



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

Published by Order of the Legislature by Hansard Reporting Services and printed by the Queen's Printer.

Available on INTERNET at <http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/>

First Session

TUESDAY, MARCH 27, 2018

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MARCH 27, 2018

Sixty-third General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Mr. Chuck Porter, Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: As Speaker, I am going to table a report entitled Perspectives on Climate Change Action in Canada: A Collaborative Report from Auditors General. This is the March 2018 report.

The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, before I do my motion, may I do an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw the attention of the House to the east gallery where we are joined today by two inspiring individuals who represented our nation, and our province, in the 2018 Winter Olympic Games with the Canadian Women's Hockey Team. We are joined by Jill Saulnier from Halifax, as well as Assistant Coach Troy Ryan from Spryfield. As well, as all Nova Scotians know, Blayre Turnbull from Stellarton was part of the Canadian Women's Olympic Hockey Team but couldn't be with us today.

I do want to say to our guests in the gallery, and through to Blayre, how inspired we were as Nova Scotians, as Canadians. We, like all Nova Scotians and all Canadians, love hockey but I can tell you how wonderful it was to watch the Olympic gold medal and recognize that two of our daughters were playing and representing not only the Nova Scotia flag but representing our country.

So, on behalf of all of us, let me say thank you for inspiring all Nova Scotians and Canadians with your tremendous hard work and dedication. (Standing Ovation)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1081

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

Whereas Jill Saulnier and Blayre Turnbull have made history in Nova Scotia, becoming the first women from our province to play on Canada's Olympic hockey team, proudly representing their home province of Nova Scotia and our nation along with fellow Nova Scotian, Assistant Coach Troy Ryan; and

Whereas Nova Scotia cheered proudly from afar as Jill and Blayre gave their all in an exciting, hard-fought tournament, with Jill becoming the first female hockey player from Nova Scotia to score at the Olympics, and the entire team concluded an amazing journey in the Olympic Games with an outstanding silver medal, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that medal is heavier than it looks; and

Whereas Jill and Blayre have returned home as an inspiration to many, including young female hockey players from across Nova Scotia, and will share their talent in giving

back to the hockey community by launching three weekend-long, all-female hockey camps this summer;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate Jill Saulnier of Halifax, Blayre Turnbull of Stellarton, and Troy Ryan of Spryfield on their drive and determination to reach the Olympic Games and thank them for so proudly representing Nova Scotia on the world stage.

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. (Standing Ovation)

The honourable Government House Leader.

RESOLUTION NO. 1082

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

Whereas the House of Assembly Act requires the appointment of at least once every 10 years an independent Electoral Boundaries Commission that is broadly representative of the population of the province to recommend the boundaries and names for the electoral districts comprising this House; and

Whereas the Government of Nova Scotia established the Commission on Effective Electoral Representation of Acadians and African Nova Scotians which has made recommendations respecting the process for establishing electoral boundaries and it is desirable to establish at this time an independent Electoral Boundaries Commission under the House of Assembly Act to recommend electoral boundaries as a result of the recommendations respecting the process for establishing electoral boundaries; and

Whereas the House of Assembly Act requires the appointment of the independent Electoral Boundaries Commission and the issuance of its terms of reference by a select committee of this House, that the commission prepare a preliminary report and hold public hearings prior to preparing the preliminary report, that following the preparation of the preliminary report the commission will hold further public hearings prior to its final report

and that the final report of the commission be laid before this House and that within 10 sitting days after the final report is tabled in this House the government introduce legislation to implement the recommendations contained in the final report;

Therefore be it resolved as follows:

- (1) That pursuant to Section 5(3) of the House of Assembly Act and the Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly this House can constitute a select committee to determine
 - (a) the composition of an independent Electoral Boundaries Commission and
 - (b) the terms of reference for this commission;
- (2) That the select committee be composed of the following members of this House:
 - (a) the member for Argyle-Barrington;
 - (b) the member for Clare-Digby;
 - (c) the member for Cole Harbour-Portland Valley;
 - (d) the member for Dartmouth South;
 - (e) the member for Fairview-Clayton Park;
 - (f) the member for Glace Bay;
 - (g) the member for Halifax Armdale;
 - (h) the member for Sackville-Beaver Bank;
 - (i) the member for Sackville-Cobequid;
- (3) That the member for Glace Bay be the chairman of the select committee, that Paragraph (1) of Rule 61 of the Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly be suspended with respect to this select committee and the chairman only have a vote in the case of a tie;
- (4) That the select committee consult as many interested persons as it reasonably can, including persons of Acadian, African Nova Scotian, and Mi'kmaq communities;
- (5) That pursuant to Section 36(1) of the House of Assembly Act, this House declare that the select committee is not dissolved by prorogation of the House and authorize the select committee to continue its inquiries after the House is prorogued; and
- (6) That the House request that pursuant to the House of Assembly Act and the House of Assembly Management Commission Act, the House of Assembly

Management Commission provide the select committee, its members and staff with such facilities and funds as are required to carry out these duties.

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

[1:15 p.m.]

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 permission, I'd like to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. COLWELL: In the east gallery, joining us today, from Benjamin Bridge Winery is Gerry McConnell, the owner, Devon McConnell-Gordon, and Scott Savoy, vineyard manager. I would ask you to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1083

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

Whereas Nova Scotia's wine industry has developed a global reputation for excellence for its quality vintages, and is receiving growing recognition for the skill and talent of its winemakers; and

Whereas Benjamin Bridge Winery in the Annapolis Valley is now recognized as a leading producer of sparkling wines known for their exceptional quality, and had its Benjamin Bridge Brut selected as the featured wine for celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay's Michelin-starred restaurant in the United Kingdom; and

Whereas Benjamin Bridge recently participated for the first time in Canada National Wine Awards and was ranked as one of the Canada's Top 10 Wineries at the competition, a first for a Nova Scotia Winery;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in congratulating Gerry McConnell, Devon McConnell-Gordon, and the Benjamin Bridge staff on this impressive achievement, and wish them continued success in reaching even wider markets with their exceptional wines.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to the east gallery where we're joined today by members of the Domestic Violence Working Group, and I would ask that they stand. These individuals come from a broad range of community groups and organizations and have been instrumental in the development of the expansion of the Domestic Violence Court here in Halifax. I would ask my colleagues in the House to give a warm welcome to our guests. (Standing Ovation)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 1084

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

Whereas domestic and intimate partner violence has shattered the lives of far too many Nova Scotian families, resulting in unacceptable harm, both physical and psychological, to mostly women and children; and

Whereas we all agree that as a society we must break the cycle of violence by intervening early and in a meaningful way to help those who commit violence against their loved ones and, just as importantly, provide continuous and caring support for survivors and family members through the court process; and

Whereas the province, the judiciary, and our many justice partners and community agencies have come together to create Nova Scotia's second Domestic Violence Court Program in Halifax, having built upon what was learned from the successes of the Domestic Violence Court Program in Sydney;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize the hard work and incredible collaboration between government and community on this important project, and thank and congratulate the more than 50 individuals from more than 25 community organizations who devoted countless hours to making the Domestic Violence Court in HRM a reality.

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 permission I'd like to make an introduction again.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. COLWELL: In our east gallery is Michael Lightfoot and Jocelyn Lightfoot. Welcome to the gallery. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1085

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

Whereas Lightfoot & Wolfville Vineyards in the Annapolis Valley received full organic and biodynamic certification in the past three years, joining only a handful of certified biodynamic wineries within Canada; and

Whereas they were named the Outstanding Large Business of the Year in 2017 by the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce, in recognition to the contribution to jobs and economic activity to their community; and

Whereas Lightfoot & Wolfville was named the 2017 Winery of the Year at the Atlantic Wine Awards, where they were also recognized as the Best of Class - Red Wine, Best of Class - White Wine, Best of Class - Non-Traditional Method Sparkling, Best of Class Single Varietal White Wine - Vinifera, Best of Class - White Blend and Best of Class - Single Varietal White Wine - Vinifera;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in thanking Jocelyn Lightfoot and Michael Lightfoot and the Lightfoot & Wolfville Vineyards for their dedication to excellence in wine making and wish them continued success as they grow their business and add to their quality reputation for Nova Scotia wines.

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. 99 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 1 (1992 Supplement) of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The House of Assembly Act. (Hon. Geoff MacLellan)

Bill No. 100 - Entitled an Act to Amend Schedule A of Chapter 1 of the Acts of 2018. The Education Act, Respecting a Mandatory Civics Course. (Mr. Tim Halman)

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that these bills be read a second time on a future day. The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, before I begin may I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. LEBLANC: I would like to draw the Chamber's attention to the gallery opposite where we have Kelsey Lane. Kelsey is an organizer with the Halifax Cycling Coalition which is an organization that is working to improve cycling conditions in HRM, with the belief that cycling improves our health, enhances our urban environment, and also reduces traffic congestion and improves the environment.

