



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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First Session

TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 2018

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 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. Just before we begin the daily routine, I'd like to present my Speaker's Ruling on a point of order raised on March 29th by the honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

SPEAKER'S RULING:

Raising the content of bills before the House in questions put to ministers and other types of business. (Pt. of order by Hon. David Wilson [Hansard p. 3434, March 29/18])

During Question Period that day, a member of his caucus questioned the minister about a piece of legislation that was before the House. After the minister's answer to the main question, I cautioned the member about raising the content of bills before the House in questions put to ministers. I said I would let that particular question stand.

In his answer to the supplementary question that followed, the minister mentioned the piece of legislation referred to in the main question. The NDP House Leader took the position that if the member of his caucus had not been permitted to discuss the bill, then I should, as Speaker, ensure that the government ministers don't answer questions pertaining directly to and mentioning directly bills before the House.

Members will remember that I had said I was allowing the main question to stand. Answers to supplementary questions, like supplementary questions themselves, flow from the main questions. While the minister did refer to a bill, a review of Hansard shows that he was continuing his answer to the main question, which is something that often happens when the answer to the main question is cut off after the allowable 45 seconds.

In the circumstances of my having allowed the main question to stand, I am not going to find the point of order substantiated, but I'm once again going to caution all members about not raising the content of bills under other types of business. This has been particularly noticeable of late under Statements by Members during the daily routine. Therefore, I'm asking for everybody's co-operation on that particular point as we move forward.

We'll now move on to the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I table a petition whose operative clause reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned, call on the Government of Nova Scotia and the Minister of Health to review their emergency services standards and the deteriorating state of emergency services in the Pubnico area. The area should not lose adequate emergency services to help The Government and EMC reach its standards in other areas.”

There are 570 signatures. I guess there are more to come. I've affixed mine, as per the rules.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition that states:

“The North Cumberland Memorial Emergency Care Centre has been closed too often. This has created unsafe medical situations in our community and we would like to put a stop to these closures.

We request the Minister of Health and his Department to work with the Nova Scotia Health Authority to make our community a priority by hiring

physicians to work in our community to provide medical coverage for the emergency department as well as to provide medical care in primary health care practices.”

I have affixed my signature, and there are 45 signatures, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: Just before we move on to the next item, I would ask the honourable member for Cumberland North to sign the petition that she tabled as an endorsement that she, in fact, tabled the petition.

The petition is tabled.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Premier.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and with your permission, I would like to do an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. CASEY: I would draw the attention of members of the House to the Speaker’s Gallery. Today in the Speaker’s Gallery we are joined by Bernhard Gueller, music director of Symphony Nova Scotia. Joining Mr. Gueller today is his wife, Shirley, and also with us are Chris Wilkinson, CEO of Symphony Nova Scotia; Gail Morris, chair of the board for the symphony; and other valued members of the team. I would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1314

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the honourable Premier, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Maestro Bernhard Gueller has served as the much-cherished and respected music director of Symphony Nova Scotia since 2002; and

Whereas he is recognized as having directed the symphony into an era of financial stability, artistic excellence, and unprecedented growth in audience attendance throughout his 16-year tenure; and

Whereas this coming day he will be retiring from his position as music director and will step into the distinguished honorary role of Symphony Nova Scotia's conductor laureate;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking him for his many years of dedication to the growth and artistic development of such an integral part of Nova Scotia's cultural landscape, and wish him all the best in future endeavours.

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

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

[1:15 p.m.]

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction before my resolution?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, in the east gallery today, we are joined by members of the 2018 Canadian Junior Women's Curling Team. These Halifax curlers proudly represented Canada on the world stage, and would they rise as I say their name?

Kaitlyn Jones, Kristin Clarke, Lindsey Burgess, Coach Andrew Atherton. Karlee Burgess and Lauren Lenentine were unable to join us today. I would ask members of the House to give our guests a warm welcome. (Standing Ovation)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1315

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

Whereas a team of Halifax curlers, Kaitlyn Jones, Kristin Clarke, Karlee Burgess, Lindsey Burgess and Lauren Lenentine, won the gold medal for Canada at the 2018 World Junior Championships in Aberdeen, Scotland, in March; and

Whereas these athletes and their coach, Andrew Atherton, represented both Nova Scotia and Canada with pride, curling throughout the tournament with excellent ability and determination; and

Whereas this is the second gold medal for Ms. Clarke and Ms. Burgess, who won the 2016 World Junior Curling Championship in Copenhagen, Denmark;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Kaitlyn Jones, Kristin Clarke, Karlee Burgess, Lindsey Burgess, Lauren Lenentine, and their coach, Andrew Atherton, on winning the gold medal and for being inspirational athletes and role models to all Nova Scotians.

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.

RESOLUTION NO. 1316

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

Whereas April 17th is the 36th Anniversary of the signing of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms; and

Whereas members of the legal community mark this day each year as Law Day, a day for the public to learn about the law, the legal profession, and the legal institutions that form the cornerstone of Canadian democracy; and

Whereas this occasion provides an opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of Nova Scotia's legal community, and to showcase some of the tremendous work of our many partners in improving access to legal information, justice, and education;

Therefore be it resolved that on this day, Law Day, all members of the House recognize the contributions of Nova Scotia's legal community in delivering justice and protecting the constitutional rights of our citizens, and congratulate them for their commitment to accessible and high-quality legal services for their clients and the public.

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 Health and Wellness.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. DELOREY: I'd draw the attention of the members to the east gallery, where we have a special guest joining us today. Dr. Stan Kutcher is an internationally renowned expert in adolescent mental health and a leader in mental health research, advocacy training, policy, and health services and innovation. So, I'd like to ask the members of the House to please give Dr. Kutcher the warm welcome of the Legislature. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1317

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

Whereas youth aged 15 to 24 are more likely to experience mental illness and/or substance use disorders, than any other age group; and

Whereas through his work, Dr. Stan Kutcher developed and implemented the *Mental Health & High School Curriculum Guide* and *Transitions: Making the most of your campus experience*, both first of their kind, to increase the mental health literacy of youth and help them transition through challenging times; and

Whereas in recognition of his incredible contributions, Dr. Stan Kutcher was honoured with the 2018 Champion of Mental Health Award by the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House thank Dr. Stan Kutcher for the incredible work he has done to improve mental health care for youth and families.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction before my resolution?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker today in the east gallery we are joined by two individuals who are members of two of the 153 agencies, boards and commissions that do such important work for their communities and our province. They are also featured in the Spring recruitment campaign for agencies, boards and commissions.

As I say their names I'd ask them to stand - Betty Thomas is a member of the College of Licensed Practical Nurses and lived in Dartmouth; Misty Morrison is a member of the Council of African Canadian Education and lives in Weymouth; and joining Ms. Morrison today is her niece, Mali M.H. McGarvey.

I'd ask all members of the House to give our guests a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1318

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

Whereas April 15th to 21st is Volunteer Week and this is a time to celebrate and thank the thousands of Nova Scotians who help make our communities strong and more vibrant; and

Whereas Nova Scotians such as Misty Morrison and Betty Thomas who serve on our province's 153 agencies, boards and commissions make important contributions to our communities and our province; and

Whereas Nova Scotians from all communities and walks of life are needed to serve on agencies, boards and commissions, and applications are now being accepted and all residents of Nova Scotia are eligible to apply for these volunteer positions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking Nova Scotians who volunteer for serving on agencies, boards and commissions, and encourage others to learn more and consider applying for positions on ABCs.

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. 124 - An Act to Amend Chapter 32 of the Acts of 2014. The Health Authorities Act, to Strengthen Community Health Boards. (Ms. Tammy Martin)

Bill No. 125 - An Act Respecting a Regional Nominee Immigration Pilot Program for Cape Breton. (Ms. Lisa Roberts)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

SHARON'S PLACE RESTAURANT: SERV. TO VETERANS - THANKS

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, the residents of the Northumberland Veterans Unit recently hosted a special celebration and presented a plaque of appreciation to thank John and Sharon Stewart of Sharon's Place Restaurant. The presentation was to highlight the tremendous hospitality and kindness shown to the veterans over the years from John and Sharon.

These veterans have been patrons of Sharon's Place and are always met with the utmost respect and care. Sharon's Place provides delicious meals to the veterans free of charge as a thank you for their service. John and Sharon do all they can to accommodate the veterans to make them feel at home and appreciated.

Please join me in thanking John, Sharon, and the entire staff of Sharon's Place for providing a little piece of kindness to those who have served us.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, might I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. BURRILL: Thank you. It is a pleasure to have with us in the House today four friends from Antigonish who have come to join the Legislature: Moraig Macgillivray, Darlene Rushton, Chad Brazier, and Sarah Armstrong, all of whom are stalwarts of the Electoral District Association of Antigonish with the New Democratic Party, and with them is Kaden Dignard, Chad's eight-year-old nephew. Let's give them a round of applause. (Applause)

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

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction before my statement?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. MACKAY: Today in the east gallery we are joined by members of the Nova Scotia Boys Under-18 curling team who won the gold medal in their age group last weekend at the Canadian Curling Championships. This team, under the direction of Graeme Weagle, the skip, curls out of the Chester Curling Club in beautiful Chester-St. Margaret's.

I would ask each of the members of the team who are with us today to stand as I call out their names, starting with the skip, Graeme Weagle; third, Owen Purcell; and lead, Scott Weagle. Unfortunately, fourth member Jeffrey Meagher and coach Anthony Purcell are unable to be with us today, but I would ask all members of the House to give our guests a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

TEAM WEAGLE: CDN. U18 CURLING CHAMPS. - CONGRATS.

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, obviously I rise today to congratulate skip Graeme Weagle and his team for this past weekend, who won the gold medal at the Canadian Under-18 Boys and Girls Curling Championships held in Saint Andrews, New Brunswick.

Graeme, who played his last game in the Under-18 category of this event, has curled out of the Chester Curling Club for a decade. Team Weagle also includes as mentioned: third Owen Purcell, second Jeffrey Meagher, and lead Scott Weagle. Their coach is Anthony Purcell.

Team Weagle played 11 tournaments leading up to this big championship. In the playoffs, the team won four straight matches and in the final, they beat Alberta 10-6 for the gold medal.

I ask the members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Graeme and his team members on winning the gold medal at the Canadian Under-18 Boys Championship for 2018.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

CULLODEN CEREMONY: HONOURING HISTORY - THANKS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the 37th annual Battle of Culloden commemoration ceremony will take place on Saturday, April 21st at the Culloden Memorial Cairn in Knoydart, Pictou County. Bill McVicar, one of the organizers, often speaks about the Battle of Culloden which occurred 272 years ago.

The annual celebration attracts visitors from across Nova Scotia and honours that particular battle and the subsequent migration of Scots to the shores of our province, including along the Northumberland Strait, where the Culloden Memorial Cairn stands. Young Gaelic students under the tutelage of teacher Brian MacDonald will participate in the annual tradition.

We thank the organizers for allowing Nova Scotians and visitors from around the world the opportunity to celebrate the rich history of our province.

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

LANGILLE, ABBIE: VOLLEYBALL IN FRANCE - CONGRATS.

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, a Truro teen has been invited to play in an overseas tournament with Canada's deaf volleyball team in May. Abbie Langille, who will be 16 next month, was born deaf. That aspect of her world changed, however, when she received her first cochlear implant at 13 months and a second one at age eight, which gives her the ability to hear. She has adjusted well with her implants, her mother Kristen says.

Besides being an awesome student, she has always been athletic. After playing volleyball since she was a young child, Abbie currently plays with the Truro Cougars Volleyball Club, but depending on her performance there, she could have the possibility of going on to international tournaments. Meanwhile, she has been invited to participate in a tournament in France on May 15th, and she's the only player east of Toronto to be added to the lineup.

Congratulations to Abbie Langille.

[1:30 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: May I be permitted to make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. PORTER: In the east gallery today, from home, we have a couple of gentlemen with us, Mr. Tony Quinn and his dad, Rick. If they would stand and get a warm welcome from the members of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

QUINN FLOORING: 75th ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, Quinn Family Flooring in Windsor is indeed a family business, spanning three generations.

It's too bad Reg couldn't be with us. He's still with us; he's 91 years old - he'll be 92 in November. He started this business in 1942, Quinn Family Flooring, and then sold the business to his son Richard who, in turn, sold it to his son Tony. Both of those gentlemen being with us today is a great thing.

Quinn Family Flooring has become a well-known successful business, employing local people and providing residential and commercial customers with hardwood, vinyl, ceramic, laminate, carpet, and so much more. They celebrate 75 years in businesses this year, 2018. I want to congratulate them on celebrating this wonderful milestone and wish them all the best for many more years.

Tony, you've got a long way to go yet. Reg started in 1942 - 91 years and going. I'm sure we have a long way to go yet.

It's great to have you operating in Windsor for so many years employing lots of local people. Welcome to the House. Thanks for being here with us today.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

KENNEY, JESSICA: SERV. TO INTL. SPORTS EVENTS - COMMEND

MR. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Dartmouth East resident Jessica Kenney, who is currently on the Gold Coast of Australia and just finished her work at the Commonwealth Games as a spectator services supervisor in the Cerarra Project.

Although it's hard to keep Jessica in one place for too long, she will always be a Dartmouth girl at heart. Having spent most of her life volunteering and working at regional, national, and international events including the Canada Games and the World Track and Field Championships, I have no doubt that Jessica did a phenomenal job and provided calm and guidance to her volunteer team.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure Jessica had the time of her life, and I look forward to hearing about her experience - that is, if I can catch her before she jets off on her next adventure.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

EMERGING LENS: 8th ANN. FILM FEST. - THANKS

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Charles Taylor Theatre and Media Arts Association for once again bringing the Emerging Lens Film Festival to Nova Scotia. The mandate of the association is to educate, empower, and inspire by showcasing the work of African Canadian and other cultural filmmakers.

The 8th annual film festival starts tomorrow at the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 and continues with screenings opened by live performances at the North Branch Library, the Central Library, the Black Cultural Centre in Cherry Brook, and at Ward 1 Social and Cultural Centre in New Glasgow.

Begun by Tara Taylor and Shelley Fashan in 2010, the festival has grown in scope and audience, and I thank all the organizers for their work in bringing Nova Scotians this important cultural event.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Portland Valley.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. INCE: With us in the east gallery, the gallery opposite to me, are Mark Connors and his mother Avril Ferguson-Connors, his dad Wayne Connors, and his aunt Paulette Jackson. His sister Alexis Ferguson was going to be here, but she put her priorities in place and she's doing her exams today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the House to welcome the Connors family as well as the community members who came here to support Mr. Connors and the family. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Portland Valley.

CONNORS, MARK: YOUNG ROLE MODEL - RECOGNIZE

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, Mark Connors is a 12-year-old Grade 7 student who plays hockey, baseball, and tennis, and also volunteers.

He has a passion for hockey, especially playing goalie. Mark's coaches describe him as having an infectious laugh, genuine happiness, and competitiveness that makes him a special person to be at the rink and enjoyable to his teammates and coaches.

Mr. Speaker, Mark recently shared with Nova Scotians some of his experiences as an African Nova Scotian, experiences that still far too many Nova Scotians can relate to. Mark talked about his experiences with maturity and a strength of character. These are the

high standards of personal behaviour and values that we have learned through participating in sport. These are the qualities one must have to succeed, not only in sport, but in life. This reminds us that we have a role to play in addressing discrimination, and ensuring sport - and all activities and facets of life - are inclusive and welcoming for all of us.

Mark's goal is to one day be a starting goaltender for the Jamaican Men's Olympic Hockey Team. (Applause) He also wishes to attend university and pursue a career in architecture, as well as being an airline pilot.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the members of the House to join me in recognizing Mark Connors for being an inspiring individual, and a young role model to Nova Scotians. We wish him the best in pursuing his dreams and goals. (Standing Ovation)

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

YOUTH EXPO.: BREAKING DOWN SOC. DETERMINANTS - THANKS

MR. LARRY HARRISON: I would like to highlight an important event coming up this Saturday, April 21st. The Youth Expo, organized by the Nova Scotia Women That Hunt Fundraising Association, is a wonderful, well-received event, now in its third year at the Don Henderson Memorial Sportsplex.

The goal of the Youth Expo is to break down as many social determinants as possible, so that youth of all ages walk away connected to new ideas, community programs, and resources. Run by volunteers and students, youth attend for free and could go from climbing a 28-foot wall, to using the jaws of life, to making their own maple syrup, or riding a mechanical bull. Contrary to what the advertisement may say, I have given up bull riding.

I wish to thank all the volunteer students and the Nova Scotia Women That Hunt for their outstanding efforts and dedication in getting this event organized, and wish them all a very successful event this Saturday.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MAYWORKS FEST.: SOC. JUSTICE THEME - CONGRATS.

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the Mayworks Halifax Festival, which this year is coming up on May 1st to May 12th at the Bus Stop Theatre.

The first annual Mayworks Festival took place in 2009, thanks to the organizing efforts and volunteers in the labour movement in Nova Scotia. The festival has since grown

from year to year, and has now become Nova Scotia's largest social justice-themed cultural event.

Centred around May 1st, International Workers Day, the festival is a multi-disciplinary one, and this year will feature photography, film, theatre, dance, and music, with roots in the struggle of workers and other marginalized communities.

Under the Surface is a photo exhibit that challenges our notions of home. Heavy is a solo play that explores body shaming, obesity, and eating disorders. The Sankofa Singer/Songwriter Circle will feature music by four African Nova Scotian women, and pay tribute to the incredible quartet Four the Moment, and the programming goes on and on.

I would like to congratulate the festival organizers on an exciting and challenging lineup and encourage all members of this House to get out to an event or two throughout the festival.

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

TIM HORTONS, DIGBY: SMILE COOKIE CAMPAIGN - RECOGNIZE

MR. GORDON WILSON: Every year for a week in September, Smile Cookies are sold in Tim Hortons across the country, and the proceeds are donated to charities and organizations in the communities where the cookies are sold. For the past two years, Teresa and Chris Joyce, the owners of Tim Hortons in Digby, donated these funds to the Digby & Area Health Services Foundation, an organization formed to maintain and improve health services in the Digby area.

The foundation, which had a large role in building our new health centre, is now focused on getting a new ultrasound machine for the hospital. The reality is that the initiatives of the foundation presently have, or will, at some point, have an impact on the lives of the Digby area residents. This is the reason the Joyces have chosen to donate to this foundation again this year.

I would like to recognize and thank Teresa and Chris Joyce for their support in our community and its organizations, through initiatives such as the Tim Hortons' Smile Cookie campaign.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

WHITE, JOHNNY: TEACHER OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, there are good teachers, there are great teachers, and then there's Johnny White.

Johnny White is a fantastic teacher, making a difference in the lives of many, many students, and the Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board recognized Johnny this year as the board's recipient of the 2018 Teacher of the Year.

I've had a chance to spend some time with Johnny and a number of his students and I can tell the positive atmosphere he surrounds them with. They really look up to this guy and he's definitely making a difference in the lives of the students he touches.

I want to take this moment to congratulate Johnny on that tremendous acknowledgement and award, it's well-earned, and keep going, keep doing what you're doing, Johnny.

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

INTL. DANCE DAY: ACCESSIBILITY - PROMOTE

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, in 2012 Canada declared April 22nd to April 29th our annual National Dance Week.

Dance Nova Scotia is the organization that drives the celebrations in this province, and through their encouragement as many as 14,000 Nova Scotians will honour this beautiful art form this April by dancing for pleasure, expression, and fitness during National Dance Week.

Dare to Dance, the component targeting our schools, is acknowledged nationally as the single most successful National Dance Week program in the country. This is something that every member of this House should be proud of and strive to expand. As Vivine Scarlett, dance artist and this year's Canadian Ambassador for International Dance Day has so eloquently remarked: Dance is a vehicle that it lends itself to learning about one's self, it helps us move through life's experiences by expressing our stories and our history, by commenting on our present, and nurturing our future.

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

IISE, DAL. CHAPTER: DELEGATES, ANN. CONF. - CONGRATS.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, from January 25th to January 28th, the Institute of Industrial and Systems Engineers Dalhousie Chapter headed to the University of Windsor for the IISE Canadian University Regional Annual Conference. The IISE was founded in 1948 with the desire to help solve complex problems and aid organizations in aerospace, health care, forestry, finance, and education, to name a few.

This delegation from Dalhousie University took part in this leadership opportunity to compete on the national stage to deliver insight and suggestions to real world scenarios.

Congratulations to the IISE Dalhousie Chapter, on its successful trip.

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

**RENNEHAN, ASHLEY/HOPKINS, DANIEL:
SPECIAL OLYMPIANS 2018 - CONGRATS.**

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Special Olympians Ashley Rennehan and Daniel Hopkins. These athletes will be representing Shelburne County in the Special Olympics Canada 2018 Summer Games being hosted in Antigonish from July 31st to August 4th.

Over 3,000 spectators, in addition to over 900 athletes, 290 coaches, officials, mission staff, and 600 volunteers, are expected at this event. Rennehan will be competing in the 1,500-metre running long jump and shot put event, and Hopkins will be participating in the 200-metre, 400-metre, and shot put.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Ashley and Daniel on reaching this national event for their first time. We wish them well and are very proud of their accomplishments so far as Special Olympians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

COMMON GOOD SOLUTIONS: NEW LOCATION - WELCOME

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome Common Good Solutions to Halifax Needham. This social enterprise consulting company, and secretariat for the social enterprise sector strategy, moved to Cunard Street earlier this month, upstairs from the Cunard Street Children's Centre, where social enterprise developer Rodney Small once went to daycare.

Common Good Solutions helps develop businesses that respect their local communities and the lives of their customers and employees. Through their move to Cunard Street, they've helped to ensure that the Cunard Street Children's Centre will be able to stay put under a secure roof.

I am sure Common Good Solutions will be a valued neighbour and member of Halifax Needham.

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

[1:45 p.m.]

DENIM DAY: SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS - COMMEND

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share a campaign being organized by New Harbour native Jessica Simms-Barss and her colleagues at the Strait Area Women's Place, in recognition of Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month.

On April 25th, all are invited to wear denim on Denim Day to bring attention to the injustice that sexual assault survivors endure from not being believed. The inspiration for the theme comes from an Italian court case that saw a rape conviction overturned because the court believed that the victim must have given consent due to her jeans being too tight.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the work that is being done by Jessica and the staff at the Strait Area Women's Place, and thank them for raising awareness and being active in the fight to prevent sexual assault.

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

LEE, LISA: GEMSTONE JEWELRY AT CANNES - RECOGNIZE

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize North Sydney resident Lisa Lee, who is marketing her line of healing gemstone jewellery all the way to the Cannes Film Festival. Lisa has been chosen to be part of the gifting suite for this event since she was so well received at the Golden Globes. Her jewellery, which is Reiki-inspired for stress reduction and relaxation, uses gemstones and crystals. These creations are handcrafted by a Cape Breton Reiki healer and are now in great demand.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish Lisa Lee a great deal of success as industry leaders in film and entertainment support her creations all around the world.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

CONSTITUENCY OFFICE STAFF - THANKS

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, at this late stage in this current legislative sitting, I'd like to thank three very hard-working people in the Dartmouth North community: the staff of the MLA constituency office.

Richard Helpard is working on outreach projects. He's new to our team in Dartmouth North, but he has dived into his work with great commitment and is already attending many community meetings and doing research about the great things happening in Dartmouth.

Joanna Hilchie is working part-time on casework in our office. She's a bright light of kindness and generosity to the people she meets, and her work is invaluable to so many.

Last but definitely not least is my constituency assistant, Kelly Wilson. Kelly, with her years of experience working in constituency offices, is an amazing wealth of knowledge and support to both me and the many, many people who come through our doors looking for help and assistance. I am so grateful for her wisdom and hard work.

Kelly, Joanna, and Richard are truly present in the heart of Dartmouth North, and I am grateful for all they do for me and for the people of our community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

R.A.C.E. RUN: INTL. FUNDRAISER - THANKS

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, last year I recognized Armdale's Fleur O'Connor, who organized a fundraising run in Halifax and welcomed a young runner from Kenya to our province for an unforgettable cultural exchange. This year, the R.A.C.E. Run will take place once more, this time inspired by an idea from Fleur's younger brother, Yale.

Through Johana Kariankei, an elite Kenyan runner and family friend of the O'Connors, Yale became aware of a small village school in Kenya where children were left without a recreational field due to nearby agricultural development. Johana has offered to donate a parcel of land to the school. However, the land needs levelling, fencing, and equipment in order to be used for running and soccer. Yale has stepped up to help fundraise to meet those needs, and this year's R.A.C.E. Run will be a fun part of those efforts.

I encourage residents across HRM to take part in this year's run on April 22nd, and I want to thank Yale O'Connor for his spirit and generosity.

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: Please do.

MS. PAON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to point out some fine folks who I've had come all the way from Cape Breton-Richmond today to be supportive of me in this House, for which I thank you so much, to honour the memory of their mother, Marie Elizabeth Cole, otherwise known to those she loved as Liz - Liz Cole.

I'd like to introduce, one at a time, five of her six children, if you could please stand: Nancy Day, Catherine Warner, Michelle Cole, Beryl Boudreau, and last but not least

- because we like to have the women come first sometimes - their brother, Robert Cole.
(Applause)

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

COLE, MARY ELIZABETH: DEATH OF - APOLOGIZE

MS. ALANA PAON: I rise today to honour the life of Marie Elizabeth (Liz) Cole, who died peacefully after her battle with cancer on March 7, 2018.

Liz's story of palliative care is not unlike others who face terminal illness. A lack of dedicated beds, supplies, and other resources caused Liz to spend her final days in the emergency room at the Strait Richmond Hospital. She was moved three times because the bed she was occupying was needed. Staff worked tirelessly to accommodate her and her family, and the growing need for palliative care. However, Liz still had to be moved within the ER.

Through it all, Liz remained her cordial and compassionate self, and thanked the nurses for helping her. Each time she asked forgiveness for being a burden for their work.

Mr. Speaker, today I stand here to extend my personal apology to the late Liz Cole and her family, and the children present, for facing such dire circumstances during the end of her life's journey.

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

PROSPECT COM. CTR.: PRESERVING ACADIAN CULTURE - THANKS

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Merci, Monsieur le Président. J'aimerais reconnaître le personnel du centre communautaire de Prospect et les habitants acadiens et francophones de Prospect.

En 1982, le premier ministre, Richard Hatfield, a consacré le 15 août comme étant le jour de la fête nationale des Acadiens. L'été dernière, le centre communautaire de Prospect a accueilli la communauté sa propre soirée mondaine.

Avec de la nourriture traditionnelle acadienne, de la musique enjouée, et les vendeurs du coin, la soirée s'est bien passée.

