



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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First Session

FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 2018

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 2018

Sixty-third General Assembly

First Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Mr. Chuck Porter, Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause being:

“We, the undersigned, ask the Government of Nova Scotia to update the current telephone service infrastructure to the Fourchu/Framboise/Grand River area and upgrade it to enable cellular phone service which will ensure residents’ safety and access to emergency services.”

Mr. Speaker, there are 530 signatures on the petition. I have put my own on to make it 531. As well, I'd like to mention that even though we cannot table an online document, change.org also had a petition with 327 electronic signatures, bringing the total to 857.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause being:

“The citizens of Cumberland Co. who drive the Route 302 from Southampton North to the intersection of Trunk 2 demand that the service be the same on the entire Route and be equal to the service on Trunk 2 as they are rated for the same level of service. We also demand that sand stop being used on the 302 and use salt as the Dept [sic] standards call for except in extreme cold when salt is not effective.”

There are 35 signatures, and I have affixed mine, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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 African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 1029

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

Whereas Quentrel Provo, through a fundraising campaign, organized to bring 400 African Nova Scotian youths to watch Black Panther, a movie where a hero looks like them; and

Whereas Mr. Provo is the founder and CEO of Stop the Violence brand and movement, which he started after the tragic death of his cousin Kaylin Diggs, where the clothing brand spreads the message of love and taking a stand against violence; and

Whereas Mr. Provo organized the proclamation of Stop the Violence Day, where everyone wears red to mark this day of awareness and does an act of kindness toward a fellow citizen;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House please join me in congratulating Quentrel Provo for being a local hero and a positive role model for the 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. (Applause)

The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I should have introduced Mr. Provo before I read that. Anyway, Mr. Quentrel Provo is up in the gallery opposite me. Thank you, Mr. Provo. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 86 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 293 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Motor Vehicle Act, Respecting the Fixing of Speed Limits by Traffic Authorities of Municipalities. (Hon. David Wilson)

Bill No. 87 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 25 of the Acts of 1996. The Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act. (Hon. Keith Colwell)

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 Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if I could make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I would draw your attention and the attention of all members of the House of Assembly to the west gallery, where today we are joined by my youngest daughter, Jessica, who is here to see that you guys are nice to me just before March break. (Applause) Yes, she takes after her mother. (Laughter)

LOUISBOURG SEAFOODS LTD.: EXCELLENCE AWARD - CONGRATS.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: I rise today to congratulate Louisbourg Seafoods Limited on receiving the Minister's Award of Excellence at the 20th Anniversary Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture Conference held here in Halifax.

The award to Louisbourg Seafoods Limited was to honour their commitment to innovation in the seafood sector and economic development for the communities in which they work and live. Louisbourg Seafoods Limited enthusiastically partners with government, non-profit organizations, and the broader seafood industry to seek out innovative solutions to industry-wide challenges that result in greater economic activities and opportunities for rural Nova Scotia.

I rise today to thank Louisbourg Seafoods Limited for their strong commitment to their business and to the communities involved in this very successful company.

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

GENDER EQUITY IN N.S.: PROGRESS - SUPPORT

HON. LLOYD HINES: I rise today in recognition of yesterday's International Women's Day to recognize the seven most important women in my life.

Every day is women's day in our household. My wife, Patricia; our daughters, Sarah, Shannon, and Victoria; and our granddaughters Nola, Carlyn, and Quinn, are strong women who bring wisdom and balance to the lives of everyone they touch.

Nova Scotia has a history of strong matriarchs among our heroes, and I am sure every member has fond memories of their mothers and grandmothers who are universally iconic members of all families.

I am pleased at the progress our society has made on the journey to gender equity, particularly in our province. We have some way to go to reach equity in many sectors, but I am pleased to support the continued advancement of gender equality in all areas of society.

[9:15 a.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MACDONALD, LOWELL (PICTOU CO.): NHL CAREER - EXEMPLARY

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, most people would agree that Lowell MacDonald was the best hockey player ever produced in Pictou County. MacDonald spent 13 years in the National Hockey League.

While Lowell was scoring goals at will during his high school years, the Detroit Red Wings were quick to sign him, and he was assigned to the junior Hamilton Red Wings. In the 1961-62 season, with Lowell playing a major role, Hamilton won the Memorial Cup. He scored 72 goals that year, including 24 in the playoffs.

He was also a teammate of Paul Henderson, a Canadian hockey icon, who scored the winning goal in the Super Series with the Soviet Union. His best hockey occurred with the Pittsburgh Penguins from 1970 to 1978. He scored 11 goals and 11 assists in 30 playoff games, and also won the Bill Masterton Memorial Trophy for the best player exemplifying perseverance, sportsmanship, and dedication to hockey. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

**METLEGE, ANTHONY WADIH:
90th BIRTHDAY (10 MAR. 2018) - CONGRATS.**

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate a very important milestone. My uncle and godfather, Anthony Wadih Metlege, affectionately known as Uncle Tony, celebrates his 90th birthday tomorrow.

This is an important milestone not just for my family but the Lebanese and, indeed, the greater Halifax community. You see, my uncle immigrated through Pier 21, crossing the large seas, landing in Halifax in 1955, and more importantly, making Halifax his home since that time. Within a year, maybe a year and a half, my father ended up following in his steps, and eventually my aunts, grandparents, and their younger brothers.

They have all not only stayed in Halifax but today have contributed greatly to the social and economic fabric of this great province. Today we total at least 100 of us all in the area. Please join me in wishing Uncle Tony a very happy 90th birthday. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea Prospect.

LAWLOR, ALLISON (PROSPECT): 1st CHILDREN'S PUBL. - CONGRATS.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize Allison Lawlor of Prospect. After working as a reporter for newspapers in Ontario, Allison returned to Nova Scotia with her husband in 2003, where she had previously attended the University of Kings College.

Allison is the author of several non-fiction books for adults, and her first book for children, *Broken Pieces: An Orphan of the Halifax Explosion*, was released in commemoration of the tragic events for the 100th Anniversary. Catering to seven- to ten-year-old readers, *Broken Pieces: An Orphan of the Halifax Explosion*, tells the story of 14-year-old Barbara Orr, who was walking to a friend's house when the explosion occurred. Readers learn about rescue efforts and historical events such as the bravery of Vincent Coleman, the railway dispatcher who stayed at his station to send out a warning.

I would like the members of Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Allison on her first book for children and thanking her for sharing the story of the Halifax Explosion with the next generation. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

BRIDGEWAY ACADEMY: SUPPORT DIVERSE LEARNERS - THANKS

MR. TIM HALMAN: Anyone involved in education knows that not all students learn the same way. For students who require a different learning environment, places like Bridgeway Academy can be vital to achieving success.

I rise today to recognize the important work that Bridgeway Academy is doing for diverse learners in Nova Scotia. At their four locations around the province, they are helping students achieve success and take ownership of their learning. The model they have developed for education ensures that their students are able to thrive.

I ask all members of this House to thank everyone at Bridgeway Academy for ensuring that every student reaches their potential and achieves greatness both in and out of the classroom.

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

MOTHER: BIRTHDAY ANNIV. - TRIBUTE

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: As some in this House may know, my mom passed away in 2012, but I rise today to recognize her on what would have been her 79th birthday.

I always thought it was quite appropriate that her birthday fell so close to International Women's Day, because my mom was truly a pioneer woman within the Lebanese community, her religious community, and her neighbourhood.

She was the first Lebanese woman to graduate from university here in Halifax, and she really was a remarkable advocate for those newcomers and the downtrodden and the impoverished. Anybody who needed help, she always felt that it was her duty to help, and hopefully some of that has passed on.

So today, on her birthday, I wish to recognize her and thank her for teaching me what it means to be a strong, powerful woman. (Applause)

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

OSPREY ARTS CTR.: 15th ANNIV. SEASON - CONGRATS.

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, in 2001, members of the Shelburne arts community and the Shelburne Harbour Yacht Club embarked on planning and fundraising to renovate a building in a shipyard on the waterfront in Shelburne. The Osprey Arts Centre Association was formed in 2002 and on May 10, 2003, the Osprey Arts Centre opened its doors. It has operated full time since then and is the arts performance hub of Shelburne County. Now in its 15th Anniversary season, the centre plays host to live music, live theatre, live dance, art exhibits, film screenings, book launches, workshops, day camps, and community events.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my appreciation and congratulations to the association and offer best wishes for many more successful seasons.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

**DAVE HART MEM. TOURNAMENT:
3rd ANNUAL (10 MAR. 2018) - CONGRATS.**

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, March 10th will mark the third annual David Hart Memorial Tournament at the Spryfield Lions Rink. David Hart passed away in April 2015 at the young age of 29. David was an avid hockey player.

His friends began this tournament to honour David's memory and raise funds for the sport he loved so much. Through the support of volunteers and many local businesses, the tournament has brought people together to raise funds for the Chebucto Minor Hockey Association. Last year over \$5,000 was raised. The organizers are hoping to surpass this amount this year.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate all the volunteers who worked so hard to organize the David Hart Memorial Tournament. I am sure that the Hart family is touched by the outpouring of love for David, and I am sure David would be extremely proud that his legacy is to help others play the sport he loved so much.

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

EDUC.: INCLUSION MODEL - GRATITUDE

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak in support of inclusive education in Nova Scotia. Many years ago, segregated programs separated students with particular challenges to different parts of our province, forcing children away from their homes and loved ones for extended periods of time. This action would eat into the very core of family life and family values - in the sense of comfort and cohesiveness a family can provide to someone when they need them the most.

Mr. Speaker, I attended public school during a transitional period when some children who learn differently, or who require specialized supports, received their education alongside us. Sometimes students were within the same school but in a different class, and sometimes these students were sent away to another school altogether.

We have come a long way, Mr. Speaker, and I am grateful for the inclusion model we have today. It is vitally important that children with specialized needs continue to receive the supports, opportunities to learn, and love and care from their families right in their own home, and with their peers in their local schools.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

N.S. TEACHERS: BILL NO. 72 - OPPOSE

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: I rise today to continue the list of names of teachers who have asked to be recognized in the House as opposing Bill No. 72; Jennifer Carroll, Michelle Walker, Isla McEachern, Sonya MacKinnon, Jennifer Courish, Crystal Isert, Angela Dale, Julia Clahane, Christina Hickey, Heather Joe, David MacLellan, Nicole Jennings, Devin Ashley, Matthew Szeto, Amanda Marchand, Kara Doyle, Jason Doyle, Roy Snook, Samantha White, Shannon Evans, Gefin Evans, Shirley Cullip, Kim Sampson, Christina Cann, Paige Laing, Stephanie Brisebois, Sara Jeffrey, Desiree Daniele-Taylor, Brooks Card, Natalie MacIsaac, Holly Laventure, Natalie Smith, Krysta Floyd, Christine Bigelow Popvich, Audrey Davison, Kate Adams, Anne Marie MacEachen, Jennifer Copley, Dunovan Kalberlah.

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

**COUSINS, MELANIE (CHESTER DIST. ELEM. SCH.):
WALK TO SCH. - CONGRATS.**

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Melanie Cousins, a Primary school teacher at the Chester District Elementary School, who suggested that her school undertake their first Walk to School event last November. Over 90 per cent of the students in this largely rural area must take the bus to school.