We'd like to welcome Kelsey to the House and thank her for her hard work. (Applause)

Bill No. 101 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 293 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Motor Vehicle Act. (Ms. Susan Leblanc)

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill be read a second time on a future day. The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. ADAMS: I'd like to draw the members' attention to the east gallery. Over on this side we have Kelly Power and Adele MacLean from the Canadian Cancer Society, as well as Judie Edgar, who is creating a Cancer Survivors Park in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, and her husband, Jim. (Applause)

I'd like to draw everyone's attention to the west gallery. On this side of the aisle, we have Ginny Eisan, who is a breast cancer survivor and researcher/fundraiser. We have Janet Landry, who is a recent cancer member, and we have my friends Sue Smith, Kim McQueen, Lisa Rochon, and Robin Carter, all of whom have been looking after those with cancer. Please stand and receive our welcome. (Applause)

Last but not least, Florence Pine, who just arrived.

Bill No. 102 - Entitled an Act to Establish Cancer Survivors Day. (Ms. Barbara Adams)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

DAVEY, NINA: JEANA'S GIRLS COM. FUNDRAISING - RECOGNIZE

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I stand to recognize Nina Davey, a Grade 10 Student of Pictou Academy who was the recipient of the Province of Nova Scotia's Youth Volunteer Award.

In 2015, Nina tragically lost her very dear friend Jeana to cancer. To honour her friend, and turn a negative into a positive, Nina started a volunteer group called Jeana's Girls, and went on to raise more than \$27,000 for the 2017 Pictou County Relay for Life. Nina was recognized as the top fundraiser.

Also in 2017, Jeana's Girls raised almost \$20,000 for the Pictou County Chapter of Children's Wish. Nina has also volunteered with a host of organizations from the IWK Committee, CanSkate, the Canadian Cancer Society, Pictou United Church, ME to WE, and a number of other worthy organizations.

I ask that the members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing Nina, as she is an inspiration to all of us.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

WORLD THEATRE DAY: N.S. THEATRE ARTISTS - SUPPORT

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, today is World Theatre Day. Since the ancient world, when religious ritual brought communities together, and when Thespis, the first actor, stepped away from a ritual dance and positioned himself in opposition to the dance, thereby changing the dance completely, some form of theatre has been present in all societies in all ages.

Theatre, at its best, is a theatre that responds to the world in the present moment in which we live. At times, theatre-makers, because of their role in commenting on political and social issues of the day, have been exiled from religious institutions, been denied proper burial, been tortured, and been killed. Theatre has been dangerous because it can challenge inequity and injustice in a creative, connective, and sometimes subversive way. The meaning of the word "drama" derives from the Greek word "dran," meaning "to do," and the meaning of "theatre" comes from "theatron," meaning "seeing-place."

May we continue to support our theatre artists in Nova Scotia, who are doing the work of seeing the world around them and responding and doing so that we all may learn, feel, empathize, and sympathize with the world around us.

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

S.W. NOVA ATV ASSOC. & TIR : PILOT PROJ. - THANKS

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, last year our government announced a pilot project granting access to off-highway vehicles in nine communities. Since then, ATV groups in the Sou'West Nova ATV Association and Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal have worked together to plan for this change.

[1:30 p.m.]

The intention of the pilot project is to give ATVs access to public roads, where there are breaks in the trail system between Weymouth and Saint-Bernard. Riders wanting to spend the day on the trails now either choose to go elsewhere, or skirt the law to continue on their way. Allowing this access has had positive impact on other communities and we are all hoping that there is such an impact in our area.

If this is successful in our area, it may be allowed in other communities of Nova Scotia, where there are breaks in the trails, also. At this point, the preparatory work continues but the two groups believe the pilot project will start soon.

For their hard work, I would like to thank the government officials, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, and the ATV Association.

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

HUSSEY, DAVID: FOUNDER, COMPANY 3 - RECOGNIZE

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: I rise today to salute a North Sydney native, David Hussey. After completing the audiovisual program at Memorial High School in Sydney Mines, Dave continued his training and finally ended up in Hollywood as one of the founders of Company 3.

He enhances film or video to make the final product spectacular. His work has been viewed by billions over the decades. David has worked with Michael Jackson, Madonna, Janet Jackson, and Prince, just to name a few. He was also responsible for the Dorito Super Bowl commercial with Peter Dinklage and Morgan Freeman.

David believes the secret to his success is being disciplined and working hard.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize David Hussey and wish him continued success.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: I want to speak today as a cyclist, as a parent, and as a citizen of a great neighbourhood, to urge all members to consider two different bills to amend the Motor Vehicle Act – the one which my colleague from Dartmouth North just introduced here in this House, and which would make streets safer for cyclists, and Bill No. 86, which would allow municipalities to set the speed limits on municipal roads.

Both of these bills attempt to . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind the honourable member that Members' Statements are not to be used to speak about legislation that is currently before the House.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie.

MULGRAVE RD. THEATRE: 40th ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. LLOYD HINES: I rise today to congratulate Mulgrave Road Theatre on 40 years of delivering quality live theatre from coast to coast to coast. Four decades of Nova Scotian productions is an immense contribution to Canadian theatre and it's a great reason to celebrate.

Mulgrave Road Theatre yields compelling and transformative works by trailblazing artists who have notable connections to the region. Their latest project with Métis writer Andrea Currie is no exception. She is developing a play about her experience in the 1960s Scoop, and I'm sure it will be an important addition to the Indigenous rights conversation.

The success of this touring theatre company can be directly related to the enthusiastic support from local audiences, donors, businesses, volunteers, and a very adept board of directors, but I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the very talented Sherry McGee and Emmy Alcorn for their vision and dedication.

Happy 40th Anniversary, Mulgrave Road Theatre, and here's to many more to come.

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

CANCER SURVIVORS: FUNDING RESEARCH - LEADERSHIP

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Today I rise to recognize all Nova Scotians who have been living with and surviving all forms of cancer. Not only are these amazing men and women living with these conditions and thriving, they are also the leaders in fundraising for research that leads to better treatment.

I want to acknowledge Kelly Power and Adele MacLean from the Canadian Cancer Society. I'd also like to recognize Janet Landrey, a nurse who looked after those with cancer who is now battling her own battle, Judie and Jim Edgar, who are creating a Cancer Survivor Park in Dartmouth, Ginny Eisan who went straight from her battle with cancer to raising money for others, Rhonda Vickers, who is turning her battle into a fight to help our constituency get a family doctor, friends Sue Smith, Kim McQueen, Lisa Rochon, Florence Pyne, and Robin Carter, who is looking after the elderly in the late stages of cancer in her home.

My mother Marjorie Hare is a cancer survivor, and my father Jack Har, survived for a month - long enough for me to come home to say goodbye. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

ZUPPA THEATRE: 20th ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise today on World Theatre Day to congratulate Zuppa Theatre on its 20th Anniversary. Twenty years ago, a group of fresh graduates came together and began creating theatre. Starting by busking on the Halifax waterfront, Zuppa Theatre is now a world-renowned company. Having toured internationally, they continue to create genre-bending, original, and dynamic theatre here in Halifax.

Next month, they will celebrate their 20th Anniversary by remounting their critically-acclaimed show, Pop-up Love Party, a show that was recently performed in my home riding of Dartmouth South.

Companies like Zuppa are the reason people continue to herald the Nova Scotian theatre scene as world-class, boundary-pushing, and resilient. They exemplify how theatre can impact a community, bring people together, and reflect our lives back to us.

They take this task so seriously that one of their founding members left the company recently to run for office and is now seated to my left, my colleague, the member for Dartmouth North.

I want to thank Zuppa and its members for continuing to create outstanding theatre in Nova Scotia and ask the House to join me in congratulating them on their big 2-0.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

211 N.S.: 5th ANNIV. - CELEBRATE

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, as MLAs, we spend a lot of time helping our constituents navigate government services. Connecting Nova Scotians with available

community and social services is an important task, and we're not the only ones helping out.

Every day, Nova Scotians take advantage of the free accessible assistance provided by the good people at 211 Nova Scotia. Whether it's finding a local counselling group, seeking food support, or finding services for newcomers, 211 staff provide friendly, professional help that makes a difference.

February 11th marked not only National 211 Day but the five-year anniversary of 211 in Nova Scotia. Today, the service is available 24/7/365 and is accessible to those who speak many different languages, who require different forms of communication support, or who prefer to text their questions.

I ask all members to join me in celebrating 211 Nova Scotia's recent anniversary and sincerely thank all the information and referral specialists who help Nova Scotians in need every day.

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

CDN. RED CROSS MONTH, MARCH: VOLUNTEERS - RECOGNIZE

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, since March is Red Cross Month, I ask that everyone here join me in recognizing the contributions of the organization's volunteers in our communities, our province, our country, and internationally.