Je demanderais que les députés de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi pour remercier le personnel du centre communautaire de Prospect et les habitants de la région pour leur dévouement à la conversation dans la langue française et la culture acadienne.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

SOAR: POVERTY ADVOCACY - COMMEND

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize the SOAR Community Health Board and its chairman, Mr. Bill Shurman. The board covers Springhill, Oxford, and the Amherst region, and they gathered in Amherst recently to discuss poverty in our community. They looked at poverty through a policy lens to discover ways to address the issue in our region.

Together they discussed new ways to approach poverty in hopes of creating change. They are looking for new ways to make life better for the citizens in our region. These citizens are important to our community, and this group of people is looking for new ways to help.

I applaud their work in this important and overwhelming problem of poverty in Amherst, and in Cumberland County, and across the entire Province of Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**O'NEILL, CARMEN - PHYSICIAN:
ACADIA UNIV. DISTING. ALUMNI - CONGRATS.**

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Carmen O'Neill, a resident of Lunenburg West and a leader and mentor in the health care system in our community, across the province, and internationally. Dr. O'Neill and her husband, Dr. Everette Weagle, have been family practitioners for 25 years. Dr. O'Neill volunteers with Harbour House, offering support and comfort to women and children victims of abuse. She is an advisory board member for 811 Nova Scotia, and an active supporter and participant in Global Brigades, providing volunteer medical support to under-resourced communities in Honduras.

This past week, Dr. O'Neill was recognized for her work as Acadia University's Distinguished Alumni 2018 for her collective work in health care. Dr. O'Neill and Dr. Weagle's proudest accomplishments lies in the eyes and hearts of their daughters, Kirsten and Rachael, who are both pursuing degrees in medicine.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to congratulate Dr. O'Neill on her collective accomplishments, and recognition as Acadia University's Distinguished Alumni 2018.

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

HARE, MARJORIE: MEMBER, IODE - THANKS

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge my mother, Marjorie Hare, who, for the past 68 years, was a member of the I.O.D.E., which stands for the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire.

After 68 years, she and other members of the Order finally had to close down the chapter because at their ripe old age, in their 80s, they had done all the volunteer work they could do. But my mother and my father, along with other members of my family, have done an awful lot of volunteer work through the church and through all of the organizations that she belongs to.

I would like to say a special shout-out to her today, and I hope she feels better soon.

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

2nd BEAVER BANK CUBS: SUPPORT FOR BEACON HOUSE - THANKS

MR. BILL HORNE: I rise today to recognize the 2nd Beaver Bank Cubs, made up of boys and girls between the ages of 8 and 10, who spent the early part of this year fundraising for the community.

Through their fundraising, they were able to purchase supplies and deliver 50 hygiene kits to Beacon House in Lower Sackville.

When delivering the donation to Beacon House, the Cubs were given a tour by Rod Rowlands, Beacon House General Manager. He spoke to the group about how the food bank works and helps the community. He answered all the great questions the Cubs had, and it was a very successful visit.

Mr. Speaker, the 2nd Beaver Bank Cubs learned first-hand about giving back to those who are less fortunate. Thank you to the Cubs and their leaders for supporting our community.

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

JAMIESON, CHRISTINE: SPECIAL OLYMPICS YOUTH PROG. - THANKS

MR. BRAD JOHNS: April 15th to April 21st is National Volunteer Week, where Canadians take time to recognize the contributions of volunteers in their community.

Mr. Speaker, I want to rise today to thank Christine Jamieson, the Volunteer Coordinator and Fundamentals Coach for the Sackville Bedford Special Olympics, and all the dedicated volunteers who help to make the fundamental programs a success. It's thanks

to their dedication, compassion, and hard work that the program is the largest Special Olympics youth program in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Volunteers like Christine and her team juggle school, work, and other extracurricular activities with their volunteer hours in fundamentals. As a result, athletes gain more confidence, learn to share and work on a team, and master an athletic skill. I thank them and salute them for all their hard work.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HOCKEY FUNDRAISER FOR HUMBOLDT - SUPPORT

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, this coming weekend, Team Dave Wilson will face off against Team Brendan Maguire in a hockey game to raise funds for the Humboldt hockey team to purchase new hockey gear, which they lost in the recent tragic accident.

This game came together quickly. I would like to thank Kinnon Kendziora; Kristen Reid; Jill Saulnier; Troy Ryan; ex-NHLer Donald MacLean; Cory Hendsbee - excuse me, Mr. Speaker, there is a list of people we want to thank - Randy MacLean, who is the current VP of the Humboldt Broncos; Morgan Watts, who played for the Broncos from 1987 to 1988; Mike Johnson, who played from 1996 to 1997; Kurt Walsh, who played for the Owen Sound Platters from 1995 to 1997; Cory Booker; Kevin Grant; Hal from the Halifax Mooseheads; and a whole host of people for making this happen.

I want to thank MLA Mr. Wilson for stepping up to get beat on Saturday. We encourage everyone to show up.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I would just like to remind the honourable member not to refer to members opposite by their proper name.

The honourable member for Pictou West.

WILLOW HOUSE INN: NEW OWNERS - CONGRATS.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate the new enthusiastic owners of the Willow House Inn in Pictou. Brenda Burton and George Castelo are now the new owners. This historic building was first built in 1840 for David Matheson, who became the town's first mayor.

After Brenda and George visited their daughter at Dalhousie University, the idea to move east took form. George, originally from Toronto, and Brenda, originally from Yarmouth, were captivated by the Pictou area as soon as they stepped off the P.E.I. ferry.

I want to give a hearty Pictou West welcome, and wish them the best of luck in their business operations going forward. It is great to see fresh faces in Pictou with a desire to contribute to the local community and economy.

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

MSMS: FISH FRIENDS PROG. - RECOGNIZE

MR. BEN JESSOME: Today I will recognize Mrs. Aucoin's Grade 6 students at Madeline Symonds Middle School for their participation in Fish Friends, an exciting program being offered by the Atlantic Salmon Federation.

The students, under the guidance of Mrs. Aucoin, will be raising fish from fertilized eggs, before releasing them into a local stream. The experience will integrate many subject areas, including science, math, language, and visual arts. Throughout the program, students will learn about life cycles, controlling egg incubation, food webs, and more. Mr. Speaker, this is a wonderful opportunity that has been offered to these students and our school.

I would ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking the Atlantic Salmon Federation for offering this program, and to congratulate Madeline Symonds Middle School for being chosen to partake, and wish them best of luck on their experiment.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East with 45 seconds.

HAPPY SMILES DENTAL: GIFT FROM THE HEART - THANKS

MR. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Happy Smiles Dental Hygiene in Dartmouth East.

Happy Smiles is one of the two Dartmouth locations that participated in Gift from the Heart on April 7th. This national event provides dental hygiene services to those in need at no cost. I'm proud of all 11 Nova Scotian locations that participated in this important event. Of course, I'm very proud of, and want to send sincere thanks to, all the registered dental hygienists who have donated their time and service to this very worthy cause.

I ask all members of this House to thank Happy Smiles and all other participants in Gift from the Heart for their generosity and kindness to those in need.

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM. - INT. SERV.: PRIVATE INFO. - RESPONSIBILITY

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, the fallout from the FOIPOP leak continues to grow, unfortunately. We are hearing from victims who have been notified by the Department of Internal Services, and we are learning that a class action suit against the province is possible - but I want to speak to a more specific area of this leak, and that is how it actually happened.

The Department of Internal Services placed the private personal information of Nova Scotians on a public website without the security of a password or an encryption, and we know that this private and personal information was not identified by a professional hacker.

So, can the Premier tell us if it is the responsibility of the Department of Internal Services to protect the private personal information it has collected?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, any time personal information is given, whether it's to government or any other organization, it's up to those organizations to protect it.

In this case, Mr. Speaker, we are looking at how this happened, how this information was downloaded through a site. It's our understanding that codes had to be changed, and then the information was downloaded thereafter. We have turned the IP address over, the police are doing their investigation, we've taken down the site, and before that site goes up we'll make sure that it is secure.

MS. MACFARLANE: On January 16, 2017, the Department of Internal Services issued a press release about the FOIPOP portal that said personal or confidential business information would not be released online. On this commitment, the department failed, as the information was released.

On September 28th, in a press release about the FOIPOP portal, the minister was quoted as saying, "We will continue to strengthen our access and privacy practices to improve transparency and accountability." The department failed to do this and there has been no accountability. The department said both of these things while private personal information was easily available online.

In this government, is the minister considered to be responsible for the actions, inaction, omission of the department and its officials?

THE PREMIER: I can't tell you how proud I am of the way that Minister Arab has handled this file before us, Mr. Speaker.

Immediately upon knowing, identifying that there was a potential breach of this portal, we brought it down, her staff went through the appropriate channels, Mr. Speaker, we called in the right partners, now it's in their hands. Our job now is to ensure that before that portal goes up that all of the information on that will be safe.

MS. MACFARLANE: I would like to read a quote, Mr. Speaker: "Internal Services should continue to implement robust cybersecurity and privacy programs that protect Nova Scotians . . ." That quote actually came from the mandate letter addressed to the minister, dated September 2017 and signed by this Premier. Protect Nova Scotians, that was the mandate this Premier gave to his minister. It is up to him to either hold his ministers accountable, or signal that his mandates are optional.

So, I will ask the Premier, does he believe the minister failed to meet his mandate that he gave, or did he decide that his mandates are optional?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the honourable member, and all Nova Scotians, this minister not only met my mandate, she has met the mandate and the expectations of Nova Scotians, quite frankly.

What she did, Mr. Speaker, immediately upon seeing there was an issue, was notified there was an issue, that site came down, there was an assessment, the appropriate information was turned over to the appropriate officials, and it is now in their hands to continue that process. Our job now is to ensure that before that site goes up, it is protected.

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

PREM. - RURAL & REMOTE MED. CONF.: N.S. REP. - LACK EXPLAIN

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, last week physician recruiters from across the country were present for the National Rural and Remote Medicine program in St. John's to make recruiting pitches to the 600 medical students, residents, and family doctors in attendance at the program. Every province and territory was represented there with only one exception - Nova Scotia.

When asked to comment about this, the Nova Scotia Health Authority said the meeting wasn't worth the money. Mr. Speaker, this brings into question - how can it but bring into question - the fundamental competence of the Health Authority's physician recruitment efforts.

So, I'd like to ask the Premier, how can people put faith in his government's claims to be on top of the doctor shortage file, when Nova Scotia is the only province not to show up at a major recruiting event?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for his thoughtful question. The fact is, I am as upset as he is about this very issue.

I contacted the Minister of Health and Wellness to ensure that he reaches out to the Health Authority, because it is unacceptable that this province is the only Canadian province not at this event.

MR. BURRILL: Then this morning, Mr. Speaker, we learned that the Department of Health and Wellness is being taken to court by the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is seeking information related to a complaint about the forcible confinement and neglect of an intellectually-disabled person, and the Department of Health and Wellness is refusing to co-operate with the investigation by the Ombudsman's Office, citing privacy concerns and their view that the Ombudsman doesn't have jurisdiction in the matter.

I'd like to ask the Premier, when his government's Department of Health and Wellness refuses to co-operate even with the Ombudsman, can the Premier understand why an awful lot of people would then look at the government and the Department of Health and Wellness and wonder what in the world is going on here?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't know the details of the specific case the honourable member is referring to. I know there are often times when there are third parties looking for information of individuals that is not released without the authorization of that individual or those families. They can release it to them.

I want to go back to his first question about the fact that it is unacceptable that the Province of Nova Scotia is the only province in Canada that doesn't show up when it comes to recruiting physicians.

MR. BURRILL: The government's ongoing handling of health care continues to be baffling and troubling to an awful lot of people. When we look for listening, we get dictation; when we look for openness, we get closed doors; when we look for investment, we get penny-pinching.

Here's the question, what does the Premier say to the hundreds of seniors who are waiting for long-term placement and the thousands of people whose ERs in their communities are closed and the 100,000 people who don't have a family doctor, all of whom are registering a deep disappointment in his government's work on the health care file?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank the honourable member for his thoughtful question. I want to remind him that we've continued to eliminate the home care list across our province and that many seniors are telling us they want to be able to remain at home as long as possible. We continue to make those investments. Working with our partners around long-term care, we've been able to cut that wait-list in half. (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: I'll start over again, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to tell the honourable member I thank him for his very thoughtful question. The fact of the matter is, we continue to invest in home care in every one of our budgets. Our seniors tell us they want to receive that investment. (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for his question. I want to go back and tell him that every budget we have invested in home care to continue to make sure people receive the care they wanted. We've reduced the long-term care wait-list by half. We're continuing to make - for caregivers, investing in family caregivers who are looking after loved ones at home.

We know there's more work to do. We're thankful for those Nova Scotians who are working with us to find solutions to the challenges faced in this province.

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

H&W - RURAL MED. CONF.: N.S. REP. - LACK EXPLAIN

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. I was going to stand up and say that I was shocked to learn that the Nova Scotia Health Authority failed to send any recruiters to the rural medicine conference in St. John's, which was attended by 600 medical students, residents and family doctors, but I'm not shocked. I'm saddened and I'm frustrated, but I'm not shocked. I'm not shocked because it's the practice of the Nova Scotia Health Authority to make decisions that reinforce their own self-importance.

Mr. Speaker, it's so simple: we need doctors here. There are doctors over there at meetings who want to go other places. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is, what excuse can the minister possibly offer for why Nova Scotia wasn't represented at that conference?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: As the member would know, we agree that that conference and the NSHA should be looking at every opportunity to recruit physicians and

primary care providers to the Province of Nova Scotia and we look forward to working with them to do so.

MR. MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we need doctors in Nova Scotia. We need specialists, we need family doctors, we need locums. We need to go where the doctors are and we need to go where our competitors are. Make no mistake, we are in a competition with every province in Canada and every jurisdiction around the world. The Yukon even sent recruiters to this, and Nova Scotia didn't. It's beyond comprehension.

There's even a boat that runs from our province to Newfoundland and Labrador. Now I'm sure that my colleague the member for Northside-Westmount would be happy to tell the minister and the members of the NSHA how to get there - and if he doesn't, I'd be happy to tell them where to go.

My question for the minister is simple, is the minister really prepared to tell Nova Scotians that St. John's is too far and that \$8,000 is too much for the province to invest in trying to get doctors. Next year the conference is here, he can put it out on the sidewalk - it won't cost him anything

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, our commitment to recruitment maintains, and that is why we have expanded working with our Department of Immigration. The opportunity to recruit not just national, but internationally (Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

MR. DELOREY: As I said, we want the NSHA to take every opportunity to recruit primary care providers to the Province of Nova Scotia. Whether they are national, international, or our own graduates here in the Province of Nova Scotia, we expect them to do the same and I will be bringing that up with representatives of the NSHA at the next meeting.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

PREM. - PERSONAL INFO.: RESPONSIBILITY - ACCEPT

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, in 2015, the Auditor General told this government that the computer systems, managed for them by Unisys, needed improvement in order to meet security standards. The Auditor General found that monthly reports were not being reviewed and things that were supposed to take place were not occurring.

The Premier has pointed in many directions since the release of this private information of hundreds of people in our province. He has pointed towards police; he has pointed towards the young man into whose possession this information came. But what he

has not done is what the people would look to a Premier, in fact, to do - he has not accepted responsibility for this problem.

I wish to ask him squarely, will the Premier accept responsibility for the government's failure to properly look after the personal information of the people of the province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the member referred to the Auditor General who laid out a number of conditions in and around all of the IT sector, and we continue to make investments in our budget to continue to improve the security in and around the things the Auditor General brought up, but as the honourable member refers to the most recent breach, I - of course, Mr. Speaker, I am as upset about this as every Nova Scotian is.

The minister responded in a way to pull down that information as quickly as possible and turn it over to the authorities. They will do what they believe is appropriate at this time. Our job now is to continue to make sure that we secure the information that is there and make sure that before that site is up, it is safe.

MR. BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, what the Premier's response overlooks is that his government was told to improve the Unisys-managed computer system in order to protect the integrity and confidentiality of this very data; that is to say the government was previously aware of this problem.

First of all, the information that was released was not the information that was hacked; it was taken from a system much like an unlocked file cabinet sitting out on the sidewalk.

There is a standard for the handling of public affairs and the government's handling of this issue certainly appears to have fallen short, so I want to ask the Premier, plainly, does his government's securing of the personal information of the people of the province meet his standards for competence and adequate performance?

THE PREMIER: In answer to the question, I want to tell him, Mr. Speaker, that the breach that took place is not acceptable to our government and it is not acceptable to me. That is why I am proud of the minister for pulling that site down immediately upon finding that, and we will work with our service provider to find out exactly what happened.

In the meantime, we did the appropriate thing. We called the right authorities to deal with the issue, we pulled down that site, and will make sure that the breach will not happen again.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

JUSTICE - POULIN, MARC: TRAGEDY - PUBLIC INQUIRY

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. A news story on Monday reveals some troubling details about a recent tragedy in Springhill - and I will table the story.

A family member told a reporter about Marc Poulin's frustration over his repeated attempts to get help from Veterans Affairs for PTSD. In a heartbreaking note, after a failed suicide attempt, Poulin wrote that he was happy he wasn't going to be another soldier who happened to fall through the cracks in support for assistance for veterans.

This is the second tragedy of this sort in the province and there is already an inquiry under way.

My question is, will the minister ask the chief medical examiner to include this Springhill tragedy in the public inquiry into the Lionel Desmond situation?

[2:15 p.m.]

MR. FUREY: Our hearts and thoughts go out to the families, Mr. Speaker, who were victims in the Springhill circumstances. These are devastating circumstances to our veterans and to their extended family members.

We're aware of these circumstances, there has been reference to an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, for these family members to participate in the upcoming inquiry and we will follow through, to ensure they are aware of that process.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotian veterans have told us they need help. They have told their provincial government that their unique medical needs are not being met by the system, and they proposed a walk-in clinic model that the Premier and other Liberals have said they agree with. Yet, funding for the clinic was not contained in this year's budget.

So, my question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is, will the minister get started on a clinic to help our veterans, and work out responsibility for the cost with his federal cousins later?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: As the member noted in his question, of course, we recognize the importance and the opportunity being presented here. I certainly thank the veterans who have brought this proposal forward. I've met with them and reviewed the details. We recognized that more work needed to be done to flesh-out exactly, as the member mentioned, the financial aspects of the proposal. That work is under way within the department, Mr. Speaker, and that will inform the next meeting I have with the Minister

of Veterans Affairs on this topic as well. So, again, we're still looking forward to moving forward in this regard.

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

JUSTICE - LALO, CESAR: VICTIMS' CASES - DELAY

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Cesar Lalo is the most prolific sex offender in our province's history. Dozens of children's lives were ruined by his conduct while he was a government employee. The Supreme Court of Nova Scotia has concluded, on two occasions, that the government is responsible, yet victims of Lalo's abuse continued to be met with lengthy delays and conflict in their efforts to be compensated by the government for the horrible suffering they endured while under its supervision.

Cases are now taking more than two years to resolve, and some claims have been waiting for more than six months for the Department of Justice to simply respond. What will the Minister of Justice do to ensure that claims made by victims of sexual abuse, while under government supervision, are dealt with respectfully and in a timely manner?

HON. MARK FUREY: The circumstances she referred to are just atrocious and horrendous, Mr. Speaker, and in today's society it's simply unacceptable. I'm not familiar with the specific circumstances of what my colleague is speaking about, but there is a process. There are legal elements attached to these discussions, and I'm confident that the Legal Services Division, within the Department of Justice, are working as efficiently and effectively as they can, with representatives to ensure these matters proceed.

MS. MACFARLANE: The problem is that they're not proceeding quickly enough, and in 2002, in his independent review of the government's response to institutional abuse, Justice Fred Kaufman recommended an approach to abuse claims that is flexible and able to settle obvious claims, and able to dispute the issue of damages in a way that is respectful. Sixteen years later, though, the Department of Justice is taking a very adversarial approach, and many lengthy delays for the victims. Despite court decisions to the contrary, the government is denying liability for the actions of sex offenders like Cesar Lalo and moving abuse claims to trial. This is unfortunate and it revictimizes.

When will the Minister of Justice ensure that institutional abuse victims in Nova Scotia are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve when seeking compensation from this government?

MR. FUREY: I certainly recognize the trauma and the revictimization that my colleague speaks to in these circumstances. These are the most horrific types of circumstances, Mr. Speaker, for victims to have to deal with. I want to assure my colleague that the Department of Justice - within the process, and working with representatives of

those victims - will continue to advance these matters as efficiently and as effectively as they possibly can.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

H&W: OMBUDSMAN COURT CASE - EXPLAIN

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. On April 10th, the Ombudsman filed a notice with the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal. The Ombudsman is asking the court to determine whether the Ombudsman can compel the production of unredacted documents from the Department of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Speaker, the Ombudsman is an independent Officer of the Legislature, not just any old third party. Under the Public Inquiries Act, Nova Scotia's Ombudsman has the same power as the Supreme Court to compel witnesses to produce documents.

I would like to ask the minister today, why is the minister's department forcing the Ombudsman to go to court to see unredacted documents?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Of course we want to work with the Ombudsman's Office. The legislation in place respecting the protection of personal health information doesn't provide an exemption. If the Ombudsman was in a position to provide the appropriate permissions to access that information, we would certainly be forthright in delivering that information to his office.

Mr. Speaker, in the current situation, there is consideration of legal matters. In fact, the court is exactly the place to have that interpretation clarified.

MR. HOUSTON: Oh boy, what lengths this government will go to to protect private information when the Ombudsman is trying to get it. Mr. Speaker, the Premier once boasted that he was going to make Nova Scotia the most open and transparent government in history. How could we have possibly known that he was talking about the FOIPOP portal being the most open in history?

Mr. Speaker, part of the Ombudsman's job is to investigate alleged wrongdoing by the government. I would like to ask, will the minister commit today to saving taxpayers money by simply producing the documents the Ombudsman is asking for?

MR. DELOREY: I assure the member opposite that I'll follow due course with respect to the legislation that governs the privacy of Nova Scotians and the health care Act, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to do that.

Mr. Speaker, if that provision was available, I would certainly work to provide that information to the Ombudsman. At this point, that's not the advice that I have received, that that information can be disclosed based upon that legislation. The court, of course, is the avenue to have clarification and the interpretation of the legislation provided.

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

LAE - ACADIA UNIV.: TUITION INCREASE - EXPLAIN

MS. LENORE ZANN: My question today is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. Last week, in the middle of exam time, students at Acadia University received a surprise from the university and not a welcome one. It wasn't exactly a tweet, which some people like to deliver bad news by.

When they opened their inboxes, an email was waiting for them, informing them that their tuition fees will be 6 per cent higher next term. That's double the 3 per cent cap that's supposed to exist on tuition fee increases in this province.

In 2015, this government told students and their parents quite clearly that universities would have one opportunity to go above the 3 per cent cap, and that opportunity was 2015. My question for the minister is, did the minister tell Acadia University something different than what his government told the public in 2015?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: This was Acadia's one-time market adjustment. They did not do one in 2015.

I would also like to add that in the 6 per cent increase to tuition, 3 per cent of that - half of the increase - is going directly back into student services, and this was done in consultation with students.

MS. ZANN: Well, this government doesn't seem to be very good at consultation because the Acadia Students' Union says they are ". . . disappointed with the lack of communication, and lack of meaningful dialogue around a potential tuition increase." I will table that.

This surprise increase creates uncertainty for both students and parents at Acadia and flies in the face of assurances this government made at the time when it announced the tuition reset.

I have to ask the minister, what is the point of having a cap on tuition fees and tuition fee increases if this Liberal Government is going to let universities circumvent it whenever they see fit?

MR. KOUSOULIS: In terms of the consultation with universities, it was the NDP that did not consult with universities when they put a cap on universities. I will also add that it was the NDP that did not consult with universities when they cut over \$30 million from their budgets and then they expected them to be able to keep tuition below 3 per cent. Mr. Speaker, it's a very simple calculation. When the NDP cut \$30 million, the universities suffered.

What we have done with universities is, every year we have increased their funding. As well, what we have done is, after they were blindsided by having their tuition frozen, we allowed them a one-time market adjustment. That's what Acadia is exercising.

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

PREM. - STRAIT AREA: PALLIATIVE CARE BEDS - COMMIT.

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, Liz Cole suffered from terminal cancer. Sadly, she spent her final days in the emergency room of the Strait Richmond Hospital.

Liz spent six days being shuttled around in the ER. The situation offered Liz and her family no privacy, and it robbed her of her dignity. During her final days, Liz's family, who are here in the House today, tried to shield their mom from the commotion caused by the arrival of ambulances in a busy emergency room. It's a heartbreaking situation.

The Premier has recognized that it is an unacceptable situation, and I am grateful that he has spoken so frankly about it. Liz's children have written a letter to the Premier and the Minister of Health and Wellness outlining their experiences, and I will table that letter today.

My question is, there are 53 people in Richmond trying to access palliative care. The Strait Richmond Palliative Care Society has identified an immediate need for six dedicated palliative care beds. Can the minister commit to getting the Strait area the beds that they need today?

THE PREMIER: As I said last week, Mr. Speaker, it is completely unacceptable that a Nova Scotian looking for end-of-life care is put in the conditions that the honourable member raised in this House.

I spoke to her outside of this House about the report that came in. She tabled it, actually, in this House. I have taken the report and put it in the Department of Health and Wellness to find out exactly what is happening around palliative care.

Strait Richmond and all communities across this province need a myriad of options when it comes to palliative care. Those Nova Scotians who are at the end of their life and their families require the appropriate level of care. It is tough enough to witness a loved

one at the end of their life. It is tough enough for all of us and all Nova Scotians, and the family that is in the gallery, to experience that, but it is completely unacceptable that they'd do that in an environment that is not one that we all want for our own loved ones.

MS. PAON: I met with the Strait Richmond Palliative Care Society yesterday, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to table again the proposal that is the answer for what we need in the Strait area and the Strait Richmond Hospital. It even includes a summary document to make it easier. It's all updated. They have worked tirelessly on this all night.

We have watched people as they suffered, the way Liz Cole and her family suffered, because there are no resources. There's no plan. Well, there is a plan. That's what we need. Who can blame them for being frustrated? We have been asking since 2014.

Will the minister or the honourable Premier direct his staff and the staff of the Nova Scotia Health Authority to make it a priority to meet with the Strait Richmond Palliative Care Society, please?

THE PREMIER: The frustration that the honourable member is bringing to the floor of the House goes back even beyond 2014. The honourable member would know there have been no dedicated palliative care beds in the Strait Richmond Hospital. There have been palliative care beds that ended up being used for acute care. It is unacceptable, the case that the honourable member has brought to this House. It is unacceptable for the families in the gallery and families in Richmond County or any part of our province not to be given the appropriate level of care at the end of life.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for bringing this document to the House. I will ensure that that document arrives in the right hands. I also said to the honourable member outside of this House that I would make sure she had the appropriate meetings at the appropriate time when we look at this document to ensure that the level of care that every Nova Scotia family should expect at their time of need will be in place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

EECD - BASINVIEW DR. SCH.: OVERCROWDING - UPDATE

MR. TIM HALMAN: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. We are now less than three months from the end of the school year, and the minister has yet to provide an update on the overcrowding issue at Basinview Drive in Bedford.

