



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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First Session

THURSDAY, MARCH 22, 2018

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MARCH 22, 2018

Sixty-third General Assembly

First Session

12:00 NOON

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

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTON NO. 1062

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

Whereas as a backbone of the provincial economy, agriculture depends on the committed efforts of countless Nova Scotians who have dedicated their lives to helping grow the sector through their hard work and determination to succeed; and

Whereas for more than 25 years Kyla Pierik has worked to support the success of agriculture as a member of a fifth-generation farming family, a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture graduate at the former Nova Scotia Agricultural College in Bible Hill, a professional agrologist, the owner of a retail farm market, a best-selling cookbook author, and a dedicated public servant in both the provincial and federal governments where she administered programs to support success for farmers; and

Whereas in recognition of her outstanding contributions to agriculture and a lifetime of achievements, Ms. Pierik was named honorary senator in the Senate Club of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, a rare distinction shared by less than a dozen people, which is made up of past presidents and honorary members;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in thanking Kyla Pierik for her unwavering dedication and service to the agricultural industry and congratulate her on her well-deserved recognition from the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture on an introduction.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, in the east gallery, is Kyla Pierik. Would you please stand, Kyla. Thank you and the family for coming today. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, may I beg leave to make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. INCE: In the east gallery, I have here today Ms. Browning and Councillor Pauline Raven who is a good, hard-working councillor in the Annapolis Valley region. If the House would like to stand and applaud for them, please. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 1063

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

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

Whereas Ms. Browning used her early-years struggles against systemic racism to fuel her work as an advocate for the protection of women and children from violence and abuse, promote literacy and education, and visit schools to share her experiences with young Nova Scotians; and

Whereas Ms. Browning is the founding member of the Black Cultural Society, the Valley African Nova Scotian Development Association, and the Black Business Initiative;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Ms. Geraldine Marjorie Browning on receiving the Order of Nova Scotia and commend her for educating and promoting a greater Nova Scotia and for being an inspiration in 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.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I'd like to make another introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. COLWELL: In the east gallery is Ralph Stirling, Ellen Kennie, Christine Herbin, and Angeline Stirling. If you could all stand and receive a warm welcome from the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1064

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

Whereas agriculture is the backbone of the provincial economy and its success depends on the determination, hard work, and innovative spirit of operators like Stirling Fruit Farms; and

Whereas since 1917, Stirling Fruit Farms Ltd. of Wolfville in the Annapolis Valley has been successfully growing apples and expanding its retail and wholesale business to reach more and more customers at home and abroad with the many delicious varieties and value-added products, such as the ciders they produce, for sale under their own label and for other companies, that have secured Nova Scotia's reputation as a leading cultivator of apples; and

Whereas more than three generations of the Stirling family have operated their farm in the Wolfville area, added innovation to help them grow the apple industry in Nova Scotia, and been recognized for determination and success with many awards, including being named the Valley's Best Farm Market in 2015 and 2016 by the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in thanking Stirling Fruit Farms for 100 years of successful and dedicated operation and wish them continued good fortune as they contribute to the vibrancy of Nova Scotia's agriculture sector.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment.

[12:15 p.m.]

RESOLUTION NO. 1065

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

Whereas today, March 22nd, is World Water Day, a day designated to focus on the importance of water around the world; and

Whereas 2.1 billion people on Earth do not have access to safe drinking water at home which impacts their health, their families, their education and their prospects for the future; and

Whereas Nova Scotians are strong environmental stewards who believe in protecting water, and our natural environment;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize World Water Day and commit to protecting our water and our environment.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 94 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 11 of the Acts of 2015. The Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act. (Mr. Eddie Orrell)

Bill No. 95 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 1 of the Acts of 1994-95. The Environment Act. (Mr. Gary Burrill)

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 Dartmouth East.

BLONDE, CHRIS: SMALL BUSINESS OWNER - RECOGNIZE

MR. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dartmouth East resident, Chris Blonde. After serving in the Royal Canadian Navy as a submariner for over 25 years, Chris has become a very well known and well-respected entrepreneur in Dartmouth East. Along with his wife Liesje Somers-Blonde, he started Blondie's Dog Treats and Doggie Pooh Services, two local businesses committed to helping our furry friends live their best lives.

Whether it was through his service to our great country or his care for our beloved pets, Chris Blonde has a positive influence in everything he does. I would like to ask all members of the house to please recognize Chris Blonde for his many community contributions and for being a welcome addition to the small business community in Dartmouth East.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

HUSSEY-TALLON, MOSS: 7th BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, today I am super happy to rise to wish my friend Moss Hussey-Tallon a very happy 7th birthday. Moss is a frequent visitor at the caucus office of the New Democratic Party, he's the son of Joanne Hussey, our Party's deputy chief of staff.

Moss likes helping his mother plant their vegetable garden and he enjoys playing board games with his father. He's a smart, caring, and very engaging little boy, and he's a person who's full of energy and joy. I'm sure that all members of the Legislature would join me in wishing Moss today a happy 7th birthday.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

GREEK'S MEATS: RETIREMENT/NEW OWNERSHIP - CONGRATS.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, Greek's Meats has been a landmark in Lunenburg County for several generations. First opened in 1975 by Victor Greek, this meat store has famously made and sold Lunenburg puddings and sausages.

In the 1990s, Victor turned the store over to the next generation, his son Richard, who has maintained the high standards and qualities of his father. Now at the age of 77, Richard is set to retire and has sold Greek's Meats to local resident Gary MacNeil. Though he will certainly miss his customers and suppliers, Richard is happy for the opportunity to spend more time with his family, and is confident that Greek's Meats will enjoy the same success under its new owner.

Congratulations to Richard on his retirement, and best of luck to Gary as he works to continue the success and reputation of Greek's Meats.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

BEDFORD, GEORGE (PICTOU): DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, the Town of Pictou has recently lost one of its most caring citizens with the sad news of the passing of George Bedford.

George, or "Chief" as he was known, was motivated by loyal community service and helping others. He served as a member of the Pictou Fire Department for more than half a century. During the last 44 years of service, he was chief and battled many blazes over the years.

George was well-known for helping many in the community at Christmastime. This was often through the fire department, but he also made sure that those in need had a Merry Christmas too.

We will miss this proud Pictonian, but his memory lives on in the tremendous giving spirit of our community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

HRSB MEMBERS: COM. SERV. - THANKS

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, as a result of the passing of Bill No. 72 the Halifax Regional School Board had its final meeting last night. The closing of the HRSB, the largest school board in the province, marks the end of democratically elected voices representing our families and children at that level.

It is sad to reflect today on what this means for democracy in our province, and what it means for all those who need a venue to amplify their voice and to make sure that their needs are being adequately met.

I would like to thank the members of the HRSB for putting themselves forward to serve our children and families in the Halifax-Dartmouth Region: Gin Yee, who is the

chairman and the representative for the people living in my riding of Dartmouth North; Linda MacKay, vice- chairman; Archy Beals, African Nova Scotian representative; Jessica Rose, Mi'kmaq representative; Bridget Ann Boutilier, Nancy Jakeman, Cindy Littlefair, Suzy Hansen, Jennifer Raven, and Dave Wright.

I would also like to say a special thank you to all of the women who sit on elected school boards across the province for being a part of the only level of government at which gender parity has been achieved.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

POIRIER, NICOLE: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell this House about a young Bedford volunteer.

Nicole Poirier has been volunteering with St. Ignatius Religious Education for many years. She's patient and understanding with young children, and devotes considerable time to preparing her lesson plans. She also has participated in church fundraising events, volunteered as a server at Knights of Columbus dinners and pancake suppers, and at Feed Nova Scotia.

Nicole has been awarded a Toastmaster Youth Leadership Certificate, and last year St. Ignatius honoured her for her volunteer work - and I'd like to thank her as well today.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

FUDGE, FELIX: COMPETITOR, MASTERCHEF CANADA - BEST WISHES

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, Felix Fudge is a native of Kentville who enjoys cooking, and he's good at it. In fact, Mr. Speaker, he's so good at it he's earned a spot on the upcoming season of MasterChef Canada.

Although he can't make fudge, Felix does make a mean fish and chips, which he chose as his audition meal. The dish featured beer-battered Atlantic cod with shoestring chips and tartar sauce.

Mr. Speaker, I wish this young man all the best on the upcoming season of MasterChef Canada, and thank him for representing our small part of the province on the world stage.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

**TUCKER, GERRY:
RECIPIENT, GOVERNOR GENERAL'S SOVEREIGN MEDAL - THANKS**

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, Gerry Tucker from Valley, Colchester North, a retired member of the RCMP recently received the Governor General's - Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers. This award recognizes exceptional accomplishments of volunteers by honouring their dedication and commitment.

Tucker has been a member of the Royal Canadian Legion during his 40-year career with the RCMP. His other volunteer activities are varied and numerous: He has taught shooting skills to cadets; volunteered with minor hockey; initiated an effort to collect clothing for underprivileged children; and raised thousands of dollars for Special Olympics in Nova Scotia.

He became involved in the Forensic Identification Unit, and in 2000 he volunteered, as a United Nations Peacekeeper, to go to Kosovo, where thousands of ethnic cleansing deaths were occurring. In 2004, following the devastating tsunami, he was asked to go to Thailand, where he was placed in charge of Forensic Identification. Amid all of the devastation, being able to give some comfort to people by helping to find their loved ones was gratifying.

Let's say a thank you to Gerry Tucker for his contributions to humanity, both here and abroad.

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

MACLEAN, BARBARA (SYDNEY MINES): DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember Barbara MacLean, who worked for 18 years at the Martha Hollett Memorial Library in Sydney Mines.

Barbara worked up until the day before she passed. The library was her life, and she always wanted to attract young people to the library and felt the library was a meeting place in the community. The enthusiasm and love Barbara exhibited for her library, and all those who came through the doors, is legendary.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize Barbara MacLean for the difference she's made in the community. She will definitely be missed.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

**BOYD, LUKE/CLASSIFIED (ENFIELD):
RURAL RESIDENT - RECOGNIZE**

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, East Hants is proud to claim this remarkable young talent as their own. Luke Boyd was born in Enfield and resides there still, despite his phenomenal global success as the rapper Classified. As Classified, Luke holds true the value of rural living, even though it belies the stereotypical lifestyle of the music genre he loves, and those values show up in the lyrics of his songs and speak to common daily scenarios of a family man.

His passion and talents have been recognized, and Classified's album, Hitch Hikin' Music, is considered to be one of the greatest Canadian rap albums of all time. He is a Juno award winner and a multiple Much Music Top Video recipient, and now, as the owner of Half Life records, supports other new artists. Yet, on a visit to our area you may see this musical star joining other parents waiting for their kids after school.

I would like to recognize Mr. Luke Boyd - Classified, as he is known - for his talents and for treasuring and appreciating the joys and the value of our rural area.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**LAUREIJS, CHRISTELINDA:
WINNER, NOURISH N.S. FOOD AND FILM CONTEST - CONGRATS.**

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize Christelinda Laureijs, an Amherst home-school student.

She was a recent youth winner in the Nourish Nova Scotia Food and Film contest, and she received a \$500 prize. Instead of keeping her prize, she donated it to NSCC's Cumberland Urgent Aid Fund. This helps students at NSCC not lose focus, by eating healthy during their studies. She wanted to educate students about how to make healthy choices to empower themselves. It's great to see someone like her be passionate about healthy choices at such a young age.

It is a pleasure to congratulate her on winning the Nourish Nova Scotia Food and Film Contest, and to salute her and her selfless dedication to other students.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

PARKER, MICHELLE: SAFETY ADVOCATE - COMMEND

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Michelle Parker who serves as the Kings County Senior Safety Coordinator for her role in organizing the Community Shred-it event, held on March 12th.

For the past 10 years, Michelle Parker has hosted Community Shred-it events, in partnership with the RCMP, to raise awareness about identity theft - one of the fastest-growing crimes in North America. Members of the public are invited to bring documents with sensitive information to be disposed of safely and securely to reduce the occurrence of fraud.

In recognition of March as Fraud Awareness Month, I would like to take this opportunity to commend Michelle Parker on a decade of Community Shred-it events, in addition to showing my appreciation for the compassion, care, advocacy, and excellent service she provides to the citizens of Kings County in her capacity as Senior Safety Coordinator.

Credit is also due to Constable Kelli Gaudet of the RCMP for her significant partnership in the event.

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

SEASIDE FM: RADIO-THON FUNDRAISER - THANKS

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Today I would like to recognize Seaside FM Radio 105.9.

Each March the annual radio-thon that the host begins with a meet and greet, welcoming everyone to our community. The radio-thon runs from March 16th to March 25th for this non-profit organization. It is a major fundraiser in our community and we rely heavily on our participants in the community to support us.

Broadcasting from Eastern Passage, Seaside FM draws mature listeners from near and far to the sounds of easy listening.

I want to express my gratitude for the hard work, dedication, and service that the station and all who contribute to it bring to the Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage constituency and beyond.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth

DUNCAN, DOUG - PASTOR, BAPTIST CHURCH: COM. SERV. - RECOGNIZE

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Pastor Doug Duncan of the Lake Echo Fellowship Baptist Church for his work in our community since 2013 as a dedicated servant enriching the lives of others.

He led a service program at the Ross Road School that involved other churches in supplying Christmas dinner for the whole school; he has provided leadership in

encouraging seniors of the church to reach out to the community with free luncheons to other seniors; and he recently led a group to help the Mineville Community Association reconnect an ice rink framework at a local park.

I applaud and recognize Pastor Doug Duncan for his ongoing work to inspire others to give their time, talents, and energy to improve the lives of others in our community.

[12:30 p.m.]

MR SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

**QUEENS CO. BLADES SKATING CLUB:
HOSTS, ATL. SYNCHRONIZED SKATING CHAMPIONSHIPS - CONGRATS.**

MS. KIM MASLAND: I rise today to recognize the Queens County Blades skating club, which from January 26th to 28th hosted the 2018 Atlantic Synchronized Skating Championships.

Mr. Speaker, 275 skaters from across Atlantic Canada amazed the crowds at Queens Place Emera Centre in Liverpool with their precision manoeuvres to music. The competition not only provided developmental and competitive experience for participants but also gave the host club the opportunity to showcase everything their community has to offer. At a normally quiet time of the year, the success of the championship brought an economic boost to the area.

I would like to congratulate competition chair Melissa Robinson and the entire Blades organization on a wonderful event and applaud them for their community pride and passion for excellence in their sport.

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

PUBLIC LIBRARIES: VITAL COM. CTRS. - RECOGNIZE

MR. GORDON WILSON: I would like to recognize the efforts of the staff of our public libraries to promote literacy and greater use of our libraries. At a time when many of us have access to much information through the Internet, we may consider the role of libraries in our lives as being lessened.

At the Isaiah W. Wilson Memorial Library in Digby, as in all branches of the Western Counties Regional Library, the staff is constantly re-evaluating and adding new services and programs, hoping to engage people. This past Fall, the Digby library had a sale of surplus books to raise funds for the library and introduce book buyers to the services and programs of the library. Just a few examples of these activities in Digby include

LEGO/DUPLO Fun Nights, wellness awareness lunches, Get Cyber Small Sessions, or Story Time for Tots.

Our libraries remain community centres where people can learn, get informed, and have some fun.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**CALLAGHAN, EVAN:
RECIPIENT, UNIV. GOLF SCHOLARSHIP - BEST WISHES**

HON. PAT DUNN: Evan Callaghan, a talented young competitive golfer from Pictou County, recently received a university golf scholarship.

He is presently attending a Minnesota prep school and has committed to play golf next season for Grand View University in Idaho. Grand View is a participating school in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. Evan's brother Ben, also an accomplished golfer, attends the same prep school in Minnesota.

Evan is looking forward to a higher level of competition within the university ranks. With an aspiring and successful career already added to his resumé, Callaghan expects to continue to increase his proficient play under the direction of university coach Chris Winkel. Evan posted a victory last October in Florida while he represented his school and took individual honours in a tournament.

I would like all members of the Legislature to join me in wishing Evan great success as he continues his academic and golf career.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**DRILLING/EXPLORATION ON SCOTIAN SHELF:
ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS - THANKS**

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, on this World Water Day, I want to recognize the efforts of the Campaign to Protect Offshore Nova Scotia and the Council of Canadians to further public debate and discussion around offshore drilling and the risks of deep-water exploration on the Scotian Shelf. The Scotian Shelf is an incredibly important area for lobster and other fisheries, as it is where larval lobster are found in greatest abundance.

Following successful town halls Tuesday night in Halifax and last night in Shelburne, the tour continues tonight in Lunenburg and features the author of *Black Tide*, a book about the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

In Nova Scotia, we tend to take our amazing coastline and the ocean environment beyond it for granted. I'm grateful to the many volunteers and fisheries organizations that remind us that it's our job to protect the environment that we are part of and rely on.

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

ANDERSON, BURNS - CONSTABLE, RCMP: COM. SAFETY - THANKS

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud the actions of Constable Burns Anderson of the RCMP detachment in Canso, Nova Scotia.

Burns and his wife were on vacation in Queens County this past summer when they encountered a car driving erratically toward them. As the car approached, Anderson could see that the driver appeared intoxicated. Because of the intermittent cell reception on the road, he was unable to call 911 to get uniformed officers to respond.

He decided to stay behind the car, but the driver was getting dangerously close to a parking area where, earlier, there had been children running about. Burns saw his chance when the car slowed enough that he was able to open the door, reach across the driver, and put the car in park. He then identified himself as a police officer and stopped what could have been a life-threatening situation from occurring.

Mr. Speaker, with great humility, I would like to thank Officer Burns Anderson for his astute reasoning and a well-timed reaction that allowed him to control this potentially tragic situation.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MALCOLM, SUSAN: RETIREMENT - GRATITUDE

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, today I wish to bring attention to Susan Malcolm, who is retiring after an impressive and successful 20-year career with the Aberdeen Health Foundation.

Susan has played a central role in the tremendous achievements of the foundation, which was established to support the Aberdeen Hospital's fundamental mission to provide quality health care to those in need by providing continuing and coordinated financial support. Susan is a caring, collaborative and compassionate individual who builds strong relationships with all stakeholders. Her expertise, enthusiasm and devoted service has left the foundation in a position of strength going forward.

Myself and the people of Pictou County are incredibly grateful for the hard work Susan has done to improve local health care services and to make our community a better place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

MEGAN, CASSIDY: FOUNDER, PURPLE DAY FOR EPILEPSY - CONGRATS.

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to bring awareness to epilepsy, a condition of the brain that affects the nervous system and impacts so many individuals and families across our province and the world. I want to recognize Purple Day, a now international day celebrated on March 26th, focused on raising awareness of epilepsy.

On March 3rd, I attended the Purple Day gala in support of the Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia. This year's gala was a particularly special one as I was pleased to present the proclamation recognizing March 2018 as Epilepsy Awareness Month in Nova Scotia.

I would like to thank our own Cassidy Megan for creating the idea of Purple Day 10 years ago. Her idea has garnered international attention and helped to spread epilepsy awareness across the globe. For her efforts Cassidy was honoured with this year's Diana Award presented to her by the Lieutenant Governor.

I congratulate Cassidy Megan and the Epilepsy Association on Purple Day's success and thank the organizers and remind all to wear purple on March 26th.