More than 5,200 Red Cross volunteers across Canada assist victims of house or apartment fires; aid communities during wildfires, floods, or ice storms; offer short-term loans of mobility and safety aids to those recovering from illness or injury; and provide swimming lessons and training in first aid and CPR. These are neighbours helping neighbours. They have been doing it for 122 years.

I would like to thank the Canadian Red Cross organization staff and volunteers for their hard work, dedication, and commitment to their communities.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

CHISHOLM, MARY-COLIN: LEGACY AWARD - CONGRATS.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, on World Theatre Day and the morning after the Merritt Awards, I want to congratulate playwright, actor, director, and constituent of Halifax Needham Mary-Colin Chisholm, who is the recipient of the 2018 Legacy Award from Theatre Nova Scotia.

Originally from Antigonish, Mary-Colin has performed at Festival Antigonish and too many festivals and theatres to mention, but I'll mention a few: from Neptune Theatre to the Manitoba Theatre Centre, the Tarragon, and the National Arts Centre. She is a co-founder of two significant theatre companies, Frankie Productions and LunaSea Theatre. Her original play *Half-Cracked: The Legend of Sugar Mary* is on stage right now at Neptune Studio.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of the House to join me in congratulating Mary-Colin Chisholm on the Legacy Award, which recognizes individuals who have made exceptional contributions in the area of organizational development, community-building, mentorship, and education, and to join me also in wishing her well as she continues her career and leadership in the creative economy here in Nova Scotia.

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

ALVVAYS: JUNO AWARD - CONGRATS.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise to recognize the recently awarded Juno winner Alvveys for winning the alternative album of the year. The award-winning album, *Antisocialites*, came out last September, a much-anticipated follow-up to Alvveys' 2014 self-titled debut, which made No. 1 on the U.S. college charts.

The band includes vocalist Molly Rankin and keyboardist Kerri MacLellan from Judique, Nova Scotia, along with guitarist Alec O'Hanley, bassist Brian Murphy, and drummer Sheridan Riley from P.E.I. They often made the long drives from Cape Breton and P.E.I. to Toronto, where they all eventually moved and formed the band in 2011.

Alvveys' music has been described as jangle-pop by its members and the music press. According to Molly, the band's emphasis is primarily on strong melodies rather than a specific genre. While the band does not have an overt Celtic music sound, Molly and Kerri were immersed in the genre from childhood, and it has a discernable influence on the music they play.

I would like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the talented young group, which includes two Nova Scotians and neighbouring Islanders, for winning a Juno and wish them well as they continue to make a name for themselves internationally.

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

LOCAL LEGENDS HOCKEY: COM. FUNDRAISING - CONGRATS.

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, on March 17th, I was pleased to attend a very successful fundraiser at the Shelburne County Arena. Shelburne County hockey players

spanning several generations, faced off at the Hockey Night in Shelburne Local Legends Hockey Game. The stands were packed, and special presentations were made to community members who made considerable contributions to the success of the arena over the years.

At the end of the event, the total raised was just over \$30,000, all of which will be put towards the purchase of a new Zamboni that is sorely needed at the rink. Mr. Speaker, the show of support from the community was incredible, and I would like to congratulate not just the organizers and players, but every single person who showed their support.

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

SHARPE, LUCY: NSHRC 50th ANNIV. AWARD - CONGRATS.

MR. BILL HORNE: For the 50th Anniversary of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, youth across Nova Scotia submitted art work on “what human rights means to them.” I was very pleased to attend the Human Rights Day and Awards where young artists were recognized for their artwork displayed.

One of these young artists was Lucy Sharpe of Fletchers Lake. Lucy describes the girl in her artwork as representing “the rights of the transgender child/youth. She is breaking away from the box she’d been put inside her entire life and she is discovering she can be free in her true self.”

Congratulations to Lucy and all the young artists recognized that evening.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

**MACDONALD, HUGHIE D. - ROMAN CATHOLIC PASTOR:
COM. SERV. - RECOGNIZE**

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, some people work until they are 65 and retire. Father Hughie D. MacDonald worked for over 65 years and retired at 93. March 18th marked Father Hughie D.’s last Sunday mass as a parish priest.

He started out in Larrys River, Guysborough County, in 1952. Not long after his arrival there, there was an election called. Not long after the election, he was paid a personal visit by a very burly fisherman who stated, as he looked him in the eye, “There was only supposed to be 12 Tory votes in our poll, this time there were 13.” One might say he got off on the wrong foot with his parish community, but the truth was that he was loved there and everywhere else he went.

Father Hughie is a cheerful and compassionate man. People want to talk with him about their challenges and, with his guidance, many have changed their lives. How many

people did he help face problems with addictions? We will never know. He has always been there for them and he has never given up on anyone.

May we in this Legislature recognize Father Hughie D. MacDonald for the many years he has been there for Nova Scotians when they needed him.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, can I start by making an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, in the east gallery I'd like to introduce Nick Cox, who is the former Communications Officer for the Liberal Party, and went on to bigger and better things and greener pastures. He now works for the IWK. I ask that the House give Nick a warm applause. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

CLARIDGE, LAURA: EASTER BASKETS FOR FAMILIES IN NEED - THANKS

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, with the Easter holiday fast approaching it is a time to reflect, relax, and enjoy time with our loved ones. Easter can also be a difficult time for families living on or below the margin. Unfortunately, Easter can be expensive and cost money that some families simply cannot afford.

Mr. Speaker, that is where local resident Laura Claridge comes in. Laura recognized this, and purchased Easter baskets filled with goodies that will be delivered to families in need. Because of Laura's generosity, 11 homes will have an even happier holiday season. I want to thank Laura for her kindness, generosity, and for giving back to our community.

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

MORRISON, ALEX (ST. PETERS): DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to acknowledge the late Alex Morrison, who passed away on Saturday, March 24th, at the Richmond Villa in St. Peter's, at the age of 97.

Alex Morrison was a member of the Progressive Conservative Association and was very active behind the scenes for over 65 years. He worked hard to elect Robert Stanfield as Premier of Nova Scotia, and one of the highlights of his life was attending the National Progressive Conservative Convention when Stanfield was elected national leader. It has

been said that if you attended a Tory meeting in Richmond County, it wasn't official until Alex Morrison was there.

Alex was also a pioneer in the ambulance service in Nova Scotia after witnessing a fatal accident in his community. He was a licensed funeral director for over 50 years, a veteran who was a member of Branch 47 Royal Canadian Legion for 73 continuous years. Alex Morrison was a dear friend and a mentor, and we will miss him dearly.

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

WORLD THEATRE DAY: THEATRE IN N.S. - CELEBRATE

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I also rise to recognize World Theatre Day, which was initiated in 1961 by the International Theatre Institute. It's celebrated annually on this 27th of March by ITI Centres and the International Theatre community, and various national and international theatre events are organized to mark this occasion.

We have a long history of the theatre here in Nova Scotia. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would call your attention and the attention of members of the House to the Theatre Arts Guild of Nova Scotia, which is Canada's oldest continuously operating theatre company. Today the traditions are also carried on by theatre companies throughout this province - here in Halifax, of course, the renowned Neptune Theatre, but also Mulgrave Road in Guysborough, Mermaid Theatre in Windsor, and, of course, the internationally acclaimed Chester Playhouse in beautiful Chester-St. Margaret's.

My own daughter, Sarah Lynn MacKay, graduated from the American Music and Drama Academy and has performed professionally in Ottawa and Vancouver, and I have a very strong family connection to the theatre and am glad to acknowledge this day.

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

MACEACHEN, LEANNE: VICTORIA CO. CAO - CONGRATS.

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, on March 5th, Leanne MacEachern officially became the new Victoria County CAO. Hired in 2014 by the municipality as director of finance, Ms. MacEachern was chosen from among 59 applicants for the position, where she recently was the interim CAO following the retirement of long-time CAO Sandy Hudson.

With 20 years of experience as a financial analyst and senior manager with Grant Thornton in Antigonish and Alberta, Leanne brings that experience to the position as well as the knowledge and the strong sense of what and where Victoria County excels. Ms. MacEachern also sees opportunity for partnerships and collaborations with other municipalities at a time of challenge for rural municipalities in Cape Breton.

I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Leanne MacEachern on her appointment, and wish her every future success.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

SON, SAMUEL THOMAS - BIRTHDAY WISHES

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish our son, Samuel Thomas, who happens to be the second son of the second son of the second son of the second son in the Croft family lineage.

Known affectionately to others as Sam the Man; Sam I Am; The Samster; Sweet Sam, by his auntie; Sammy Boy; Samuel, by me when he's in trouble; and in recent years Sam the Snap-on Tool Man, who can turn any man cave in Lunenburg-Queens into the envy of others.

But to his family he is the Pied Piper to younger cousins and adored nieces, the dog and cat whisperer wherever he goes, a self-taught chef extraordinaire, and one of the three Brothers Broken - and kind to the core.

