice versa.

That's not right, but that is the crazy road that the federal Liberal Government is taking this country down. The very people who create the jobs, who take the risks, who hire their neighbours, they're the target of the Liberal Party of Canada now. The very people we want to do more of those creative things, like starting a company and taking a chance and creating jobs, they're the problem according to the federal Liberal Government. They're the ones who are under attack. They're not feeling really very good that the provincial government raised the threshold for small business when the federal Liberal Government is attacking them for using these very tools that we have provided to them, federally and provincially over the years, to recognize the risk that they take when they cut the ties of a fixed paycheque and go into self-employment or family employment. They are not feeling like they are better off because of course they count it all in, as they should, Mr. Speaker.

In this session of the House, I have asked the Premier regularly, how much more is the provincial government going to take in in taxes from Nova Scotia's small businesses as a result of the federal changes? He won't say, Mr. Speaker, but it is not lost on the common sense, everyday Nova Scotian that there is a windfall coming in new taxes from Nova Scotia businesses to this government. The least they could do is be up front and tell Nova Scotians how much.

I've looked to the Premier as the leader of this province to oppose those changes which kill jobs, which kill innovation, which are harmful to family businesses. But he seems to think his only role is to pass on the concerns of people to the national government like he is the courier in chief - oh, I heard a concern, I'll pass it on. Give me a stamp, I'll mail your letter for you. That seems to be his position. That's not leadership - I'll pass it on. He doesn't even say that I agree with you or I disagree - I'll pass it on. What are MPs for? In fact, ironically, the federal government set up a website where we can all go and we can express our concerns. We don't need the Premier, we can go online apparently if he limits his role to passing on the concerns he's hearing.

Whatever happened to standing up for Nova Scotians? Whatever happened to representing the people of Nova Scotia when they are being attacked by the federal government, when they are being called names like tax cheat? When their very family businesses are being ripped apart, whatever happened to defending them? That's gone and

replaced by, well I'll pass it on, thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I don't think they feel very encouraged by the tax cut in this budget when they're watching it go the other way.

You know, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier really did care about what's going on with small business taxes at the federal level, he would renounce the extra taxes that are going to be collected here in Nova Scotia. And we have given him an opportunity to do that because we have a bill before this House right now which will refund the extra federal taxes back to the family businesses that are going to be compelled to pay them - at least the provincial portion. Then our Premier and our Liberal Government would have the credibility to stand up to Ottawa because they are saying, we don't want part of it.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, every family business where one spouse is denied the ability to participate in the business and forced to pay taxes at the highest personal rate enters the provincial tax system at the same time and pays more to the province as well. These are ill-gotten gains that are coming this government's way. Maybe that's why they have been so quiet about the changes. Maybe that's why they're content to pass on the concerns of Nova Scotia family businesses because they are quite happy to reap the gains that are going to come their way when this is all done. They are like McDonald's - charging the highest prices while sliding the beef off the menu so that we get less. That is no way to run this province.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the government likes to give itself some credit for expenditure control, as if that is the be-all and end-all of running a province - expenditure control. Now I am a Progressive Conservative and I like expenditure control when it's reasonable, when it makes sense, when it eliminates waste. But it is not expenditure control to deny people a family doctor. It is outright negligence. We can only imagine the social costs that will come back to haunt this government, or some future government, if that many people go without the family medicine they need.

It is not expenditure control to have a year-long waiting list in Cape Breton for adolescent mental health services. It is outright neglect, Mr. Speaker. We can only imagine the social costs that will come back to haunt a future government if that many young Nova Scotians go without the mental health supports that they need. There is nothing to be proud of with expenditure control when you operate it the way this government is operating it. That is a fact.