Ms. Cousins' initiative resulted in the school buses dropping off 248 children at the Eleanor Pew Memorial Arena who were joined by many teachers to walk to school together. These Walk to School events are held across Canada and around the world to promote active and safe routes to school, and are an innovative way to get children to start their day with a bit of fresh air and exercise.

I would like the members of the House to join me in congratulating Melanie on her highly engaging initiative for the children of Chester District Elementary School.

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

SUTHERLAND, EDNA: COM. VOLUNTEER - TRIBUTE

MR. LARRY HARRISON: I would like to posthumously recognize the contributions of one senior to our community.

In December 2017, at the time of her 100th birthday, lifelong Brookfield resident Edna Sutherland had donated over 300 hand-knit caps for newborns to the Colchester East Hants Health Centre. At the time, she had no intention of stopping, but unfortunately, Mrs. Sutherland passed away in January of this year, just a month after her milestone birthday.

In recognizing Mrs. Sutherland's contribution, I'm also pointing out that seniors have incredible value to their communities and to this province and that their wisdom and skills should be appreciated and called upon more often.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

N.S. TEACHERS: BILL NO. 72 - OPPOSE

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue reading the list of names: Krista Chaban, Sherri Harlt, Wendy Gould, Shelly Tonen, Chris Doiron, Aren Morris, M. Daegle, Andrew Gosney, Katie Tucker, Maureen Baker, Jane Taylor, Michelle Lyn Richards, Katelyn McKenzie, Tanya Smith, Emily Reilly, Bill Murphy, Peter Day, Rae Brown, Rebecca Dunstan, Catherine Thompson, Mary Ellen Sellers, Shelley Morse, Robin Douglas, Danette Lynn.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

MACLELLAN, GEORGIA: BIRTHDAY (9 MAR. 2018) - GREETINGS

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Exactly seven years ago today, the most important little girl in the world came to change our lives forever.

On March 9, 2011, Georgia Renée MacLellan arrived to enrich us with entertainment, happiness, kindness, and love. Her mom Leah and I are fortunate to have her shape our days. We are proud of who she is and who she will become.

To her brother, Daniel, and to her cousins Nadair and Liam, we are proud of them too. They would be whining if I didn't say that in this video, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to invite all members of the Assembly to Georgia's skating party on Monday at 3:00 p.m. at the Dominion Rink. Please bring a gift. (Laughter)

Happy birthday to Georgia. Have a great day, baby. I love you, Dad. (Applause)

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

PASSAGE PLAYERS SOC.: COM. THEATRE - SALUTE

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Today I rise to acknowledge and thank the Passage Players Society for keeping the importance of theatre vibrant in our constituency.

This not-for-profit society's story began in 2015 with *A Dickens Christmas at Captain Bird's*. An improv workshop was a success, and the momentum didn't stop there. Two additional dinner theatre productions - *Snow White and the Wicked Queen*, and *Captain Bird's Annual Christmas Ball* - were completely sold out.

Membership grew to 55 and counting. Some have a theatre background, but most, like myself, do not. Each of the dinner theatre productions was sure to include a little local history, folklore, and of course, lots of laughs and great memories.

There is an amazing board of directors that I would like to acknowledge: Gail Fulop, Ian Lewer, former MLA Becky Kent; Alain Bergeron and his wife, Barb, Trevor Pierce; and Angie Hebert. They all keep us going. I ask all members to join me in saluting the Passage Players Society and all they do for our community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

SAUNDERS, JOY: VON FOOT CLINIC VOLUNTEER - THANKS

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: VON relies heavily on volunteers to transport seniors, deliver nutritious food to seniors and those recovering from surgeries, and to run local foot clinics.

Joy Saunders has been a volunteer at the Lunenburg VON foot clinic for 28 years and recently celebrated her 99th birthday.

Joy enjoys her time spent at the Lunenburg VON foot clinic, despite becoming legally blind in recent years. She continues to make appointments and greet community members as they come to the clinic.

Joy is a great spokesperson for the importance of remaining active as you age. Her 15-year-old golden retriever named Prayer, which she adopted through ElderDog, joins Joy on her twice-a-day walks.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and the members of this House of Assembly please join me in thanking Joy Saunders on her many years of volunteer service and her contributions to the Lunenburg VON foot clinic.

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

HARVEY, LEN: AUS TOP COACH, WOMEN'S BASKETBALL - CONGRATS.

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in my place today to recognize the accomplishments of Len Harvey of Baddeck.

Len has been named Atlantic University Sports Top Coach for women's basketball as he led the Acadia Axewomen to a record of 18 and 2 for first place in the conference.

It may have been an individual honour, but Mr. Harvey has referred to it as a team honour, as he praised the accomplishments of his team. He was named the recipient of the Carolyn Savoy Award in this his third season with the X-Women, as he led his team to not only first place in the conference but third in the country.

[9:30 a.m.]

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Len Harvey on his accomplishments, and wish him and his team every success in the future.

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

**MCDONALD, WENDY:
HFX. NW TRAILS ASSOC. VOLUNTEER - COMMEND**

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize a dedicated volunteer who has been serving in my riding for over a decade. Wendy McDonald is among the founding members of the Halifax North West Trails Association. She currently oversees the association's advocacy activities, along with her husband Bob.

Wendy was instrumental in the campaign to have the Crown lands of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, become a protected wilderness. Due partly to her advocacy, the provincial government announced in 2007 its plan to designate Blue Mountain-Birch Cove under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act. She has travelled to Australia, Ethiopia, Mexico, and the Arctic, to expand her knowledge of conservation issues. Aside from her work with the trails association, Wendy has worked in several of the Halifax Public Libraries to help students gain greater appreciation of the conservation of Nova Scotia's natural history.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Women's History Month, I ask that the members of this House of Assembly join me in commending this outstanding woman for her tremendous contributions to nature conservation in this province - and I know Wendy is watching.

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

**SHEPPARD, PERCY (LOUISBOURG):
SENATE OF CANADA MEDAL - CONGRATS.**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Mr. Percy Sheppard, from Louisbourg, on recently being presented with a Senate of Canada Medal. Senator Mike MacDonald made presentations to several veterans on the occasion, which was held at the Louisbourg Legion.

Senator MacDonald, who was born and raised in Louisbourg, takes great pride in these presentations as he thanked the veterans for their service to their community. Mr. Percy Sheppard also spent his whole life in Louisbourg and he has been a very active member of the community and the Legion.

I stand today to thank and congratulate Percy for the service he has done for our wonderful country.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

CUDMORE, DAVID: LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD - CONGRATS.

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate David Cudmore on receiving the 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce for his extraordinary contribution to the apple industry in this province. David was President and CEO of Scotia Gold Co-operative Limited for nearly three decades, and played an integral role in building a struggling organization into the largest apple packing and storage operation in Eastern Canada.

After his tenure at Scotian Gold he continued to help grow the market for Annapolis Valley apples as President of NS Apple Sales Limited. Throughout his career Mr. Cudmore generously volunteered his time and expertise to the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers' Association and other industry-related organizations.

I invite all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating David Cudmore on his well-earned award and in thanking him for his exceptional commitment to the Nova Scotia apple industry.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**TOWNSEND, HUGH (PICTOU CO.):
64 YRS., NEWSPAPER CAREER - CONGRATS.**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, Hugh Townsend's newspaper career started in Pictou County during his high school days in New Glasgow, and extended into his 64th year.

Townsend wrote thousands of articles about Pictou County's sports community. During his six decades in the business he watched numerous athletes mould their athletic skills in their respective sports. Hugh understood the power of sports and the need for journalists to tell the stories that make sports such an influential entity. He has published two very informative books, one is entitled *I've Lived My Dream* and the most recent is called *Remembering Pictou County*.

Imagine a career taking you to the Olympic Games, Canada Summer Games, Stanley Cup Championships, the World Series, and numerous Grey Cups. It is my pleasure to congratulate Hugh Townsend on a long and successful career. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**PAON, ALANA:
FIRST ACADIAN WOMAN, N.S. LEGISLATURE - CONGRATS.**

HON. DAVID WILSON: Je veux reconnaître la députée du Cape Breton-Richmond qui a été élue à l'Assemblée législative en mai 2017. Je veux la féliciter d'avoir été la première femme acadienne élue à la Chambre. Je sais que ses amis, sa famille, et sa communauté sont très fiers, et je lui souhaite beaucoup de succès dans l'avenir.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize the member for Cape Breton-Richmond on her election win in May 2017. She is the first Acadian woman to be elected to this Chamber and I know her friends, family, and community are extremely proud, and I wish her all the success in the future. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

**SURETTE, ANNETTE:
2018 VOLUNTEER OF THE YR., YARMOUTH - CONGRATS.**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. National Volunteer Week will be observed this year from April 15th to April 21st. Volunteers from across Nova Scotia will be honoured here in Halifax when the province holds its annual volunteer awards ceremony on Monday, April 9th.

Among those being honoured is Yarmouth's Annette Surette, who was selected by the Town of Yarmouth as its volunteer of the year for 2018.

Annette is a long-time volunteer at the Yarmouth Regional Hospital and her main focus in volunteering has been at the Dr. Ed Janke Cancer Care Centre.

I ask this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Annette Surette on being named the Town of Yarmouth's volunteer of the year, and in thanking her for many years of volunteering. Our community is blessed to have people like her who so generously give their time to others. Thank you so much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**RAMSAY, LORRAINE/MACNEIL, JEFF:
FUNDRAISER, YMCA STRONG KIDS - RECOGNIZE**

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize Lorraine Ramsay of Dooly's in Amherst, and Jeff MacNeil of Cumberland YMCA.

Together, they have organized a pool event to raise money for the YMCA. All proceeds go to the YMCA's Strong Kids Campaign. They hope to raise \$3,000 this year, and the program provides subsidized memberships for youth, children, families, and team leadership programs.

It is great to see people like Lorraine and Jeff create an event that is both fun and beneficial to our communities. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**PARK VIEW PANTHERS:
GLEN MURRAY HS HOCKEY TOURNAMENT - CONGRATS.**

HON. MARK FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Glen Murray High School Hockey Tournament took place November 17th to November 19th at the Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre. Showcasing high school teams from across the province, this was the first year the tournament took place with the new team comprised of the blended high schools of Bridgewater High School and Park View Education Centre.

Coached by Grant Johnston and Ethan Thomas, the Park View Panthers defeated Shelburne Regional High School in the finals, winning the tournament for the first time since 2010.

Tournaments like the Glen Murray Tournament happen only because of the volunteers working behind the scenes who organized the event, found sponsors, ran score clocks, sold 50/50 tickets, and much, much more. Thank you to those volunteers, family, and friends who work hard year after year to make this such a successful event.

Congratulations to Park View Panthers on their tournament win. Thank you.

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

**SEARS, ROWAN/WATSON, DAVID:
CDN. JR. MEN'S SOFTBALL - SELECTED**

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of our local athletes, this time two young men who have been selected for the 2018 Canadian Junior Men's National Team at the Junior Men's Softball World Championships.

