



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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First Session

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2018

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2018

Sixty-third General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Mr. Chuck Porter, Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, the topic for late debate tonight, at the moment of interruption, as submitted by the honourable member for Cumberland North is:

Therefore be it resolved that Liberal management has caused a crisis in health care and that the government seems determined to deal the same fate to Nova Scotia's education system.

For late debate, at the moment of interruption.

We'll now begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition on behalf of 210 residents of the Basinview school community. The operative clause is:

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the undersigned request the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development build a new elementary school to accommodate the influx of new students in Bedford.”

I have affixed my signature, according to the Rules of the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

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STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 742

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

Whereas Heritage Day provides an opportunity for Nova Scotians to gather, recognize, and celebrate the achievements of those who have made significant contributions to our province and the world abroad; and

Whereas during Heritage Day weekend, I was honoured to deliver remarks about Mona Parsons, a Nova Scotia war hero who lived a life characterized by courageous service and defiance to tyranny; and

Whereas the incredible story of Mona Parsons, our 2018 Heritage Day honouree, has received widespread recognition as a result of Heritage Day events across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly extend their appreciation to Nova Scotians throughout the province for participating in Heritage Day events and for celebrating the spirit of Mona Parsons, a young Nova Scotia woman whose courageous actions made a difference during a dark chapter of history.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 743

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

Whereas February 28, 2018, marks the Pink Shirt Day, a movement started by Nova Scotians David Shepherd and Travis Price after seeing a student being bullied in school; and

Whereas this year the focus is on cyberbullying, and people across Canada and the world unite in celebrating diversity and raising awareness to stop all forms of bullying; and

Whereas it is important to celebrate the differences among us to ensure that every Nova Scotian has the opportunity to fulfill their dreams, to feel comfortable in the community, and be able to show us who they are;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly work together to eradicate cyberbullying and all forms of bullying in Nova Scotia, while promoting acceptance, understanding, and respect for all.

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 African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 744

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

Whereas Bradford J. Barton received the Order of Nova Scotia in 2017, which is the province's highest honour, recognizing individuals for their outstanding contributions, and shines a light on the efforts they have made in their communities; and

Whereas Mr. Barton spent his professional career as a teacher in the education system and has worked throughout his life in the pursuit of positive race relations, cross-cultural understanding, and human rights; and

Whereas Mr. Barton pioneered integration of the Nova Scotia schools, created the foundation for inclusion of African Nova Scotian learners, educators, and curricula, and is an internationally recognized sports official, having given 50 years of service as a coach, referee, and mentor;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Bradford J. Barton on receiving the Order of Nova Scotia and commend him on advocating for youth, creating an environment for all students to succeed, and for being an inspiration in the African Nova Scotian community.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 745

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

Whereas Barbara Hannigan, an operatic soprano and orchestra conductor from Waverley, Nova Scotia, won a Grammy Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal album, entitled *Crazy Girl Crazy*, in 2018; and

Whereas the Grammy Awards are presented by The Recording Academy to recognize achievement in the mainly English-language music industry; and

Whereas Ms. Hannigan has achieved renown in Europe and North America as a singer and advocate of new opera, has been noted for her passionate and physical performances in performance art, has broken boundaries and proven versatility, and is a high-achieving iconoclast in a profession where women orchestra conductors are rare;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in acknowledging Barbara Hannigan on receiving the Grammy Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal album in 2018, a highly prestigious and extraordinary musical achievement that is recognized around the world.

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. 69 - Entitled an Act to Provide Dental Health Care for all Nova Scotian Children. (Mr. Gary Burrill)

Bill No. 70 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 1 of the Acts of 2003. The Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act. (Hon. Labi Kousoulis)

Bill No. 71 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 7 of the Acts of 2011. The Fair Drug Pricing Act. (Ms. Tammy Martin)

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 Preston-Dartmouth.

[1:15 p.m.]

RCL CENTENNIAL BR. 160: POPPY CAMPAIGN - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Centennial Legion Branch 160 Royal Canadian Legion on their very successful Poppy Campaign that raised approximately \$72,000 to support the important work of the Legion.

These funds are used strictly in compliance with the Poppy Manual to support veterans and their families, and seniors in our community, and medical research at the Dartmouth General and Camp Hill Hospitals. The campaign's success depends entirely on a group of tireless volunteers working in conjunction with many community businesses and organizations.

I applaud and congratulate the Centennial Branch 160 for this significant achievement, and for making a positive difference in the lives of veterans, and our communities.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MARTIN, DANIEL: N.S. SPECIAL OLYMPIAN OF THE YR. (2017) - CONGRATS.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Daniel Martin of Pictou, who will be named the 2017 Nova Scotia Special Olympian of the Year.

Daniel first joined Special Olympics and tried the sport of snowshoeing in 2011. Since then, he has taken home medals and had great success at both the national, and world games. Daniel trains four-to-five times a week, and through his hard work and commitment, he has achieved great success. We are all so proud of him and his achievements with Nova Scotia Special Olympics.

I wish him the best of luck in future competitions. I know he will do us tremendously proud, and he is an admirable representative of Pictou West and Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

PETERSON, BETTY: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, on Saturday Canada lost one of its great civic personages and beacons for peace and social justice, with the passing of Betty Peterson in Halifax. Betty was 100 years old.

Betty Peterson's name was synonymous with the struggle for a more just and equitable world. She travelled the country fighting for Indigenous rights, and organizing for peace, particularly through the Voice of Women and the Halifax Society of Friends. Betty was a role model to generations, particularly women, and her 100th birthday party last November in the city was a great music and joy-filled reunion of a legion of Betty's friends and admirers, over a succession of many decades.

In 2015, the Canadian Voice of Women presented Betty Peterson with the Muriel Duckworth Award for Peace Activism. The citation for that award read as follows:

“For many years, you have dedicated tireless hours to many of civil society's peace and social justice communities. As an unstoppable advocate through non-violence trainings, campaigns, workshops, lobbying, especially for disarmament and First Nations peoples' concerns, your leadership speaks of the resourcefulness and strength you have dedicated to positive change.”

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

**SABEAN, EBEN/TUFTS, JOAN:
GOV. GEN. SOVEREIGN'S MEDAL - CONGRATS.**

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, last summer the Governor General of Canada presented three honours to 70 deserving Atlantic Canadians, including the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteer. This medal was presented to the following individuals from the Digby County area:

Eben Sabean has been a leader within our community, commanding volunteer firefighters out in the field and instructing cadets. Through his efforts with cadets, he has guided and helped these young people to become well-rounded citizens.

Joan Tufts has for the last 15 years promoted to facilitate better mental health. She has been both an advocate for people who need help, and worked to reduce stigma associated with mental illness. Ms. Tufts also shared her Acadian culture and heritage through La Guilde Acadienne de Clare.

Congratulations to our two medal recipients and volunteers, two people who work for our community to make it a better place for everyone to live.

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

PINK SHIRT DAY: BULLYING - EFFECT CHANGE

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, five months ago I stood and delivered my maiden speech. In that speech, I shared my own family's struggles with bullying and talked of the terrible impacts that it had on our lives. Today, according to Canadian statistics, one in five children is bullied; that is one in five too many.

Mr. Speaker, today is Pink Shirt Day, a day dedicated to raising awareness of bullying and the preventive measures that people can take to stop it from happening. This day was started because in 2007, two ordinary young Nova Scotians did an extraordinary thing. They saw a fellow student being bullied and they decided to stand up for him. They became heroes. It is my hope that all of us will continue to have conversations about bullying, and do what we can to effect change.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

AFRICAN HISTORY MONTH: WORKING WHILE BLACK GROUP - SALUTE

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, on this last day of African History Month, I want to salute a group that works against racism in Halifax Needham and beyond. Working While Black is a website and working collaboration involving members of the African Nova Scotian community and allies in Solidarity Halifax.

Its website is a good read and sometimes a shocking one. Black residents of Nova Scotia share their stories of confronting systemic racism and discrimination in the workplace. Just one example: a Black defence lawyer who advised his white client to wear a dress shirt was assumed by the Crown attorney to be the defendant, even though he was wearing the three-piece suit and had legal books in front of him.

I read the stories and I am reminded to pause and to check my own implicit bias. Working While Black also provides advice for being a good ally if we witness an incident of racism in our workplaces, but are not the target, we can speak up.

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

SHEET HBR. LIONS CLUB: ANNIV. (70th) - CONGRATS.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Sheet Harbour Lions Club on their 70th Anniversary. They have been flourishing since December 17, 1947, only the fifth club to be chartered in Nova Scotia and sponsored by the Lions

Club of Truro back in the day. They should be applauded for their strong community spirit and hard work.

Throughout the year they volunteer their space for numerous recreation programs, fundraisers, weddings, memorial banquets, and many more community events. They provide catering and transportation using a 15-seat van purchased by them to service their patrons. They also coordinate the Terry Fox Run and Seaside Festival activities. They sponsor bursaries for graduating students, provide monies for those in crisis, and purchase Christmas gifts for families in need.

I commend the Sheet Harbour Lions Club for their volunteerism, leadership, and charitable contributions in our community. They are the very lifeblood that keeps our beloved small communities thriving, and we can all be grateful for their dedication.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MALCOLM, SUSAN: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the Aberdeen Health Foundation will be without their dynamic and cheerful executive director. Susan Malcolm has decided to retire at the end of February 2018. Malcolm transformed the direction of the foundation during the mid-2000s, and her focus was to broaden the organization's scope to have a significant impact on health and well-being.

This major change allowed the foundation to direct dollars to wellness initiatives in the community in addition to hospital needs. Our community is heavily grateful to Susan for her impeccable leadership during a time of transition in the health needs of citizens in Pictou County. Susan was the embodiment of optimism and hard work. Congratulations and have a happy retirement.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

AFRICAN HISTORY MONTH: AFRICAN N.S. MUSIC ASSOC. - RECOGNIZE

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, on this last day of African Heritage Month, I'd like to recognize the work of the African Nova Scotian Music Association and its celebration and promotion of African Nova Scotian musicians and musical heritage. On Saturday night, ANSMA held its 20th Anniversary awards show at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium and it was a great night. Hosted by Cory Bowles and Mike Robinson and featuring performances by the ANSMA Youth Choir, Kwento and Cyndi Cain, the night celebrated emerging artists as well as seasoned professionals who have taken their skills and talents around the world.

The award winners included, but were not limited to, industry pioneers like Dean Jarvis and drummer JoJo Bowden, emerging artists Jody Upshaw, and cousins Amariah Bernard-Washington and Zamani Bernard-Millar, and the Artist of the Year Award went to the amazing Reeny Smith. I ask this House to join me in congratulating all the nominees and award winners on their achievements, and ANSMA for celebrating its 20th year of supporting these incredible artists.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

**AFRICAN HISTORY MONTH:
AFRICAN HERITAGE & DIVERSITY SUNDAY - RECOGNIZE**

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, this month we marked African Heritage Month in communities across Nova Scotia. On February 25th I had the privilege of joining the Redeemed Christian Church of God Restoration Chapel on Herring Cove Road for their African Heritage and Diversity Sunday. This was truly a great example of celebration of diversity, and an opportunity to form new bonds between communities.

The morning included beautiful choir music, prayer and reflections songs, sermons, and spoken word performances. I was delighted to join the celebration and connect with members, some of which had just arrived in Canada five days earlier of the many African Nova Scotian communities that make up Nova Scotia, including many Francophones. It was a unique opportunity to join the congregation in worship, and I was happy to share with them how we worship in my own Maronite Catholic parish.

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

**CAVANAUGH, KIM & COUSINEAU, MEDRIC:
TAX CREDIT - RECOGNIZE**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the PC Party has been honoured to support brave people like Kim Cavanaugh and Medric Cousineau as they've fought for equality. Through their service dogs, they live full, productive lives. Their work helps countless others to access psychiatric service dogs, and in the 2018 federal budget, service dogs are included in the federal disability tax credit.

Today Medric was thrilled by the credit. He recognizes that the fight for the tax credit has been an uphill battle, but one that needed to be fought. It is not often one can say that they changed the country for the better, but Medric knew that equality was worth fighting for.

The Nova Scotia PC Party is honoured to have been able to support them. Medric, Kim, members of the Legion, the credit is all yours.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

AFRICAN HISTORY MONTH: ARCHY BEALS - RECOGNIZE

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the last day of African Heritage Month to recognize Archy Beals, the Halifax Regional School Board African Nova Scotian Representative. It's Archy's job to track things like racist incidents in schools.

I was reminded of the importance of this recently when I was contacted by a distraught Dartmouth parent whose daughter, age nine, is now in her second year of being subjected to racist bullying and epithets by a group of her peers - the same aggressors for two years, with no progress being made.

After contacting every level of government, all available resources, Archy is the only person who has given this mother genuine assistance, both personally in terms of practical advice and systemically in terms of bringing forward these issues at the school board level. The teacher, principal, and guidance counsellor at the school could not help, and Archy could.

Archy has been a tireless advocate for African Nova Scotian learners in Dartmouth. In response to the proposed education changes, he has lamented that African Nova Scotian learners will continue to be lost in a system that has not been and continues not to be friendly to them as a community - a marginalized and disenfranchised and disengaged community. At a recent town hall on education, Archy quoted a proverb: if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go slow, go together.

Like Archy, I still hold out hope that we can go together and that voices like Archy's will not be lost in our school system.

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

**RESOURCE OPPORTUNITIES CENTRE:
VOLUNTEER AWARDS - CONGRATS.**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Resource Opportunities Centre for facilitating an annual volunteer awards event for residents of the Prospect communities. Special recognition goes out to the ROC staff - notably Shirley Jollimore, Amy Hockin, and Jessica Morrissey - who have worked hard to ensure that this event runs smoothly.

Local residents and organizations came together to celebrate 36 amazing volunteers at the 3rd Annual Prospect Communities Volunteer Awards, held on June 10th of last year. These awards are a celebration of the many dedicated volunteers, community groups, and

organizations that passionately give their time and service to important initiatives in the Prospect communities.

I am proud to serve a community that recognizes and places such value on the significant contribution of volunteers in making our communities welcoming and inclusive for all.

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

SCH. COUNSELLORS: IMPACT - ACKNOWLEDGE

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, February 5th to February 9th was Canadian School Counselling Week. This week is a celebration of the positive impact that school counsellors have in supporting students' success within our schools. School counsellors contribute to all aspects of a student's development, whether it be personal, social, academic, or career development.

Although this week has since passed, I thought it important to raise awareness of the invaluable scope of programs and services provided to our students by school counsellors, including the increasingly-needed mental health guidance and assistance.

I would like to take this time to thank our Nova Scotia school counsellors and counsellors elsewhere for their commitment, their dedication, and their support to our students.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

AFRICAN HISTORY MONTH: N.S. MASS CHOIR - CONGRATS.

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, on this, the last day of African Heritage Month, I'd like to take a moment to congratulate the Nova Scotia Mass Choir on two recent events: the first, their 15th annual tribute concert to Martin Luther King, Jr., which took place on January 13th in Halifax, and the second, a series of free concerts held this month in partnership with Halifax public libraries. Both events highlight the singular mission of the choir: to spread a message of racial harmony through their music and composition.

I'd invite the House to join me in recognizing the Nova Scotia Mass Choir on these achievements and in anticipating their 16th annual Martin Luther King Jr. tribute concert in 2019.

[1:30 p.m.]

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

PAUL, CHIEF TERRY: ORDER OF CANADA - CONGRATS.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'm proud to rise today to recognize Chief Terry Paul of Membertou, who, this past November, was a recipient of the Order of Canada.

For over 33 years, Chief Paul has been the leader of Membertou First Nation, winning 16 consecutive elections. He is a champion for First Nation communities not only in Cape Breton but across the country, and has transformed Membertou from a tiny community to an economic force in Cape Breton and beyond.

I stand in my place today and ask all the members of this Assembly to congratulate Chief Paul on his Order of Canada and thank him for his continued leadership across the province, supporting economic development and the rights of our First Nations communities.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**MARTIN, ALLEN
- WESTRAY MINERS MEM. PARK: FUNDRAISING - THANK**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Allen Martin lost a brother in the Westray disaster, and he has watched as the Westray Miners Memorial Park was continually vandalized over the past 25 years.

Precautions over the years to protect the park were not successful and Mr. Martin took the matter into his own hands - he set up a GoFundMe campaign in mid-December to raise funds to build a fence to protect the property. Within five weeks, the goal of \$7,000 was reached.

On behalf of all those who lost loved ones in the disaster and those who have donated money, I want to thank Allen Martin for successfully taking on this mission and seeing it through to completion. Job well done, Allen.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE: RECONCILIATION - DISAPPOINTMENT

MS. LISA ROBERTS: I want to take a minute, which is my privilege as a member of this House, to reflect on my privilege as a white settler on Turtle Island and to

acknowledge the disappointment and real heartbreak of Indigenous people in the wake of recent court decisions.

I am not the most prolific on social media, but I have valued Twitter because at different moments - for example at the height of Idle No More - I began to follow strangers from very different locations and experiences, and I have learned so much from them.

The other night, after the decision in the death of Tina Fontaine, Twitter was like a window into pain. Since then, several regular posters from #NativeTwitter have actually left the platform because they were being targeted in racist attacks.

Reconciliation has to be so much more than words. We are at the very beginning. I am sorry.

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

AUSTIN, MURRAY - FAIRVIEW COMMUN.: CONTRIBUTIONS - THANK

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I would like to recognize Murray Austin, Fairview Legion Branch 142 president. Murray has been an active member of the Fairview Legion for many years and works tirelessly alongside his executive to ensure that the organization is successful in our community. He's currently serving his second term as president of the Legion.

Murray has been a member of the Fairview community for over 20 years now, after moving here from Ontario to join the Navy. He served during the Gulf War on the HMCS *Athabaskan*. After retiring, he began his work with Metro Transit.

I ask the members of this House of Assembly to join me in thanking Murray Austin for not only his contributions to the community of Fairview, but for all that he has done for our country.

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

SACKVILLE SNOW DAYS: ORGANIZERS - CONGRATS.

MR. BRAD JOHNS: I rise today to congratulate the organization of Sackville Snow Days on another successful event.

Sackville Snow Days is an annual winter festival that runs during the February long weekend. The Sackville Business Association and countless community groups, organizations, businesses, and volunteers come together to create a fun-filled winter weekend.

Residents can start their day with a delicious hot pancake breakfast and enjoy everything from a giant kerplunk game to the old-fashioned sledding party, bringing back the days of old, of Sackville's winter carnival.

I want to assure all members of this Legislature that this shows that the community spirit is still alive and well in the community of Sackville.

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

**MRS. ROBINSON'S CHILDREN'S CENTRE TOO: CHRISTMAS SPIRIT -
THANK**

MR. BILL HORNE: I rise today and I would like to thank all the children and their families at Mrs. Robinson's Children's Centre Too in Fall River for collecting toys and various items for pre-teens for Christmas.

Three years ago, the children's centre looked for a charity for workers and their children to support. Fortunately, they found a residential home for pre-teens in Halifax, and each year they have collected toys and other items to donate. If children are asked, they would tell you many reasons why it's important to help others, such as, if nobody gave anything it would make them be sad, and they wouldn't have any presents for Christmas.

It is heartwarming to see the Christmas spirit being fostered for these young children.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

SEAMAN, DR. JIM: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a man from my riding who has cared for the sick and ailing constituents of Kings North for 44 years. Dr. Jim Seaman of Kentville has retired from his practice just three weeks ago, at age 73. Dr. Seaman was born on May 17, 1944, graduated from Dalhousie Medical School in 1971, and practised medicine for 44 years in the Town of Kentville. At the time of his retirement, he had pared down his patients to just over 1,800, yet he is still the official doctor for Evergreen nursing home.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to help me congratulate Dr. Seaman and wish him a happy and long-lived retirement.

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

**CRUICKSHANK, MORGAN/HENDERSON, RACHAEL:
JAZZ RECORDING OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.**

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Morgan Cruickshank, a guitarist from East Chester, who, with his vocal partner Rachael Henderson, recently won the trophy for Jazz Recording of the Year during Nova Scotia Music Week. The trophy, in the form of a blue glass vase, was represented for their extended play record, Blind.

Nova Scotia Music Week, an annual festival and conference, offers musicians information about new opportunities to expand their knowledge of the music industry. Morgan and Rachael have formed a group named The Blue Lane, which has made 34 appearances in less than a year, including an outdoor concert in Chester last summer. Just weeks ago they were the opening act at the Carleton Hotel's recently renovated bar and restaurant, and they anticipate doing a Canadian tour and European tour shortly.

Mr. Speaker, I invite the members of this House to congratulate Morgan and Rachael on their recent award from Nova Scotia Music Week, and to wish the band well in their future endeavours.

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

**MACDONALD, ROBERT: RICHMOND EDUC. CTR./ACADEMY -
GRATITUDE**

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Robert MacDonald, a teacher at Richmond Education Centre/Academy in Louisdale.

Mr. MacDonald spends countless hours as a hockey coach for the Richmond Hurricanes and is also a softball coach for the school. Mr. MacDonald gives freely of his time for all these sports that enhance the school experience for the students.

Mr. Speaker, parents, students, and fans see Mr. MacDonald on the bench and in the classroom. I am certain they appreciate his commitment to students both during and after school hours. He's known for spending his free time helping students, and gives up his lunch breaks to make phone calls of concern to parents.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. MacDonald deserves our recognition for his contribution inside the classroom, as well as his contribution which goes above and beyond the parameters of his job to ensure that our students feel special, cared for, and motivated to succeed.

I would like to send my gratitude to teachers like Mr. Robert MacDonald, a dedicated Nova Scotia teacher who deserves our utmost praise.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

WINTER OLYMPICS (2018): CDN. ATHLETES - CONGRATS.

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, February 25, 2018, saw the Olympic flame extinguished in Pyeongchang, South Korea, marking the end of the 2018 Winter Olympics. The Games were a huge success and Canada had their best showing ever, bringing home 29 medals. The Canadian Women's Hockey Team faced the United States in the gold medal game and unfortunately came up short in a shootout.