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

**DR. KINGSTON B. MEM. COM. HEALTH CTR.:
COLLABORATIVE CARE - CONGRATS.**

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge the Dr. Kingston B. Memorial Community Health Centre in L'Ardoise. The services provided at this clinic are an excellent example of a collaborative practice - home to two doctors, one full-time family practice nurse and a part-time dietitian. They are currently in the process of hiring a part-time social worker.

Mr. Speaker, the clinic makes home visits, provides education classes in the community regarding healthy living and chronic disease management, in addition to well women and well babies clinics. This is a true community health centre, a collaborative practice where the patient is seen by the person who will provide the best treatment for their needs.

I would like to congratulate the Dr. Kingston B. Memorial Community Health Centre for the progressive model of health care delivery and excellence in service.

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

DEVANNEY, CHRISTOPHER: DOC. FILM SERIES - CONGRATS.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize filmmaker Christopher DeVanney of Prospect. Christopher's stunning cinematography is so well suited to capturing the dramatic landscape of Prospect where the land meets the sea and history meets the future.

Christopher is a proud Prospector with deep family roots in the village he calls home. His film honours the stories and memories of the village's rich history. He partnered with fellow Prospector and local genealogist Nathaniel Smith, who shared his extensive genealogical research to create the Prospect Village Tales, a documentary series that will be aired on Eastlink TV.

I'd like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Christopher and thanking him for sharing the history and beauty of this special part of Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

BROWN, JEFF - CST., HFX. REG. POLICE: COM. SERV. - INSPIRING

MR. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken before about my deep respect for first responders. Today I rise to honour Halifax Regional Police East Division Community Relations Officer Constable Jeff Brown. Since getting elected, developing a friendship with Constable Brown has not been a difficult task. Not only does he attend every event in the community of Dartmouth East but he actively participates.

Constable Jeff Brown's desire to improve his community extends far past his duties as a police officer. He acts in a proactive way, fully utilizing the power of the elected officials in his district to help the community he serves.

I am very proud to work closely with Constable Brown and ask all members of the House to acknowledge his unending determination to improve the community of Dartmouth East.

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

**PAUL, CHIEF TERRY (MEMBERTOU): RECIPIENT, FRANK MCKENNA
AWARD - LEADERSHIP**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago I rose in my place to congratulate Chief Terry Paul of Membertou as a new recipient of the Order of

Canada. Today I rise again to recognize Chief Paul for his induction in receiving the McKenna Award, which is awarded to outstanding Atlantic Canadians who make outstanding contributions to public policy.

Chief Paul has been the Chief and CEO of Membertou Corporate for almost 34 years and has taken a community in annual deficits, now with an operating budget each year of over \$112 million. He is a true advocate for our island and economic prosperity for the community of Membertou and our island and for all First Nations communities.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place again today to thank Chief Paul for his outstanding leadership and the Membertou Council for their vision in making Membertou as prosperous of a community as it is and supporting all of Cape Breton Island.

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

**FRIENDS OF MCNABS ISLAND SOC.:
MAINTENANCE/CLEANUP - THANKS**

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the Friends of McNab's Island Society. McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park is located at the mouth of the Halifax Harbour, but I can see it from my constituency office. The islands have a rich history, which spans from French fishing villages and defence forts to McNab's family farms.

The island hosts many picnics and social activities. In the 1920s, Bill Lynch bought a piece of land on McNabs Island and created the Bill Lynch shows. Today the island is home to many beautiful walking trails.

It was 1990 when the Friends of McNabs Island Society became a registered charity. The society gladly maintains the trails and takes on cleanup events every year. The 2017 cleanup yielded 500 bags of garbage and recyclables, and year to date they have gathered up 13,000 bags.

I'd also like to thank the member for Halifax Atlantic, who is working in partnership with me to help the Friends of McNabs Island grow and expand their services.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect on an introduction.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like the members of the House to direct their attention to the east gallery, where we have with us today my hard-working constituency assistant, Barb Allen, who I consider my partner in constituency matters. We also have with us a new co-op student in our office, Anna Gaudet, a student from Halifax West High School.

They're both here to watch the proceedings and the entertainment during Question Period. If you would rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

2nd FAIRVIEW SCOUTS TROOP: PANCAKE SUPPER - RECOGNIZE

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 2nd Fairview Scout troop for hosting a successful pancake supper last month. This group is an active part of our community and most recently hosted this wonderful meal. All members from Beavers, Cubs, and Scouts were tasked with the setup, the cooking, the cleanup - all aspects of the event - and they did so with the help of their supportive leaders and parents.

The Fairview United Church graciously allowed the Scouts to host their pancake supper at this venue, and the event was attended by many in the community. In particular, the Beavers were really cute. They were so sweet.

I ask the members of this House to join me in recognizing the 2nd Fairview Scouts for organizing this amazing event and for all they do for our community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**E. PICTOU SILVER BLADES:
AWARD WINNERS, ROB MCCALL MEM. COMPETITION - CONGRATS.**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, today I'm proud to report that once again the skaters from the East Pictou Silver Blades participated in the Rob McCall Memorial Competition in East Hants and brought home some hardware. Ariel Ferris received bronze in the Star 3 category and Jessica Arnold got gold in Star 2, while Adelle Thomsen and Ella MacIntyre both received silver in Star 2 events.

During the Winter Olympics we watched champions who started in small rinks all around the world. These young skaters, along with others from their club, will soon be competing in the STARSkate provincial championships. I want to congratulate them on their excellent showing so far and wish them well moving forward.

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

TURTLEBACK TAP AND GRILL: 1 YR. IN BUS. - CONGRATS.

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the owners and employees of Turtleback Tap & Grill in Fall River on their one-year anniversary. Co-owners Jaro Schubert and Darren Scott are very pleased with the community support that local residents have given them.

With 20 employees, the Turtleback has a relaxing atmosphere where local residents can have a great meal and a drink without leaving the community. The restaurant plans to celebrate with a customer appreciation night, bringing back Sackville's Jon Cyr, who played at the grand opening.

Congratulations to Jaro and Darren on the one-year anniversary of their business.

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

**WOMEN'S WEDNESDAYS (HIGHER GROUNDS CAFÉ, N. SYDNEY):
CELEBRATING SUCCESS - SALUTE**

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Gail Holdner and Shirley Dalton for the creation of Women's Wednesday at Higher Grounds Café in North Sydney. Women's Wednesdays are an opportunity for women to share their stories, provide support to one another, and inspire one another, with a feature presenter and a feature musician. Food and celebration are part of each event.

I would like to take this opportunity to salute this ever-increasing number of interested women who have brought their stories of success in life and business to this community.

[12:45 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY: BLDG. HOMES AND COMS. - CONGRATS.

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, on January 23rd, I had the honour of presenting house keys to the Nowe and Martin families at the latest Habitat for Humanity Key Ceremony. There's no better feeling than seeing families open the door to their new home, knowing that they now have a safe, healthy, and affordable place that they can raise their family.

Habitat provides no down payment, zero interest mortgages to families, making it possible for them to afford a house of their own. In return, the owners work alongside volunteers providing 500 hours of sweat equity. Habitat for Humanity is now planning a 95-home community in the Spryfield area.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Nowe and Martin families and Habitat for Humanity, and all of the volunteers for providing home ownership opportunities for hard-working Nova Scotians. I look forward to the new Habitat for Humanity community in Spryfield, and the opportunities to provide to the families in the community who thought home ownership was only a dream.

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

**LABRADOR, TODD:
RECIPIENT, INDIGENOUS ARTIST RECOG. AWARD - BEST WISHES**

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, in November, Queens County self-taught artist Todd Labrador received the Indigenous Artist Recognition Award as part of the Interplay Creative Nova Scotia Awards.

Mr. Labrador is perhaps best known for creating beautiful birchbark canoes and wigwams, and last summer the 150 Forward Fund: Birchbark Apprenticeship Program took place under his guidance. As a seventh-generation canoe builder, he works hard and is committed to keeping old traditions alive and raising awareness about his culture.

I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Mr. Labrador on this well-deserved recognition, and thank him for all he does as an ambassador for Nova Scotia and for the Mi'kmaq Nation. I wish him much success in the future as he works to preserve his heritage.

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

**OUR HEALTH CTR. ASSOC. (CHESTER):
NEW WALK-IN CLINIC - CONGRATS.**

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Our Health Care Centre Association, located in Chester, for the new walk-in clinic slated to open on April 1st of this year.

The walk-in clinic will provide access to health care for residents of our service area who do not currently have a family doctor, for seasonal residents, of which we have many, for visitors and people who need medical care outside of their family physician's usual working hours. We have four physicians who will work at the OHC and there will be no cost to the patient, unless they ask for services not covered by MSI.

The walk-in clinic will be managed by the OHC Association, not the Nova Scotia Health Authority; however, the Health Authority will be helping with logistical issues, like sterilizing equipment and transfer of specimens to the lab in Bridgewater.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of this Legislature to join me in congratulating the board of the OHC and of the NSHA, for working together to provide this important service for the people of Chester.

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

GRANDPARENTS: CAREGIVERS - FUNDING REQUIRED

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the role of grandparents as caregivers. For circumstances beyond their control, and in an effort to keep families together, grandparents often take on the responsibility of caring for their grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I was recently told a story by a 59-year-old woman who, on a fixed income, cares for her grandson. Affordable housing, appropriate levels of funding, access to social programs, and acknowledgement of family structures need to be taken into account when grandparents on fixed incomes continue their role as caregivers.

Mr. Speaker, I raise this issue today in order to bring the plight of grandparents to the Legislature, with the hope that the appropriate ministers take notice and begin the steps to ensure grandparents as caregivers are acknowledged and funded accordingly.

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

**LUCASVILLE GREENWAY TRAIL COMM.:
FUNDRAISING EFFORTS - THANKS**

MR. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to recognize the Lucasville Greenway Walking/Biking Trail Committee. Led by Cindy Lucas and John Young, this committee began working to build a trail in Lucasville in 2015. This committee of volunteers raised funds to hire a local consultant to develop a Greenway vision on how to connect their communities by way of active transportation.

They want to build a connection to join Lucasville, Hammonds Plains, and Lower Sackville, and strengthen the connections within the community in Waterstone, Kingswood North, and Timber Trails. They believe residents will benefit from active transportation and recreational trail connections for health, pedestrian, and cyclist safety, creating community connections and increasing tourism.

They hold regular wing nights, Mr. Speaker, to raise funds and awareness for their cause, an event I am comfortable being on record saying I enjoy. I would ask all members of the House to please join me in thanking the committee for their work towards this vision and to provide the community with active transportation.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

SIM, HUGH (PICTOU CO.): HOCKEY ATHLETE - RECOGNIZE

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, when people talk hockey around Pictou County, the conversation often delves into the very successful career of Hugh Sim.

After completion of his high school hockey, he laced up for the New Glasgow Bombers Junior Club in the Metro Valley League and on to the Saint Mary's Huskies in university ranks.

He began coaching after his university days in P.E.I., with Bantam AAA and Midget AAA teams going to the Nationals in Ontario and the Air Canada tournaments the following year.

Following his transfer to New Glasgow, Hugh enjoyed a banner year coaching the Pictou AAA Atom Club to the provincial championship.

Two of his sons, Mike and Jon, played a major role in the team's success. Mike went on to play junior and university hockey, and Jon played in the National Hockey League, winning the Stanley Cup with the Dallas Stars. His third son, Andrew, played goal and reached university ranks.

Hugh Sim had an amazing and fulfilling hockey career.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**TRETHEWEY, ADAM - RCN:
RECIPIENT, QUILT OF VALOUR - CONGRATS.**

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: The Quilts of Valour - Canada Society is a registered charity that delivers quilts to past and present members of the Armed Forces. Quilts of comfort are made by quilters across the country to honour the service and commitment of members of the Armed Forces and are presented to those who incur an injury while deployed.

I would like to recognize Adam Trethewey of New Germany, who was presented with a Quilt of Valour at the New Germany Rural High School Remembrance Day ceremony, which I attended.

Adam is a former seaman in the Canadian Navy who was assaulted while off duty during a posting in B.C. He incurred a traumatic brain injury, causing him to stay a month in hospital in B.C., followed by six months of rehabilitation in Halifax.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you, and all members of this House of Assembly, please join me in congratulating Adam on receiving his Quilt of Valour and thank him and all members of the Armed Forces for their service to our country.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**CAMPBELL, KIM:
PAY IT FORWARD PANTRY (AMHERST) - RECOGNIZE**

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the Pay It Forward Pantry in Amherst.

Mr. Kim Campbell started the project up to enhance, improve, and beautify the community. This is a purely community-based project with no outside funding. It represents the spirit and good nature of our small community.

Anyone can donate food to the Pantry and anyone can use food from the Pantry. The project has only been up and running since October 2017, but the residents are using it and contributing to it greatly.

This is just one small example of a community coming together for positive change.

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

**ABOUELELA, JUMANA/YAZBEK, YARA:
HFX. W. HS WAKE-A-THON - YOUTH LEADERSHIP**

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize two incredible young ladies who are promoting community involvement in their school.

Jumana Abouelela and Yara Yazbek are the executive liaisons to the community involvement committee at Halifax West High School. Their committee organized the 14th Annual Wake-a-Thon in support of the Brunswick Street Mission and Ronald McDonald House. Proceeds also help students at Halifax West who are unable to meet their basic needs. Jumana and Yara also coordinated a large group of students to prepare and serve meals at the Brunswick Street Mission.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the House of Assembly join me in applauding these outstanding young leaders for their dedication to helping those less fortunate.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**SAMPSON, LANCE:
WINNER, CBC SEARCHLIGHT COMPETITION - CONGRATS.**

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the success of Halifax's Lance Sampson, a.k.a. aquakultre, who was just named the winner of CBC's 2018 Searchlight Competition.

Mr. Sampson's story should be made into a Nova Scotia-made film. He picked up a guitar while he was incarcerated at Springhill for convictions related to drug trafficking. Now, with national attention for his original music that mixes rap with soulful R&B singing, Sampson continues to prioritize his day job, working as a plumber, which he vows to continue until he gets his Red Seal. He'll have to take some time off, though, to perform at the Junos.

Please join me in congratulating Lance Sampson and wish him well.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**MCMULLEN, GLENN:
SOUND OF POP, 10 YRS. IN BUS. - CONGRATS.**

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the tremendous success that entrepreneur Glenn McMullen has achieved over the past decade with his music publishing & master/sync representation company, Sound of Pop.

Glenn bought Sound of Pop in 2008. Since then, the Wolfville-based business has received a long list of accolades, including Music Nova Scotia's nomination for Company of the Year and multiple East Coast Music Awards nominations spanning several categories. Sound of Pop has been nominated for Company of the Year at the East Coast Music Awards again this year.

Sound of Pop represents over 1,000 songs in a one-stop capacity for sync representation and/or publishing, and tracks have been heard in television programs, movies, and video games in Canada and abroad.

I invite all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Glenn McMullen on 10 years of successful operation of Sound of Pop.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**ROSS, BRAYDEN:
SUPPORT FROM LOCAL HOCKEY PLAYERS - INITIATIVE**

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Brayden Ross was an assistant captain for North Nova Education Centre's hockey team before he was benched by leukemia.

Recently, local players raised \$1,000 from a ball hockey tournament that will go towards Brayden's treatment costs over the next several months. My hat is off to these young players for their initiative in helping their teammate with fundraising and for raising awareness about leukemia.

Brayden needs bone marrow, and he's having trouble finding a donor. A simple cheek swab can determine a potential donor, and I encourage Nova Scotians to submit to that cheek swab. Hopefully, we can find a donor and a match for Brayden.

As a hockey dad, I'm proud of the sportsmanship and maturity of the young men in supporting one of their own, and I wish Brayden a successful treatment and a full recovery. We're praying for you, Brayden.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**TEAM DEAGLE (BRIDGEWATER):
WINNERS, TRAVELLERS CURLING CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS - CONGRATS.**

HON. MARK FUREY: Last Fall, a skilled men's curling team from the Bridgewater Curling Club represented Nova Scotia at the Travelers Curling Club Championship held in Kingston, Ontario.

Team Deagle comprised of skip Nick Deagle, third Jason van Vonderen, second Rob Phillips, and lead Ryan Sperry made it to quarterfinal play where they were defeated by Team Alberta. Friends and family were all able to watch games and cheer from home watching via live stream, and I'm confident Team Deagle knew how much support they had going into the tournament.

Please help me congratulate Team Deagle for their success in the Travelers Curling Club Championship tournament. I'm confident that this isn't the last we'll hear from this team.

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

**PROVO, KARDEISHA (N. PRESTON):
RECIPIENT, HORATIO ALGER CDN. SCHOLARSHIP - RECOGNIZE**

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I would like to recognize Kardeisha Provo of North Preston as a recent recipient of the prestigious \$5,000 Horatio Alger Canadian scholarship.

This scholarship is awarded to a student who has demonstrated strength in character, strong academics, and commitment to pursuing higher education. Kardeisha has demonstrated presence as a student in Cole Harbour District High School and achieved this significant recognition. She now joins the ranks of other exceptional individuals who have received the \$5,000 Horatio Alger Canadian scholarship. The individuals who receive the scholarship must demonstrate a desire to contribute to the community and society.

I applaud Kardeisha Provo for outstanding achievement and wish her every success in the future.

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

**ANL. WALK OF LIGHTS, VINTAGE FARMS:
COM. FUNDRAISERS - RECOGNIZE**

MR. GORDON WILSON: I would like to recognize the organizers of the 11th Annual Walk of Lights at Vintage Farms, a farm located just outside of Weymouth.

For the past 11 years, on an evening before Christmas, Vintage Farms has invited the public to come to their farm and walk their lit trails. The visitors can also spend some time around a bonfire or in a barn where they can enjoy some food, hot chocolate, and music. For many people, the visit to Vintage Farms has become an annual family Christmas tradition.

Prior to the night, volunteers have spent hours and hours getting the trails ready and organizing the food for their guests. The trails are lit by hundreds of candles in mason jars placed along the trails or hung in trees and shrubs.

Last Christmas, the volunteers outdid themselves, and the weather co-operated. That night, there was a little wind and a little bit of snow. Over 550 people dropped in, and more importantly, over \$2,700 was raised for local charities.

MR. SPEAKER: I thank you very much for those thoughtful members' statements as we get ready for Oral Questions put by Members to Ministers.

[1:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM.: ESSENTIAL SERVS. PLAN - TABLE

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Nova Scotians know the health care system is in a crisis. Waiting lists that stretch actually into years, hallway medicine, a doctor shortage - and we could go on and on.

People didn't think it could get any worse, Mr. Speaker, but they are wrong. Many Nova Scotians learned within the last 24 hours that they may soon experience the chaos that a strike by 6,500 health care workers will bring. How long with the Premier allow the threat of chaos and uncertainty to hang over the heads of Nova Scotians who want, who need, and who deserve reliable health care?

HON. STEPHEN MACNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to continuing the great relationship I have developed with our public sector unions to make sure that we can live within our means and deliver the great services Nova Scotians can expect. I know the health care workers will continue to work us to make sure we deliver those services.

MS. MACFARLANE: Well that was such a short answer for such a crisis that we are going to be in.

No one will disagree, Mr. Speaker, that health care is an absolutely essential service, and in many cases accessing health care services in a timely manner is literally a matter of life and death in this province. For Nova Scotians who wait in surgery, or with complicated health conditions, the possibility of a strike will bring concern and anxiety.