Colchester Royals player Rowan Sears of Brookfield, and Milford's David "Bubba" Watson, were two of the 26 athletes from almost 200 athletes to represent Canada in the championship scheduled for July in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

Whatever way a young person is excelling, whether it be in sports, as it is with these young men, academics, the arts, or humanitarian efforts, this is our future and I'm proud to recognize and support them. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

BROCKWELL, MARY ANN: PHILANTHROPIST - TRIBUTE

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to share the story of a Bedford woman from our past whose name is not well known, but whose influence lives on.

Mary Ann Brockwell arrived in Nova Scotia from Britain in the mid-1850s with her newly-married sister and brother-in-law. In the 1870s, that couple died, leaving Mary Ann a considerable amount of money. She set about using it for good.

She set up the Brockwell Bedford Community Cemetery which was open to anyone at a time when cemeteries were strictly denominational. She adopted two orphan girls, when many orphans from England and Ireland were being sent here to live grim little lives as labourers. Although Miss Brockwell was a bit eccentric, she raised those girls strictly, but with love.

When Miss Brockwell died, after a court case, her estate went to establish the St. Paul's School for Girls in Halifax. To this day, St. Paul's Home supports many worthy causes including HomeBridge Youth Society, Phoenix Youth Programs, and the Spryfield Boys and Girls Club. There is a Bedford street named after her but I bet most residents don't know much about her.

Today I'd like to commend the memory of Mary Ann Brockwell, a woman before her time.

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

MURPHY, JAMES: KENYAN CULTURAL EXCHANGE - BEST WISHES

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, James Murphy has the philosophy that life is short and it must be lived well. That's why he jumped at an opportunity to visit a new country.

The Grade 11 student at Munro Academy will be one of 10 students and three chaperones who will travel to Kenya next week, where they will spend 18 days visiting different areas of the country.

The students will visit the country to spread love, build connections, volunteer, and see first-hand the struggles of those living there.

During this trip, the students will be enrolled in a school with Kenyan students in an effort to understand how they learn, and what they are experiencing on a daily basis.

They will also have an opportunity to help build three houses for widows.

The trip will not only have an impact on these students, but also on those they meet, and we wish them well.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

LATINSKI, MICHAEL: MINOR HOCKEY ROOM - TRIBUTE

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, Michael C. Latinski, a very talented and gifted hockey athlete, was a very dedicated hockey player in his community. After years with the Tatamagouche Minor Hockey Association he went on to play for the Cumberland/Colchester Colts in the Junior C hockey league. Tragically, on July 5, 2015, Michael died as a result of a motorcycle accident, just four days short of his 25th birthday.

A new hockey room at the North Shore Recreation Centre in Tatamagouche, Colchester North, has been named the Michael C. Latinski Minor Hockey Room. A sign has been installed to acknowledge the dedication of the room, as well as his jersey. A very popular young man in the community, this room will be a lasting memory of those who knew him and of those who loved him.

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

BURKE, ANNETTE: BIRTHDAY (9 MAR. 2018) - BEST WISHES

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish my constituency assistant a very Happy Birthday. Although I won't share her age today, I can assure you it is a very significant one.

Annette Burke is a wonderful person who has one of the largest hearts I have ever witnessed. An 18-year educator, she is presently on a leave of absence to spend some time with me. She is an active member of the Queens County Community Choir and Winds of Change Dramatic Society. She is also the Vice-Chair of the Liverpool International Theatre Festival and volunteers with many organizations, such as the community food bank, Queens Manor, Mersey Point Community Hall, just to name a few.

I consider myself so blessed to have Annette not only as my constituency assistant, but as my friend. I ask all members of this House to please join me in wishing Annette Burke a very Happy Birthday today. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**HARTLING-BOYLAN, CAROL (BERWICK):
COM. VOLUNTEER - RECOGNIZE**

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Yesterday being International Women's Day, I want to recognize a woman in Berwick who, for over two decades has impacted her community. Carol Boylan-Hartling has been an effective leader in the areas of recreation, event planning, and facilities improvement.

Carol and her husband Dale volunteer hundreds of hours every year to support and keep a keen eye on the Berwick and area events that she had already planned. The well-executed Gala Day parade, Santa Claus parade and Halloween kids' event are now fixtures, and highly-anticipated celebrations.

Carol has been all about what she can do in the interests of every citizen. In doing so she has raised community spirit in Berwick, winning the Lieutenant Governor's Community Spirit award, increasing well-being, and family first events are her signature endeavour.

Carol, continue to be a woman of strength and inspiration to Berwick and area residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

NIXON, MARYLYN: KENYA TRIP (ME TO WE) - PERSPECTIVE

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to stand and recognize Marylyn Nixon. She is a senior high school student from Amherst.

This past summer she went to Kenya with the Me to We program. She went to help build a new school room with a group of 26 students she had never met.

Marylyn gained an appreciation for her life here in Nova Scotia - simple things, like having clean water and food. She went out of her comfort zone to help others in another country.

She says it was a humbling experience for her and she will take it with her for the rest of her life. I am proud of her and this new perspective she has on life now, because of this journey. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

HINES, MELISSA: PHARMACIST/ENTREPRENEUR - CONGRATS.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: International Women's Day has been observed since the early 1900s and is now celebrated around the world each year on March 8th. International Women's Day recognizes women's achievements and puts out a call to action to support women's rights and advance gender equality.

Mr. Speaker, I thought it would be fitting to take this opportunity to recognize a new business owner in Antigonish - a woman, of course - Melissa Hines. Melissa has been a pharmacist at Haliburton's PharmaChoice for eight years, and now she can add "business owner" to her resumé. Haliburton's has always been a locally owned and operated business in Antigonish, and I'm proud to say it will continue to be.

I would like to congratulate Melissa for her new and important role as a business owner. I wish her the best of luck in her endeavours and thank her for her service to her community.

[9:45 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

HANLEY, CHRIS - MAJOR, CAF: DEDICATION TO COUNTRY - THANKS

MR. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, there are few things more humbling than hearing a member of the Canadian Armed Forces talk about their experiences.

Today I recognize Major Chris Hanley for his years of service in the Canadian Forces and his service to Canada. Chris has been serving his nation since 1991, when he joined the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals in Halifax. Since then, Chris has completed three overseas deployments - Israel and Syria, Sudan, and most recently in south Sudan as a military liaison officer.

Currently, Major Hanley is an operations officer with Joint Task Force Atlantic headquarters, a joint organization responsible for domestic operations such as humanitarian assistance and disaster response in Atlantic Canada.

Chris Hanley is an amazing father, husband, and friend. I thank him for his dedication to his community and his service to Canada. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

**ASHLEY, SHARON (LANTZ):
PHOTOGRAPHER/ENTREPRENEUR - APPRECIATION**

HON. MARGARET MILLER: In the face of adversity, some people discover an unfamiliar path in life's journey. It's fair to say that Sharon Ashley of Lantz is one of these.

Sharon's oldest son, Owen, diagnosed with autism, would become agitated when she took him to have photos done. As a mother, she didn't want to miss capturing those treasured milestones in the life of her child. So she picked up a camera and taught herself how to photograph her two boys in a home environment that did not cause them distress.

Well, it turns out the art of photography is a natural gift to this loving mom. She has turned this skill, born out of love and necessity, into a business. Her portfolio now includes stunning wedding shots, babies, and animals. She hopes to use what she has learned about her son's condition in her photography to help other parents facing similar challenges.

Please join me in offering Sharon Lee Photography appreciation for her inspiring dedication to helping her son and sparking the flame of entrepreneurship.

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

REG. OCC. CTR. (PORT HAWKESBURY): STORE OPENING - THANKS

MS. ALANA PAON: I would like to acknowledge the Regional Occupational Centre in Port Hawkesbury. This community-based not-for-profit organization is dedicated to the development of persons with disabilities.

In 2017, the current facility was able to expand and make improvements including a new wheelchair ramp, flooring, and upgrades to their kitchen. The modifications have enabled the group to develop the ROC store, which is officially opening in the Spring of this year. This addition has enhanced their well-established and overwhelmingly popular bakery. The new store will provide great learning opportunities for adults with disabilities, including money handling, pricing, and customer service, while adding to the economic activity of the ROC.

I would personally like to thank all who were involved in bringing the expansion to fruition.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, might I say a word of introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. BURRILL: I would like to direct members' attention this morning to the west gallery, where we're joined today by our guest Gary MacLeod, who is a spokesperson for the group Advocates for the Care of the Elderly. Mr. MacLeod is with us to observe the proceedings of the House this morning. (Applause)

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

ROBICHAUD, CLAREDON, DEATH OF: TRIBUTE

MR. GORDON WILSON: The Clare area in the Province of Nova Scotia experienced a sad day with the passing of a great champion, a community leader, and someone known by most people in this House: Claredon Robicheau.

I was fortunate to have met Claredon years ago, and we immediately became good friends. Claredon never did anything halfway. Because of his particular health circumstances, he was acutely aware of the difficulties people with disabilities had, especially in rural areas like ours.

It was he who envisioned Le Transport de Clare, a system that served as a model for our provincial rural transportation network. He was a member of the Bill 59 Community Alliance group, which was integral to the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act. He was recently honoured with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Award.

Claredon was always there to help, and I always appreciated his advice. We need more Claredon Robicheaus in our communities to take on his role, and live our lives with the thought of others in mind.

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

EASTERN PASSAGE AND AREA BUS. ASSOC.: BUS. EXPO. (19 APR. 2018) - INFORMATIVE

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, the member for Cole Harbour-Portland Valley and I are both very fortunate to have such strong business associations in our community. They organize a lot of events that help both the children, as well as the business owners in our areas.

I especially want to acknowledge today Tamara Freeman who took over as the chairman of the Eastern Passage and Area Business Association several months ago. We are organizing a business expo on April 19, 2018, at the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Lions Club, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. It is going to include government resources from across the aisle, a business expo for all of the businesses in the community, and an opportunity for the members of the community to come in and find out more about the non-profit

organizations, as well as the businesses and government organizations that offer services in our area.

I'd like to recognize the Eastern Passage and Area Business Association and congratulate them on a year of working in our community.

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

**PETERS, MAUD (BOYLSTON):
EQUINE ANTI-BULLYING PROG. - BEST WISHES**

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of a remarkable individual - Maud Peters of Boylston. She is a German immigrant entrepreneur and a long-time resident of Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie.

Maud has developed a series of healing programs for her new venture, HOPE Ridge. She is a talented equine assistant learning facilitator who works with all age groups, but her work with local youth through her anti-bullying program is most inspirational. The children learn leadership skills, practice empathy, and develop emotional resiliency by interacting with the compassionate power of horses, thus getting our youth the new communication tools needed to navigate through the new social challenges faced by their generation.

Mr. Speaker, Maud Peters and HOPE Ridge are a wonderful asset to the community, and we wish her much continued success with her strong introduction to the small business community of our riding.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ARMDALE LAWN CARE: 15 YRS. IN BUS. - CONGRATS.

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, as daylight saving time begins this Sunday, many people's minds will turn to their gardens, and I want to highlight a local business in my constituency, Armdale Lawn Care.

Brothers David and Brian Hunt started this business in their teen years; in fact, I remember them going to school with my kids. It has now been over 15 years where the Armdale Lawn Care is a go-to source for commercial and residential lawns of all sizes in Halifax.