By the way, there is more to government than collecting your taxes and controlling your expenses. There is more to government than that. Here is the big glaring hole that Nova Scotians see with this government: there is no vision. There is no vision for where we're going. There is no vision for actual growth. There is no vision for more prosperity or more opportunity. If you truly want to balance the budget, if that's all there is - I would argue that that's not all there is, but to this government that seems to be it - then you have to go about it either by seeing taxes go up, which they're doing; controlling expenses, which in the wrong way, in the harshest way, they like to think they're doing; or by growing

the economy of this province and creating more opportunities for people. There is no plan, no provision, no vision for doing that with this government. Not this year, not last year, not the year before that, not since they got elected.

There are 10 provinces in Canada and three territories, as we all know. One province is unfortunately shrinking, and that is Newfoundland and Labrador. Eight provinces are growing, some quite rapidly now. There is one with no growth at all, and it unfortunately is little ol' Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker. There is the result of a government with no vision. We're stalled. Our incomes are stalled. Our growth is stalled. Many parts of rural Nova Scotia are in outright decline . . .

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Come to the Valley. Come to the Valley.

MR. BAILLIE: Well Kingston might be doing well. I hope they are. If they are (Interruptions)

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

MR. BAILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You're doing a good job of keeping those guys in line, and I appreciate that.

It was interesting to hear the member for Kings West take credit for all the growth that's going on in Kings West, so good for him. He certainly did a great job with their health care system, as all Nova Scotians know. God help us if he does the same job growing the economy of Kings West. But that's a whole other story.

Mr. Speaker, my point is 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 - where is the plan? Where is the growth? Where is the opportunity? There isn't any. Wouldn't it be better to come to this House with a real growth plan and a real opportunities plan and say, it might take a little longer to get us to that balanced budget but when we get there, we won't have left anyone behind. We won't have polluted the environment. We won't have denied people basic services along the way.

Everyone participates in growth. That's the great thing about growth. Everyone participates when we're growing. Everyone has more opportunity. Everyone has more choice. More kids stay home. More seniors get the services that they need. Our schools get more resources when we're growing. But there is no plan for growth. It's cut this, cut that, raise that tax. That's not going to get us where we need to go.

Here is the funny thing - it's not funny, I shouldn't call it funny. Here is the sad thing, Mr. Speaker: Nova Scotians have a government that has no idea how to grow the economy and create jobs, none. They have proven it over and over again. But the world is a funny place because early on in their mandate, a plan rained down on them from the

heavens. It literally landed on the Premier's desk - a plan for growth called the Ivany report. Just as we were electing a government that had no idea how to actually create opportunity, a plan for opportunity came and landed on their desk. Wouldn't it be nice if they had taken that up? Wouldn't it be nice if they'd taken that up? Wouldn't it be honest to say, you know what? This is great, because we really don't know what we're doing, but here's a plan. We'll follow this plan.

[5:45 p.m.]

But that didn't happen. You ask Nova Scotians today, did the government take up the challenge of the Ivany report and get it done? Nine times out of 10 they're going to say no, they didn't - no, they didn't. They think they did, but you show me in the Ivany report where it said to cut back on doctors until 100,000 people don't have a doctor. I don't think that was in the Ivany report. You show me in the Ivany report where it said to let the wait times for adolescent mental health services zoom to 400 days in Cape Breton. You show me where it says that, and then I will say, well, maybe they've done something from the Ivany report. But I know it does not say those things.

You show me where it said in the Ivany report that you should really kick the legs out from under the film business. We want growth, but not growth of creative young people, 3,000 of them who promote this province around the world. The Ivany report did not say, you know, you should get rid of that, but that's what this government did. No, they didn't follow the Ivany report. They didn't have a plan of their own, and they didn't take up the one they did have, and here we are today.

Just today I watched with interest as the Minister of Health and Wellness bragged about putting some money back into nursing homes - approximately half the amount he cut out of nursing homes the year before. Here's a great lesson: fixing something you broke is not actually something to brag about, particularly if what you broke is the food budget in our nursing homes and your fix is to put half as much back in.

I'm sure almost all the members of this House, if not all, have been through the nursing homes in their own constituencies. I hope they took the time to talk to the people who work there, to talk to the residents who live there, and ask them how it's going. When you do, you very quickly find out what this government's cuts to nursing homes meant to the staff and to the residents of this province's nursing homes.