Will the Premier table the details of the essential services health care plan today, so that Nova Scotians can understand how a potential strike will impact them further in this province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as the honourable member would know, we were the first government in the history of this province to actually call health care an essential service. When we put a bill before this House, the honourable member voted against it, including the entire Party. The four bargaining units in health care assured all members of this House they could bring us essential service legislation and they don't have the right to strike, quite frankly, until they deliver it.

Unfortunately, if we had left it the way the honourable member would have wanted it, this health care system would be in crisis. Right not it's stable, providing assistance for Nova Scotians.

MS. MACFARLANE: The difference, though, between that side and this side is that we actually have a plan to fix it.

The Health Care Council of Unions are complaining that the government is using stall tactics to get its way at the bargaining table. The only problem is they are gambling with the lives of Nova Scotians. Sick Nova Scotians should not be used as bargaining chips in this high-stakes game. It has to stop, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Premier guarantee that Nova Scotians who need care will get it, even in the event of a strike?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member's and the Opposition's plan for health care is fearmongering. (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: The fact of the matter is we delivered essential service legislation to this House. The honourable member voted against it. She voted against it along with every member of her caucus and said we do not believe health care is an essential service, year after year, decade after decade.

Decade after decade they allow health care patients in this province to be used as political pawns in bargaining. We ended that practice and we expect and deliver essential service and we're not - we expect and ensure they are in their place of work.

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

PREM.: HEALTH CARE CRISIS - RESPONSE

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, in the summer of 2017, David Doucette didn't have a family doctor and was feeling too sick to go to a walk-in clinic, so he went to the emergency room for help. On his fourth visit there, Mr. Doucette was then at death's door and had no choice but to leave the emergency room and go to a mall parking lot and call an ambulance there, in order to receive medical attention from paramedics.

On that night, it was discovered that Mr. Doucette had stage 4 non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. His hematologist said that when he was diagnosed he was the sickest person she had ever seen survive.

Mr. Doucette has asked a question, Mr. Speaker, that deserved to be posed in this Legislature and deserves to be put to the Premier. Mr. Doucette's question, which I am quoting exactly, is this, what is wrong with the government . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that the rules of Question Period indicate that you're not allowed to ask a question directly from a constituent. You can ask your question.

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

MR. BURRILL: Is your ruling affected by the fact that Mr. Doucette is not a constituent?

MR. SPEAKER: You're able to ask a question from one member to another, not directly on behalf of any constituent.

MR. BURRILL: Thank you. In fact, as it turns out, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Doucette's question is a question that I and many others in our Party have asked many, many times, so I will put it directly.

The question is, what is wrong with the Government of Nova Scotia that we can't get some doctors in here?

THE PREMIER: Again, I too read the article, and the experience that Mr. Doucette had is unacceptable at any time in our province. No patient should end up being in a parking lot to call an ambulance and find out the level of illness that Mr. Doucette has been under.

I want to remind the honourable member of the budget that we introduced a few days ago. The agreement we have with Doctors Nova Scotia is to deal with the very issue the honourable member is referring to, to ensure that we increase the benefits around family practice docs, make sure that we reduce the 811 list, and continue to work in a collaborative way with our health care providers to ensure that a health care team is available to all Nova Scotians.

MR. BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, we have got over 100,000 people without a doctor. We have got emergency rooms that are plugged and stopped or closed. We have seniors all over the province waiting, waiting, waiting for placement in nursing homes.

Now we learn that 6,500 front-line health care workers in Nova Scotia are moving to a strike vote. This move to a strike vote signifies that there are an awful lot of front-line health care workers in Nova Scotia who, too, have lost confidence in this government's capacity to be effective on health care.

I want to ask the Premier, is this not a great concern to him? What does he plan to do about it?

THE PREMIER: I'm going to continue to work with our partners across the province to ensure that we can provide health care services in communities from one end of the province to the other.

The honourable member would know part of the collective bargaining process is that those health care workers have the right to take a strike vote if they wish. He would know - his Party voted against an essential-services piece of legislation.

The four major health care unions assured all Nova Scotians they would put together a plan around essential services that has to be approved. We're waiting, welcoming, and looking forward to that. But we're continuing to look and make sure that we get a deal at the bargaining table, as we have with other collective agreements.

MR. BURRILL: This move to a strike vote comes at a very significant moment. Nurses are speaking about constantly working short across the province. CCAs are speaking about their outrage at the nursing home funding cuts. Doctors are taking the government to court. Now 6,500 health care workers are throwing up their hands.

I want to ask the Premier, does he not see that his failure to listen to, to work with, and to adequately respect the people who actually deliver health care in Nova Scotia is contributing to, exacerbating, deepening, worsening the health care crisis in our province?

THE PREMIER: We all know that, not only in this province but across the country, there has been an HR shortage in many places.

The fact of the matter is, successive governments in this province ignored the issue. We came to government in 2013. We're continuing to lay out strategies on how we deal with it. We're seeing 100 new doctors who came into the province last year. With this recent budget, we believe we will get to the six-month wait when it comes to orthopaedic surgeries. The honourable member would know that when they left government, there were about 2,400 people on long-term care wait-lists. That has been cut by 53 per cent.

We know there's more work to do, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to work with our partners to continue to make sure that we continue to reduce those wait-lists to provide the services Nova Scotians expect.

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

PREM. - CANNABIS: CO-LOCATION - COST

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: My question is for the Premier. I'm wondering if this government took any practical expert advice on the legalization of cannabis. After ignoring the federal task force advice on co-location, it seems that this government is also ignoring the advice of the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation.

A freedom of information request confirmed that co-locating alcohol and cannabis would increase the already-significant legalization cost to Nova Scotian taxpayers. The NSLC's advice stressed that stand-alone stores would ensure a standard, easily duplicated store design, keeping costs down and reducing delays. Co-location means the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation will have to keep stores open during construction - and I will table that.

Why did the Premier choose the option that creates the greatest expense for Nova Scotia taxpayers?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the whole entire premise of her question is absolutely wrong. If you go back and look at where these are located, they are already the stores that have the U-vint, where they were actually making wine in those stores. We have removed that service; it has gone out in the private sector. Separate rooms are made available and young kids will not be allowed into those rooms. It is actually the lowest cost in terms of capital costs to the taxpayers of Nova Scotia. We continue to move forward. The fact of the matter is that they will be able to order that online across the province, as well.

We are going to continue to monitor as we continue to roll out this product and I share this with the honourable members - I said to many Nova Scotians that next year edibles will become part of this conversation and we need to make sure that the distribution network reflects a desire and demand of Nova Scotians.

MS. MACFARLANE: It may not even be legalized until next year.

The advice that this government received on co-location was not just hypothetical or academic, it was from practical experience - and I table that - it says: According to one of the resources referred to in its deliberations was an interview with Dr. Larry Wolk, the Chief Medical Officer for Colorado, who had three years' experience with this. When asked about selling cannabis in liquor stores, he said, I think it's a bad idea because the co-use of marijuana and liquor is simply bad. He went on to say when consumed together, those effects are not just addictive, they definitely increase somebody's use of both substances. Selling both from the same establishment is not just something we would support.

Why would the Premier choose to ignore three years of practical experience and walk down the clearly dangerous road of co-locating?

THE PREMIER: As a matter of fact, we accept the advice from Colorado where it said to make sure you hold on to that distribution network in a tight way because, over a period of time, you begin to understand you are selling this product. You can always let it out. The fact of the matter is that in Colorado they can't control the distribution network, as the honourable member has described.

If she actually took the time to look at what's happening with the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporations - you go in there, in a separate room. They are co-located under the same roof. Young people will not be allowed in those rooms. You'll purchase it inside that room and you will walk out the same doors you do when you buy liquor in the province.

The fact of the matter is that where there is separation under the same roof, we'll continue to ensure - we'll continue to monitor the distribution network in this province and we are looking forward. The fact of the matter is the decisions that this government made, we will be ready on July 1st to ensure that we can distribute that through those locations we said would be ready.

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

H&W - ORTHO POSITIONS: RECRUITMENT PLAN - TABLE

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

It was reported yesterday that one of the four orthopaedic positions that the Health and Wellness Minister announced in October has been filled. These positions were part of the government's plan to meet the national wait-time standards for knee and hip replacements. Unfortunately, since we haven't been able to hire new surgeons, meeting that benchmark won't be in the cards this year.

Will the minister table the details of the recruitment plan for these much-needed specialists?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for raising the question to provide the opportunity for me to reiterate that in the Fall when we announced the multi-year plan towards improving our orthopaedic surgeries within the Province of Nova Scotia, a plan that we worked together with our partner at the Nova Scotia Health Authority as well as those health care professionals on the front line to develop this plan - the proposal to move forward - I want to remind the member or advise the member and all members of the Legislature that, in fact, the plan did not require or call for any hires within the 2017-2018 fiscal year, Mr. Speaker. In fact, those hires are related to the proposed growth of this service into this coming fiscal year.

So, we are ahead of the game, Mr. Speaker. We have three out of the eight positions filled already.

MS. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I notice that in this new provincial budget, there is an additional \$8.8 million to do 350 more hip and knee surgeries and to hire more orthopaedic surgeons. Now this, however, I'm scratching my head at, since the minister hasn't been able to recruit the surgeons that were budgeted for in September.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain why Nova Scotians should believe that he will be able to bring even more orthopaedic surgeons to the province when he hasn't been able to follow through on the first batch yet?

[1:15 p.m.]

MR. DELOREY: I'm happy to clarify the confusion for the member opposite. Mr. Speaker, as I just indicated, when the plan was first rolled out in the Fall, the plan for 2017-18 - for about that six-month period - really focused on a different approach for delivering services, the process by which services and the use of our operating rooms were provided. Mr. Speaker, that's how they were able to achieve over 400 additional surgeries already. We're doing very well towards the target for this fiscal year.

With the additional expansion with resources, anesthesiologists, as well as orthopaedic surgeons, and others to support the team, we're going to be well on track to reach the target of an additional 350 this coming year.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

FIN. & TREASURY BD. - CANNABIS SALES: \$20 M. PROFIT - TIMELINE

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. On March 2nd, my colleague from Pictou West asked the Premier about the potential cost to municipalities and police force as a result of the legalization of cannabis. On that day, the Premier committed to talking to municipalities about the best way to address the cost. The Premier made the following statement about the sale of cannabis, “But let me be clear, there is no great revenue source here coming in from this product.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, that was then and this is now. Just three short weeks later, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board delivered a budget that does, as a matter of fact, anticipate \$20 million in profit from the sale of cannabis.

My question to the minister is, when did the minister inform the Premier that the government expected \$20 million in profit from the sale of cannabis?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. I believe I mentioned this a couple of days ago, but in the budget that was presented, the estimate was for revenue, it was not for profit. I also indicated that the costs for the implementation of the federal legalization were unknown. We were working with the municipalities, some of those will be borne by them through policing, there will be education, advertising, and all of those costs. They were not presented as a line item in the budget for costs.

So, just to be clear, the number that was there, respecting cannabis, was expected revenue based on what the NSLC will be purchasing, it was not profit.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, when you have \$20 million dollars in revenue and no expenses against it, the \$20 million is profit. There is \$20 million in profit in here.

Also, on March 2nd, the Premier went on to say, “I have already given word to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, don’t spend any money that the Opposition thinks is coming with this product because it just isn’t there.” Mr. Speaker, the Premier seemed to imply at that time that balancing the budget off the back of cannabis sales would be a dopey way to balance the budget.

The minister, to the credit, did not spend the \$20 million because it makes up \$20 million of the \$29 million surplus. Given how quickly this \$20 million appeared - just three short weeks - it is fair to say that the cannabis revenue could go up in smoke just as quickly as it appeared? It could be voted down in the Senate today, Mr. Speaker.

After admitting that the cannabis revenue figure is just a number pulled out of the air, how confident can the minister be in the surplus that the government has booked?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, just to the last question, it certainly was not pulled out of the air. I indicated that it was based on what the NSLC believes that they need to have to purchase in order to meet the demand. We don't know what consumption is going to be, we don't know what that demand is going to be, but the NSLC recognized that they needed to put an amount on the quantity that they would have to be ready for July 1st, and based on what they were recommending as the quantity they need, we based our projected revenue - not profit - on that.

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

JUSTICE - RURAL N.S.: CANNABIS SALES - INACCESSIBLE

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, this government has decided to offer cannabis for sale in only six of 52 municipalities across this province. This leaves many people in rural Nova Scotia unable to easily access cannabis. For some residents in Cape Breton, the nearest physical sales location is over 90 minutes away. The solution for this, according to the government, is home delivery during online sales. Despite the recent announcement regarding rural Internet, online purchasing is simply not in the foreseeable future for many residents in Nova Scotia, in rural Nova Scotia particularly.

The question is, for Nova Scotians in rural areas, without reliable Internet access, how does the minister propose accessing cannabis, or are these Nova Scotians simply not a concern for her?

MR. SPEAKER: Who?

MS. PAON: The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Dammit. (Laughter)

Thank you, I would like to refer that question to the Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

We spoke about this extensively, both publicly and here in the House. The mediums for access to cannabis are provincial in nature, the limit around numbers of retail stores is based on a business plan that anyone going into business would apply.

What I want to share with my colleague is, yes, we recognize the limitations of high-speed Internet, but my colleague would know that many Nova Scotians, in the absence

of quality high-speed Internet, often go to core communities in their day-to-day travels and the ability to access cannabis online, with home delivery, is an element that Nova Scotians recognize and have asked for. The survey identified the need for that online preference. Cannabis will be available to Nova Scotians, Nova Scotia will be ready on July 1st, and we look forward to the opportunity to communicate this further.

MS. PAON: Mr. Speaker, my supplemental question will be, again, for the Minister of Justice.

Most regular cannabis users in rural Nova Scotia will not drive 90 minutes for their pot, nor will they wait for an online purchase to be delivered - and we're not going to look for smoke signals in the air either. They're most likely going to continue to access the black or gray markets for their cannabis. The NSLC business plans state that one of its priorities is to provide a safe supply of cannabis to Nova Scotians to help eliminate the illicit market, but this distribution model will only promote it in certain areas.

Does the honourable minister anticipate that poor access to legal cannabis in rural Nova Scotia will continue to allow illegal sales to thrive?

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I would say that the medium used and presented for Nova Scotians to access cannabis is a very reasonable medium. (Interruption) I've said from day one, and it would be naive to think, as my colleague for Argyle-Barrington believes, it would be naive to think for any one of us in this House that tomorrow we're going to flip a switch and the illicit market is going to go away. We will transition from an illicit market to a legal recreational cannabis product of quality that provides safety to Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

JUSTICE - RENTAL UNITS: NO CANNABIS CLAUSES - CONSIDER

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, while normalizing it for youth.

So, a question for the Minister responsible for the Residential Tenancies Act. Marijuana smoke is a very unique smell. About 300,000 Nova Scotians live in rental units, many of them live in apartment buildings. Those people may find it offensive. Certainly parents do not want their children exposed to it. I've heard from landlords and residents across the province, they're genuinely concerned about the negative impacts of consumption that the growing use of recreational marijuana will have on rental housing, especially the negative impact on multi-unit residential buildings.

Will the minister allow landlords to open lease agreements to insert no cannabis smoking and cultivation clauses?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to hand this question to the Minister of Justice, please.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague. We have had extensive discussions around the elements of the Residential Tenancies Act and the concerns that have been advanced, not only by landlords but by tenants as well. The Residential Tenancies Act itself allows now for landlords to implement specific circumstances in leases where they can prevent elements within that rental environment. The simple example that we use and identify is landlords have been able to identify smoke-free buildings, which prevent tenants from smoking in apartments, and they've been able to identify the restrictions of pets. The same circumstances apply in the Residential Tenancies Act for cannabis.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns raised is that they may expect landlords to enforce this through the Smoke-free Places Act, which is very subjective and very difficult to do that when it comes to smoking.

The other issue here is, it's not just smoke that becomes an issue. Growing marijuana, cultivating it, in apartments is an issue as well. Factors like temperature, humidity, lighting, and air flow are things that need to be adjusted to produce optimal growing conditions. Changing those things for optimal growing conditions may not be what is best for people who are breathing the air in the building. That would cause safety hazards and potential damage to people and to buildings. It puts tenants and mortgage-holders at risk.

How will the minister ensure that tenants are safe in their homes and building owners' investments are protected?

MR. FUREY: The agriculture or harvesting of home-grown marijuana in a private residence will be the decision of private homeowners. In the rental environment that my colleague talks about, the same circumstances apply in the Residential Tenancies Act that would allow the landlord to restrict a tenant from growing within the property.

The points that my colleague has shared are circumstances that we have discussed at length in the preparation of this particular piece of legislation. I want to assure my colleague and all colleagues of this House and landlords across the province - I spoke yesterday with another colleague who asked a similar question, Mr. Speaker - that the authority is already there within the Residential Tenancies Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

BUS. - INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE: PROV. INVEST. - OWNERSHIP

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: My question is for the Minister of Business. The \$120 million investment to bring high-speed Internet to our rural communities is so important. With such large public investment, Nova Scotians want to be sure the benefits will remain in the hands of Nova Scotians.

All of us have seen the high costs associated with P3 schools and the privatization of Nova Scotia Power. It's a discredited and expensive route, and we don't need to go down it again. The middle mile infrastructure is an opportunity for us to get it right.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to ensuring that the public will own this infrastructure since the public is paying for it?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I do thank the member for the question. I did listen intently to some of her comments around this topic at late debate and the fact that she alluded to the money leaving the province.

Mr. Speaker, look, it is a reality that because of the challenges of broadband and getting the service to remote places in all areas of Nova Scotia, we have to make investments. There isn't a private sector business model that would do that in all provinces, quite frankly, so we're making a very big investment on behalf of the people of Nova Scotia.

Of course by way of the Internet trust and by way of the third party corporation that will run these programs, we're going to invest this on behalf of Nova Scotians, so it will certainly be public infrastructure. Of course, there's a number of ways and requirements to make sure of that accessibility and having access to this particular infrastructure is open to anyone who could access it to provide additional services.

It is a very good question. This is for Nova Scotians. It's not for the private sector to make profit. This is about getting broadband to our people.

MS. CHENDER: With respect, if it's not a co-operative local enterprise, the profits will not remain with Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, I hope this government, if they need an example of this, will listen to the inspiring and clear message coming from the Municipality of Annapolis. When they saw market failure in rural Internet, they took matters into their own hands. In Lawrencetown, community members got together and formed a co-operative. Those volunteers worked with the municipality to build their own last mile infrastructure, and now the village owns the infrastructure, and the co-operative runs the service. The profits and control stay in the community. I'll table that.

In a news clip, residents said they were getting twice the speed for almost half the price. What is most important, in the words of resident Diana Ackroyd is, it's ours, it belongs to our community. I'll table that.

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask again, will the minister commit that the province's spending will support community assets and community control, or at least look into it before we commit to a private partner?

MR. MACLELLAN: Simply put, philosophically here, we're making an historic investment in broadband. I don't feel that we're giving it away to corporations. I don't think that we're doing anything other than the right (Interruption) Sorry?

AN HON. MEMBER: Just do it right.

MR. MACLELLAN: Yes. Of course the Opposition wants us to do it right, Mr. Speaker. But believe it or not, we are intending to do it right. We are going to do it right.

AN HON. MEMBER: Be sure you have enough to do it.

MR. MACLELLAN: Right, yes, thanks for the lesson. We'll make sure that we learn from their mistakes, Mr. Speaker, and we get it right.