Nova Scotia had many reasons to cheer on the hockey team, as two of the players hailed from Nova Scotia - Jillian Saulnier is from Halifax and Blayre Turnbull is from Stellarton. Also, Spryfield was well represented, as the Assistant Coach Troy Ryan is a native Spryfielder. Congratulations, Troy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating all the Canadian athletes who represented our country so well at the Winter Olympics. It takes a huge amount of hard work and dedication to become an Olympian and all Canadians should be proud of their accomplishments.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

WARNER, KERRY: COMMUNITY SPIRIT - COMMEND

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Ms. Kerry Warner. Kerry is a young woman who saw a problem in our community and she took action. She has collected almost 3,500 signatures on a petition to push for repair of the Rainbow Bridge in Nappan.

It's so encouraging to see members of the community involved in their community, and that they take pride in their homes and want to see their community flourish. Hundreds of people every day are negatively impacted by the closing of this bridge.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all MLAs to join me in commending Ms. Kerry Warner's community spirit, and urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to repair the Rainbow Bridge.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

SCHOOL HEALTHY EATING PROG. - FUNDING INCREASE

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to talk about the School Healthy Eating Program. The School Healthy Eating Program is meant to provide the children of Nova Scotia with healthy, nutritious breakfasts at their schools.

Last year, the School Healthy Eating Program provided more than five million breakfasts to children across the province. Recently, our government more than doubled the funding to this very important program. The total funding for the program is \$1.975 million.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to ensuring that all Nova Scotian children get the best possible start to their school day. This funding increase means that every student in public schools across the province will be able to get a nutritious breakfast every day.

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

**MACEACHERN, MARY PAULA:
CANADA'S OUTSTANDING PRINCIPALS - CONGRATS.**

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize and honour Principal Mary Paula MacEachern of South Woodside Elementary School. Paula is one of only two Nova Scotia principals to be recognized by the Learning Partnership as one of Canada's Outstanding Principals. This program highlights the importance of leadership in the public education system.

The Learning Partnership is a national charity dedicated to enhancing publicly-funded education to prepare our students in Canada for a globally-connected world by building partnerships between government, education, and business. Only 40 Canadian Outstanding Principals were invited to attend the annual Canada's Outstanding Principals gala in Toronto. She will receive five days of executive leadership training through the Rotman School of Management, and we are so excited to have her bring this knowledge back to our constituency.

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

**VERITAS CATHOLIC BOOKS & GIFTS:
ROCKINGHAM OPENING - WELCOME**

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the work of a little book and gift store that has quickly become a staple in my riding. Although Veritas Catholic Books and Gifts has been open in various locations across HRM for over 20 years, it opened in Rockingham Plaza this past April.

Veritas is a unique store because it is a non-profit, volunteer-run organization. Its central aim is to cultivate good reading and to help all people of the community come to a better understanding of their lives, their purpose, and their faith.

If you stop by the new location, you will be greeted by Brother Grant McLean or one of the 20 volunteers who are ready and willing to help you find the perfect book or gift.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome Veritas to Clayton Park West, and I wish them great success with their new location. It is a wonderful addition to our community.

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

STEWART, DR. RONALD: HEALTH CARE CONTRIBUTIONS - RECOGNIZE

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to recognize Dr. Ronald Stewart, a former member and Minister of Health in this Legislature, for his tremendous contributions to the health and well-being of his fellow Nova Scotians.

One of his many accomplishments was the training of paramedics in both Canada and the United States. Because of his guidance, Nova Scotia now has professional, dedicated paramedic and ambulatory care for residents. With awards and acknowledgements too numerous to mention, Dr. Stewart recently pledged \$1.3 million to the Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation to establish the Ronald Stewart Symposium in Emergency Medical Services Research and provide seed funding for a Chair in Emergency Medical Services Research.

I ask all members of this Legislature to join me in recognizing Dr. Ron Stewart and thanking him for his many contributions to the betterment of the health and lives of Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**KLEIN, CASSIDY:
CDN. JR. WEIGHTLIFTING CHAMPIONSHIPS - CONGRATS.**

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize the impressive performance by 19-year-old Coldbrook athlete Cassidy Klein at the recent Canadian Junior Weightlifting Championships in Halifax. Cassidy responded exceptionally well to the pressures of competing on the national stage, and earned the bronze medal in the 75-kilogram category, with a combined total of 142 kilograms in two events. This fantastic result required a tremendous amount of hard work, dedication, and natural talent. The sky is the limit for this talented young weightlifter.

I invite all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Cassidy Klein on her remarkable showing at the Canadian Championships and wishing her well and continued success in the sport of weightlifting.

[1:45 p.m.]

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

LUCY THE LOBSTER: GROUNDHOG DAY - RECOGNIZE

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, on February 2nd, Lucy the Lobster made her first debut on Nova Scotia's South Shore and the Lobster Capital of Canada. Lucy made the Groundhog Day prediction at 8:00 a.m. on the Cape Island Causeway. She didn't come voluntarily, but she got to the top of her predicting perch on top of a lobster trap with just a little coaxing, and it seems a lobster is just as good as a groundhog since Lucy's prediction matched that of Shubenacadie Sam predicting that Spring is just around the corner.

The event is a kickoff for the South Shore Lobster Crawl, a three-week winter festival that celebrates everything lobster and, in case you're worried, Lucy will be spared from the pot for now. She'll be accepting visitors and can be seen at Capt. Kat's Lobster Shack in Barrington Passage.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

IMO FOODS LTD.: AWARD OF EXCELLENCE - CONGRATS.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the 20th Annual Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture Fisheries Ministers' Conference took place in Halifax on February 22nd and February 23rd. One of the recipients of the Minister's Award of Excellence was Yarmouth's IMO Foods Ltd., a company that has been packing local fish for more than 40 years, producing canned herring, sardines, and mackerel, using freshly caught fish from the Bay of Fundy.

IMO's Award of Excellence stated that the company was being honoured for their ongoing commitment to producing high-value, superior-quality, value-added products. IMO Foods Ltd.'s focus is on strategic partnerships, product innovations, and process efficiencies which has positioned it to thrive in its unique position as Canada's last independently-owned fish cannery competing against large multinational brands, and the award further stated that active participation in trade shows has enabled IMO Foods to better understand the needs of their customers and has positioned them to expand their production line in their international market.

I ask this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating IMO Foods Ltd. on this prestigious honour, and thank them for their dedication to their community and wish them much continued economic success.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

PINK SHIRT DAY: VICTIMS OF BULLYING - SUPPORT

MR. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, on the 10th year of Pink Shirt Day in recognition of anti bullying, I want to acknowledge those who are experiencing bullying. I want them to know that they are not alone; I want them to know they are supported. I want those who are experiencing bullying to know that they are cared about. I want them to know that there are supports to assist. I encourage you to go and speak or guardian, your coach, your teacher, guidance counsellor, school health nurse, or vice-principal or principal. Bullying is unacceptable. It takes a collective effort to stand up to bullying, along with individual initiative to stand up against injustice and inappropriate behaviour.

I ask all members of this Assembly to remember those who often suffer in silence and remind them that there are supports available and they are not alone.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

LUNENBURG CO.: FIRST RESPONDERS - RECOGNIZE

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize and thank the first responders who responded to a major fire on King Street in Bridgewater on October 22nd that destroyed several businesses and left several homeless. A dozen fire departments from across Lunenburg County responded to the call that thankfully did not result in any injuries or loss of life. The crews worked throughout the night and into the morning to save adjacent buildings of our Main Street.

Without the efforts of these volunteers, the outcome would have been so much different. As the affected businesses continue to pick up the pieces and relocate to other spaces in town, I'd like to thank all of our volunteer firefighters and other first responders who battled one of the most significant fires our town has seen in many years.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

COTTON, AMY: N.S. HALL OF FAME INDUCT. - RECOGNIZE

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, let us recognize Amy Cotton of Judique on her induction to the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame. Amy is a two-time Olympian and was a member of Canada's national judo team for 18 years.

There is a famous saying: "Judique on the floor! Who'll put her off?" It comes from days gone by when Judiquers would take to the dance floor and challenge anyone tough enough to remove them.

Amy Cotton took that approach to the world of judo competitions and few could put her off that floor. She was a world cup medallist 13 times; a Pan American medallist

eight times; placed seventh at the world championships in 2005 and 2009; and represented Canada at the 2004 Athens Olympics and the 2012 Olympics in London.

Nova Scotia is proud of Amy Cotton and we know her parents Danny and the late Debbie Cotton are too. May we in this Legislature extend our applause for her accomplishments. (Applause)

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

AFRICAN HERITAGE MONTH: BLACK CINEMA - RECOGNIZE

MS. LENORE ZANN: On this last day of African Heritage Month, I would like to congratulate Truro's own Cory Bowles, whose film *Black Cop* will be screening on Sunday, March 4th, at 7:00 p.m. as part of this year's Halifax Black Film Festival. Other films featured at the festival include *Black Lives Matter*, *The Rape of Recy Taylor*, *Mariannes Noires*, and *Tell Them We Are Rising: The Story of Historically Black Colleges & Universities*.

Meanwhile, last Thursday, more than 400 youth packed Dartmouth theatres for a private showing of Marvel's first superhero flick to feature a predominantly black cast, *Black Panther*. Many thanks to the fundraising campaign that raised thousands of dollars within days by Quentrel Provo and his organization, Stop the Violence. As he said, it's more than just a movie.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

NICKERSON, KENT: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. KELLY REGAN: I wish to note today the passing of a long-time Bedford resident and volunteer. Kent Nickerson lived his whole life in Bedford, and he served our community so well.

He was a 30-year Department of National Defence plumber and steamfitter, but it was as a volunteer that so many Bedford residents remember him. He worked for a new cenotaph, and that process is now underway. He volunteered at All Saints Anglican Church, the JCs, the Bedford Legion, and the Bedford Lions. He was a fixture at events for the latter.

I don't think I ever went to an event with the Lions that he didn't attend until New Year's Day this year. When he wasn't at their New Year's Day levee, I worried his health had taken a turn for the worse. He died on January 6th.

Kent and his wife Diane were married for 45 years, and he was very proud of his children and grandchildren. My condolences go out to them and to his many friends. There is no doubt that Kent Nickerson will be missed.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

WATERS, JANICE: VOLUNTEERISM - RECOGNIZE

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: I stand today to recognize Janice Waters for her dedication and tireless volunteerism as the president of the Pictou Legion Branch 16 and to congratulate her as she begins her third term in that role. For a decade, through her membership with the Legion, Janice has touched many lives in our community.

She serves an incredibly important role in remembering the sacrifices our veterans made in the past as well as being an advocate for them in the present. Under her presidential leadership, membership has stabilized, and there are more younger members joining daily.

Janice is a prime example of the volunteering spirit which plays such an important role in Nova Scotia and Pictou West.

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

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, may I offer an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. BURRILL: I would like to direct the attention of the members to the west gallery, where we have just been joined, on his first day on the job, by the Nova Scotia New Democratic Party's new provincial secretary, Jamie Moss.

I would like to introduce the House to Jamie. Jamie has come from the Ottawa Party to work with our Party and has just arrived to take up his position today. We want to welcome him to Nova Scotia and to Halifax. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

BONNYMAN, SARA: VOLUNTEERISM - RECOGNIZE

HON. KAREN CASEY: Sara Bonnyman from Tatamagouche, famous for her pottery, is and has been a strong supporter of the William Frasier Hospital Auxiliary. She has been supporting the auxiliary with her open house and has recently been working on a healing garden for patients and their families and friends.

In October, Sara held an open house to help support the project. Once again, Scotiabank agreed to match the funds, and over \$4,000 was raised in total. Bonnyman hand-made lumberjack mugs that came with hot soup and sold for \$20, and the auxiliary made homemade pies for the sale. Bonnyman also did hands-on demonstrations throughout the day, and had clay available for the children who attended.

Sara still remembers and still has the first bowl she made at the age of 14. She now delivers pieces of her work all across the world, something she never dreamed of.

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

SHELBURNE CO.: AFRICAN HERITAGE MONTH LAUNCH - CONGRATS.

MS. KIM MASLAND: On February 2nd, I was honoured to deliver the closing remarks at the municipal proclamation launch for African Heritage Month 2018. This wonderful event was held at the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre in Birchtown. Through words, music, and theatre, the theme of Educate, Unite, and Celebrate Community rang loudly and clearly.

I applaud the towns and municipalities of Shelburne County for hosting this event and for working to ensure that people do not forget to celebrate the achievements of past and present African Canadians and Nova Scotians.

I would like to congratulate the organizers of this event and thank them for their ongoing efforts in reminding us to embrace all people and celebrate diversity.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

WESTERN VALLEY SPARTANS: ICE TIME DONATION - THANK

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the Western Valley Spartans Atom B hockey team, who donated ice time at the Credit Union Centre in Kingston to host a Skating with Santa community event on December 9th. Families and friends in attendance were thrilled to share the ice with Santa. Some children made their first steps onto the ice under the watchful eye of their parents and Mr. Claus himself. In addition to these holiday memories, a pizza party was also donated, and items were collected for the local food bank. The Village of Kingston also partnered in this event.

On behalf of the province, I'd like to thank the Western Valley Spartans Atom A hockey team for their generosity, support, and good citizenship, which culminated in the debut of a wonderful community event. I look forward to watching the event grow in the years ahead.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

AFRICAN CANADIANS: MILITARY SERVICE - APPRECIATION

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, African Canadians have a long and proud history of service in uniform. From the period before Canada was a country to our present day, African Canadians have sacrificed and contributed to military life while serving with military forces - Army, air, and sea.

William Neilson Hall, a Black seaman from Horton Bluff, Nova Scotia, was one of the first Canadians to be awarded the British Empire's highest award for bravery, the Victoria Cross. The No. 2 Construction Battalion, a group of Black men, became the unit of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in July 1916. A big thanks to our Black Canadian veterans and families for your past and ongoing service for our country of Canada.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

SAINT ANDREW JR. SCHOOL: LEADERSHIP TEAM - CONGRATS.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, on February 14, 2018 - yes, that would be Valentine's Day - there was an intense battle at the Antigonish Arena. It was the 4th Annual Pink in the Rink hockey fundraiser, organized by the student leadership team at Saint Andrew Junior School. In pink was the student team, made up by student members of the Saint Andrew Junior School leadership group and the other Grade 7 and 8 students. They took on a team of red, made up of teachers and local celebrities, like the head coach of the St. F.X. women's hockey team. In the stands were students, parents, and friends.

The Saint Andrew Junior School student leadership team had committed to supporting two projects this year, one local and one global. Funds raised were donated to Cathy's Place, the cancer resource room at St. Martha's Regional Hospital, and the Free the Children organization's Education Pillar Initiative. The students, as I mentioned, are decked out in pink jerseys. On these jerseys are black arm patches with the name of someone being honoured.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Saint Andrew's Junior student leadership team on another successful Pink in the Rink. They're an amazing group of students making a real positive impact.

I should note that this year, after falling behind early in the game, the teachers' celebrity team got the win - 9 to 7 was the final score - but hopefully the student team can get their W next year. Thank you.

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

MACDONALD, AUDREY: ARTWORK - CONGRATS.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Audrey MacDonald from Marion Bridge. Audrey is 97 years old and rediscovered her lost love of art a few years ago when someone gave her a new set of paints as a gift.

Audrey keeps some of her work for herself, but she gives most away to family and friends. The family and friends say the real gift is how the hobby keeps her busy doing something she is passionate about. She will have one of her works on display at the Proletariat art exhibit at Cape Breton University.

I stand here today to congratulate Audrey MacDonald and hope she is inspiring other seniors to continue to follow their dreams, whatever they may be. Thank you.

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

CLAYTON, CUSTIO: BOXING SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Custio Clayton of North Preston, a 2012 Olympian boxer who in December 2017 won the World Boxing Organization International welterweight title. He also claimed the WBC Continental Americas welterweight and the IBF International welterweight titles in 2017.

His victory in claiming the World Boxing Organization International title moved him from a 15th place ranking to the top 10. I applaud and congratulate Custio Clayton for his tremendous success and determination to excel in boxing at the international level.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Statements by Members has expired.

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY**ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition. (Applause)

H&W: FAMILY DOCTOR LOSS - NUMBER

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: That's going to get really mouldy guys. Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier.

I know we're all happy to be back in the House here, doing the important work that we have to do. Unfortunately, it seems that we return and nothing has really changed. We all know there's 100,000 Nova Scotians right now that continue to find themselves without a family doctor. The list continues to grow, while hope shrinks.

A CBC report indicates that Nova Scotia has seen a net loss of 114 doctors since 2011. Meanwhile, the voices get louder and louder, as health care professionals refuse to accept a system that is in crisis. Can the Premier tell Nova Scotians how many family doctors Nova Scotia has lost since the last time this Legislature met?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, we've recruited roughly 100 since April.

MS. MACFARLANE: I appreciate the answer, that sounds really good, I hope the Premier will table - I like that, maybe we can have that tabled. The Department of Health and Wellness budget however, is over \$4 billion, the budget for doctor recruitment is \$2.4 million. The province has five people working to bring in new family doctors. Five, everyone, five.

We learned the other day that Vancouver Island, which has a population of 100,000 people less than Nova Scotia, has 11 recruiters, tasked with the same job. I'm sure the Premier will tell us that Nova Scotia is doing the same job, but just for less. I'd like to know, will the Premier pledge that his budget will at least match the effort of Vancouver Island to bring new doctors to Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question, and I want to assure her we're working with Doctors Nova Scotia and health care providers across the province. I want to thank those recruiters who are out there working on behalf of Nova Scotians, and I hope the honourable member, when she stands up the next time, will acknowledge the great work they've been doing.

MS. MACFARLANE: I will acknowledge the great work that the five are doing, but maybe we need five more.

Let's face it, as if the lack of recruitment funding isn't bad enough, it's more galling to know that Nova Scotia won't even offer a competitive salary to the doctors it is trying to recruit. Nova Scotia offers the lowest doctors' salaries in our country; the lowest in our country. Overworked, underpaid - doesn't make much for a recruitment pitch. There's no incentive, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier commit that his new budget will finally pay doctors a competitive salary?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, some things never change. The Tories are always pessimistic about the future of this province. Quite frankly, people want to live in this province, they want to continue to work. We've recognized there have been some

challenges, the fact of the matter is they would continue to have us spend more money on administration instead of front-line health care workers. We're going to continue to work with our partners to make sure that Nova Scotians get the health care in the communities where, and when they need it.

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

H&W: EMERGENCY ROOM CLOSURES - INCREASE

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, since this government took office, emergency room closures have jumped so astronomically that today they're the worst they've been at any point since Dr. John Ross' 2010 report.

In 2012, emergency rooms were closed for a total of 15,083 hours, but in 2016, that number had jumped to over 25,000. I would like to ask the Premier, can he blame the people of Nova Scotia for losing confidence in his government's leadership on health care, when the epidemic of emergency room closures across the province continues in this dramatic downward spiral?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it must be contagious on that side of the House. The fact of the matter is we're continuing to work with optimistic Nova Scotians to continue to ensure that not only do they have the proper health care in the communities they deserve, but that the economic future of this province is on solid footing.

Young people see a future for themselves. People feel that they can retire in an affordable way in this province. The education system is being righted. So, the fact that young people see a future for themselves - and we're going to continue to work with those optimistic Nova Scotians, to move this province forward.

MR. BURRILL: The government's ongoing failures in health care led last month, Dr. Robert MacNeill, Professor of Anesthesiology at Dalhousie, to write about what he called the, I quote: "continuous, relentless, and intentional disassembly of our health-care system" under the influence of what he called a parade and charade of incompetence.

I'd like to ask the Premier how he responds to his government being so scathingly condemned from such a respected quarter.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't agree with his opinion.

MR. BURRILL: There is often the comment made, that there is a comprehensive lack of respect towards health care providers and their analyses by the present government. The Premier's response is an illustration of it, a further illustration . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind the honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party that I am going to categorize that newspaper as a prop. If you have a copy of something out of it, I'd be glad to accept that. Please go on.

MR. BURRILL: Speaking of the subject of disrespect for health care providers, Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to make reference to today's *Chronicle Herald*, Dr. Richard Gibson from the Nova Scotia Health Authority, refers to fee-for-service doctors as dinosaurs, as laggards. He compares them to those who refuse to carry, in the present age, a cellphone.

I want to ask the Premier, is this the kind of respect that, in his judgment, is going to improve the relationship we have with the health care providers in Nova Scotia, and help us to draw the doctors that we need?

THE PREMIER: I want to tell the honourable member we have been working with Doctors Nova Scotia to continue to move forward, address some of the challenges that they feel are in the system. I'm looking forward to continuing to do that.

To specifically address the issue around whether it's fee-for-service or salary doctors, it's our belief that there is room for both in this system. We're going to continue to make sure that however the physician wants to practise in this province, there is room for them in Nova Scotia.

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

PREM. - TRAVEL: TRADE TALKS - RESULTS

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Global News reported that the Premier spent more time travelling than any other Premier in Canada. It would be great news if he was travelling to recruit doctors. He spent a total of 43 days, travelling to Washington, D.C., England, Scotland, Wales, China, and the list goes on and on.

Expense claims for the Premier suggest his trips were for trade and investment. It wasn't to recruit doctors.

The Minister of Trade made three trips last year. Two were to Washington, D.C., for softwood lumber and trade stakeholder meetings. The Premier's mandate letter to the Minister of Trade specifies that part of the minister's role is to promote Nova Scotia's trade interests, cultivate existing trade ties.

Given that the Premier has taken four times . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Does the member have a question?

MS. MACFARLANE : . . . more trade trips than his Trade Minister, should Nova Scotians see this as a lack of confidence in his own Trade Minister?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I couldn't have more confidence in the member for Glace Bay not only as the Trade Minister but with a broader vision for this province. Under his leadership, we have continued to see our exports grow. The great work by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture and the Immigration Minister - but let me be clear about something, the Office of the Premier matters in every Canadian province. What other Premiers do is up to them, but this Premier is going to continue to make sure that I promote this province in every market that's important to us, so we can continue to build on the dismal performance of the former government and the leadership of the Tory Party when they were in power - the highest records in population, youth unemployment staying here, highest trade. We're going to continue to lead this country.