Happy 27th Birthday, Sam. Love, Mommy-Girl.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

SUMMER ST. INDUS. SOC.: 50th ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, New Glasgow's Summer Street Industries Society is celebrating 50 years of helping people with intellectual challenges build successful, happy, and productive lives. Now boasting 2,000 donors, 30 staff, and a wide range of programs to help its 200 clients, Summer Street has mushroomed from its humble beginnings. Summer Street staff work with each client individually to help meet their needs, be it finding new skills or acquiring employment.

Congratulations to Executive Director Bob Bennett, staff, and the board members for maintaining family values in caring for people with disabilities.

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

SAVOURY, YVONNE: GIRL GUIDES OF CAN. - COMMEND

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize an exceptional woman who is helping young leaders make a difference in their community.

Yvonne Savoury is the Area Commissioner for Girl Guides of Canada in the Tri-Waters Area in Halifax Regional Municipality, which includes Clayton Park West. Yvonne has been involved in the Girl Guides movement for 37 consecutive years. She joined as a Brownie and went on to Girl Guides, Rangers, and finally cadets before transitioning to a leader. She regularly helps Girl Guides in her area make a mark through community service - groups make fleece mitts, hats, blankets to donate, and they volunteer at soup kitchens and food banks and more.

I would like to ask this House of Assembly join me in commending Yvonne for her many years of service with Girl Guides. She has made a lasting impact on the next generation of leaders.

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

BRAS D'OR ARMY & NAVY UNIT 381: SERV. TO VETERANS - THANKS

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the Bras d'Or Army and Navy Unit 381, and President Sheldon MacDonald.

Last Remembrance Day, Sheldon had a number of oversized poppies carved out of wood for all the veterans of Harbour View Hospital. On each poppy, the veteran's name and the words, "Lest We Forget," were included. Each poppy was placed in a veteran's room. George Head was the man who created the poppies, and they have become a year-round reminder of the service and sacrifice of our veterans.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all veterans and those who remember them.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

C. KINGS RURAL HS GATORS: PROV. HOCKEY CHAMPS - CONGRATS.

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the newly crowned Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation Division 2 Boys Hockey Provincial Champions, the Central Kings Rural High School Gators.

On March 25th, the Gators faced off against the Hants East Rural High Tigers for the right to be called the best Division 2 team in the province. Despite the importance of the game, and the fact that they were playing in the opposition's rink, the team approached the finals like any other game and did not let the pressure get the better of them. Through their talent, toughness, and tenacity, they earned a 6-2 victory and the provincial championship.

I invite all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Central Kings Rural High School Boys Hockey Team, on winning the NSSAF Division 2 Provincial Hockey Championship.

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

PRAYER SHAWL GIFTS: COM. CARE - COMMEND

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the efforts of Claire Marchand, Wilfred Marchand, Rose Marie Samson, and Angela Hyland from Louisdale, for their work as a group known as Prayer Shawl Gifts of Hope and Comfort.

Since 2014, the group has been providing handmade items as donations to various support facilities in our Community of Cape Breton-Richmond, and throughout Nova Scotia. Items donated include shawls, baby hats, finger puppets, hats, mittens, and scarves.

Mr. Speaker, donated items have been well-received by Strait-Richmond Hospital Palliative Care, the Richmond Villa, St. Anne Community and Nursing Care Centre, St. Martha's Cancer Centre, the IWK, Salvation Army, and Phoenix House, to name only a few.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend this group for the gifts they deliver, that provide hope, care, comfort, and strength to fellow Nova Scotians in their time of need.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

PETITE RIVIÈRE: COM. SPIRIT - ACKNOWLEDGE

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, the Community of Petite Rivière and the community group, the Greater Petite Area Community Association, are amazing advocates and ambassadors, determined to see their area thrive.

Over the years, I've spent considerable time in the Petite area, enjoying organized events, participating in stakeholder meetings, visiting the local shops and galleries, and of course, Mr. Speaker, the fire department breakfast. More than ever, families are making their way to Petite and the surrounding area to put down roots, set up businesses, and raise their children in this growing community.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the Community of Petite Rivière, and greater area, for its determination, its resiliency, its spirit, and professionalism. They are a welcoming community. I value and appreciate their guidance, advice, discussions, and friendships over many years.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MACCALLUM, ADDIE - S/SGT., RCMP: NEW DISTRICT CDR. - WELCOME

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome Staff Sergeant Addie Maccallum as the new district commander for the Pictou County RCMP.

Staff Sergeant Maccallum joined the RCMP in 1996, in his home province of Prince Edward Island, and has worked in Kelowna, Caledonia, Bible Hill, and Guysborough. He has held many roles including general duty, community policing, general investigation section, and street crime enforcement. He was transferred to the Pictou District in August 2017, and his extensive career will provide valuable experience for identifying and implementing local policing opportunities.

I truly look forward to working closely with Staff Sergeant Maccallum, and assisting, where possible, to keep our community safe. The Pictou District RCMP is in capable hands, and I wish Staff Sergeant Addie Maccallum all the best in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester-North.

PORTER, RYAN: HARRISON MCCAIN FDN. SCHOLARSHIP - CONGRATS.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the Harrison McCain Foundation was established in 1997 by Harrison McCain, one of the founders of the McCain Foods Ltd.

The foundation champions a wide variety of causes in Atlantic Canada, which support community organizations, the arts, culture, health and sciences, and also funds the Harrison McCain Scholarships and Bursaries for Atlantic Canadian universities. These scholarships and bursaries are available annually to entering students from a high school in Canada.

Each award has a program value of \$16,000 payable over a four-year course of study in the amount of \$4,000 each year. Criteria include a minimum 80-per cent average in the senior year of high school, financial need, leadership qualities, and a recognized initiative by the student in funding his or her own education.

Ryan Porter from Lower Onslow, Colchester North, was one of the winners of this prestigious scholarship. Congratulations, Ryan, on behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly.

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

**TEAM CAN. WORLD JR. WOMEN'S CURLING:
GOLD MEDALLISTS - CONGRATS.**

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, I spoke previously about the showing of Karlee and Lindsay Burgess and team Nova Scotia at the Canadian Junior Curling Championships in Quebec.

I am pleased to announce that these young women have done Canada proud in bringing home the gold medal at the World Junior Women's Curling Championships in Aberdeen, Scotland. Team Canada claimed a 7-4 victory over the previously undefeated team from Sweden, returning home with a three-point lead after an outstanding performance by the Burgess women and their teammates: Kaitlyn Jones skip, Kristin Clarke third, and Karlee, who was the team second.

Once again, I congratulate these fine young athletes and look forward to more victories in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

BICYCLE N.S.: PROMOTING CYCLING CULTURE - THANKS

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the work and efforts of Bicycle Nova Scotia.

The organization, now in its 44th year, strives to create a safe, accessible, dynamic, and versatile cycling culture in Nova Scotia. From urban street cycling to mountain bike trail-blazing, literally, Bicycle Nova Scotia is at the forefront of the practical and promotional cycling effort.

We all know what benefits a strong cycling identity can bring to a city and to a province - the promotion of health, activity, and fitness. It also boosts eco-tourism and builds community.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the team and the board at Bicycle Nova Scotia for its constant work within the organization. Nova Scotians across the province benefit from this work, and I'm thrilled to acknowledge it in the people's House.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

GEKKOTECH COMPUTER SERV.: APPLE SERV. AWARD - CONGRATS.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jason Schofield of GekkoTech Computer Services in Berwick on being awarded the Apple Premium Service Provider distinction for 2018.

The distinction recognizes exemplary service offered throughout the year, based upon factors such as repair, turnaround times, the number of parts per repair, and customer satisfaction. GekkoTech Computer Services has been in business since 2015 and is one of two Atlantic Canadian locations to earn the prestigious designation this year.

As the member of the Legislative Assembly for Kings West, I would like to congratulate Jason Schofield of GekkoTech Computer Services on receiving the Apple Premium Service Provider distinction in 2018 and wish him all the best for continued success in the future.

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

**100 PLUS WOMEN OF SHELBURNE CO. WHO CARE:
COM. SERV. - RECOGNIZE**

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a very energetic and community-spirited group of women from Shelburne County. The 100-Plus Women of Shelburne County Who Care was started last year by Penny Smith, Warden of the Municipality of Shelburne.

Since its inception, the group has raised almost \$50,000. The money goes to deserving organizations nominated by the women themselves. With over 160 members now, the organizations that they have helped have include the Little People's Place in Shelburne, Shelburne County VON, Shelburne County Special Olympics, and Sou'West Nova Transit. The money they give also helps the organizations to leverage funding from other sources.

We are very proud of these women who have accomplished so much in such a short space of time and are really making a difference in their community.

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

WORLD THEATRE DAY: N.S. ACTORS - RECOGNIZE

MS. LENORE ZANN: I rise to my feet today to recognize World Theatre Day. I just want to recognize all of the many actors and actresses who have come and gone across our stages, graced the stages for a brief moment or several moments, and are here no more - and all of those who continue with this wonderful work which really takes heart, soul, passion, and devotion, in order to be able to remain successful and do it for as long as we want. As Shakespeare once said:

“Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
“That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
“And then is heard no more. It is a tale
“Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
“Signifying nothing.”