[1:30 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, this is a major problem, there is no benefit for us to do anything other than get this investment in the hands of the communities. The municipalities are going to play a critical role here. We need them to tell us what projects they require in the communities on the ground. That's exactly what we're going to do.

This money - \$120 million and a whole lot more to get to that \$500 million finish line - it's for Nova Scotians. They're going to tell us how we spend it, we're going to get them broadband. Thank you very much.

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

NSLC - CANNABIS SALES: GUIDELINES - ENFORCEMENT

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: My question is to the Minister responsible for the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation. According to a Q&A produced by the NSLC, there is no prohibition on selling recreational cannabis to a customer who is under the influence of cannabis. I'll table that.

By contrast, NSLC employees are not allowed to legally sell beverage alcohol to a customer who is under the influence. According to the American Addiction Centers, some

of the common physical side effects associated with marijuana are poor muscle and limb coordination, delayed reaction times and abilities, and a distorted sense of perception.

My question is in two parts: is it accurate that the NSLC employees will be allowed to sell cannabis to customers who are clearly under the influence; if so, how will they know if a customer is impaired by cannabis, alcohol, or some other substance?

HON. KAREN CASEY: I know the member is anxious to see what's in the legislation. One of the things I think we all recognize is that there will have to be some education, some training, some learning that will take place by all of the employees at the NSLC, so they can be sure that they are protecting the youth and those who may be under the influence and all those other concerns, because they will be the ones who are on the front line with the customer.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: The NSLC's Q&A concedes that they've heard from employees that selling and handling cannabis is a sensitive issue. People who sign onto a job to sell beverage alcohol had no idea that they would be required to handle and sell cannabis, a substance that has been illegal in Canada for almost 100 years. Now they must ponder whether or not they'll be liable, should an incident happen after they have sold cannabis to a person who is already under the influence.

The Q&A says that if employees don't like it, they will have to find work somewhere else. My question to the minister is, is the government forcing NSLC employees to sell pot or quit?

MS. CASEY: As we would expect, as we want, we have asked NSLC and any employer to make sure they work with their employees and they have a relationship there between employer and employee. If there is additional training required, we'll make sure, and the employer will make sure, that that employee has that training.

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

NSLC: CANNABIS PRODUCTS - CONTENT DETAILS

MR. BRAD JOHNS: My question, as well, is to the Minister responsible for the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation. We all know the legal sale of cannabis is coming. Obviously by questions asked here today, there's a lot we just don't know about this product. It's my hope and my expectation that a full education program would precede the start of the sale, but obviously, we're running out of time.

There's many Nova Scotians who are going to be starting from day one at zero when it comes to cannabis. They don't know the amounts, the strengths. There's a lot of questions people don't understand.

People know they can go to the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation, they can get a beer or a light beer, they understand they can get 750 millilitres of spirits, or 1.4 litres of spirits. Can the minister provide me some details about the products that the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation will offer, the THC content and the package sizes?

HON. KAREN CASEY: The question the member raises is a good question. It takes me back to the answer I just gave, that there will be an education component for the employees, there will be an education component for Nova Scotians. We need to recognize, and we will recognize, that once people start selling cannabis they need to be knowledgeable about the product they are selling, and they will have to live within the guidelines that will be in the legislation.

MR. JOHNS: I appreciate that comment because it kind of leads into my next question, Mr. Speaker. Customers are going to be relying on Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation employees to help them with product choices. They are going to go to the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation. They do it now, they ask an employee, or they expect to be able to ask an employee, for recommendations on a good type of wine or some type of product. Often, they ask those employees to provide an opinion based on personal experiences, having tried the product themselves.

My question is, does the minister expect employees of the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation who are selling cannabis - is there an expectation that they have actually tried the products in order to properly advise the customers?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, people are getting a little light-hearted, and maybe a little light-headed.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, I'm serious.

MS. CASEY: I'm serious too. I think we have a steep learning curve, as Nova Scotians, whether we are a consumer or not a consumer. I think we have to recognize that there's a lot of education that has to take place.

To the member's question, the employees, those who are purchasing, the general public, for many it's a steep learning curve, and there's a lot of danger. There's a lot of risk. We want to make sure, and we have said it from the get-go, that our position will be to ensure the safety of youth and children as we move down this road. It is new territory for all of us, and that's why it's important that those people who are handling the product are very well aware of what they're handling and the marking on the product to make sure it clearly identifies the content.

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

MUN. AFFS.: CANNABIS LEGALIZATION - FINANCIAL IMPACTS

MR. KEITH BAIN: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The federal government is legalizing recreational cannabis, and the provincial government is distributing it, but it's the local governments and police forces that will be the most impacted by legalization.

Municipalities will have to mobilize so that residents remain safe. They will bare most of the responsibility to eliminate the illicit market and ensure that residents have the best tools available to make decisions that don't adversely affect their physical and mental health. Municipalities throughout the County of Victoria are anticipating that cannabis legislation will have significant financial implications for policing, bylaw enforcement, and more.

My question to the minister is, can municipalities like the County of Victoria count on the province to help with additional funding for policing and other costs associated with legal pot? Or will this government leave cash-strapped municipalities to find extra money in their own budgets?

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Throughout this process, we have ensured that the voices of municipalities have been heard. One of the first steps that I took is, I asked staff to go out and do public consultation in conjunction with the Department of Justice. Many participants, whether they were elected municipal staff or law enforcement across Nova Scotia, went to various sessions held from Cape Breton to Yarmouth.

We keep a close connection with the Department of Justice, and we're constantly advocating for more educational supports and equipment supports to support our local law enforcement and to support local municipalities. I can assure the member that, as we move towards this date, the voices of municipalities will continue to be heard and advocated for through the process.

MR. BAIN: The federal and provincial governments have repeatedly stated that municipal governments are key partners in the new cannabis regime.

Many municipalities are very fearful about how the change is going to affect their already stretched municipal budgets. Municipalities are concerned that bylaw enforcement would be used to enforce provincial and federal provisions relating to home cultivation. They are concerned they will have no say in where pot can be consumed, and they wonder what tools they will have to impose penalties and fines for illegal unlicensed distribution activity.

My question to the minister is, what steps is the minister taking to address municipal concerns like the ones I have just mentioned?

MR. MOMBOURQUETTE: Again, I thank the member for the question. Most importantly, through this process, we have ensured that, at every avenue, the voices of municipalities were heard as we moved towards legalization. I'm working with the Department of Justice. We're applying for funding for more educational programs for our municipalities, for more equipment for our law enforcement, and for more tools that municipalities can use.

As I said, we will continue to ensure that the voices of municipalities are heard through this process. We have heard their concerns. I have assured them, as their minister, that we'll do whatever we can to work with our partners to ensure that whatever supports we can provide to them, we will.

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

LAE - DONKIN MINE: SAFETY CONCERNS - INVESTIGATE

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: My question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. This morning, I heard the stories of former Donkin Mine workers, and they made me frustrated and afraid. These workers are sounding the alarm about sparks flying without methane detectors, ceilings caving in, and spraying concrete without masks. According to these mine workers, productivity is being put before safety, and I'll table that.

These descriptions are similar to the conditions that resulted in Westray, and I'm scared that this government's response so far has been superficial. Mr. Speaker, at Westray, it took just one spark. That's all it was.

My question to the minister is, will you commit to immediately and thoroughly investigating these complaints and make sure there are real consequences for any violations?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. This is a very important question. The safety at Donkin Mine and every other workplace in Nova Scotia is of the utmost importance. There is no leeway when it comes to safety.

I can assure the honourable member, and I can assure every member in this House and every member in Nova Scotia, that all of the issues that have been brought up have already been looked at. They've already been addressed with the company.

The company is playing by the rules. We've had a great working relationship with them. We do constant site visits, both announced and unannounced, and every time anything has come up, we've had the company respond.

I would also like to add to the House that one time, on a technicality, when the company had a generator that had not been inspected, we shut the mine down. I want you to know how important safety is. We shut the mine down over a technicality of a generator that hadn't been inspected. The inspection was done. The generator was fine, and we knew there was probably no reason to shut the mine down, but that's how safe this mine is. Thank you.

MS. MARTIN: This is a company that promised good jobs for our community, but within months of opening, it had dozens of safety violations, and within a year, it had cut one-third of its jobs. Now we hear the violations are continuing and there is a culture of fear in the mine against speaking up about safety - or a union, for that matter.

In Cape Breton, we know from a long history that there is only one thing that makes the company listen to its workers, and that's a union. Now we hear that management have told the workers that if they try to start a union, they'll just fire everybody and hire new workers. That's illegal and disgraceful.

Will the minister commit to provide mine workers automatic protection in a union?

MR. KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, to all the mine workers who are at Donkin Mine and any other workplace in the province, if they feel they are in an unsafe work environment, I advise them to call 1-800-9LABOUR. It's an anonymous tip line in the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. We will send out our occupational health and safety inspectors immediately.

Again, I would like to reiterate to all the workers at the mine that we investigate every complaint that comes in. We do both announced and unannounced investigations. The mine is safe, but we also have to remember that this is a very large industrial site. We have dedicated staff to the mine. It is a dangerous work environment, but what we do is we mitigate that risk, and the mine is a partner with us. We have seen very good results with the company and with the workers. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**H&W - CANNABIS USE:
MENTAL HEALTH/ADDICTION ISSUES - SUPPORTS**

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, this question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Last year, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction conducted a survey that confirmed that our youth have a poor sense of the negative effects of cannabis use. I'll table that document.

The survey found that participants underestimated harms associated with cannabis use, such as driving while impaired, impact on brain development, risk for addiction, and

other mental and physical consequences. Some respondents described friends who were frequent cannabis users as prone to anxiety, edginess, and aggressiveness after periods of not using cannabis.

My questions to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, what specific funding is the government allocating to enhance mental health and addictions supports specifically for those with dependency on cannabis?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. As the member knows, we're investing and have invested in the last number of budgets as one of our priority areas around mental health and addictions. We're doing a lot of work both as a department with our partners in the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK, as well as community partners, to provide supports and services to people who do have mental health and/or addiction challenges.

We continue to invest into these areas - not just if that addiction or concern is related to cannabis, but for many other substances as well.

[1:45 p.m.]

MS. SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, in the budget tabled this week, supports for cannabis-related mental health and addiction issues were not on the minds of the government. The word "cannabis," in fact, only appears in the budget in relation to how much money the government claims it will make and how much cannabis the NSLC claims it will sell.

The Department of Health and Wellness doesn't seem concerned about the effects cannabis will have on mental health services; in fact, they could only find a couple of million to kick towards a \$300 million mental health care budget. Perhaps the minister is hoping that so much like the rest of the health care system, the potential threat will simply sort itself out if we ignore it.

The question is, if this government is indeed prioritizing mental health and addiction support strategy around cannabis, where is it found in the 1 per cent increase in mental health supports?

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. As I had said earlier, the investments around mental health and addiction services and support are a combination of multiple factors - some, of course, are: increased investments; financial investments; some of it relates to advancing changes and practice based upon the evidence and what's been learned about the delivery of services, whether they be for mental health services and addiction services. The evolving evidence, best practices, we're learning from the clinicians on the front lines that community-based supports for people with these types of conditions is actually the best way to move forward.

Although I appreciate the concerns the member is bringing forward around cannabis with this as an emerging recreational legal product, I don't want the member to forget about the opioid deaths that are taking place in this province and our significant commitment under the opioid framework to move forward and support to save lives from one end of this province to another.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

H&W - CANNABIS: SCHIZOPHRENIA LINK - IMPACT

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Dr. Phil Tibbo is a psychiatrist and the Dalhousie Chairman in Psychotic Disorders and Director of the Nova Scotia Early Psychosis Program. He has authored a number of papers linking the use of cannabis with the onset of schizophrenia in young adults and youth under the age of 25, and I'll table them. One from the Chronicle of Neurology & Psychiatry entitled *The Brains of Youth Harmed by Cannabis*, and another entitled *Cannabis and the maturing brain: Role in psychosis development*, authored by Crocker and Tibbo. I tabled those.

My question for the minister is, does this government agree with Dr. Tibbo that the use of cannabis can have a devastating impact on the mental health of young Nova Scotians?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this question to the floor of the Legislature.

Indeed, we do know that the situation before us, the legislation that we're expecting during this legislative session to be tabled around the provincial response to cannabis legalization - we have to recognize this is a response to changes being made at the federal level in the legalization of this market. As my colleague the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board stated earlier, it is really a new territory for all of us in this province and across the country. We're trying to balance a number of factors, making the best decisions we can on behalf of all Nova Scotians, for both their safety as well as their access to meet the obligations that we do have.

MR. LOHR: I thank the minister for that answer. When this government tabled its budget this week, it claimed that sales of cannabis would increase revenues for the province. My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is, has his department calculated how much cannabis use will actually cost the health care system and is he prepared to put additional resources into mental health services to accommodate that?

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, again I thank the member for the question. I think we've demonstrated that mental health services are a very important priority for this government, it's why we continue to increase our investments upwards of about \$300 million going towards mental health and addiction services throughout this province in the budget. That's a significant investment and we know it's not about the money but it's about where that money goes and what it enables us to do - provide those resources through clinicians at the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK but also with our community partners.

We've shown, I think, in the past and in this budget that we're certainly committed and dedicated to providing additional financial resources as needed to support mental health needs and addictions in this province.

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

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Good to see you though. (Laughter) The time allotted for Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers has expired.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

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

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I was just wondering if I may make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. MACFARLANE: If I could have the Chamber's attention to the west gallery. We have a young, bright, brilliant, talented, kind young man from Pictou West that I would

put my money on who is going to be the Prime Minister of Canada someday. I want us to give him a warm welcome, Kyle MacKenzie. (Applause)

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

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to be talking today about the issues and challenges facing our province. There was a comment posted on Facebook yesterday where someone said, wow, I've been trying to read the budget and it's really dry - how do you do it?

I reminded that person that every line in that budget is a dollar amount that is going to affect someone's life. As a health care professional, I know that every dollar that goes towards someone's health is a good investment, but of course we can't spend every penny on health care, so we have to divide things up.

The devil is in the details, Mr. Speaker. I want to start out by talking about one of the most important issues in this province, which is doctors and our health care system. We have been asking, and I asked the Premier himself last week, if you hired 100 doctors, how come the health care crisis isn't solved - because there were only 55 vacancies for family doctors, according to the Auditor General? If we hired 100, and none left, we should have a surplus and everybody should have a family doctor and that's not the case.

We wanted to know how many doctors left, retired, died, or simply chose to move into a walk-in clinic practice like my family doctor did, and we do not have that answer. When I met with the physicians responsible for the recruitment of family doctors in this province and I said, how many do we have? They said, well our best guess - and I said, no, I don't want your best guess, I said, how many actual? They said, well, we don't know right now. Then I asked, how many family doctor visits did we have last year, versus how many walk-in clinic doctor visits we had last year? If we are shifting from seeing family doctors to walk-in clinic doctors, we are changing the quality of health care in this province. Do you know what the answer was to how many walk-in versus family doctor visits? Does anybody know that answer? The answer is that they are not even tracking it. How do you evaluate indicators if you are not tracking numbers?

We don't know how many people without a family doctor are going to emerge versus those who do have a family doctor who are going to emerge, so we have an incredible bias. I have a family doctor, I can go to a walk-in clinic, I can get tests ordered, because my family doctor can follow them up. The person right next to me, who doesn't have a family doctor, can go to that same walk-in clinic and get a different level of service. That's not fair.

We have foetuses that went on the 811 list and when I spoke to the head of the Nova Scotia Family Doctors Association, they said that's not right. Every family doctor who has a pregnant patient should be taking that child on. I appreciate the Council on the Status of

Women for getting involved in this issue because there's a discrepancy here between what we think doctors are doing and what, in fact, they are doing. We have patients with mammograms ordered who lose their family doctor who are then being told they can't get the test. I have patients who lose their family doctor and their medical records are being withheld until their MLA is intervening. I have a constituent - quite a high-profile constituent - who found out his family doctor had quit. He did not find out from his family doctor. Do you know how he found out that his family doctor had left? He went to get blood tests done two days after he saw his family doctor and as he was registering at the lab, the lab assistant said, oh, your family doctor is no longer working, where would you like me to send your test results? That's how he found out. This is last week.

I appreciate all the strategies in the budget to address health care issues. There are some of them in there I like very much, and I'm really praying to God that it does reduce wait times, but I want to keep reminding the government of stories that you may not be hearing because I appreciate you can't know them all. I brought the House's attention to the fact that people or doctors were not using the 811 call list. They were making up their own lists. They were asking family, do you have someone you need to take on a family doctor? We have an underground system of how people were getting seen.

In my own constituency of Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage, where we are the only constituency without a single family doctor - I don't know if I've mentioned that before - nobody was getting called off the 811 list because we had no doctor to call them. The Health Authority apparently intervened, and people are supposed to be getting called. They told me almost 100 people got called, but I haven't found a single one. I realize there are privacy issues, but no one that I can find has gotten a call.

Now we are having to pay family doctors to take that name off the list and it sounds great in theory. I know that a number of my constituents are thrilled with any attempt to increase their access to a family doctor. The concern is that we already have over-worked doctors because we don't have enough doctors. So, now they are going to take all those people off the list for that \$150, and now everyone on their caseload is going to wait longer. I personally don't have a problem with that because I don't think it's fair that there are 100,000 without any access and 900,000 with access. I'm more than happy to share my family doctor's time with those who are still without a family doctor. It isn't the solution. The solution is more doctors. I appreciate this is a temporary step, but we need to move forward.

We have four recruiters in this province, and I'll tell you how that's working for my constituency. Many months ago, the Minister of Health and Wellness agreed to give me a clinical nurse practitioner. I immediately said to him, I already have one willing to come here. I already have a place where this person can go. That was in October. I immediately went to the Nova Scotia Health Authority and said, guess what, we can do this. So I've been working with them. Then they got completely diverted by working towards collaborative health centres and clinical nurse practitioners in every other area

except mine. They suggested themselves, we have a location where we think we could put one, and I said I'd call them up. They said, let's talk about it. Come on over. That was in the end of December. Do you know when they finally agreed to go make that visit? This week. I cannot begin to tell you how angry I am, and if you listen to the Sheldon MacLeod Show, you can hear the polite way in which I expressed my concerns. That meeting that took place - the message that I got from the person who met with them was, "Barb, I don't really think they're that interested. I think they're doing this because you are making an issue out of it, but I don't know that it's going to happen."

I don't know what else to do for my constituents besides what I am already doing. I really appreciate the conversation with the Minister of Health and Wellness that we had a couple of weeks ago. I really do. I know he is as equally frustrated with some of the delays that go on in the Nova Scotia Health Authority and I am grateful to him for taking the time to talk to me and to intervene, because I don't think I'd be this far ahead, having got that meeting taken place, but there are real issues here. I haven't asked him yet but I will, to find out if we are getting a collaborative health centre, because he knows that's the number one thing my constituents are asking for.

I do have a question for him, though, and I'll say it now so he can gather the numbers. If a new doctor does come to Eastern Passage and they take 2,000 people off the 811 wait-list at \$150 a pop, does that mean they end up with \$300,000? If that's the case, I'm going to put out an ad right now on Facebook and I'll have them coming from all over the world.

I want to talk about emergency services and ambulances. Having worked in home care and health care, I know that everyone would rather stay home, and the Premier has said that he has heard people would rather stay home, but if no one wanted to go into a home, there would be no wait-list.