MS. MACFARLANE : I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, but that totally sounds a little out of touch with the reality of Nova Scotians. It is estimated that the Prime Minister of Canada travelled approximately 50 days outside the country on government business. Premier Brad Wall, the Premier of Saskatchewan, travelled 14 days. The Premiers of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island nine and 11 days respectively. (Interruptions) Can I keep going?

Meanwhile, the Nova Scotia Premier travelled 43 days and claims he can justify this. Well, will the Premier table, before the House closes today, the number of deals he has helped Nova Scotia companies achieve by his travels in 2017?

THE PREMIER: I appreciate the opportunity to remind the honourable member this is the third consecutive budget that will be tabled, next week, by this government.

She talked about Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, they continue to have a declining economy. We will continue to make (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The honourable Premier has the floor.

THE PREMIER: We'll continue to make sure this province is represented in our markets that matter to this province, to continue to grow economic opportunity. The trade improvements that we've made - I want to congratulate every Cabinet Minister who has gone out and defended the interest of business and communities across this province, and regardless of the pessimism coming from the Opposition we will continue to do what Nova Scotians re-elected us to do - build on the great record we started in here in term one.

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

EECD: SCHOOL BDS. - WOMEN REPS.

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Premier if he's really determined to be the man who ends the one level of democracy we have in our province where women are proportionately represented, our local school boards.

The Premier spoke about his opinions, he spoke about his record, he spoke about his commitments - he spoke about everything except his answer to this question. There are 57 women in Nova Scotia who have stepped forward as leaders in their communities and are doing important work in their school boards - they deserve an answer to this question.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier, is the Premier really so committed to ramming through these Glaze report recommendations that he's willing to undermine so much of the important work in gender equality of recent years by telling these 57 women their voices are no longer needed?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank not only those 57 women, but all school board members across the province who continue to work on behalf of their communities in the system, Mr. Speaker, that hasn't worked for students. What we're saying very much, the administrative structure has to change, but I want to reassure those women and their daughters that this government takes gender equity and equality seriously. It's why we ignored the dismal performance of the NDP when they were in power when it came to the judiciary. We have gender equality today on the Provincial Court Family Bench, Mr. Speaker.

I want to tell those women and their daughters in this province, Mr. Speaker, we need more of their voices in this Chamber. I want another Premier in the future to be able to appoint more women to the Executive Council, but I want to remind the honourable member this Premier has appointed more women to the Executive Council than any other Premier in the history of our province - and I've had more women elected under my leadership than any other Premier in this province. And we will continue to promote women not only in our Party, but in a provincial bureaucracy, and in every corner that is under our control.

MR. BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I have not asked about the Premier's record, or his commitments, or his opinion. I have asked about his actions on these 57 women.

I want to also refer to the fact that the Nova Scotia School Boards Association calls this government's elimination of elected African Nova Scotian school board members an "outrage." Now, yesterday I asked about this outrage with the Premier and he answered again about a range of his opinions, a range of the things that he's proud of, the range of things that he wishes to communicate to various mothers, sisters, and daughters. But I'm not asking about what he wishes to say to mothers, sisters, and daughters, and his

commitments, and his records of all these matters, I'm asking simply about the seven African Nova Scotians he is about to disenfranchise.

Here's the question, what does the Premier say to those who are outraged that he's telling Joanne Reddick, Glenda Talbot-Richards, Lorne Green, Vernon Simms, Peter Cromwell, Archy Beals, and Reverend Michael Alden Fells that their work as elected decision makers is no longer needed by the Government of Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank all of them for their tremendous work. I know Peter Cromwell very well as a personal friend. His mother, Edith, was a tremendous icon in our province, one of the first Order of Nova Scotia recipients, Mr. Speaker. They understand quite frankly, the issues in this province around systemic racism and the challenges in the education system, and I thank them tremendously for the work that they have done on behalf of all Nova Scotians, not just the African Nova Scotians, but . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The honourable Premier has the floor.

[2:15 p.m.]

THE PREMIER: Let me reassure that member, and those seven members, that their voice will be represented not only at the Provincial Advisory Council, but they'll be represented in school communities . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The honourable Premier has the floor.

THE PREMIER: I don't know, should I start over again, Mr. Speaker?

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, I know some of those people. They're family friends of mine. I know his mother, she was a tremendous icon in this province. She was one of the first Order of Nova Scotia recipients. They've done tremendous work when it comes to ensuring that African Nova Scotian voices are heard in the education system, and I want to tell you their voices will continue to be heard. Instead of being the rhetoric from the sidelines, we're in the arena making a difference on behalf of all Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

H&W - QEII CENTRE: REDEVELOPMENT - CONCERNS

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I've been at Public Accounts Committee when there was one witness. Deputy Darrow came one time by himself and I've been there sometimes when there are three or four witnesses. This morning, we had two rows of witnesses. Two full rows of bureaucrats appeared here at Public Accounts Committee this morning to talk about the redevelopment of the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre

complex. Looking across at probably \$2 million in salary, I asked one simple question to start the session. I said, "Who is in charge?"

After a little navel-gazing and back and forth, it was said that one department is in charge of one part, and another department is in charge of another. Suffice it to say that I still don't know who is in charge so I don't really know who to address the question to, but I'll try with the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Maybe the Minister of Health and Wellness can tell this House who is in charge of the QEII redevelopment project - is it your department? If not, tell me what minister it is.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for the question. The work that is ongoing really is an initiative to renew critical infrastructure in our health care system that serves all Nova Scotians across this province. It's renewing infrastructure that has provided good health care services and access to health care for the past 50 years. This exercise that is ongoing is to renew this infrastructure to provide health care services for the next 50 years.

We hear often about the silos within government. This is a team effort, Mr. Speaker. We work with our partners at the Nova Scotia Health Authority to identify the clinical services that are needed; we work with Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to do the work and the planning on the actual building of the infrastructure; and of course, as the Department of Health and Wellness, we work to advocate to ensure we have the appropriate funding to do so.

MR. HOUSTON: Clearly, Mr. Speaker, somebody is charge - maybe we just don't know who it is. This is a project that has been talked about for seven years in this province, and seven years later, I asked this morning, how much will it cost? The only commitment that was made at the end by one of the three deputies - I think it actually might have actually been the CEO of the Health Authority who made the commitment - is that this project will be on time and on budget. But we don't know what the budget is, and we don't know what the timeline is. It's pretty easy to meet that goal line, and that's what they're talking about.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness, how much will it cost and when will it be open?

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, when my colleague, the current Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, introduced the QEII redevelopment project, we were very clear that this was a project that has a scope and a complexity that really is not seen on a regular basis in the Province of Nova Scotia.

We identified that this was going to require a lot of different projects that contribute to the overall redevelopment. We're seeing this work, and projects that are taking place,

including work at the Dartmouth General. Last week we opened the operating room at Hants Community Hospital. We continue to do work.

These projects are each budgeted and announced as they go forward. They've all been done. The investments have been made and they have been coming in on time and on budget, at each phase of this project.

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

PREM. - VETERANS WALK-IN CLINIC: FED. FUNDS - CONVINC

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Premier. Veterans in Nova Scotia have worked hard and put forward a convincing argument: they say there is a need for a walk-in clinic for veterans in our province. After sacrificing and serving our country, our veterans deserve health care that meets their needs once they have retired.

During the election campaign, the Premier said he admired the idea, but he thought the federal government should pay for it. Yesterday we heard no mention of funding for this worthy project in the federal budget.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is, has the Premier been successful in convincing the federal government to fund a project for our veterans that all Parties in Nova Scotia support?

THE PREMIER: The honourable member is right. I did say during the election campaign that I thought this was a great project. It was brought forward by the former Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia.

I did say that I believed it was the federal government's responsibility to pay for that. We have continued to work with the federal government to look at whether or not we can do something in collaboration around Camp Hill, and we will continue to work with them.

I want to remind the honourable member and all members of this House of the investments we're going to make next week and have made in mental health services, for all Nova Scotians. We're going to continue to make sure that we continue to invest in health care for all Nova Scotians.

MR. MACLEOD: Our veterans never hesitated to stand up for us. It is so disappointing that so few of the people in this House are willing to stand up for them. The health of our veterans should not be a political football.

Sometimes, and this is one of them, we need to put aside our political differences and do the right thing. My question to the Premier is, Mr. Premier, will you commit today to making a pitch to your federal counterparts in government to secure funding for a walk-in clinic for the veterans of the Province of Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: I want to tell the honourable member that our government has been in contact with the national government, working with that minister.

I do think, Mr. Speaker, that there are many more times when we need to set aside our political differences. It's never wrong to do the right thing. That will continue to be the guiding principle as our government moves forward, no matter what the issue is in this province. We will make sure we continue to carry that principle when it comes to the very issue that the honourable member has just raised.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

H&W - IWK BOARD: VACANCIES - STATUS

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: The province has two seats on the IWK board, and they have been vacant for nearly three years. Unfortunately, this lack of representation was brought into sharp focus last year, when the board of directors did not follow proper protocols when vetting staff expense claims.

Yesterday at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, the government had yet another chance to fill these vacancies but again failed to act.

Nova Scotians and Atlantic Canadians demand proper board governance from these important regional institutions. That is made more difficult when the appointments fall short of the requirements.

Mr. Speaker, my question is, what is keeping our Minister of Health and Wellness from doing the right thing and filling these vacancies?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for the question. I guess the first thing is, I think there's a portion of that statement, if we go back, that made reference to not fulfilling the mandate. I believe that was the language used. I assure the member opposite that the mandate, the requirements, for the board has been met. The public positions were not mandatory positions for the board. They were optional positions to be appointed.

Mr. Speaker, as I have previously stated publicly, during the Fall advertisement to encourage Nova Scotians to apply for our agencies, boards, and commissions, this would be one of those boards that were available - encouraged them to apply. It goes through a screening process.

I just received the submissions in January that had applied through the Fall and that came forward at that time. I was reviewing those, Mr. Speaker. There's a number of other processes that the submissions have to go through. I missed the deadline for February, but I assure the member, it should be showing up in next month's meeting, some recommended appointments for those positions.

MS. SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I find it hard to believe that in three years, we haven't had enough Nova Scotians apply for these two positions on the IWK Board of Directors. The board didn't follow proper protocols when vetting staff expense claims, so this is a concern. I still don't understand why these positions haven't been filled.

I would also like to ask a question regarding the Nova Scotia Health Authority Board of Directors, which oversees health care services for all Nova Scotians. That board makes decisions that affect health outcomes, yet there are no medical nor health professionals on the board. If the Nova Scotia Health Authority board does not have the capacity to understand the medical ramifications of the decisions that it's making, how can it have the confidence of Nova Scotians?

My question to the minister is, how can Nova Scotians have confidence in the decisions made by the Nova Scotia Health Authority Board of Directors, that their decisions are made in the best interests of the health of Nova Scotians?

MR. DELOREY: I thank the member for that question. There are a number of factors at play there to respond to and hopefully build some confidence in the member opposite and for all Nova Scotians.

One of the first is to remember and to recognize that the work and proposals that get brought to the board do often come from the staff within the Nova Scotia Health Authority. There are many clinical experts, health care professionals, who fill those senior positions within the Health Authority, be they nurses, doctors, physicians, and other health care professionals. Certainly the advice and recommendations that come forward to the board for consideration - just like for myself, although I'm not a health professional, the advice and recommendations that come to me come from people who do have that expertise and experience.

The other thing the member should be aware of is that, when wondering about whether or not these board members are acting in the best interest of the people of Nova Scotia, you have to remember these are volunteers. Despite all of the criticism that the members opposite and others may throw their way, these are volunteers who are there working day in and day out on behalf of all Nova Scotians.

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

H&W: LACK OF FAMILY DOCTORS - ACTION

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, in November the Auditor General delivered a report identifying major issues for the health care system in Nova Scotia in primary care, mental health care, and continuing care. In his statement responding to the report, the Minister of Health and Wellness said, "We're making progress on several fronts and we're committed to addressing concerns." On the ground, though, we're not seeing this progress the minister refers to.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, how can he be satisfied with this government's work when there are still more than 100,000 Nova Scotians without a family doctor?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as the member mentioned, I referenced progress being made. One of those specific areas the Auditor General raised and flagged was the need to do a better job communicating and engaging with Nova Scotians. Although work had been done and has been ongoing, I myself have been out across the province to engage with Nova Scotians. Health care professionals and the Nova Scotia Health Authority representatives have been doing the same.

Indeed, the Nova Scotia Health Authority recently launched an initiative. They have meetings scheduled in communities - I believe they started earlier this week or last week to have community conversations. I encourage all Nova Scotians to look at the Nova Scotia Health Authority's website to see when the meeting nearest them is going to take place so that they can join that conversation.

MS. MARTIN: So maybe in those meetings we'll hear about the progress.

I understand that progress takes time, but I'm afraid Nova Scotians don't have the luxury of waiting much longer. Last week we learned that our province has experienced a net loss of 114 doctors over the last six years, and that 45 of those losses happened in 2016, the year after the health authorities were merged into one. We're in an acute crisis and our situation requires emergency care.

Can the Minister of Health and Wellness please tell this House what is being done to stop the bleeding?

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question and the opportunity to respond. The report the member opposite was referring to was not the total net position of physicians for the province but rather about interprovincial migration of physicians, not the net position of physician coverage within the Province of Nova Scotia.

I can let the member know that we've recruited over 110 physicians to the province since April, many of those family physicians, as well as specialists serving in communities.

I can let the member know that in her own community in the eastern region of Nova Scotia, almost 40 per cent of all residents who have registered for a family physician have received that access. Almost 40 per cent of those who have been receiving that have been in the eastern zone, which includes Cape Breton coverage.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

H&W: DOCTOR SHORTAGE - CRISIS

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. There can be no doubt that there's a health care crisis in this province and there is a health care crisis in the Valley now. In the past six months, as many as 12,000 residents in the Annapolis Valley have lost their family doctor. Excellent doctors like Dr. Jim Seaman have retired, and others have simply left.

Through the NSHA website, we know that there are general practitioners needed in Canning/Wolfville, Kentville, and Middleton, plus hospitalists in Kentville. In fact, 55 GP positions are being advertised across the province. I will table that.

My question for the minister is, can he tell the citizens of the Valley, in the middle of this health care crisis, and in desperate need of family doctors, what on earth they are supposed to do to get health care?

[2:30 p.m.]

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Indeed, there's a lot of work ongoing. We know we learn as new information becomes available. There has been a lot of talk about the 811 Need a Family Practice registry - the line that we ask Nova Scotians to register when they're looking for primary care coverage. This process has allowed us to identify where the needs are most acute within the province.

We certainly encourage physicians to support those communities most in need. We've had a lot of success providing and matching thousands of Nova Scotians with care, once they register for that line. Through recruitment, we continue to change our recruitment initiatives to try to make Nova Scotia more attractive for physicians and other health care providers.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, last week the CBC reported - and I will table this - that it took 18 months to recruit a family doctor. That means an 82-year wait, if all 55 positions would be done one at a time, and hopefully the Health Authority's five recruiters can recruit more than one doctor at a time. However, we know that we have the lowest paid doctors in Canada, and I'll table a CBC article entitled, "Why would you come?"

Can the minister update the citizens of the Valley when to expect new doctors, and exactly what type of hope there is for any new recruits, given the current pay structure?

MR. DELOREY: Well, I can certainly address the concern the member opposite has as to whether the province recruits more than one physician at a time. I can assure the member that of course the province is out recruiting more than one physician at a time.

The recruitment process for international physicians, we recently initiated in partnership with my colleague at the Department of Immigration, the Minister of Immigration, a stream to support and facilitate the immigration process for internationally trained physicians. Our residency program where 75 per cent of residents stay and practise in Nova Scotia, even if they're not originally from here, we commit to expand that to another 10. That's an additional seven to eight physicians each and every year. Thank you.

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

TIR - PORT ROYAL BRIDGE: REPLACEMENT - STATUS

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, by far the most calls that I get to my rural constituency office would be about roads and bridges, as is probably the case in most of rural Nova Scotia. Over the last few years, the Port Royal Bridge was operating under a reduced weight restriction of five tons. Despite this restriction, the bridge remained a major thoroughfare for school buses, home heating oil trucks, and other local travel. The bridge traverses a waterway between Port Royal Harbour and Benoit's Big Creek. Had the bridge collapsed under the weight of an oil truck, potential ecological damage to the harbour and creek could have been catastrophic.

This past December the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal finally closed the bridge completely. The Port Royal Bridge and the Port Royal Road is an important and safe route for many communities on Isle Madame to Highway 206. My question is, can the minister indicate if there is a plan to repair or replace the bridge?

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. In Nova Scotia, we have 4,200 bridges and they're all extremely important to us because of the safety consideration. That's the number one issue we look at when we have our people in the field testing on a regular basis.

Many of our structures are old. We know that. Some have to be closed. In that instance, in the Port Royal Bridge, it is in the normal process, as many other bridges in the province are, of being reviewed and a consultant's report will be supplied to the department as to what is going to be required. Thank you.

MS. PAON: With the closure of the Port Royal Bridge, local traffic has been forced to detour onto the MacEachern Road. MacEachern Road is itself in very rough condition.

There are numerous potholes in areas where the water actually flows across the road and freezes into a sheet of ice. It's extremely dangerous. The intersection of MacEachern Road and Highway 206 consists of a blind crest and some really tricky turns. The condition of MacEachern Road and the dangerous turn onto Highway 206 is why the weight-restricted bridge remained the preferred route. If the minister will not be replacing or rehabilitating the Port Royal Bridge, will he at least commit to the much-needed upgrades to MacEachern Road to make this area safe?

MR. HINES: Mr. Speaker, of course, in this glorious weather that we're having in Nova Scotia, like today, there's a bit of a problem because it does put a lot of strain on all of our highways. We expect lots of potholes and road repairs this Spring. That road will be looked at among the others and I will undertake to have our people take a look at it and see if there's anything special that we can do there. Thank you.

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

JUSTICE - REAL PROPERTY ISSUES: LOW-INCOME FAMILIES - ASSIST.

MR. LARRY HARRISON: My question is for the Minister of Justice. I have an ongoing case which I previously brought to this Legislature, regarding a low-income family needing assistance with the deed to their home. They need this deed before any work can be done through housing.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid, Dalhousie Legal Aid, the Justice Access Centre, and Legal Information Nova Scotia could not offer assistance for real property issues. Here we have a family that already has a home, one of the big hurdles for low-income families. All they need is a little legal help to make sure that they are protected on their home ownership.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is this, where can low-income families go to access affordable legal assistance for real property issues?

HON. MARK FUREY: I appreciate the question from my colleague and want to recognize the importance of the question and what home ownership means to individuals. I'm not familiar with the specific circumstances my colleague has mentioned, but if he is prepared to share those specific circumstances, I am certainly prepared to work with him to facilitate dialogue with those who are able to help this particular family.

MR. HARRISON: There is still another case I am working through, quite similar to the first one. This one unfortunately involves a family separation, and it requires legal assistance in transferring the deed from one spouse to another.

Legal Information Nova Scotia and the Justice Access Centre provide free legal information, whereas Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Dalhousie Legal Aid provide services on

family law, tenancy law, and also social justice. Again, real estate and real property are a substantial gap in the legal services.

I would like to know what it would take to have real property under the legal system, the legal help?

MR. FUREY: I appreciate the applause from my colleague from Pictou. Mr. Speaker, these are important questions that my colleague has advanced, and as I indicated in my first response, I am more than prepared to work with my colleague if he is prepared to share the specific circumstances, and to facilitate dialogue so that we can have some understanding of these needs and where opportunities present themselves, to be able to provide some type of support. I'm certainly prepared to work with my colleague.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

EECD: EDUC. REFORM - EXPECTATIONS

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. When we look across Canada, we can learn from the experiences of other provinces. Ontario is the only province with both a college of teachers and a union that excludes principals and vice-principals. When the change was made in that province the result was a sharp increase in labour-related grievances.

British Columbia had a college of teachers and dismantled it as a failed experiment. Mr. Speaker, based on the evidence from other provinces, why does the minister think the result will be any different in Nova Scotia?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, something that the member didn't mention is that in both of those provinces that have been two of the top three performing provinces when it comes to student achievement, they've actually seen increases in levels of student achievement. Those are the facts that we are concerned about. B.C. and Ontario have been first, second, and third in various years for student achievement.

Our focus, which is very different than the focus of the NDP, is on our kids and how well they are doing in making sure we have a system that is going to best support them.

MS. CHENDER: I'm going to try to conduct myself like an adult rather than a grown-up, Mr. Speaker, so I'll just continue with my question. Perhaps B.C. has the highest achievement outcomes because it has dismantled its College of Teachers, which was not leading to that result.

When the Mike Harris Progressive Conservatives in Ontario brought forward these changes in classrooms, the evidence shows that Ontario students collectively lost 25

million learning days, from protests, strikes, lockouts, and constant unpredictability. Evidence from the Program for International Student Assessment Data across OECD countries shows that what does produce positive results for students is having teachers who are respected and working in collaboration together with their peers, who also have administrative responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, why isn't the minister learning from these examples instead of insisting on making the same old mistakes and scapegoating our children in the process?

MR. CHURCHILL: We are learning from the jurisdictions that are performing better than us year after year after year. That is why we're looking at models that fit this mould, Mr. Speaker.

Let's look at the argument that somehow our schools are going to become divisive because of a change in union membership. I'm sorry, but I have a lot more faith in our principals, in our VPs, and in our teachers - and know that the relationship goes much deeper than that union membership. I believe in them and in their ability to function in a professional way that always puts kids and learning first.

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

TIR - BUDGET 2018: RIM FUNDING - INCREASE

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

As an MLA for many small rural communities, I receive calls on a regular basis in my office concerning the condition of roads throughout the constituency due to the lack of funding for infrastructure maintenance. As a result of insufficient maintenance funding, Victoria-The Lakes is falling behind on road improvements.

The Rural Impact Mitigation funding is an increasingly vital source for road maintenance in many parts of the province and needs to play a foundational role in rural maintenance and development.

My question through you to the minister, will the minister commit to increasing RIM funding in the upcoming budget?

HON. LLOYD HINES: I thank the honourable member opposite for the question. Victoria-The Lakes, of course, was my old stomping ground and we share a bit of a common heritage there.