Relying on positive word of mouth from clients and neighbours, the company has built a solid reputation based on flexible professional service, respect for clients, and sustainable turf management. Whether it is mowing, fertilizing, shrub trimming, eco-

friendly weed management, or restoring some of our neighbours' many flagstone walkways, Armdale Lawn Care has the expertise for the job. Having knocked on the doors of my riding many times, I can attest to the loveliness of the lawns and gardens they help maintain.

I want to congratulate the Armdale Lawn Care and the Hunt boys.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**GLOOSCAP CURLING CLUB:
CDN. SR. WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS - BEST WISHES**

MR. JOHN LOHR: Two Glooscap Curling Club members are among a team of four soon to be representing Nova Scotia at the Canadian Senior Women's Championship for the second year in a row.

Team skip Andrea Saulnier and second Jill Alcoe-Holland - both Coldbrook residents - and team members Mary Mattatall and Marg Curcliffe started out the season with back-to-back national appearances in mind. They knew this was a lofty goal heading into the recent qualifying tournament in Amherst. The team won five straight games in Amherst with the championship game decided in the last shot.

The team will represent Nova Scotia in Stratford, Ontario, from March 24th to March 29th at the Canadian Senior Women's Championship. Please join me in wishing them all the best.

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

MACLEOD, MOIRA (WHITES LAKE): 2nd NOVEL PUBL. - CONGRATS.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Moira MacLeod, of White's Lake, on the successful release of her second novel, *Or so it seemed*. MacLeod became an author using the assisted self-publishing method. She enlisted the assistance of a book publisher, FriesenPress, and as the writer she had to pay all the upfront costs of having the book produced.

Or so it seemed is a standalone, page-turning mystery that reintroduces many of the unforgettable characters fans of *The Bread Maker*, Moira's first novel, have come to know and enjoy. Both of Moira's books have been well-received and fans are ever-hopeful that there will be a third novel in the series.

I'd like the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in recognizing Moira's achievements, and wish her well in her literary career.

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

**WELSH, MACKENZIE (HFX. W. HS):
NORTHWOOD VOLUNTEER - THANKS**

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mackenzie Welsh, a student at Halifax West High School who selflessly volunteers her time at Northwood Manor.

Mackenzie is currently in her senior year of high school and plans on becoming a nurse. At Northwood she brightens the day of many individuals with her sense of humour and compassion. This holiday season Mackenzie helped an older lady enjoy what would typically be a hard time for her by accompanying her to the facility's Christmas party - just one the many stories the residents of Northwood Manor themselves have to share of this young girl's dedication to their home.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the members of this House join me in thanking Mackenzie Welsh for volunteering her time at Northwood Manor, and wish her the very best in her future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

SETTLES AUTO REPAIR (HARRIETSFIELD): 50th ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, Settle's Auto Repair in Harrietsfield celebrated their 50th Anniversary last month. Settle's is a local, family-run business serving the HRM area, a well-respected auto repair business providing good service at fair prices to their clients.

Small businesses are the backbone of the Nova Scotia economy and it is always a pleasure to hear a local small business that has done so well. With 50 years in business, Settle's Auto Repair has proven, with hard work and perseverance small businesses can flourish in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate Settle's Auto Repair on their 50th Anniversary, and wish them continued success. I encourage everyone to continue to support our local small businesses and recognize the important role they play in Nova Scotia's economy.

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

GELDART, KIM (CHESTER): COM. VOLUNTEER - CONGRATS.

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the contribution made to our community and province by Ms. Kim Geldart of Chester, Nova Scotia.

Kim is a driving business force in Chester-St. Margaret's, and across the province, as the owner of 14 Pharmasave locations. At the same time, she has contributed many hours each week to volunteer in our communities, serving as the chairman of the Shoreham Village Foundation, raising money to provide a palliative care unit for the nursing home and surrounding communities. She is also an active member of the PR committee and the fundraising committee of Bonny Lea Farm, a very special home and workplace for challenged individuals.

Kim was a key player in bringing Chester's Our Health Centre from dream to reality. She brought her keen business sense to the OHC board and has continued her wise counsel as a critically important board member. She is a member of the Hubbards and Area Business Association and past board member of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia.

I invite the members of the House to join me in congratulating Kim on her contributions.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**LUNENBURG:
CULTURAL DESTINATION OF THE YR. AWARD - CONGRATS.**

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the Town of Lunenburg on receiving the Cultural Destination of the Year: Americas award for 2017. Luxury Travel Guide, a guide based out of the U.K. for affluent travellers, awarded this honour, highlighting the best accommodations and hotels through North America.

Kathleen Quinlan, Marketing Director for the Lunenburg Board of Trade, took the initiative to submit the entire Town of Lunenburg as a cultural resort, resulting in a win for the town.

Winning this award provides Lunenburg with a profile in the LTG Winner's Guide, a guide focusing on where to go and what to do while travelling. This guide is distributed to hundreds of thousands of subscribers, travel agents, international airport lounges, hotels, and cruise ships. Overall, the free marketing the town receives is estimated to be worth \$100,000.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the Town of Lunenburg, the Lunenburg Board of Trade, and Kathleen Quinlan, on winning the prestigious Cultural Destination of the Year: Americas Award for 2017.

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

**DAUPHINEE, LAURA (HFX. W. HS):
VOLUNTEER ORGANIZERS - THANK**

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize an outstanding young lady who is promoting volunteerism at her school.

Laura Dauphinee is an executive liaison to the Volunteerism Committee at Halifax West High School. She has organized a multitude of fundraisers for the Terry Fox Foundation, including three grocery-bagging sessions, popcorn sales, bake sales, and more. She is currently spearheading the 14th Annual Head for a Cure fundraiser, with the goal of raising \$15,000 for the foundation.

Most notably, Laura organized a volunteer expo in the Bella Rose Arts Centre for all 1,500 students at the school. Seven different associations, including the Special Olympics, the IWK, and the Keshen Goodman Library, presented the students with volunteer opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Laura for encouraging her peers to make a difference in their communities. Her work is instrumental in nurturing the next generation of volunteer leaders.

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

[10:00 a.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM.: WEST END/JUNCTION RD. ELEM. SCHS. (SPRINGHILL) - REPLACE

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Springhill has been in need of a new elementary school for a number of years now to replace the aging West End and Junction Road schools.

For the past number of years, Chignecto-Central Regional School Board identified a new elementary school for Springhill as a priority and on its capital list for the province. All that's needed right now is approval from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Since we haven't seen the government's capital plan yet, there's still some time to make sure that the elementary school is on it. To the Premier, will Springhill be receiving a new school project in this year's capital plan?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): That school and all schools across the province that require either an A&A or a total replacement will be part of the assessment that will be done in the capital plan. In due time, it will be announced.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Like a lot of schools around our province, Springhill is on top of the list for a new school, on top of the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board's list.

The age and the condition of the schools is affecting programming. These schools have leaky roofs, outdated plumbing, and overcrowded gymnasiums. They are long-standing problems, but for some reason, the people of Springhill have been passed over by this government year after year.

There have been many questions about this government's policy about building new schools, as the Auditor General has as well. The Springhill kids deserve a new school. Will the minister get on with it and commit to building the new school that they need and deserve?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I agree with the member. The evidence of the need for that school is there. That is one of the schools that needs to be done in this province.

We are currently undergoing our capital planning process. Dr. Glaze and the Auditor General have both told us that we need to have a longer-term planning process. Of course, we want to have a process in place that the public will have full confidence in.

Once we do have that list complete, we will be announcing that to the public.

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

PREM. - LONG-TERM CARE BEDS: SHORTAGE - IMPACT

MR. GARY BURRILL: My question for the Premier is about long-term care. People in hospitals waiting for long-term care placements are not going to be helped by home care services. They are in these hospital beds because they cannot be discharged to their homes. Over the course of the last five years, 21 per cent of our hospital beds in the province were filled by people waiting for a nursing home placement.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier not understand that the real, actual needs of the seniors of our province are exceeding what this government is actually really providing?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the very important question. As he would know, in 2013, when we came in, there were 2,500 Nova Scotians on a wait-list for long-term care. We have reduced that by over 50 per cent. We're continuing to ensure we provide that support . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Because they died.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it's really inappropriate, the content coming from the member opposite suggesting that the only reason these people were removed was because they died. That is actually completely inaccurate and really disrespectful to seniors in this province. If they would like me to answer the question, I would be more than happy to answer it on their behalf.

Let me tell you, we have reduced that wait-list by over 50 per cent - there are still too many people on that list.

What we have heard from seniors is that they actually want to remain in the home as long as possible. We continue to invest in home care, and we continue to invest in the caregiver allowance to ensure that Nova Scotians who can and want to remain in their home can do so with supports. We know there's more work to do around continuing to reduce that wait-list, and we will continue to do that.

MR. BURRILL: It is not myself or our Party. It's rather our province's Auditor General and auditors from Accreditation Canada who have noted that our health care system in Nova Scotia is stressed by the excess of nursing home patients in acute care beds. This compromises patient flow in our hospitals and is creating all kinds of situations around the province where patients are being treated in hallways and corridors and Lord knows where.

Does the Premier not understand the impact his decision not to open a single new nursing home bed is having on the hospitals of Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: That is part of the challenge that we're facing in hospitals, Mr. Speaker. There's no question that we have - that is why we have continued to reduce that list by more than 50 per cent in our first term.

We're continuing to work, but let's not blame everything that's happening in our hospitals on no long-term care beds. The fact of the matter is that for decades, under successive governments, the QEII was left there. Every government knew the challenges but ignored them. That's part of the issue down there.

We're going through the massive restructuring of primary health care in the Province of Nova Scotia. The investments we're making at Dartmouth General will alleviate some of the challenges that he's referring to. The investments we're making at HI

will alleviate some of the issues that he's referring to. The investments in home care, the investments in a caregiver allowance will alleviate some of the challenges.

The difference is, we are not ignoring the issues in front of us. We are working with our partners to ensure that we deliver the health care they deserve.

MR. BURRILL: What is troubling us is not investment or investments. What we are troubled by is the non-investment, the investment in zero new nursing home beds over a five-year period.

Last month the Government of New Brunswick announced plans to create more than 1,000 beds for nursing home residents and people with dementia over the next five-year period. In Ontario the government is planning to open 5,000 new nursing home beds by 2021 and an additional 25,000 over the next decade.

Mr. Speaker, why can't the Premier see that seniors in Nova Scotia need new nursing home beds as badly as seniors in Ontario and New Brunswick?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to tell the honourable member that while he is watching what is happening in other provinces, he might want to pay attention to the fact that those who are waiting for long-term care beds in this province, the list is going down. It has been reduced by over 53 per cent.

We're going to continue to work with our partners across the province to ensure that we provide the long-term care and other acute health care that's available to our communities. We'll continue to work with our partners to ensure that every community gets access to the primary health care and long-term care that they require.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

COM. SERV. - ACADIA LOAN: UNIV. RES. - MIN. AWARENESS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education about the \$2.7 million loan to Acadia University to update the Cutten House residence. That money was originally announced as coming from the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, but we know that it actually came from Housing Nova Scotia, and it was approved in this Legislature for affordable housing.