Parents are very concerned that the school has the capacity for 579 students but held 680 students this school year, and this is only one of the schools in the Bedford area that's bursting at the seams. Basinview Drive parents may not find out until June if their

Grades 5 and 6 students are going to be moved to another school or crammed into a portable.

[2:30 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, my question is, why did the minister neglect the situation to the point where parents still don't know if their children will be attending an overcrowded school in September?

MR. CHURCHILL: We have a lot of school communities in the province that are experiencing population pressures. These have come forward, through the regions, to the department. These are informing the capital decisions that we are making. We understand that communities have been waiting for this information, we are working as quickly as possible to provide them with a capital plan.

The extra time we have taken has been to ensure we are doing our best to comply with the recommendations that have come forward from the Auditor General's Office, as well as Dr. Glaze, in relation to better capital planning for the long term.

MR. HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Basinview SAC is scrambling to answer questions from parents about this situation, with no clear direction or information from the minister. The SAC had grave concerns about the interim overcrowding options proposed in February by the HRSB, including split shifts and portables, and I'm happy to table that.

Shortly after the HRSB made recommendations, it was abolished - now parents don't know where to turn. Families are left wondering where the kids will go next school year, teachers are wondering where they will teach, and administration wonders how they'll put together accurate class lists.

Mr. Speaker, my question is, with the elected school boards abolished, when will the minister demonstrate the necessary leadership to get answers for the families of Basinview Drive?

MR. CHURCHILL: I know this is an issue for that community. The member for Bedford has been a dogged advocate for that community and bringing this issue to my attention - more times than I would have liked, actually - but I thank that member and this member.

We know that there are capital pressures across the province, we are working as quickly as we can to ensure that communities have not only a one-year plan that's provided by the province, which has been the long-standing practice, but a multiple-year plan, so that communities know what capital investments are happening in their communities over a number of years.

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

**H&W - VICTORIA CO. MEM. HOSP. (BADDECK): ER CLOSURE -
SERV. ENSURE**

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Well, here we go again: another day that an emergency room was closed in Cape Breton. Earlier last week, and again yesterday, a doctor shortage caused the closure of the emergency department at the Victoria County Memorial Hospital in Baddeck, something that was previously unheard of - until recently.

This is at a time when residents need this ER, because others throughout the CBRM might be closed and residents don't want or can't wait six to eight hours at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital. Unfortunately, this is the continuing saga of the health care crisis in Cape Breton under this government.

My question is, what is the minister doing to ensure that the Baddeck ER, which is almost 100 kilometres away from the Cape Breton Regional Hospital, remains open at all times?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I'm pleased to advise the member, Mr. Speaker, that I actually had the opportunity to visit that site earlier this year. I had an opportunity to sit down with physicians, fantastic physicians, and front-line health care providers in that facility.

They raised these concerns with me at that time, the needs and the pressures at that facility, like in others that were coming. I'm pleased to advise the member that one of the things that's been done through the partnership with the Department of Immigration, in fact, the very first physician coming to Nova Scotia through that program, actually accepted a position at that very facility. I believe, if I recall correctly, they're expected to start in May, so while it's unfortunate timing, we are seeing progress.

MR. BAIN: Well, that's very good, but to add insult to injury, we're now learning that by year's end, the plan is to close lab services at the hospital in Baddeck. Mr. Speaker, taking this important service away for the residents of southern Victoria County is another example of this government's raid on the health care system in Cape Breton - all at a time when the Baddeck hospital has successfully recruited to fill a void that resulted from the retirement of Dr. Carlyle Chow.

Given the fact that many residents are having difficulty finding a doctor in this current climate, the removal or lack of this service - the lab service - wouldn't be much of an incentive for a new doctor to move to the area. My question to the minister is, is it the intention of the Health Authority and this minister to make Victoria County Memorial Hospital in Baddeck a skeleton when it comes to offering services? Or will the minister

commit today that these and other services will continue at the Victoria County Memorial Hospital well into the future?

MR. DELOREY: I'm pleased to advise the member that indeed, again, when I've toured across the province and visited various hospital sites - not just regional hospitals but some community hospitals as well - I've had this very conversation. One of the things that came up was that with the advent of technology, there are new ways to gather and collect and report on blood test results at the point of care. There are certainly opportunities being pursued at some locations to take advantage of this opportunity.

I can assure the member opposite and all members that blood services will continue to be provided to Nova Scotians and continue to provide the care they need.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MUN. AFFS. - MUN. ELECTIONS: PERM. RES. - VOTING RTS. EXTEND

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I think many of us in this House have had the experience of having great conversations with constituents on the doorstep at election time, only to learn that those residents are permanent residents and cannot vote. These constituents have a stake in our communities and in our province, and we have the power to give permanent residents the right to vote in municipal elections. That would be a great step in the right direction.

Permanent residents are important members of our communities and they should have the same right to vote for their municipal representatives as any other Nova Scotian. Does the minister support extending the right to vote in municipal elections to permanent residents?

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question and the conversations that we've had during estimates and throughout this session. I've also had this conversation with some elected representatives in communities across the province.

This is something I've taken under advisement. I'm doing my own research on it. We don't have a path forward at this point, but I have offered to the member to keep our conversations going to determine what a path forward is going to be.

MS. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, allowing permanent residents to vote at the municipal level would be a wonderful signal that we truly value their voice in our communities. We know Nova Scotia needs to encourage more immigrants to stay for our province to thrive. Now is the time to prioritize this.

The Halifax Regional Municipality has been asking for this change since 2014. There is no reason to wait. Will the minister commit to working across Party lines to make this change before the end of the year?

MR. MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I have had that conversation as well with HRM in regard to permanent residents voting, but also having that broader discussion about residents being able to run for public office.

There's a lot of work that has to be done on this file. We work with 50 municipal units across the province. We've had the conversation with one municipal unit at this point, which is HRM.

Again, I appreciate the comments that I've had with my colleague and her advocacy for this issue. I will continue to have those conversations with her and our municipal partners. Thank you.

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

COM. SERV. - FIXED INCOME CLIENTS: POWER BILLS - ASSIST.

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Services. With the emergence of Spring comes the hope of warm temperatures - warm temperatures many residents in my constituency have not felt in their home since last autumn.

Sometimes seniors on fixed incomes and other people on fixed incomes have to make a choice between food, shelter, or paying their power bill. The parade of people who have fallen behind in their power bills is lengthening at my office.

Will the minister please explain how the Department of Community Services can assist those who have struggled through the winter, only to be threatened with being without power this Spring?

HON. KELLY REGAN: As the honourable member knows, we are in the process of transforming the Department of Community Services and the services that we do offer. Among those is a wage incentive, which will allow Nova Scotians who are on income assistance to actually earn more money and keep more money.

There are a number of other changes that we are making. We changed, for example, the way we treat income that is gained under maintenance, so that in fact will no longer be counted as income towards receiving income assistance. There are a number of other things we are doing as well.

MR. HARRISON: The problem is not so much the unwillingness to pay, in most cases, but the increasing power bills and increasing cost of living together, people are just lacking in funds to do it all. I am concerned that the coming cap-and-trade regulations will only add to the problem.

My question is, will the minister see that any new public housing projects include heat and lights, as people are no longer able to keep up with the power rate increases in the province?

MS. REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for his comments. I will absolutely take that back to Housing Nova Scotia. I think that's a very practical idea, Mr. Speaker.

I would also want to let him know that we are looking at when we build new builds that we build them in a way that makes them much more energy efficient, Mr. Speaker, because we all know that if you don't have to spend it in the first place, that's the best place to save money.

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

H&W - AMBULANCE SERV. (PUBNICO): RESPONSE TIMES - UNACCEPTABLE

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. As he knows, the Community of Pubnico has been worried about the ambulance service for quite some time. Today I tabled a petition in the House from 570 concerned citizens of the area, about their service.

I know a lot of the problem does revolve around transfer times and travelling here to Halifax that many of the ambulances across the province are now being stretched to a point where they're not being effective. Just recently there was an elderly lady, an 80-year-old who fell in the Co-op parking lot, and waited 35 minutes for an ambulance to come and attend to her needs.

I'm just wondering, does the minister think that 35 minutes is an acceptable wait time?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I believe as the member would know, we certainly have service level agreements and expectations with the ambulance provider. We fully expect that they operate across the province, not just in the member's community but from one end of the province to the other, in adherence with those stated performance expectations, and 35 minutes would seem to fall outside of the norm of that expectation.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: As the minister is aware, Pubnico was the last ambulance service to transfer to the EHS system of the day. They did sign a deal with the province at the time to make sure they stayed as a level-one ambulance base, but they are seeing the erosion of that service continually.

Mr. Speaker, just recently an elderly senior with shortness of breath waited over 25 minutes for an ambulance to come. Will the minister endeavour to review the contract with EMC to ensure that all Nova Scotians get a respectable wait time and respectable response from the ambulance service?

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, that's in fact the structure of the contract and that's why you have service level agreements - the expected response times are very clearly laid out within those contracts. We'll continue to do that. As the member knows, there's some reporting on that, and through Estimates, the member had asked for some additional details for his part of the province. We're pulling that report together and we'll certainly be providing that, as previously promised.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

H&W - PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE: PRIMARY CARE - CONTINUITY

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. There are 100,000 Nova Scotians who continue to find themselves without a family doctor. I hear far too often from my constituents in Pictou County that they continue to have difficulty finding a primary care physician. Having to go to the emergency room or a walk-in clinic does not provide the continuity of care between the doctor and patient that Nova Scotians deserve and should expect.

My question to the minister is, does the minister believe that Nova Scotians without a primary care physician receive the same level of care as those who are lucky enough to have a family physician?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I do thank the member for raising this very important topic here in the Legislature. Of course, the objective of the province and our partners, the Health Authorities, is to strengthen and improve access to primary care services for Nova Scotians. That includes access to primary care providers, whether it's a nurse practitioner or a family physician. Certainly, family physicians are part of that collaborative care team. That's why we continue to take steps to improve our ability to recruit and retain physicians and other primary care providers in Nova Scotia.

[2:45 p.m.]

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, a recent story shared by one of my constituents highlights how individuals who don't have a primary care physician fall through the cracks, in some cases to devastating patient outcomes.

This constituent's elderly, frail father has to rely on emergency room physicians for treatment when experiencing health issues. That's a situation that is happening all the time for many Nova Scotia families. When physicians offer competing options or treatment to a patient, disastrous mistakes can be made without having a primary care physician there to help the patient choose the best care option.

My question to the minister is, will the minister admit that Nova Scotia has a two-tier health care system, those who have a primary care physician and those who don't?

MR. DELOREY: I am pleased to advise the member opposite of some of the many things taking place to improve access to primary care in Nova Scotia. That includes the growing commitment to and investments in collaborative care practices. We know, Mr. Speaker, that new health care professionals are coming out, and they have been trained in this way. There's an opportunity in these collaborative practices to better balance a work-life environment while providing top-notch quality primary care services to patients.

That's what we're hearing, that desire, and believe that it will help both with recruitment and retention. The information the NSHA received in a recent expression of interest saw over 100 submissions to pursue this type of practice. That would include existing physicians and health care providers here in Nova Scotia. So we know we're on the right track. We know that it's going to improve access for all Nova Scotians.

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

ENVIRON. - VICTORIA CO.: QUARRY APPROVAL - CONSULT

MS. LENORE ZANN: This question is for the Minister of Environment. The minister recently approved a quarry in Victoria County, Cape Breton, to triple its size. Glenn Kosick, who has managed mining projects in 30 different countries and has a home in the area, says that when the quarry is operating at full capacity, that will mean 15- to 25-ton trucks rolling along the Cabot Trail every nine to 14 minutes.

He believes that Aspy Bay, St. Margaret Village, Sugarloaf, Meat Cove, Cape North, Dingwall, Neil's Harbour, and Ingonish will all be negatively impacted - beautiful area. Yet when municipal councillor Norm MacDonald tried to arrange a public meeting on the subject, he never even heard back from the department.

My question for the minister is, respectfully, does he think his department did enough to adequately inform and consult these communities before he gave approval for that expansion?

HON. IAIN RANKIN: We followed the process, as we do with all applications. For the environmental assessment there was a 30-day public submission period. We took all the submissions in, and our staff analyzed it, the expert opinion and the science that's provided with the application. The terms and conditions are there to ensure that noise and dust levels are minimal.

Obviously, whenever there's activity at a quarry, that's because there's activity in the adjacent area for the roads. Nova Scotians expect good roads, especially in areas where we have a high volume of tourism. This is based on the evidence, and we're happy with the application.

MS. ZANN: Well, it doesn't sound very good for tourism in the area. So my supplementary is for the Minister responsible for Tourism Nova Scotia.

Andrew Stevenson recently sold his financial planning companies to begin developing an adventure tourism mecca right in the area of the quarry. It would include hiking and mountain biking trails, year-round cabins, and potentially a nano brewery. His business plan hinges on the high potential for the area to attract European tourists, which is what we need.

But he's worried, Mr. Speaker. He says the government may be scratching their head in two, three, or four years from now saying, what did we do? We have a whole adventure tourism industry that's growing, and those trucks are killing it.

My question to the Minister of Tourism is, what part of the environmental assessment process, the industrial approval process, or any other process can give this man confidence that he won't be scratching his head with regret three years from now?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: All members of this House realize how important tourism is in this province, and we all know that Cape Breton is leading that charge. Let's be honest right? Come on.

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

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader on a point of order.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Last week, the Minister of Internal Services committed to tabling documents around the security of the FOIPOP portal. Specifically, she said she would table a privacy impact assessment and documents around

examples of testing conducted on websites and databases by her department. Those documents have not yet been tabled.

As tomorrow might be the last day of the session, I ask you to direct the minister to table the documents by the end of the day, or at least the end of tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: I'll take that point of order under advisement.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Before we call the government's business for this afternoon, I would like to identify, for the House, all members, staff, Legislative Counsel, and everyone connected to the Legislature, that we will be conducting an Opposition Day tomorrow. We're just tightening up some of the time we'll need, time for the Opposition Business, as well as time for the Lieutenant Governor's representative to come here and provide assent for the bills that we have passed over this session.

At the end of today's proceedings, I will turn it over to the Official Opposition House Leader for business and for official hours. I just wanted to put the House on notice that we will be here tomorrow for an Opposition Day.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 116.

Bill No. 116 - Financial Measures (2018) Act.

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

HON. KAREN CASEY: I move that Bill No. 116, an Act Respecting Certain Financial Measures, the Financial Measures (2018) Act, be now read a third time and do pass.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 116 provides the legislative authority for measures in the budget of 2018-19.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to say a few words about the Financial Measures (2018) Act, which is essentially, as I understand it, the budget, and comments on the budget.

I know that the government has said many times how pleased they are that we have a balanced budget. Our Party has said we have some reservations about that balance. We know that there are numbers in there that are called into question - two numbers in particular in the budget.

There's a \$17 million revenue line from the transfer of the Securities Commission work from provincial to federal. While we may agree, and we may think that's a great move, to have federal securities management in Nova Scotia, we understand that at the time that it was published - and maybe that's not true now - that agreement wasn't actually signed. Was that money really there?

A further concern of ours, which we spoke at length, about was the \$20-plus million of revenue from the sale of cannabis in the province. We know that that has been held up at the federal level somewhat, but we'll still be going through. We know that there will be many costs associated with the sale of cannabis in the province. I know that to say that there's just revenue from that and no expenses, the government itself has said that that wasn't really the case, but they failed to account for that. So, do we really have a balanced budget?

I know that the people of the province have heard that we have had several balanced budgets in a row. The people in the province would be very surprised to know that in fact, the net debt position for the government continues to climb. The net provincial debt in our province, at the beginning of 2017-18, was \$14.954 billion. The estimate for the net debt position of the province, at the end of this fiscal year that we are discussing, will be \$15.171 billion. So, we have a \$225 million increase in total debt of the province at the same time we have a balanced budget. I know that it would take an accountant to explain, but I do know that it is related.

How are we getting there? How are we increasing our net debt when we have balanced budgets? I know that if it was my household, and I had a surplus, then my net debt wouldn't be increasing. I think that's a concern to the province. Obviously, it's an artifact of accounting - how accounting is done - but it is a big concern to the people of our province.

We have a massive budget, and I don't know if the public is really aware that over \$3 billion of our budget is transfer payments from Ottawa. They are transfer payments in several ways - equalization payments, health care transfers - and I don't know if the general public is aware of that, so this is a chance to state that.

In fact, we know that due to the current federal Liberal Government in Ottawa, the Trudeau Government has cut back health care transfers to the Province of Nova Scotia by the tune of about \$100 million a year - not quite. Over a 10-year agreement, it will be \$1 billion less in health care from the accord that former Premier Dr. John Hamm signed with the federal government that based health care on actual number of health cases, not simply on per capita. For various reasons, maybe, we have an older population in Nova Scotia than some of the other provinces, so we lost on that deal. The federal government is cutting health care transfers to our province by almost \$100 million, and we're very concerned about that. That shows up in the budget, Mr. Speaker. It's just sort of a number in there.

I know that on an approximately \$10 billion budget, the people of Nova Scotia should know that approximately, or very close to, \$1 billion is payment on the debt. The province borrows money and it cycles that through and keeps paying that. We're paying interest every year to the tune of about \$1 billion. We have a balanced budget, but in fact, we added to the debt. The net debt will go up by \$225 million this year.

We continue to borrow. We continue to add to the debt, and we have a budget that is essentially what I would almost call a spending budget because, like I've already outlined, we have two line items that are questionable revenue sources. We're adding to the debt. Many people will remember that shortly - just a week or two - before the budget came down, we had \$225 million in one-time spending. It was a one-time payment related to the offshore accord.

The reality is that our natural gas offshore is in decline. In fact, it's in a sunset. We've heard that we're going to have more decommissioning costs than expected. So we get a one-time payment for that, and that's immediately spent, immediately committed to things other than related to the decommissioning costs on Sable Island, which I'm very concerned about. We know those decommissioning costs are real. They're going to be there. It's a future debt.

Rather than do a cautious approach, rather than do what has been done in the past with those one-time payments coming out of the offshore - I believe, again going back in history to the Dr. Hamm Government, there was approximately \$1 billion in a one-time payment offshore. That was applied to the debt.

We almost literally have a house of cards here. While on the one hand, the government can say it's a balanced budget, we have two line items that we know in one case is both a one-time deal, and in the other case is a line item of revenue which actually has a fair bit of expense associated with it, which has not been itemized, but we know it's there. Those two things give us great cause for concern in the budget.

We could say that as the Liberal Government fortunes decline, they start spending money. We see that. Even though it's a "balanced budget," it has very many great concerns.

One thing I haven't heard mentioned this year, which I do want to mention, is that I do recognize that some of the spending in the budget really relates to the New Democratic Party Government. We know that through the Jobs Fund, the Dexter Government committed out on 30 years on payments to certain businesses. We still have approximately 25 years left on some of those, and maybe 22, 23, or 24 years left on them. So the hands of the next four, five, or six governments have literally been tied by the spending that that government did to support certain businesses in the province - who very well may have worthwhile activity.

When you ask - I know I didn't ask the question this year in Estimates, but I've asked it before - why that isn't a fixed number, it's got to do with the level of activity of the business and it's a subsidy to those businesses that continue to absorb the management and time of the Department of Business or Nova Scotia Business Inc. It is, in my opinion, unconscionable for a government to put money out more than eight or 10 years - and that was a 30-year commitment.

[3:00 p.m.]

I know that's part of the budget and I want to state that for the record, again, that I believe it was unethical - if I am allowed to say that, Mr. Speaker, about the previous government. To me, that is an unethical move on the part of that government - to tie the hands of five, six, seven governments in the future on something like that which is a subsidy to business. Be it the activity of those businesses worthwhile, good, whatever, I do recognize some of them are very good corporate citizens and they simply took what was offered to them.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to comment again on the part of this budget that has to do with Internal Services. Since Estimates has finished and, essentially, we have an issue with this FOIPOP breach, suddenly we are looking at what's going on here and what happened with the FOIPOP breach in the Department of Internal Services.

It is interesting to note - and I won't table it because we all have it - but the report from the Auditor General to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly follow-up on the recommendation of 2014-15, Page 26 says: "The Department of Community Services and the Department of Internal Services should address security weaknesses identified in ICM databases and servers. Status - Department of Internal Services - Not Complete."

I am very concerned about that and it makes me wonder what is going on in the Department of Internal Services. When I look at the budget, it looks like very ho-hum, business-as-usual line items. In fact, I see a decline in the budget to the Department of Internal Services - the actual for 2017-18 was \$144,785,000, and the estimate for the coming year is \$144,234,000. In fact, I guess that's Programs and Services on Page 14.7. I am concerned about that, as it is the actual part of the department that relates to security, and I believe it is a concern.

Another “not complete” item that relates to this current issue - this FOIPOP issue before the House - which relates to the budget, government priorities. Was it a priority? I question that. It says here, again, the Auditor General says, “The Department of Community Services should ensure that business continuity plans are in place and contain information such as prioritization and timelines for restoration of key Department computer programs.”

The FOIPOP program has been down now for a week or more - was there any plan in place to deal with that? The status of that recommendation was simply - not complete, and here we are dealing with it.

Another recommendation by the Auditor General was, “The Department of Internal Services and the Department of Community Services should work together to incorporate the Department of Community Services’ business continuity plan into the Province’s disaster recovery plan.” Again - not complete, by the Department of Internal Services or the Department of Community Services.

Another one, “The Department of Community Services should ensure it has a control framework for IT which includes risk management and a plan to assess the ongoing effectiveness of controls.” The status for the Department of Internal Services - Not Complete.

We see that there are many issues here which now have, unfortunately for us as a government - for this government - for us as a province, and for the 300 and some individuals who are going through this, there are issues.

When we talk about the big numbers in the budget, this comes down very quickly to very real things affecting very real people, and it is of great concern to us as an Opposition that we have faith in government, and to the people of Nova Scotia that they believe they have a government they can trust.

So, we have a balanced budget, yet we have approximately \$90 million of revenue that is from sources that we know will have expenses associated with them, or from sources that are one-time events. We had \$225 million in spending just before the budget from a one-time source, which we know will have future costs associated with it; we know the offshore is going to have future costs.

Here we are with a budget and with the Financial Measures Act which represents almost the last part of this budget, and we recognize - I do want to say that we recognize there are many good civil servants in the province. I am criticizing the budget. I know there are many good things that happen in the province, and the departments do many sorts of good work, but we’re questioning the overall plan and the control here. This is this government’s part in this. We see the debt growing, we see the servicing costs for that debt growing. We’ve been very fortunate the last number of years to be living in a very low-

interest environment, and it has been relatively inexpensive for the government to borrow more money, and there are borrowing provisions in the FMA - the Financial Measures Act - so it has been relatively inexpensive. Heaven help us if we see interest rates increase. The cost of servicing our debt and pension costs of approximately \$1 billion is a great concern to us as the Opposition.

The priorities of the government, and what can be done with the numbers, is very interesting but it can be spun one way and maybe the government will say yes, I'm painting a bleak picture. I am saying there's \$225 million more in our provincial debt this year than there was projected at the end of the year, in a budget that shows a \$20 million surplus. I think the public would be surprised to hear that. I think the public would be surprised to really understand how much money we are spending on servicing our provincial debt. We could double our money spent on the Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, on roads in this province, if we did not have that debt. We are spending approximately \$450 million, \$500 million I believe, if my memory serves me correctly, on the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

I can tell you that in my area, citizens are very concerned about the state of the roads. I know that is true across the province. They might be surprised to know that we are spending approximately two and a half times as much money on servicing the debt in this province as we are on actual roads. In fact, the debt servicing would be one of the highest, biggest line-item expenses. Health care would be first, there would be the Department of Community Services, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and then servicing the debt.

This is a very significant concern to us as a province, the actual debt, servicing that debt. I'll go back again and just say again that the \$225 million one-time payment in the offshore, if we simply followed the model that Premier Hamm did at the time, and he felt the very best way to spend that one-time revenue from the offshore was to put it into debt reduction. We're carrying a \$15 billion debt. The debt continues to grow, even in balanced budgets, and is of great concern to us as a party. With those words, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, can I adjourn the debate for a moment, please?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, with the unanimous consent of the House, we'd like to adjourn debate temporarily on Bill No. 116, the Financial Measures (2018) Act, and move to Bill No. 52, the Motor Vehicle Act.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 52.

Bill No. 52 - Motor Vehicle Act.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all members of the House for indulging, for a few moments, the interruption of the business to talk about Bill No. 52. I move third reading of Bill No. 52, the Motor Vehicle Act.

Mr. Speaker, to say the least, it has been a long journey for me and for many who are interested in ensuring that those men and women who work here in Nova Scotia have as much protection as possible when they find themselves providing services, working every day around the province.

If I could, for a moment, am I able to do a quick introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I would like to bring the attention of members to the west gallery, where we are visited by some guests who have an interest in Bill No. 52. Today we have Paul Beaton, from Beaton's Towing; Paul Ruggles, from Ruggles Towing; Chad White, from McNeill's Towing; Carl Ettinger, from Miller's Towing; and Lindsay Milne, from Milne towing. If they would rise for the welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

MR. DAVID WILSON: I want to welcome those guests to the House here today. They have keen interest, as they all work for - some are owners - tow operating services here in Nova Scotia. As I said, it has been a long road to get to this point today, where we have an amendment to an existing bill that will provide additional protection, in my opinion, to a dedicated group of individuals who provide an extremely important service to Nova Scotians.

I often speak in the House from my past experience as a volunteer firefighter and as a paramedic, the scenes and the calls that I have attended, and how important it is to make sure that those first responders are protected in our province, whether that be through supporting them with legislation around recognizing PTSD and others, but most importantly, the move-over legislation, which what this piece of legislation is all about.

A key component to the team that responds to an emergency or someone who is in need of some assistance is the tow operators of our province. As a first responder, as a paramedic, as a volunteer firefighter, you couldn't complete the job of providing the services without the assistance of many of those who work for tow operators here in Nova Scotia. They, too, put themselves at risk every single day, Mr. Speaker, responding to emergencies and responding to motorists who need their assistance. If any of you have been travelling our highways, take a moment to recognize how quickly vehicles travel on those roadways, especially our 100-Series Highways. When you're on the side of the road, if you're a first responder - a police officer, a paramedic, a firefighter, or a tow operator - it's an extremely dangerous environment to work in.