[2:00 p.m.]

So, there are 2,000 people who don't agree with the Premier, who do want to go into long-term care, and they have extended family so we're talking 10,000 to 20,000 people out there who are desperately waiting for that person to go into a long-term care bed. But they're sitting in a hospital bed, so the ambulances can't drop off people in through emergency, because the emergency people can't get upstairs. We already heard about somebody sitting there in an emergency room bed for five days. Well, my own mother sat in one for two and a half days after a stroke, going to the bathroom behind a curtain with people sitting all around her. So, there are people who want to go into long-term care beds, and we have to stop saying that there aren't any.

The other thing is, I think I'm going to have blood pressure issues if I keep hearing that we've cut the wait time for long-term care beds - we changed the rules to be on the list for long-term care beds. I know that because I worked in that system, and I know that

because I know the people on the list. I know that I used to have to beg people to put their name on the wait-list because they were crumbling under the weight of trying to be a health care professional and a child to that person. I used to be able to get them to do that because there was an option that you could put somebody on the wait-list, and if mom or dad didn't deteriorate quite as fast as they predicted they could skip over them once. Now, we've changed that. So, now, if you go on the wait-list and you don't go the split second they call, they're going to take you off the list and you go back to the beginning.

So, now I have a whole slew of people around this province who are afraid to make that call to continuing care, and I'm begging them, saying I can predict how fast your mother is going to deteriorate because that's my expertise, and we're expecting family members to somehow intuitively know how quickly mom or dad is going to have to move into long-term care. I know, I have patients I saw as recently as before I got elected, where I would say to the family, one fall away and they are not going to be able to stay in this home, no matter how many home care resources we put into place.

So, now I want to talk about home care resources, because I don't know who's calling you, but I know who called us. I know from seeing it first-hand - we do not have enough home care support staff available. So, the person I spoke about yesterday in the Legislature, home care doesn't show up. They don't do what they're supposed to do because they don't have enough time to do what they need to do. They are people who are so quick to try to get to the next person, because there's so many people on their list, they're leaving after 40 minutes, and we're billing family for an hour and a half visit. I know those home care agencies are doing their very best, and I know there was a move, I believe it's in Bridgewater, where there's a Nova Scotia Community College that is giving free tuition for CCAs - I think I've got that correct? Brilliant, we need them desperately.

I have clients who fell on a Friday and weren't seen again until Monday when the CCA walked in on Monday morning and they'd been there all weekend. This is not rare. The number of CCAs who cancel, without warning sometimes, don't show up when they are supposed to, it's great. So, I mentioned yesterday, we have an option like the Department of Veterans Affairs has done, to give people the money straight-up for that care and allow them to hire whoever they want, a friend, a neighbour, a grandchild, somebody in their community who knows them, who's probably going to spend four times the amount of time as a CCA who's driving in and driving out again. We need to look at that.

We need to look at education and the changes that Bill No. 72 is going to bring to us - and it still breaks my heart that we did that before the inclusion report comes out. People are left in the dark and teachers are very frustrated - and you look at mental health issues, well, we created a whole mental health issue in the schools by making the teachers feel that we weren't listening. Well, in my constituency of Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage, the school review process - we're still in the dark. It was June when the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development put a halt to that.

There are schools all around this province who don't know what their fate is. So, I'm going to encourage the minister to make up his mind soon as to what's happening to those schools, so that we can reduce the health and mental health stresses in that constituency, and so that my constituency assistant can stop getting the phone calls asking what's happening.

We also talked about job creation a little bit, but not a whole lot, and given the fact that your health is directly impacted by your income level, we need to talk more in this House about how we're creating new jobs. One of the new job creation processes is skills trades. Everybody acknowledges that. So what I don't understand is why the kids who live in Eastern Passage currently have access to a high school with a skills trades program and, come September, they're not. We deliberately built a new high school at around \$21 million with no skills trades. That's not going to help my constituency with job creation.

Finally, in the last few seconds, it was an article in the paper yesterday that 50 per cent of all women in Nova Scotia have been sexually harassed and 33 per cent have been raped or molested. There was a \$6 million grant to help reduce the incidence of sexualized violence in this province - that grant ended. Sexual assault and sexual harassment did not end, and so I'm going to ask the government to take another look at providing funds to help reduce violent crime. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll take my seat.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to have a few moments to talk before we get into a process that's extremely important not only to the elected officials here - even though many at home may not think it's important, it's important to Nova Scotians. The process of evaluating and scrutinizing the budget is an important one. Often throughout the process, we as elected officials, as political Parties, find more details of what the impact will be on the services that Nova Scotians depend on.

To be very clear as a government when you produce your budget, you talk about all the good things in the budget - the rosy picture of spending \$10.8 billion. I'll be the first one to admit that when you spend \$10.8 billion, good things will happen; good things will come out of that.

But when a government prepares a budget, it's their commitment to Nova Scotians. It's their commitment to try to address some of the concerns and some of the issues that are in front of everyday Nova Scotians. That's what our role I think over the next 40 hours once we start the Budget Estimates and the debate will be. Is that investment of \$10.8 billion going to address the issues and the concerns that everyday Nova Scotians are facing when they wake up in the morning, when they go to work, if they have work, when they try to find services - either education, community services, health care? Is the \$10.8 billion going to support them in some of the challenges that they have and that families face every day in Nova Scotia?

As I say, there are good things in the budget and the government has their opportunity when they do the Budget Speech, when the minister is in front of the media, to promote some of those investments. But there are going to be Nova Scotians who won't get that support, who won't get that relief, who won't see an improvement in their everyday lives because of the investment of that \$10.8 billion.

So, that will be our role as Opposition members. It's an important role to go through the budget line by line to try to find out: did the government listen to Nova Scotians, do the members of the governing Party listen to their constituents and others when they call their constituency offices, when they call or write a letter to the minister or the MLA saying this is the major issue in my life today, I hope that you as a government will address it.

We know in the language of the Budget Speech and the documents that they use - improving the fiscal health with three balanced budgets in a row was one of the first lines that the government used. Our challenge that we have is, it's important to make sure that we have the economy in the province to ensure that we can pay for the services that we have, but we can't forget about the actual health of our citizens and our province.

It's no secret that health care is the number one concern for people. If you're healthy, it may be a little lower on your priority list, but usually everybody knows somebody who has some health condition, some issue within health care, and that's why any polling - the polling that has been done over the last 15, 20 years - always comes back with health care as the number one issue for Nova Scotians. Health care, education and then, depending on the issues of the day, the other priorities and issues fall under those two headings.

Health care has dominated what I've been dealing with in my constituency over the last three or four years. To be truthful, it has probably dominated the issues I dealt with over the last 15 years as an elected official. I think this is my 18th or 19th budget process that I'm going through, even though I've been here 15 years, we've had a couple of years where we've had two budgets. Either the budget didn't pass, there were elections and we go through the process and on that budget vote, after doing 40 hours of Estimates, the budget vote failed and we go to an election. It's happened. But it's an important process, as I say. In 15 years, health care definitely has been the area where I've had to spend most of my time trying to help, assist, and navigate, direct my constituents and others in Nova Scotia, trying to gain access to care and those things that go along with that.

As I said, in the budget, of course, Nova Scotians were anticipating what is the government going to invest in? Caucus offices, Opposition offices, we're looking at what government is going to invest in. We try to influence that, I think, as we bring questions to the ministers, as we promote what our caucus is advocating for in social media, in advertising back in our communities. I know we've done that, every Party does that, and one of the strong emphases that we've had over the last number of months, and the last

couple of years, has been the fact that health care definitely needs to have the attention of the government.

There are many, many other issues and I have to say the government has - use the terminology "sprinkled money" all over the place in this budget. There are a number of areas that they've invested in that we support, that we know are important. Some of the poverty reduction investment is extremely important to our caucus, and we commend the government for investing in those areas.

But there have been areas that we haven't seen the priority for government to pay some attention to, and we've mentioned it a number of times in the last couple of weeks. Remember, I said this is my 18th budget, and probably my 200th debate or speech, and I usually don't fall for any traps from across the way. But health care has been an area that we wanted to see some investment in long-term care. We would be the first ones to agree that most Nova Scotians, we heard it earlier from the previous speaker, most Nova Scotians want to stay home as long as possible.

When we were in government, when I was Minister of Health and Wellness, we invested in home care. The Liberals are not the first government to invest in home care. But you need to invest in both, and that is what we've seen missing in this budget this year. You have to invest in both, you have to move the needs of Nova Scotians - especially those who require long-term care and home care - you need to move them forward in tandem, not in a solo fashion. I think I read something last night that the Minister of Health and Wellness said, well, we may look at that as an option down the road, but definitely not in this budget. There hasn't been any investment in creating new long-term care beds or nursing home beds.

There are people - I know the Premier gets very passionate when we question the Premier on the congestion we see in our hospitals, and the backup that we see in our emergency rooms, and the long transfers, and limited EHS vehicles ready to respond - it does follow back, there's a domino effect. When you have over 200 people in Nova Scotia right now who are in hospital, in the hospital setting, they need another setting - that causes a backlog, and there is a domino effect right back to the ER. You can't deny that. That's why we were looking for an investment in long-term care, to try to help alleviate some of the congestion we see in the flow in the hospitals.

[2:15 p.m.]

Over the last couple of years there has been a reduction in the ability and the capacity in our hospitals to have in-patients. We applaud the continuation of the investment at Dartmouth General and the renovations going on. We were very supportive of that. We were committed to that. I believe the Progressive Conservatives were committed to that when they got the ball started on whether the Dartmouth General should be expanded or renovated. As a government, when we were in, we moved those initiatives forward.

So we commend the government on that, but by doing the renovations, there is a reduction in in-patient bed capacity in our province. We've seen it around the province, and that has an effect on the congestion we see in our hospitals.

We know that when we have our paramedics responding to calls and ending up in emergency departments, they are delayed immensely. I am in constant contact with those paramedics around the province. I haven't been on the trucks in a number of years - and I think I've said this before - the norm transfer time when I left some 15 years ago was maybe 10 to 20 minutes. You get to a hospital emergency department - in 10 minutes you have your patient offloaded and transferred, you are doing your paperwork, you are cleaning the unit, and you are back on the street.

Now it's almost their entire shift: 12 hours. People are doing shift change in our emergency departments, in our hospitals. It's very critical. I know it's very frustrating for those paramedics who are on the trucks today.

I know there has been an investment here of some \$6.8 million to the EHS, but that wasn't born out of, oh, let's address the issue that we see. That's born out of the increasing call volume that EMC has seen over the last year. The dispatch centre, which is manned by paramedics, received over 155,000 calls last year. Break that up into how many calls a day. I think in February they hit a record of the most calls ever, which was well over 700 calls, maybe 720 calls, in one 24-hour period. The contract that EMC has with the government requires more investment, so that's why we see this investment.

Some of the medics say this is great; maybe there will be more units available to respond. But if that's the case, if the call volumes continue to see a rise, then we're going to see more congestion in our hospitals because there's no investment in long-term care to try to move some of those 200 patients out of the hospital.

We have numbers for patients who are in-patient, in the hospital, waiting for long-term care, and we also have the patients who are waiting for palliative care. There are two different numbers. When we talk about how many patients are waiting for long-term care placement or nursing home beds in hospital, we have those raw numbers, those true numbers.

I know there has been an investment in physicians and the way we pay our physicians. In Nova Scotia, they are one of the lowest paid in the country. Even with the investment, we're still behind New Brunswick and P.E.I. That's going to be a challenge for recruitment and retention, especially recruitment of physicians. We know we have to have that.

I know physicians welcome that investment because they are challenged. They are bursting at the seams. Many of them are on the verge of burnout. That investment that we see does nothing to help alleviate that. I think it's too long-term down the road to see if

there's going to be a positive impact on that recruitment of physicians and the ability to do that.

We know there are a number of risks. The government is indicating a \$29-million surplus. That can vanish in the blink of an eye. Trust me, Mr. Speaker. They used to joke in the Department of Health and Wellness that you could walk down the hall and cough and that would cost you \$50 million and that money is gone. I know the Minister of Health and Wellness is smiling because it's very true. One piece of equipment could wipe out that \$29 million (Interruption), and the Minister of Health and Wellness says no one is allowed to cough in the department anymore. So that could wipe that out, and there are prior year adjustments that could wipe that \$29 million out.

There are consumption taxes that are sensitive to household incomes; there is sensitivity to taxable income or the yield; and there is also the delay in the legalization of cannabis. So, Mr. Speaker, we are concerned that the government hasn't heard the concerns of Nova Scotians and, as we get into this process, we'll find more information out that it's not as rosy as the government tries to paint. That there will be Nova Scotians left behind because of not making their issue a priority for the government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to provide a few comments - and I appreciate the comments from both of my colleagues previous.

I would just like to take a few minutes to talk a bit about what the budget means for home in conjunction with some of the investments that government has been making. I do want to recognize, before I start, my colleagues from Cape Breton and from all sides of the floor. We may not agree at times on the process, but we all are here to support not only all Nova Scotians, but particularly the folks from Cape Breton. So, thank you for your work for that.

For me, in the last two and a half years since I've been in this job, I've seen many commitments come forward from our government to support home. Whether they be economic opportunities for home, expansion of programs, support for our youth, or support for our seniors, it's been an exciting time for me to be part of this, and I'm proud of the investments our government has made.

Whether they are on a larger economic scale, looking at the support we've provided for the second cruise ship berth in Sydney; whether it's the journey we are now currently on to fulfill potentially one of the largest projects in the history of Sydney with the relocation of the Nova Scotia Community College; our commitment to working with council on community projects throughout the Cape Breton Regional Municipality; supporting and preserving our most significant historical and cultural facilities with the

announcement by my colleague in Glace Bay for the support for the Savoy Theatre; supporting the project at the former Holy Angels site, New Dawn - the Centre for Social Innovation - that is going to be a great hub for artists in the CBRM area, these are all very significant and strategic investments that I've been part of with this government I appreciate the support that I've received from my colleagues throughout that journey.

We've been, in the last couple of years, really establishing a new economic footprint in the CBRM area and supporting communities right across Cape Breton that have come forward.

One of things we've heard - I've heard during the campaign, and we've all heard it as MLAs in this House and as representatives in Cape Breton - are some of the services that people wanted to see during the election. We heard a lot about education. We've heard a lot about health care, more support for youth, more support for our families, and how we can expand access to primary care for all Cape Bretoners. This budget that we've tabled is showing significant improvement in those services that we are going to offer for folks across Nova Scotia, but particularly at home.

I also want to say on the record, I've seen in my two - this will be my third budget, the tremendous amount of work that staff in every department undertakes to get us to this point. I especially have a new-found appreciation for it since becoming Minister of Municipal Affairs, the work that staff must undertake to prepare for budget. To all of you who may be listening, I just want to say, as an MLA in this House, thank you all very much for the work you are doing. I also want to give congratulations to my colleague, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, who has done a tremendous amount of work to get us to this point. To the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, Mr. Speaker, I offer congratulations to her.

So, health care has been top of mind for home for many years. Actually, I've been following some of the media at home and there is - just for protocol, I want to reference an article in the *Cape Breton Post*, but I think I may have to table that; I don't have it with me.

In a more broad sense, there has been a lot of support for collaborative care at home. We're seeing that in the stories that we're seeing in the community. It's actually encouraged me to do a bit of research because, from what I've been reading and what I've been hearing the community, collaborative care hasn't been a new model. It was actually introduced many years ago. We're seeing the results of it at home, and I use the example of Dr. Steve MacDougall in Sydney. Dr. MacDougall embraced the idea of the collaborative care model and collaborative centres early on and, as a result of that, we've seen a significant decrease in the residents of the greater Sydney area who are looking for support from a family physician, who are looking for support from primary care.

I had an op-ed that I put out that explained that, but you're looking at - that area that it represents actually represents greater than Sydney. It represents Mira. It represents Coxheath. It represents Sydney River. It represents East Bay. It represents Sydney Forks. It represents Upper Leitches Creek. It represents parts of Louisbourg, Lorraine, and in between. We're showing significant progress in residents receiving access to primary care.

I always recognize Steve MacDougall because I had the honour of making that announcement last year where we opened the collaborative care centre in Sydney. Now that has four doctors. That has a social worker. That has a nurse practitioner. That has a family practice nurse and that collaborative centre is taking up to 40 new patients a month. They're taking 40 new residents in the CBRM off the list. We have investments in this budget to support new collaborative care centres in the north side, to support new collaborative care centres in Glace Bay. These were the investments that I heard as I was campaigning in the election, the requests from residents that came forward. We were setting the economic tools to support growth in the CBRM, but we need to do more to support the services that CBRM residents require at home and across the province. So, that's one of the most important pieces of the budget for me.

We're seeing significant improvement in access to primary care right across the board in CBRM and, to the Dr. MacDougalls and the other physicians that are embracing this, thank you very much. To the nurse practitioners we've been hiring, thank you very much. To the family practice nurses, to the social workers, to the people who are embracing this concept, it is your work, it is your dedication - that's the reason why we're seeing the results we are. So, thank you to all health care providers for the work that you do for home.

Some of the other investments - we talk about education at home and it's been a hot topic right across the province. It's been a very challenging time at home because we've seen many school closures over the last two years. As we try to tackle outmigration, not only in our community but communities across the province, this is one of the realities that we face - this infrastructure.

I can say this: as an MLA in the CBRM, I'm very proud of the work of my colleague, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, the MLA for Yarmouth, for his commitment to my community and to the commitment for the communities across the province. I appreciate the time he took when he came to meet with parents and principals and administrators, and he used that feedback as he developed the legislation that came forward. Through all those challenges, through the challenges of school closures, we continued to invest in our kids, and in a community that has seen higher rates of poverty, I stand in my place today as an MLA proud of the pre-Primary program that we're rolling out.

The pre-Primary program, for me, is one of the most significant pieces I believe any government now and into the future will bring forward for our kids. It's absolutely, as

my colleague the MLA from Halifax Atlantic said, it's one of the most significant programs I believe we'll see in the history of this Legislature, regardless of socio-economic status.

[2:30 p.m.]

I represent a community that has a vast array of children who come from different walks of life. With this program, every four-year-old is going to have the same opportunity. Every four-year-old is going to have that opportunity to gain those tools, so that when they enter Primary, they are all on a level playing field.

We hear the statistic of one in four Nova Scotian children in that age bracket were accessing some sort of pre-Primary education leading in. I would argue that that number may be higher in some of the communities we represent. Time will show that this, for home, will be one of the most significant programs any government will bring forward.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we see the committee that has been formed to look at improving classroom conditions. I'm receiving positive feedback at home. We're seeing the investments. The SchoolsPlus program, for example, is at 100 per cent in Cape Breton. Those are services that students and families are receiving.

Again, to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, thank you for that commitment to home because these are the services that residents at home want to see, so we're at 100 per cent at home.

The breakfast program - we're expanding the breakfast program so every child has that opportunity to be nourished as they go through their day with their education.

These are important services that, on a daily basis, I hear that our residents want.

In this budget there are so many things that are positive for home. We're expanding our home care services. We're expanding our caregiver program. We're making investments to support groups and organizations which I believe are the backbone for all of us. I look again at the member for Halifax Atlantic, who is probably one of the best I've ever seen at working with community organizations. We have vibrant community grants. We're supporting these organizations that are supporting the most vulnerable in our community. We're going to continue to do that work and support those organizations.