The Minister of Labour and Advanced Education was quick to dismiss this as somebody else's problem yesterday. He refused comment to the media initially, and the Minister of Community Services has also refused to speak publicly about the loan. I'll table that.

The question is, at what point did the Minister of Community Services become aware that money for low-income housing was being used to update a university residence?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member. I became aware of that once the loan was paid off.

MR. MACMASTER: That's not the point, Mr. Speaker. This was money that was approved in the Legislature for affordable housing. A spokesperson for Housing Nova Scotia previously defended the loan as addressing a gap in student housing, but if we look on the Housing Nova Scotia website, there are no programs with such a mandate. In fact, the only program is a Lone Parent Student Affordable Rental Housing program. I'll table that.

Adding to the confusion, the Minister of Community Services recently refused an interview on this subject.

Was the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education correct when he said the loan should never had been made? Or was Housing Nova Scotia right when they said the loan was needed to fill a gap in student housing?

MS. REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Again, this was a loan that was given to Acadia during the NDP's period in power. When I look at the press release that was put out at the time, it indicates it is from government. It doesn't say it came from Labour and Advanced Education, and it doesn't say it came from Housing Nova Scotia.

Would I have preferred that it was clear about what was actually happening? Yes, I would have. What I can tell the honourable member is that Acadia repaid the loan in full.

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

H&W: C.B. HEALTH CARE SERV. – MIN. APOLOGIZE

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, today in the *Cape Breton Post* I am very upset to read that every ER, except for the Cape Breton Regional, will be closed on Cape Breton Island starting today, and some until Thursday - every ER.

Just the other day, I was informed that the mobile care team at the New Waterford Consolidated Hospital has once again been taken off the schedule for the next three months. People in New Waterford need that service. They depend on it being there. I hope that I or family members do not have to go to the Cape Breton Regional Hospital over the next week, because they will be worked to death.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that the mobile care team in New Waterford has essentially been eliminated. Will the minister apologize to the people of New Waterford for taking away their health care services?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Indeed, we continue to invest in health care services for the people of Nova Scotia, including those in Cape Breton and specifically, in the Sydney region. I just yesterday had the opportunity to make an announcement which showed continued investment, expansion of nurses with our collaborative health care practices. That's providing health care services to help those people that are showing up at ERs for perhaps non-acute issues, things that can be seen by their family physicians or other primary health care providers.

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: Good luck, if that's at the Cape Breton Regional this week. Mr. Speaker, the minister seems to think that saving a few thousand dollars is more important than providing primary and emergency care services to the people of Nova Scotia. It's no wonder that doctors across this province don't seem to trust the promises this government is making about health care. According to one burnt-out physician on the South Shore, doctors themselves are being forced to pick up the slack in primary care. Earlier this week, Dr. Diane Edmonds told reporters that she diagnosed a walk-in patient with advanced lung cancer. Imagine being diagnosed at a walk-in clinic, and I'll table that. Surely, the minister can agree that if you have to go to a walk-in clinic for a cancer diagnosis, that something is terribly wrong with health care in Nova Scotia.

MR. DELOREY: As the member highlights, there are many different ways and means of receiving health care services in the Province of Nova Scotia. These include practices that are traditional family practices with independent physicians working, but also an evolution, where more and more of these practices are evolving into collaborative teams where physicians are being joined by other health care professionals like nurses, family practice nurses, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, physiotherapists, and even social workers providing comprehensive care to people across this province. I'm proud that this government has been able to continue to expand those services across the province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

COM. SERV. - INCOME ASSIST.: SHELTER ALLOWANCE - INADEQUATE

HON. PAT DUNN: My question is for the Minister of Community Services. It has been my experience that helping individuals who are on income assistance find accommodations is very challenging given the current amounts for the minister's department. The average cost for a person to rent a bedroom with a shared bathroom and common kitchen living area is around \$500 in the Pictou County area. However, under the minister's current funding model, an IA recipient would only receive \$235. I currently have a constituent who did receive \$535 living in a rooming house that was grandfathered.

Unfortunately, he had to move because bedbugs were eating him alive. My constituent found a room for \$435, but now he's been reduced to \$235.

My question to the minister, does the minister feel that someone on income assistance can find proper living accommodations on this meagre amount?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for raising this particular issue with me, and I'm happy to sit down with him outside the House so we can walk through and find out exactly what happened. What I can tell the honourable member - and I know that his concern for his constituent is genuine - what I can tell him is that we are in the process of revamping how we do what we do at Community Services and, when we finish our transformation, all of our clients will receive the maximum available for their housing.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, everyone has a right to lead a healthy life in our province. However, it's getting harder and harder for those on income assistance to live that way. The current formula only allows an IA recipient \$235 to live in a shelter, and \$535 if they choose to live in an apartment. My question to the minister is, will the minister commit to addressing this need by increasing this formula in this year's budget, or does my constituent need to enroll somewhere else to get income assistance?

MS. REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for his question, and I want to assure him that we're in the process of changing how we do what we do so that, in fact, this kind of thing does not happen, and I want to thank him for raising it for me here in the House today.

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

COM. SERV. - HOUSING: EXISTING CLIENTS - PRIORITY

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, my question is also to the Minister of Community Services. On March 5, 2018, I met with a constituent named Bonnie Gibson who was there to advocate for a disabled woman, Arlene Wright who, two months ago, was forced out of low-income housing at the recommendations of her family physician, because of the severity of the mould and the vermin in her building.

Additionally, Arlene had been a victim of physical assault in that housing complex. She has nowhere to go. She would be living on the street right now if it wasn't for Bonnie, who has taken her in.

My question to the minister, when someone who is in housing already is forced out of their housing because of mould issues, would they not be placed on the top of the list for housing, rather than being told that now that she's out of there she has to wait another two years to get back in?

[10:15 a.m.]

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for raising this question with me in the House today. I want to assure her that we want our clients to live in safe surroundings.

I would, however, caution the honourable member that it is not appropriate to raise names, to identify people who are receiving assistance from Nova Scotia. It's not appropriate. We are outing them; we're putting their names out in the public. I want to be clear with the honourable member that I don't mind if she raises that with me individually, but you need to be very careful.

MS. ADAMS: I thank the member for the reminder. Next time I'll bring the consent form that she signed. I guarantee you, as a health professional, confidentiality is always a priority. She is desperate. She wanted to go to the news, but I said, no, I would prefer to speak to you directly because I know that you have always been responsive when I brought it forward, so I had her permission.

This woman also goes to another program during the week, and her belongings have been put in storage. She is doing the best that she can to live independently, but without a location to go to she has been set back in her efforts. All she wants is a safe place to live.

My question, what options are available to her and others who are on disability who need to relocate for their own safety especially, and what the strategy is moving forward as our population ages?

MS. REGAN: We have a number of programs that can assist people who would prefer to be doing different things during the day. We have, in fact, added \$1 million to our budget this past year to expand our day programs. Again, I would be happy to speak to the honourable member about this particular case outside the House.

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

TIR: ROCCO POINT RD. FLOODING - LONG-TERM FIX

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Rocco Point Road is a scenic dirt road in Ste. Anne du Ruisseau; unfortunately, it runs through a coastal marsh and is prone to flooding. The recent storm surge has caused some flooding, but the road also has been in danger over the last number of months during the perigeon tides. TIR staff has been out to visit the sites and has posted a flooding sign.

My question to the minister, are there any other measures that can immediately shore up the Rocco Point Road and other roads like it that are prone to this kind of flooding?

HON. LLOYD HINES: I appreciate the question from the member. We will take a specific look at Rocky Point Road.

As I mentioned earlier in the week, in this wonderful province that we have, which is a virtual island, we are subject to the ebb and flow of the tides and some of the worst storms in the North Atlantic. They are changing the nature of our estuaries. We had one yesterday from Chezzetcook, and I'm aware of issues in different parts of Cape Breton, all along the area. I think perhaps what we have to do is look at an analysis of what the implications are here and look on a longer term at the ways that we can deal with those ever-changing situations.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: I thank the minister for his answer. The Rocco Point Road, - R-O-C-C- O - is on a busing route, and residents do operate some small businesses. Now they have to keep a tide chart at home so that they don't cross over too much water when it's those super-high tides that we have been having.

They just need a reliable road, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the road can be rebuilt, especially in a couple of those sections, to properly correct the flooding.

So, is the minister able to provide any more detail or inquire of his staff on what the long-term fix is for the Rocco Point Road?

MR. HINES: We will take a look at that in particular. I will get a report and make that available to the member.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

NAT. RES. - FORESTRY: CLEAR-CUT REDUCTION - OVERSIGHT

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Nova Scotians are questioning this government's commitment to a sustainable future for forestry in our province. First the Liberal Government backed off the clear-cut reduction targets that the NDP Government had set, and now media are reporting troubling stories of questionable cuts that may be clearing old-growth forests.

The pre-cut assessments are done by Port Hawkesbury Paper itself, and the minister's department only checks their assessment one in 10 times - I'll table that. Does the minister believe this is adequate oversight to protect our high-quality forests against low-quality harvesting?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: I thank the honourable member for that question. We take very seriously our role in the Department of Natural Resources in doing the assessments of our forest lots before they are harvested. As a matter of fact, we have an Independent Reporting Mechanism process where the assessment is done. Everything is evaluated, whether it is an old-growth forest, whether there is habitat for different endangered species, and all those allowances are all made before a determination is made.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table this document that is a sample of the IRM process, how it is figured out, and allow members to have a look at this.

MS. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I don't think Nova Scotian foresters are satisfied. There are troubling signs that this government's forestry policy is moving Nova Scotia towards becoming one big, low-quality tree farm. Groupe Savoie's mill in Westville is the last operating hardwood mill in northern Nova Scotia and it has only been operating one day a week for the past two months, because it doesn't have enough quality hardwood logs. I'll table that.

High-quality hardwood is worth more money and creates more employment per cubic foot, so how can the department say it is transforming the forestry industry to maximize high-value resources when the department is not even enforcing its own policies properly?

MS. MILLER: I thank the member for the question again. Certainly, we are enforcing it. When we hear of any violations in the department or any perceived violations by different stakeholders in the province, we certainly do investigate that. If they are in violation of the approval of their permits, then we'll be dealing with that personally.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

H&W - LYME DISEASE: DIAGNOSIS/TREATMENT - ADDRESS

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Over the past number of sessions, I've asked the Minister of Health and Wellness to show support for those struggling with Lyme disease. To this day, too many people are forced to leave the province to seek treatment because their diagnosis is not always made in a timely manner. People are increasingly aware of the risks, and are going to greater lengths to prevent contracting the disease, but the health care system is not keeping pace.

My question for the minister is, what specific measures is the department taking to address Lyme disease diagnosis and treatment, and how will they prevent people from having to travel to the United States for treatment?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member bringing this topic to the floor of the Legislature again. I know my colleague the member for Bedford -

formerly affectionately known as the “Minister of Ticks” - was quite active in bringing this discussion to the floor as well.

Mr. Speaker, what the department is doing is following the national guidelines around the assessment and treatment of tick-related Lyme disease. We continue to do that work, as well as promote awareness which, as the member acknowledged, people in Nova Scotia are becoming more aware, and being more proactive in our outdoors.