What has happened to RIM funding is tragic, Mr. Speaker, and short-sighted. The Third Party reduced that funding from \$20 million in 2012 to \$15 million. This government

in 2014 increased it by \$1 million and has maintained that \$1 million expenditure, and we're looking at what we can do in the future.

MR. BAIN: One of the roads requiring maintenance is the road that leads to Meat Cove, in northern Victoria County, a road I'm sure the minister is very familiar with.

It's worthwhile to note that it's the only road in and out of the community, and it's important that it be well maintained for the safety of the residents and access for school buses and emergency responders, as well as for the enjoyment of the many tourists who want to visit this remote and peaceful area.

The road requires work on the roadbed and guardrails, and much more. Will the minister commit to additional funding being spent on the Meat Cove road this season to ensure the safety of the residents of Meat Cove?

MR. HINES: I absolutely agree that Meat Cove is an icon and a cherished treasure in this province. We are looking at the issues around that road; we're concerned about recent icing problems, and the department has undertaken to take a significant look at what can be done to improve that access.

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

H&W - SACKVILLE: FAMILY DOCTOR LOSS - ACTION

MR. BRAD JOHNS: I noticed today that there seems to be a few trends. I'm noticing the trend that members of my caucus continue to raise and bring up concerns about calls we're getting about shortages of family physicians across the province. I'm also seeing a trend that seems to be a pattern of one step forward and one step back.

I want to ensure that the Minister of Health and Wellness is aware of another practice that's recently closing. This time, it's a family doctor in my community, the community of Sackville, who has a caseload of over 2,000 patients, who will be retiring in two months, and she has no replacement.

Will the minister please tell me what these 2,000 residents of Sackville are supposed to do without a family doctor to provide them with medical care today, not years and months down the road?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I recognize the challenge, Mr. Speaker, particularly for those Nova Scotians who don't have a family physician or a primary care provider.

We recognize those challenges. That's why we worked to increase our incentive programs. We established the 811 Need a Family Physician line so we could identify exactly who is needing a family physician, primary care coverage. We're investing and

working with our partners at the Nova Scotia Health Authority, the IWK, the partners through Doctors Nova Scotia, and physicians throughout the province, as well as nurses and nurse practitioners, to come together in collaborative practices to provide that care and those services in communities across the province. We know that there are physicians retiring and moving out of communities, but we also know physicians are coming here, graduating, and providing services as well.

MR. JOHNS: I recognize all that, but the problem is that there are another 2,000 people who are going to be affected immediately with no resolution. This one person, he's a veteran, he can't get surgery because he doesn't have a family doctor now. He needs follow-up treatment. I've raised here before he can't go to family clinics to receive those things. He's in pain, he needs his pain medication but, again, we have a problem and a backlog with walk-in clinics that can't prescribe it. Besides calling 811, what can I tell this resident to do to get a doctor now?

MR. DELOREY: The work with physicians again, the 811 line, to provide us the Need a Family Practice registry which you can do online or make a phone call, that allows the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the province to know who is in need, so that when a new family primary care provider is available in a community, that we can provide them with a list of people who are currently looking in need of those services. That's the most efficient way to provide that service. But in the meantime, as has always been the case - and keep in mind that this is a new approach, that is a compliment - that individual can certainly contact, as they always would, care providers within their communities. The ability to provide the prescriptions and pain medications, there are opportunities, and the physician can provide those services already.

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

PREM.: PHYSICIAN NUMBERS - ACCURACY

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. I can only imagine the questions and phone calls I'm going to get tonight when my constituents find out that this province hired 100 doctors and my constituency continues to be the only one without a single one, despite the promises from Dr. Rick Gibson back in August that we could have a family doctor, and the Minister of Health and Wellness who said we could also have a clinical nurse practitioner - I'll update you on how well that's going at another time.

What I'd like to know from the Premier, because I can add and subtract, of the 100 doctors that he added, how many more do we lose, how many more retired, died, or got up and left the province? Do we really have more than less, compared to last April? How many people got taken off the 811 wait-list, because I can tell you that until I intervened - so the question is, how many net doctors do we have compared to last season?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I know she's a new member but being negative in this House isn't always the way to move forward. I want to tell the honourable member we've hired 100 new doctors.

MS. ADAMS: Excuse me. I remember being kind to a couple of the ministers and then being left in the lurch. I'll save that for another day. Being negative is sometimes the only way to get attention, but I can tell you the reality is that I have two people at home who both have cancer and they don't have a family doctor. I'm going to ask you again, how many doctors in that same period of time that you hired 100 retired . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would just like to remind the honourable member not to refer to members opposite directly. Keep your comments through the Chair.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage has the floor.

MS. ADAMS: I'll ask the Premier again, how many doctors left the province, retired, or died in the last six months, and why are there no doctors in my constituency?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member. In her question, she said that being negative is the only time you get attention. The issue is we should get the issues addressed and not look for getting attention from members in this House. The fact of the matter is, there are 100 new doctors in this province. We're going to continue to work with Doctors Nova Scotia. The Minister of Health and Wellness is going to continue to work to make sure that we have health care providers in every community. The member for Pictou East can continue to reform - at some point, maybe a Tory will listen to him. The fact of the matter is we're going to continue to make sure this province moves forward. Thank you.

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 64.

Bill No. 64 - Health Authorities Act.

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

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak this afternoon on an Act to Amend Chapter 32 of the Acts of 2014, the Health Authorities Act, Respecting Board Meetings, a piece of legislation which we have been referring to in our Party as the “Nova Scotia Health Authority Openness Act” [Bill No. 64].

When I, in the constituency of Halifax Chebucto, go door-to-door, I always ask everyone with whom I have a conversation if there is anything in particular they would like me to bring to the government’s attention. By far the most common answer I get to that question is health care. Then typically, this leads to a conversation in which people will speak about how they, or someone in their family, badly need a family doctor and is unable to find one, or it will lead to a conversation about how the person, or someone in their family, has experienced a preposterously long wait for, let’s say, orthopaedic surgery, or perhaps in an emergency room, or for mental health services, or to be seen in some other context of this nature.

Often these conversations, as we explore people’s experience with the crisis in the health care system, they become a little more in-depth, it’s perfectly natural for a person to say to me, as they often do, well, what do you and the NDP propose to fix this? This “Nova Scotia Health Authority Openness Act” [Bill No. 64] is a first-step component of an answer to that question.

There are of course many things we need to do in the health care crisis, but let’s start with the fact that we need to not be the one province in Canada whose Health Authority meetings are not open to the public. There are many things we need to see to in the health care system, as we need to address the health care crisis, but certainly one of them at the top of the list is we need to not be the only province in Canada where the public is not able to avail themselves of the minutes of the meetings, the record of the proceedings of the Health Authority of the province.

There is a reason why every municipal council in Nova Scotia, every school board and, for that matter, every provincial Legislature in the country, has a provision in its building for members of the public to attend and observe the proceedings that happen there. Why, every school board, every municipal government that we are familiar with, every provincial Legislature has an arrangement, an accommodation made for members of the media, because we know that in a democratic society, the competent performance of the public administration is enhanced and advanced by media and by public scrutiny.

Let’s be clear, it’s not as though the record of the Nova Scotia Health Authority is so spectacular that we don’t need to worry about improving on its performance. One thinks of the condemnation issue just a few months ago by the Auditor General, in which he raised

such serious questions about the forthrightness and competence of communications work within the NSHA. One thinks of the over 100,000 people so often spoken about here in this Chamber without a family doctor in Nova Scotia.

Certainly, as I spoke about earlier this afternoon, one thinks of all the emergency room closures that have increased so steadily since this present government came to power, so much so that so much of the progress that had been made in recent years has been squandered since this government came to power, so that we are in a situation now with closures from Shelburne and Lunenburg, to Parrsboro and Pugwash, and Springhill and New Waterford, Glace Bay, from one end of the province to the other, the situation of emergency room dependability has been reversed a decade to the epidemic situation that pertained before the inauguration of the John Ross study and the 2010 Ross report.

The “Nova Scotia Health Authority Openness Act” [Bill No. 64] would bring openness and accountability to the work of the NSHA in three main ways: (1) by requiring all meetings of the Nova Scotia Health Authority Board of Directors, including the regular meetings and the annual meeting, to be open to the public; (2) by requiring that the meetings of the Nova Scotia Health Authority Board of Directors be announced well enough in advance so that the participation of citizens there could be facilitated; and (3) by requiring that the agendas and the minutes of all meetings of the Board of Directors of the Nova Scotia Health Authority be made public and be posted and publicly available on the NSHA’s website.

Now, none of this is to say that there aren’t many other very serious, large, dramatic improvements required in the work that is the responsibility of the NSHA, and we certainly understand that that’s the case. I mentioned, simply, just three. We know that the NSHA needs first to concentrate, as does this government, on rebuilding relationships of trust with health care providers - relationships of trust which have been set back so badly, particularly when we think about Bill No. 148 and the way the relationship of trust with nurses in the province was set back by a law which prohibits them from being able to bargain their own conditions of their employment.

We think about important relationships with health care providers which have been so dramatically reversed, such as the relationship with the physicians of the province. In terms of the government’s failure to reach an agreement with Doctors Nova Scotia over that benefits fund, leading to the acrimony which has caused so much - what would have been avoidable discord in the present lawsuit. This is an area that the Health Authority certainly needs to concentrate on: the repairing of damaged relationships.

A second area certainly the government needs to concentrate along this front is the building of a renewed and vigorous insistence from our government that we have a federal partner in health care funding in Nova Scotia. When the dust settles on the present government’s health care record, I predict that near the top of the list of the shortcomings is going to be the capitulation to a federal health funding formula that takes no account of

the demographic idiosyncrasies and realities we face in Nova Scotia, a funding formula which sees our province receiving not one red cent more in federal health transfer funding for a 95-year-old on a walker in South Branch than the Ontario Government is today receiving for a 25-year-old athlete in Mississauga. This is a matter that needs addressing.

A third matter that certainly needs addressing: we need to move, and government in general on this front, to move from the whole approach of cutting to the approach of investing. It makes no sense that in Nova Scotia so many of the beds of our hospitals are taken up at this stage by people who are not hospital patients at all, but rather nursing home residents who are waiting for nursing home placements that are not available for them because there has been a failure to invest, for four and a half years, in the opening of a single new nursing home bed in the province. At the same time, not only do we not have that investment, we have the funds being cut that support diet, recreation, and staffing to the nursing homes that we do have across the province.

There is no shortage, we understand, of things that stand in dire need of improvement in health care in Nova Scotia, but you've got to start somewhere. The "Nova Scotia Health Authority Openness Act" [Bill No. 64] is exactly this kind of a beginning place. We may think of that scene in Dickinson's *Great Expectations*, where Miss Havisham has lived decades and decades in a darkened room with heavy, heavy curtains pulled from one side to the other. The scene comes where the curtains are pulled back and everything is changed because light begins to shine into the room from every direction. One does not effectively address a health care crisis by an emphasis on command and control. One does not effectively address a health care crisis by an emphasis on the top-secret, or on heavy darkened curtains of information

The first step toward effectively reversing the terrible trajectory that the Liberals have established for health care in Nova Scotia is openness, transparency, accountability, and light. These are the principles that are advanced for the Nova Scotia Health Authority in the bill that we are pleased to put forward, the "Nova Scotia Health Authority Openness Act" [Bill No. 64].

[3:00 p.m.]

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

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the occasion to stand up any time and have a chance to talk about health care and health care issues in the Province of Nova Scotia. I think my colleagues have heard me here before. It's an area that - I must say, with our previous minister and our current minister - has been probably one of the forefront things in my community for which I've worked very hard to not only represent the community but represent some of the challenges that this province faces.

The broad terms of health care, sometimes we look at every aspect of it as they're raising here today - the operations of the board right straight down into emergency department operations and things like that. From my perspective, there's one thing I'd like to bring to the conversation, and I think it might get to the crux of the matter as far as what they've brought forward today for discussion. That's community understanding and community involvement, as far as their ability to be part of the process and to make sure their voices are heard and to understand what's being said.

In saying that, I think one thing I want to embrace with everybody - and I put this challenge out to all of our members across the floor; it's also a conversation that I've had with a lot of our members on our side of the House. That is, regardless of what we know or don't know, we need to go out and find that information. The only way to do that properly is to be engaged. It's to reach out and build a relationship.

That goes across all the sectors. It's not just apparent within the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, Department of Health and Wellness, Community Services - it doesn't matter where it is. I would encourage all of our members to go out and make sure they start working in their communities directly under an umbrella that allows them to be able to effectively communicate, to effectively understand, and to effectively pass on the positions of those constituents that they represent.

I'll give one quick example before I pass on my time to my colleague. I challenge every person in this House to make sure that within their community they find a model, a model that will fit that, a model that will bring all the stakeholders together, a model that will take the voices of the people in the community and build a relationship. I know we hear about the negativity. I know it's something that doctors from abroad and those looking to come here hear.

I would challenge everybody to show what you have to offer in your communities. I challenge everybody to build a way of showing why Nova Scotia is the best place to live and why we should be having people moving here - not just for doctors but for engineers, for our young people who are in Alberta and everywhere else across this country.

That's the one thing I would ask. That's the one thing I would bring. I really thank everybody for the opportunity to stand here today and say that. I will turn my time over.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to rise and share a few words about Bill No. 64, which includes amendments to the Health Authorities Act. The Nova Scotia Health Authority is a public entity that receives more than \$2 billion of our taxpayers' money. The mission of the Health Authority is "to achieve excellence in health, healing and learning through working together."

That's not the mission statement of a secret society, but in many ways our Nova Scotia Health Authority acts and behaves like a secret society.

Let's look at the definition of a secret society: it's a "club or an organization whose activities, events, inter-functioning, or membership are concealed from non-members." Does that sound familiar, Mr. Speaker? It sounds familiar to me, because we are not able to access the information about what our Nova Scotia Health Authority board of directors does. We are not able to find their minutes. We are not able to find when they meet, what dates, for how long. It sounds similar to a secret society.

The Health Authority, we do know, has a board of directors. We know who they are, but we don't have a clear idea of what they do. Here's what we do know: the board is made up of 13 experienced professionals, and the Health Authority's website says these 13 men and women "work to ensure proper governance in our complex health system."

How many times, Mr. Speaker, do you think they would meet in a 12-month period? Think about the job that they have to do. They are governing our complex health care system which includes - let's think about it - long-term care, acute care, which involves all of the in-patient beds, our emergency departments, continuing care, mental health, some of the collaborative care clinics.

Let me ask that question again, how many times do you think, Mr. Speaker, this board of directors would meet in a 12-month period? We're told they meet eight times, that's it. How can they govern this complex health care system in eight meetings a year? Again, we have no idea how long these meetings are, what kind of discussions are being held. We don't know if the 13 board members show up. Do 12 show up? Do nine show up? Do three show up?

This kind of secrecy is not a good thing for democracy. It is something to consider that we're one of the only Health Authority boards for health systems in the whole country that acts this way. In every other province some, if not all, of the meetings are open. They are open to the public. However, here in Nova Scotia, our meetings are closed - zero, zero, zero transparency. In some provinces, the minutes of the meetings are even posted to the website. In other provinces, they are available upon request. However, again, here in Nova Scotia, no meetings are available.

Openness and transparency are the pillars of a healthy democracy, and that's one of the reasons that we support this amendment, Bill No. 64. Openness and transparency are the wellsprings of accountability. I think back to the Fall session of the Legislature and one of the things that I spoke about a lot, Mr. Speaker, was the lack of accountability that is apparent throughout our whole health care system. If a government or government agency is open, trust improves.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, the people of Nova Scotia deserve to be able to trust those who are in charge of something so important as the health of individuals, and the health of our families, and the health of the people of Nova Scotia.

Democracy requires citizens to participate in the processes of government. By government being open to scrutiny, citizens are able to protect themselves from an overzealous government or agency. They're able to judge for themselves if a government or agency is acting appropriately and in the best interests of the majority of people.

Our Premier used to understand this. In fact, once he said he would make Nova Scotia the most open and transparent government in the country. Well, this is a promise he has failed to fulfill, particularly when it comes to the Nova Scotia Health Authority. Then what happens when people are not open and transparent? We automatically question why. What is being held back? What are they hiding?

I listened to the Premier and members opposite today chastise my colleagues for being negative. I'm just here to say we are speaking on behalf of the people, and I can't believe that the members opposite do not have the exact same situations coming to their offices every day just like ours. I don't understand how the members opposite can ignore and not make positive changes to our Nova Scotia Health Authority board of directors and our health care system. I don't understand.

I know that in government you need to stick together as a team, but why are the members opposite not sticking together as a team to make improvements? I know they must have the same situations - people coming to their office who have no access to a family doctor, who have a sick child dying from cancer, who have medications that can't be filled, who have chronic pain and can't get in to a pain specialist because they don't have a family doctor to get a referral. I find it hard to believe that the members opposite are not experiencing the exact same things that we are with our citizens.

I encourage you, before you criticize us, and before members opposite chastise my colleagues for being negative, let me just remind you that we are being real. We are being honest. We are being open and transparent. I would like to bring it back that we think the Nova Scotia Health Authority board of directors should be the same.

Mr. Speaker, I have been a registered nurse for 27 years, and I have been married to a family physician for the same number of years. We are reminded in the last 12 months of what it was like when we first started our careers. The early 1990s are known as the Savage days. It was a very, very, very dark time for those people who worked in health care. For those of you who are old enough, like me, to think back, there was a huge exodus of physicians and other health care professionals from the province at that time because they were so discouraged and felt so demoralized by the government of the day.

When I see what's happening now - if we don't turn things around, Mr. Speaker, and start showing that we are a government that values our health care workers, that we are a government that wants to provide the best health care services to our people, things are only going to continue to worsen. We do not need to go back to days like the Savage days.

Those of you who were here in the last Fall session may remember me tabling a couple of documents, and I have them here again today. A group of seven physicians wrote a couple of papers on governance. These physicians were highly critical of our Nova Scotia Health Authority board of directors and how there was zero transparency. That is not normal. Most physicians and nurses do not speak out because they are more focused on patient care. They're not used to being political, they're not used to being publicly vocal, and most of them are very uncomfortable. I applaud the physicians who took the time and were brave and wrote these articles.

When you look at these articles and the recommendations that they made, they highlight the importance of transparency. One of the very specific recommendations that they have made is that our Nova Scotia Health Authority board of directors meetings should be open to the public.

Mr. Speaker, on my drive in today, I listened to a radio talk show, and they were talking about the municipal Halifax meetings and how they have too many closed sessions that are not open to the public. I thought it's very similar to this, it just creates distrust.

[3:15 p.m.]

When people who are elected to represent the people do not promote openness and transparency it creates distrust in the government and in the people. I would like to table this document that clearly states that physicians do believe that the Nova Scotia Health Authority board of directors should have open and transparent meetings.

When you look at good governance principles, I have a paper here from McInnes Cooper and it states, "The objective of corporate governance is to promote strong, viable competitive corporations accountable to stakeholders."

I ask, who are the stakeholders here? The stakeholders are the people of Nova Scotia. The stakeholders are you and I and all of our families and all of the people that we were elected to represent - they are the stakeholders for the Health Authority. The Nova Scotia Health Authority board of directors is accountable to them. They deserve to know what is being done in these meetings. They should be accountable to the stakeholders. This board of directors are good people, I have no doubts. But because of the lack of transparency, we have no idea what they're doing.

This lack of transparency trickles down into front-line workers. Do you know out of the 19 government departments, the Department of Health and Wellness and anyone that works under the Nova Scotia Health Authority is the only department that I, as an elected official, am not allowed to speak to anyone in management? I have to go through a public relations person, I'm not allowed to speak to anyone in management. But if there's a pothole in my road, I can call up the area manager and get her to fix it. This lack of transparency and openness is seen throughout every level, starting with our board of directors. It trickles down. Leadership matters.

My last minute or so I will just say I am grateful to the NDP, to our colleagues, for bringing forth this bill. I do believe this is an important bill. I believe it represents what the people of Nova Scotia have been wanting and deserve. For this reason I would like to say myself and my caucus do support this bill.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, thank you to both of my colleagues who have spoken to this bill already, as well as to my Leader. I'm very proud this is a bill that we have brought forward and I actually believe that all members of the House should support it.

Last year I would always preface my speeches as a relatively new MLA, but now I'm like one of the more experienced folks on this side of the House. Still, I remain struck by how, as a province - in too many ways, over too many mandates - we have wasted the good work that has been done no matter which stripe, by a desire for the incoming government to change the page. To say, oh, that's what they did, but we're going to do something new.

I say that particularly as the representative for Halifax Needham where, as you all know, I was preceded by Maureen MacDonald who, I have been told by multiple bureaucrats and multiple health care professionals, was an exemplary Health and Wellness Minister.

There was good work done and some of that good work is actually mentioned in an Auditor General's Report from June 2016, which I was referring to . . .

HON. RANDY DELOREY: She's from Antigonish.

MS. ROBERTS: Okay, so the current Minister of Health and Wellness is pointing out that she's from Antigonish. While that may be true, trust me, she is a constituent, and she represented my neighborhood very well.

But seriously, we acknowledge on this side of the House that making change, particularly in health care, is not easy. Making good change is not easy. Under Maureen's

leadership, under the NDP Government, a number of good things were done. I know that everything that needed to be done was not done, because it's actually not possible when you come into government, I get that. It's not possible to make every positive change that you want to see happen.

My understanding - not just from speaking with Maureen, but from speaking with people who worked with her - was that she was strategic. She figured out within the first few weeks in her portfolio which changes she was going to tackle, and then she tackled them with laser focus. That is why, with the help of John Ross, just for example, we saw the rollout of Collaborative Emergency Centres.

That was cited in the June 2016 Auditor General's Report as a positive change that resulted in reduced ER closures, better access both to emergency care and to primary care for people who do not have primary health care at a doctor's office in their community. We know that those were rolling out, and we know that there was a schedule for other ones that would roll out, and we know that this government has chosen to stop that rollout.

Frankly, one of my concerns about not introducing this bill, not having transparency at the Nova Scotia Health Authority, is that I don't know who will win the next election. I hope it's us, but if we do, I would not want to see whatever hard lessons and whatever accomplishments the NSHA - after finally figuring out its new bureaucracy, whatever good stuff is able to be accomplished, I would really hate to see that stop in its tracks because oh, somebody else is leading now.