On April 28, 2004, I had the opportunity to first introduce a change to the Motor Vehicle Act. It was Bill No. 66. At the time, I had been an MLA for about a year, and I was requesting that move-over legislation be introduced, be passed, and be in effect here in Nova Scotia. I met with resistance from the government at the time. It took me many years to get across to the government of the day that we needed this type of legislation here in Nova Scotia to protect those first responders responding to our emergency calls. At the time, tow operators were not included in that legislation. Part of the reason was that it was a challenge to try to get the government to wake up and change the mindset, the old thinking of keeping the traffic moving as quickly as possible on the highways - we can't slow traffic down.

It was a challenge, Mr. Speaker. I tried on a number of occasions. As I said, on April 28, 2004, I introduced legislation, May 8, 2006, June 30, 2006, and November 30, 2007 - all without success. I was very proud when the NDP took over government in 2009, that Bill No. 1, the very first bill that the new NDP Government introduced, was a change to the Motor Vehicle Act. As I said, Bill No. 1 was a move-over piece of legislation. Interestingly enough, it was on my birthday, November 5, 2009.

Bill Estabrooks, who I know some in the gallery may recall as vice principal and teacher at Sackville High and as an MLA, was the minister at the time and introduced that legislation. It was passed in 2009 with a lot of support from members of the House at that time.

That's when the work started, when I know that many indicated that that should be broadened, that that piece of legislation should include tow operators. I started to work in 2017. I introduced a bill, Bill No. 85, and I think October 2017, I introduced another bill and then, March 1, 2018, another bill, and here we are today with Bill No. 52 and I

appreciate the current members' support on this and the importance of having the tow operators included in it.

[3:15 p.m.]

I do want to pay tribute to someone who worked initially with me on this - former paramedic Jolene Cormier, who actually is from Springhill. I believe her parents may still be from that area, but I think Jolene is now down in the U.S. I think she went down for additional training and met an American, fell in love, and is now in the U.S. But she worked with me in 2004 to bring forward legislation, as I said, that initially made these changes.

As I said, tow operators are a key component to those who respond to our emergencies and those who respond to the assistance of Nova Scotians, and we can't put a price on the importance of protecting those who provide that service, and I think it's well overdue that we recognize their commitment and their sacrifice and their ability to respond in all hours, in all weather, Mr. Speaker.

So, the most important thing out of this is that Nova Scotians need to understand when you come across a red light or a blue light or a yellow light on a highway, you need to move over and slow down. You need to move over and slow down (Applause). I hope with this and with the education component that I think all of us need to bring awareness around, that Nova Scotians will understand that.

Yes, there are those who continue to suggest that that's not right - we shouldn't be moving over or we shouldn't be slowing down. All I say to that is they need to put themselves in the place of those men and women who are on the side of the highway when they're trying to work and having a vehicle pass them at 100 and 120, 130, 140, 90 kilometres, 80 kilometres, an hour. It is not safe and whatever we can do as MLAs, as elected officials, I think we need to do and I hope that people recognize that importance.

I want to just wrap up with saying how committed I think those in the tow industry have been with the move-over legislation. Currently, if you drive around HRM and maybe around the province, you often see some of the tow trucks have "move over, it's the law" on the back of their windows, and they did that even when that law didn't pertain to them. They did that because I think they're committed and they recognize how dangerous it is and, really, a little bit of awareness is the key.

I know recently just looking through different jurisdictions that Alberta, for example, has a non-profit group that's supported by the tow industry and others who respond to emergencies on the highway and they have moveoverallberta.ca, I think it is and they have little ads that pop up on Facebook, social media and I think, with hardly any money. That's something we should look at to try to get the message across.

When you come across a red light, a blue light, or a yellow light, slow down and move over so that men and women who go to work that day can go home at the end of the day making sure that they're safe and sound.

I want to commend those who are here today and those who work as tow operators in this province for the service they do. They often go unthanked but I want to personally thank them for the work that they've contributed during my career as a first responder and as an MLA and they are a key component and key contributor to that team that responds, and our goal should be to protect those who protect us. (Applause)

So, thank you, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this bill.

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

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague to my left of me here for introducing this most important bill. It's a common-sense bill.

I'd like to welcome those who are in the west gallery joining us today. It's great to have these individuals here to witness this bill that has a huge impact actually on all of us and it's really about the safety for all of us. First, we think about those individuals, the first responders, those who are going out in their tow trucks, but really anyone who is pulled over or has to go over.

My son is 16 and currently going through driver's ed and here a few weeks ago when I was taking him I was telling him about the bill I was introducing that day with regards to Frankie Deschenes who was the RCMP officer who tragically lost his life helping an individual change their tire. It's very tragic. When I was telling my son about the idea of honouring Frankie Deschenes on September 12th every year, and having signs that would show all of us the rules on the highway and to actually slow down and move over, his response to me is, why would you need a bill - isn't that just common sense, Mum?

Yes, it is common sense, but the reality is that we all become complacent, in particular those who are on the road a lot and on the road for work because we are so absorbed in what our profession is and what our work is, regardless of what it is.

Other individuals I think about are the tourists who come to Nova Scotia. We have many Americans who come into Nova Scotia, and Europeans, and we have to be cognizant of the fact that their laws and rules and regulations around driving in their countries and states are much different than ours. So I am very happy and pleased that Bill No. 52 is moving ahead and I'm very pleased and happy to have the Liberal Government adopt or accept some of my ideas with regards to the bill that I wanted to have moved forward.

Within this Bill No. 52 the members here in this Chamber have kindly endorsed that September 12th will be a day of honouring Frankie Deschenes. It will be a day, hopefully, that will expand and bring more education and awareness around why it is so important for us to slow down and move over.

I know that the widow of Frankie Deschenes is extremely pleased with this start of recognizing September 12th, as well as recognizing that this part of the legislation will be called Deschenes Bill, so I think it's a good start.

I hope that we will, as we move forward, consider setting aside a financial investment to even take it a step further and put up signs. I believe that throughout the province there needs to be a number of signs that indicate to those who are travelling that they do have to slow down and move over. But in particular we should start with at least putting those signs up in those entryways into our province - so let's start with the airport when they go to rent a car; it could be as simple as handing them with their receipt, outlining this law. Having digital signs at the gateway to the Yarmouth ferry and from Wood Islands and Caribou, in Cape Breton, and in Amherst. We need to start putting up those signs in those areas where we know there is heavy traffic flow. We need to do a better job at getting the message out.

We continue to spend time in this Chamber making all different laws and pieces of legislation as safe as possible. I think it is our duty not to just stop here today but to recognize that there is more to add to this piece of legislation. I want to assure those people here today, as well as those who are watching us, that I will continue to advocate for better signage in addressing our rules and regulations.

So, again, I'd like to congratulate my colleague on having this bill finally recognized and supported, and for those people that have joined us in the gallery, and for everyone collectively coming together and realizing that this is really a no-brainer - it's common sense. Let's get it done as soon as possible.

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

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to rise to, one, congratulate my colleague for Sackville-Cobequid for relentlessly pushing this issue forward, because it's such an important issue, as well as to recognize, welcome, and thank the tow-truck operators who serve our province and do it so well and so safely.

This is an issue in my constituency of Cape Breton Centre as well. People have said to me, you need to realize that the road, the highway, the street that you're driving on is my workplace. To think that we can recognize that as a workplace for police and firefighters and paramedics and first responders is wonderful, and to ensure their safety, but it's long overdue that we also ensure that you're safe because that is your place of work.

I know I shudder when I see the commercials on TV, and when I hear of the police officers, or the first responders, or the tow-truck drivers that have been within inches of their lives. You know, these people are going out to work to help protect others who are in danger. This is the least, I believe, that we can do to ensure that these members get home safely. As my colleagues have said, when we see these vehicles, nothing is more important than the lives that are on these roads, whether they're in recovery mode or they're there working to help with whatever is going on, whether it's an accident. It's so important that we remember to take the time to slow down and ensure that everybody gets home safely at the end of the day.

Finally, I'd like to congratulate all of us for finally working together. What an awesome day, what an awesome moment this is for all Parties, to come together to see the importance of something, regardless of political stripe.

Today is a successful day in Province House, in my opinion. It's something that I've waited to see since my election and - there's been a few - but to think that we all see the importance of this, and the importance of the lives of these people who are working on the road in order to protect those lives that they're there to assist.

So, thank you to my colleague from Sackville-Cobequid, to all of the members of this House, and especially to the tow-truck drivers. It was long overdue but we did it, and good for you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to repeat the many words from across the aisle. The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid clearly knows this business well, and what tow-truck drivers face alongside our fire department, and our first responders, our paramedics, et cetera.

On behalf of my caucus, I did want to say how happy we are to be working with all members of this House to pass this bill. I want to thank the member for Sackville-Cobequid for his tenacity to bring forward this bill to previous governments, and I'm happy to say that this is the time in which government is moving on this bill, and along with all members of this House, supporting this bill.

I want to thank the tow-truck drivers for their daily work on our roads. As a commuter now, in this job, I see every day, on Highway No. 101, which has its dangerous areas, that I travel more often than I wish, that our tow-truck drivers and first responders are out there keeping us safe. As has been said before, they deserve a safe workplace and that we, in this province, do everything we can to make sure that they are returning home safely to their families.

[3:30 p.m.]

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

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate all the comments from my colleagues here in the Legislature. Please close third reading of Bill No. 52.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 52. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, would you please revert to the order of business, Public Bills for Third Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, would you please call for the resumption of debate on Bill No. 116.

Bill No. 116 - Financial Measures (2018) Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the chance to speak for a few minutes about this bill and to register my opposition to it.

Making a budget is no easy task, as we all know. It's complicated and nitpicky work. In my former life, I was often in charge of making budgets, both for grant applications and for my organization's operations, once we heard what the results of those applications were. Those budgets were only \$200,000 to \$250,000, so it's not much when you compare the budget of this province, but regardless of the size of the budget, making one is all about choices.

In our case, it was, do we spend \$2,000 on a lighting designer or a costume designer? Do we scrimp on rehearsal space in order to find a really awesome performance space? Do we sit on our surplus that, for our little company, was essentially an emergency fund in case bad weather caused people not to buy tickets to our shows? Do we sit on that surplus while our artists barely make a living wage, or do we dip into it and invest in our artists and allow them to have a better wage, knowing that this is a risk that we need to take to keep our artists in Nova Scotia and to help them make ends meet a little better?

Making choices is not always easy. I live with a three-year-old and a five-year-old, and in our house, conversations often turn to choices. This morning, this was a conversation: Do you want oatmeal or toast? Make a choice. Last Sunday: You can choose to continue crying about this or you can choose to try to calm down so that we can have an actual conversation.

For small people, as we all know, choices are often framed as good choices or bad choices, and if we make good choices, then the bad consequences won't happen or will be less likely to happen. If we make a bad choice, then whatever happens is your own or our own fault.

This is simplistic, and it doesn't allow for nuance or complication or unforeseen circumstances, and yet, when we look at this budget for this province, I believe it seems very clear that the government has made some choices, and many of them are bad choices.

This government has chosen to boast a small surplus in this budget. As my colleague, the member for Dartmouth South said the other day, the members of this government feel very proud of the fact that there is a small surplus. They clap and self-congratulate.

This government has made tough choices to get to that place of a surplus. It has chosen to boast a surplus while Nova Scotians continue to go without doctors, while emergency rooms are either closed or jam-packed with people, and while patients wait months and months to be transferred to long-term care homes because there are no new beds being opened.

This government has chosen to boast a surplus while the budgets of women's centres continue to get cut, and while there are not adequate services for survivors of sexual or domestic violence.

This government has chosen a surplus over investing properly in the security of our computer systems. It's chosen a surplus over palliative care beds.

The government has chosen a surplus over funding our local film industry - an industry that was badly damaged by another one of the government's choices: to cut the

Film Tax Credit and replace it with an incentive fund that renders our province's industry non-competitive.

A surplus has been chosen over an equity development fund that would allow local filmmakers to leverage funding from other levels of government and private investment, and thus boost our film industry and try to regain some of its former power and success.

A surplus was chosen while over a thousand Nova Scotians with intellectual disabilities wait to find housing in the community. There is a need for 25 small options homes to open a year. This year, eight might open - four of which are from last year's budget. A surplus was chosen over the rights of these people to live in their community.

The government has chosen a surplus over making life easier for the people who are living in poverty in Nova Scotia, and this is a very bad choice. People who live in poverty in Nova Scotia, especially the children who live in poverty, are among the poorest people in this country. People in the lower income brackets in our province cannot find housing in their price range, and if they can, it's often in terrible condition and unsafe to live in. These same people cannot afford to buy groceries for their families and often have to choose between food and paying their power bills.

The government has made a choice to have a surplus rather than increase the rates for people living on ESIA. There's plenty of promises for next year and transformation and all of that, but these people cannot wait any longer. People are in desperate situations, and the money allotted to them is not enough to cover their bills. We heard just today from the member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley that the lineup of people in his office whose power is to be cut off is very long. Poverty activists and advocates for people on ESIA have called for an immediate 15 per cent hike of ESIA rates. The government has chosen to ignore this request, this demand, this plea, in favour of a surplus. This budget has chosen to have a surplus instead of helping people in a meaningful way, the people who need it most.

It is not enough to promise help later. We have heard the Minister of Community Services talk about how the biggest increases ever to ESIA will be coming next year, but even those biggest increases will not do what we need them to do.

The small changes in the Department of Community Services in this budget are welcome. For instance, the ability for people on ESIA to keep more of the money they make in employment, that's great. It's very helpful - complicated but helpful.

The fact that child support payments will no longer be clawed back, that's great. But I have to say that the way the government has communicated this change is offensive. It is spoken about like it's the government offering this benevolent gesture, when instead it is actually the people's money, and the government has been keeping it from them. They have now decided that that's probably a bad idea, and they are going to give it back. Let's

appreciate the change. Let's appreciate that the government has heard our demands for this, but let's take the change with a grain of salt. The way these pieces are being communicated is a bit hard to take.

The government will say it cannot afford to pass on debt to the children and grandchildren of this province. The government cannot afford to spend, and it will blame the fact that they can't afford to spend on all kinds of reasons. Mr. Speaker, I put forward that we are already spending all of the money that the government says we can't spend. We're spending it in poor outcomes in our education system. We're spending it in health care costs. We're spending it in the justice system. We're spending it, kind of, on help for people in mental health crises.

I find myself questioning the choices of this government. It is choosing to avoid investment in the fundamental needs of the people of this province. It's choosing to ignore the pleas for help from people in poverty; from workers, including film industry workers; from people who cannot find safe, affordable housing; and from people who are desperately tied up in our broken health care system.

Mr. Speaker, for all the reasons I have outlined, I am strongly registering my opposition to this budget.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: It's my pleasure to stand and speak for a few moments to the FMA, the Financial Measures (2018) Act. I'm sure a lot of people watching or who follow this asked, what does the FMA do? How is it important to my life? Why are they talking about it in that Legislature?

Well, Mr. Speaker, the FMA is really part two of the budget. This government brings down a budget every year - in this particular case, they brought it down twice, so this is the second opportunity we've had to look at an FMA. An FMA really is an omnibus bill that does a whole bunch of different things to different bills, though it really is the enacting document for the budget. When we're talking about a total expenditure from the Province of Nova Scotia from the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, it really is \$10 billion worth of budgeting that this bill truly authorizes.

Mr. Speaker, should this bill fall, we would actually be into a general election once again, so this is an important bill as it is a money bill that we have to look at in this Legislature.

I thought I would sort of quickly go through a number of things that are in here, just to give you an idea of the mishmash of different bills that it really does encompass. Maybe just to give a few examples to our audience and to the people listening, and maybe for the help of the members of the House. You know, they range from authorizing boards

to make bylaws with respect to legacy designations; makes changes to the Chartered Professional Accountants Act, other legacy definitions; limitation periods for refunds of overpayments from four to five years on corporation capital tax; and changes the name once and for all for the Nova Scotia Provincial Lotteries and Casino Corporations to just simply the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation. So, you get my drift that a lot of these things are very basic changes across government.

It provides for the removal of the \$10,000 maximum limit on the medical expenses credit for financially dependent relatives - so we see some of them are actually taxation pieces; and provides for an Innovation Equity Tax Credit in respect of eligible investments made after December 31, 2018, and before March 1, 2024. Let me just find a few more before I move on from it. It makes changes or amends the long title of the Public Service Superannuation Act, or the provincial pension plan; places provisions for “plan regulations” with “plan text” - just different wording, so as lawyers or solicitors have looked at, their perspective, bills and legislation to suggest changes; and a number of directors for the Public Service Superannuation Plan Trustee Inc. Let me find a few more - you know what I mean, they are enacting pieces, but some of them are actually taxation-based.

They receive a fair amount of consideration from those of us here in the House in making sure that they encompass the things that we find are important. Now, Mr. Speaker, I can say that the idea or the concept of balanced budgets is, I think, a sound one. I know I was listening to the member for Dartmouth North just a few moments ago, talking about the competing priorities of balanced budgets versus programs are not being followed through with, or parts of our communities that are doing without. Yet, that is part of the challenge that many governments have to face when we bring bills like this forward, when we do our budgeting process.

You know, one thing that maybe the member didn't have in context is that the previous NDP Government actually balanced its budget, I think two times during their mandate, and they had to challenge between competing requirements of community versus balancing the budget. It is a tough balancing act for any government of finding it.

You know, I look across at my colleague, the Minister of Health and Wellness, and knowing that his work with the budgeting process is one that I'm sure the other ministers take disdain in, that it seems like every time the numbers are finally down to a point where they're within a few million dollars of balancing the budget, that that minister would come in with something else that needs to be addressed. I can just go with maybe the previous minister, and the previous minister, and the previous minister, of how this went. It just always seems that when the department would bring some numbers to us it would always change, and then the department came up with something else it forgot it had to do. It's always a challenge, Mr. Speaker, of trying to find that balance between competing things, competing community needs, competing health care needs, competing transportation needs, versus the total number of dollars held within this budget.

[3:45 p.m.]

The biggest thing I think that, from a budgetary standpoint, and the idea of balanced budgets, is the issue of how you balance the budget. What pieces are actually held within that budget that make it balanced. That's where I think the Opposition is taking the government to task, the basic \$20 million that's sitting there. So, I think it's in the surplus of about \$27 million, where \$20 million is predicated on the sale and taxation of cannabis. We really don't know yet when cannabis will be sold in the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation, because we're still waiting on what exactly that legalized date is going to be, because the federal government is still working through its part of its process of legalizing this across Canada.

Then of course, we have another Act that's before us, that I'm sure will be discussed later on at length - the Cannabis Control Act - to make sure that we, as a province, are ready with regulations, and to be ready for those things. Once those things are enacted, only then can we truly understand what the revenues from the sale of that drug is going to be coming back to this province.

Now, part of our opposition to that bill, and to the numbers that are held within the Financial Measures (2018) Bill, and the Appropriations Act, is the fact that we don't know for sure what kind of money this government plans on paying for other programs - education programs, what kind of social costs will actually be coming from the sale of that narcotic. What kind of, I would say, mental health programs are we going to have to provide to individuals and communities that find themselves not necessarily addicted - because we'll have a discussion about cannabis later on - but there are social costs to the consumption of any drug. Just like the social costs for drinking are today, where there are substantial costs for that revenue. We don't see that in this piece of legislation in the Financial Measures (2018) Bill, nor do we see it within the Appropriations Act.

The other thing that we don't see in these documents that could change our mind. - not to say that we, as Opposition, continually just oppose for the sake of opposition; I know some people would find that hard to believe - but if we can see ourselves reflected in something that government is doing, like the bill that my colleague for Sackville-Cobequid just brought forward, we see ourselves in that kind of bill, and we've seen ourselves in other bills that this government has brought forward, that of course, we don't oppose, we celebrate and vote with our colleagues in this House of Assembly.

Had we seen some of those things that reflect our needs and what we're hearing from our communities, then maybe we would not be voting against this bill, which we will do later on. For me, the biggest issue that I don't see in this document, is really the capital plan. The capital plan not only for the construction of highways and intersections, and overpasses and bridges, which are extremely important to rural Nova Scotia, but I don't see a plan for schools and those kinds of things. I mean, how many times have I stood in this House of Assembly and spoken about my school in Wedgeport, needing a new school

for the last number of years? I know the minister has spoken positively to that project, and spoken positively to the community, yet we have to wait until June.

So, there is spending authority that's given to that department, but we don't know exactly what's going to be on that list. We had a question in Question Period today brought forward from the member for Dartmouth East, which talked about Basinview School in Bedford. Really no plan for that just yet, and we're getting close to the end of the season, the end of the school year, we've only got a couple of months to go, and those families don't know whether there will be trailers or some other options to make sure that the almost 200 extra kids are going to have the opportunity to learn in an environment that is conducive to learning.

Why wasn't that brought forward? I would have thought that prior to the budget a capital plan would have been brought down by this government, and we would have seen it in here. I know there has been criticism. There has been a fair amount of criticism by the Auditor General when it comes to planning, especially planning for education, that it doesn't make sense a lot of times how things were chosen.

I understand that maybe the government wants to take a little more time in making that happen, but they had ample time. Instead of using their time to maybe figure that side of the ledger out, of course, they were trying to get rid of school boards and making their changes to the education system and that matter. Mr. Speaker, I think that creates the problem we have today where we don't have a clear indication of what that capital plan is going to be for schools like Wedgeport or Basinview. We can probably go around to many of our members who are waiting for some kind of capital plan so they know what is happening. It might have changed our mind a little bit in what we saw or how we see this budget being brought forward.

All I can say is that I hope that the government works expeditiously in getting that list prepared so that the community knows what is going on, especially Wedgeport. I continue to talk about them because it's my best example of governments - and I'm going to look at a couple of previous governments, whether it be ours or the previous NDP Government. I don't think they were fair to the community of Wedgeport in how they held them there when a school board at the time had it as their number one plan, the number one project, and yet it never really got done. In the five years that this government has been in power, the same thing has happened. It has been the number one project of the CSAP, and it has not gone forward. I hope the government moves forward, but here's what happens when the government makes its decision in June on what that list is. Fingers crossed, toes crossed, everything I can cross, that it will be on that list.

Then a process starts. That doesn't get a school built or a hospital built right after June. There's a whole bunch of planning that has to go forward. They have to decide what the site is, what the size of the school is going to be, then acquire that property, get the property ready, and then have the money available to it so it can go forward in construction.

I don't see that in this bill. I don't see that anywhere. I don't see that in the Appropriations bill anywhere either, and I don't think that many of these members can see those projects.

The other thing that I do want to quickly talk about before I sit down revolves around highway infrastructure. I know the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal is very aware of this. I have two intersections in my constituency - I forget their numbers exactly, but they are Pubnico and Nakile. Nakile is the No. 3 worst intersection in all of Nova Scotia. I don't know what the other two are. I should probably find out what the other two are. This is No. 3. You figure there have to be at least three projects that are going forward in trying to get them safer so that there are no accidents happening in the future.

These are the kinds of things that we should see in an infrastructure plan so that we in Opposition can truly make our final decision on whether a budget is good or bad because it talks about the full spending of this government. We know it deals with tangible capital assets. It doesn't deal with the daily spending of the province, what we see in the budget. It actually deals with the debts because tangible capital assets basically borrow against the debt to get constructed.

Mr. Speaker, with those short few words, I don't agree with the bill that's before us. I don't think it does enough to find the competing requirements of Nova Scotians. Of course, I'll be voting against it when I have my opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak to Bill No. 116, basically this government's budget.

Since becoming an MLA, I have had the opportunity to be inspired and impressed over and over again by the wealth of ideas and energy that we have in our many communities in Nova Scotia. I came out of work at a community level in my constituency, Halifax Needham. That's where I first got excited about some of the work I saw happening through collaboration, and through really intense communication at a neighbourhood level. Now I can see, through my critic roles and looking around the province, that there are many, many springs of initiative and vision and leadership across the province. People in Nova Scotia are full of solutions to some of the biggest challenges our province is facing right now, including lagging rural economic development, and the need for an inclusive transition to a green economy.

I feel confident and excited that Nova Scotia has paths forward towards a sustainable future that supports everyone, and is based on democratic decision-making, because community organizations and local businesses and social enterprises I talk to have a vision of that future, and they're working toward it. But when I am in this House and looking, in particular, at this Liberal budget, the investment priorities the governing Party

has chosen, and the way it has reacted to criticism, my confidence is shaken, and my excitement turns to disappointment, because I don't see that vision. I don't see that vision reflected in the words or in the priorities of this Liberal Government. I don't see them supporting and building on, and building with, the vision that is coming from so many communities.

A few examples of the many rays of hope from outside this Legislature: one is the Town of Bridgewater which has reduced energy consumption by 23 per cent in a province that has one of the highest energy poverty rates in the country. Bridgewater is tackling that on its own, through innovative programs and they have a vision to reduce the municipality's greenhouse gases by 80 per cent by 2050, in order to save the community \$2 billion and create green jobs. The town's planner, Leon de Vreede, calls it a huge economic development opportunity. That plan takes vision, and it has vision, and they have the political will to do some upfront spending in order to reap the dividends. I've heard it said that support from the province would make it easier to accomplish that vision, but they're not going to wait.

In Antigonish, a community energy co-op, again, is doing incredible work. A volunteer-run, non-profit that helps members install affordable solar energy by buying in bulk, and learning the skills together to install solar panels. They've completed 50 installations in the past three years. Membership costs \$5.

Also in Antigonish, the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society is taking the lack of affordable housing in Antigonish into its own hands. In 2017, they built four family units of affordable housing, and in 2018, they're going to build another 10 units. That's 10 units more than I see in this budget. They're doing it because no new public housing apartments have been built in Antigonish since 1996, and there are 194 families on the wait-list. I'm very grateful to them because they recently organized a People's School to share their experience with people from across the province, and two of my constituents went up together, and they had a great conversation in the car on the way up, in the car on the way back, and I'm hopeful that we'll start to see some actual building and investment in new social housing in Halifax Needham, again, thanks to leadership that's coming from the community.

I've already spoken in this House about the Medway Community Forest Co-op which is providing incredible leadership on how Crown lands can be managed sustainably for long-term community benefits, including local jobs, and groups in St. Margaret's Bay are calling for the province to allow more community forests to be established and to access Crown lands for the public interest for the long term, with the whole range of different values that those forests provide.

[4:00 p.m.]

Here in Halifax some of my constituents, but also constituents of many other members here in this House, are participating in the African Community Investment Co-op. They're doing great work based out of Halifax Atlantic through collective investment to create economic opportunities for African Nova Scotians and new immigrants from many different countries. They've worked through their space, they've been able to host events for the Association of Nigerians of Nova Scotia, the Sierra Leonean Association, Jamaican and Caribbean Association, and the Association of Cameroonians, all using their space to hold gatherings and community events.