MR. HOUSTON: The issue of Lyme disease has been ongoing for many years, for sure. The impact on people’s lives can be devastating. The province has made strides in making people aware of the dangers associated with ticks in certain areas of the province, but the diagnosis and education is simply not going far enough.

My question is, will the minister commit to developing a Lyme disease strategy that will target the gaps in unique circumstances faced by Nova Scotians struggling with this disease?

MR. DELOREY: Again, with the ongoing work within the department and with our partners, the Nova Scotia Health Authority, with physicians across the province, Mr. Speaker - again, education both for the citizens of the province on how to be proactive in preventing tick bites, but also have to identify - but also with our physicians and health care partners in the primary care space - to identify and treat appropriately, we work with them on training and getting information out there.

Again, the guidelines we follow in our health care system for the identification and treatment does follow our national standards, Mr. Speaker.

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

EECD: SPECIAL EDUC. FUNDING - REVIEW

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Last year, the minister met with a constituent of mine, Ms. Barbara Wynn - and I have her permission to use her name - about her son, Eric, who attends the Harbourview Montessori School.

Eric has a challenged learning, and attending the Harbourview Montessori School has resulted in positive change in Eric’s development and he is progressing well in that environment. The challenge for his mother is the cost of the private institution, and the fact that the local school board does not seem willing to assist with the cost.

The question for the minister is, will the minister address this issue of funding and assist Barbara and Eric by helping to fund Eric’s tuition at the Harbourview Montessori School?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. We did send a letter to Harbourview Montessori School. Right now, they do not fit the criteria for subsidy, because they do not have a specialization in supporting students with special needs. However, we have reached out to them to let them know what they do need to meet the criteria for that subsidy. In the meantime, we will be working with the regional executive director to see if there are alternative solutions to the challenges that that student, and family, is facing.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the minister has outlined a long list of ways that public education can assist Eric. This family found a resolution without having to disrupt Eric's progress and creating new issues and, after today, the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board cannot be blamed for special education policies because they don't exist anymore.

The responsibility will rest with the minister and his department, alone, and, in a letter dated December 13th, and I quote: You have my assurance that I will reflect on your family's experience as we strive to improve and enhance public education in our province.

So the question for the minister is this, will the minister commit today to reviewing the funding for special education in cases like Eric's so their education is not impeded by bureaucracy?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we do have funding recommendations that will be coming forward from the Commission on Inclusive Education, as the Premier has stated. We will plan on investing in those supports for the classroom so that we not only help this particular student, but help all those students in the system that currently aren't getting everything that they need from our education system.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

SERVICE N.S. - DRIVER'S LICENCE: NEW SYSTEM - FLAWED

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Service Nova Scotia. Holly Taylor of North Alton had her driver's licence renewed at Access Nova Scotia on January 15th of this year. She received a paper licence and was told the real licence would arrive in the mail in two weeks. Seven weeks later, she has still not received her licence. Meanwhile, the white paper licence has expired, and Holly had to pay another \$25 to renew that.

My question for the minister is, how does this system of having licences printed in Ontario and mailed to Nova Scotia benefit Nova Scotians if licences are getting lost in the mail, stolen, or misdirected?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Obviously, in that particular case, it doesn't benefit at all. That's got to be an anomaly, without question. So, I can take the constituent's name and check that out to make sure that she's treated properly, and we get that fixed up.

With respect to the licences, that was a regional program the Atlantic Provinces all signed on for one procurement, and it's really done in the name of security. These cards not only will be more secure from identity theft, but moving forward with advanced technologies in how we utilize our cards to have a one-payment system, one identification system for all Nova Scotians and all Atlantic Canadians. There is an idea and a notion that not only is it advanced security, but it's also better in terms of transactions in dealing between the public and the government.

We'll check that specific case and get back to the member.

MR. LOHR: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer, Mr. Speaker. Holly had to pay extra to restart the licence process, and was unfortunately even without a valid temporary licence for a few days. The government has said one reason for going to the new system was to enhance security but, for the sake of saving a few bucks, we have a system which isn't working for Nova Scotians and may be less secure.

My question for the minister is this, will the minister admit that having licences printed at each Access Nova Scotia while you waited was really a much more secure system, and gave much better service, and will he commit to reinstating the printing of licences at Access Nova Scotia again?

MR. MACLELLAN: Respectfully, no, I wouldn't agree to that. Number one, over the course of the contract, there's a \$10 million saving for the province - which is big - but that's not even the most important part of this initiative. It's about the security and the fact that as we move to a digital government, every service, or the majority of services that Service Nova Scotia provides, a lot of times (Interruption) What's that? Stop interrupting me, I'm trying to answer the question. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

[10:30 a.m.]

It's in the name of security, but there's no question that we can't have those things happen. For the member's constituent, we can check that specifically, but this is a more secure system. It's a better system. The fact that it's an Atlantic Provinces procurement program with all of our sister provinces signed on means that it's an important move for all of us and it will be a better system. Thanks.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

COM. SERV.: CHILD & FAM. POVERTY - ACTION

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Services. Nova Scotia has the highest rate of child and family poverty in the country, at 22.2 per cent. Child poverty is women's poverty. The 2017 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives explains that child poverty is intricately linked to the dynamics of women's poverty and the gendered discrimination they face in care work and the labour market, and the challenges of unpaid caregiving that falls disproportionately to women. I'll table that.

Mr. Speaker, how does the minister expect to raise children out of poverty when this government refuses to take meaningful action to improve the situation of women and their families?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As the member well knows, we are in the process of transforming our system at Community Services so that we can serve families who are our clients much better.

I would note that according to Statistics Canada, between 2006 and 2016, the rate of poverty in Nova Scotia decreased approximately 17 per cent. But I am not saying that we are done. Far from it. There is a lot more work that needs to be done. I can assure the honourable member that we will be looking not just at the supports that we offer at Community Services but at poverty across government, across all departments.

I also want to assure the honourable member that, unlike when her Party was in power, we are not going to raise taxes for the poorest among us.

MS. LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, Karen Theriault of Feed Nova Scotia has said that individuals receiving social assistance are 30 per cent to 40 per cent below the poverty line, so the work is definitely not done. Meanwhile, the minister wants us to applaud a potential 2 per cent increase in ESIA rates. In fact, after this increase, ESIA recipients will be poorer in buying power than they were in 2016, right after the last raise. A 2 per cent increase and less buying power hardly sound transformative.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister acknowledge that her department is failing in its responsibility to improve the economic situation for women?

MS. REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I would remind her that one of the things we are most pleased about is that the federal government has joined this fight against child poverty and they have introduced the Canada child benefit.

This began in July 2016. It gives families up to \$533 per child per month to assist with family expenses. Having talked to accountants who have looked at this, I would say that it has made a significant impact.

I'm not saying that poverty is eliminated or anything like that, Mr. Speaker. I am saying it has had a significant impact on the lives of Nova Scotians here in this province. Thank you.

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

BUS. - QUEENS CO.: INTERNET ACCESS - ACTION

MS. KIM MASLAND: My question is to the Minister of Business. Last year the government introduced a high-speed rural Internet strategy to give Nova Scotians access to Internet service, which "is essential to live, work and operate in our modern world." I will table that document.

I receive complaints on a regular basis from constituents - constituents like Jessica Joudrey, who is a young teacher from rural Queens County trying to do work from home, who can't, while her neighbour 400 feet down the road can. Jessica wrote the Premier with her concerns and only received platitudes about programs available to other communities. I'll table that document.

My question is, will the minister address the real needs of people like Jessica with real solutions, as opposed to a letter of platitudes and programs utilized in other places?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I do thank the member for the question. The answer is yes, we certainly will. With the planning and preparation that has gone into the broadband initiative, and the program that we're about to release and put out there for all Nova Scotians to see, we have done a lot of work. The legwork will be in place, and the strategy will be very clear for all Nova Scotians.

More importantly, over and above the plan, this is about money. Because of the fiscal decisions that we have made, and the fact that we have had three consecutive balanced budgets, we're ready to invest big in broadband because Nova Scotians need it. It is essential. I agree with the member. That's why we're going to invest big, and we're going to support Nova Scotians to that end.

MS. MASLAND: Thank you for that answer, minister. People want to move to Queens County and set up businesses and employ people. However, rural Internet service is prohibiting such opportunities from happening, as outlined in a message I received in January: In a few months, we will be returning to live in our beloved Queens County, specifically Labelle. We are concerned, however, that the lack of decent Internet will stop

our efforts to pursue business opportunities in our community, and that we may be forced to relocate in order to support ourselves.

I know the minister has pretty much answered my question, but I'll ask the question once again. Will the minister commit today to making the investments necessary to ensure all Nova Scotians can pursue opportunities no matter where they live?

MR. MACLELLAN: Again, it is a critical issue for us and for many people in this province. Connectivity is important for security and safety first and foremost, but we have so many initiatives that are tied to the rural economy, and growing the rural economy and keeping people home growing businesses, allowing innovation and entrepreneurship to take place. We can't do that without decent Internet access, to the member's point. Again, we will be making a major investment in broadband for this fiscal year and many years to come.

The member can tell her constituent not to go anywhere, to stay where she's at, because the broadband service will be coming soon.

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

TIR – GRAND RIV./FORCHU/FRAMBOISE: CELLPHONE COV. - PRIORITY

MS. ALANA PAON: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. A few days ago, I spoke in this House regarding a constituent of Cape Breton-Richmond who operates a fishing company. They were concerned about the lack of cellphone coverage in the Grand River-Forchu-Framboise area, and the challenges this presents to their business.

Today I would like to table a letter from another constituent who operates a trucking and excavating company. They struggle to communicate with their employees from the moment they leave the yard.

I am certain that the minister places a high priority on the safety of his Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal staff when they are in the field. Does the minister feel confident sending his staff out to work with heavy machinery in areas without reliable cellphone coverage?

HON. LLOYD HINES: The department has an internal radio system which the province has invested significant money into, and is an alternative in areas where cellphone service might be spotty.

MS. PAON: It must be fabulous to have an onboard radio system. I wish that the residents of Cape Breton-Richmond all had access to one as well, but they don't.

Beyond the business implications, the lack of cell service presents safety issues for this company when their employees are out in the field. In fact, surely the minister understands the importance of accessing emergency services, considering the issue I brought forward recently in this House regarding one of his department's pickup trucks being completely engulfed in flood conditions on the Loch Lomond Road. That vehicle lost power, and they were just able to make a call before their radio system went down.

On Wednesday, the Minister of Business stated that he believed reliable cell service was necessary to operate a modern business. Does the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal believe that cellphone service is as important a part of infrastructure in this province as roads or electricity?

MR. HINES: Yes.

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

EECD: SCHOOL BUSES - SERV. STANDARDS

MR. LARRY HARRISON: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Multiple constituents on the Lays Lake Road have children requiring bus services to get to school. We have received multiple phone calls from families stating that the bus will not be travelling on that road for the remainder of that winter.

A couple of the parents reported never receiving notice that this was going to take place. The young children of one family, who are normally dropped off at their grandmother's house only found out that they were being dropped off at the end of the road when the bus doors opened.