Frankly, in Nova Scotia, we are a small enough province and our needs are urgent enough and our resources are scarce enough, that we actually need leadership from all kinds of places. I have spoken about this with my colleague from Digby, we've spoken about the community health centre in Clare, and how much leadership the municipality has shown, and how hard it was for that municipality to decide, okay, we're going to invest in a community health centre, where another municipality next to us is going to invest in affordable transit. We need that leadership to come from all places.

One of the problems with the complete opaqueness of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, is that the message it gives to Nova Scotians, and the message that I get from the Premier when he says that we're all just being pessimists over here, and we should stop being so negative - the message is, we've got this. We, the Party in power, we the Nova Scotia Health Authority, we the government, we've got this. We don't need your input, we don't need your help. Leave us alone, stop criticizing, and let us do the job that we're very capable of doing.

Well, you know, it's so obvious that that is not the case. We need people to be participating, we need people to be contributing. Furthermore, we actually owe it to them when they have contributed so much in so many different communities, to allow them into the conversation.

I think, for example, of the community health boards across the province, all of which are also volunteer-run; those are also volunteer boards. I happened to make it out last week to the announcement of the Community Health Team Grants of the Halifax Community Health Board. I've known them for years, many of them, though the board has changed over time. When I was involved in my community at a more grassroots level, we applied for these small wellness grants from the community health board. I was just looking at the 2017 Community Health Plan, and this describes what they did.

It mentions 1,000 volunteer hours that went into this Community Health Plan; 3,996 responses to their survey, 43 meetings. That's for the whole Central Zone - collaboration between four different community health boards. Then, just after that, when they're talking about what the meat is of the plan, they acknowledge:

“Because, as CHBs, we have neither the capacity nor the resources to evaluate NSHA Central Zone's response to our recommendations, we've included examples of actions - requested by our communities - that will indicate to us that the NSHA Central Zone is moving forward with our recommendations. We look forward to working with the NSHA Central Zone to develop indicators for evaluation with future health plans.”

I mean not only do they not have the capacity to evaluate whether the NSHA is implementing the recommendations, they can't even see if this ever makes it to a board room meeting. They don't know. They've put in 1,000 volunteer hours and they have no idea if it has gone down a well or if it has actually informed the discussions at a boardroom table. That's just an example of why I think it is disrespectful to volunteers working throughout our health care system to not have those meetings be open and transparent.

I think of hospital foundations - how many of the hospitals that are being run by the NSHA were built by volunteer fundraising, annual events where we ask Nova Scotians to feel a sense of pride and ownership and obligation to our hospitals and then they don't get to be part of any conversation about what's happening with them, nor can they even know what the conversation is. That, for me, is unacceptable.

I think about how decisions might be different if there was some openness. You all have heard me already speak about the decision to place an outpatient clinic in Bayers Lake and to some extent we're going to have to just agree to disagree. One of these days I'm going to feel generous and buy you all a copy of *Happy City* which talks about how urban planning is linked to healthy outcomes for populations and maybe you'll be convinced by that book - which I would also like to give to all of Halifax Council.

Regardless, that decision came down, there were decisions that happened behind closed doors, and then there was reaction - I like to think that that reaction landed with some of you. Maybe if some of that conversation had happened at a Health Authority

meeting which was open and transparent, maybe some of that conversation would have actually affected the decision. That would have been ideal, in my view.

I think, too, of long-term care which also falls under the Health Authority. Today at Public Accounts Committee we had a conversation about the QEII - what do they call that project, the redevelopment of the QEII. We know that the view of this government is that we do not need long-term care beds. Everybody is going to be okay at home, we're investing in continuing care, we're investing in home care and we are investing in various ways in outpatient care and in refurbishing a hospital that is designed for acute care.

Great, except that I understand from my colleague from Dartmouth South that the last she heard, 27 of 99 beds at the Dartmouth General Hospital were occupied by patients who actually need long-term care. So how does it make sense that long-term care is not smack dab in the agenda and in the discussion about the redevelopment of the QEII? We don't know if those conversations are happening in the Nova Scotia Health Authority board meetings because we can't see the minutes, right?

We know that, by the way, long-term care beds cost - let me see, this is from the Auditor General's Report - \$250 a day versus \$1,300 a day for a day of hospital stay. So, in terms of value for money, where should we be putting some of our resources, given that we are still in the early days of the bulge of seniors which Nova Scotia is going to experience over the next 20 years?

I need to gather my thoughts for one moment and look at what I want to say at the end.

[3:30 p.m.]

We hear about a reduction in wait-lists for long-term care. I've spoken with a continuing care coordinator in the course of advocating for one resident in my constituency and I understand that being really strict about who gets on the wait-list does work well for flexibility in the system so that when somebody really, really, really, really needs a bed they get one. But the people who are just on the cusp of qualified are often really struggling and so are their family members who are trying to give them care, and so are the home care workers.

We do not talk enough here about continuing care assistants who increasingly are being paid with public dollars but through private companies, who are not guaranteed hours, who are not paid for travel time, who are not paid for lunch hours, who cannot rely on that work to support their families, who are in some cases working for multiple private providers because they're hoping that one week they'll get enough from one provider and the other week they get enough from the other provider. No wonder people enter and exit that profession and yet, we are relying on these very poorly paid - almost devoid of

employment rights. I mean, they are the precariously employed and that is what our public system is relying on to keep our residents safe and well in their homes.

I think that that is a model of continuing care that I find offensive. It's a poor way of growing our communities and I cannot see it being sustainable in the long run for Nova Scotia. These are the conversations. Again, maybe that conversation is happening at the board table of the Nova Scotia Health Authority but we don't know because we can't see the minutes.

Just to conclude, a final time referring back to some comments from my colleague from Digby. Absolutely, Nova Scotia is a beautiful place to live and I think there are many, many reasons to recommend it. I think all of us would recommend it to folks, but the fact is that the health care crisis in this province is deterring people from moving here. We've already heard stories of that from municipalities and frankly, I worry about our system's ability to welcome the people who would like to move here - some of whom, let's be honest, are seniors and are adding to our demographic trends. They're not subtracting from them because you can sell a home that you own in Toronto or in Vancouver or in a series of other markets across the country and retire here by the ocean. Why wouldn't you, except if you can't find a family doctor? Thank you very much.

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

MR. BEN JESSOME: Good day to you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to get up here and respond to some of the comments that my colleagues have made from all corners of the House. Certainly, getting into public service, elected public service in particular, there is an important conversation to have and there's an important sentiment to uphold in trying to communicate with the broader public, the things that we're making decisions on and that, in this context, the Health Authority is making decisions on. I do want to begin my commentary by acknowledging, I guess, the related concerns to health care that have been expressed. It's important to acknowledge that there is room for improvement throughout the system.

Certainly, we all experience varying degrees of access to primary care, to continuing care, to every arm of the health care system. We, as members, do experience some of those particularly touching stories in our offices, and I won't go into great detail about the particulars, but I think it's important to acknowledge that those issues do exist, and we as a government are making an effort to hear more about what individuals within our communities respectively expect in terms of accessing their health care system.

But today we're here to discuss an attempt to create a more open and transparent health care system, namely via access to the information expressed at the Nova Scotia Health Authority - a requirement to give public notification of when meetings will take place, and the information from the agenda and minutes to be made publicly available.

Communities across this province certainly value access to this information, or would value access to this information. There are examples across the province of community-led initiatives that add a tremendous amount of value to the end product, the end program, the service delivery. I think we can all agree that the testimonial from communities is a definite asset in coming up with an improved product or improved service delivery.

Access to that information that's being expressed at the Health Authority's table would be beneficial in terms of expanding a conversation and creating a more fulsome scenario for the exchange of information. I would just like to acknowledge that both the Minister of Health and Wellness and our Premier have expressed an interest in going down this road.

We, as government, do not believe that the current Health Authority bylaws preclude this public expression of the information that takes place. To the best of our ability, the conversations are beginning to take place with respect to how we can make that public conversation more fulsome through the relay of the information that is being exchanged at the Health Authority meetings.

There are instances - I think back to as recently as this morning at Public Accounts, when the Deputy Minister of TIR brought up that it's important for elements of the information that exists out there to be maintained as confidential. I think we can all acknowledge that there are certain things that exist out there, whether it be - I guess the first example that comes to mind would be for tendering services or products so that we can remain competitive.

Using that as an example, there are particular things within every conversation that we have a responsibility to keep close to the chest and to limit their exposure. This conversation about making that information at the Health Authority, to the best of our ability - keeping in mind there are elements that need to be protected as confidential. I think that we're committed to having that conversation with the Health Authority, as a government. As I said previously, both the minister and the Premier have made it clear that we will endeavour to have that conversation in the interest of trying to relay that information to the broader public.

I would like to add - and I'll table a couple of documents here - that we have made an effort as a government to try to enhance the way we express what we're doing to the broader public to improve transparency. I think we live and operate as MLAs in a time where society certainly acknowledges the past troubles that have been created by secrecy and a lack of transparency with the public. It's no surprise to any of us that we are expected to operate our offices in such a way that is accessible to the people of Nova Scotia, the people who will hold us to account and ensure that we are doing our jobs to the best of our abilities and making the most reasonable decisions that we can based on the information that we have.

I would like to reference the Open Data portal that was launched. I have a document here dated February 5, 2016. This was an initiative by our government to make collections of data more accessible to the broader public as a means to express information that government would not have otherwise made public. This is one example, Mr. Speaker, of the government making strides to try and be more transparent.

The second and more recent example that I would like to cite is with respect to the services that are offered to the public with respect to our Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. We now offer a full host of services for the public to go through the freedom-of-information process online. We're the first province in Canada to have done that, if I'm not mistaken.

I'll reference some comments made by the Minister of Internal Services. "We've made great strides opening up access to government information in the last year with the new FOIPOP portal, online disclosures and expanding open-data offerings for everyone." This initiative also makes us the third province to begin posting completed FOIPOP requests online; I'll table that. I would like to note that this is just another example of an inclination that we have to try and make the conversations that we have and business that we do as a government more accessible and more transparent to the broader public.

I would also highlight that all of our expenses are posted online - Cabinet Ministers and private members alike. Cabinet Ministers' EAs have their expenses posted online as well. There are different examples, throughout the time at least that I have been in this House, where government has made strides to try and be more open and transparent with the public in terms of enabling more accountability. We all take an oath here to be accountable to the broader public.

I think back to before I was elected. One of the things that I think frustrated me the most about government was a lack of information and a lack of trust, I guess that's one way to express it. I was kind of going in a couple of different directions, perhaps, but the path I decided to go on was to put my name on a ballot and try to conduct myself in a way that at least makes an effort to set an example that not all politicians are crooks. As a position, we often get labelled in such a fashion.

I think it's important for us to be intentional, be very conscious about conducting ourselves collectively in such a way that doesn't uphold that negative sentiment. I will say that I do appreciate the concept of the bill as it pertains to transparency within our health care system. A system that is certainly, if not number one or two, a very important service that we provide to Nova Scotians. Regardless of what house you grow up in, where you live, what corner of the province that you're from, health care is something that touches everybody and it's the goal of our government to try to be open to having conversations about how we improve the system.

[3:45 p.m.]

I think there's a lot of value, maybe it doesn't always get acknowledged on the floor of this House, but certainly there's a lot of value that I receive in commentary expressed from the Opposition. We get an opportunity in this House to hear about the different testimonials as per, you know, how we do our jobs and what comes through the doors of our offices in every area of this province, and there's a tremendous amount of value in just being able to - while your initial purpose and your initial mandate for being elected in this House is to represent your constituents, I think that there's a tremendous amount of value in putting what you learn from your constituents into the context of the greater province.

We are elected to represent one constituency and I know that everybody does that as a priority, but there is certainly a lot of value in hearing from others and in being able to put what you've learned about your community into that broader provincial context when it comes to decision making when you're in government, and being critical when you're in the Opposition. At least, that's how I understand this House to work to some effect.

I do want to stress, and I just said it a moment ago, that I really believe there is value in the dialogue that we as government receive from the Opposition, and again, it's not always acknowledged willingly, but it is important to - and I'd just like to make the point that there is value in the conversation that we do have in this House, regardless of whether it gets brought to light or not.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 67.

Bill No. 67 - Health Authorities Act.

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

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand up to speak to this bill today, and I have to say first off to the member opposite, I agree with you. I agree that we should be open and honest, and we need to work together, and you know, it may come across as critical, but let's tell the truth. That's why I ran, so that people don't think all politicians are crooks, which is how we've come to introduce this bill. Let's tell the real story. What are we trying to hide by not being completely up front, open, and honest about real numbers?

I've said to my colleagues, I've said to my constituents, the only promise I can ever make you is that I will get you an answer; you may not like my answer, but I will get you an answer. Same thing with this: we might not like the answers that we get when the Department of Health and Wellness tells us what the actual numbers are in this bill that we

are hoping will pass, but we need to know the answers. How do we fix what we don't know?

The opposition to these bills - I introduced one in the Fall about blood plasma, I believe - the things that are no-cost items that will make everybody more informed and better able to work together. I guess I don't understand the opposition.

The most important thing I've learned in the last nine months is that you can't fix the problems that you don't see - and we don't see the problems. Members opposite say that the number is about 40,000 for Nova Scotians without a doctor. We have information that tells us that we're well over 100,000 Nova Scotians without a family doctor. Why don't we work together to get this information? When I'm driving into the office one day and every emergency room in Cape Breton Island is closed except for the Regional, give us those numbers. I just heard today that a nurse practitioner-turned- doctor in Glace Bay cannot get a job in Cape Breton. He's a doctor and he has a family in Glace Bay. Why do we hear this from other people? Why don't we have these numbers and this information available to us?

On the ground, we see lots of problems. I see them. I hear from people every day. As one of my colleagues said, between roads and doctors, it's the most - they're frequent flyers that come into my office. People across the province are struggling to get the care that they need. I hear children who are watching elderly parents die and who are admitted to the ice machine, hallway two; pop machine, hallway three. Watching these people die because there are no beds.

I hear from parents of children with mental health issues. Imagine how disgraceful it is to pick up the phone in your constituency office and hear: my daughter's about to commit suicide, can you help me? I have to say, no, the wait is 353 days in Cape Breton - and that's for an initial intake appointment. Then how long after the initial intake appointment are these people being put into any kind of treatment plan? These are the numbers that we need to have.

I'll say it again, and I'll say it again, and I'll say it again: we cannot fix an issue that we don't know where the problem is. We don't know where to attack. I would be happy to work with the entire government to try to fix this problem. I would do whatever we could - and I think I speak for my caucus - but we can't fix what we don't know.

We need a better way to understand the challenges that the health care system is facing. We need to know how many people are coming into emergency rooms. I'm repeating myself, I know, but never before in all of my years working in health care have I ever seen a group of doctors come together to voice their collective concern prior to an election - or any time, for that matter.

I just had a phone call from a specialist at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital who has asked to meet with me because he thinks that I should know about what's going to happen in a certain department in two years when the bottom falls out of it. In all of my years, that's never happened before.

I hear from nurses who work a 12-hour day or a 12-hour night in the emergency room departments, as well as others, who don't get a chance to go to the washroom. It's that busy. Imagine the stress and the care that they are providing when we're not providing them with the tools they need to offer the care that they need to provide.

There's no substitute for seeing things with your own eyes, and that's why in our health care accountability bill we would require the NSHA to track and publish the information - key information on the state of our health care system. Together with this information, we could work with the NSHA and work with government and hopefully doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals, to try to resolve these issues.

People are dying. That's not changing. What is changing is the demographics that we're dealing with, and the lack of services provided to all Nova Scotians, but we don't know exactly how that's changing. And maybe - let's give the government the benefit of the doubt - maybe it's changing for the better. If that's the case, then kudos to them, but show it to me. Show it to me in numbers, because that's the only way we know exactly what's going on.

We know that patients who don't get comprehensive primary care end up with more complex health needs. Those complex health problems end up in acute care beds in emergency rooms, when they could have been avoided with earlier intervention or preventive care.

I heard today at Public Accounts Committee of the cost differential between long-term care and acute care beds, from \$1,300 to \$250. Also, we heard in a quote from - I don't want to say who but somebody said it this morning. I believe it was Janet Knox - I could be incorrect - it was said that long-term care is not a key component of the QEII redevelopment plan. Now, think about that for a second. As my colleague has suggested, almost 30 out of 90-some-odd patients in Dartmouth General are awaiting long-term care beds, yet long-term care beds are not a key component of a redevelopment that is supposedly going to change health care for the entire province.

Well, from Cape Breton, I really don't know how that is going to change things in Cape Breton. However, I welcome the opportunity to be told that, but again, we don't have the numbers. I can tell you personally, from when I was a health care worker, how many people we had in acute care settings, waiting for long-term care placement, and who are there in an alternative level of care, but again, these aren't numbers that are provided readily.

I have to speak to my colleague who said we're only allowed, as elected officials, to talk to the PR person, which in my area is Greg Boone. However, because I have some knowledge, I can find out other information. How unnecessary is that, to have to go through this bureaucracy when you could just call the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and say there's a really bad pothole on Grand Lake Road, for example? What's the difference? What's the secrecy? What are we trying to hide?

We're not looking to point the finger at somebody and say, shame on you. We're looking to work together. We need to know how long it takes people to get to appointments, how long it takes people in emergency rooms who have been triaged and seen. We need to know the length of time it takes between an intake appointment in mental health and actual follow-up. These are numbers we need to work together in order to try to resolve the health care issue.

Seniors, the wait in long-term care and people who are in ALC beds in acute care - I believe the number is about one-third of people who are dying before they even get to a long-term care bed. I'm embarrassed by that number. However, I'd like to know the actual number, but the information that tells me that is embarrassing. You know, somebody is trying to get to their place, prior to their death, somewhere half-decent to live, as opposed to living in a hospital room. Without any connection to activities or care or follow-up, they are actually dying there before they even get to enjoy the last days of their life, which I am embarrassed by.

By tracking and publishing these metrics we'll get a clearer picture of the state of health care in our province. With more information, we'll be able to focus on solutions and on specific communities that need help the most.

Nobody can deny that I'm here for Cape Breton. Everybody knows that and I'm here to speak about (Interruption) I know - shocking. I'm here to talk about the specific issues that are in Cape Breton, one of which is mental health, two is doctor shortage, three is emergency room closures, and I could go on and on. However, I digress, but maybe it's not just Cape Breton that has the worst issue. I don't believe that, but somebody needs to show me the proof. Somebody needs to tell me that Cape Breton is not the worst off and that we should not become our own province, of which I would be the Premier, just saying. (Laughter)

However, we can't fix it if we can't name it. We're looking to work together. It's a no-cost item, let's work together to try to find the answers to these problems. Let's work together to tell me why this guy in Glace Bay, who is a doctor, can't get a job. Somebody needs to tell me the reason behind that, because to me that just blows my mind. It's just mind-boggling. He has invested, he has a family, he owns a home. He's not going anywhere, he's staying in Cape Breton, so let's give him a job.

[4:00 p.m.]

My daughter is one who doesn't have a family doctor. I know there are lots of people in Cape Breton. I'm sure my other colleagues from Cape Breton are able to say that the shortage is atrocious. So, let's work together. You know, let's try to get the solutions to these problems. The support of this bill would be a desperate attempt to try to fix the problems and address specific solutions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to the Health Authorities Act, Bill No. 67, an Act to Amend Chapter 32 of the Acts of 2014, the Health Authorities Act.

I enjoyed listening to the member for Cape Breton Centre. I think she was doing a "down with the causeway" kind of speech towards the end, but her passion for Cape Breton is very clear and her situation - I was pleased to see her at Public Accounts Committee today because she is the critic for health care and she really shows her passion for health care in Cape Breton. (Applause)

Since 2015, when this government changed nine health authorities and formed one, we have seen a lot of changes and in part of that changes we made improvements with reporting and keeping the public informed. With that, down came some barriers and many of these barriers prevented us from having a good way to measure statistics with our health authorities. Different authorities had different methods and techniques for collecting and reporting. Some were reporting on issues that were important to them in their geographical area and, now, with the one Health Authority, accuracy is a little better, and it's improving all the time. As technology improves and as the data centres collect more information and posting, it is something that NSHA has committed to improving and they have and they are.

I can tell you I have seen some of this improvement in my constituency. I have offered information to constituents who are looking for ortho-surgery and are tired of waiting, or are in so much pain that they want another option, and I have offered through my assistant at my constituency office and myself to show them the website and to find out where ortho-surgeries are being offered and what the wait-lists are.

People have taken advantage of that. It has empowered them to go ahead and meet with their doctor and ask to go to another area of the province to receive the surgery that they require and many have come back very happy and very satisfied that they were able to get their surgeries done a little faster than the waiting list they had previously been on, and they have come to thank us for letting them know that. So, I think the more we encourage people to go to the website and get knowledge about what the statistics are we'll see more people accessing this information.

In the Fall of 2017, the Auditor General's Report made some recommendations about the way that the Health Authority has been communicating with Nova Scotians, and the department has taken this very seriously. They are looking to really improve how they are informing and reporting to the public on issues with health care that are evident in the province, but we are working on those issues and they have really tried to make improvements to their website and they are really working hard on that.

I said earlier that one of the big issues was every Health Authority, the nine, all reporting differently. So, now we found that they were tracking different pieces of data. They were using different definitions and they were using different models of care, so there was no way of really getting a full picture, but now that they're all on board, they are trying to make up their data processing to suit all Nova Scotia, and have reports coming in that are consistent all over Nova Scotia. This will make tracking better and also the reporting better, and so the posting of the data on the website will be more accurate. It is measurable and the sources are going to know exactly how to report, so there is better consistency.

One thing that troubles me is the more we report - we have to remember who is doing that work. Often, it's the people with the boots on the ground, and more and more of the professionals in health care are doing paperwork and not patient care. We need to get this right, Mr. Speaker, because our patients deserve and they need care, and I can tell you that practitioners want to be with their patients more than they want to be filling out reports and documenting, documenting, documenting.