When you meet a woman from Northwood who realizes that they're not even getting whole real potatoes anymore, that they're getting powdered potatoes because the nursing home can't afford potatoes, something has gone horribly wrong. When tomatoes are replaced by canned tomatoes, something has gone wrong. When they have to ration out the incontinence pads to seniors in nursing homes, because the budget has been cut to the point we can't afford to have enough for everybody, something has gone horribly wrong.

Rather than say we went too far on that, and we have to put that money back in and make sure people get looked after, the government puts half of it back in and then acts like they did a great thing for our seniors. That's not a great thing, that's a horrible thing. The more Nova Scotians see this, the more upset they get. That's the problem. They see a government that's really out of touch with the impact of the decisions they're making.

We all have been watching on the national news how the Canadian Finance Minister, Mr. Morneau - oops, forgot to record that he owns a villa in France when he made his disclosure when he got elected. Oops, yes, he thinks people who use small business corporations are tax cheats because they're splitting their income, but he himself is the beneficiary of a number of family trusts that are designed to split their income and lower their taxes, and he actually received a lot of his pay from his old company from a numbered Canadian-controlled company registered in the Province of Alberta even though he lived and worked in Ontario. Why? I think we all know why: because the taxes are lower in Alberta.

He was doing the exact things he's now condemning every other small business in Canada for doing. They realize these guys are so far out of touch, yet they lecture the family businesses of the country about how they're tax cheats.

I would like to think that if any of the members of this House owned a villa in France, they would remember to declare it. I would like to think that. I don't know how many own a villa in France. I understand it's a very nice villa, by the way, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure it is, but it's just unimaginable that that same person would lecture all of us about how family businesses are incorporated.

The Prime Minister, the very person saying small family businesses are the problem, spent \$200,000 to design the cover page for his budget. How could you do that in good conscience when there's so much hardship out there? I can't even imagine a reasonable person saying, we need a better cover for this budget - has anybody got \$200,000 that we can throw around? It's unimaginable. Mr. Speaker, \$200,000 would have provided high-speed Internet coverage to half of Cumberland County, giving the people there the opportunity to create businesses, to work from home, or to go to work and be full participants in the global economy. I think that would have been a better use of that \$200,000 than getting a fancy cover for the federal budget.

Of course, making the point that you can't judge a book by its cover, you can't judge a budget by its cover - you will be judged on the contents. The national Liberal Government is facing that judgment now. The revolt that they have generated across this country from family businesses and from everyday Canadians who don't run family businesses but are employed by family businesses or who are friends or neighbours with people who do run family businesses is growing. Here in Nova Scotia, we're at the front lines of that because we actually have more people working in a family business than any other part of the country.

For all of the fights that the government likes to have with its own employees, the fact remains 80 per cent of Nova Scotians are employed by a family business. They rely on those businesses for their livelihoods. Whether it's a doctor's office or a blueberry field or anything in between, this is how Nova Scotians generate opportunity. They generate that opportunity without the support of their government. Sometimes they generate that growth and opportunity despite the actions of their government. That's the problem.

Here in Nova Scotia, every day people ask me - and I hope they ask others a similar question - why are we struggling as a province when we obviously have so much going for us, great universities, great ports, smart people, great natural resources, and on and on? We live in the middle of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the European free trade agreement. We should be trading our stuff with the world and making real money and growing our economy and creating opportunity here, yet we're not. Why is that? Why is it that a province that should be doing so well is struggling? The answer, and I say this with some pain, is bad government.

Governments actually get in the way of creating jobs, get in the way of opportunity, get in the way of a family being able to pay the monthly bills, Mr. Speaker.

When a young couple in Springhill works at Oxford Frozen Foods and drives back and forth every day to do their job, while raising two kids, in crumbling schools, across crumbling roads, only to find they can't have a family doctor when they need one, that their paycheque goes less and less far every year, they may not know why because the tax increases are not done in the open light of day - they wonder, why is this so tough?