For me, I would argue that this government is one of the governments that in recent history has made every community a commitment but has made CBRM a commitment. They've looked at our economic projects. They want to see economic prosperity for where I represent. We've made those investments. We're seeing some of the biggest investments in the history of our community come forward. (Interruption)

AN HON. MEMBER: Culture.

MR. MOMBOURQUETTE: Culture, absolutely. The Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage is my favourite lately.

We're setting the blueprint for economic success at home, but throughout this there has always been that conversation at home about the services that we provide to Cape Bretoners. This budget provides so much for home. It's tackling the shortage of family physicians and access to family care. It's supporting our seniors. It's supporting residents who want to stay in their home. It's making investments into our community and cultural and significant facilities. It's supporting our kids with pre-Primary education, combatting poverty, (Interruption) looking at supports - SchoolsPlus, mental health.

In conclusion, I'm so proud of the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board for tabling this budget. I'm so proud of my Premier and our caucus colleagues who brought forward a budget that's progressive, a budget that supports all Nova Scotians.

I look forward to the comments as we move into estimates. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. That concludes the debate going into Committee of the Whole on Supply.

The motion is carried.

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

[2:35 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CW on Supply with Deputy Speaker Mr. Chuck Porter in the Chair.]

[6:41 p.m. CW on Supply rose and the House reconvened. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Kevin Murphy, resumed the Chair.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The Chair of the Committee of the Whole on Supply reports:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole on Supply has met, has made progress, and begs leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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. 82.

Bill No. 82 - Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 82, an Act to Amend Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter Respecting a District Energy System, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide comments today on proposed amendments to the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter that will give the Halifax Regional Municipality the authority to require that any future development in the Cogswell redevelopment area be connected to the district energy system.

HRM is contemplating creating a system that uses waste energy in the form of steam from Halifax Water's nearby wastewater facility. These systems can supply heating and cooling to multiple buildings from either a centralized plant or several interconnected but distributed plants. We are pleased to be able to support HRM's request for these changes, which reflect their strategic priorities for healthy, livable communities and social development, and support the community energy plan.

The district energy system at Cogswell is projected to lead to a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions by using waste energy to generate heat and cooling for buildings. Mr. Speaker, district energy systems can be found in Nova Scotia, across Canada, and internationally, and are generally successful in areas of high density. There are current examples of public and private district energy systems in Nova Scotia at Dalhousie University, Alderney Landing, Purdy's Wharf and the Department of National Defence Dockyards and the Victoria General Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments give HRM bylaw-making authority which will ensure that there is public notice. Government is pleased to bring these amendments forward on the request from HRM to amend its Charter to require connection to a district energy system in the Cogswell redevelopment area.

I look forward to comments from my colleagues.

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

MR. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, we as the PC caucus certainly do support this bill that is coming forward. I do want to take a second to compliment HRM. When I was over across the street, I had an opportunity to see the presentation, and what I will say for members of this House is that it's going to be a significant piece of work. You'll see all the overpasses, of course, coming down, and the development of four or five new, large-scale, high-density development down here in the downtown core of the municipality. It's well done out and thought out with bike lanes, green spaces, and parkways.

I certainly would encourage any members of this House who would like to see more - I know that HRM does have a video presentation with a computer mock-up on the HRM website, so I would encourage members to go and look at that. I think it's really going to change somewhat the look of that end of the City of Halifax.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we do recognize that this is legislation that is environmentally friendly, it's green energy, it has been done in other places as the minister has talked about. However, we do have a couple of concerns around it that I'll talk about just for the sake of making sure that it is in the record.

It is somewhat vague on what the cost of the overall project is going to be, and although the Halifax Regional Water Commission as a utility is basically mandated to be revenue neutral, it would be nice to see what kind of concept they are looking at for funding, and what kind of impact it's going to be. I think it's vital in weighing against the benefits of the project to know those things. It would be interesting to know whether or not the Water Commission is looking to recoup the entire cost of the project at the final fees stage or whether it would just be a fee to connect up and, once they're connected, to pay on an ongoing month.

We're curious about whether or not - and it's looking as if not - so I guess there's some concern around the fact that there is an option for people to opt out at all. We do recognize it's part of what makes the project viable, but if costing becomes too high to developers or to owners, they should have an ability to opt out.

[6:45 p.m.]

I guess the biggest issue that our caucus has around this - and this has been somewhat highlighted in the news lately - is around the lack of transparency and openness that Halifax Regional Water Commission meetings are. Although they fall under the same rules and regulations as the municipality, they do hold their meetings behind closed doors. In the case of councils, they typically have a list of qualifications whereby they can go in in camera, and other than that, any standing committees or any committees of council - including councils across the province - are mandated to be open to the public.

It's been raised by a number of issues that the Halifax Regional Water Commission just doesn't seem to be as transparent, and I think that's what our biggest concern is: that there will be many decisions and changes made that are currently, and will continue to happen, behind closed doors. I believe a year or so ago one of the members of our caucus did bring forward a bill to look to amend the Water Commission charter to try to get them out of doors. We're looking at potentially bringing something back again, I think, so that they're not behind closed doors.

I just want to make sure that I'm not missing anything as we go through here. I think that all in all, the project does support both the province's and HRM's goals of decreasing greenhouse gas emissions corporately and community wide. We have talked about, and we do agree and recognize, that it would be similar to the Purdy's Wharf construction when it was done 30 years ago. It became a showcase not just in the province but around the world at that time, and we would certainly see this becoming a showcase project of district energy systems for Nova Scotia. We may even see an uptake in other parts of the province because of it.

These systems certainly lead to that decrease of greenhouse gas emissions. We think that anything that we can do that benefits that, our caucus is willing to do. We would look forward to working with the government as well as with the municipality on this.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, just a few moments on Bill No. 82. District energy systems are smart and make a lot of common sense in a way our city should move toward becoming less wasteful and more sustainable when it comes to the heating and cooling of our buildings.

I know this piece of legislation is specific to the Cogswell Redevelopment Project, but I do believe that the municipality really wanted more of a broad ability to do this for other projects if they come forward. It will be interesting if we have to see future amendments to the bill or to the charter to allow for this to happen. I don't know if there is a reason why we're only giving a single development approval for this district energy system.

This bill gives HRM the power to enforce participation in the district energy system for buildings, as I said, in the upcoming Cogswell Redevelopment Project and that is good. We should see more of this in our province. The HRM should have this power for any new redevelopment where a district energy system makes sense.

We look forward to hearing from those who have an interest in this at Law Amendments Committee to see their perspective and some of the suggestions. But I would hope that the government would look at why this is a single development request for approval through legislation when, as an Assembly, we only meet twice a year. Council

meets throughout the year every week. If there is a future development that wants to take advantage of a similar exemption, then they have to wait for us to sit here in this Chamber to go through this all again.

As I said, I would have hoped that we might have seen a broader ability for HRM. They have a charter. I think we trust them to make the best interest decisions of citizens in HRM, especially around development downtown with the Cogswell and other redevelopment projects. We do support this.

But I do want to echo my colleague's comments around concern around the Water Commission. I think it might have been last year or the year before, we tried to move an amendment to a bill that pertained to the Water Commission to require them to have open, transparent meetings.

We know, and I heard as an MLA, about some of the concerns residents had of changes the Water Commission made, charges that the Water Commission charged residents. I would hope that this is on the radar of the government to make sure that if we are overseeing the charter and the responsibility of the municipality, and we are getting down to having to approve each district energy system, then we should make it mandatory that the Water Commission have open and transparent meetings so that taxpayers know exactly what's going on. We have called for that in other areas of service like the Nova Scotia Health Authority and others. I would think it should pertain to the Water Commission also.

We look forward to seeing what kind of outcome and what kind of comments we may hear from individuals at Law Amendments Committee and look forward to the debate.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Thank you to both of my colleagues for their comments in regard to Bill No. 82 and their support for the HRM and this project.

I rise to close debate on Bill No. 82.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 82. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Order 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. 84.

Bill No. 84 - Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 84, An Act to Amend Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Respecting Bonus Zoning, now be read for a second time.

I am pleased to provide comments today on proposed amendments to the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter that will allow the municipality to use incentive or bonus zoning throughout the Halifax Regional Municipality. Government is bringing these charter amendments forward at HRM's request to allow for bonus zoning in all areas of HRM as part of its municipal planning processes.

Incentive or bonus zoning is a planning tool that allows municipalities to increase the size of a development in exchange for community benefits. This change will allow HRM to be more flexible in municipal planning and help lead to smart growth in development in key areas throughout the entire municipality.

Currently, HRM can only use incentive for bonus zoning in designated parts of the municipality, specifically the downtown areas of Halifax and Dartmouth, within the HRM by Design Downtown Plan Area and the Centre Plan Area. HRM has used bonus zoning in recent years for development projects with additional densities such as width and height, while providing additional benefits for the community that contribute to the livability and proper planning of the neighbourhood affected.

These benefits may include a number of different options such as sustainable buildings, affordable housing, more green space, and streetscaping improvements. The public benefits may be used off-site from the property being developed to enhance the neighbourhood as a whole. For example, the Halifax Central Library development was granted additional height in exchange for the provision of public open space plazas. As well, the TD Bank tower on Barrington Street was granted additional density, resulting in the preservation of heritage resources and the provision of sustainable building practices.

I would also note that the municipality works with neighbourhoods as part of a public engagement process when developing land use bylaws to ensure that community needs are identified as categories for the public benefit. All other municipalities in Nova Scotia are permitted to use bonus zoning anywhere within their borders. These amendments will ensure the Halifax Regional Municipality has the same opportunity for its citizens.

Ultimately, these changes will enable HRM to carry out more strategic, efficient, and sustainable municipal planning that will help make the municipality a better place to

live and work, and provide more vibrant and sustainable neighbourhoods. I look forward to the comments from my colleagues.

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

MR. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I think we're not as agreeable on this one as we were on the last one. I say over and over again, I'm sure some people are getting really tired of hearing about it, but when I was across the street - I think that the current bonus zoning for HRM currently is good the way it is. I think this will open up a can of worms across this municipality.

I have a lot of concerns around this. They hold out the public benefit that comes from bonus zoning and the municipality will hold that out as a carrot, but it's just like the donkey with the carrot in front of it, you never catch it. I'll tell you, many times I was over on council that we saw developments come forward where we were told the affordable housing that we were going to be able to get, and things like that - I don't recall one development that has ever happened since bonus zoning was in place. I know currently there is one that is being talked about on the Willow Tree, and ironically at that, I guess I'd submit this if I can - I don't know if people can table stuff - but I will table this now from March 20th.

It's the *Metro* paper, it will back up a lot of what I'm talking about here. If you want to see what a horse and pony show things are with density bonus zoning, take a look at this. At the end of the day, what is going to end up happening - particularly considering that our caucus is limited in the number of downtown Halifax councillors, but I know the government caucus has a lot. Areas like Hammonds Plains, Fall River - all of a sudden somebody comes out to Fall River and they decide they want to build a 10-story building in a place that's supposed to be R-1 development.

Well, they go to the municipality, they negotiate through bonus zoning, they promise the community everything, and get the zoning and at the end of the day nothing happens. To say that they're required to have a public meeting, that's a bit of a joke as well because they go, you listen to the public, and then you see exactly what happened in the *Metro* article, shows exactly what ends up happening. What the public concerns are, a lot of times go away. They're not addressed and they just disappear, what the public thinks.

I'll tell you what bonus zoning does. Bonus zoning benefits the developers and bonus zoning benefits the municipality who makes money via assessments, and the higher assessments then the more bonus, the more money the municipality makes. It does not benefit the residents of that municipality across the municipality. Schools end up being overcrowded, there's a lack of infrastructure with regard to sidewalks. There are so many issues that bonus zoning ends up creating, particularly in suburban and rural HRM, and to turn around and now open it up, I certainly could never support that.

Luckily, I guess I'm thankful that the caucus has taken somewhat of a similar approach as me, and that's why I'm saying it.

[7:00 p.m.]

Like I said, I think to say that you're having a public meeting, it's just a check box that they do. They don't necessarily take into consideration what's heard at the public meetings, and we see that in the *Metro* article that came up. Money - they suggest that there will be, that if it's not - and I will say for the members of this House who don't know me, there was a councillor who was on council with me, Councillor Jennifer Watts. We were probably two of the strongest advocates on that council in regard to affordable housing in that municipality. I will tell you, time and again, particularly myself with staff over the years, worked at trying to look at ways to get affordable housing in the downtown. They have this now in the downtown - start showing me where it's given affordable housing, because it certainly hasn't.

They talk about money and the incentives that can come back to the community - 90 per cent of the time those incentives that come in, the financial contributions, end up going into the general coffers and don't even go back to benefit the communities. I think what the process does, the public hearing process, it creates fatigue, it creates frustration, a sense of unknown with residents. We certainly see that in the Willow Tree development right now, what's going on. You can see what council has given away in what they're entitled to, and what has been given away in that. Now, all of a sudden, they're asking to do this across the municipality.

I think there's a reason why - you know, when I was on council, it was one of the things that we always said is a very big frustration, was we always had to come to the province, or Big Brother, and ask for permission for things to do. I think the process is in place for a reason, and they are coming forward and asking for this, but it's not something that we're currently going to support.

I would like to see what happens when it goes to Law Amendments Committee. I know - and I'll predict right now - that we will have numerous developers that will show up who will be advocating for it, but because of the way it will be worded, you know I will certainly be putting it out there for residents to know what the implications are. I think that I'm looking forward to the Law Amendments Committee.

I remind members of this House, it wasn't that long ago that HRM went through what was called at the time, it was a regional planning exercise that they went through about 12 years ago now, whereby they laid out how they wanted the municipality to develop across the province. At that time, the government of the day actually came forward and put a freeze on development in HRM so that they could pursue that process. There were numerous public hearings. They created a thick, thick document, and it's on their website, the regional plan. It was recently reviewed three or four years ago under the RP+5,

it's a relatively new document. This would supersede all those public hearings, everything that's in that document, it's a significant change from the direction that that document went.

I think it flies clearly in opposition of local municipal planning strategies, they're called MPSs. I think that this would fly whereby, in an MPS, residents of a local area are able to talk about how they want their general area to develop. Do they want apartment buildings? Do they want single-family units? Do they want apartment buildings or townhouses? They're able to talk at a local level, and that's a municipal planning strategy. This would supersede the MPSs for areas, and like I said, it's fine to say that there's a public consultation process. I've seen the other way, where you sit and you listen, and you go through all the public consultation - oh, hang on, I saw that here too, where you sit and go through all the public consultation, and then you do the other thing anyhow.

I can't support it, right? Like I said, we'll end up seeing buildings of 10, 15 stories built out in Sackville, and that's not what our MPS says, that's not what we want. Bonus zoning is an incentive for developers, and it benefits the developers in the municipalities. It does not benefit the residents and, to me, that's what we're here for, to hopefully do what's in the best interests of the residents, and I certainly don't feel that it is. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand and speak for a few moments on Bill No. 84. It's interesting, last evening after we left here I was at an open house for some trail development in our area and I ran into the councillor for part of the area in Sackville, District 14. I inquired about these pieces of legislation because I often say that I respect deeply the levels of government that we have - our municipal, our school board starting off - our municipal, our provincial, and our federal representatives. I try often not to stand in my place and criticize and go after what another level of government is going to do.

I posed the question to Lisa Blackburn and I was surprised that she wasn't overly informed about the changes in the legislation that we're dealing with now, which concerns me to some degree. I don't know if that's a result of the government and the consultation from the department, or if it's from the municipality and their requirement or need to educate their councillors that there is legislation on the provincial side of things that is going through the legislative process.

With this piece of legislation on the surface we know that the density bonus zoning and that issue was here for downtown Halifax, the one thing I do know in the area I represent is that affordable housing, especially for low income, but for seniors, has been an issue for many, many years. There have been some recent developments over the last couple of years in trying to address the needs of our constituents. One of the biggest things I heard for many years was the fact that if a senior, a couple, who brought up their kids,

their families, in the suburbs got to a point where they either wanted to downsize or, unfortunately, had to go into a nursing home, they had to leave our community.

We've been very fortunate over the last number of years to not only have a new nursing home over the last five, six years in our community but we also have the new seniors' complex which, I believe, is a three-storey complex. But I wouldn't be opposed to maybe a five-storey senior complex in my community if that was an initiative that was pushed and developed and, hopefully, encouraged, especially from our Sackville Business Association. They do an amazing job, I think, out in our area to try to improve the streetscape of Sackville, to try to encourage development of businesses. I am not totally opposed to having some kind of mechanism to ensure that we have affordable housing, maybe increased improvement in our streetscape, seniors' housing.

I'm looking forward to hearing what people have to say and I reserve judgment on if this is really good for an area like I represent, the suburbs of Halifax. We've heard a lot over the years about planning and development of downtown Halifax but there's a world outside downtown Halifax that I'm very proud of, Mr. Speaker. So, I hope - and Lisa is supposed to get back to me as she looks through that tonight, and I'm going to reach out to Steve Craig, who is the Councillor for District 15, on trying to seek his input on what his thoughts are because I do respect those levels of government.

I know democratic planning, Mr. Speaker, is so important and planning in our cities, and developments, shouldn't be left in the hands of staff. It needs to involve everyone in the community having a say and being part of the vision. I think that's a lot of the criticisms that we've heard, especially around the additional bonus zoning here in Halifax, it's that engagement with the community to make sure that the community buys in to whatever the municipality is going to allow for a development project. That's where my biggest concern is, and we look forward to hearing from those Haligonians or others who might want to come to Law Amendments Committee and engage in this process to see if truly this is the best approach.

Should we be allowing the municipality to allow for something that happens downtown to happen in areas like the suburbs, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

MR. KEITH IRVING: I just thought I would weigh in with a few thoughts, given the comments from my colleagues across the floor, which raised some important points on both sides of the argument.

Where I would like to begin is that land-use planning is a task that we have delegated to municipalities. We, in a very limited way, retain some control around agricultural land preservation, housing, infrastructure efficiency, and water, through our

statements of provincial interest. The rest we have delegated to our municipal partners. This bill is giving a tool, a land-use planning tool, to those partners to use if they wish.

This is a tool that has benefits, as my colleague, the member for Sackville-Cobequid has stated, with respect to the ability to encourage affordable housing. Municipalities have very few tools to create affordable housing. They have perhaps land to donate and a planning tool such as density bonusing. I think it is important, if we're interested in affordable housing, to give them the powers to use the tools, the limited planning tools, that are at hand.

I do want to acknowledge my colleague, the member for Sackville-Beaver Bank's concerns. They are real concerns. Planning is a very controversial and difficult issue to manage within communities. HRM's debates, which we have seen in the media, are real. They are real, and they are a problem. They're a problem for developers, and they're a problem for communities.

The issues that the member for Sackville-Beaver Bank have raised are far broader than this tool that we are suggesting that municipalities be given, or that HRM be given. The problems within planning go back to the MPS that the communities decided on.

Unfortunately, communities don't do a very good job of engaging citizens in the development of those plans. I have been at the municipal level. I have worked on municipal plans. To drag people out to talk about the concept of planning, MPSs, and land-use zoning is a very difficult task. It's only when something starts going up in the backyard, five years after the plan has been approved and agreed upon, that they then engage and say, oh my God. I didn't realize our rules permitted somebody to build this in my backyard. The challenge here is not this tool. The challenge here is more back to the planning process, and the importance of municipal councils to properly engage and use processes so that the citizens understand the importance of those municipal planning documents and understand what bonus density is.