Their space includes a commercial kitchen as well as a large number of sewing machines, and they've taught 35 different newcomers through their sewing program, and 15 different vendors use their space in order to prepare food that they sell through different farmers' markets and small catering contracts.

These organizations are charting paths towards green and inclusive economic and community development in our province, and those solutions are democratic because they're coming straight out of conversations that are happening in the community, happening in parks, happening at farmers' markets, happening at community halls and at community gatherings of all sorts.

With investment and support from the province, they and many others like them could be accomplishing greater impact sooner and going further, but it doesn't seem to me that they have the province's ear. I think this government is taking advice from much bigger players to whom the Liberal Government continues to feel beholden.

I point for a contrast to New Brunswick, which also has a Liberal Government, but they have a provincial strategy to increase local procurement of food in all events which are supported by the province, and they also have a grassroots movement to get local food in schools - and that's gone from eight schools procuring food through local distribution channels connected directly back to farmers, to now 16 schools and growing. Again, here in Nova Scotia, that is happening out of the Municipality of Inverness through the Cape Breton Food Hub which started in 2015, with a 15-week season, serving 50 households and restaurants, and now it's connected to 41 food producers with 125 consumers.

There's so much potential in this province, there's so much land that could be put back to use. In 1918, in Inverness for example, there were 56,000 hectares in agricultural production - in 1918. In 2010, there was one-quarter that amount, and we're at a time of such changing climate, of such global insecurity. There are so many people who, with the right encouragement and support, would love to make their homes here. I think when we saw the reaction to the Farmer's Daughter viral add, we saw that potential, and yet I don't feel like as a province we're really jumping to be a partner with the folks who are taking the lead.

The Centre for Local Prosperity recently published a report outlining the opportunities and first steps for an import replacement strategy in Atlantic Canada. Instead, in this House we hear always, always, always about exports, but import replacement is also a strategy and it's the strategy that builds resilience and capacity at a local community level. The report of the Centre for Local Prosperity estimates that \$4 out of every \$10 spent in Atlantic Canada leaves the Atlantic economy, and that a 10 per cent shift in demand from imported goods to local goods could create 43,000 new jobs in the region and generate \$2.6 billion in new wages, and \$219 million in new tax revenue.

The report gives six recommendations to the provincial government for ways it could facilitate community-driven import replacement, and many of them are simple regulatory changes or just shifting of how existing funds are targeted and wouldn't necessarily cost more to the government. What we see instead is a continued emphasis on making things easy for big players, so low standards for offshore oil and for Northern Pulp because we don't want to make things too expensive for them.

If you look into the details of the budget and of Public Accounts we can see subsidies and tax credits that benefit bigger players or old ways of doing things and leave out smaller and newer businesses. For example, the Innovation Rebate Program that has a \$2 million threshold that a lot of smaller fish harvesters can't meet, or subsidies that help farmers buy tractors and big equipment when many young farmers who want to move into farming for the first time are actually moving away from models that are reliant on heavy equipment and really need help to access land.

Similarly, there are policies and subsidies in the forestry industry that make it easy to buy a harvester. You can get a 20 per cent tax credit for that or a tax rebate but you can only use that and pay it off through clear-cutting. There's lots of evidence that we already have enough harvesters in this province, so the government is not supporting other models.

Nova Scotia needs a provincial government that will help chart the path out of the dichotomy of environment versus jobs and community voice versus exports or foreign investment. To do that the province just needs to listen and watch and learn and come alongside all the great work being done at a community level, in some cases by municipalities, in some cases by non-profits and in some cases by businesses that could be scaled and multiplied with the right policies and the right investments. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I am pleased to rise to speak to the Financial Measures (2018) Act today. The budget is one of the most important pieces of legislation that is presented here in the House of Assembly and we're looking at a budget this year of approximately \$10.8 billion.

Looking back I'm grateful that we have the time of Estimates to ask the different ministers various questions of the different departments. It's a valuable time to ask questions that are important to the people of Nova Scotia. I appreciate having the time today to speak to the bill.

The budget proposed for 2018-19 is not a budget that encourages economic growth and it is not a budget that inspires the people of Nova Scotia. Economic growth increases our tax revenue, increases our tax base and, more important, economic growth instills hope for a brighter future for the people of Nova Scotia. When there is hope and confidence in our economy, investors invest, business owners spend on capital and business owners hire employees. Employees then have the money to pay their mortgage and put food on their table.

Mr. Speaker, this budget misses the mark by balancing the budget with a one-time injection of funds through the securities, with an injection of funds through cannabis sales, and with an injection of \$9 million net revenue from the Cobequid Pass, which I have spoken to on several occasions here in this House, which is an unfair taxation to the people of Cumberland County and this province.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to refer to an article that was in *The Chronicle Herald* today. It was entitled, "A Younger Perspective", founder believes the younger generation is key to a prosperous and different future. Author Michael DeVenney says, "We have a tremendous problem with our ability to build a dynamic economy. There's an attitude within the province to accept that 'we are where we are' and hope the government will ride in and save us. They're not, and they won't."

The out-migration of our youth is going to continue until we make changes to stop this. I'd like to read a quote from the survey and then I'll table it, the survey that Michael DeVenney and his Mindset Project completed. The survey data reveals the demographic of their youth - the survey was of 406 people between the ages of 22 and 39. It says:

"The demographic has little faith in the government's capacity to move the province forward, viewing a lack of collaboration" - we've certainly seen that here in the House - "excess bureaucracy, crisis thinking and needless complexity as insurmountable barriers. In the private sector, they see competition rather than collaboration, and a turf-protection mindset that creates problems and challenges. Hiring is a 'who you know' rather than what you know, and outsiders are not welcome. Nova Scotia is seen as a place without opportunity, and even when there are successes, Nova Scotians' tendency to 'wallow on what's not working' keeps the good stories on the back burner."

I was very interested to read this article today. I think it just reemphasizes the importance that we, as the government of Nova Scotia, present a budget that is focused on economic growth and gives our young people some hope in a better future. When I look at how many people in this age group that this article refers to are continuously leaving this province for work outside of Nova Scotia - my husband and I have four children, and unfortunately, our oldest son, at 24, is living in Calgary, and who knows if he will return to this province? I certainly hope so, but we need to look at why they're leaving.

They're leaving to go to other provinces because other provinces are willing to look at the resources they have and develop them responsibly. Recently, a leader in Alberta said that provinces that are not willing to extract their resources and develop them responsibly are going to have a rude awakening in the future when provinces like Alberta say that they're no longer going to be willing to share.

It's time that we make responsible choices and look at the resources that we have, such as our natural gas deposits, and extract them responsibly. It is not okay to continue to lose our most precious resource, which is our young people, to western Canada.

We are literally sitting on billions and billions of dollars here in Nova Scotia, and we choose to turn away and keep this moratorium on developing it. I believe it is irresponsible. A large deposit is sitting in Cumberland County, and I sit and watch the people of my area suffer. Two weeks ago, I shared some numbers here in this House that 44 per cent of the people in Cumberland County have an average income of less than \$22,000 - while we sit on billions upon billions of dollars of natural gas below our surface.

Now, there are other ways of developing our economy and developing our resources. One of them is something else that we have in Cumberland County. That's our wild blueberries, and we have experienced huge increase in supply, huge increase of production in our wild blueberries due to improved agricultural practices. Most would see that as a positive. Unfortunately, however, the demand of the product has not increased at the same rate of the increase in production.

We ran out of time, but I was going to ask a question in Question Period today to emphasize the importance of our government looking at continuing to find ways to export our wild blueberries. The increase in production has resulted in a drastic decrease in the price of wild blueberries, to the point where it doesn't even make sense for the blueberry producers, the blueberry farmers, to take the fruit off the vine. Last Fall, a lot of farmers chose not to harvest. There is a ton of money that has been lost over the last couple of years.

I challenge this government to not only do trade missions but do trade missions with the purpose of getting results. I know there has been some talk here in this House about the number of trips that our Premier has taken over the last year. I'm okay with our Premier doing international trade missions if we're getting the results and if it's good use

of our money, but the fact that we haven't been able to work with China to export more wild blueberries there, the fact that they can charge a huge, significant tariff on our wild blueberries while importing wild blueberries from other countries with no tariff, I think we have a lot of work to do. On behalf of the blueberry farmers and producers in Cumberland County, I would ask this government to make that more of a focus. It's not just going to benefit Cumberland County, it's going to benefit the entire Province of Nova Scotia, as we can realize increased revenues from these exports.

On that same topic, Mr. Speaker, there's a huge opportunity for us to grow our revenues in this province. We could grow our tax base and grow this budget by looking at our food supply in this province. We have a significant problem with food security and we would not be able to feed ourselves if there was a world war, or imports were stopped at the airport and/or the harbour.

It's a scary thing, Mr. Speaker, when you hear the Federation of Agriculture talk, that if imports were to stop, we would run out of food within four to five days in this province. I believe that we have put ourselves in a position that is not safe, and we have a responsibility to the people of Nova Scotia to change that.

I think that we should be presenting a budget that's putting more of a focus on economic development in agriculture, growing our food supply. Right now, we import 87 per cent - or 86 per cent - of our food, and if we worked with our farmers, worked to get our unused farmland in production again, worked to develop greenhouses using our geothermal energy in Springhill and across this province, we would inject over a billion dollars into the economy of Nova Scotia, if we brought our food supply down to about 50 per cent sustainability.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to end my comments on the Financial Measures (2018) Bill by bringing up health care. Health care is approximately half - close to half - of our budget here in Nova Scotia, and there's no question right now that we need to take a good, hard look at how that money is being managed. Every day, I can guarantee every one of us in this House hears from our constituents of the lack of access to health services. We also are hearing the poor mismanagement.

Today in the House, we heard about how we're the only province in the whole country that did not attend a recruitment fair in Newfoundland and Labrador. Meanwhile, I got a text from a local physician letting me know that there's new recruitment laws, that a defined licensed physician that is recruited here to Nova Scotia is going to be expected to pay for their own mentoring - \$175 an hour, they're going to be expected to pay - so that they can obtain a licence here in this province.

I don't know who is making up these rules and who is managing this, Mr. Speaker, but I have to say, our government needs to take a good, hard look at who is in charge at the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and make drastic changes immediately. I know that there

has been some change at the Nova Scotia Health Authority board, we have a new chair and they have appointed one physician - a non-voting physician - to the board, and I am encouraged with this current change, but I think we need to go much further.

We have a CEO that's paid over \$340,000 a year that has been there now about four years, and is clearly ineffective in managing this health care system, Mr. Speaker, and I encourage the Minister of Health and Wellness to make changes dramatically. If what we saw in the House today, that we are the only province that has not sent someone to a recruitment fair, with the problems we have in this province with lack of family physicians, if nothing else has told him that this CEO needs to be changed, this should definitely be the final straw.

The people of this province, the health care workers in this province, Mr. Speaker, have had enough. Either this government is trying to create a failure in this health care system, or there are clearly the wrong people managing it. So, if this Minister of Health and Wellness is not purposely trying to make this health care system fail, then he needs to take a long, hard look at who he has in charge and make changes at the top.

I also want to bring up the other deficiencies with this health care budget. We are not making any improvements, Mr. Speaker, in access to mental health care services. Today in Cape Breton, the wait time to be seen in mental health is 363 days. Access to hip and knee surgery, there have been no dramatic improvements there. It's still a one- to two-year wait time just to get in to see the consultant and then another long wait time to actually have the surgery. We hear time and time again about the lack of access to long-term care beds and the lack of access to palliative care, as spoken about passionately here by my colleague, the member for Cape Breton-Richmond. We know this is happening across this whole province.

Just today I got another email from a mother who is frustrated in Tatamagouche. Her daughter was taken off the family doctor list because her daughter saw a nurse practitioner. She and her son are still on the list, and they have been appointed a new family physician who has moved to that area, but her daughter is not allowed to be on that list to see the family physician. I brought this to the attention of the Minister of Health and Wellness, and this woman got a phone call from someone in the Nova Scotia Health Authority about two weeks ago. That person told her, sorry, but yes, because your daughter was seen by a nurse practitioner, she is no longer allowed to be on the list for a family physician. This mother saw the new family physician herself last week. When she saw her, she explained to the doctor what happened, and the doctor expressed extreme frustration and said, that is ridiculous. She said, of course I will take your daughter on as a patient, and she did so.

These collaborative centres, which sound great in theory, just seem to be adding a new level of bureaucracy to our health care system, which is not what we need. We need to be making decisions that are allowing improved access to health care for all people.

Finally, I want to mention our debt. The debt in our budget takes up almost 10 per cent of our revenue. Last month, this government announced a huge injection of money. It was never clearly articulated where that money came from, but none of it was placed on the debt. I believe we need to be responsible with the taxpayers' money in this province, and we need to ensure that we are managing our debt responsibly. Just like you would in your home, Mr. Speaker, if you had a huge influx of unexpected revenue, you would look at what your debt is, and you would place at least a portion of that money on to your debt.

Mr. Speaker, Toronto-Dominion Bank put out their provincial economic forecast. Their forecast said they expect the growth of the economy in Nova Scotia to dip to 1.2 per cent this year. In 2019, they expect it to be 1.0 per cent. That's not an encouraging economic growth outlook.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, a budget should inspire the people. A budget should inspire and be finding ways to have economic growth. We need a budget that is going to allow us to reduce poverty in this province. We can no longer continue to push the same money around. We need new money. We need to look at the opportunities we have and create new money for the people of Nova Scotia so that we can properly fund health care, so that families and communities in this province can grow and expand, and so that we can build a healthier Nova Scotia.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: I'm glad to take a few moments to stand and speak on Bill No. 116, the Financial Measures (2018) Act.

I have said this a few times in my previous comments over the last month or so when we're here dealing with and speaking about the budget in Nova Scotia. I know this year the government has posted a small surplus. I have often indicated that that small surplus could evaporate pretty quickly, knowing how government works and previously being in a department that could erase a surplus of \$20-some million probably within a few minutes.

I know when the government spends over \$10 billion that there is some positive investment in the budget, and you cannot take that away from any government in the same situation. When you invest and you spend that significant amount of money there are some positive things in there and there is money going towards important services that Nova Scotians depend on and they need government to continue to invest in.

Governments are always or often looked at in the past tense: what does the investment they make in a particular year do, and what will we see in the next year or so?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid has the floor.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Often you don't really see the ramifications or the impact that the budget has until a year later, and sometimes two years later, when the money rolls out of the departments, when they get those commitments up and running. Often there is a bit of a delay in actually spending that money, and seeing the results are much later. Next year, when we go through this process again, then we will have a better picture on what the impact of the current budget and the Financial Measures (2018) Bill will actually have on the lives of Nova Scotians.

In our role as Opposition Parties, we flag some of those areas that we feel the government hasn't put enough emphasis or time or energy or money towards. That's what we do and it's in the electoral system we have. There is an important role for having robust and competent Opposition Parties in the Legislature, and I think we do have that.

We have the ability, with the wealth of experience that we have, not only in my own caucus but in the Progressive Conservative caucus, to bring forward some of those concerns, and that's what we've done through the Budget Estimates, through the debate on financial measures, and our engagement in this political process.

The government is not going to shine a light on those areas that may not be a priority in this year's budget. I know they are not going to do that; it's not to their advantage to do that and that's why I think the title is just, when you recognize the Parties on this side of the House.

It's the Opposition Party, but it's not to say that we oppose every single thing that the government does. There are positive investments in the budget, but there are areas that we, as the New Democratic Party caucus, know and want to raise issues on that the government hasn't made addressing the issues a priority.

The first one that we have to talk about is the investment in health care. It's not always about adding more money to the overall budget for health, it's the ability to see and prioritize wherein the Health and Wellness Department - in the health budget - investment, additional investment, or movement of funds is needed to address the issues that are facing everyday Nova Scotians.

In health, often it's given a higher priority than some of the other issues that Nova Scotians face, because ultimately health care is the number-one concern for Nova Scotians. Even those who are healthy individuals know people who access health services. If it's an aging parent or family member, a relative who might be dealing with mental health issues, or someone who might be diagnosed with a chronic disease like cancer or whatever you have, they are concerned. They're concerned that the government, hopefully, will make the investment and look at how we can improve services so that Nova Scotians can gain access to the best possible care that you have.

[4:30 p.m.]

Health care is not something that you just look at and say, let's just fund it. Here are the programs we fund, and we'll just continue to maintain those budgets year after year. There shouldn't be any movement. If we can get close to inflation the increase in the budget, then we're doing well. That's not the case, Mr. Speaker. Like many other areas within government and government services, health care is forever changing. It's always important for a government to have the ability to shift, to prioritize where their attention is going to be.

I have been highly critical of the Liberal Government about the health file over the last four or four and a half years, especially what I believe is taking their eyes off of what's important and prioritizing what I think Nova Scotians would expect the government to prioritize. We know the exercise, and I have talked about this a number of times, of amalgamating the district health authorities in our province took years. It took years. The unfortunate side of that is that those within the Department of Health and Wellness and those who were maybe in a managerial position within those health authorities are the individuals who worked every single day to try to adapt what services they were providing to make sure that they're meeting the health needs of Nova Scotians.

As I said, it changes, Mr. Speaker, on a yearly basis, sometimes on a monthly basis. There's new medications, for example, that come online. They are often extremely expensive, but they have been found to support and enhance, hopefully, improving outcomes when it comes to access to those medications.

Someone sent me an email yesterday around a new medication for breast cancer. Just a heads-up to the Minister of Health and Wellness, he will most likely be receiving a letter from me in the next coming weeks, asking where is the province at in looking at potentially covering here in Nova Scotia a specific drug that other jurisdictions have started to cover.

That's an example of what people in those positions in the district health authority and in the minister's office need to work on every single day. Health care is something that needs the attention of the minister, those beneath the minister, and those who are working in our health sector every day so they can try to adapt. You can try to ensure that when you are creating the budget for health care, for example, you're including new things, that you're including maybe changes in how services are provided.

There has been a distraction for four and half years, and that has been the amalgamation. Unfortunately, we have seen, I think, too many areas within health care put on hold until the amalgamation was complete and the organizational chart of the new Health Authority had been finalized. I don't think today the minister could stand up and say it's totally finished, that it's totally finalized. It's not. I continue to hear from health care providers who are wondering who's going to take over this role, and they amalgamated

this position with this position. What suffers is the ability to adapt, to change, and to invest in health care services, Mr. Speaker.

In this budget, one of the areas that is definitely (1) expensive but (2) most important to invest in - and we haven't seen one dollar, additional dollars, invested in creating new long-term care beds in Nova Scotia.

When I was first elected in 2003, I recall the discussion, the debate around the aging population in front of us - that was almost 15 years ago - and how quickly our population here in Nova Scotia is aging. The sheer number of people who turn 65 every month in Nova Scotia is one of the highest in the country.

I remember listening to many discuss what the priorities should be for political Parties, for the government of the time. Long-term care was very much in the mix, and it still needs to be now. Unfortunately, in this budget there is not one dollar that will lead to the creation of additional beds to increase the stock we have for long-term care. Unfortunately, that means that many Nova Scotians, especially our seniors, will be waiting for those long-term care placements that many are on the wait-lists for.

I know it's expensive. I was at the table when you look at how much each bed costs. We're looking at six, seven, eight years ago, and I think there was a figure thrown around that when you create or build a new long-term care facility, each bed is around \$200,000 or \$250,000. I know it's not a cheap initiative to invest in, but it's one that is very much needed.

Investing in home care is extremely important. I recognize that. That's why the previous NDP Government invested in home care and long-term care. The previous Progressive Conservative Government invested in long-term care and home care. But it has been the stance for this government to just invest in home care.

I agree with the government when we ask them about long-term care, they continually say, we're investing in home care. People want to stay home longer and we're investing in home care. I agree with that. People haven't stopped saying that over the last 10 or 15 years, but unfortunately, there is a point in someone's life that home care just will not meet the needs of Nova Scotians. You have to invest in both of those prongs or directions. You have to invest in making sure that people have access to and exhaust home care services, but you also need to invest in long-term care.

The unfortunate thing is that I see history repeating itself here. When I was first elected, there wasn't a big initiative on investing in long-term care beds. Over a couple of years of pressure not only from Opposition but from the public, from seniors, from Nova Scotians, the Progressive Conservative Government at the time said, okay, we're going to revamp the Continuing Care Strategy and we're going to invest not only in home care but also in long-term care beds and building new beds.

It's expensive. Everybody understands that. But they realized they had to do that, because there had been a number of years where that investment had not taken place, and then you are starting, really, in a position of trying to catch up.

I hope that someday we will be in a position where, when a Nova Scotian is getting older or has some ailment or disease that requires assistance for home care, it's just a matter of a phone call - you do an assessment, they receive that home care quickly. Then maybe things change in their condition and they require a long-term care facility or placement, and that happens within a week or two or a month. I hope we achieve that someday. That's really the system we should have.

What we've seen in this investment and the lack of investing in long-term care is that future decisions down the road, whether that is a Liberal Government or an NDP Government or a Progressive Conservative Government, Mr. Speaker, they are going to be behind the eight ball. They are going to be behind where we should be in investment, and it's going to take even more money to catch up to where we should be and where we should have a system where it responds immediately to the needs of Nova Scotians, especially for home care and for long-term care.

I am concerned that with our aging demographic we're not going to be able to meet the needs of Nova Scotians, when it comes time where they need long-term care placement, and we're going to continue to see those vulnerable Nova Scotians in our hospital system, in a bed that's meant to be there for someone who might be ill, or have chronic disease, who have been admitted by the hospital or the ER. There is definitely a domino effect when people are in the hospital who can't go home anymore, and are awaiting placement for long-term care.

I've been there personally - as a paramedic, as a friend of a family who has to make that difficult decision. There's nothing harder for a family to go through than to recognize that either your mother or your father or a family member can no longer live on their own in their own home, and they have to be put into a long-term care facility. There's nothing harder on an individual than being in that position. Often what happens is the family, a lot of the time, provides or oversees that gap in the services that the government should be providing. They are often the caregivers. Many of them are with older parents, for example, work and take care of their parents, they move them into their homes.

I'm not saying that's not how it should happen or it shouldn't be that way. I think I'd be the first one to say if it was my parents, or my wife's parents, that we'd be there to do that. There's a certain point where that exhausts that individual. There's an exhaustion level, and far too often, people find themselves in a situation where their health is in a crisis because they spent the last two or three years taking care of a loved one. So, that is definitely an area where the government has fallen down in this budget, where the Financial Measures (2018) Act doesn't have a line in it that increases the investment in long-term care, so that we'll see another 30 or 40 or 50 beds in Nova Scotia.

Finally, after the whole session of grilling the government on this issue, I believe that the Premier did say, if we have to look at that, we will, but to me, that means down the road - next year's budget maybe, the year after maybe. The issue is not going to go away and I had mentioned that domino effect.

We know right now there's a crisis in health care when it comes to a number of fronts, and the one I want to talk about first is, of course, one that's close to my heart, and that's the EHS system and the pressure that is placed on the paramedics, for example, over the last six to eight months here in Nova Scotia. I've continuously - almost every single day, either received tweets, emails, direct messages, phone calls from medics who are out there, and people who support medics who are out there, who find themselves for hours and hours delayed at our hospitals because they can't transfer care of the patient that they responded to.

There has to be a level of priority placed on this, and a recognition that there are a number of factors why, but one of the factors and a recognition needs to be that the patients in the ER, the department staff, are unable to admit those patients up to other beds, either on other floors or in other parts of the hospital, for many reasons. It's because there are hundreds of Nova Scotians who are in beds in hospital who need long-term care, who need a bed in a long-term care facility.

So it does go right back to the possibility of communities not having appropriate ambulance coverage because of a lack of investment in long-term care. It's frustrating that the government does not recognize that, or there hasn't been any time that the government has acknowledged that that's one of the factors in why we have our medics waiting hours and hours in our ER and the delay in their ability to transfer the care of the patients over.

[4:45 p.m.]

In the government's introduction of the budget they talked about a new investment for EHS, \$6.8 million. Mr. Speaker, \$5 million of that, when we dug into the budget, goes directly to addressing contract requirements. EMC, the provider here that oversees and manages the delivery of ground and air ambulance for EHS, which is the government organization - they have a performance-based contract with the government. If they meet a certain call volume, then it triggers an increase in money towards their contract. That's what the \$5 million is for. I found out through Budget Estimates and questioning that it doesn't exactly mean that there are going to be more ambulances on the road; it just means that EMC gets to charge more for their contract because of their call volume.

I think it's 162,000 calls EHS responded to last year - 162,000 calls. It's interesting because I think the number I got for dispatch was 155,000 calls. I don't know how we get the different numbers, but they're relatively close. That 155,000 calls for the EHS dispatch is an increase from the year before, and it's a record. The most calls the EHS dispatch has

ever taken was in the last year, Mr. Speaker. I would say the 162,000 calls that the EHS ambulances responded to was probably one of the highest in history also.

The \$1.8 million is for an increase in fuel costs, CPP, WCB, and indexing of the contract. So the investment there is not going to address the issues of the delays that paramedics are seeing across our province. We know that it's ongoing.

The unfortunate thing is if tomorrow is our last day on the floor of this House, where we're able to bring those issues up, really confront the government and the minister on these issues, we will no longer be here, and it will be harder and harder to hold the government to account. I'm afraid that we're going to have a busy summer, and then in the Fall, when we come back, most of these issues that I just mentioned over the last couple of minutes will still be there. They'll continue to be there. I think we'll probably have to dust off some of our questions for Question Period because it's not going to go away.

That investment in the budget is not there this year to address the issues that are facing Nova Scotians right now. Not one dollar in this budget is going towards increasing the number of Collaborative Emergency Centres. We know that that was a commitment from the government. When they won government, there was supposed to be an additional three Collaborative Emergency Centres open up - Fishermen's and a few other ones. It has been a couple of years now, so I forget exactly, but I know that the government has backed away from that initiative. What has happened, Mr. Speaker?

We have seen a change in a direction that was extremely important on ER closures. For years we were seeing a decrease in the number of ERs closed in our province. I believe it was four consecutive years, once the Ross report was introduced and some changes were made and investments made in previous budgets, that we saw a decrease - four years in a row - of closures of emergency rooms across our province. What we have seen over the last couple of years was no money and no priority placed in the budget. Now what we have is an increase in ER closures, and it is dramatically increasing - it might even be back to the numbers that we saw in the mid-2000s when that was an issue. It was an issue that the government at the time, the Progressive Conservative Government at the time, were trying to address but, in my opinion, weren't addressing it quickly enough and through initiatives that we supported, as a Party, Nova Scotians made a decision at the ballot box.