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

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

EECD - INCL. EDUC.: FLEXIBLE IMPLEMENTATION - DETAILS

MR. TIM HALMAN: Surprise, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, the Commission on Inclusive Education released its report. This is a thorough and crucial report, but my concern is that it’s on the heels of a much more contentious report commissioned by this government. The Glaze report sent education administration in this province down an uncertain path with unknown, long-term impacts for students. The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has called for a flexible approach to the implementation of the inclusion recommendations. With a promise to spend \$15 million in a flexible manner, I fear the government is moving forward with no real implementation plan.

My question to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is this, without any idea as to how the money will be spent, how did the minister land upon the figure of \$15 million for his flexible implementation?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. In fact, the \$15 million is in line with the recommendation for funding that the commission provided us. Those dollars will be intended to put more resources into the classroom, primarily specialist supports for behavioural challenges, for health challenges.

The reason why I say we need to be flexible is because the targets that the commission has outlined for September will be difficult to achieve, because those specialists currently aren’t in the system and we currently don’t have enough trained. So, we do have to work with our B.Ed. providers to make sure that we are producing enough graduates to meet the needs of the system.

MR. HALMAN: I appreciate the minister's response and I know we can all agree that the report is a huge piece of work, but it's hard to understand how the funding commitment will translate in the classroom. Now, we have a newly-empowered Department of Education and Early Childhood Development tasked with a vast overhaul of the inclusion model in a very short period of time. The government has not yet indicated where the \$15 million allocated for recommendations will be specifically spent. Will the minister commit to this House today that every dollar of the \$15 million will go into the classrooms of Nova Scotia?

MR. CHURCHILL: Our intention as a government is to follow through on the broad objectives of the Commission on Inclusive Education report. The reason why flexibility is required is because there are recommendations in there that impact collective agreements. We do need to have willing partners and co-operators in the Nova Scotia Teachers Union to help us implement, for example, the recommendation on professional development, on speech pathologists, on psychologists, and their ability to enter into the system to provide these supports for students.

So we do need to be flexible, because these are specific things that actually do require co-operation. We are committed and I'm very excited for the future of education in this province and the supports that are going to be there for our students and teachers.

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

**PREM. - OFFICE LEASE: RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ALLEGATIONS -
AWARENESS**

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, if you or I or any of us here were to go out on to the Hollis Street entrance to Province House any day this week at 12:00 noon or at 4:00 p.m. and just look south down the street about a block, we'd see a demonstration of the janitors at Founders Square.

Just last week, those janitors learned that all of them there of African descent, who are in a non-supervisory capacity, would be losing their jobs due to a change in the companies with the contracts. They filed a human rights complaint and the management for the building, The Armour Group Limited, that building which includes the Department of Natural Resources there, moved to terminate all their work immediately, and banned them from the premises.

I want to ask the Premier, is he aware that our government in Nova Scotia is leasing space from a company that responds to allegations of racial discrimination by firing the complainants and banning them from the worksite?

THE PREMIER: I'm actually aware that Founders Square has a number of government offices that are in there. The honourable member is referring to a contract that

is with that group that went back out to tender. Another firm had won that tender and is bringing in their employees to go down the road to offer that service to the company that owns that building.

MR. BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, also last week, staff at the Smiling Goat coffee shop in Halifax made headlines when they let it be known that they would be welcoming generous tips because their paycheques from their employer were bouncing. In their collective agreement, it provides that they should have direct deposit of their payment - they have been in cheques, but many of those cheques have been bouncing thousands of dollars they have not been paid. One employee there is out, at the moment, \$1,700.

I want to ask the Premier, will he direct officials of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education to investigate and get to the bottom of this scandal?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it's certainly our hope that this business in the province gets back on stable footing with all those employees who are owed money. It is certainly our belief that collective agreements be respected in this province, and we'll continue to monitor this situation.

MR. BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, these problems are deeply rooted in a larger problem: the problem of too-low wages. Most people working in the service sector in Nova Scotia get about 30 hours of work a week. So at minimum wage, it comes out that they get around \$16,000 a year.

There are all kinds of people working in Nova Scotia at the moment who need two things very badly: they need a serious raise and they need serious improvements in the labour standards under which they work to protect them from unscrupulous employers.

I want to ask the Premier if he will raise the minimum wage to \$15 and update employment standards to protect lower-wage workers in our province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again, the honourable member is making a characterization. There are many people in the service industry who pay more than the minimum wage. Employers in this province continue to do so. He would also know there are some Canadian provinces that have raised the minimum wage, and what we've seen for those workers is their hours being cut, which has impacted them. They haven't seen the increase that has been touted by the New Democratic Party in Nova Scotia.

What we are noticing here in Nova Scotia - looking forward to continuing to see the basic personal exemption rise for those workers in this province who could use the money the most. We believe that will have the greatest impact on those families and those workers and will in turn continue to allow us to grow the economy here in Nova Scotia.

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

PREM.: SEX. ASSAULT PREV. & FUNDING - INSUFFICIENT

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. A troubling pattern is emerging with this government when it comes to sexual assault prevention policy and funding. Just last week the Premier told this House that the government has continued to invest in a sexual assault strategy working with partners across this province. Those partners have been asking for predictable, sustainable funding from this government, but some of those partners will actually run out of money this week, and survivors - particularly in the western region - will not have access to help them.

Will the Premier admit that this funding for therapeutic counsellors contained in the budget is insufficient to meet the needs of these survivors?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. It's a question she raised last week in Question Period. I told her that in the budget there's \$3.4 million that will be for different organizations, different funding formulas, with the Minister of Community Services. There's an additional \$2 million to deal with the issue of domestic violence. There is also some funding that would be in the Department of Health and Wellness to deal with the very issue the honourable member is referring to. We're going to continue to work with our partners.

I think the Minister of Community Services mentioned that there'd been an ongoing conversation and collaboration with their sister organizations and we're going to continue to work with them to ensure that Nova Scotia women have the services they require.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I'm raising it because some of these organizations are losing their funding. In debate earlier this month, the Minister of Internal Services said the government is demanding that universities have sexual assault strategy policies, but she did not support legislation that required these policies to be established.

When students pointed out in an op-ed that the government does not seem to be doing all it could to combat sexual violence on campus, they were told that the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education was unhappy with the op-ed and that there would be consequences.

Will the Premier detail what kind of consequences the students will face for making the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education unhappy?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the work that we've been able to do with post-secondary education institutions across the province. We're going to continue to work with student organizations. We're going to continue to work with the presidents to continue to make sure that we build that collaboration to continue to grow job opportunities here in the province.

I want to remind the honourable member those young people she's referring to are more optimistic about the future in this province. We now have, in the last two consecutive years, retained more young people than we're losing - the first time since 1990. We're going to continue to work with all of our partners to ensure that this province can continue to grow and continue to prosper and provide opportunities for not only those young people but all of our families.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Students say the consequences of making a minister unhappy are cancelling meetings with the minister, with departmental staff, and with the Liberal caucus, and exclusion from a roundtable discussion. In fact, students are excluded from all meetings with the department until they explain the content of their op-ed with the deputy minister.

A news story from last June alleges that the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education said the Premier called all of the women's organizations, and they unanimously said a former Liberal staffer convicted of domestic assault should be re-hired. Our office called those same organizations, and none of them had received one of those calls.

Given these two incidents, does the Premier believe the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education is capable of dealing fairly with these issues around sexual and domestic assault?

THE PREMIER: I have full confidence in the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education to continue to administer his portfolio to ensure that post-secondary institutions continue to be a vibrant part of our economy, continue to make sure that we're providing a safe environment for young people - not only our own sons and daughters but the 20,000 kids who determine that this is the best place to get a post-secondary education and the growing number of those who decide that this is the best place to begin to build their working career and to build a family.

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

**STATUS OF WOMEN - SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS:
COUNSELLING SERV. - FUNDING COMMIT**

MS. LENORE ZANN: My question is for the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act. The Sexual Assault Services Network of Nova Scotia has called on the government to provide long-term funding for therapeutic counsellors and 13 new therapy programs across the province.

However, the budget released last week includes some funding to four organizations and cuts to funding to several other groups that have been providing these services. While I appreciate the work done through the province's sexual assault strategy,

it is not reasonable for the government to think that the problem of sexual assault will just disappear at the end of two years.

My question for the minister is, will the minister please commit to permanent funding for these essential counselling services for survivors of sexual assault?

HON. KELLY REGAN: Of course, we want all Nova Scotians to be able to grow and succeed here in the province. Sexual violence impedes that growth. It hampers lives.