They drive by wonderful forestry resources that can be harvested sustainably, they drive by great blueberry fields and wonder, who is helping market these wonderful blueberries, or maple syrup? Mr. Speaker, they see the Cumberland Campus of the Nova Scotia Community College giving people great trade training. They hope that maybe one or two of their kids will go to Dalhousie or Acadia or St. F.X. and get a degree and go and take on the world. They just want what we all want, which is the chance to get ahead but the chance to get ahead gets harder when the government has no plan for growth, and actually gets in the way of creating those opportunities. That is one of the great things that is a problem here today.

Mr. Speaker, even when we look at what's going on in our schools - the government wants to bring in a pre-Primary program that when implemented will cost \$49 million a year. It would be great for us all to get behind it if they were actually tackling the existing problems in our schools at the same time. But the great gaps in our education system are inclusion around extra help for kids who have learning difficulties and need that extra help to participate in class. Those problems go on; those problems continue.

Intaking four-year-olds is not going to help with the greater problems in our P-12 system. I think that Nova Scotia parents deserve to know that whether it is at age four or

age five that their kids are going to get the help they need to get all the way through to Grade 12 and beyond. That would be a great education plan and it would be a great economic growth and opportunities plan. That's not where we're going and that's another example of where the government has ignored the opportunities and focused on the debits and credits of accounting, which is a shame.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words I will move that we adjourn debate for tonight and I look forward to a continuation of this discussion when next we meet. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on Bill No. 39. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that concludes government business for today. We will meet again tomorrow, Wednesday, October 18th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Following the daily routine and Question Period, we will debate Opposition business.

I now turn the House over to the Official Opposition House Leader for tomorrow's agenda.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, after Question Period Opposition debate will be Bill No. 44, the Mental Health Court Expansion Act, and Bill No. 47, the Homes for Special Care Act.

I move that we adjourn until tomorrow, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow, Wednesday, October 18th, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

[The House rose at 6:00 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 368**

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (The Premier)

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

Whereas four years ago, four talented women formed the group Artists With Artitude; and

Whereas with the mission statement OMG! (On a Mission of Giving), Brigit Hawkins, June Wells, Barb Leduc, and Sharon Hutton share a vision for supporting community endeavours and promoting their passion for art; and

Whereas through their popular Dine and Paint series, these artists have raised over \$12,000 in support of Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, the VON, and a school breakfast program;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing and thanking these artists for turning their art into an act from the heart in responding to the needs in their community.

RESOLUTION NO. 369

By: Hon. Leo Glavine (Communities, Culture and Heritage)

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

Whereas every day a family in Nova Scotia experiences the unthinkable pain of losing a child due to miscarriage, stillbirth, or neonatal loss; and

Whereas by increasing public awareness through initiatives such as Walk to Remember ceremonies, those affected by pregnancy and infant loss can better establish circles of support as they grieve; and

Whereas upon receiving the unanimous support of the House, an Act formally declaring the 15th of October as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day in Nova Scotia was passed, thereby establishing a day of remembrance and awareness of pregnancy and infant loss;

Therefore be it resolved that the Province of Nova Scotia recognizes October 15th, Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day, as a day to increase awareness and support families who have lost children through miscarriage, stillbirth, or neonatal loss. I would also like to mention Dana Rennie and commend her for her support of this legislation.

RESOLUTION NO. 370

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Norine VanEe is a long-time resident of the Eastern Shore; and

Whereas Norine has made her career in the area of providing reliable, compassionate, and dedicated personal care services to many Eastern Shore residents; and

Whereas anyone who needs a helping hand should be so lucky as to have a person like Norine to help enable them;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Norine VanEe for her dedication to her clients and community.

RESOLUTION NO. 371

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (The Speaker)

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

Whereas Ann Dube is a long-time resident of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Ann has been a practising personal care assistant for several decades; and

Whereas Ann brings compassion, experience, and dedication to her job every day;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Ann Dube for her years of dedication to enabling her clients.