It shows how important trying to address the current issues that Nova Scotians are facing because they will have a chance to judge the government. I mentioned at the start that we can't really tell exactly what will happen with this budget and the implementation of it. We will in a couple of years and that's a couple of years closer to the next election. Nova Scotians get it right when they are frustrated, Mr. Speaker. I mean you just look at how political Parties come in and out of government. How you could have a political Party in third place win government. That has happened in the last 16 years, 20 years - from third place right into government, because I believe if you look back at what was the hot issue at the time, the government did not pay attention to it.

The ironic thing is it was in the late 1990s and health care was a huge issue. The government of the day was cutting back on health care. I think it was the Liberal Government, Mr. Speaker; I believe so. I may be corrected but I think it was the Liberal Government of the day. In the 1990s they made a decision that they were going to cut certain areas of health care. They didn't cut health care everywhere, but in certain areas and Nova Scotians were extremely upset. I have to say that over the last three and four years, I've seen more activity from health care providers, those who normally don't stand up and put themselves out there about challenging the government in their investment, but they have been.

In Cape Breton we had doctors protesting, Mr. Speaker. I've never seen that in the time that I've been here. So the government should be concerned that when they don't prioritize the things that are extremely important to Nova Scotians that they do in the end pay a price.

This government has picked a lot of fights with people over the last couple of years, I have to say. It started off in 2013 around health care providers and the unions and some of the negotiations that were going on and Bill No. 148 and Bill No. 75 and Bill No. 70 and the list can go on; I can repeat many of them. The interesting thing is those decisions could end up costing the government down the road - it could wipe out that \$20-some million surplus. Maybe if the current government is not there - it could be another Party there and they may have to deal with some of the challenges that organizations like the NSGEU and others, Doctors Nova Scotia, teachers, the Ombudsman, all these groups having to go and take the unheard of step - it doesn't happen too often - of taking the government to court, and that could really have an impact on future budgets.

The prior year adjustments happen regularly and they could - what's out there right now pending could really have an impact on the finances of the province in years to come, Mr. Speaker. So, what's in front of us today doesn't always kind of work its way through within the year and you know what the end result is; it could be a number of years down the road.

Mental health, it has been mentioned a number of times, Mr. Speaker. It's an investment that the government needs to continue to look at. There are a lot of prongs that fit into mental health and ensuring that people have access to appropriate mental health services.

Just during the last election, Mr. Speaker, it was tough out in our area. It came to light that there was like a peer support mental health group at the Cobequid Centre and that program was going to be cancelled - and it was cancelled. Unfortunately, we weren't in session, and it was really hard to engage government on why they were doing that or why did they allow the new Health Authority to do that. To this day, no real answers came from that, Mr. Speaker. It's very hard in an environment when you know people are suffering.

Awareness of mental health is everywhere, which is a good thing. It's important that we continue to shine a light on mental health services. For far too long, we just never spoke about mental health. That was something you didn't talk about. If it was a friend or a family member, you didn't talk about that person. It wasn't good to bring awareness around that. We know that that's not how you address it. We know that that's not how we change stigmas. We know that that's not how we will have people get better into the future. I don't think investing in mental health is at a level where it needs to be, and this budget definitely falls short of that.

There are two other areas. I know the Leader of our Party talks about this a lot, but it should be alarming to everybody when you know - I could be corrected, but I think Nova Scotia has the highest use of food bank by children in the country (Interruption) The fastest-rising use of food banks in the country by children. I don't believe we have seen the investment needed to change that.

We don't believe that there has been priority placed on this, and these are some of the most vulnerable children. We need to do better than just saying that we're going to offer breakfast programs in every school. We really need to get to the root of why these kids and their families are going to the food bank. There are a lot of dedicated people. In Sackville, Beacon House is an organization that anybody in the community recognizes as extremely important. Many people support it and donate to it and try to help them address the needs of children and families in our community.

The other area I know has been talked about over the last couple years, and that is the increase in tuition costs. In 2015 - yes it was prior to the last election - the government allowed for universities to deviate from the 3 per cent increase in tuition. We're just hearing now that Acadia is going to have 6 per cent increase in tuition costs.

To me, it's really about the timing. Here are these young adults who are working extremely hard. There's about a week left in courses at Acadia. They're all cramming for exams, Mr. Speaker. They're all stressed, they're vulnerable, and they're concerned. Then they get this email that says oh, by the way, the government said we were allowed to do this, so we're going to do this next year. Many of them can't organize at this point to try to push back and say, wait a minute, is there a way of avoiding seeing a 6 per cent increase? That's double what they were anticipating.

My opinion - and I haven't even brought it up to our caucus - is that they should be required to address this prior to a week before the end of the school year. Many of them are looking at how they're going to pay for next year, where they're going to work, what summer job they're going to have, and how much money they have to save. They're studying, cramming for exams and then get this email about a 6 per cent increase.

I'll be very open and transparent. My daughter goes to university at Acadia, and she called me really concerned. I told her, don't worry about it, please just concentrate on

studying. But she is concerned about it because she works hard, and she pays for the majority of her university. She works all summer. At 18 years old, she left to work across the other side of the country last year for the summer to pay for tuition. I'm glad to see that, and I support her.

But I was concerned when I found out it was 6 per cent. It's not because I have a daughter who goes there, but for the students. It was her words - she sent me a text this morning - that people are stressed and vulnerable, and this is just not an appropriate time to lay that on a student who is just trying to do their best and get the best grades possible. There needs to be a better way of doing that. I hope government looks at that.

[5:00 p.m.]

Listen, that legislation passed in, what, 2015? I mean, there should have been a stop date on that. I guess we'll do some homework now to find out if all the universities have triggered that market adjustment - that's what it's called, a market adjustment - where their students will see a double increase in what they projected their tuition will go up by next year.

As I said, the budget does have things in it that are important. There are some positive things within the budget that people will appreciate. But there is a lot that I think Nova Scotians were looking for, and there is the question of why those investments didn't happen or didn't take place, or why wasn't there a change or a shift in direction when it comes to the priority of the government or the investment of the government?

I know my colleague mentioned just at the tail end of her speaking on this bill around the concern around the doctor shortage and the job fair that just happened in Newfoundland and Labrador. That was one of the areas that I think I forgot to talk about - the doctors, but the investment in recruitment and retention. That has been one of the areas, I have to admit, that you have to work on every single day within the department - within the district health authorities at the time I was there, but at the current Health Authority - and to know that they chose not to go.

It's not that it was in the Yukon or in the Northwest Territories or B.C., where the costs would go up. This was in Newfoundland and Labrador. Every other province and territory was there, and today the Premier said it was unacceptable. Well, I hope that more will come of that and say who's responsible, who should be held accountable. We're in desperate need of recruitment and retention of doctors in this province, and to think that we missed an opportunity - listen, if I was the Minister of Health and Wellness, and that came across my desk to sign off on it, I would sign off on it. I would say, yes, spend \$8,000, yes, invest in that. Heck, you could probably say spend \$20,000 to make sure that we are represented in a job fair where every other jurisdiction is competing for our doctors and our medical students.

I hope the government comes back - I hope the Premier comes back and really explains, okay, if it's not acceptable, then what is he going to do about it? Hopefully we won't see that happen again.

I know my colleagues have spoken. I know my fellow colleagues have to speak a little bit more on Bill No. 116, but there are significant shortfalls within the budget where the government has not kept their eye on the ball. They have not placed a priority, in our opinion, on the areas that Nova Scotians have been, some of them, yelling about for years now.

Unfortunately, as an Opposition Party, we'll continue to hold the government to account. I guess that'll continue into the Fall and into future Budget Debates, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: It has been an interesting day here in the Legislature and beyond. We had an interesting Question Period today, where the Premier acknowledged two shortcomings of the Nova Scotia Health Authority. It was interesting to hear a discussion in the House and have somebody on the government side agree with something that was put forward.

We talked about the recruitment efforts in the Legislature today, a topic that gets a great amount of discussion, and it was brought to the attention of the government, what turned out to be I guess an oversight, or a mistake, as the Premier termed it, where Nova Scotia wasn't represented at a big recruiting event that was happening. He kind of acknowledged that shortcoming and then, shortly thereafter, my colleague, the member for Cape Breton-Richmond raised some concerns about the palliative care in her area. The Premier took the question himself and he said, yes, you're right, we are going to try to do better there.

He did have a chance to go three for three. He could have acknowledged the mess that's happened with this whole FOIPOP situation, and he could have done the same thing in that situation too. He could have just put his hand up and said, look, we made a mistake as a government. We had all the information that was necessary to know that the information wasn't properly protected, but we didn't take it; we didn't act on it.

There was an opportunity to go three for three there today, and I thought that might be something that would be a nice thing to have happen, but two for three, you know, that's a batting average that lots of people would be happy about. In some areas, it's good.

The whole FOIPOP situation - this House will rise and we will go back to our constituencies and get on with our lives, but there are people whose lives have been interrupted and whose lives have been changed by this situation, for sure. We know there

are hundreds of Nova Scotians whose personal information was made public; it was accessed. We know there is one family who had their lives disrupted and turned upside down by an investigation.

It is interesting, when you listen to people who work in the industry, Nova Scotia is becoming a bit of a laughing stock over this. Major IT publications, major IT bloggers are writing about what is happening right here in this province and how bad it makes us look. It really makes us look backwoods that we didn't take steps, as a government, to protect personal information. The information was accessed in such an easy manner and it's a shame that that is unfolding right before our eyes.

When we talk about the budget, we are talking about Nova Scotians, and I do want to mention my friends Alfie and Mary Lou, who were named Volunteers of the Year in Westville - great community people who do a lot for their community. I was proud to see them receive that honour and that acknowledgement from their fellow citizens of all the wonderful stuff they have done.

I don't want to let the opportunity pass to mention Dr. Mark Sutherland, whom I had the pleasure of spending two hours in his dental chair this morning to get some first-class dental service. His words to me as he stitched me up were, hopefully you can go and take it easy. I said, it looks like it will be an easy day - only 11 hours in the Legislature. Some of them are different, but I do appreciate what Dr. Sutherland, the service that he provides to Nova Scotians.

When we stand in this Legislature, we are talking about ways to make Nova Scotia better; we always, in this Chamber, should be looking for ways to make Nova Scotia better. I've asked the question, three balanced budgets in a row is what I say, and then I often say, maybe. They might turn out to be three balanced budgets in a row when the dust settles and the lawsuits are finalized. They may still be balanced budgets, but they may not.

We may look back at this and at some of the approaches that this government has taken. We may look back at some of this and it might be some of our worst fiscal years. That is an option, and who knows now, with the FOIPOP situation and the lawsuits that will come out of that. There's going to be a cost to that, as well, and I'm sure that cost is not in this budget today - this budget that we have tabled with the \$29 million surplus.

I don't think there is much in there for the lawsuits that will undoubtedly fall out of this government's mistake. So, when we look back in time, history will be the judge as to whether these were good fiscal years for us as a province.

We know that the third balanced budget in a row is important to this government. We know that. It's obvious from the way that they got there; \$75 million of one-off windfall from joining the National Securities Regulator. That wasn't done last year, or the year before, it wasn't done next year, it was timed, I would suggest, to help these numbers. A

cannabis windfall that goes against everything this government has said about their involvement in cannabis. Everything they always said was, we're not going to make money off this. But when it's time to table the budget, \$20 million of profit from the sale of cannabis. That number will move, will come and go, as the situation at the federal level unfolds.

Who knows how it will all end up when time passes and the dust settles? We do know that the efforts that the government has taken to get there have been extreme. So, if we go back to where we started, how do we make Nova Scotia better, and does this budget make Nova Scotia better? That's the question that people ask. Those who are watching would ask that question - and by the way, most are not watching.

I talked to a friend of mine yesterday, who I would consider quite a learned person, quite an involved person. I mentioned that I suspected the Legislature would wrap up today or tomorrow, and he was quite surprised to learn that the Legislature has been in session for over a month - almost two months - he had no idea. People aren't paying attention to what happens in this Chamber, because for the most part, there's a lot of nonsense that happens in this Chamber. So, we need to make what happens in this Chamber relevant, and we need to make sure that we're doing things that make Nova Scotia better.

Does this budget make Nova Scotia better? Look at what is happening in our health care system. We have - pick a number - 70,000, 80,000, 90,000, 100,000 Nova Scotians without a doctor. Whatever number you pick, by whatever standard you want to measure that, it's a big, big number and it's a long way from a political promise that was made in the 2013 election, which was a doctor for every Nova Scotian. It was a promise made by, at that time, a Premier who was a Leader of the Official Opposition, who was hoping to be Premier, who had been in Opposition for 10, 11, 12 years, who should've known the challenges. So, let's assume he did know the challenges, and still made a promise: a political promise for political reasons. A doctor for every Nova Scotian, and we're worse off now than we were then. We don't have to wonder why people don't pay attention to what happens in this Chamber. We don't have to wonder why people don't even vote, because they're tired of it.

When you tell Nova Scotians the budget is balanced, it's the third balanced budget in a row, there's no reason for them to believe that. There's no reason for them to believe it, because they know what their own life circumstances are like. Maybe, it's good news to herald of a balanced budget, but if you're one of those tens of thousands of people without a family doctor, do you care? The reality in this province is we have Nova Scotians dying on stretchers in hallways of hospitals. That's the reality, and the budget this year will be \$4.5 billion on health care. We have less than a million people. Many people, myself included, would say that should be enough, and yet, it's not.

Why is it not enough? Because of poor management, poor leadership, and I know that the government members, that their frustration level must be rising too. When I see

the Premier concede twice in one Question Period to the own shortcomings of the Health Authority, I know that the frustrations of the government must be rising. They're bubbling to the surface, and now the question will be, is there enough leadership over there to take any action? Five years into their term as majority government, is somebody finally going to take action?

[5:15 p.m.]

I am worried that they won't. I'm worried that they won't, based on the evidence that has been presented in the last week on the FOIPOP situation, where instead of the government saying, "We made a mistake, we will do better," the Premier patted the government on the back as to what an outstanding job they're doing.

Accountability is the first step to leadership. Until we see it, Nova Scotians have no reason to tune in to what happens in this Chamber. They know what's happening in the world. They understand how their own lives are. There are many things that this government could do to improve the lives of Nova Scotians - common-sense actions - and it still doesn't happen. It gets lost in the bureaucracy.

When we think about the emergency room closures around this province, and then we think of those who are fortunate enough to have an emergency room that's open and reliable - we have a reliable emergency room in Pictou County. You may have to wait, but when you go there, it will be open. There are many parts of the province where you have to, as my colleague the member for Northside-Westmount said, check the paper to see if an emergency room might be open or not.

But even the ones that are open have to deal with the bureaucratic ooze of this government. That was pointed out to me by an emergency room physician who pointed me to something called the Murray Formula. The Murray Formula is unique to Nova Scotia. It has been in place here since 2011. It is a mathematical formula devoid of common sense, where somebody in the bureaucracy of the Health Authority can run some numbers and determine if there should be more staffing hours at an emergency room or less.

If you know anyone who's been to the emergency room at the Aberdeen Regional Hospital in the last couple of years, they would tell you about the long wait times and about the difficulty in accessing service there. It's not for the efforts of the staff who are trying to see the patients and help them.

Well, this Spring, probably as part of the budget consultations, the Murray Formula concluded that there were too many staffing hours at the emergency room at the Aberdeen Regional Hospital and suggested that the hours be cut back. One trip to the emergency room by a staffer in the department, or one ounce of concern from the minister as to what is happening in his department, would have shown that this formula is not producing a common-sense result. So why do we have a government that operates this way?

There are other statistics in health care. Door-to-doctor discharge might be a more relevant way to look at it. You would see that period of time lengthening and say that we need more staffing hours. But instead, this government chooses to employ tactics and formulas that they use to convince themselves that they're doing just great. Three balanced budgets, isn't it great? But it's detached from reality, and what people are looking for, what they're looking to government for, is a sense of urgency. They want to know that government understands the issues and that government will act on the issues. They don't feel that sense of urgency, and they respond in kind - the 54 per cent voter turnout.

A couple of times I was asked about the economic development initiatives of the province. I've been asked in the context of a \$10 billion or \$11 billion budget - you know, for less than a million people, that should be enough, managed properly, to deliver the services that Nova Scotians have the right to expect. It should be enough, yet it doesn't feel like it.

I was asked about growing the economy, about economic development. It's an interesting question. I spent the weekend in industrial Cape Breton, where there has been \$1 billion of economic development money pumped into that area in the last 20 years, \$1 billion. If you go around and look, it's hard to see the results of it. There are incredibly smart people there, with great ideas (Interruption) There's also some other people there, Mr. Speaker. (Laughter)

There are incredibly smart people and great community assets. We need to ask ourselves the question, how are we doing economic development in this province? If I asked the government today, and I have done it before, about how much the province is spending on economic development, you wouldn't get an answer. It's not a number that the government has to hand. They are not monitoring it.

There's a Department of Business. There are economic development budgets in various departments. There's the federal share of ACOA. There's all kinds of economic development money flowing into this province. It's not being properly harnessed. Nobody is taking the leadership to look at that and say, how can we use this money to make Nova Scotia better?

We need to start thinking about how we can do that. If we can put that money to good use and grow the economy, then the \$10 billion or \$11 billion that we have to run the province could grow. If the \$10 billion that we're spending now is enough, properly managed, to deliver the services to Nova Scotians, then you would have real extra. What could you do with that, Mr. Speaker? When are we ever going to pay down the debt this province is facing, \$15 billion worth of debt?

Now I know the government members - there's one in particular who is very quick to criticize the prior government for their growth in the debt. You added to the debt, he'll always say. He'll go back decades, of course implying that his government hasn't. I have

a little bit of a reality check for the members opposite. The debt is growing under this government. It might be at a smaller rate, but it is growing, and growing debt is not good for the long-term future of this province. You can take your three balanced budgets, and you can cut every corner you want all in the name of progress, but when you are growing the debt, you're hurting the long-term future of this province, and you are passing it to the next generation.

I would challenge the members to look at the facts and ask themselves a serious question, how do we make Nova Scotia better? I would ask them to pay attention to the economic development opportunities that are before them. We need to start thinking about doing things differently in this province because what we have done hasn't been working.

People talk until they are blue in the face about the demographic challenges facing this province. Everyone accepts that we have a demographic issue facing us. Guess what? So does everywhere else. We can talk about it, or we can start to take some action to address it.

The way that economic development has been done in this province around the demographic issue has just been a pipe dream. We'll create all these jobs, and all these young people will mysteriously, magically appear and fill them. How is it working, Mr. Speaker? Hundreds of millions of dollars of economic development year after year after year - how is it working? Not very good.

We need to start thinking about how we can do things differently, and there are many things we can do differently, that we can do better. If we want to grow this economy, we need to improve our record on immigration. The Department of Immigration is just another example of a department that looks at things through a dated, wrong lens.

The Department of Immigration will stand and cheer about their retention rates, and they are quite good, Mr. Speaker, 70 or 80 per cent; 70 or 80 per cent are retaining, are staying in this province, 70 or 80 per cent of one of the smallest immigration numbers in Canada are staying here. Next door, in P.E.I, they're bringing multiples of people. They're attracting multiples of immigrants to P.E.I, their economy is doing much, much better than ours. Their retention rate is lower, but they have more people going through. So, a lower retention rate on a bigger number - I could do a bit of math here, if the members would like - is a bigger number in population growth.

Stop thinking small. If you bring in 10 people and nine stay, you have a tremendous retention rate. Guess what? You got nine people. Next door, they'll bring in 4,000 and keep 30. What number is bigger, Mr. Speaker? In Manitoba, they have a million people, they bring in 10 times more people than Nova Scotia, and yet, if you listen to the Premier, and you listen to this government, massive successes on an immigration front. I call baloney on that.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind the honourable member that, although that's what I had for breakfast this morning, that is an unparliamentary term, and I'll ask you to retract that.

The honourable member for Pictou East has the floor.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, we can have a bit of a giggle over my choice of words, I am known for my small vocabulary, and I accept that. The reality doesn't change. The reality does not change. We need to stop pretending that things are great and we need to acknowledge the challenges that are before us, and address them with confidence.

That starts on simple issues, obvious issues, like the FOIPOP situation. We need to look at immigration as a way to grow this economy. We need to look at the companies that we are supporting through our economic development initiatives, and we need to start to be a province with diversity of thought. Diversity of thought at all levels.

I was recently asked, would I initiate a program that required companies that receive funding and loans and grants from the Province of Nova Scotia, would I initiate a program that required those companies to have 40 per cent female representation on their board of directors?

I was in a group of people, and a number of us were asked that question. There was a very predictable response from a number of those people that was: I'd have to look at it, I'd have to study it before I could commit to that, and how would it work - all the questions that politicians sometimes ask to stretch problems out. I'm not interested in problem-stretching, I'm interested in problem-solving.

My answer to that question was very quick: yes, I would do that. And the reason I would do that is because the analysis already shows that companies with diversified boards of directors, companies with diversified management teams perform better because they have diversity of thought, and the opposite of diversity of thought is often on display in this Chamber - the exact opposite. When you would see a member opposite make a statement, you'll see a resounding round of applause from a group of what can be best described often as hypnotized chickens. We need . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member will retract that statement as he will retract the statement about baloney earlier. I did not hear you retract that.

The honourable member for Pictou East has the floor.

MR. HOUSTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I retract the use of that very fine sandwich meat, baloney, and also my use of the phrase "hypnotized chickens."

The point still stands that we need diversity of thought. We need to challenge each other and we need to have debate about how things will work and can be improved, because as long as we have a lack of diversity of thought, as long as we support companies that have a lack of diversity of thought, we are bound to repeat our history.

[5:30 p.m.]

I don't know if you have had a chance, Mr. Speaker, to look at the track record of NSBI's investments. Quite often, NSBI is writing off the investments that it has made in companies; I'd say more often than not that's happening. It's not working for us. We need to be more thoughtful; we need to be more clever about how we're doing things. We can't continue to do what we're doing; we need to do things better and smarter.

Now, there are many issues that are going to come to life in the next little while in this province. Members may have noticed the price of gas creeping up and it is something that people are going to start to speak more and more about, especially those in the rural areas who have to drive to get to town, to get to the doctor, to get to work, to get to the school (Interruption) My colleague points out something, my colleague makes an interesting observation that to drive to the doctor you actually need to have a doctor, and so maybe not everyone might need to do that.

But the reality is that the price of gas is creeping up, and you ain't seen nothin' yet - wait until the carbon tax scheme comes in. We are going to have serious discussions about the price of gasoline and the very real impact on Nova Scotians in this Chamber over the next little while, and this government can lie in wait or they can start to look into that now and we will see what they decide to do, because it is time that government starts to be proactive instead of reactive; it's time for the government to start to think about what is on the horizon.

We don't often talk in this Chamber about the pension liabilities facing this province, billions of dollars of pension liabilities facing this province secured by plus or minus billions of dollars of pension assets. What happens if we have a stock market correction? I think there has been nine in the last 50 years. We haven't had one in almost a decade and many people say we may be due. What happens if those pension assets are reduced by 10, 15 per cent? What happens if it takes a decade for them to come back and those pension funds aren't getting that 4 per cent or 5 per cent that they're targeting, and they are falling further behind? There's major headwinds in front of us that we need to be thinking about as a government. We need to be talking about these things and listening to perspectives from a number of different angles.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that Nova Scotia is thriving. I don't think that those individuals who are trying to access mental health care feel like Nova Scotia is thriving. I don't feel like those people who are under-employed or unemployed or among the record number of Nova Scotians accessing food banks - there's zero opportunity for them. I don't

think they feel like Nova Scotia is thriving. Those are the people we need to listen to and acknowledge and show that we feel a sense of urgency, that the members in this Chamber feel the urgency to address these issues.

I don't get it. I don't feel it right now, Mr. Speaker. I don't feel that sense of urgency from the members in this Chamber. I feel a sense of accomplishment, that they feel that what they have done has accomplished so much.

We can turn this ship around, but it starts with an attitude at the top. Many of the issues we face are from a lack of leadership at the top. Until there is accountability at the very top, there will be no accountability at the bottom.

It is pretty disappointing for me to see a minister of the government whose department has failed to act on recommendations made by the Auditor General that could have avoided a situation. The Auditor General has been talking about the security weaknesses and the shortcomings of the management of the IT systems of this province for multiple Auditor General Reports over multiple years. Today as we sit here, those recommendations are not followed. Why should we be surprised when personal private information is breached when the government hasn't taken the steps that it was instructed to take?

Do you know what level of accountability we see back from the government? One set of talking points recited to almost 10 questions. Nobody is interested in being accountable. Until we see accountability, we will have the government that we have now. You get what you got, Mr. Speaker, and we're getting what we got.

We need to ask ourselves what type of Premier issues a mandate letter to a minister and then, in the clearest example of failure to execute on that mandate letter, says, I think they're doing a wonderful job. I think the minister is doing a fantastic, outstanding job. There's no accountability at the top. There won't be any accountability at the lower levels.

We see it in health more so than ever. If you ask questions in this Legislature of the Minister of Health and Wellness, you'll quite often see that that's actually not the responsibility of the Minister of Health and Wellness, that it's the Health Authority's responsibility - not my department. If you come to Public Accounts on some occasion, if you are fortunate to be here when the health officials are before us, you might see 10 senior executives from the Health Authority and a smattering of officials from the Department of Health and Wellness. You could be sitting on this side looking across at literally millions of dollars of salary, and do you know what you'd see when you ask a very pointed question to that assembly of highly-priced, obviously smart individuals? You see a lot of shoulder-shrugging and finger-pointing, asking somebody else.

I remember one time at Public Accounts, we were talking about the doctor situation in this province. I had a series of questions. I had five questions. The five questions were

designed to get to a point where it became obvious to everyone in the room that there were not enough doctors. How many Nova Scotians do we have? How many doctors do we have? What's the normal ratio of doctors to citizens? On and on.

I never got past the question of how many doctors do we have in Nova Scotia, because despite the fact that there were millions of salary dollars present in the room with multiple large binders, do you think there was one person who could answer the question of how many doctors we have? I asked the same question for 20 minutes and I got a runaround of circles of, well, what type of doctors do you mean - do you mean specialists? Do you mean professors? Do you mean family? I just wanted to know how many doctors there are, but nobody could answer that question.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to report to you that all those people are still doing their jobs. There is no accountability for answering simple questions. Those people are necessary so the minister can stand in his place in this Chamber and point at them.

The minister doesn't want to be accountable for what's happening in health care. He's got plenty of money to deliver health care to Nova Scotians. I think it is approaching \$4.5 billion. He has plenty of money to deliver health care to Nova Scotians. He is failing, and his colleague is failing to protect people's personal, private information. You know whose fault all of this is? A 19-year-old kid who downloaded some information with the simplest of Internet moves. Nobody wants to be accountable.

Somebody needs to start being accountable for the direction of this province, and it has to start at the very top. We have the resources. We have the opportunity. We need to start to put them to work. They are not to work right now because nobody feels the sense of urgency.