What the honourable member should know, Mr. Speaker, is that in fact when we went out to consult on this particular issue, what we did hear from 1,000 people who we consulted with was that there were too many people being left out of the prevention question. There were too many people in marginalized communities and young people who were not in fact able to access the services that they need to prevent sexual assault. Young people make up 20 per cent of our population, but they make up 55 per cent of the sexual assaults in this province that are reported to us. That is why we are focusing money on helping prevent sexual assault among young people.

MS. ZANN: I have to say, I held a feminist round table in Truro just before Christmas, and many of the women's centres and sexual assault centres were very concerned about whether they would get to keep funding or that they would lose it. My follow-ups with them are that many of them are very, very concerned they won't be able to continue doing the work that they do.

My follow-up question is actually for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. On March 15th, the local paper published an op-ed by the Nova Scotia chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students, which expressed students' frustration at his government's continued refusal to pass legislation to address sexual violence on campus. Now these students are being told that they are banned from meetings with the minister or his department until they meet with the deputy minister to discuss an op-ed that they wrote. Are we now muzzling students in Nova Scotia? Is there no freedom of expression here?

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister, does he agree that it is unreasonable to bar representatives from the Canadian Federation of Students - the oldest and largest student organization in Canada - from access to the department?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: I meet with over 10 student groups regularly, CFS being one of them. I actually just met with them in February, and we spoke about the very culture of change that we're trying to accomplish on university campuses. Our goal, and it's their goal as well, is to change the culture on campuses to have less sexual assaults.

In terms of CFS, what they had asked me at the time is to legislate that. We took a different approach. What we did is, we put in the MOU with universities that each of them

must have a stand-alone sexual assault violence strategy and, if they don't, we will withhold their funding.

[2:15 p.m.]

I think that is a great way to get our universities to do this, but I'd like to add that the universities are all in support of this strategy. This strategy will lower sexual assaults on campus and, as I've committed to CFS, if it does not, I will legislate.

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

LAE - COOKE AQUA.: PROV. LOAN - EXPLAIN

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, last week it was reported that Cooke Aquaculture was seeking to have some of its \$16 million loan forgiven. This loan was for Cooke to expand their operations, an expansion that never lived up to its promises. It was also revealed that Cooke Aquaculture made an \$800,000 contribution to Dalhousie University to help study the environmental impacts of fish farming. This report also indicated that the \$800,000 contribution was offered as part of the considerations for the loan forgiveness.

My question to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education is, when did the department start using provincial loans to provide backdoor funding to universities?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I do thank the member for the question. I became aware of this loan, which was under the former Nova Scotia Jobs Fund and I find it to be absolutely unacceptable. The Accountability Act that we brought forward was to guard against exactly this. We've had agreements and deals with private sector operators who committed with the best interests of their operations, which is very reasonable. That's what they do and we don't blame them for that.

There were all kinds of opportunities for non-disclosure, confidentiality, not giving this information, so we would release any information we could and any agreement that we've signed as this government in the previous mandate or this one, it's available to all Nova Scotians.

If we are spending tax dollars we have to be accountable and we have to show Nova Scotians how we spent that. So, with the previous decisions the Nova Scotia Jobs Fund we're done with that practice and from here on in, since 2013, Nova Scotians know where their money is spent.

MR. ORRELL: Thank you to the minister for that answer. If money is going to go from the government to a third party, then that third party gives money to another party in exchange for loan forgiveness, then people start to wonder what's going on.

Mr. Speaker, this is on the heels of the department using Community Services housing money to renovate washrooms at Acadia University. Again, if they want to give money to universities, give the money to universities. Why are we hiding it?

I want to ask the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education again, can the minister provide the House with an accounting of all other off-book payments to our universities?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, the funding that the member speaks to was done by a previous government. Our government is not doing any such type of off-the-books accounting transactions that he speaks of.

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

PREM. - CHRÉTIEN VISIT: LOBBYING - CONCERN

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians remain aghast as the Premier defends his meeting with former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. The Premier maintains that he did nothing wrong, that it's Mr. Chrétien's responsibility to register as a lobbyist. In fact, the Premier has said it is not his responsibility to ask anyone if they are a registered lobbyist.

The intent of the law is clear. Nova Scotians ought to know who their government is meeting with and what the focus of those meetings is. Although I can appreciate big families, and I truly do, I doubt that Mr. Chrétien came all this way just to talk about having a large family.

Does the Premier believe that his office should be held to a higher ethical standard than to simply say, I didn't break the law?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'll be happy to put the reputation of my office any day against the reputation of the Leader of the Official Opposition's office.

MS. MACFARLANE: When they go low, we go high. (Applause)

There is not a reasonable thinking person in this province who believes that Mr. Chrétien came to do anything other than lobby this government for his clients. He even announced it himself the day before.

As I said last week, it took a visit from this former Prime Minister to shed light on this government's disregard for the Lobbyist Registration Act. The Premier claims to be running a transparent government, but Nova Scotians are kept in the dark. Will the Premier commit to regularly releasing his schedule so somebody can ask who is a registered lobbyist?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank not only Nova Scotians but all those across the globe who actually want to meet with our government to continue to look for opportunities in our province. We'll continue to do so, and we will continue to prove results. We will continue to grow the economy, to provide more opportunity for young people.

That's what Nova Scotians talked to me about this weekend, Mr. Speaker. Not a single Nova Scotian raised the issue about a meeting with the former Prime Minister. What they talked to me about was the positive job numbers they have seen. They saw growth in tourism for the third consecutive year. What they have talked to me about is continued opportunity in our province. What they have asked me is, don't be distracted by the noise on the other side - keep moving this province forward.

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

NAT. RES.: E. CHEZZETCOOK BERM - ACTION

MR. KEITH BAIN: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Mr. Speaker, you know where this one's going.

Recently, my colleague asked the Minister of TIR about the situation in East Chezzetcook that has local residents very worried. I'm talking about the berm that separates the freshwater lake from the ocean. The berm was breached in January and again in March. Meetings were held, but nothing has been done to address the breaches.

Of course, residents are worried that all the fish in the lake will be killed or washed away. But they also fear that their wells will be contaminated and their basements flooded with seawater. With every stormy weather report, those fears become greater.

My question to the minister is, when will the CBCL consultant's report be complete, and when can the people of East Chezzetcook expect to see some action to address the problems with the berm?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: I thank the honourable member for raising the question on behalf of the Speaker. I know the member has been very adamant and spoke with me quite often about this very situation in his community, and in his area.

This is something that speaks to a greater problem that we're going to be dealing with in Nova Scotia, and that is coastal mitigation. As climate change moves forward and seawaters rise, we're going to be dealing with these types of breaches more often that are going to impact Nova Scotians all around Nova Scotia.

The review will be done very soon. We should have a response by the first of the month.

MR. BAIN: With all due respect, more talking and a consultant's report is not going to stop the water from entering the wells and homes of these residents.

You know what they say - the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry. These residents alerted their government that there was a big problem in East Chezzetcook. They have conscientiously updated their government about the condition of the berm and their fears for the lake and their homes. They aren't sure what else to do to get their government to act.

So, my question to the minister is, if the ocean destroys the wells and damages the homes of these residents, will the minister take responsibility for the government's inaction and pay to fix the damage?

MS. MILLER: Again, this speaks to the greater problem that we're going to be dealing with in this province. Do we say the same thing to properties in Liverpool that are flooded when the weather conditions cause that to happen? In Halifax, we saw the same thing where businesses' basements flooded. We saw flooding up on the boardwalk here. There's damage there. Is that something that taxpayers of Nova Scotia, the government, should be paying for? Or do we need to look at coastal mitigation in a broader sense?

The report will be coming through very soon. We'll have all the recommendations from that report. We'll be bringing that to the House and to the Speaker.

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

H&W: LACK OF PALLIATIVE CARE - IMPACT

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, in January, long-time Richmond County physician, Dr. Bob Martel, gave up his medical licence out of frustration with the palliative care system, citing the need for a larger support team and increased funding, and I'll table that.

Right now, less than 40 per cent of people who die in hospital receive palliative care. People should be able to receive that care at the end of their lives.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, is the Minister concerned that the lack of palliative care is negatively impacting the lives of Nova Scotians?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I think the member raises a question that is important to many Nova Scotians who have an interest. Perhaps they have a loved one who is nearing the end of life and looking for palliative care services.

Mr. Speaker, we do have palliative care services in some of our hospitals around the province. The other thing the member cited was in the context of hospital palliative care services, but what was not mentioned in the question was that we also have an innovative program around palliative care services, making use of paramedics as health care providers to help provide palliative care services in the home as well. So we have a range of palliative services that are offered to Nova Scotians across the province.

MS. MARTIN: The national standard for residential hospice beds is 7.7 per 100,000 people. In Nova Scotia, to meet that standard, we need about 70 beds. We currently have none, and I'll table that.

While the province's first palliative care home is under construction and scheduled to open this year, Nova Scotians need more than just 10 rooms in Halifax. Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to bringing Nova Scotia to the national benchmark for residential hospice beds?