Will the minister be creating standards for busing services so that poorly maintained roads will not be used as an excuse for failing to deliver students from home to school and return?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, of course transportation policy is one of the areas that we can now look at through a provincial lens. I do know that when it comes to roads that have challenges, with the time of year there are safety issues to be concerned about as well, and of course the safety of our kids getting to and from school is absolutely paramount to any decisions we make provincially and locally.

MR. HARRISON: Just on that particular road - I drove it a couple of times during the winter. There are moments when the bus cannot get through, but there are also many times when it can.

A school bus picking children up for the Musquodoboit Valley Elementary School is reported to be extremely unreliable. There has been no communication at all with the

parents. Phone calls to the school board are referred to Stock Transportation and, when you phone Stock Transportation, they don't get back to you.

Will the minister be reviewing the busing policies in HRM and follow up on the continued complaints about school transportation in the Musquodoboit Valley Elementary School district?

MR. CHURCHILL: Now that we do have the unified system, transportation is one of those key areas where we can look at, as I mentioned, through a provincial lens and make sure that best practices are being employed from one end of this province to the other.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

TIR: BLOOMFIELD COMPLEX - DISPOSITION

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

The future of the massive Bloomfield complex has been up in the air for years. Halifax Regional Council voted last August to sell a portion of the site to the provincial government with the hope it would be turned into a school. The 120-day window for that sale came and went without an official response. A letter from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, dated January 15th, says the province is unable to consider council's offer. Also, in January, chain-link fencing and private property signs went up around the publicly owned land.

Mr. Speaker, given the significant need for public infrastructure for public housing, health and education facilities on the peninsula, why is the minister risking this public property be sold into private hands?

HON. LLOYD HINES: The disposition of the property is under the purview of the Halifax Regional Municipality. In terms of securing the property, it is always in the best interests of the public to make sure that all our properties are safe.

MS. LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, the 2016 report by the Auditor General found that the government decisions on school capital construction are ad hoc and unsupported - and often unsupported by analysis. The CSAP had hoped that Bloomfield could have been the site for a new P-12 school. The HRSB also submitted a capital request for a new North End junior high school.

Despite all the reforms just put through, the legislation passed last night by this government has made no improvements to the school capital process.

Mr. Speaker, what is the minister doing to make sure there is a transparent system for school capital planning in place so communities can make sure their voices are being heard by this government?

MR. HINES: My department is informed by the decisions of others of the education chain who determine where the processes are, and the engineering expertise that our department has is employed to produce the finished facility. It would appear on the surface, though, that the very Act that the member refers to will enable us to make more informed decisions and move with greater speed in implementing those decisions.

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

NAT. RES. - INGONISH BEACH AREA: COYOTES - CONTROL

MR. KEITH BAIN: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Over the past three or four weeks the residents of the Ingonish Beach area have been contacting my office, as well as the local councillor, because they are concerned about the number of coyotes in the area. Over the past few months the number of coyotes has been steadily increasing not only in the Ingonish Beach area but on the North Shore and Tarbot areas as well. One resident has reported seeing five in her driveway when she prepared to take her dog for a walk. Needless to say, she stayed in her home.

So, my question is, what does the minister's department do to investigate and control situations such as this, especially when it is one that could affect the safety of the residents?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: I thank the honourable member for this question. This is certainly something that our department is very - I won't say "keen on" but certainly we want to make sure that the safety of residents, whenever it concerns wild animals, is first and paramount. I would encourage the honourable member, if there are any complaints, to forward them to our department. We will have staff go out and investigate those complaints. If we find that really is a danger to the public, we'll be able to take some action.

MR. KEITH BAIN: I thank the minister for that response. I know that there has been contact made with the local depot in her department. A number of residents of the Ingonish Beach area have indicated they've seen the coyotes around their houses. One even went right up to the doors of one home. Residents are becoming very frustrated and concerned for their children and their pets, and they're living in fear. Some residents are even talking about shooting them, which could lead to even more issues. My question: will the minister have her department do everything possible to eradicate these concerns as soon as possible for the safety of the residents of Ingonish Beach?

MS. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member. Certainly, as I've said, safety is certainly going to be paramount in dealing with this. If, indeed, this is found after

investigation by the department to be the case, we'll be able to take some action to make sure that the residents are not ever in danger.

[10:45 a.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

H&W - COL. HEALTH CTRS.: CHOICE OF PRACTITIONER - CONFIRM

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, a question for the Minister of Health and Wellness. We hear about the new collaborative health centres and, as I understand, the idea is there are to be nurse practitioners and other health professionals. But essentially, you can see a nurse practitioner and, if there is a need to see a family doctor, they can get you access to that doctor.

I know I'm hearing from people in my constituency who have been told - and we're hearing in other parts of the province - that you have to choose whether you want a nurse practitioner or a family doctor. You can only have one or the other and, if you refuse the nurse practitioner, yes, you can stay on the doctor wait-list but, if you take the nurse practitioner, you're off the doctor wait-list.

Can the minister tell us, do you only have the option of choosing one or the other?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I think what the member is referencing is registering on a roster with - that's just paperwork identifying who the primary person they go in to see is. But the whole point in the way that these collaborative practices and collaborative teams work is they work as a team. If they needed to see a general practitioner, a family physician, then they would have access to those services as well.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I do hope that is the case, and I take the Minister at his word, although I would like to raise this concern because this person, this individual was told that if you stick with the nurse practitioner, and you need to see a family doctor, you should go to the emergency department. So, maybe it is a case of misinformation, but it came from somebody fairly high up in the Health Authority, and it begs the question, is the goal of the government to help people to see a doctor when they need one, or is it to get them off the family doctor wait-list so they can talk about their finding family doctors for people?

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

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I had the privilege yesterday to make an announcement about seven additional collaborative practice teams being implemented

across the province, as well as expanding and strengthening 16 others, we made it very clear, as did the physician and the family practice nurse that were part of that presentation over in Dartmouth, that they do work collaboratively together. They do share support for the patients and their community. Both, who have decades of experience in health care, spoke about how amazing this experience - although only one month old in their practice - how amazing that experience has been for both the physician and the nurse. Thank you.

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

MR. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Last September, I asked the minister a question about a courtesy bus, and parents have continued to express their concerns with the maximum distance that province to school boards are setting for walking and busing. Distances set provincially are set at 3.6 km and a student can be bused whether they are five or 18 years old. Halifax Regional School Board, of course, has a policy of 2.4 km.

The minister has said that the standardized policy across the province is one of the objectives to centralization. In September, the minister actually said, and I would quote and table: "There are many out there who would agree that having our children walk to schools is healthy exercise."

I would like to know, Mr. Speaker, if the minister will commit to coming to my constituency and joining myself and a five-year-old as we walk the 7.2 kilometers to school and back.

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

MR. CHURCHILL: Maybe.

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

Just before we move on to government business, the honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development on an introduction.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I have a couple of introductions. If I could bring the members' attention to the east gallery, we have my current executive assistant, Dylan Blain, and former executive assistant, Shawn Lawlor, both of whom have provided me with great service.

More importantly, I would like to introduce again to the House my joyous inspirations and the loves of my life, my wonderful wife, Dr. Katie Churchill, and my

incredible daughter, Cecilia Louise Churchill. Members, please join me in welcoming my family and friends. (Applause)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 76.

Bill No. 76 - Mineral Resources Act

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: I move that Bill No. 149, amendments to the Mineral Resources Act, be read a second time.

I remember when this bill first came forward to this House. I was sitting next to the former Minister of Natural Resources at the time thinking, I'm really glad this isn't my file. Be careful what you wish for. (Laughter)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to ask the honourable member to confirm the bill number. I have Bill No. 76 - You read a different bill number.

MS. MILLER: I move that Bill No. 76, amendments to the Mineral Resources Act be read a second time.

That's one of those things, when you think you don't need to have all of the information about a bill, and you're really glad one of your colleagues is doing it, and then all of a sudden it becomes your bill, and you need to know everything about it. So, there you go.

As the members will know, mining holds a long tradition in Nova Scotia. We have been exploring for and mining coal, gypsum, gold, and salt on and off, for more than 150 years.

Even our well-established industries need modern, effective legislation which provides effective processes for industry and government. On March 2nd, I had the honour

of introducing amendments to the Mineral Resources Act to the Legislature. The Mineral Resources Act is the legislation that establishes the rights and obligations around the responsible development of Nova Scotia's mineral resources. Our government led a substantial review of the Act, which had not been done since 1990. Updating the Mineral Resources Act fulfilled a commitment of the Natural Resources Strategy.

The legislation strikes the right balance between stimulating the economy, particularly in rural Nova Scotia, and managing our natural resources. This new bill was the product of several years of work, and follows consultations with Nova Scotians, particularly industry, professional associations, environmental, non-government organizations, the Mi'kmaq, and the public.

The new Mineral Resources Bill encourages mineral exploration and development in Nova Scotia. The new Mineral Resources Bill cuts red tape by making it easier and less expensive for industry to manage exploration licences. It requires less frequent industry reporting, so that industry spends more time and money investing in exploration and less on administering licences. It allows for more time to complete work on exploration licences. It adopts consistent processes to better and timelier exploration access to most minerals. It streamlines the process for resolving private land and access disputes.

The new bill establishes good practices for industry to engage with communities, to guide them as they create their own social licence, and build public confidence in exploration and mining projects. The bill also contributes to the public confidence discussion by requiring regular reviews of mine reclamation plans, and ensuring that mine sites have adequate reclamation security through the mining cycle.

Our government recognizes the importance of effective legislation to reduce barriers to industry. The bill will improve Nova Scotia's competitive position, and further supports an open-for-business environment for mining in the province and effective community engagement. Public and stakeholder feedback was an important element in the creation of this bill. The Department of Natural Resources met with various stakeholders on numerous occasions to discuss the bill and receive input. As well, we created a public consultation document which gave Nova Scotians the opportunity to provide their thoughts and ideas regarding the bill.

Our province is endowed with a diversity of mineral resources and has the potential for new mine projects that will help to grow and sustain our economy and provide employment and opportunities for rural economic development.

The Mineral Resources Act helps to facilitate the discovery and development of these resources. The Atlantic gold mine in the Musquodoboit Valley that opened in Fall 2017 is a significant new development providing high-paying jobs for Nova Scotians, which will generate new wealth for our province.

I visited that mine just a little while ago, and I was so pleased when they told me that 98 per cent or 99 per cent of their employees were Nova Scotians, many of whom had returned from the west to work in the industry in Nova Scotia. It was good news for Nova Scotia.

This signals to the global mining community that Nova Scotia is open for business. The Mineral Resources Act provides a framework for new projects like the Atlantic gold mine to come into production.

It is important to the people of Nova Scotia and to this government that we have the most up-to-date Act that helps us manage our mineral resources. To ensure that we have the most effective Act, we are introducing amendments that assure greater clarity. During the drafting of the regulations, we identified areas where the intent of the Act was not clear enough. As the goal is to provide industry with a modern regulatory framework under which to explore and mine in the province, it was decided that these sections should be made clearer so there would be no misinterpretation or unintended restrictions.

Before the bill is proclaimed, we want everyone to clearly understand what is required to secure and keep a mineral right in Nova Scotia. The amendments include ensuring that the registrar, the person who manages the mineral registry, has the express authority to undertake the responsibilities identified within the Act and the regulations.