One way to look at this issue of bonus density is to say that 20-storey height that is permitted in this zone, maybe when we rewrite the municipal planning strategy, that drops to 15, with a possibility of bonus zoning to put the extra five on with affordable housing being part to get back up to that 20. There's another way of looking at that, and I would encourage HRM and the municipality to think carefully through how they use this tool.

I wrestled with this a bit when I first heard about it and had similar concerns as my colleague in Sackville-Beaver Bank. I think with further reflection, I feel it is important that we as a province recognize that we have a capital city here. The capital city is half of our province. They are a mature government. They're as mature as Regina, Vancouver, Toronto, or Québec City. I think we need to trust them and support them in making the decisions for their communities within the HRM, and not be too much a Big Brother to HRM.

[7:15 p.m.]

I think the cautions around planning are valid, but I don't think this one tool is adding much more to that problem that exists that needs to be tackled, in terms of public engagement and understanding of planning. So, I would like to suggest that we as a government respect that duty that we have delegated to them, with respect to land-use planning, to be making the decisions for their community, for finding that delicate balance between large buildings and affordable housing, and I believe that we should support this bill.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I'll just take a few moments and I'll say first that I actually really welcome the opportunity to have heard my colleague, the member for Kings South before I spoke. I land somewhere right in between his sentiment and the sentiments of my colleague in the Tory caucus. I'm sorry I'll have to practise being a Speaker one day just so I can get the names of the constituencies coming out of my mouth quickly when I rise to speak.

I do also believe that this is a tool and I don't know the exact history on when the request for this tool went in, but I want to also echo the comments earlier from my colleague, the member for Sackville-Cobequid about this Chamber meeting two times a year, and about requests from the municipality and, as was stated, the capital city of this province representing half the population of Nova Scotia often sitting and having to wait - waiting in some cases for years - for requests for tools that are pertinent to the job of Halifax Regional Municipality to be responded to. I don't think that changes to legislation piece by piece, by small request are an efficient way of working with the municipal level of government of a large urban city.

The other comment that I want to make is that really, why has the municipality asked for this tool? My understanding is that it is largely about an interest in increasing the supply of affordable housing in Halifax, and I think in another way we're being a poor partner there. If I look at this year's budget, we see investments, a substantial allocation of investments, to improve and repair and do deferred maintenance on the existing public housing stock, and then we see a significant line item that's going towards rent supplements.

Rent supplements are not investments. They are not investments in our future. They are transfers from the public sector to the private sector. They have to happen year after year and they gain us nothing. When I look at what makes the neighbourhood - which I am so lucky to represent - a wonderful neighbourhood, I can even look at my own house. I can look at the house I live in - my whole street was built by a builders co-op that was organized by the parish priest at the Catholic church up the hill back in the 1960s.

I look at the Hydrostone neighbourhood, one of the most coveted neighbourhoods in this country, it gets design awards from all over, built with public dollars after the Halifax Explosion. I look at all the small, storey-and-a-half, two-bedroom, one-bathroom houses, many of which have passed through family generations in the neighbourhood further up in Richmond, close to where I live, all built with public dollars after the war.

Then we look at our actual public housing and right now we're at a moment where the city has recognized, with assistance from United Way, with research, that we need an investment in thousands of more social housing units. Our social housing portion in the housing market is dangerously small and it gives an incredible amount of power to landlords, and it also gives us very few alternatives for folks who are really struggling to find a decent place to live.

If we want people to live and to have futures and actually live and work in the way that we envision our future should be, where people are being more active, where people are using public transportation, we need to be investing in that infrastructure.

Really what this is, is the city clutching at a tool because they don't have a partner in the province in terms of actually building that. This is the only tool they have that they might be able to get in their tool box, and even for that they have to come to the province.

I'm also open to hearing and being more informed by Law Amendments, but I guess I just really urge us all to think about the role that the province has said that it plays in housing. If we are failing to play that role, how are we going to correct that so that we are actually investing for the future, so that the next generation can also look back to the landmark investments that are made during our time sitting in this House. Thank you very much.

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

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to get up and speak to this topic.

Density is very important in the city, especially in the downtown area, in the South End area, which I support. I'm a huge fan of density in any way that we can get it. Primarily it solves many problems. As we talk about affordable housing, it's one thing to talk about the lowest incomes, and we do have to support them as well, but we also have a middle class who, when you look at the rents that are in the downtown and south end of Halifax and many other areas across Halifax, the rents are still a major portion of their income.

When I look at the problem, especially in my riding in Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, in this area, for me it's a supply problem - there's not enough supply. The demand is there, we have all the universities, five universities in Halifax Citadel-Sable Island. We have all those students and we welcome them and we want them here, but we also have people who

work downtown who want to walk to work. Many of them are willing to pay a higher rent and forgo having a car - and I applaud them because that's putting less pollution into our environment, it's making them healthy by walking, and I wish that we could even offer that to more people.

When I do look at this, there is a supply issue and there's a high demand - low supply, high demand. What does it result in? High rents. It also results in sprawl, and Halifax has been sprawling for decades. So, when I look at density I don't see the downside that we're going to go into a residential area and build a high-rise, that's not going to happen. We're not going into R1; you cannot go into R1 and build a high-rise. It's not going to happen.

But, Mr. Speaker, what you can do with giving a density bonusing is you can provide more units for people who want to live in the downtown area - who want to live, let's say, in the Main Street of Sackville. When you have more supply what you end up doing is you have prices dropping.

Many years ago, I looked at this topic because when the city started looking at what they were going to do for development, they said we're looking at a centre plan. There was a lot of buzz around the Centre Plan and I started watching it on TV. Many people were coming and speaking out against the Centre Plan. I actually had not read the Centre Plan at this point. As I was watching I was surprised to see that about 90 per cent of everyone who spoke was dead set against the Centre Plan and said no to height, no to density.

I started thinking, well what's in the Centre Plan that's so offensive because nobody was actually talking about what the plan was. They were just saying there's a beautiful home I don't want to see destroyed. Then a councillor would comment and say that's in an R1 area, that heritage home will not be destroyed, this is a centre plan dealing with areas that you can develop.

When I actually read the Centre Plan it then got me thinking, well we have the Centre Plan and its aim is to add density to HRM. Is this needed or not? I started looking at - and I'm going to use figures from many years ago and this is going back probably about eight years ago, seven years ago when the Centre Plan was being debated - I started looking at Halifax as city versus other cities in Canada. As I did that it was very interesting as I looked across the country, Ottawa at that point had a density per kilometre of about 1,700 people; Calgary, 1,250 people; and Vancouver, 1,650 people. I saw a trend here. Halifax had 67 people.

I did realize Halifax has a lot of rural area pulled into it, which would lower the numbers, so I dug a little deeper. What does Downtown Halifax, the peninsula, have? It has 800 people. The core of our city had half of the density of an average city in Canada.

I started thinking, that seems like it could skew things for councillors and for the taxpayers of the city. As I dug some more, I remembered as a child growing up on the peninsula, the population here was always hovering around 90,000 people. We were always wondering if we would break the 100,000 mark. Today the population is around 65,000. You don't have five people living in a home. Who lives in a home has changed. It could be one individual living in a home. So we actually have a third less people living on the peninsula, but the city has almost doubled in population. We're probably one of the very few cities that has that lopsided 10 per cent of the population living downtown in a major city in Canada.

It's also apparent to me because, as one single member in the whole province, I have all of downtown and half of the South End. If we had the right density here, this would be carved up into about three different ridings because there should be more people living downtown, making downtown even more vibrant than it already is. That would also create other great problems for the taxpayers of Halifax and for our councillors. If we had more density, we could stop building more roads, we could stop building more sewage.

I looked at Halifax Water. Halifax Water has been in the news a lot lately because of the costs that people are incurring on their water bills. Back in 2011 the budget of Halifax Water went up by over 100 per cent in one year.

I looked at how efficient our bus service was back then. I recalled that to run Metro Transit at the time was \$100 million. Metro Transit was collecting about \$30 million in fees from its riders. But every other municipality across Canada had about a 50-50 balance. To me, that said we were running about a one-third or a 50-per cent inefficiency in Halifax, and that was because of sprawl. Metro Transit will not be as efficient as a city with density because Metro Transit has to travel long lines. I hear from many members here that the bus in Harrietsfield and Hammonds Plains is travelling with one person on it because there's so much sprawl, and it's going to an area where the lots are an acre.

With that sprawl and that bus travelling, you also have people travelling - more pollution, more people in cars. What's the outcome? We're having conversations in this city about expropriating the houses on Bayers Road so we can put in another lane and let people come to work faster. It's like we're solving the problem by expropriating affordable housing, which boggles my mind because the housing on Bayers Road is actually quite affordable, and then we want to allow people having more ease getting to downtown.

Having lived in New York when I worked there, what other cities do with traffic problems is, they actually don't make it easier for people to get into the downtown area. They say, if you want to live on the outskirts and travel to downtown, we're going to make it harder for you so you have to take public transportation. What they do is, they control their sprawl with traffic. In Halifax, our traffic actually moves quite freely. When you visit other cities, you can see how long it actually does take to get home during the five o'clock rush hour, whereas here, we flow quite nicely.

As I looked at HRM's budget and sprawl and the lack of density which we need a lot more of, I started looking at how much HRM is collecting from property taxes. At the time it was approximately 63 per cent of their total budget. I compared it to Vancouver which had double our population. Vancouver was collecting 29 per cent of its revenues from property tax.

What also struck a chord with me is, Vancouver was collecting less property tax than HRM. Vancouver was operating their city with double the population, because it's dense, with the same amount of money that Halifax was, because Vancouver chose to sprawl upwards, not outwards. If you know many people in Vancouver, most of them walk to work, bike to work, or jog to work. In Halifax, most people drive to work. When we sit there and we talk about anything to do with density, it is a good thing.

[7:30 p.m.]

Now, people come up and they say, well, we don't want height. There's a lot of people in Halifax, all across the province - they just don't want things built that are going to change the landscape or make a wind tunnel, as they say.

I spoke to architects about the problem, and the way they explained it is, it's not the height that creates the wind tunnel. It's actually our current planning that is creating the wind tunnels, because we don't allow height - small footprint, lots of height. We build a façade on a street. When you walk down a street, we allow these short stubby buildings, and we build a façade right up to the sidewalk, and because of that façade, we get a wind tunnel.

When you go to Maritime Centre, and you walk by it (Interruptions) Maybe the member from Pictou would like to get up and speak, but he can have his own time to do that.

When you walk by Maritime Mall, you do get a wind tunnel, because it's built right at the sidewalk. But if you go over to an area such as Summer Gardens (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

MR. KOUSOULIS: When you walk to an area like Summer Gardens, which is set back about 50 or 100 feet from the street, there is never a wind tunnel. You see a small building with height.

Mr. Speaker, what this bill gives HRM the ability to do is to allow more density bonusing, which would result in more height, but it could also result in a smaller footprint on that land, which would reduce the wind-tunnel effect. It also allows HRM to give more

density bonusing and allow more units to be built, which would then allow for more affordable housing and people walking and being healthier in this city. It would help our health care system, and it'd be a benefit all around.

When I look at an area like Vancouver and how people live and how they walk, I'd like to see more of that in Halifax. Some people do enjoy that privilege, who live downtown, but I think many more people do want to live downtown and don't have the opportunity.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. DEREK MOMOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank all of my colleagues for their comments on this bill. Most importantly for me, whether it's Halifax, or whether it's one of our smaller municipal units across Nova Scotia, is that municipalities want more tools at their disposal to spur economic and social development. In this case, we have our largest city, which was restricted in using a tool that other municipalities can use freely across the province.

I think this is important for HRM Council, and again, it's the message from me in this portfolio that I'm going to do whatever I can to provide the tools necessary so that municipalities can use their strengths and their uniqueness to succeed.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I rise to close debate on Bill No. 84.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 84. Would all those in favour please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 85.

Bill No. 85 - The Municipal Government Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I move that Bill No. 85, an Act to Amend Chapter 18 of the Acts of 1998, the Municipal Government Act, Respecting Cape Breton Municipality, be read for a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide comments today on proposed amendments to the Municipal Government Act - or MGA - that will allow CBRM to spur business development at the Port of Sydney.

In November 2017, CBRM Municipal Council approved an agreement to lease or sell a parcel of harbour land to a private business consortium called Sydney Harbour Investment Partners Inc. This agreement would allow the consortium, known as SHIP, to move ahead with securing international customers for a container terminal. The agreement between CBRM and SHIP has the potential to significantly improve the economy in the CBRM and across the Island.

It is also important to note that while the terms of the agreement cannot be released, it has been reviewed by an independent multinational professional services firm, PricewaterhouseCoopers. In fact, PricewaterhouseCoopers told CBRM Council that the agreement meets CBRM goals and is a low-risk approach to encouraging economic development.

I would also add that based on further review of the PricewaterhouseCoopers report, from a trade perspective, there is minimal risk or a trade challenge

Like HRM, CBRM is a regional municipality with the capacity and resources to develop and manage a project of this significance. CBRM has requested amendments to the MGA to allow for the agreement to proceed.

Specifically, CBRM is seeking amendments to Section 50(5) of the MGA to enable the municipality to sell and lease property for less than market value to a commercial entity, and amendments to Section 70(5) of the MGA, which would allow CBRM to structure a tax agreement for a commercial entity. The specific properties to which these amendments would apply would be defined in regulation.

It is important to note that these amendments are not unique. Similar amendments were made to the Halifax Charter in 2012, which allowed HRM, through regulations, to structure a tax agreement with the owner of an eligible industrial property - in this case, the Irving Shipyard.

There are other examples of special legislation over the years, at the request of municipalities, that have been developed to allow municipalities to structure agreements with private sector entities that support their economic development efforts.

To help our municipal partners in Richmond, government created the Oil Refineries and L.N.G. Plants Municipal Taxation Act to allow the municipality to pursue the development of an L.N.G. Plant.

The province also amended the Assessment Act to provide Guysborough County with a sustainable and predictable source of revenue in relation to pipeline development.

In addition, in 2016, government made changes to the MGA and Halifax Charter to give all municipalities the authority to create bylaws to designate one or more commercial development districts within their borders. Municipalities can create these districts in their communities where infrastructure exists to support business growth. In these districts, municipalities have the power to phase in assessment increases for taxation purposes over a number of years.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, the amendments we are discussing today build on the province's history of working with municipalities to enable development projects that are not currently enabled under the Municipal Government Act, which is one of the reasons why we have undertaken a comprehensive review of the MGA.

I would like to add that other municipal units have expressed interest in similar economic development tools, and the department is taking all these into consideration as we review the MGA.

We know that this legislation needs to be modernized so Nova Scotians can benefit from economic growth where it makes the most sense and delivers the greatest returns, but in the meantime, until we complete our review of the MGA, it is necessary to continue to work with municipalities and bring amendments like these forward to ensure that economic opportunities are not lost.

These amendments will ultimately enable CBRM to continue to pursue the growth potential of a port, and contribute to the economic growth of Cape Breton.

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

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

MR. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill No. 85. This one I have some prepped statements for, but first, what I will say is, I was ready to go on about this particular bill for quite a while. I read a lot of articles in the newspaper, have a strong opinion about it, and was willing to talk on this for a long, long, long time. What I'll say is that after reviewing and having a considerable, long discussion at our caucus on this, I am very comfortable with what I'm going to say.

I rise to speak to Bill No. 85. In my nearly two decades in politics, most of it at the municipal level, I have learned the need for electoral representation, elected representatives to speak for and to fight for their constituents. That's why our constituents elect us. It's not always easy. Sometimes there are conflicting views and interests.

The people surrounding me in this caucus are fierce advocates for their constituents. They speak up without reserve, and I think that that's how it should be. The members of the PC caucus are never shy to give their voice to the needs and the concerns of the people who they represent, and I'm proud to stand with them as my colleagues.

In municipal politics, there have been many difficult and divisive issues and projects that I watched and sometimes was even part of. Seasoned municipal leaders always try to draft policy without knowingly pitting one area against the other. It weakens the project. It puts the area in a tight spot and negatively impacts the entire municipality.

I sometimes wish that we had the same approach here at the provincial level. It seems so many things that we face here as legislators are actually designed to divide us, whether we were talking about teachers, doctors, or province-wide health care workers. The list goes on. With Bill No. 85, the Liberals have successfully added municipalities to that shameful list. The legacy of this government, in the end, is really going to be what people look back to, and that is going to be that they forged an agenda based on wedge politics.

On this side of the House, we're taking a step back today. We have all been hearing from our municipal leaders and businesses back home. You will see us today reflect that we are listening to our constituents. You will see that, as a group, we have supported each other in standing up for our individual constituencies while at the same time for each other. It's unique, but I think we're stronger because of it.

The Law Amendments Committee is going to have presenters to come to this. I'm hoping they do. They are going to be pitted against each other from across this province while we sit there and listen.

I find it impossible, absolutely impossible, that the entire government caucus is 100 per cent behind this bill. I just can't believe that they would be. If they are hearing from their municipal leaders and staying silent, that's bad. If their municipal leaders aren't reaching out to them, and they're not hearing from them, then I think that's even worse because it means that their municipal partners are giving up on even trying to be heard by the government caucus members.

Our caucus has heard very strong views for and against this bill, and I think that it's no small matter. Municipalities in Nova Scotia need a unifying government.

This bill clearly shows that the Liberal Government is not unifying Nova Scotia municipalities. Their voices, though, we'll allow their voices to be heard in the PC caucus, all of them.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: I was hoping that I would be standing up talking on Bill No. 85. I know there's some kind of error in the order paper on the title of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter and then respecting Cape Breton Regional Municipality. But I was hoping that we would be standing in our place in this legislative session to talk about a charter for CBRM. Really, that's what CBRM deserves. Truly, that's where we should be focused.

The reason I say that is that here in Halifax they have a Charter. The provincial government is treating Halifax different than they are treating CBRM and that's not fair, Mr. Speaker. That's not fair.

[7:45 p.m.]

We're doing that and we're here today because of course in 1992 a task force on local government reported to the government of the day, and it was called the Hayward report, that the 67 municipalities in Nova Scotia were too many to efficiently and cost-effectively provide services in a province having slightly more than 900,000 residents. The report was commissioned by the Progressive Conservative Government of the day of Donald Cameron, but was taken up and implemented by the incoming Liberal Government of Premier John Savage - of course, that was the forced amalgamation of the municipalities in our province.

Some years later the Municipality of Halifax, which is our largest municipality, received the ability to have a Charter, to be treated differently than the other municipal units across Nova Scotia.

The Cape Breton Regional Municipality is the second largest municipality in Nova Scotia and I think it's long overdue that we treat them the same as we treat Halifax, Mr. Speaker.

So, Bill No. 85 does give CBRM powers that HRM already has, and that's only fair. But I think it's important when you are using below market value sales that there should be a requirement, and I don't know if it will be a requirement, but two-thirds of the majority vote by council should be required for any change in large-scale sales of below market value or any large-scale developments and there should be a requirement for a public hearing. I think that is the main criticism that I hear on a municipal level from residents, that they feel they are not engaged in the planning of the city, here in Halifax mostly, but I think it would be the same in Cape Breton.

The whole community has to have a say, so I hope maybe the minister could clarify - I think he's nodding - that a two-thirds majority of the vote on council will be required before that municipality could change the below market value or sell anything for below market value.