MR. DELOREY: I thank the member for the question. Again, as I said, there are a number of different models for providing palliative care services. It's also important to note that palliative level services and hospice level services are not synonymous.

We talk about palliative and we talk about hospice, but these are different types of programs and service levels being provided. As I've said in my previous response, we do have some very innovative steps that we've taken in our commitment as a government that have really brought Nova Scotia forward. The fact that the beds aren't in place really is a reflection of previous governments, not this government. This government developed a hospice framework under the previous Minister of Health and Wellness, and we continue to roll out hospice beds with our partners in Halifax and down in the Valley.

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

SERVICE N.S. - DRIVER'S LICENCES: NEW PROCESS - INFORM

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: My question is to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia. As one of my colleagues raised two weeks ago, our constituents are getting an unpleasant surprise when they head out to renew their driver's licences. They are finding out that instead of getting their replacement licences produced on site, they have to wait two weeks or longer for new licences to arrive from Ontario.

The minister previously defended the new licences as more economical and harder to duplicate. My constituents hardly seem aware of the new process, much less the benefits.

From the calls I'm getting, it doesn't seem that the government has done a good job of publicizing this change. My question is, outside of the news release and a few tweets,

what has the government done to make Nova Scotians aware that they will have to wait two weeks for new driver's licences to be printed in Ontario?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I thank the member for the question. Certainly, with respect to this decision as the member alluded to, \$10 million in savings for the Atlantic Provinces that have signed on to this joint procurement is significant, but this really is about security, first and foremost.

As the member said about duplication, it's also about the ability to access government services. Access Nova Scotia really is the face of government for many Nova Scotians, and to have your information, your file, all your documentation in an electronic format, by way of your user access card and your file ID, which is where we are moving vis-à-vis the digital government, it's going to make a difference in people's lives. That's the purpose of this.

The fact that people don't leave the Access Nova Scotia site with their IDs and have to wait a couple of weeks to get it in the mail - we understand and appreciate that's different than what we are used to. We can talk to Communications Nova Scotia about stepping up the efforts to put word out there, but at the end of the day, this is a good thing for Nova Scotians.

MR. ORRELL: I thank the minister for the answer. Without any consultation with Nova Scotians, this government decided to go ahead and partner with other Atlantic provinces to roll out this new process for licence renewal.

As my colleague for Kings North pointed out, Service Nova Scotia now offers temporary permits to drivers while they wait for their permanent licences to be mailed from Ontario. This permit is practically useless if someone needs the permanent licence in a hurry to fly out west for work. The department warns drivers to plan ahead to give yourself enough time for the licence to be sent in the mail, and I'll table that, Mr. Speaker.

Since the government did such a poor job of publicizing this change, I would expect that my constituents cannot plan for what they do not know about. My question to the minister is, will Service Nova Scotia be offering an expedited permanent driver's licence for Nova Scotians who need them urgently and, if so, will the cost be passed along to the taxpayer?

MR. MACLELLAN: There won't be additional costs passed on to anyone. This is the plan that is in place.

Again, we go through a very detailed process to get to a point where we make this decision. Obviously, when this decision was actually inked and the agreement made with our fellow provinces in the Atlantic region, it was in the previous mandate - I was in Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal - and it's not an easy thing because you don't

want to pass on burden or confusion or create any challenges for Nova Scotians. We did this with due diligence to understand what the implications would be and how we would smoothly transition into that.

[2:30 p.m.]

I can assure the member and all Nova Scotians that, long term, this is the best option. As the member said, there is a temporary permit that people leave with and they do have temporary accessibility for their driver's licence, so they're not leaving without anything so to speak. But at the end of the day, if it is a communications piece that we have to revisit, we'll certainly do that. We don't want to impact people but, at the same time, if there is prior notice and planning that has to take place, then we'll be happy to play a role in it. Thank you.

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

H&W - WALK-IN CLINICS: SCOPE OF PRACTICE - LIMITED

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The other day, I had a call from a concerned daughter who had taken her father to the Aberdeen Regional Hospital. He was fluctuating in and out of hypertension. The emergency department told him to go to the walk-in clinic to see if they would give him blood pressure medication since he didn't have a family doctor. They wouldn't do it because he didn't have a family doctor and they stated that they couldn't because that was the law. So, he went to the walk-in clinic only to be turned away.

My question to the minister is - and this is happening over and over again where going to walk-in clinics is getting substandard care. I want to know, what has his department done to deal with the very limited scope of practice that walk-in clinic physicians adhere to?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I think we've been very clear in our efforts to improve access to primary care on behalf of all Nova Scotians. It's been a multi-pronged approach. One of the key foundations we focus on is our efforts to roll out collaborative care practices. As the member mentioned in her question, the notion of expanding scopes of practice and making use of those services - that's exactly what we're seeing take place in our collaborative care teams across the province. I'm pleased that we've been able to expand and create new teams throughout Nova Scotia.

MS. ADAMS: After an additional five hours after he went back to the emergency department to get the medication, they finally agreed to prescribe the medication and told him to go back to the walk-in clinic in a few days to find out the results from a blood panel. This is hardly the standard of care that we want for Nova Scotians. He then started having

massive swelling in his forehead so he went back to the walk-in clinic three separate times, and do you know what he was told? They told him that his hat was too tight.

My question to the minister is, has the minister met specifically with the physicians who own the walk-in clinics - and it's ultimately their decision as to what their doctors will and won't do - and will he talk to those physicians about having their physicians take on a greater scope of practice? We should not have any Nova Scotian who doesn't have somebody they can go to who will give them the care that they need.

MR. DELOREY: I guess first with respect to the specific situation the member is referring to, I don't have the details there but I'd certainly encourage that member - this sounds like a situation where there may be some concerns about the actual care and the service delivery provided by some medical professionals, so there is the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Nova Scotia. If the member believes that the care provided was substandard and not meeting the practice standards, I'd encourage that citizen to file a complaint through the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Nova Scotia and they would investigate.

With respect to how we can incentivize walk-in clinics, the announcement we made about the funding changes is provided for family practice physicians and is not available to walk-in clinics. We're trying to encourage them to provide more primary care services to Nova Scotians. Part of that was the compensation package that we released just a couple of weeks ago.

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

EECD: WATER SYSTEM SHUTDOWN (LIVERPOOL) - H&S CONCERNS

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Early Monday morning, a blown pump caused the water system in Liverpool to shut down. Shortly after this news broke on social media, I received dozens of calls and messages from constituents asking why schools in the area had not been closed because of this incident. Parents told me that no communication had been received from the school board updating them on whether the school would be closed. I then began receiving calls from teachers wondering why children were kept in a school with toilets that wouldn't flush and children couldn't have any water to wash their hands or use a water fountain.

My question to the minister is if, as the minister has stated, the health and safety of children in our schools is paramount, why did schools in Liverpool stay open with no water yesterday?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'll grab the information from the member on the school and the situation to make sure that we follow up with the regional executive director and have a conversation about that very situation. Thank you.

MS. MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the response. When I finally managed to contact the school board superintendent yesterday, he indicated the situation was being monitored all morning. I have to assume the superintendent was aware that several toilets were clogged, and that children could not wash their hands.

Some elementary school students were not dismissed by bus until 1:40 p.m. Mr. Speaker - the school day is over at 3:00 p.m. I'm concerned if parents hadn't raised the alarm, children would have remained in the building for the entire day without running water.

My question to the minister is - since the buck will now stop with the minister - how would he have handled this situation in Liverpool differently?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, to be clear if the member would familiarize herself with the previous Education Act, the buck has always stopped with the Minister of Education in this province - nothing in that regard will change. Operational decisions - read the Act, read the Act. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, in terms of operational decisions, we do entrust our staff to make those decisions, as school boards have entrusted their staff to make those decisions. These are not areas where school boards were involved from a governance perspective, or a decision-making process. That said, I'd like to have the information, we can look into it at the department, and make sure that proper protocols were followed.

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

FIN. & TREASURY BD.: PROV. GAMING STRATEGY - UPDATE

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, in April of 2005, the Nova Scotia Government under John Hamm introduced the province's first gaming strategy. Our NDP Government updated the strategy in 2011, but to ensure a responsible, sustainable, and accountable approach to gambling, gambling problem research and governance. That strategy hasn't been updated for seven years.

We know that the majority of Nova Scotians partake in some form of gambling on a regular basis, and for that, some gambling is risky activity that causes harm not only to the gamblers, but to their friends, families, and communities.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is, why hasn't the government updated the provincial gaming strategy, to continue this important work?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, if you can tolerate my voice I would be happy to answer.

It's true that the strategy was introduced in 2005. In 2006, there was an assessment program put in place, which meant that there would ongoing assessment of new products and new programs, and that continues throughout the duration of the strategy.