However, I realize how important documentation is but we have to find that balance, because I'm hearing more and more from people who work in health care that they just want to work with the patients. We hear it with teachers, they just want to work with the students. We know how assessment has really affected the education system and has really bogged teachers down with assessment work, when they really would like to use that for improving their classes and maybe using some of that time for teaching or working one-on-one with students.

It's no different in health care. We have to balance the amount of time we're asking our people with their boots on the ground to be recording and collecting data, and how much time they are giving to patient care because first of all, they should be there for the patients and not always doing paperwork.

I know people who have taken a break from nursing, or being a lab technician, or other people who have been continuing care workers, and have taken maybe maternity leaves, or have taken breaks to raise their children, and have come back into the field of medicine, they are overwhelmed with all the documentation, and they say, "what happened?" in a certain period of time. Well, technology has happened, and it has made collecting data a little easier, but also our demands for data have increased. The public wants more information, governments want more information, all of us want more information.

That information is important and it's critical to helping us to improve. The member for Cape Breton Centre said we need the numbers, we need the information, because we can't fix what we don't know. But again, it can be overwhelming and I'm sure there are days when tracking is more challenging than others, when you have a really busy case of the flu in your area, and the emergency room is full and just packed with people waiting to get in, and people who are already inside and triaged, there's little time for documenting, you are busy running on the floor.

We have to keep in mind the people who are tracking this and ensure there is a balance, but also that we are collecting the information we need.

The Nova Scotia Health Authority is currently publishing reports, and many of the items that have been listed in the legislation are already being addressed for primary care, and that would be family doctors, collaborative care teams, university clinics. They are currently being tracked and the data is being provided on the website. Triage to admissions, they try to target the number of hours and wait times in emergency rooms across the province. They are reporting right now the emergency department lengths of stays, and the admittance of patients, and the volume of triage. Those are being tracked right now, and also data on the times for each stage of emergency care is being tracked. This is all posted, Mr. Speaker.

The alternate care and the long-term care waits are being tracked. The people waiting for beds is being tracked. The percentage of beds that are being taken up on floors in hospitals by people who are waiting for long-term care is also being tracked.

The challenge right now is that they can report retrospectively. It's really hard, but they're working on it. They hope that in future, they will be able to give more day-to-day tracking of the situation. That system is being developed. It isn't quite there yet, but it is a hope that they will have more accurate, up-to-date information that will be available to the public.

Also in regard to wait times for the first appointments for mental health - they are tracking when you get your first appointment and the length of time it takes from the referral to getting treatment. That is all being tracked currently, Mr. Speaker, by the Health Authority. As the member for Cape Breton Centre spoke about, hopefully these statistics will help us with being able to dedicate services and know where we need to improve services. Hopefully, there will be a focus on that.

Are we where we have to be? We're getting there. With technology ever changing, what we can collect in a small period of time now is way more than what we had for years and years of data collection. It can almost be overwhelming, the amount of data collection, what it is in just a small period of time today as opposed to even five years ago what data collection was. We have so much of it. It's working with that data and using it to the best of our ability.

In the future, we are going to be able to enhance our quarterly reporting. It is something that we are working on now with the Nova Scotia Health Authority. It is in the works. It isn't there yet, but that is one of the things that the bill addresses, quarterly reporting. It is a goal of the Nova Scotia Health Authority as well.

As we establish improving data sources here at the Nova Scotia Health Authority, they are also working with a patient and family advisory council. The work of that council is taking the data that is being collected by the Health Authority and discerning the information, breaking it down, and trying to put it in language that everyone can understand. There's nothing more frustrating than listening to someone give a speech who is talking way above the heads of people. It's no different than getting information off a website, looking at it, and not knowing what it means.

The work of this committee is going to be really critical and important for the discernment of information. As we collect more information and work with this committee, we will be able to put together better packages of material. The website will be more user friendly. As more people hear that it's user friendly, that the documents there are readable for everybody, more people are going to go to the website to get the information.

I know people in other constituencies, I'm sure, have people who are challenged with literacy. They can go to their MLA's office. I know I print off a lot of information for constituents who don't have access to a computer or just don't know how to operate a computer, so that they can have it. They can come to my office, and we willingly print off fact sheets for them all the time on all sorts of topics that they're looking for. I think it's critical to work together to share the information.

[4:15 p.m.]

It's the same as when another member has a critical piece of information on health care that they share it with the appropriate parties so that work can be documented and dealt with. It's the same as me having information and making sure not only that directing people to websites - but if I have that information as an MLA, I need to get that information out. I can post it on Facebook, I can have pamphlets written and printed off and in my office for people who drop by to have a chat.

With that, I close my talk, and I just want to say that I think the Nova Scotia Health Authority is working in the right direction.

MR. SPEAKER: The time allotted for the member's comments has expired.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased this afternoon to say a few words about Bill No. 67, amendments to the Health Authorities Act. I believe this bill is a

good complement to Bill No. 64, and of course it's also a good complement to Bill No. 22, a Progressive Conservative bill that requires the Health Authority to make public information on a weekly basis about how many times a Code Census was called at a hospital.

I recall a few years ago accompanying my late wife to the Halifax Infirmary to receive some tests. She had been a nurse at Camp Hill, she had been a nurse at the Halifax Infirmary for a number of years, and while we were waiting, this alarm goes off. I turned to her and asked, what's that all about? She said, that's a common occurrence around here, that's a Code Census. I said, what's a Code Census? This is when the hospital is working at overcapacity, there's not enough beds.

Of course, being a student of history, at that moment I think about the Canada Health Act, where accessibility in a timely manner is a fundamental Canadian concept. Then I asked her, how is it we ask our nurses, our health care professionals, to work in conditions like that? She said, you just sort of get used to it. The background that I come from, education - okay, I can see that, sometimes a classroom may have its challenges, and you just get used to those learning conditions.

Why do we accept that? I can clearly tell in this House there's a consensus, we want our systems in health care to be open and transparent, that is just the way of systems today, and that's a good thing. My background, I can recall a time when you kept your marks in education, your VP or principal would ask you to open up the books. Now through the PowerSchool system, marks are 24 hours, or live. You can easily access them. That is the way of a lot of systems, so of course we can agree that things must be open and transparent.

Oftentimes, I think the data that is being collected and put out there for Nova Scotians, as it relates to our health care system, is quite frankly, a little offside. Certainly, we freely admit on this side of the House, the stories we are hearing from Nova Scotians as it relates to our health care system, are quite frankly appalling.

I love this province, as I know every single MLA does, but we all need to take a step back and recognize that there are profound problems, that there is a crisis in our health care system. With 100,000 people in this province unable to access primary care, we all have to take a few steps back and analyze what is really going on. Certainly, years ago, when I was explained what a Code Census was, it really opened my eyes to a lot of things. Why do we accept that? Why aren't we openly talking about this in our province?

You will hear from others that, no, everything is fine. Go to a website. Check this out. The data says that there are some bumps in the road, but we're on the right path. Well, I just can't accept that, Mr. Speaker, because I value human experience way too much. Data is important. Data must always be part of the solution. But data must never come at the cost of listening to the experiences of average, everyday Nova Scotians. When I have a mother of five children come into my office and say that she does not have access to

primary care, I say we can do so much better, and I encourage this government to do so much better.

We have to recognize that some of the data that we have doesn't answer some fundamental questions we need to get addressed in order to improve health care. How many patients were placed on in-patient floors during a Code Census? How many patients requiring long-term care are in the hospital awaiting places? How many people sought treatment at the Halifax Infirmary each day, and how long? How often are ambulances waiting in the emergency department to offload patients? How many surgeries were cancelled at hospitals? When I hear stories from my colleagues from Cape Breton that there was no ambulance service on the Island, we have to ask ourselves, why do we accept that? Why do we accept that, Mr. Speaker?

I have no doubt, and I do not doubt for a moment that this government, in their own way, is attempting to try to deal with these situations, but there needs to be a sense of urgency. With a sense of urgency comes a call to action, and we need to take action to ensure that the Nova Scotians who are going without primary care get it in a timely manner. All of us in this House, I appeal to your sense of justice. I appeal to your sense of putting public policy in place that maximizes the common good.

Is it acceptable to us to have a province with so many people without access to primary care? The number one program that matters to Nova Scotians is the health care system. We need to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that we develop incentives to attract and retain doctors to this province.

All three bills, whether they're PC or NDP, are about injecting openness and transparency in our Health Authority. Openness and transparency, I don't think anyone is going to dispute that. Certainly, we are saying on this side of the House that there are major, major problems. Let's figure out what the source of the problem is. I believe that fundamentally we can trace the source of the doctor shortage to our over-reliance, our emphasis, on centralizing, whether it's centralizing health care or possibly - and we'll see what happens in the days ahead - centralizing our education system.

I can remember being in high school in the mid-1990s, and I remember the big fashion at the time was amalgamating municipalities. From Vancouver to Halifax, Miramichi to Montreal, amalgamation, centralization, was the name of the game. We were going to produce efficiencies. We were going to produce more balanced books. All right, on this side, we agree that fiscal prudence is critical. But it came at the cost, Mr. Speaker, of people feeling connected to their communities. The community that I represent in Dartmouth - just ask anyone from Dartmouth. They often feel that they lost their identity in amalgamation. The City of Montreal years ago voted against amalgamation because they felt they lost their identity. They felt as though they lost their local voice.

We need to recognize, Mr. Speaker, that centralization is not always the answer. I think of the community of Clare in the constituency of Clare-Digby, where they do not have a doctor shortage because in Clare the local community was empowered to take ownership of attracting and retaining doctors.

Then just 10 kilometres down the road in Weymouth, for many years Dr. Westby indicated that he was going to be retiring, but no plan was put in place to attract a doctor to Weymouth. I think of my colleague, the member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage who has been saying that we need a doctor for the Passage, only for it at times to go unnoticed.

Is centralization the way we should be moving forward? I'm not completely convinced of it. I think there is a desire on the part of Nova Scotians to have their local voices heard. Perhaps centralization, whether it's health care, possibly in education, maybe that's not necessarily the path we should be going down.

The Health Authority consumes a large percentage of the province's budget - over \$4 billion - yet often Nova Scotians don't have any real information to measure how effectively their money is being spent. They often don't know any of the information that Bill No. 22 requires. They don't know things such as wait times in emergency rooms, numbers of people at an ER who don't have a family doctor, or the number of Nova Scotians who get mental health services in an acceptable time.

Let's be honest, people don't know any of this information, but they believe the system is in crisis. You listen to the stories of people who come into our constituency offices. The phone calls many of our offices get are a clear indication. When Dr. Gregus in Dartmouth retired, I know the Dartmouth MLAs - our constituency offices, and possibly Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage, were inundated. I don't need data to tell me how people feel - just listening to what's going on.

That should be our call to action. There should be a sense of urgency to ensure that Nova Scotians have access to primary care. The bottom line is, a great many Nova Scotians don't have the confidence that the health system will be there when they need it. Those of us in this House - it is our responsibility to make sure the people have confidence in the social programs that have been built up in this province and to ensure they have access to those programs in a timely manner.

Most working Nova Scotians get performance reviews at work, and their performance is measured against expectations. Our children get report cards where they are given a numeric and alphabetic measure of their work. Every four years Nova Scotians give us, as MLAs, a performance review. They measure our actions against our promises and what we can deliver. But because no data about performance is public to Nova Scotians in our health care system, often they cannot judge the performance of the authority.

The people of Nova Scotia want their systems to be responsive to their needs, and oftentimes the Nova Scotia Health Authority fails in delivering some very basic services - returning phone calls, returning emails. What people want is to know that the system will be there for them. We have a responsibility to make sure that happens.

I believe that most, if not all, of the statistics that Bill No. 22 and Bill No. 67 call for are collected by the Health Authority. They need to be made public. How can the organization improve if they don't know how they are doing? It is only a small step to make that information public. In this information age, it is not a difficult process.

[4:30 p.m.]

People say you can't fix a problem until you admit it. So even if the statistics are bad, make it public to Nova Scotians. The stories we are hearing tell us that there is a crisis and that crisis, I hope, will create a sense of urgency on the part of this government to put a plan in place to improve the accessibility for people to access health care in this province, for Nova Scotians to have confidence that there is a plan to attract and retain doctors in our beautiful Province of Nova Scotia.

I encourage all members of this House to think about that sense of urgency because it is beyond a shadow of a doubt the crisis of our time. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the members who have spoken so far on Bill No. 67. I hope that what has been discussed resonates with all members of the House but, more importantly, with government members and the Minister of Health and Wellness, and the Premier, who are in a position to make the changes that we are asking for in Bill No. 67.

I've been in the House long enough to know that it's not too often that Opposition bills are passed and accepted and fully implemented, and I understand that. But I would hope the government would look at this and say, here's a piece of legislation that will hopefully in the end improve access to care, improve health services here in our province.

This is not just a piece of legislation that an Opposition Party is bringing forward just to hammer the current government over the head with if this data is released. The information that we outlined in the bill - I'll talk a bit about them as we go through this - it's not our position to have this implemented to do that. I appreciate the member opposite's attempt to try to justify why government shouldn't do this - they're collecting some of this data and that's fine. I do agree with that.

Ultimately, I don't know if the member missed the point or the government has missed the point on this piece of legislation. It's about accountability. Even though it does

deal with a lot of the information and data and services that the Nova Scotia Health Authority provides Nova Scotians, it's about government accountability. By providing this information to Nova Scotians, Nova Scotians can judge the government on their attempt to address some of the serious issues that we see in health care, and we're not doing this and we don't just think of this piece of legislation in our capacity as an Opposition Party.

Our caucus, our Party, has believed in the fact that we need to engage, we need to educate. You need to be transparent with the people of this province to ensure the government is making the right decisions as you move forward and especially as you address issues in health care. When we were in government, the issue of the day when we came into government I remember was emergency room closures. The numbers of closures across this province were escalating at a rate that was really alarming, which was dangerous for communities - people weren't getting the access to emergency care. At the time we asked Dr. Ross to come up with ideas and a path forward. Of course, the Ross report, as we often refer to it, was created, and the Collaborative Emergency Centre model was implemented in the province.

But we didn't just stop there and say let's just implement a new model, hurray for the NDP Government, we're going to address the issue that was facing us at that time that was kind of hammering each community pretty hard. We also agreed there needed to be accountability to that. Nova Scotians needed to know that the changes we were going to make at that time - were they going to be good, were they going to be bad?

That's why we brought in the Emergency Department Accountability Act to create a report for government, of course at the time for the NDP Government. But if the NDP Government wasn't in government forever - which no party will be - the next government would be required to provide those reports to ensure that the accountability of those changes could be seen by those in the communities that are affected. That report is a report that we continue to see, and those numbers definitely have been alarming for us to see them increase.

It's in the same context around the Health Authority Act, and the responsibility of NSHA and the government in providing health care services to Nova Scotians. As we heard earlier, government needs to be accountable. They need to be transparent, and we've just gone through a major transition over the last four years, by the change of the district health authorities into the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK. This is a major change in how things are reported, and this piece of legislation could assist the government down the road in educating Nova Scotians that that was the right move, that we're accountable, we want to be transparent, that the investment that they made in the amalgamation of the district health authorities is working, and this piece of legislation could help them support the transition into the one amalgamated health authority.

Often, if anybody travels outside Canada into the US - I don't know if the people would recognize, you're travelling down the interstate, you see a billboard, and you see an

ad for a hospital, and underneath it you see the wait times in that emergency department. I've often been asked why we don't have that in Nova Scotia. I don't think we need to go to that degree right now, but I do believe in reporting to the people who are providing the financing for our health system. I do believe government owes it to them to report certain aspects of health care delivery to them and, in this piece of legislation, I believe it would do that.

Nova Scotians don't spend every minute of their day online looking at the wait times that are reported online, but that has been going on for many years. I know under the Progressive Conservative Government there was a push towards reporting those wait times online. I know in my capacity as Minister of Health and Wellness in 2012, there was a push to increase the amount of information that was put online, so that Nova Scotians could hold government to account for what they're investing in, what their priorities are, and how we as a province can improve health care delivery.

I recall at the time - I believe we were trying to move on children's mental health wait times and the numbers weren't great. I remember getting some advice saying, no, we shouldn't put that up because people will get mad that there's a wait time for adolescent mental health, but we knew that that was what we needed to do as a government. There was investment along with that to try to address mental health youth access to care, and that is continuing on.

I believe that with the reporting of that type of information, governments regardless of what stripe they are can be held to higher accountability when it comes to what their priorities are, and how we are going to move forward at addressing the crisis and the issues that we see in health care.

A lot of former colleagues of mine who were paramedics are reaching out to me, engaging me with some of the pressures that we're seeing in our hospitals around the province. This piece of legislation, I think, could go a long way into educating Nova Scotians on the pressures that the system sees on a regular basis.

The unfortunate thing with my former colleagues is that they feel like they can reach out to me, but by no means will they reach out publicly and report some of the things that they're encountering as they work daily in the health care system. EMC, for example, has a social media policy around what medics can and cannot retweet and put on Facebook. A lot of them are afraid if they do speak up when there are no ambulances on Cape Breton Island to respond to an emergency. They're afraid for their job, Mr. Speaker.

I think we need to ensure that there are avenues that report wait times and the issues that we see here in Bill No. 67, so that government will be held to account when the budget comes - for example, Mr. Speaker, when investments and announcements around this province are made to try to address health care services and health care programs. In this, there were about eight areas of health care that the Health Authority should be prepared to

inform Nova Scotians about at each emergency room in a hospital: how long it takes for them to register, admission targets, wait times, the average registration-to-admission wait times for each day, the number of alternative level of care beds and long-term care patients who are awaiting placements elsewhere.

Some of that information is being kept and reported now, Mr. Speaker, but it's everywhere. Even in my own office, when I get calls for wait times for surgeries or other procedures, it takes a while for myself and my staff to find out exactly where to locate those wait times, where to try to advocate for that constituent to maybe ask their GP or their specialist if they're going to move to another area of the province to maybe seek treatment.

What this bill would do is create one area where there's a quarterly report on all these different areas within health care. It would be much easier for people to access that information. It would show Nova Scotians that the government is open, that they're transparent, and that they want to be accountable.

In a couple weeks, when we have our budget tabled, there will be investments, and the Minister of Health and Wellness and the Premier go around the province afterwards making all those little announcements. Those people who are affected in those areas can look at a quarterly report for example, and say, you know what? In our area, we know that there are issues around people waiting in a hospital bed before they get to long-term care. Is government addressing that? Are they investing in that in our communities?

I think ensuring that we have a piece of legislation like this, similar to the Emergency Department Accountability Act and the report that comes from that, that holds the government to account. It'll hold the next government to account, whoever that may be, Mr. Speaker. I think it would go a long way in showing Nova Scotians that the government is serious about addressing issues, especially in health care.

As was said earlier, this piece of legislation deals with an aspect of our budget that is over \$4 billion, Mr. Speaker - \$4 billion being spent to try to address the needs of Nova Scotians from one end of the province to the other in health care. Would you not, as a government, think that a piece of legislation like Bill No. 67 could hopefully educate Nova Scotians not only on where the pressures are in our hospital system and in our health care system, but show Nova Scotians that the government takes it seriously, that they make it a priority, and that they are investing in it? I believe that's what is behind Bill No. 67, and I would hope that the government would reconsider having a piece of legislation like this pass through the House.

If the Liberal Government wants to bring in their own bill, go right ahead. We'll stand and support it, Mr. Speaker. Similar to the previous bill that we just debated, we're kind of fighting an uphill battle trying to get information, trying to get data out of the government, out of the department, out of the Nova Scotia Health Authority. I don't know

how many freedom of information requests our caucus puts out on a monthly basis. That shouldn't be the way we get information from the government.

I have been on the Public Accounts Committee for years now. It has been very frustrating over the last year or two trying to get information from government officials about the investment in health care, about the changes that we have seen with the amalgamation of the district health authorities. We try to make an informed decision when we get up in this House and when we decide to criticize the government on a lack of initiative or a lack of priority when it comes to health care, Mr. Speaker.

I think this bill could help the government tell the story of where they are going to go in the next four years, three and a half years in their mandate, in ensuring that Nova Scotians who pay the \$4 billion to have health care services in our province, that that money and their money is being used to address the issues that are facing them every day.

[4:45 p.m.]

With that, Mr. Speaker, I hope the government reconsiders this bill and we see the changes that are needed so that the government will be more accountable to Nova Scotians, especially when it comes to health care.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 68.

Bill No. 68 - Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: This is a piece of legislation whose time has come. Some may note that we introduced a version of this bill in the last legislative sitting in response to a positive indication from the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs that they were ready to fix the glaring hole in this area. The response to that bill at that time was that it didn't go far enough, that we weren't contemplating fathers and adoptive parents in providing leave to municipal councillors, so we've rewritten the bill because, again, this is legislation whose time has come.

This is a simple bill. It's needed because the current situation municipally is that councillors must put a request before council if they need to miss more than three meetings for any reason. In the case of parenthood, this means that a parent must beg leave of their council colleagues to have access to time to be with their children and adjust to the demands of parenthood and public life. That request is then put to a vote. One councillor has described this to me as a nerve-racking experience. I call it humiliating.

As a society, we acknowledge that parental bonding is hugely important in the development of a child. As Nova Scotians and Canadians, we accommodate this via employment insurance for maternal and parental leave, which we just heard yesterday will be expanded to fathers. Everyone in this Chamber says they are committed to gender parity in politics. As elected officials are not eligible for EI or the like provisions, this bill amends this key gap, a gap which presents a clear barrier for young women and parents to entering politics.

This bill allows the time and flexibility for new parents to determine how to juggle the demands of parenthood and public life. Consistent with EI provisions and labour standards this bill allows for new parents, once a councillor has filed evidence with the Clerk of expecting a child, that a councillor may miss up to 52 weeks of meetings without requesting permission to do so.

As MLAs, we spend the majority of our time serving and representing our constituencies. We know that none of us could disappear for a year and hope to be re-elected but those of us with children also know that we often have to juggle responsibilities and timelines to balance work and family life, especially in the early days.