I feel the sense of urgency. My colleagues feel the sense of urgency. We just need the people with their hands on the levers of government, as Alexa McDonough would say. We need the people who have their hands on the levers of government to feel the urgency to do something.

It's not good enough. It's not good enough, what's happening in this province. It's not good enough that people are dying on stretchers in the hallway of a hospital. It's not good enough that my colleague's constituent fell in the parking lot of a grocery store and had to wait 35 minutes for an ambulance - for first responders.

It's not good enough. Somebody needs to feel the sense of urgency and somebody needs to start acting upon what is before us.

If you talk to people delivering emergency health care, they have the answers. Do you know that in this province there was a trial running for an automated lift which would help those paramedics and people working for EHS move patients in and out? It was a great

trial. It made it so much easier for people to do their jobs. It prevented the risk of injury to the people performing that vital service. They all want it, Mr. Speaker. They all want that to stay.

[5:45 p.m.]

When I asked the Minister of Health and Wellness if he would continue that and equip those ambulances with that device to help those people deliver the services to Nova Scotians, do you know what the minister said? They need to study it. I could help the minister complete that study tonight if he's interested. We could go and find 10 people who used it for the last month or 60 days, and they could tell him first-hand if it helped them do their job.

Problem-stretching? We need problem solvers who understand the urgency. That's what we need to see. We need to tell those people working in this province, in government, in health care, and in our schools that we respect them and that we as a government, with \$10 billion almost \$11 billion at our fingertips, are willing to put that money to work to help them do their job. Do we see that?

Do you get that impression, Mr. Speaker, from the lawsuits between Doctors Nova Scotia and the province? Do you get the impression that this government is willing to work with Nova Scotians to make Nova Scotia better? Do you get that impression from the lawsuit? Did you get the impression from teachers marching around this Legislature? Did you get the impression that they feel that this government is willing to put the resources of this province to work to help them? Did you get that impression from talking to the first responders that the government is willing to help them?

Would you like to join me, Mr. Speaker, on a tour of volunteer fire departments? We can talk to those wonderful volunteer firefighters who do so much for their communities. Would you like to join me on a tour, and we can speak to some of those members and ask them if they feel that the government is willing to put the resources of this province to work towards making Nova Scotia better? Let's go on that little tour and you will find that the people who make Nova Scotia tick, the people who make Nova Scotia work, feel pretty disconnected from what happens in this Chamber. You will understand the reasons for the 54 per cent voter turnout.

If you or any member in this Chamber, including from the government side, come on that tour with me, you will find why Nova Scotians are disconnected. It's because their government doesn't feel the sense of urgency. Their government doesn't have a plan. Sometimes we hear a plan to make a plan. They don't have a plan on how to improve Nova Scotia. I can't explain why that is, but it's happening.

I mentioned the issue with the pensions that's possibly out there facing us. I do see something in the Financial Measures (2018) Bill to change the board constitutions of some

of the pension entities. Maybe that will work. Maybe that will move towards diversity of thought, but until we start putting the right people in the right places, we aren't going anywhere in this province.

We can't be fooled. Nova Scotians won't be fooled by three balanced budgets in a row. They know the reality. They understand what is happening in this province from students at the youngest age who go home from school crying because they can't get the support they need in the classroom, all the way to senior citizens, grandparents, who see their grandchildren come home from school crying. They understand the issues, and the talking points of a study or a council, or a fund, a fund that we don't know how we're going to use because we don't feel the sense of urgency to figure out how to use it.

Nobody should take comfort in that, Mr. Speaker. There's not one single Nova Scotian who should take comfort in that, should feel for one second that this is the \$20 million that will make a difference, because the track record is not good.

We have \$120 million in a fund to deal with rural Internet challenges. Now that's \$120 million that, if deployed the way government historically could deploy money like that, it could turn into about \$40 or \$50 million worth of value. Governments are notorious for taking money and devaluing it. That \$120 million might return \$40 or \$50 million to Nova Scotians if we do what we've always done. But if we're smart and we put the right people in the right place, that \$120 million could return \$240 million worth of value.

Time will tell, Mr. Speaker. Time will tell. But the process of planning to the podium, preparing for the announcement, making the announcement, patting oneself on the back, accepting some high fives from the colleagues and then doing nothing - that is not good enough. I want to see the government feel a sense of urgency. I want a government that comes to the table and says, there's a \$120 million windfall here and I'm going to put it to use for Nova Scotians, and this is exactly what we're going to do.

Have you seen the plan, Mr. Speaker, and where that \$120 million might end up? It was announced some time ago. Maybe not in government terms but in real life, everyday Nova Scotian terms. It was announced some time ago. Has anybody said, well, this is the plan now? There's no sense of urgency. The microphone was held, the announcement was made - done and dusted. There, I don't have to worry about that, now, look. And the results under that formula will come in with \$40 or \$50 million worth of value.

That's what will happen, unless somebody feels accountable to stretch every last single dollar of value out of that, unless somebody feels the urgency to act with that money as if it was their own, instead of acting as if it's money that fell from the sky, and we'll put it over here, we'll park it over here and isn't that great. And you know what? Maybe when the next election comes along, we'll put it right on our bullet points - we invested \$120 million into rural Internet. Wouldn't that be a nice bullet point, Mr. Speaker, right underneath a doctor for every Nova Scotian?

The results will come in, Mr. Speaker, the results will come in. That's quite apart from what I'm interested in. I'm interested in actually seeing government take a dollar and return value to Nova Scotians with it, to the best of their abilities. I'm interested in seeing a government be accountable, be willing to be held accountable for the decisions they make in their own department, for their shortcomings in their own department, in their colleagues' departments, to be accountable and to hold each other accountable. That is the way that Nova Scotia will move forward.

This budget, and the year in front of us will determine whether it was balanced or not. The minister has time to make \$4.5 million of health care dollars valuable to Nova Scotians. The minister has time to make that happen, and we will see if it happens. If we're sitting here a year from now, Mr. Speaker, debating another budget and we still have tens of thousands of Nova Scotians who don't have access to primary health care, who don't have a doctor, and if we're sitting here a year from now and there's still record numbers of people accessing the food bank, then we will see if Nova Scotians got value from this budget today.

If we're sitting here talking about the challenges remaining in the education system, then we will see if Nova Scotians got value for the education dollars, for the fund that is available.

History is often an indicator of future performance, Mr. Speaker. I hope this is the exception to the rule, but from what I've seen of this government's unwillingness to take accountability for its own actions, from what this government has displayed to all Nova Scotians over just the last week, I'm not particularly convinced that there are many members opposite willing to be held accountable.

As we read the blogs from Internet and IT security experts from all over the world that talk about how ridiculous what happened here is, and as we read the Internet posts of how laughable it is that people's personal information was just put on the Internet, and with every day that passes, people become more and more convinced that what happens in this Chamber is nonsense, and people become more and more convinced that there's no reason to vote.

The next time the Premier stands up and says how sad it is that the voter turnout rate is so low, remind him of this discussion, because every time he does something like this, he is contributing to that and he is encouraging people to not vote. He is telling them it doesn't matter.

We believe it matters, and we'll keep pushing forward for that. With those few words, I'll take my place.

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

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind all members of the House and all Nova Scotians that the fiscal health of Nova Scotia is critical to our growth and our success. When we formed government in 2013, the province was borrowing money to pay its bills. That path is not fiscally sustainable, it does not lead to good fiscal health for the province, and that fiscal health is critical for us to attract new business, new immigrants, and that will help drive the economy.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia has been identified as only one of two provinces in Canada that is on a fiscally sustainable path over the long-term, and achieving that fiscal sustainability is so important to our province. It gives us the ability to make future investments in health care and education while we continue to live within our means. The investments we make today will be affordable tomorrow. We will not leave those for a future government or a future generation.

Our government embraced stronger budgetary and financial management, and I'm pleased to report that three credit rating agencies have acknowledged our improved fiscal health and have recognized that in their ratings for Nova Scotia. These agencies are independent, and their analysis and their ratings reflect their views on the province's credit worthiness.

One measure of how a province is performing is the ratio of net debt to GDP. When we formed government, Mr. Speaker, the net debt to GDP was 38.2 per cent. The One Nova Scotia Commission had challenged the province to reduce that ratio to 30 per cent by 2024. Each year since 2014, that ratio has decreased, and we are on track to achieve the 30 per cent by 2024.

Mr. Speaker, with a solid financial foundation, positive and improved credit ratings, strong financial management practices, and controlled departmental spending, we are in an excellent position to invest in programs and services that Nova Scotians need and deserve. Those investments are reflected in Budget 2018-19. Bill No. 116, the Financial Measures (2018) Act, provides the legislative authority for those measures.

Mr. Speaker, I now close debate on Bill No. 116.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 116.

There has been a call for a recorded vote. We will ring the bells until the Whips are satisfied.

[6:00 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Are the Whips satisfied?

Before we proceed with the recorded vote, I'll just remind all members to remain completely silent while the Clerks record your vote. When your name is called, please stand tall and state a simple "yea" or "nay."

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[6:15 p.m.]

YEAS

Mr. Churchill
 Mr. Furey
 Ms. Regan
 Mr. MacLellan
 Mr. McNeil
 Ms. Casey
 Mr. Glavine
 Mr. Delorey
 Mr. Colwell
 Ms. Miller
 Mr. Kousoulis
 Mr. Porter
 Mr. Gordon Wilson
 Mr. Hines
 Ms. Diab
 Mr. Ince
 Mr. Rankin
 Mr. Mombourquette
 Mr. Horne
 Mr. Maguire
 Mr. MacKay
 Mr. Jessome
 Ms. Lohnes-Croft
 Ms. DiCostanzo
 Mr. Irving

NAYS

Mr. MacMaster
 Mr. MacLeod
 Mr. Dunn
 Mr. Bain
 Ms. MacFarlane
 Mr. d'Entremont
 Mr. David Wilson
 Mr. Burrill
 Ms. Zann
 Ms. Roberts
 Ms. Martin
 Ms. Chender
 Ms. Smith-McCrossin
 Ms. Paon
 Mr. Houston
 Mr. Orrell
 Ms. Adams
 Mr. Lohr
 Mr. Johns
 Ms. Masland
 Mr. Halman
 Mr. Harrison

THE CLERK: For, 25. Against, 22.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 108.

Bill No. 108 - Cannabis Control Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 108 now be read a third time and do pass.

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

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, as many of you know, I am voting no to this bill, and I'm not voting no against the legalization of cannabis, I am voting no against a bill that lacks the best regulations, policies, and procedures (Interruption)

No, but if the member (Interruptions)

Again, Mr. Speaker, I am voting against a bill that lacks the best regulations, policies, and procedures required to ensure the best protection of society.

I firmly believe that no one in this Chamber wanted this to come as fast as it has. The federal Liberals have decided that Canada will be a nation of legalized pot-smoking for recreational purposes. Imagine - recreational. Unlike carbon pricing, they have given provinces no choice. Do it, or we'll do it for you, and you can deal with the fallout later. It truly is a poor way to treat partners in Confederation.

There are thousands of Nova Scotians who do not want this and have grave concerns on many fronts. There are many Nova Scotians who do welcome the legalization of cannabis but also have concerns with the rollout of Bill No. 108. We certainly attempted to deal with these concerns through carefully considered amendments that were rejected not only by the Liberals but, I do have to point out, the NDP as well - all 12.

It's hard for me to understand why members in this Chamber are in favour of a bill that has so much of it only entering into force at some future date of proclamation. Don't they see that, with all the unknowns and work still yet to be done, this puts law-abiding citizens at risk, particularly our youth? Cannabis is going mainstream, and Nova Scotia is not nearly ready for the explosion that is about to occur in the next few months.

It's hard to believe, but cannabis is actually traced back as far as 7000 BC. Yes, it is true, and humans discovered that parts of the cannabis plant could be used to create clothing and rope. Humans discovered that the leaves and flowers have actual healing powers.

I am all for medicinal marijuana. I am all for the ability to create economic growth.

A bit of trivia, Mr. Speaker - it was stated in a book that I read recently that Christopher Columbus was actually the first pot dealer, crossing the ocean in 1492 and carrying a very large load of hemp seeds to the New World.

It is truly difficult to believe that we have arrived at third reading of Bill No. 108, and not one amendment was accepted. We couldn't even get the NDP to support us in eliminating golf courses from allowing you to light up a joint while playing the historic and growing sport amongst our youth. (Interruptions) I can't believe it. (Interruptions) It does, though, Madam Speaker.

It makes me wonder though, what is it that the Liberals and the NDP know about golfing that I don't know? We can all find a little bit of humour in this, and that's fine. But I really don't understand the golf course part. I really, really don't. It just seems like it's some type of secret code that I have to crack. I feel that perhaps in third reading some mystery will be discovered and I will have a better understanding of why we are allowing everyone to light up on the golf course.

I'm sure that the Minister of Justice, given the amount of time that he has spent on this piece of legislation with his department, is aware that there are over 800 strains. Imagine. Some names are Girl Scout Cookies, Blue Dream, White Widow, and - one of the best - Gorilla Glue. These are just four that are actually highly popular and contain higher levels of THC, but you guys all knew that, right? Everyone knew that, since they're the most popular strains. I'm sure they'll be sold at NSLCs in Nova Scotia, the nine different locations. I'm sure that the minister and the department have definitely chosen to have the best products there.

I will always wonder, what was the drive to legalize it? I suppose money, perhaps in hopes to decrease the black market? Many people have spoken about, why don't we just decriminalize it? Others stated, why not make policies around medicinal cannabis more lax? However, the truth of the matter is that the average cannabis stock rose 332 per cent between 2016 and 2017 - and I'm not going to deny that I have shares. I will not deny that, but I won't tell you what the name of the company is.

It's all about the money, isn't it? It really is all about the money. I mean, just look at our most recent Liberal budget, where the Liberals bragged about a surplus - a surplus that is based on guestimates. It's a risky budget, a very risky budget. Not so much a balanced budget, especially when you're basing it on a potential of \$10.4 million for a cannabis tax and another \$10.4 million for HST related to cannabis sales.

People have asked me, what do we tell our children? How do we talk to our children about this? Well, up until now, I have personally been telling my kids, don't do drugs. Don't do drugs. It's illegal, and if you're caught with it, depending on the amount and the

offence, you could actually go to jail. Now I get to tell them that the Liberal Government has legalized pot. Chloe and Jack, you are now allowed to go to the liquor store when you're 19, and you can purchase cannabis.

AN HON. MEMBER: Alcohol is a drug . . .

MS. MACFARLANE: I don't deny that alcohol is a drug. In fact, you know what? We could have another debate. I would love to pick up a debate about that.

I'll share a little story. Last year, we were sitting in this Chamber, and I got a call. One of the Pages came to me, and they said, there's someone on the phone for you. I went out, and it was a teacher. I'll have to be honest, I have never had a call from a teacher about my two children, so I panicked. I thought, oh my gosh. I really thought something had happened.

It was later in the day, about quarter to four, when we were here and I got the call. The teacher said, I'm so sorry. I asked your assistant how I could get hold of you, and she gave this number. I said, it's okay, just tell me what happened. She said, it's okay. You knew that Jack had an essay to write? I said, yes, and she said, do you know the subject matter?

I said, no, I just asked him. I'm not getting the Mother of the Year Award. I know that. I just said, Jack, before I go this week, you did that essay, right? He said, yes, Mom, it's all done. I said, okay. I should have been a little bit more attentive.

She said, it's okay, I just wanted to let you and Andrew know that he wrote about why cannabis is healthier for you than alcohol. I want you to know he got an A-plus. But I do think you and Andrew need to know what the subject matter was." So we had a great little chat that evening, Jack and I.

[6:30 p.m.]

Picking up on what the member across the aisle here said, I don't deny it. I absolutely believe that alcohol is much worse for you. But again, that's a debate for another day. Today we're talking about the lack of policies, rules, and regulations in Bill No. 108.

We ignored the expert panel of the chief medical officers from across this country that recommended 25 because it's a no-brainer. We all know the frontal lobe is not completely developed until then. Look, they even compromised at 21. But clearly this government believes that 19 is the ideal age for one to legally purchase cannabis for recreational use.

It appears that the Liberals, and from what I have heard, the NDP, are okay with selling it in co-locations. Given all the evidence by the expert panels across this country,

you think it's okay. I don't think you do. I think it was really truly out of convenience. Again, it's about the money. Let's not do standalone stores. It will be cheaper for us to put it in existing NSLCs. I think that one is going to come back to haunt us all. I really do.

Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear: this bill should have been about protecting the health and well-being of our youth from cannabis. The justice system is already overburdened, and enforcing new pot-related measures could make things worse. The municipalities will no doubt do most of the cost-based heavy lifting as they try to train and equip law enforcement agencies to better deal with intoxicated, drugged drivers.

We do know, Madam Speaker, that the Trudeau Government has earmarked just over \$274 million to support policing and border efforts associated with legalized pot, with some of that money to be made available to all the provinces. But we have no idea what percentage of that \$274 million is going to be given to Nova Scotia. Last week or the week before during Estimates, I asked the Minister of Justice and his colleagues, have we had those discussions? Do we know what percentage we are getting? It would be kind of nice to know, considering that B.C. and Nova Scotia have the highest consumption rates. They consume more cannabis than any other provinces.

I believe this government is preparing to sell 12 million grams in the first year. (Interruption) It's just July until March - thank you for correcting me. That's incredible, 12 million. I don't know if Girl Scout Cookies are in that or Gorilla Glue or not.

I hope the minister will clarify as soon as possible with regard to what amount of that \$274 million the Trudeau Liberal Government has earmarked, because I'll tell you what, municipalities are going to need extra help. They are not prepared for what's ahead of them. What they are prepared for, and what they are aware of, is the fact that they are going to see a colossal increase in their policing budget, but there's been no discussion with the Liberal Government and the municipalities on this. They say that they've consulted, and that they spoke to around 200-some people around the province, but that really isn't clearly the best type of consultation.

I have many municipal councillors coming to me, asking me how this is all going to unfold. What needs to happen is this government needs to hold a special meeting with the UNSM, and invite all wardens, all mayors, all councillors that want to come, and discuss how they go forward in best ensuring that they're doing the right thing in protecting our youth. That would be the first step to do.

Madam Speaker, it's very frustrating knowing that our municipalities are struggling with this, because we see other provinces across Canada that are setting aside extra money for regulating and monitoring of cannabis. Ontario has just set aside \$40 million to help municipalities with this transition, and what they have done is they have based it on the number of households in each municipality, which I think is fair. I would hope that maybe a discussion could happen between the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Municipal

Affairs to discuss what we think each municipality would require. We know that there are different demographics across the province, maybe there would be some areas that would require help with their policing, maybe there are some municipalities that wouldn't. What I can assure you, is that it is a huge concern.

They say, Madam Speaker, that by 2020, cannabis sales could possibly reach as high as \$7 billion. I just read an article yesterday, and I wrote this down I think last week after reading an article - and yesterday I read one where it says it could get close to \$20 billion. I don't know where they're getting their numbers, but they were in articles that I read. It's just hard to believe that with that kind of money that's going to be projected, that's going to be coming in federally, provincially, that we're not setting aside something for our municipalities. Perhaps equally disturbing, and perhaps more disturbing in the minds of some, is that we're not setting aside anything for education, awareness.

Some of these provinces already have public service announcements out there on their televisions, and local radio stations, and social media, bringing education and awareness to the legalization of cannabis, but we have not invested anything in that. That was one of my amendments, I thought it was just a common-sense amendment, where - why wouldn't we prepare and be ready to launch a campaign about the education and the awareness of this product, at least 90 days prior to legalizing it? Doesn't that make sense? Why are we saying, well, we're going to look at that, and we'll roll it out sometime after it's legalized. That doesn't seem right, that seems backwards.

So, again, it's something really difficult for me to wrap my head around, why there wasn't more time spent consulting Nova Scotians on this. It's very perplexing to know that much of this bill is based on their original launch of an online survey. We all know that survey could be taken over and over and over, and over, as many times as you wanted to do it.

AN HON. MEMBER: Their systems are secure.

MS. MACFARLANE: Their systems are secure.

But, really, (Interruption) Pardon?

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. The member for Pictou West has the floor.

MS. MACFARLANE: Really, that was a very weak survey. I can appreciate that the minister thinks differently and needs to defend that, but I would dare to ask any one of those 30,000 people who apparently went online and took part in the survey, I would dare to ask any of them: How secure was this survey? Did you need to put in any password? Did you need to identify yourself? Did you actually even have to be 18? Did you have to live here? No, no, no, no, no. It's awful, and that's what we based the majority of this legislation on. It's awful.

Madam Speaker, there are many situations where employers are already dealing with employees who are high, and they are struggling now. When this becomes legalized this is going to escalate.

Now some small businesses, I know many that have been able to work it out with their employees because apparently the employee has a doctor's note that they have to use medicinal cannabis and it has worked out, and they have been able to work this out. But we have big companies that employ hundreds and hundreds of people and they are asking, so what is in this legislation that is going to ensure how we deal with our employees when they show up high, and what kind of test are we going to use?

They are very confused; they have no idea, and no one is guiding them, and interestingly enough I was informed during my investigation over the last number of months that you can actually purchase synthetic cannabis. Actually, that's probably where you should go and invest your money. I know it's in the black market, but if you can get involved with that because, guess what? Synthetic cannabis does not show up in blood work. Did anyone know that? No.

So, what is the plan, what plan does this government have to deal with counterfeit cannabis? Developing synthetic cannabis aversion of not real, obviously, cannabis is certainly creating a controversy in the cannabis realm of those who are growing it organically and actually have a Health Canada permit.

So again, synthetic cannabis is made by people who have no training, do not care what is in it and, obviously, their only motivation is profit. So again, the worst part of this is that it doesn't show up on a drug screen. The public perception is, this is great, I won't get fired if I take it because it's not going to show up. It is a concern to me, and I think it's something that we should seriously look at and identify and be sure we have the proper policies and measures in place to deal with.

[6:45 p.m.]

We all know that Canada's green rush is on. We will not have though, Madam Speaker, a local producer ready to supply the nine co-locations that have to be ready for July 1st. In fact, recently, during estimates, I asked the Minister of Justice, what companies are actually supplying cannabis to the nine NSLC locations? The minister answered, well, actually, we're just in discussions right now, but no, you're correct - there won't be any from Nova Scotia because they won't be ready. They won't be ready. They're not going to get into this market in their own province until who knows when because it's going to be determined by what type of contract is signed with these other companies outside our province. If they had any clue, and if I was that business person outside the province selling cannabis to Nova Scotia, I would say, yes, I'll supply you but it's going to be for five years (Interruption) Yes.

It's very frustrating, and I think that this isn't going to end here. It's really not going to end here. I know many of my colleagues have many of their own opinions and thoughts that they would like to share. We realize that this is definitely going to pass. We all know that, with a majority government.

But I hope that perhaps there will be discussions held afterwards about some of the amendments that we sincerely put forward that we thought were common-sense amendments. We did put in 12, but there are least seven or eight that I really hope this government will go back and look at and possibly implement themselves. I think that in the coming months and the coming years, you're going to have a lot of issues that are going to have unintended consequences.

In closing, I want to be clear. I am not resisting change. I am not against legalization. I am against Bill No. 108. Until that bill improves to protect our youth, I will never endorse this Liberal decision on Bill No. 108.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'm honoured to rise and say a few words about Bill No. 108. This is obviously a contentious bill. I think we can all agree that it wasn't a bill that any of us, the government included, decided to put forward. It's something that has come down from on high so to speak, and we're all struggling to make sense of it. We're doing our best.

It's the NDP's position that this bill does in fact do an adequate job of contemplating the various issues involved in legalization. Cannabis is here. We know that cannabis is widely used right now in Nova Scotia in all age groups, and it will soon be legal.

As my colleague pointed out, we may differ on many issues, but we agree on the fact that this bill will pass. Our questions are less about the legislation and the legislative gaps but much more about the implementation and the planning, or what I would call the serious lack thereof, at least in terms of the evidence we've seen, for appropriate implementation.

Whether or not it was introduced of its own volition, this government has known since 2017, that legalization was going to be a reality, and in that time, Madam Speaker - about a year of which I've been paying pretty close attention - it's been crickets. I mean, we haven't heard anything until very recently in this sitting about the plans.

As far as we can tell, based on what we've heard, the government has not done the work that it needs to do to be as ready as it needs to be for legalization. This is an enormous change. The minister has spoken to that, I think we all acknowledge that, that this legislative change is going to be huge in terms of its implications on so many aspects of

the work that this government does. That carries with it, obviously, a number of risks, and we've been focused on those risks, but it also carries with it opportunities, and it's our position, Madam Speaker, that this government has not prepared appropriately for either.

We do support the distribution of cannabis through the NSLC, but as we've said before, and we'll say now, we think that co-location is a terrible idea. The federal task force pointed out that this was a bad idea, they specifically advised against it, and I agree with my colleague, the member for Pictou West, that this is clearly a cost-saving measure. Bottle your own wine didn't work, so let's try cannabis.

So, while I understand that if you're looking at how to save money, that this is one way that seems like it makes a ton of sense. We happen to have these nine locations, we have a product idea that's not doing well, let's stick cannabis in there instead. Madam Speaker, to me this is emblematic of the level of planning and thoughtfulness that we've seen on this file. We've talked about the survey, and this is another example that's very in line with that, of doing the bare-minimum to figure out how to dot the i's and cross the t's to implement, again, what will be a huge change.

Madam Speaker, this government has repeatedly said that public safety is foremost in the minds of the government and the minister when it comes to this sweeping change. Co-location flies in the face of that assertion. Again, the federal task force has said, do not co-locate, it's a bad idea. We have a number of groups that have come out and said that as well. The experts in the area have all said this, and not only has this decision been made, but we have no assurance that the government is going to be monitoring the public health impacts of co-location, and that the government's going to be ready to move quickly.

It's clear that this is a pilot. We're all finger-painting here, we don't know what legalized cannabis is going to look like. This government is presumably doing it's best to figure out how to put these Jenga blocks together in a way that makes sense, but it's not at all clear to us, Madam Speaker, that this particular decision, to put marijuana retailers in nine random NSLCs across the province - again, I'll point out that our neighbours in New Brunswick will have 20 - and that they just happened to be the ones that have failed Bottle Your Own Wine operations. To me, that's not the hallmark of a thoughtful decision.

Furthermore, as we've discussed before in this House, one of the reasons that we support legalization is because we know what an active black market there is. We've all joked about the different cannabis derivatives and other things that are for sale under the heading of cannabis and marijuana in Nova Scotia, but the reality is, it's true. It's an unregulated supply, there is a black market, and nine locations across the province will not combat that black market, Madam Speaker, I'm sorry. We've heard now a couple of times that people can order it online and I'll say again that here's the sales process right now for buying cannabis on the black market - you call a guy and you go see a guy or you call a guy and a guy comes and sees you and it's cheap.