We are also fixing an unintended loop in the appeals process. The way the Act is currently worded, there is a loop where decisions of the minister under one section are appealable only to the minister. Now as a parent, I'm looking at that and saying, okay, that means if I make a decision and you come back to me, I'm going to tell you it's still the same. We need to have that process in government where everything is appealable to the Supreme Court. This amendment will eliminate the loop and the unintended restriction on someone wishing to appeal a decision.

In addition, there are several other amendments, which include removing some of the duplicated sections of the Act, clarifying language regarding decisions that are solely under the authority of the minister, and correcting typographical errors.

The proposed changes provide clarity and functionality to the Act, ensuring that how we've been informing stakeholders that the Act and regulations are going to work is clearly reflected. Moreover, the amended Act will be consistent with what we heard from industry during the consultation process.

I look forward to proclaiming the new Act in Spring 2018 with updated regulations that ensure clarity for both industry and staff when working within the areas administered by the Act.

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

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill No. 76. Responsible resource development is critically important for moving our province forward. Mining is an industry that will play a huge role in the future of this province. We have a proud tradition of mining across this province, from Cumberland to Pictou County and Cape Breton.

The role of government is extremely important in setting the conditions for the competitive marketing sector here in Nova Scotia. Modernization of the Mineral Resources Act has been greatly needed. We need to ensure that the appeals process is fair and independent from the minister's office, and also bring clarity to industry on the role of the Registrar of Mineral and Petroleum Titles.

We know that the mining industry has been held back in Nova Scotia in recent years. Year after year, we can see that our province has ranked poorly in investment attractiveness for mining, according to the Fraser Institute.

[11:00 a.m.]

I would like to reiterate, it's my sincere hope that the government is not content to stop with this Act. The mining industry has been asking the government to deliver a fuel tax rebate, similar to those that have been extended to other resource sectors. This government has indicated they would bring this forward, but we have not seen it yet. A rebate like this would benefit job-creating companies and signal that Nova Scotia is open for business.

We'd also like to see the government engage in a serious conversation about competitive fees. Mr. Speaker, we look forward to hearing presentations at Law Amendments Committee on this very important bill. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak briefly to this bill. I hope, perhaps, there will be witnesses on this Act at Law Amendments Committee, and I would like to begin by reminding the House that when the Liberal Government passed Bill No. 149, which became the new Mineral Resources Act just last year, it did that without making any amendments that would have addressed significant concerns that were brought forward at that time.

A number of environmental groups participated in Law Amendments Committee then, including the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, and the Sierra Club. Those groups pointed out that the Act does not adequately protect land that has been conserved in land trusts, and gives the minister the power to force the transfer of land against the will of the owner. Those concerns still stand, and these new amendments certainly do nothing to address them.

It is good that the amendments clarify the process of appealing decisions by the minister. However, these amendments are not going to assure Nova Scotians that they will have adequate say in whether mining is allowed in protected areas. For me, this underscores how urgently Nova Scotians need an Environmental Bill of Rights, like the NDP has proposed.

Our Environmental Bill of Rights would accomplish five goals: (1) expand citizen participation and consultation in the environmental assessment process; (2) increase government accountability and transparency by requiring all environmental data to be posted online; (3) create whistleblower protections for public and private employees who expose environmental wrongdoing; (4) create a mechanism for citizens to sue in court over violations of environmental rights; and (5) create and establish an environmental commissioner, an independent and arm's-length office, similar to the Auditor General, who would report on environmental issues to the Legislature.

Just in closing, we spoke at some length yesterday in this House about trust, and about whether citizens trust the government, in that case specifically speaking to education issues. I think those trust issues are fairly widespread, and certainly on the environment and environmental stewardship, it's an area where many people do not trust the government. I think it speaks to a need for transparency and for local voice in environmental issues as well. My concern is that these amendments to the Mineral Resources Act do not ensure those. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of clarification. The member for Victoria-The Lakes just indicated and called on government to implement the fuel tax rebate for the mining industry in Nova Scotia, and I'd like to point out that that was contained in our most recent budget for last year. I've been very happy to be talking to the senior mining partners in the province who are very grateful, including MANS that this government provided that rebate and corrected that inequity that existed.

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

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: I'd like to thank all members of the House who spoke on the bill. I certainly look forward to comments at Law Amendments Committee as well. Hopefully, we'll have some stakeholders there who will be able to give us some input as well. With that I move to close debate on Bill No. 76, the Mineral Resources Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 76. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 79.

Bill No. 79 - Property Valuation Services Corporation Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 79, an Act to Amend Chapter 19 of the Acts of 2006, the Property Valuation Services Corporation Act, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide comments today on proposed amendments to the Property Valuation Services Corporation Act to allow Property Valuation Services Corporation, or PVSC, to modernize their board of directors. As you are likely aware, PVSC, which was created in 2008, is an independent not-for-profit corporation which assesses every property in Nova Scotia.

The mission of the PVSC is to provide essential world-class property assessment services that enable their clients to make sound decisions. PVSC believes that changes to their governance structure would benefit their operations, and the province is making the required legislative amendments to allow these changes to occur.

Currently the board of directors is comprised of 13 people, with six elected members, three municipal administrators, three independent members, plus the executive director from the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities. The responsibilities of the board of directors are: to establish a long-term strategic plan; create multi-year capital and operation budgets; appoint a CEO; encourage partnership opportunities with stakeholders and others; communicate with its stakeholders, including reporting to the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities at its annual general meeting; and ensuring external financial and quality audits are completed. Changes to the Property Valuation Services Corporation Act will result in a smaller board and will allow for the establishment of a recruitment committee to attract board members.

This committee will be made up of representatives of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, the Association of Municipal Administrators, and the corporation; membership terms to increase from three years to four years to better coincide with the municipal election cycles and provide more continuity, balance between the number of municipally elected officials and municipal administrators; and under the new structure there would be three elected members and three administrators and four to five independent

members, as opposed to three. In addition, the UNSM executive director would serve as a non-voting member of the board.

Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate in Nova Scotia to have a recognized independent organization responsible for conducting our property assessments. The corporation believes the changes to its governance structure would benefit its operations to help them better serve the people of Nova Scotia. This is the first time since the PVSC was created that there have been significant changes around the structure of its board of directors.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the comments from my colleagues. Thank you.

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

MR. BRAD JOHNS: Thank you to the minister for bringing this forward as well. It's relatively light housekeeping amendments and there's not really much criticism I can say in regard to most of it. I think our caucus certainly recognizes and supports the need to modernize the PVSC. In addition to that, we also support the roles and responsibilities that municipalities play across the province. We want to encourage and help support those municipal units across the province and work collaboratively with the government with those units, as well as affiliated organizations like the PVSC.

Overall there really doesn't seem to be a whole lot of concerns about the amendments coming forward. I do recognize, and understand, the need to adjust the composition of the board, particularly I believe there have been challenges in the past with quorum issues and stuff, and I think these will address some of those issues.

In regard to composition, though, I do support moving to a more competency-based board. However, with the reduction of representatives to only three, I am questioning whether or not the minister had an opportunity to see whether Halifax is interested, and whether Halifax should have one of those seats. HRM, of course, is somewhat unique to other municipal units across the province both in size - being geographically the size of the Province of P.E.I. - and constituting close to 50 per cent of the province's population. I'm curious as to whether there may be merits in having HRM as one of those assigned seats.

The fact that the only municipal unit that currently has a charter is Halifax does highlight the uniqueness of that municipality. When we look around us when we're downtown, the commercial units and stuff - I think there is some uniqueness to HRM, and it would be nice to ensure that they have a representative at that table as well, or at least be given the option to have one of those three elected ones be an HRM representative.

Currently, we don't have any real amendments. We'll probably be bringing that one forward at some point in time. Perhaps the minister could actually review or maybe reach out to HRM to see whether there's merit in that question.

As a side note, though, Mr. Speaker, I do know that the minister as well as myself heard very clearly at the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities meeting held here in Halifax in the Fall that municipal units are also looking at the CAP, and capped assessments. They have asked numerous times whether or not there could be a multi-Party committee or whether or not the minister might be willing to look at reviewing how the CAP is currently done to address some of those concerns that the municipalities have been bringing up as well. That's just a side note. Thank you very much.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: I'm glad to see the Minister of Municipal Affairs took an approach to improving the board system, unlike the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and what we did with the school boards. I commend the minister for trying to improve on the board makeup and governance in the manner in which he has.

Really, truly, I think that's the role of the government, when you have a department that oversees a board like this, the Property Valuation Services Corporation, and when there are issues especially around the timing of municipal elections and those who sit on the board of that organization or corporation. There may be some voids after an election if someone doesn't run again or someone doesn't get re-elected.

We welcome the changes to that to ensure that the services provided by the Property Valuation Services Corporation can continue. I look forward to this bill going through the process.

Again, I commend the minister for not taking the approach of his colleague in the Department of Health and Wellness - or the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Maybe the Department of Health and Wellness too - they amalgamated the district health authorities.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I want to thank both of my colleagues for their comments. I'll just conclude by recognizing Warden MacAlpine, who is the chair of PVSC - if he is watching today - for his leadership with these changes, and everybody involved with the PVSC and the Department of Municipal Affairs for bringing some of these changes forward.

There was in-depth consultation to get us to this point. I want to recognize the work of PVSC, which is an award-winning organization, for the work that they do.

At this point, I will close debate on second reading of Bill No. 79.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 79. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: That concludes government business for today. (Interruptions) Sad, I know. Sorry, members.

I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Tuesday, March 20th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Business will include the province's annual budget introduction followed by daily routine, Question Period, and if time permits, we'll move into second reading on Bill Nos. 82, 84, and 85.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to rise to meet again on Tuesday, March 20th, 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.

The House now stands adjourned until Tuesday, March 20th, at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 11:15 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1030**

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Environment)

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

Whereas Marsha Robinson of Brookside is a busy mom of two active boys and an avid photographer who has a wonderful eye and creates stunningly beautiful images; and

Whereas with one of Marsha's photographs of a bubble blown outside just after sunrise on a cold day in February, the temperature was -8 Celsius and we had fresh snow that morning, the bubble quickly started to freeze and the design left was a thing of beauty, captured perfectly by Marsha's lens; and

Whereas *The Old Farmer's Almanac* recognized the exquisite beauty of Marsha's amazing picture of the frozen bubble and made it their cover photograph on their social media page;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Marsha on this recognition and wish her well in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1031

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Environment)

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

Whereas the Prospect Bulls U-12 Boys Basketball Team won the Bedford Invitational Championship held at the Prospect Road Community Centre on March 4, 2018; and

Whereas credit goes to Coach Trevor Knocton, and Assistant Coaches, Peter Miles and Kyler Knocton, for fostering such a strong and inclusive team spirit in their players; and

Whereas the final game was a nail-biter until the very end when Ry Mills, Mason Benoit, Alister Miles, Camden Jardine, Riley Knocton, Nantus Beard, Rowen Morgan, Jack Milhausen, Lucas Weatherbee, Aidan Bourque, Dale King, Timothy Bourke, and Etienne Pahlke managed to secure the championship win for the team;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating the Prospect Bulls U-12 players and coaches on their championship win, and wish them all well in the future.