The bill does not amount to the Charter, and we hope that a full Charter is coming soon and that this does not signal the government's backing away from its commitment to create a full Charter. I don't know if there's a time limit on that, but maybe the minister in his closing of second reading will reassure those residents of Cape Breton, and those on the council in Cape Breton, that the creation of that Charter is coming and it's still a commitment of this government.

The CBRM Charter should be written with a wide vision for the future, Mr. Speaker. You can't be narrowly focused on a single issue. We need to make sure that the provincial government understands these issues facing CBRM so that a Charter could be drafted to meet their needs.

In the Charter for the Municipality of Halifax, for example, it recognizes that the municipality is the largest municipality in Atlantic Canada. CBRM is the second largest in Nova Scotia. It also indicates that the Halifax Regional Municipality is a responsible order of government accountable to the people. The CBRM Council, I think, is a responsible order of government accountable to their people. In the Halifax Charter, it gives the municipality a broad authority to the council that includes broad authority to pass bylaws, and respect its rights to govern the municipality in whatever way the council considers appropriate within the jurisdiction given it.

I don't think the municipality should be coming to the province every time to request amendments to the legislation that governs them every time they want to improve the municipality, to provide services for their residents.

The province is still not doing enough to work with the municipalities to plan and invest in rural economic development strategies, in our opinion, Mr. Speaker. I know there are a lot of requests from the Halifax Municipality, but other municipalities - we've heard just from this announcement of Bill No. 85, a number of them requesting that they need some attention, too.

I hope the government is listening and we, too, will be monitoring the Law Amendments Committee and moving forward and, hopefully, to the day that we will see a Charter for CBRM and end that discrepancy of the provincial government treating one municipality differently than the other.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I'm very disappointed to see this legislation come before the House. It is divisive and I will not support it.

I will reserve further comment until we hear from people at the Committee on Law Amendments. I expect we'll be hearing from chambers of commerce and other

municipalities. At some point, I would like to hear from the members for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie and Antigonish.

I say that because I want to hear how they think this legislation is fair to the private investment that has already been made at Melford in the Strait area, which I will remind the minister is also part of Cape Breton Island.

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

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak on second reading of this bill. I do wish that CBRM could be put on a level playing field with the other city that does exist, that we're all in at the moment, which is HRM. They were both forced into amalgamation in the 1990s, obviously, and yet CBRM has kind of strayed behind as far as being able to put a charter together.

Here we find ourselves today. I, as the representative for Cape Breton-Richmond, and other members who sit in this House who represent the Strait area, are put in a position where we have private investment that has been properly adhered to - which I think this government just recently affirmed with the investors of that project in Melford, that they would not meddle with port development, yet we all can see that, unfortunately, this bill is really about meddling with port development projects.

It's unfortunate that this race to the bottom is contrary to the One Nova Scotia report that was put out very recently. It's pitting municipalities against one another, and I'm fairly certain that Mr. Ivany has stated quite clearly in that report that we should be competing with the world. We should not be competing against one another in this way in this province.

I'm going to keep this very short, but I want to make it clear to my constituents in Cape Breton-Richmond, and to all of those who are around in the Strait area, who have been diligently working on a project on one of the most incredible deepwater ports in the world - an ice-free port, land that has been purchased from the municipality at fair market value - and they're paying their taxes and being responsible investors and good citizens. I will stand here today and I will tell this House that there's no way I can support this bill. It's a sad day for me to see that such a regressive step is being taken instead of a progressive one, which I certainly would stand for.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and say a few words on this bill today. This piece of legislation is simply not well thought out. It represents poor public policy, not only for Cape Breton Regional Municipality but for any municipality in Nova Scotia.

We could be standing here today talking about a charter for CBRM, but we're not. We should be, but we're not talking about that. The residents of that area - and all Nova Scotians, really - shouldn't be asked to settle for a poor piece of legislation like this.

Making land available - municipal or provincial, for that matter - for economic development at less than the fair market value is a bad precedent to establish. It will inevitably pit municipality against municipality and advantage some potential investors over others. As members in this Chamber today, we should put politics aside and we should ask ourselves, how would investors look at this? How would investors feel? Those are the questions that we should be asking in this Chamber.

What we need in this province is a detailed port development strategy, both for our primary ports and our secondary ports, and that should be developed within a comprehensive, integrated, industrial development plan. We need a strategy, Mr. Speaker. That's what we should be talking about in this House, an actual strategy, that's what I would stand for, and that's what most members in this House would stand for.

The issue with this bill, as it's written, goes much further than just that. The issue is that there's no real criteria established within the bill for the sale or lease of any land at less than fair market value, and this could potentially create a free-for-all - a free-for-all that nobody wants to see. We should be considering the actual MGA when we think about this bill. The case law has interpreted the function of the MGA as to represent services that are a demonstrable benefit to the community. That's what the MGA is about Mr. Speaker, and this bill should include, at a minimum, language that states things like, an applicant for a tax agreement must be able to prove their need for special consideration. We should be looking at an application with a business case, and the bill should include, at a minimum, language that says any party receiving a tax abatement must reapply on an annual basis. With language such as this, council must be satisfied that there exists a continued need for service.

We should not be giving blanket tax abatements, or giving land away on a blanket basis. My colleague called for public hearings on these types of things, and these are the types of things that we should really be thinking about, more openness, more transparency. We want less red tape, but we want public accountability, and this bill does not advance public accountability, it does not advance public transparency, and it should be.

Those are the things that we stand for on this side of the House, and with those few words, I'll take my seat and listen to Law Amendments Committee, and see what the government may have to say to the issues of the bill.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Business.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I also will be brief in speaking to Bill No. 85, the Municipal Government Act, Respecting CBRM.

Interesting conversations so far, Mr. Speaker - I know everyone is looking forward to Law Amendments Committee to see what comments, and what opinions and positions are there. Also, it's certainly interesting to see some members of the Opposition lightly tiptoeing around this issue. You won't be able to tiptoe for much longer because the full conversation will come out over the next few rounds of this legislative process.

This is about a port, Mr. Speaker, by and large. What's been asked of this government from the CBRM, where we're from - although, this is not about the Port of Sydney and us choosing one over the other, despite obviously, some of the Opposition members, who clearly select one port versus the other two that are in the mix. This is about given the opportunity (Interruptions)

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

MR. MACLELLAN: The Cape Breton Regional Municipality has asked us to give them the flexibility, the opportunity, to have a 99-year lease put aside in case there is a development around the Port of Sydney. They've also asked for the opportunity for tax agreements, they've asked for the opportunity to look at below-market value, there's no question about that, that's part of this legislation.

I think we can all have - and this is isn't a Cape Breton thing, this is about all municipal councillors and wardens, mayors and governments - we can have the trust to give them that flexibility, to have a two-thirds majority vote, which is part of the legislation, to have public consultation, which is part of the legislation. That's what this is about. I know the narrative and the rhetoric is around an unlevel playing field - what about the uniqueness of each region of this province and each core competency, each major development and project that's out there? I don't have to list them off in different regions and different municipalities, Mr. Speaker, things we've done around taxes or land value or investments - and there have been many of all stripes and all levels of government.

This is about giving a municipality an opportunity. We have been very clear to the proponents of port developments and potential port developments that we would listen. We're not going to tilt the scales, this is not going to be a game changer for Sydney to jump ahead of anybody else - Melford or Halifax. It's not going to be. There are so many hurdles.

[8:00 p.m.]

I have been following the port development file for the province - not for Sydney but for the province - for a number of years now. There's a lot of things that have to happen for these projects to advance, and it's going to be the private sector driving them. This will not be a government decision.

Let's be clear, we have given the invitation to Sydney, to Melford, and to Halifax to have these discussions with the government. What is it we can do? Is it an infrastructure

piece? Is it a policy piece? Are there things we can do to help move this along? That's what this is about.

Pardon me, but it's very ironic and a bit rich to say that we're the ones with the divisive politics here, Mr. Speaker. That's not the case at all. We would do the same for any port. We would do the same for any municipality. Anyway, there will be lots of opportunities (Interruptions)

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

MR. MACLELLAN: The voices are being heard.

Mr. Speaker, the MLA for Sackville-Cobequid talked about a full charter. Again, it's fantastic that now we're talking about an equality and an equidistant amount of support for Halifax and Sydney - that's fantastic news. Sydney is our city in Cape Breton. It's one of our key pieces of economic opportunity for the entire province. This is a regional government municipality. Sydney is important, and that's great.

The problem with the charter is that it could take up to two years to do. When the time comes, and that process begins, we're very happy to have some members of the Opposition support that.

This is coming from the CBRM mayor and council. This is a time-sensitive issue, so that's why we brought this here. Again, the CBRM mayor and council are going to have big decisions to make, and we trust them to do that.

We trust all municipalities. If this is the question for other municipalities, we invite them to come forward with these pieces, these aspects.

Law Amendments Committee will be quite interesting. I know that the members talked about who will come out, and they hope that they will come out, that people will come out on both sides. I can certainly anticipate many people coming from the CBRM to voice their support and rationale for why this makes sense, Mr. Speaker.

Again, there are different things for different regions, and there are different requirements that we all have. This is going to be a very interesting conversation. If everybody just opens up to what is being asked here specifically, I think it's a rational ask. It's one that I support because I am the MLA for Glace Bay, of course, but also because I'm a member of the provincial Cabinet, and this is good for our region, which is good for the province.

We don't belittle, question, or criticize anything that happens in the downtown core. Just one quick example: the Nova Centre is something that I believe is a great thing. It was ushered in by the NDP. I supported it then, and we support it now. Sometimes the question

is asked in Cape Breton, does Halifax need that? The region, the Atlantic Provinces and certainly the city and Nova Scotia do need that. It's an easy thing for me to defend (Interruption) Sorry?

AN HON. MEMBER: How much was the Nova Centre?

MR. MACLELLAN: We'll get into that in a different debate, Mr. Speaker.

Again, this is about uniqueness and specific things that we are being asked for and that we support. I look forward to Law Amendments Committee. I look forward to the continuing debate. But please, let's not make this about the divisiveness of picking one over the other. I know that's going to be the narrative. I look forward to having a much longer opportunity to speak on this at third reading, after Law Amendments Committee. I believe there will be some compelling arguments brought forward.

This, for me, is about the Port of Sydney. There's a lot of opportunity potentially for Sydney. Melford is very much in the mix. They have a great business plan. They have tremendous people there. Halifax is what it is. It's outstanding, and no one can take anything away from them. This is one municipality asking for freedom and flexibility to take charge of something they believe could materialize. That's all it is.

I'll close with this: hiding around this is wrong, and we should have done it differently, people will see through that. I would caution the members on that being their argument, that this makes sense, but it's just bad planning and terrible policy by the government. That won't fly with the people who are supporting this.

Secondly, the member for Sackville-Beaver Bank talked about the government caucus. Is the caucus entirely united? They want to hear from members from the government caucus. I think that goes for all sides of the House, Mr. Speaker. I think that goes for every caucus here in the Legislature. We don't want to make this about Cape Breton.

I know the members from the opposite side from Cape Breton - the worst thing we could do right now is to make this about Cape Breton versus everyone else. We all get tired of that narrative. It has gone on too long. This is one province. It's one place. It's less than a million people. We can support (Interruptions).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Business.

MR. MACLELLAN: Again, the members of the opposite side will have the opportunity to make their case. We're not trying to harm anyone here, Mr. Speaker. For one significant ask, we're just trying to help a municipality. Believe me, if you think that

we've got overwhelming support back home, you should tune in to one of the CBRM debates, because that certainly is not the case.

We take our fair share of heat because of things that we shouldn't do, or we did do, or we should do better. This is one time where our mayor and council are asking us to do something we happen to believe in. Again, we are not putting this ahead of Milford or Halifax. This is one specific thing that matters to them, so it matters to us.

So, please, for all members of the House, be open-minded about what you are going to hear in Law Amendments Committee and through third reading. It's great that lots of members are going to be given the opportunity to vote on this. This is not about Cape Breton. This helps our municipality, and it helps the people at home make good decisions. This is about moving Nova Scotia forward.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I find this debate very interesting and I just wanted to share a different perspective. For years, as a businessperson in Amherst, I was always very frustrated watching the growth of Moncton and watching Amherst shrink. The reason that it happened, in my opinion and in the opinions of many, is because we could not be competitive with our neighbouring province. I was always told by our municipality that it was because of the Municipal Government Act - that it prevented our municipality from competing with our neighbouring province.

One of the examples - there were many industries that wanted to come, and our mayor would almost have them locked in, and then the City of Moncton would come along and offer a piece of land that was worth a million dollars and give it to them for free.

Guess what happened to those industries? They did not come to Amherst. We lost business after business, industry after industry, to our neighbouring province. It frustrated me that we couldn't be competitive.

I've listened to both sides of the debate, and I think my message is that I think it is very important that there is a level playing field. I've seen the effects when it's not. I just encourage us to have healthy debate on this issue because the outcome of the decision will be lasting on the impact of our province.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of my colleagues for their comments and their passion on this bill. I want to go back to some of the comments from the member from Sackville-Cobequid. He is absolutely right - there is

a process for public accountability through this vote and the value of the land. Anything over \$10,000 must go to a public hearing. That is part of the bill.

I want to talk about the Charter. I want to recognize the members from Cape Breton Centre, Northside-Westmount, Victoria-the Lakes, Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg, and Glace Bay. CBRM will eventually have a charter but we held two public consultations just in the New Year and the community at the time said, don't rush it. The community at the time said that the charter should not only represent economic opportunities, but the social fabric of the CBRM.

I go back to some of the earlier comments on some of the other bills we were talking about - I know we are talking specifically about this one, but the member from Sackville-Cobequid is right. We are looking at a CBRM charter, but we are also looking at that in concert with some of the barriers I feel are in the HRM Charter.

If we are going to do this right, we are going to write legislation that is reflective of regional municipalities - whether it's HRM, whether it's CBRM, and whether it's Queens - and look at the tools that we provide them, look at the decision-making that they currently have, and how we can give them more flexibility. Look at all of the municipal units across the province, who I went to and who told me time and time again that they need more tools at their disposal, that they want to set their own course, that they want a stronger relationship with municipal affairs and with government.

I made the commitment to them that as fortunate as I am to hold this portfolio, I'm going to do whatever I can for all municipal units, to give them that flexibility and that support. Specific to this, my colleague and the member from Glace Bay is absolutely right. This is a request from a municipality and I visited every municipality.

When I took this position, my first endeavour was to go meet with all 50 municipal units, to meet with the village commission, to meet with our regional enterprise networks, to meet with their staff. The message for me then was this: I'm hearing loud and clear that you want change, and I'm hearing loud and clear that you feel like there are barriers to economic and social growth within your communities. I am here. I want to hear your projects. I want to support you in any capacity I can.

In this case, we had a municipality come forward, go out and get a third-party, independent view of their project before they ever came to Municipal Affairs - they did that. We went through our vetting process. We went back and looked at what we did in the past, what we did with Irving Shipyard, what we did in Richmond County, what we did in Guysborough, what we're doing with Bill No. 177. We went through our vetting process. We went through trade to see if there are any trade issues or trade barriers. It came back low risk.

So we are doing our due diligence with this project. I said this to every community, that I will sit down with every community in this province if you have a project. Whether it's social or economic, I am here to do whatever I can as your minister to support you. That message has been out there since I took this position and to any community that's listening tonight, that opportunity still stands. As your Minister of Municipal Affairs, I want to hear from your councils. I want to do whatever I can to bring in legislation, or help support with infrastructure, or do whatever we can to support you. Reach out.

CBRM reached out. They did their due diligence and now we have this bill before us like we've had in the past, like with the Halifax Convention Centre, like the other projects that I mentioned. Mr. Speaker, we're going to do whatever we can not only to support the CBRM - I'm from the CBRM and as a former councillor, I have an experience of some of the barriers and some of the frustrations that council had in trying to make economic decisions - but it's not just about CBRM. It's about every municipal unit. How can we have municipal units support one another better? How can we move beyond traditional boundaries to support economic goals to support an entire region? That's where we're going.

So, I'll finish off by saying I thank you all for this debate. This is an important discussion to have. This is one of many projects that are of potentially significant importance to the entire province. But I say this again to the municipal units across the province we're willing to listen to any project that comes forward. We had one that came forward that was vetted, and now here we are with a bill before us. I look forward to Law Amendments Committee, to all the presenters that will be in attendance.

With that, I close debate on Bill No. 85.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 85.

There's been a call for a recorded vote.

We will ring the bells until the Whips are satisfied.

[8:14 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips satisfied?

We will now proceed with the recorded vote on Bill No. 85 - the Municipal Government Act, Respecting Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

I remind all members that when your name is called to please stand tall with a simple Yea or Nay and for all other members to remain silent until the vote is completed.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[8:21 p.m.]

YEAS

Mr. Churchill
Mr. Furey
Ms. Regan
Mr. MacLellan
Ms. Casey
Mr. Glavine
Mr. Delorey
Mr. Colwell
Ms. Miller
Mr. Kousoulis
Mr. Porter
Mr. Gordon Wilson
Mr. Hines
Ms. Diab
Mr. Ince
Mr. Rankin
Mr. Mombourquette
Ms. Arab
Mr. Horne
Mr. Maguire
Mr. MacKay
Mr. Jessome
Ms. Lohnes-Croft
Ms. DiCostanzo
Mr. Irving
Mr. Bain
Mr. David Wilson
Mr. Burrill
Ms. Zann
Ms. Roberts
Ms. Leblanc
Ms. Martin
Ms. Chender
Mr. Orrell

NAYS

Mr. MacMaster
Mr. Dunn
Ms. MacFarlane
Mr. d'Entremont
Ms. Smith-McCrossin
Ms. Paon
Mr. Houston
Ms. Adams
Mr. Lohr
Mr. Johns
Ms. Masland
Mr. Halman
Mr. Harrison

THE CLERK: For, 34. Against, 13.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that concludes government business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, Friday, March 23, between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Following the daily routine and Question Period, we will resolve the House into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to continue Estimates of course and, with time permitting, we'll call Public Bills for Second Reading, Bill No. 87.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to adjourn to meet tomorrow, March 23rd, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 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 tomorrow at 9:00 a.m.

[The House rose at 8:25 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1066**

By: Hon. Stephen McNeil (The Premier)

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

Whereas Danielle Stewart, through her hard work and dedication to Girl Guides of Canada in Middleton for the past 13 years, has earned the Chief Commissioner's Gold Award; and

Whereas this award is the ultimate award a youth member can earn within the Guiding Movement; and

Whereas Danielle has been a willing and cheerful participant in all aspects of her school and community service endeavours;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Danielle on her achievements and wish her all the best in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1067

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Environment)

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

Whereas Cassidy Megan of Shad Bay founded Purple Day at the age of eight to promote epilepsy awareness and fight stigma, a mission she continuously supports by delivering speeches to schools and hospitals worldwide, with Purple Day now being celebrated in more than 100 countries and becoming an international day of recognition; and

Whereas Cassidy received the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Award for her humanitarian efforts, an award created in Princess Diana's honour with a mission of recognizing young people inspiring positive change, a prestigious award of only 40 yearly recipients; and

Whereas Cassidy's aspiration for positive change has made a significant impact on the lives of all people suffering with epilepsy and she continues to raise awareness for an important cause, making her an accomplished humanitarian and an exemplary global citizen;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Cassidy Megan on receiving the Diana Award and wishing her continued success in the future.