Municipal councils across Nova Scotia vary widely in composition, compensation, and the level of commitment demanded by councillors. We're therefore offering a broad, blanket prescription that will certainly be operationalized in different ways by different councillors in the months and years to come. Even today, with the historic number of women represented in this Chamber - the kudos for which go only to those women, their hard work, and their supporters, by the way - we are still not close to achieving gender parity. Not only that but we are looking at the elimination of the one order of elected governance where women have achieved and surpassed parity, that is our elected school boards.

In December, we sent a draft of this bill to all municipal councils in Nova Scotia. We've spoken with councillors across the province and recently presented to the Executive Council of the Halifax Regional Municipality, who were very supportive of this effort. Three municipalities - Inverness, Richmond, and Kentville - have all officially supported our bill. The Cape Breton Regional Council just yesterday passed a resolution supporting province-wide rules for parental leave for councillors.

There's growing support from our province's municipalities on this issue, and we should move forward with these changes to ensure that women and young people know that parenting is not a barrier to political participation.

The Parental Committee of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities includes representatives from municipalities, the Status of Women, and Municipal Affairs, and was struck in December after the introduction of our bill. We know that the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities is hard at work on this file, but that is not an excuse not to legislate

in this area. The report of this group has also recommended leave provisions for expectant parents. Further to that, the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities is suggesting that all councils create standing orders such that these rules could be operationalized council by council.

When I had the opportunity to speak to the vice-president of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, I said to him what I'm saying to all of you in this Chamber. This is a piece of legislation whose time has come. Just as an individual councillor shouldn't have to stand before all of their colleagues and have them vote on their leave, the same as if they wanted to go to Disneyland or they were getting knee surgery, they also shouldn't have to vote council by council on whether these are provisions that ought or ought not to be implemented.

If a young person wants to run for elected office, they should be able to know that, legislatively, they will be protected and accommodated if and when they decide to start a family. It's common sense, and it's a glaring error.

We know that we also have this error at the provincial level. In this Chamber, there is no leave provision at all for an expectant parent, not just mothers but anybody. We're also working in tandem on this effort through the House of Assembly Management Commission, and we hope to have positive news from that group soon.

Again, we know that the Premier and the minister have been broadly supportive of these efforts, and we appreciate it. As my colleague the member for Sackville-Cobequid recently stated, if the government wants to bring in their own bill that looks a lot like this and pass it and give themselves applause, go right ahead. I'll applaud right with you, and I'll sign on.

I'm saying here today in this Chamber that this is a piece of legislation whose time has come. We are in a particular legislative moment. Inside and outside of this Chamber and all Chambers at all orders of government, politicians and staff are grappling with the ways in which we know that our political culture is still pervaded by patriarchy and misogyny. We know this.

We are in the moment of Me Too. We don't have an opportunity to talk about it in this Chamber. We haven't done it in this sitting, for obvious reasons. It is painful. It's painful to talk about. It's painful to believe that we have these structures that are still in place and that there are so many invisible and visible barriers to full participation in public life, especially for women. It has been in place for centuries, and it will take time to dismantle.

This is one small move in that direction but, practically and symbolically, my argument is that it's a very, very important move. Publicly, we have seen scandals pop up now and again in politics over the last few months. But privately we know, I would say

especially the women in this Chamber, that these conversations are happening constantly. They are happening constantly.

Are we products and participants in a political culture that fully supports our participation? Here is an opportunity for all members of this House to show that the answer to that question is yes, we are members of that.

We have seen supports signalled. We have been told that the last version of this bill didn't go far enough. We have amended the bill. We have circulated it for feedback. We come to you now with what we fully believe is a simple one-page bill that fixes a glaring gap and barrier to women's support in the political process.

I'm asking all of you to please support this bill and let it move forward. It is a piece of legislation whose time has come.

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

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'm honoured to rise in my place to speak on this bill and in this debate. I'll start by recognizing the member opposite for her commitment and her passion. I, too, agree that the time has come to make these changes. I want to appreciate all of the members whom I have had conversations with since the first bill was introduced about making the necessary changes to ensure that we do the right thing and that we take away all barriers for women and for young families who want to seek elected municipal office.

I can assure the members of this: as I hold this portfolio as the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I will do all I can in my power to ensure that we remove all the barriers to ensure that anybody who wants to seek elected office in the Province of Nova Scotia at a municipal level will do so.

I want to start by recognizing why we're having this debate, and there are two individuals who started this debate. In my opinion, they are the ones who receive all the credit for why we can stand here in this House to have this debate and why changes will eventually come because of their work: Megan Hodges, who is a Kings County councillor, and Deputy Mayor Lutz, for highlighting this issue. They were the ones who brought it forward. That is the reason we're having this debate today. They have championed this from day one. I don't know if you are watching this today, but thank you on behalf of all of us for bringing this forward, and thank you for staying committed to this as we move forward. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, that's really how this started. They brought this issue forward and when it came forward, for me, as the minister of this portfolio, we moved very quickly.

We struck a committee that consisted of representatives from the Department of Municipal Affairs, and Deputy Mayor Lutz, who agreed to chair the committee which was fantastic. She was involved since day one. We also had representatives - Don Holmesdale, who is the Chair of the Kingston Village Commission, and who is also very important in this because as we draft legislation, it's important to reflect not only our municipalities, but our village commissions, to ensure that everybody is represented within that legislation. Vicki Brooke, a policy analyst with the Municipality of Kings, and Julie Gibson, the policy and business initiatives coordinator with HRM, are two of the representatives from the municipal administrators who also played a big part in doing the work that eventually will come before this House. Shannon Bennett, who many know, is one of our directors within Municipal Affairs; Nancy Bray; and Timothy Habinski, who is the warden of the Municipality of the County of Annapolis.

These are some of the members who stepped up right away, who took the call from us that said we need support, we want consultation right across the province. The Advisory Council on the Status of Women was involved with this, and they travelled across the province, they talked to councillors, they talked to their stakeholders, they looked across the country at best practices, and they have drafted work that I'm reviewing, that I look forward to bringing to this House in the very near future. This is their work. This is going to be their legislation. They took the lead on this, and the time has come for that legislation to become a reality.

One of the most important roles that our department plays is ensuring that we have that communication between our partners. We've seen that multiple times. I use the example of the Joint Municipal Accountability and Transparency Committee from last year, which brought forward recommendations around municipal expenses, posting expenses online, ensuring that residents had that ability to see where their municipal representatives were allocating resources. That legislation also was a product of our department reaching out to the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, reaching out to the municipal administrators, and reaching out to municipal councillors and councils across the province to talk about their best practices.

They talked about what they could do and where they needed support with implementing that policy. As a result, that policy has passed through here. We have municipalities who are embracing that. They are posting their expenses online. They are looking at their codes of conduct, and we work very closely with them.

This process is very similar in nature. We have a situation on our hands where I believe it's - I can't even believe we're having a conversation that someone who wants to start a family has to bring that to council and have that debate. That's incredibly wrong. It's incredibly wrong and we need to change it. We reached out to our partners, and I'm really excited about the work that they've done. I'm excited about the legislation that is coming forward and I can say that it's very detailed. It reflects their conversations with councils across the province. It looks at council policies that will be drafted in support of

the legislation and, as well, it clearly defines councils across the province, whether you're a regional municipality, a smaller municipality, or a village.

[5:00 p.m.]

That's important moving forward. I appreciate the comments from the member opposite, but there are some things within that legislation that I saw that we would need to tighten up. For example, I know that you talked about some level of consultation with some of the municipalities, and you had a conversation with the vice-president of the UNSM . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would just ask the honourable member not to refer to other members in the House as "you," but through the Chair.

Carry on, please, sir.

MR. MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member had done some preliminary work and had conversations with stakeholders across the province. I can say that the legislation that the committee is working on is reflective of the entire province. It's reflective of our municipal staff, our municipal councillors, and the members of their communities.

Looking at some of the legislation that has been presented, I question a bit of the level of consultation. We know that our legislation that we're working on is very strong. As I said, it's very representative.

One of the other things within the legislation is we want to ensure that there are no barriers for someone who wants to take that leave, but we also have to ensure that within those council policies there is interim representation, so that the residents they represent have a different conduit to reach out for municipal services or support while that parent or that politician takes leave. That's something that's not reflective in the legislation. Those are some of the examples that I'll be looking at when I see the work that's come forward from the group.

I'll just finish by saying that there's nobody in this House who disagrees that the time has come to change this. This is long overdue. We need to do whatever we can to ensure that young families, women, parents - we want them to seek public office. We want to ensure there are no barriers in their way to do what we all love to do. We all put our name on the ballot. We're here. We love our jobs. We love representing our communities.

It is an honour to serve at any level of government. I had the opportunity to serve as a municipal councillor with the CBRM. It was an honour to serve at that level and be that grassroots politician who's dealing with the day-to-day concerns and desires of my community. It's an honour to do it, and everybody should have that opportunity. Everybody should have that opportunity without any barriers in their way.

I appreciate the debate moving forward, and I really appreciate the comments of my colleague across the floor. We will be moving forward. We support that change is needed, but the change that is coming and what will be presented to this House is the work of the UNSM. It is the work of the Association of Municipal Administrators. It is the work of the two elected representatives who brought it forward. It is the work of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. It is the work of councillors across Nova Scotia.

They've done a tremendous amount of work, and I believe everybody will be very supportive of the legislation when it comes. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I do want to commend my colleagues for Dartmouth South and for Sydney-Whitney Pier on endorsing the bill. I think I heard the member opposite say they would be bringing in their own bill on this.

Certainly the PC caucus recognizes that the time has come for this type of legislation and this type of clarity, particularly at the municipal level. I'm quite proud to say that it was really coming out of Kings County. We have two young female councillors, Emily Lutz and Meg Hodges, who have - one has had a child, and one is expecting.

We're very proud of those two young women in politics, and we would not want to see anything inhibit more young women from getting involved in politics on this - or adoptive fathers or parents. We approve of the legislation, and believe that it is a step forward.

The problem that I understand it was trying to address is that after missing three meetings without excuse, or just simply missing three meetings, you have to provide an excuse. It would require the mother or the adoptive parent to go back to the council each meeting and state why they weren't there. It seems rather onerous for that when, clearly, pregnancy can take much more than three weeks or three months, depending on the cycle of the council meeting.

It would seem that it would be common sense that a municipal council would not let a councillor go for this type of reason, but common sense isn't that common and sometimes municipal councils can be places where there are very sharp divisions. We believe that the time is right for this type of legislation.

As I said, Meg Hodges is my own councillor and I can tell you that it wasn't very long ago, only a few days ago, that I was at a meeting where her young child was also present. So she is not only not taking that year off, her young child is often at council meetings. I admire her courage and her pluck to do that. She sometimes has an assistant there with her, at her own expense I'm sure, to do that.

We're very proud of these two councillors in Kings County, I want you to know, and I think the time has come for this type of legislation. We're very pleased to see it come forward.

Certainly, to have time to bond with your young child is very valuable, too, for fathers and for adoptive parents. Obviously in the case of adoption or for the father having a young child in the home can turn the home upside down, there's no doubt about that. So you need time to deal with that.

I believe it is this legislation, and I know our caucus believes that this legislation, the time has come for that. We believe that it will be a step forward, that it will be something that has been, maybe in some slight way, prohibitive to women being involved in politics and that it would be an improvement.

We certainly recognize there needs to be consultation with the UNSM and recognize the minister's comments about his steps to have consultation with the UNSM. I realize that is maybe a small flaw in the bill, but we do recognize not every municipality has a clerk any more. The clerks are gone. In many municipalities, the clerk has been superseded by the CAO, so maybe the terminology in that relation, but I recognize that's a very small issue in this bill and certainly could be overcome.

We do want to speak in favour of the bill and in the fact that we do not want to see the Rules of the Legislature or the municipal councils to be prohibitive or onerous to women being involved, or in fact adoptive parents or fathers. We certainly recognize that this is not only an issue at the municipal level, but as the member for Dartmouth South has said, it is also an issue at this level of government. What are the rules in our case?

I think obviously the public has very strong goodwill towards people having children, of course, so we would not be wanting to be punitive, even lacking rules. But it would be a better situation if we knew what the rules were and I believe that it is also the case at the federal level that the rules are also unclear and need to be firmed up.

We recognize that anyone who is in government is, in fact, a term employee. We're all on contracts, so to speak, with our own voters, and one of the main things is that that contract will be renewed at the next election cycle. For someone to take a full year off, it may not be possible to get re-elected, but in this day and age an enormous amount of work can be done from home, too, connecting with constituents. So, would a young mother take a full year off? Well I don't know, I can tell you that Councillor Hodges has been very diligent about attending meetings even as it is now, even with very favourable reaction from her own council to her taking time off, she has made every effort to be there.

We know in this day and age that being accessible and available to our constituents is of primary importance and in fact we will all face that our term of our contract will end or be renewed at the next election. But nevertheless, I think it would be very helpful to the

process for it to have this clarified, and whether this bill goes forward or not of course is up to the majority Liberal Government. From what I think I heard the Minister of Municipal Affairs say, he intends to introduce his own bill. I think that's what I heard him say.

I'm sure we will support this bill or the minister's bill, whichever bill does come forward, because we do believe that this needs to be clarified. We see this as being an acceptable bill, and we would support this one, maybe changing the wording on clerk. Other than that, I would encourage the government to bring this bill forward and support it.

With those words, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak and take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Thank you to all of my colleagues who have spoken today on this bill. It gives me great pleasure to speak in support of it. I want to thank especially my colleague the member for Dartmouth South for championing this matter in this House and in our caucus and working so hard to get this bill here today. It truly is - and we did not compare notes before I started speaking - legislation whose time has come. It would be really wonderful to see this Assembly, which has the highest number of female MLAs in Nova Scotia's history, come together to pass it.

I'm going to try not to repeat too much that has been already said, but I will add a few comments and maybe some personal experience. Just over six years ago, I was working with my colleagues at Neptune Theatre making a new play. At the end of a long rehearsal day - it was my birthday; I remember this very clearly - I opened my e-mail to find out that a play that I had created a year or two before had been accepted to a very prestigious theatre festival in Montreal. I burst out crying. Wait for it. I wonder why. I burst out crying. My colleagues were saying, what's wrong? I said, oh my God, my play - we're going to Festival TransAmériques. They were like, that's awesome. Why are you crying? I said, because I'm pregnant. I was overcome with emotion.

But actually, it wasn't just that I was full of hormones. It's that getting pregnant when you are an actor is actually very complicated because a pregnancy and having a baby when you are a self-employed artist is not without challenges. If someone chooses to have a baby, it usually means that one gets out of the game for a little while. In a male-dominated world, as theatre and performance is, it can be really, really difficult to get back in that game. It's really tough.

For my part, I was actually very lucky because, as it happened, I had become an employee of my company recently before that, so I was able to collect EI benefits, which most artists can't do. My show went to Montreal, and it got great acclaim, but I wasn't there. I stayed home with my baby and was trying to figure out my path of motherhood.

AN HON. MEMBER: What was it called?

MS. LEBLANC: *The Debacle*. The whole thing was a debacle. Thank you for that excellent question.

I tell this story just to illustrate the difficult choices that women must face in male-dominated professions, which let's face it, are most professions. In many places in society, we do see fit to honour and facilitate the contribution that women make by doing the work of child-bearing and -rearing by offering EI benefits. But there are still some areas of work where this doesn't happen. When it doesn't, the women are left to advocate for themselves and humbly request special consideration and permission to take time off to welcome a baby into their lives.

We have already talked about the two municipal councillors who, as my colleague said, faced what must have been a humiliating experience to have to argue for their own time off to their councils and colleagues. I actually cannot believe that we are here now debating this and that this has not already changed.

I really do truly appreciate the minister's support of this bill and the government's support of this bill. But given that we have said 15 times already today that this is a bill whose time has come, I would really like him to commit to passing either the government's legislation or our legislation with amendments, if that is what's appropriate, in this sitting of the Legislature.

Since this particular Assembly began, there has been much talk in this House about women's equality, protections, gender parity, and much self-congratulation for it being an Assembly with an historically high number of female MLAs. This is all great, but what is the good of all of that if we do not stand here and make policies and laws that actually have an impact on women having full access to politics, specifically, and their worlds in general? If we do not speak truth to power, to our power as politicians in this House, how will things ever get better?

As lawmakers, we have the duty to respond to our society and help facilitate changes that give women more equity. There are many places that we need to do better when it comes to our duty to women, but this is a debate for another day, or for perhaps many other days in this sitting.

With this bill, we have the chance to do the right thing, to offer women who are in municipal office the ability to choose. To choose to get pregnant, have a baby, and care for that baby in a way that allows them to juggle the strains of family with the work of holding public office. It offers these people the guarantee that there are policies in place should they decide to become parents, so that they don't have to advocate for themselves and hope that the council they are on or work for is generous enough to allow them some time. So if we want women to enter politics, as we say we do, we must pass this bill to remove one of

the barriers for women to run and succeed. This will not solve all of the problems, but it will solve one and that is something.

So, again, it is really great that the government wants to do this, wants to pass this legislation or some form of this legislation, but our concern is getting this done as soon as possible. So, we hope that the government will introduce and pass legislation this sitting, or work with us and propose amendments on our bill, so that we can get it passed and it can be done. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that concludes business for the day. I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, Thursday, March 1, 2018, from the hours of 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Following the daily routine and Question Period, we will move to second reading of Bill No. 65, the Psychologists Act; and Bill No. 70, the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to rise to meet tomorrow, March 1st, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

We have now reached the moment of interruption, and the topic for debate as submitted by the honourable member for Cumberland North is:

“Therefore be it resolved that Liberal mismanagement has caused a crisis in health care, and that the government seems determined to deal the same fate to Nova Scotia’s education system.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

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

EDUCATION - SYSTEM MANAGEMENT: EFFECT - ADVERSE

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, as a health professional with almost four decades of experience, it is entirely frustrating for me to sit in this Legislature and listen to members of the Legislature introduce what I would call common sense. We should not have to have an amendment to an Act to require boards of importance of the Health

Authority to release their minutes. We shouldn't have to bring it to the Legislature to ask the House to ensure that a health board actually has members filled in its position.

I can tell you, every health professional I ever worked with would not want to know that the Health Authority board doesn't contain any health professionals. We would consider that an insult to every health care professional out there who's working overtime through their lunch breaks, coming in early, filling shifts for other staff who are unable to be there. We want to have collaborative health centres, yet we can't get an Opposition bill passed because it wasn't the government's idea; that's not my idea of collaboration.

So the bills that were introduced today, which are such simple changes as making something visible to the public - we need to start showing that we know how to collaborate, and I'm going to challenge the government now to pass those bills without delay. But we're worried, Mr. Speaker, the constituents are wondering if the mess that we have in health care is going to translate into a mess in education.

There are a lot of people out there who aren't exactly sure how the Glaze report recommendations are going to be implemented, and of course we are waiting for the legislation ourselves to find out how that is. The most common comment we get is, I hope they don't do to education what they did to health care. You may not want to take that coming from an Opposition MLA, but when you read what the Auditor General is saying about health care - just this October, he said that the government wasn't meeting its requirements in terms of oversight, accountability, and even hiring practices.

One of the examples from the October 2017 Auditor General's Report said that the Nova Scotia Health Authority has not determined how to measure success. He indicated there were 55 physician vacancies as of October 2017, so doing the math, I'm not exactly sure how the Premier managed to hire 100 when there were only 55 vacancies. I'm assuming that even though he didn't give me the number, that there must have been a number of them who passed away, retired, or got fed up and left the province.

When we're talking about hiring issues, as somebody who worked in the system and managed a very large department, I know it's a challenge. I also know that the accreditation report on the Nova Scotia Health Authority, which was 177 pages long, had one common theme. It didn't matter which department in health care you were talking about - they could not hire enough staff for any department. So when you look at the government budget, they underspent their budgets because they could not hire staff.

I just had a text message from a concerned teacher - I won't say where - who said that they had a number of staff call in sick, there's no people to fill those vacancies. We have children who need extra support who are not getting it. We had an email that went out to all the parents in my constituency, looking for a French teacher because the students were going to French immersion and not getting taught.

When we look at the hiring practices of the Health Authority, there's a glaring gap. I'm going to use an example, and I'm hoping everybody is listening to this, we have been trying to recruit a family doctor and a clinical nurse practitioner for my constituency alone. The person responsible for that is going on maternity leave in the next week or so. The person responsible for recruitment and hiring is going on maternity leave and I asked, who is your replacement, because you are leaving in the next week or so. I was told yesterday that they haven't found someone yet. So here's an irony: the person who is responsible for hiring and recruiting hasn't been able to find someone to replace that person. Somebody else who has already got a very difficult job is going to have to do their job until they can find a replacement, and they had six months, Mr. Speaker, to find a replacement for this person who is doing a very important job.

Then we are looking at how are we going to recruit and find enough teachers. My son, who is 26, is now doing his PhD at Dalhousie University. He was going to be a school teacher until he found out that his own cousin, who is now a teacher, had to wait seven years before she could get a full-time permanent position with the school board. He decided he wasn't going to try that path, because there were too many teachers and too few jobs.

Now, just a few years later, we have a shortage. I can tell you from meeting with the parents and teachers over the recommendations from the Glaze report, they are deeply worried about what is going to happen to the teachers of this province because so many of them are now saying the same thing that I never thought I'd hear: I am just going to move to another province. I have too many doctors telling me that, now I have teachers telling me that. The comparison between the two is very, very worrisome. Depending on what legislation comes out, I expect we'll hear more of that from the teachers, not less.

When we talk about accountability, we are debating in the Legislature here as to whether to hold the Nova Scotia Health Authority board accountable. It makes no sense to me - they are accountable. It's a \$4.3 billion industry, and we can't even tell who is on the board and how often they show up, and what they are saying and doing.

We have the Auditor General talking about that. We also have him talking about that when it comes to school board governance. It's kind of ironic when I was reading his comments from 2015 in the November 2015 Report of the Auditor General: "The Education Act defines the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the Minister, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and school boards, but it does not clearly define the accountability relationship between school boards and the Minister."

It further says: "The Department has not established how often regional education officers are to report to the Department, or what information they should report." Furthermore: "We found the Department does not provide information on roles and accountabilities to newly-elected school board members."

Mr. Speaker, instead of defining a school boards' roles and responsibilities and ensuring what they were supposed to do, the department didn't do that. They didn't know how to manage the school board, so it's their decision to do away with the school board reps who might have been able to help them manage the school board administration.