In 2011, it was updated and as I said in my previous response, earlier in Question Period, the ongoing strategy provides a guide for any government as they move through, keeping in mind that of course the protection of the players and those involved in the gaming are always protected. We need to make sure that it is not risky, that it is safe, and as part of the assessment program any issues that come forward either from a user, or from an employer who may have a VLT machine in their premises, those come as part of the assessment and are followed up immediately.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, when the strategy was being updated in 2011, many stakeholders were concerned about gambling advertising and marketing. We put in regulated advertising standards and these standards reflect the current best practices for advertising and marketing of gambling products and services.

Mr. Speaker, while I was watching the evening news recently, I saw an ad for Take5, the gambling support network, but immediately following that was an ad for Casino Nova Scotia. So, it made me think, is it time to update the strategy?

So, I'd like to ask the minister, will the minister commit to updating the strategy and commission a review on the Code of Advertising Standards by responsible gaming experts?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the situation that member raises was a very unfortunate situation. The sequence of those advertisements should never have been the sequence that we saw. We immediately contacted the network and they recognized that that was their error. We have an agreement through CNS with the advertisement, and at no time is that sequence ever to be as it was presented.

So, I thank the member for bringing that to our attention, and we certainly have responded to that. It is unfortunate, it is not something we would promote and it should never have happened.

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

EECD - PRE-PRIMARY PROG.: SCHOOLS - CRITERIA

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

The second phase of the pre-Primary program rollout has been announced, and is to be implemented in the year 2018-19. Approximately, 130 schools were included in this phase.

In the initial phase, the government provided a detailed set of criteria on how the first group of sites were chosen. My understanding is that that explanation was not given for the second group. Could the minister inform us as to how the schools were chosen for this phase?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. The same criteria applied for this phase - space availability, need, and also doing an assessment of EDI scores to see where these programs would be most beneficial in our province.

That said, we are at about 50 per cent coverage right now. Over the next two years 100 per cent of Nova Scotians will have access to free universal pre-Primary, despite the fact that both Opposition Parties voted against this important program.

MR. HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, I've been contacted by the parents of the Dutch Settlement Elementary School. They have concerns about their pre-Primary-aged children falling behind others in their surrounding communities. They're the only school within about a 30-kilometre radius to not receive a pre-Primary program. These students are competing with others, and parents are concerned about how their children will perform later on.

Is there a plan and timeline in place to implement a pre-Primary program at the Dutch Settlement Elementary School?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the member points to the biggest challenge we have with our pre-Primary program, and that's keeping up with demand in every one of our communities. In my estimation, at this point, that is a good problem to have. The execution and delivery of this program have run smoothly and have been really effective in increasing the ability and opportunities for our kids at such an early age.

I will tell the member again, we do have phase two rolling out for September 2018. In September 2019 we'll have phase three rollout, and in the fourth year of our mandate, 100 per cent of Nova Scotians will have access to this important program.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

COM. SERV. - PICTOU CO.: HOME HEATING ASSIST. - THRESHOLD

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Services. Recently I spoke with a couple that was looking for some help to heat their home, to maintain their home heating efficiency and cut down on some costs. They have a combined income of just over \$29,000, but they don't qualify for any assistance because the threshold in Pictou East is \$25,000. This couple receives only CPP and Old Age Security. My understanding is that if they lived in pretty much any other area of the province, they would qualify, as the thresholds are much higher in other areas - as high as \$35,000 in some areas quite close to Pictou East.

My question for the minister is, does it make sense that there's such a wide discrepancy between the thresholds for different areas of the province that are quite similar?

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I would let him know that those folks may well qualify for the Heating Assistance Rebate Program, so that would be another place where they could go to get some assistance. But I would be happy to sit down and look at the divergence with the honourable member.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her response. This government has said that keeping seniors in their homes is a key priority of their government. For those who are able, this is obviously a very good objective, but greater flexibility in home maintenance grants could offer an avenue to allow seniors to maintain their homes and independence longer.

Perhaps the minister could enlighten the House, is the minister aware of the last time these grant thresholds were increased or at least reviewed?

MS. REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. He would know that the federal government has announced a national housing strategy. We're in the process of having bilaterals with the federal government around this particular issue. More will become clear during that time.

I can also let the honourable member know that the member for Halifax Atlantic has been working on seniors' programs and the various programs that assist seniors to stay

in their home. I want him to know that the honourable member has been working on that particular issue for me right now.

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

BUS.: RURAL INTERNET SERV. - DETAILS

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Business. Two weeks ago the government announced its next stage in rural Internet implementation. This captures the middle mile stage of bringing reliable Internet service to rural Nova Scotia. I raised this issue with the minister yesterday in Estimates, but there is one point I want to make sure I understand clearly. Is the plan to bring the Internet to every Nova Scotian, or only every Nova Scotian for whom a business case can be made?

[2:45 p.m.]

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: The answer is we are going to get it to as many Nova Scotians as we possibly can. That has always been - there's a promise that's a decade old now, that every Nova Scotian would have that broadband access, and it's a very daunting task for any government and any Party.

With respect to the second part of the question, again, we keep using the term - we used it a lot in Estimates yesterday - it's a market failure. Quite frankly, there's no private sector business case for anything we're about to do, vis-à-vis \$500 million of work, so this falls to the government - it falls to the taxpayers of Nova Scotia and what we have in our coffers. That's why the fiscal management in the budget has been so important.

We have been the best-performing province with respect to broadband investment relative to our sister provinces, as it was with \$15 million. But putting \$120 million into Nova Scotians for broadband means we're investing in them and we're going to get them the Internet as quickly as we possibly can.

MS. PAON: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken many times in this House about the lack of cellular service in many areas of my constituency, and in fact, across Nova Scotia. While I am genuinely pleased that we are moving to the next phase of rural Internet, the cellphone issue remains. I believe the proposed rural Internet program presents an opportunity to address both problems. I addressed this with the minister yesterday but would like to raise it here again, because everyone likes a two-for-one deal, and this could be a win-win.

Will the minister direct the rural Internet initiative to consider, and in fact make it a priority, to utilize rural Internet infrastructure to also address areas lacking sufficient cellphone coverage?

MR. MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if I'd go as far as directing them. The whole point of this is that they take the money that will be invested into the trust option for the broadband initiative, the Internet initiative, and use it to make the best decisions. The whole idea is that we don't have it cumbersome and tied up with the bureaucracy. Quite frankly, we get it out into the third party, arm's-length operation that can do this quickly, that can adjust and adapt, based on what is needed in that moment, for every region of the province, for each municipality that steps up, and many of them will step up and come forward with a specific plan.

With respect to cell service and the towers and the infrastructure that is connected, this would be the time to have that pertinent conversation. That's certainly something we can advise them to consider. With my colleagues in TIR and in Municipal Affairs, we can talk about land lines and cellphones, EMO access, and making sure that we're connecting as many Nova Scotians as we can. This money is the opportunity to do so.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

NAT. RES. - FORESTRY: LOW-VALUE HARVEST - PREVENT

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. On March 9th, in response to a question that we raised here about Guysborough County, the minister assured this House that before a forest lot is harvested, that everything is evaluated, including whether there is old-growth forest.

Since then, the department has concluded that it is indeed possible that old-growth forest was improperly cut. I'll table that. A representative has said that the department had no idea there might be old-growth forests there, and likely no department staff visited the lot before it was cut.

Given these revelations, is the minister still confident that everything is being done to prevent low-value harvesting of the province's high-value forests?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member opposite for that question so I can readdress this issue. We have had department members out on staff and they have assessed the area. We are waiting for a report to come on what the final report can be.

Since then I've looked into it a little more about the difference between old-growth forests and old trees, and there are differences there. I can table this. This is from the Old Forest Policy for 2012. It certainly has a different designation because they truly are different things.

The pre-assessment was done by Port Hawkesbury Paper and they usually - we audit 10 per cent of all the cuts before they are done and 25 per cent after.

MS. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, the Old Forest Policy is very clear that the province needs to conserve the remaining old-growth forests on public land, yet it seems that no one is even clear about who is responsible to identify where that old growth is.

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

The honourable Minister of Environment on an introduction.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I'd like to direct the members to the gallery opposite. We are joined by my father, a former councillor and Deputy Mayor of Halifax, Reg Rankin. If you want to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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 motion is carried.

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

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

[7:06 p.m. CW on Supply rose and the House reconvened. The Speaker, Hon. Kevin Murphy resumed in the Chair.]

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that concludes government business for the day. I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, Wednesday, March 28th, between 1:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m.

Following the daily routine and Question Period, we will move that the committee - we have to call Opposition Business. Maybe we'll get through that first after Question Period, and then I'm going to turn it over to the Leader of the Official Opposition to do so.

After Opposition Business we will move back to the Committee of the Whole on Supply, and if time permits, we'll also move to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills for Bill Nos. 70, 76 and 85.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow being Opposition day, we'll be calling Bill No. 102, Cancer Survivors Day Act, which was just introduced today; Bill No. 94, the Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act, and Bill No. 1, the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary Appreciation Act.

I move that we do now rise, to meet again tomorrow between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again tomorrow between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

[The House rose at 7:14 p.m.]