When it comes to documentation, we have computerization in the education system. My kid can send in an e-mail to his teacher and get a response back within 20 minutes. I want my health records and I have to get my MLA to come and give me access once my family doctor is gone. That's what I had to do for a resident, and I had another resident who wanted to get a copy of her report from her mammogram and it took the MLA having to write a letter on her behalf for her to get a copy because she also didn't have a family doctor.

When we look at performance, we've got logjams of seniors waiting in acute-care beds, we've got a massive number of kids with autism waiting for diagnosis, we have ambulances that cannot unload their passengers - and I just had a call from another constituent where an ambulance showed up because a mother called and the paramedics decided the kid wasn't sick enough and refused to take the child to the hospital. When they finally went there through another route, the doctor said thank God you came when you did because that child's eye was full of infection and you might have lost it if you hadn't come.

In closing, I just want to say that we have problems with accountability, problems with hiring, problems with setting standards, problems with performance, problems with documentation, problems with structure. What the education system and teachers are telling me is exactly what I experienced as a health care professional, and I do not want to see the same thing happen to the education system that is currently happening in health care because the two are interconnected in ways that many cannot understand.

We have a faulty recipe going on in health care. We don't want to repeat it in education, and I encourage the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to take a longer period of time to listen to the teachers so that we can show them that we respect all that they do. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand here today to speak at late debate. I do want to say, before I get into the late debate topic, that the last round of debate on, I think it was Bill No. 68 - I think that is a good show of how great this Legislature can be. I think everyone is kind of on the same path, so I want to congratulate everyone on that debate.

The member from Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage is, you know, she's a rookie here but she's also a quick learn and she's been fantastic on her feet (Applause) and I agree that

there are some issues. Obviously, there are some issues with our health care system and our education system. I do know that I hear some of the same issues that the members in this Legislature hear but these issues aren't new. I'm not going to stand up here and point fingers at one particular side but I think that these issues are decades old, some of them. (Interruption) No, I didn't actually. I didn't.

But, you know, I think everybody's kind of had their hand in the pot and I understand that to make change sometimes can be difficult and we just went through an election and I keep hearing that people - from the opposite side - are upset with us and that we're a negative government, but the truth is we just went through an election and we received a second mandate. To me, that shows that the majority of the people who voted agree with the direction and agree with some of the tough decisions. I know it's not easy. Some of these tough decisions directly affected my house, directly affected my family, and directly affected the people I know and love in my community.

[5:30 p.m.]

I know these decisions are not easy. I do have faith that we're trying to do this to build a better, stronger Nova Scotia.

I want to talk about not just education but health. I also want to talk about the late debate topic. The late debate topic is: "Therefore be it resolved that Liberal mismanagement has caused a crisis in health care and that the government seems determined to deal the same fate to Nova Scotia's education system."

I'm not going to read this verbatim, but I want to follow this up with a message I received from an individual who doesn't live in my community but felt the need to reach out to have some input on this.

What was said was: how have we arrived here? We can no longer disagree without being personal, without attacking the other side. We care less about the facts and more about making our point. We use emotions instead of logic. I feel sadness and shame as I watch debates unfold in public. People commenting on the education level of MLAs, elected officials not returning phone calls, elected officials not answering the hard questions from their constituents. Is this the example for our young people? Be aggressive, be rude, and be hostile. Make assumptions about other people's professional integrity. What happened to phrases like, "We need to get this right, we haven't done our best for you"? We can do better. I believe there are good people on both sides . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I just want to remind the honourable member that it's okay to paraphrase but not to read directly. It's been a bit too long. Get to the point.

MR. MAGUIRE: I am paraphrasing. There are actually some words in here that I can't say, so . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Give us the spirit of the email, not the quotes.

MR. MAGUIRE: I am. Essentially, what this individual is saying is that we are a small province, we need to be nimble and creative, and we need to make steps forward. The person is saying to me - I have sent this off to a lot of people - that we need to put the power plays aside for the sake of the people who are tired, for the officials who feel personally attacked, and for the children who are watching.

It was probably one of the best emails I've ever received. I can say - maybe because I'm getting older, feeling older with three children, I find it's taking more and more - even over the last four years, I know there have been times when I've been heated and I've said things. I find it's taking more and more out of me to be negative and to be aggressive than it is to be positive and try to find solutions.

What I want to do today is put some of that stuff aside. Yes, there have been mistakes, and yes, there have been bumps in the road, but yes, there have been some positive things.

You know, if we're out of this Chamber and we're sitting in a lunchroom, some of the best conversations and best meetings I've had - one was recently with the member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage. She and I sat across from each other with some stakeholders. We didn't look at each other as Progressive Conservative or Liberal, and we were able to hopefully find some solutions. Some of the best conversations we have - everyone in this room can agree - is with members opposite in the lunchroom. The members for Dartmouth North, Dartmouth South, and all kinds of other places.

I have notes here, and I'm going to find it hard to stay on topic, because I think there is a lot of positive stuff being done. I think that it wears on the people of this province and I think it makes it look like this province isn't open for business and it isn't welcoming when every headline you see and every speech you hear is about how there is all this negativity in the health care system, there's all this negativity in the education system.

We've had some really positive announcements. Of course, there are issues, but we've had some positive announcements around a new immigration stream for doctors to come into this province. If I am a doctor who wants to immigrate to Nova Scotia, and I do a quick Google search, and all I see is negativity, why would I want to come here? The member from Pictou can say what he wants, but I have had a lot of people reach out to me and say they're tired of the negativity. I'll go back to say it's not just from the Opposition's side. It's from all sides.

I want to take a different approach and talk about how people are reaching out and saying some of the things they are proud of. They are proud of the residents' seats in Cape Breton. They're proud of the new doctor that just recently settled down in Timberlea. They're proud of the new doctors in Digby, the new doctors that have come to Cape Breton,

and the new doctors that have come to Halifax. Do we need more? Absolutely we need more, but we're working together to try to achieve this. They're proud of the investments that we're making in nurse practitioners, investments that have had an impact on the community of almost every person in this room, whether you're Progressive Conservative, NDP, or Liberal.

These investments have had a huge impact on front-line services. They're proud of the medical equipment that is being purchased. They're proud that government is tackling our hospital and looking to build a new hospital that is reflective of our society. They're proud of blood clinics and the hiring of midwives. These are important investments in health care. They don't just impact one community. They impact the entire health care system.

We need to get out. We need to promote what's best for Nova Scotia. We need to encourage people to come to this province.

Doctor recruitment is a huge thing in this province, yet today in Question Period, we heard, why is the Premier travelling? He's the most travelled Premier in all of the country. If I'm a doctor and I want to be recruited, it would be great to have a sit down with the Premier. If I'm a business, and I want to come to a province, to a state, or to a jurisdiction, I want to have a sit down with the Premier. If I want to make an investment in your province, in your country, I want to have a sit down with that government. We sit there, and we bash the fact that our Premier is travelling and trying to promote this province to get investment in this province. (Interruption)

I just heard someone say, how many doctors did he recruit? Well, doctors have partners, and those partners have jobs, and if they don't have jobs that meet those standards - it's great to see our Premier out there trying to recruit new businesses here. It's great to see our Premier out there trying to bring in the partners and the doctors.

I just want to go back. I don't know how we do it - and maybe I'm just getting tired of it, I guess. We need to get past the negativity. We need to make changes to our health care system. We need to make changes to our education system. It's not going to be easy, and we need to do it together.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, it's with interest that I have listened to the dialogue, the debate, going on about this important issue. Let's remind ourselves what it is: "Therefore be it resolved that Liberal mismanagement has caused a crisis in health care and that the government seems determined to deal the same fate to Nova Scotia's education system."

Well, after being here for several turns now, going into my ninth year actually very shortly, I have to say that I have heard a lot said in this House. I have watched a lot done, and I have seen the results of different mistakes and also some very good practices that have been put in place.

One of the things I have to say is that I have more esteem now for the public servants of this province than I ever, ever did before. Really, I do. I have to say that. They work so hard. Oftentimes when people say, oh, the government, it's like this big gray blob. They don't really know what makes up the government, but they know that the government is at fault. I say to myself, actually a lot of those people who are working for the government do so unceremoniously, working day in and day out, and they just want to have a good life. I say my hat is off to them for all the work they do. So, this would involve the province's teachers, as well. The province's teachers work so hard for their students, to try and make life better and they have not had an easy job of it.

My mother was a teacher many years ago, and in fact, she was a teacher back when they last marched on the Legislature, when the Savage Government was in office. That can tell you how long ago that was. It was so long ago that a lot of the younger teachers, my own sister included, had forgotten what it was like to be under assault, to have forgotten what it was like to have to fight for their rights, and their beliefs and their fair collective bargaining agreements.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, after the actions of this government last year during what I call "the winter of our discontent", when they ran through that blizzard bill in the middle of the night, in the middle of a blizzard, and made everybody march up here to the Legislature when everybody else in their right mind was at home, and trying to stay warm and safe, they marched us up here.

Why did they do that, Mr. Speaker? Maybe because they wanted to ram it through in the middle of the night so nobody could come out here to protest out in the streets. They were hoping people would stay home. And why did they limit the Law Amendments people coming in to be able to speak to the bill when, in fact, there were so many teachers who wanted to speak, why did they do that? I would say that is an injustice, personally, and it is not democratic, so it is actually taking away our democratic rights, and the teachers have become politicized because of this.

Earlier in the year, well, a couple of years before that, they did the same thing to the film industry. They took away a lot of things the film industry needed just to survive, and guess what? They politicized the film industry and artists – and they have not forgotten.

The same with the health workers, Mr. Speaker, the same with all the different unions who have been affected by various attacks - yes, attacks - by this government. I say why would they wonder that yet again, here we are with a new legislative session and there are already protests? Not only are there protests from the public servants, but there are

protests from the people who care about this province and the environment of this province, who care about the clear-cutting and the glyphosate spraying, and the fact that this government is going to allow a pipe to be put in the middle of the Northumberland Strait, which the fishermen feel is going to damage and destroy their \$3 billion fishing industry.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say no, no more, the people of Nova Scotia are waking up and they are like a sleeping giant, and they are not going to go to sleep again. I believe that we here on this side of the House all feel the same way about this.

Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at why we are here a whole month early in this winter session, not even a Spring session, because it's due to yet more contentious changes to the Education Act that the government plans to implement. The New Democratic Party caucus and I are once again prepared to stand up and fight Goliath against this, and any of the other bills that will greet us while we are introducing our own bills that we feel will make life actually better for Nova Scotians, not worse.

I studied the Glaze report - I was busy for a week, I didn't get a chance to get around to it, and then I took a look on my phone here - and I saw there were 30 pages. I started at midnight and I finished at 3:30 in the morning. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, I was concerned and I was interested enough to actually stay awake and keep reading 30 pages on a tiny little phone like this, because I couldn't believe what I was reading, that this government would actually put forth a bill like this.

The minister, we know the new minister - this was already planned. He is really just regurgitating what was already in the works, and for him to sit there and say that the teachers and the public servants are special interest groups, I'm sorry, I take offence to that. They are not special interest groups, they are Nova Scotians, they are citizens of this province, and they deserve respect, and they deserve to be treated properly. So, this bill is not going to make their lives any different, it's not going to help them teach, it's not going to help the students and it certainly does away with the democratic system of school boards.

Now, as we've said in this House before, 57 of those people are women, and a lot of them are also African Nova Scotian and some are Mi'kmaq. These people have been giving their time and energy for a very, very, very tiny, miniscule amount of money because they believe in what they're doing. They want to make the education system better, and this is not going to do that.

The same goes for our doctors and our nurses and our nursing assistants. The thing is, yes, the doctors are retiring. Yes, they are moving away. They have had it. They're up to here, Mr. Speaker. My own doctor, who is younger than I am, has retired because she's so upset with the way things are going with this government. Many of them are leaving. We wonder, why is it so hard to get doctors? Why is it so hard to attract them and retain them? It's because of respect. People expect and demand respect, and they are not getting it from this government.

I would have to say that once again I find that the government is choosing to ignore and disrespect the input of professionals who live in rural Nova Scotia - the doctors, the nurses, and the teachers who live in rural Nova Scotia. Instead they are trying to centralize everything in Halifax. I have a problem with that, Mr. Speaker. I don't live in Halifax.

I love Halifax. It's one of my favourite cities in the world, but you know what? There's a whole province out there, and half of the province lives in the rest of Nova Scotia. I know that my sister here, my colleague from Cape Breton, feels the same way. Many, many people choose to live in Nova Scotia because it's such a beautiful province. If we wanted to be in cities, there are other cities with skyscrapers, but we don't. We want to be in rural Nova Scotia because we love it, we believe in it, and we want to improve life there, not take things away.

The damage that's being done right now in Nova Scotia is, in large part, due to an attitude, I would say, of self-satisfaction and elitism by this Premier and this government. Once again, I think we are dealing with an attitude of father knows best. That's okay, little people. We know best. You just go about your merry little business, and we'll do what's best for you. Just trust us. I'm sorry, but they have proved over and over and over again, Mr. Speaker, that they are not trustworthy. One day, they'll say oh, we're negotiating with teachers, and then - bang - in comes a bill that takes away all their rights. Well, I'm sorry. That takes away the right to be respected and to be trusted.

This province and the people of Nova Scotia are starting to wake up, and I'm going to help them wake up, Mr. Speaker. You can bet that every single one of us here will be doing that, as well.

One last thing I wanted to end up with was talking about teachers who want every single student to have the support they need to succeed in every school across the province. Any change to the education system of Nova Scotia that isn't aimed directly at benefiting our students is in direct contradiction to what teachers want. They want their students to thrive, to flourish, and to believe that they are priceless and capable, just as the teachers believe that they are.

We need to respect the women of this province, many of whom are in the teaching profession and in the health care system. So let us respect women and put our money where our mouths are.

MR. SPEAKER: That concludes the time allotted for late debate. The House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 5:48 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 746**

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

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

Whereas Sara Bonnyman, from Tatamagouche, Colchester North, famous for her pottery, is and has been a strong supporter of the Lillian Fraser Hospital Auxiliary and has been supporting the Auxiliary with her open house for the last 8 or 9 years; and

Whereas recently the Auxiliary has been working on a healing garden for patients, their families, and friends, so Bonnyman held an open house last Fall to help support the project and once again Scotiabank agreed to match the funds raised; and

Whereas Bonnyman had lumberjack mugs, the Auxiliary ladies had homemade pies, and Sara did hands-on demonstrations throughout the day, and allowed children to try their hand with the clay;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in wishing Sara Bonnyman all the best with her future endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 747

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

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

Whereas Stacey Culgin from Debert, Colchester North, became interested in genealogy about 30 years ago when she began looking into her McCully family history, which in turn led to her volunteering at the Colchester Historium keeping pictures, newspaper clippings, and other information in binders, one for each street in Debert; and

Whereas In 2017 she published An Historical Miscellany of Debert and Area that focused on the area's first settlers, their homes, businesses and other interesting facts about their time and way of life; and

Whereas Stacey is very pleased with the response, especially the interest it has created in people of her own generation who are seeking more information about their own genealogy and connections to the area;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Stacey for her very successful first book, already in its third printing, and wish her continued success with her next publication.

RESOLUTION NO. 748

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

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

Whereas last Fall more than 40 people gathered in North River, Colchester County, to help harvest grapes at Goose Landing Vineyards, managed by Al Begin as a community event; and

Whereas the volunteers helped harvest the grapes, which took less than three hours, and the group harvested an estimated 5,000 pounds, then celebrated with some bubbly and charcuterie; and

Whereas the grapes then went to Benjamin Bridge Wine House to make a new batch of their renowned Nova 7 wine, and, once bottled, Goose Landing's vineyard harvest would contribute to almost 1,700 bottles of wine;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in wishing Al Begin continued enjoyment and success with his vineyard.

RESOLUTION NO. 749

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

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

Whereas the Forum for Young Canadians is a non-partisan program for youth aged 15 to 19, held three times a year with 100 students selected from across Canada to attend; and

Whereas Rachel Pring, a 17-year-old from East Mountain, Colchester North, and a Grade 12 student at Colchester Christian Academy in Truro, was chosen as one of those students who participated in the week-long forum in Ottawa from January 29th to February 2nd of this year, involved in simulations related to politics and public affairs; and

Whereas Rachel is known as an excellent student, a member of the Army Reserves in Truro, and one with a keen interest in politics;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Rachel for being selected to represent our province at the Forum for Young Canadians.

RESOLUTION NO. 750

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

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

Whereas Ryan Porter from Lower Onslow, Colchester North, was one of the winners of a prestigious scholarship with the Harrison McCain Foundation, which was established in 1997 by Harrison McCain, one of the founders of McCain Foods Limited; and

Whereas the foundation champions a wide variety of causes in Atlantic Canada which support community organizations, the arts, culture, health, and sciences, and also funds the Harrison McCain Scholarships/Bursaries at Atlantic Canadian universities; and

Whereas these scholarships/bursaries are available annually to entering students from a high school in Canada with a program value of \$16,000 payable over a four-year course of study, and criteria include a minimum 80 per cent average in senior year of high school, financial need, leadership qualities, and a recognized initiative by the student in funding his or her own education;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Ryan Porter for winning this esteemed scholarship.

RESOLUTION NO. 751

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

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

Whereas Connor Miller from Lower Debert, Colchester North, is a Grade 12 student at the Cobequid Educational Centre in Truro and is the assistant captain of the CEC Cougars hockey team; and

Whereas first playing in the West Colchester Minor Hockey Association, he later played Atom AAA, Peewee AAA and Major Bantam for the Truro Bearcats; and

Whereas Connor is known for always putting his best effort into every shift, leads his team in scoring, excels at stick handling, and according to his coach, Miller is one of the best high school forwards in the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly wish Connor success in his plans to attend trade school after graduation.

RESOLUTION NO. 752

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

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

Whereas 17-year-old Luke Smith of Great Village, Colchester North, is a Grade 12 student at the Cobequid Educational Centre in Truro and a member of the CEC Cougars hockey team for three years and is the team captain; and

Whereas this high-scoring defenceman is a strong skater, covers the ice well, handles the puck with expertise, has a powerful shot, and is proud of the team's win at the Auburn Classic Hockey Tournament in Cole Harbour in December, defeating the host team 2 to 1 in overtime, with Smith scoring the first goal; and

Whereas Smith is an assistant coach with the Brookfield Elks Bantam A Team and enjoys working with the younger skaters and as well played in the outfield for three seasons with the CEC Cougars baseball team;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly wish Luke the best in his plans to study engineering after graduation, and wish the Cougars well in their goal to be winners of the Northern Nova Scotia High School Hockey League.

RESOLUTION NO. 753

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

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

Whereas author Gary Blackwood from Tatamagouche, Colchester North, has had 34 works published, including his first adult novel titled Bucket's List; and

Whereas the character Inspector Bucket was based on a real detective from Scotland Yard, so Blackwood decided to set his novel in 1853; and

Whereas Blackwood wanted the reader to care more about the main character and the victims, so when he reached out to agents and publishers, he was very surprised when he quickly received a publishing offer;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in wishing Gary Blackwood the best of luck with his sequel and many more literary works to come.

RESOLUTION NO. 754

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

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

Whereas 4-H Canada's Going Global Exchange program is designed to help 4-H youth grow through an intercultural experience, as well as to learn about sustainable agriculture and food production, experience a new country, expand their global perspective, and explore issues related to food security; and

Whereas Ella Porter, an Onslow-Belmont senior 4-H member, was chosen for the program and in June 2017 flew to Finland for a 21-day tour; and

Whereas Ella visited a 4-H farm in Lahti where youth from the city could learn about agriculture through courses and camps offered there, as well as experienced Midsummerfest, a large summer celebration in Finland, and visited a dairy farm with robotic milkers;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Ella for reaching her personal goals to experience a new country and culture; to become more self-confident, well-rounded, and independent; and to learn about agriculture and 4-H in a different context from the one she grew up in.

RESOLUTION NO. 755

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

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

Whereas as part of the 30th Anniversary of the YMCA Peace Medal, YMCAs across Canada presented the Peace Medal to groups or individuals who, without any special resources, have demonstrated in their lives and activities the values expressed by PEACE: participation, empathy, advocacy, community, and empowerment; and

Whereas one of the recipients of this prestigious medal was Dr. Karen Ewing from Bass River, Colchester North; and

Whereas Dr. Ewing was honored for the creation and successful operation of the Veterans' Memorial Park and was instrumental in starting the Blue Marble Initiative, which works to achieve peace and protect our environment by empowering the idealism of youth;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Dr. Ewing for receiving this medal and a certificate designating her as a Peacemaker.

RESOLUTION NO. 756

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Environment)

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

Whereas Suzanne Bishop of Hatchet Lake is very involved in St. James United Church in Goodwood, which is a point of Crossroads Pastoral Charge, and Suzanne is a trustee and chair of the Worship Committee and sits on the Crossroad Council; and

Whereas Suzanne ensures the sanctuary is ready every week and she is always ready, willing, and able to help out however she can; and

Whereas volunteers are the heart and soul of our communities, and the dedication of individuals such as Suzanne ensures that our local churches are vibrant and valued institutions open to all;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Suzanne for all she does for St. James United Church and the community at large.

RESOLUTION NO. 757

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Environment)

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

Whereas the Bay Treasure Chest was established in early 2014 as a community fundraiser and now benefits seven local not-for-profit partners, involves more than 200 dedicated volunteers, and is supported by 15 local businesses; and

Whereas the Bay Treasure Chest has an honorarium program and a scholarship fund for local high school students and has paid out more than \$1 million to individual players and \$1 million to the partner organizations for local projects; and

Whereas the following individuals make up the board of directors for the Bay Treasure Chest: Ruth Ann Moger, Shaun MacIntyre, Rick Muzyk, Megan Harris, Melan Sapp, Gwen Colman, Anne Patrick, Heather Cochrane, Theresa Milligan, Harry Ward, Nick Horne, Lorna Zinck-Gordon, Beth McGee, and Fred Dobel;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in sending sincere congratulations and thanks to the Bay Treasure Chest Board for their leadership with this phenomenal community undertaking.