So the new sales process for everyone who doesn't live close to one of those nine locations is either use your home computer, if you have a computer and you have access to the Internet, which we know is a challenge for many Nova Scotians. If you don't have a computer or access to the Internet, the assertion is that you are going to get in your car, you are going to drive to a public access computer, you are going to order it online in a public place in a public access computer. Again, the online sales we've been told are to diminish a stigma that people may not want to walk into a store and yet they're going to sit at a public access computer in a library and then they are going to plan that they might want to take some cannabis in a couple of weeks or whenever Canada Post is going to deliver it. Frankly it's absurd, Madam Speaker.

So, again, we have real issues on whether this preliminary foot forward into legalization is going to do anything to combat the black market. We've been hearing especially in the last few days, a lot of concerns from our municipal partners. While I recognize the challenge that the federal government has placed on this government in offloading a number of the thorny questions about how legalization will occur, I would submit that this government is offloading a number of those thorny questions, again, onto our municipal partners.

The UNSM has now come out with big questions about this legislation because in the end they are going to be the ones left holding the bag for a lot of the enforcement and it's not at all clear how they are going to do that. I think that the government seems to be violating this maxim of treating others how you'd like to be treated. My sense from speaking to municipal officials in the last week is that they are certainly very unhappy with the number of unanswered questions they have about the implementation of this legalization.

Madam Speaker, we were also hoping to see something from this government signalling their intention to work with federal counterparts on the issue of previous convictions. We support the principle that Nova Scotians previously convicted of something that is now legal should not continue to be negatively impacted by that conviction. We submit that the government should be looking at opportunities for individuals with convictions for possession at or below the now legal limit to be able to apply for a pardon. We'll be asking government about that and looking forward, particularly because we know that often those charges disproportionately fall on some of the most vulnerable folks in our society.

On the matter of impaired driving, it's important to note that this is not a new problem. Again, I'll say that thousands of Nova Scotians already consume cannabis; many of them drive and it's a problem right now. Madam Speaker, this is one of the opportunities. Legalization gives Nova Scotia the opportunity to do a better job at limiting cannabis-impaired driving, but the government is moving too slowly. We need to see a police force trained and ready with accurate tests to give Nova Scotians the confidence that there will be legal consequences to driving while high.

Madam Speaker, this is another area and another reason why we support legalization: people drive high and there's much less of a stigma amongst consumers of cannabis around driving high than there is around driving drunk. Part of that is because, well from a public health perspective, we've been very quiet on cannabis because it's not legal. Now that it's legal, we have the opportunity to have a robust education campaign. It's not just about enforcement, it's about education. But again, crickets, we've heard nothing about education other than we can't talk about it because there's an RFP going out.

We are months away from legalization but we haven't gotten any clarity from the government about their approach to education, especially a public health education campaign. I'm sorry, Madam Speaker, I don't want to prejudice an RFP but I am more concerned about there not being a robust public education and health campaign and driving campaign than I am about the government having to spend a few thousand extra dollars on an RFP because the cat's out of the bag that we're going to have an education campaign.

Young people need to learn the facts about cannabis consumption. We need a public education campaign that promotes harm minimization, is based on evidence, and includes coordinated messaging with the federal government. This government has provided no budget, no plans, and no specifics.

[7:00 p.m.]

We're hearing from medical cannabis users. I asked the minister about this in Question Period the other day. There is a lot of concern about the lack of clarity of what legalization will mean for them. Medical cannabis is still regulated by the federal government and sold by the federal government. These users need to know that their access to their prescription will not be negatively impacted by the recreational market.

The changes to the Smoke-free Places Act, while we support them, in many ways don't adequately provide for people who have a prescription for medical cannabis, particularly those who would use a vaporizer or a device like that, which shouldn't be a problem in a dwelling. That would be a very simple fix that this government could make to ensure that people who have already been accessing cannabis legally through the medical stream would continue to be able to do so, again, knowing that individuals with disabilities are often very limited already in their housing options. The whole idea that you can get out of your lease if you consume cannabis and your landlord says it's not okay, for many of the people I'm talking about, that's just not going to be an option.

There are risks. We have been talking about risks, but there are opportunities. The federal Task Force on Cannabis Legalization and Regulation highlighted that there will be a supply shortage for the first few years of legalization. Each time I have asked the government about how they will support local cannabis production, crickets. The silence has been deafening. In Budget Estimates, I could not get a single answer from the Minister of Business about any incentive or economic development initiative aimed at the

production of cannabis. This is an opportunity. When I asked the Minister of Justice about this in Question Period, he said we're not pursuing economic development because the safety of our children is too important. What does that even mean?

There are federally regulated facilities across this country that are producing cannabis that will make a lot of money, many of them in rural areas with a high knowledge of agriculture. Ding ding - we have those. Empty facilities that can be had for cheap, we have those too. None of our supply, when this legalization happens, will be local, and that's a real shame.

We have a government that's focused on imports and exports. What about producing what we need here in Nova Scotia? As far as I can tell, nobody has even put their mind to this. I asked about the tourism file. I'm sure this is a controversial issue. Nonetheless, the reality is that we have a whole raft of states to the south of us in the United States where cannabis will continue not to be legal. We will have people, I tell you, who will come here because cannabis is legal. We have seen it in every jurisdiction that has legalized. If we want that to be an opportunity rather than a challenge for us, then let's do some planning. Again, I have not gotten a single answer to the question that indicates that anyone has even thought about this question, and that's a concern.

We need to be considering measures similar to those in place for the Nova Scotia wine industry and craft brewing. Edibles are coming. We have discussed this. Cannabis will be legal like wine and beer, and we need to treat it that way. We need to be thinking beyond whether or not we want it to be legal and about how we're going to manage it once it is.

To that end, the government should be supporting cannabis research. St. Thomas University in Fredericton has established a new research chair on cannabis funded by Shoppers Drug Mart and the New Brunswick Health Research Foundation. We have heard nothing from this government about support for research in what will be an area where we will need more and more current data. I have heard this government say so many times now that they only make decisions based on evidence, but from the original survey to the lack of research now to the lack of information that we have been provided, for the life of me, I cannot figure out what evidence it is that those decisions are being based on.

What we have here, in terms of legislation, is the bare minimum. We have a government that has dragged its heels and has reluctantly complied with the federal government decision. We have a government that is more concerned about the bottom line than about adequately managing risks or taking advantage of opportunities. This legislation checks some of the necessary boxes without showing the support or the vision needed to successfully manage the transition.

While we will support this legislation, because we support legalization, I believe it's a missed opportunity. We remain very skeptical of and concerned about this

government's lack of preparedness. We are not managing the risks, and we are not taking advantage of the opportunities, and that's a shame.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: This is a difficult bill for me to speak to. As a former registered nurse for 26 years, I'm used to looking at most things through the lens of evidence-based medicine and health care. We look at things objectively, and what do we know in health? We know that cannabis use increases the risk of schizophrenia.

In the general population, individuals diagnosed as having a psychotic disorder have higher rates of cannabis use than those not diagnosed with a psychotic disorder. So, what are we doing here in Nova Scotia and across this country? We're legalizing it.

Did anyone consider actually standing up to the Prime Minister and just saying no, like we've been doing to drugs for the last number of years? We could do that. We could stand up for what is right. We could stand and have our own opinion here in Nova Scotia and we could do what is best for the health of the people of Nova Scotia. Yes, we can.

Did you know that the Government of Saskatchewan is standing up to the Prime Minister? Right now, Premier Scott Moe said, Saskatchewan "... will go to court over the federal government's carbon tax."

When we see the federal government download its negative agenda on to us here in the provincial government, we can stand up for what is right for our province and our people. But here we are, legalizing a drug that we know, through evidence-based research, is harmful. I am concerned what this change will do for the culture around drug use here in this province.

I grew up with the mantra "drugs are bad," with the mantra "don't do drugs" and "just say no to drugs." Now we are legalizing it and changing the culture around drug use here in this country.

It is well known in health care, it is well known by the enforcement - by RCMP and by police - that marijuana is a gateway drug. Many drug addicts start with marijuana and then they look for their next high. Marijuana today is not like marijuana of 30 years ago, with the THC levels higher and higher. Tetrahydrocannabinol, which is a mind-altering ingredient, is addictive.

Many using marijuana will look for an increased high, leading to marijuana with higher THC levels, leading to cocaine use, opioid use, and crystal meth, among just a few.

One of the reasons I find this bill hard to speak to is because I have seen first-hand the negative side effects of marijuana, among other drugs, and I've seen drugs kill. One of

my sons was best friends with a young man named Taylor Samson, who was a bright, A+ physics student at Dalhousie, but he earned his income through selling marijuana.

No one across the way will tell me that this bill is going to lead to a decrease in the legal sale of marijuana. There is no way, and the RCMP will verify it, that this bill will decrease the illegal sale of marijuana.

I have seen marijuana kill. No one will ever convince me that drugs are okay. I have seen drugs ruin people's lives. I have seen drugs ruin families through brain damage, through psychosis, and through death.

I would love to see legislation that finds ways to decrease the amount of drug use in our society, not make it more culturally acceptable and more available. But here we are. Because we have a Liberal Prime Minister, we are faced with the legalization (Interruption) We do. You can say aww, but we do. You cannot deny it. We are faced, because of our Liberal Prime Minister, with legalizing a drug that we have spent years teaching people about all the dangerous effects on the human brain, because he wants the votes.

In Law Amendments Committee, we heard from many educated, intelligent people who recommended amendments to this legislation, and I supported these amendments. Some of them were creating a public awareness campaign to educate about the dangerous effects of marijuana and cannabis use, not having co-location of alcohol and cannabis, treating it the same as open liquor and linking it to the Liquor Control Act, having a total ban on public possession and open packaging, and protecting our public from second-hand cannabis smoke, the vulnerable people in our population who have health diagnoses of things like asthma and COPD. None of these amendments were accepted, Madam Speaker, none. If I had my way, I also believe we should have had an amendment that legislates that every dollar of net profit of the sales of cannabis should be used exclusively for addiction services and addiction centres in this province.

I worry for the future of our province and our country. I grew up surrounded by hard-working people who were clear-mined, sober, and productive. I have a best friend in Amherst who is from Jamaica. She said to me, Elizabeth, smoking marijuana in Jamaica is completely accepted, and there's a completely different work ethic and very low productivity in Jamaica. I think we already have a productivity problem here in Nova Scotia. We do not need something else making it worse.

I do want to make a comment to my colleague here, our Leader. She spoke about synthetic cannabis. Last week, I shared with the caucus a recent research article put out in a medical journal that spoke to synthetic cannabis leading to bleeding disorders leading to death. We need to be aware of what's coming, Madam Speaker.

I'll end by saying that I believe if we were responsible leaders, we wouldn't be placing legislation to get a popular vote, like our Prime Minister. No, rather, we would be

putting in legislation that is best for our people. I believe we should be focusing on building a healthier population and preventing illness, specifically preventing mental illness.

Recently I have been reading a book called *A Healthy Society*. There's a quote in there from a former Premier of Saskatchewan, Mr. Roy Romanow. He says that "Governments of all stripes have to view the decisions they make through the prism of . . ." - everyone listen to this, this is good - "will it invest in the well-being of our society - in our health and overall quality of life - or will it diminish those things?"

I believe this legislation will diminish the well-being of our society, and I will be voting against this bill.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: First of all, I would like to start off by saying that while we do support this bill and we do support the legalization of cannabis, marijuana, we also feel that this government has not exactly done the work necessary to make Nova Scotia quite ready for legalization. So there are both risks and opportunities, and we feel this government is not really preparing the province for either.

[7:15 p.m.]

Buying cannabis legally needs to be accessible enough to replace the black market. The province will need more than nine locations to accomplish that goal. Online sales are not enough ensure access to legal cannabis, because many Nova Scotians, as my colleague has already said, they don't have access to high-speed Internet. If we're going to legalize marijuana, then we feel that the Liberals need to do more to support local cannabis production. This is an economic opportunity that someone will take advantage of - that's clear - and if so, then we feel it should be Nova Scotians.

I have to say, I have mixed feelings about this bill, being somebody who is a sober alcoholic. I just celebrated my 23rd year of sobriety this week. (Applause) Thank you, thank you. I appreciate it because believe me, I would not be able to be here if that had not occurred. So as somebody who has been addicted to a drug - and I call the drug alcohol, that was my drug of choice. Cannabis is also a drug, but alcohol is a drug too. When we hear talk of young people abusing, overusing, taking too much of a drug, I have to say alcohol is probably the biggest killer in our society today - not just from direct use, but also from accidents like car accidents.

How many times have we here known of young people out celebrating their graduation, or the proms and we find out the next day that they've had a terrible accident and are dead? I can't even name how many times that's happened to me growing up in Truro, in a rural environment. Back when I was a young person growing up, I mean there

wasn't that much to do, so a lot of people would drink. They would smoke dope, but they would mainly drink and they would drive.

At the time I remember my boyfriend from Bass River who's an actor now, Page Fletcher who played the hitchhiker in the television series *The Hitchhiker*. He also played Robocop - I had to kick Robocop out of my house one time so people would say, don't mess with Lenore because she's kicked Robocop out of her house. Anyway, he's from Bass River and by the time he turned I think 20, he had been a pallbearer at about 10 funerals for his friends.

So I know how hard it is here in Nova Scotia. The whole culture of drinking and using - it's difficult because a lot of young people feel they want to fit in, they want to belong. As I've said in many talks at schools that I give, when I was 12, 13, 14 living out in Belmont - which was even beyond Truro - I would come to school on a bus and hear kids all talking about getting drunk and stoned on the weekend, and how much fun it was when they threw up all over everywhere. I mean, they would talk about it like it was fun. (Interruption) Does my friend from Cape Breton relate to this at all?

It was crazy, I didn't do anything at that time. I was just a kid who wanted to have high marks and do well and please people, but I realized at one point that if I was going to fit in, I felt like I needed to also use. I needed to drink or try drugs or something just to be cool. So, I did one time and I got very, very sick and very, very much in trouble with my parents, and swore that I would never do that again. But all of a sudden, I had a story to tell in school and guess what? Suddenly I was cool. I was suddenly cool and kids would start to talk to me. Before that, I was a little bit of a loner, I was really shy, I had a weird Australian accent and I just felt like I didn't quite fit in. But when you started to talk about using alcohol and drugs, all of a sudden it was like, you're part of the gang, you're okay.

Coming from Australia, where drinking and using is also very popular - especially the drinking - I can say that people judge you on how much alcohol you can actually hold. You know, I can drink you under the table or I'm going to just get under the table and I'm going to be drinking down there, so if you want to come and join me, you can come and drink under the table. I mean people do things like this and, again, it's within our whole system whereby this is held up as the okay thing to do and, meanwhile, how many of us and how many people in our families are actually alcoholics and can't admit it and we don't want to admit it?

People say, well, just hold your liquor, just hold it. Well, some people can't and it's the same with drugs, any kind of drugs whether it is mushrooms or psilocybin. Some people can take some and they seem to be okay and some people can have a tiny little bit of one and they go haywire. Why is that? Because everybody's different, and so I understand where my colleagues are coming from saying any kids who might have some mental health issues it's going to come out. Yes, it will come out, but it will also come out with alcohol and there have been many awful murders even close to my own community recently, and

I swear that if alcohol wasn't a factor these wouldn't happen and a lot of these young people would still be alive now.

So, the other thing I wanted to say about that is that I have a friend, I have a good friend in New York City and it was Christmastime and she was looking forward to Christmas. She had a beautiful, young daughter who was an actress. She was a casting agent and, on Christmas Eve, her daughter went out to party with some friends and they had a few drinks, and then they went on to another club and they drank some more and she ended up staying there talking to her boyfriend by Skype or texting or something, and then she made her way home.

It was cold out and she started to try and get her key in the door but she couldn't get the key in the door because she was drunk. She was only 20 years old and kind of gave up and she sat down on the stoop outside of the brownstone apartment where they lived and she fell asleep. But, unfortunately, she fell asleep with her head upways, blocking her windpipe. She vomited, and she drowned in her own vomit and her mother found her, my friend found her the next day on that stoop like that and, I'll tell you, that is a sad, sad case and a sad, sad story and that's not the only one that we've heard.

It happens a lot and I just say for myself - there but for the grace of God go I, because I can't tell you how many times I found myself in situations, but I was lucky. For one reason or another, I'm still alive even though the problem with alcoholism is - and any drug when hooked on them - is you really want to self-destruct. You don't want to live anymore. You become extremely self destructive and we have to watch those tendencies in ourselves always because, as I like to try and tell people, the pilot light is always on whether you quit - it doesn't matter how long that you've been sober or straight for - the pilot light is always on. So, you just don't feed it with that drug, whatever it is that you are addicted to.

So, on that note, I did receive a letter from Dr. Ryan Sommers, who is a family physician in Truro, and he's also the Regional Medical Officer of Health for the Northern Zone, the Nova Scotia Health Authority. Medical Officers of Health have a legislated role in Nova Scotia to protect the public's health, and the purpose of his letter, as he said, was to provide feedback to our Law Amendments Committee actually at the time, last week, about the recently introduced Cannabis Control Act, Bill No. 108.

In this letter, he mentions that he was encouraged "that the Nova Scotia Government has adopted an approach to cannabis similar to recommendations made by a number of organizations that have proposed a public health approach to cannabis. The creation of a government monopoly, prohibiting the operation of vehicles while under the influence of cannabis, and prohibiting public consumption of cannabis in public place are a few examples of how this proposed legislation will help minimize the harms from cannabis and to protect the health of all Nova Scotians."

“While the legislation expands the Smoke Free Places Act to include the public consumption of cannabis, there is a significant opportunity to provide further enhancements and protections from the harms of cannabis. Compared to other proposed provincial and territorial cannabis legislation, the Nova Scotia Cannabis and Control Act (sic) can be further enriched by banning the use of Cannabis in all public settings.” Including, I suppose, golf courses, but he said that six other provinces - Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories - have all banned the public consumption of cannabis in all public spaces. He also said that a universal approach to public consumption will ensure that all communities are protected from the harms of cannabis, and that the current legislation would require municipalities to create by-laws for their own jurisdictions.

Now, in Truro, for instance, we do have a bylaw there which says that the main street in Truro, you cannot smoke at all. You can’t smoke cigarettes, and I’m sure that we will be keeping that the same when it comes to marijuana. He is echoing the concerns that I heard from a number of presenters at Law Amendments Committee, which is that this is going to create a patchwork quilt across the province, with different jurisdictions having their own rules and regulations.

It’s going to be hard for tourists, and even just people from Nova Scotia. Are young people really going to check before they go from one municipality to another to see what the rules are? Then, is that going to get them in trouble? Are they going to get arrested or something then, because they’ve done something against the bylaws?

Dr. Ryan Sommers was very concerned that this will result in a mismatch of rules and regulations that could impact efforts to prevent the normalization of cannabis use in children and youth. So, he’s concerned about that - the normalization of it. He said, “A complete ban on the public consumption of cannabis will also provide citizens and visitors with clear messages on where cannabis can be consumed . . . and enhanced legislation would mean the Cannabis Control Act would be similar to many other Canadian jurisdictions.”

“Nova Scotia has a long history of taking the lead in creating legislation that protects our communities from the negative secondary hand exposure from harmful products. Our province was one of the first provincial jurisdictions in Canada to introduce legislation that banned smoking in public places. This was one of the first stepping-stones for the creation of similar policies in other parts of the country.”

So, Dr. Sommers recommends, as a specialist in public health and preventive medicine, that the Government of Nova Scotia ban the consumption of cannabis in all public places, and takes bold and immediate measures to ensure that the health of all Nova Scotians is protected from the negative harms of cannabis.

So, that was one particular concern from by Dr. Ryan Sommers . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Will you table that?

MS. ZANN: Yes, I can table that, Madam Speaker. Also, I received a message from Bill Schurma, who is the Chair of the Northern Zone Community Health Board. That was followed up by a phone call by Colleen Dowe, who is a friend of mine, who also works for the Community Health Board in the Amherst-Pugwash area. They had said that on their behalf of the Northern Zone Community Health Board, they also wanted to have consideration on the proposed legalization framework for the usage, sale, and marketing of recreational cannabis products. They wanted to say that they are aligned with the IWK Health Centre, the Public Health Association of Nova Scotia, and also Injury Free Nova Scotia, who also presented to us at Law Amendments Committee.

They all had great concerns with the existing proposal, particularly with respect to where cannabis can be smoked. So, like Dr. Sommers, they had those similar concerns, and they are pleased with the expanded Smoke-free Places Act, but they don't believe that that alone is enough to protect society, particularly from the harms of cannabis. They feel that consuming cannabis should be limited to personal residences, they said, with the possibility of increasing other designated locations in the future. In order to achieve the objectives of Bill C-45, which is the Act Respecting Cannabis, they said that in that Act the objectives are said to be preventing young persons from accessing it, protecting public health and safety, deterring criminal activity, and reducing the burden on the criminal justice system.

So, they felt that to achieve those objectives the health of the public must take precedence over the revenue generation, if related harms are to be minimized, and children safeguarded.

[7:30 p.m.]

They had concerns about edibles, as well - candies that look like candies but have cannabis in them that children could easily swipe off a table or get out of a cupboard or something. "The goal of a public health approach is to maximize benefits and minimize harms, promote the health and wellness of all members of a population, reduce inequities within the population, and ensure that the harms associated with interventions and laws are not disproportionate to the harms of the substance themselves."

They said they know that the use of cannabis by youth can have side effects "... that can seriously limit their educational, occupational and social development. The evidence also describes the link to negative neurological and cognitive effects (memory, attention and psychomotor speed), and effects on mental health," as I already talked about.

They also said, "Finally, the evidence describes the regular-use of cannabis in adolescence to be associated with low-levels of education attainment, diminished life satisfaction . . ." - depression - "... higher likelihood of developing cannabis-use related

disorders and an increased risk of developing mental health problems later on in life.” It states that “Youth between the ages of 15 to 25 have the highest rate of use.”

Yet I have to say that, growing up in Truro, I know that kids are smoking dope. I know that we did when I was a kid, so I also agree with the minister, who has said that they’re going to do it anyway. They are already doing it anyway. The best thing to do is try to regulate it and have a monopoly whereby you can make sure, for instance, that angel dust, or some other kind of really terrible drug, isn’t laced into the marijuana.

Hopefully the government can also keep an eye on what the THC content is, so that it is not going to have adverse effects on people’s mental health - although, as we’ve said, it affects different people differently. Drugs affect different people differently. Some people are born alcoholics, and it’s in your genetic disposition; others are not. It’s the same with this drug. Some people seem to be able to just have a joint or two and put it away, and some people seem to get hooked on it and need it day after day after day. Eventually they reach a point where they realize that in order to get my life back, I need to abstain. At this point, abstinence is the only cure for any of these mental health and physical addictions.

The chair of the Northern Zone Community Health Boards, on behalf of the health boards throughout the northern region, said, “Taking a public health approach will ensure that all decisions are made in light of the best available evidence. A public health approach is essential to minimize the harms associated with cannabis use. It also sets the health of Nova Scotians as the priority, thus increasing our collective productivity, in turn contributing to the prosperity of Nova Scotia.”

They also outlined several of the issues that they thought we should consider going forward, and wanted to mention that their provincial partners who are in agreement with them are the IWK Health Centre; the Nova Scotia Health Authority, of course; Injury Free Nova Scotia; Smoke Free Nova Scotia; the Public Health Agency of Nova Scotia; and the CHB Council of Chairs for the Western and Eastern Zones.

Some of the things they have suggested - some are provincial and some are federal - “Advertising, marketing and sponsorship of ALL cannabis, cannabis products and cannabis companies should be prohibited as this could have negative impacts on children.” Again, I mentioned that sometimes the packaging of different edibles, and the same with cigarettes and alcohol, are designed to try to grab the attention of young children. The bright colours, the pictures on them, and they know - they’ve done studies, a lot of these people who sell these products (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order. Can we keep the chatter down, please?

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

MS. ZANN: We recognize and it has been proven in years of late that marketing companies have done studies that will show what attracts young people and young women first. They are trying to attract more of those young children because the younger you can get them hooked on a product, the longer they will remain your client. They will keep paying, and the money will keep coming in. Cha-ching, cha-ching, cha-ching. Again, I have to say marijuana, cannabis, is a drug, just like alcohol and even tobacco, which is designed to get people addicted. Once they are addicted, it's very hard to kick the habit. That's why they care about the packaging.

Also, they recommended that, "Child proof packaging be required on all products to minimize the risk of child-poisoning; A limit be placed on the types of products available to minimize the appeal to children and youth (i.e. candy, chocolate bars, cookies, or other products that target children and youth); Strict guidelines and limitations on packaging . . . Labels should include the health risks of using the product (as does tobacco packaging)."

Again, these ones are now federal. These are going to be federal decisions, but I think it's important for our provincial partners to keep an eye on this and make sure we stay on top of it.

Retail outlets should ". . . not be located close to schools, playgrounds, community centres, and other places where children and youth are in close proximity." I think that's a no-brainer, Madam Speaker. Again, if some people had their way to try to make money, they would put them near schools because they know that kids are going to go and try to get these products.

They also felt there should be restriction on where the smoked form and the edibles are able to be used.

The bottom line is that they are just concerned about what would happen in lieu of a government monopoly. "A frequently cited concern with legalization is that it will allow the rise of Big Cannabis, similar to Big Tobacco and Big Alcohol. These powerful multinational corporations have revenues and market expansion as their primary goals, with little consideration of the impact on public health. They increase tobacco and alcohol use by lobbying for favourable regulations and funding huge marketing campaigns. It is important that the regulations actively work against the establishment of Big Cannabis . . ." going after as many people and as many young people as they can.

Finally, Madam Speaker, "The Northern Zone Community Health Boards strongly believe that a portion of the revenue should be used for health promotion, surveillance, unintended consequences, and associated costs." While they appreciate the rationale behind legalization of non-medical cannabis, they say that they want to keep Nova Scotians as safe as possible. "Legal does not mean safe." I will table that as well.

That's on behalf of these various medical groups and organizations that definitely have the best interests of Nova Scotians at heart. They have these concerns which they would like us all to be aware of.

But as I have said before, we here in the NDP caucus do agree with the legalization of cannabis. In fact, I have lived in many countries where it is legal, and it doesn't go too far whereby, all of a sudden, everybody is hooked on drugs.

I'm looking forward to seeing how this goes, but there are several things that my colleagues and I have already mentioned that we would have liked to have seen in this bill which are not in the bill. Perhaps as we go forward, the government can also change things and add things with regulations.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: It's interesting to listen to the stories here tonight about people's experiences with people they know and their own personal experiences. I know that alcohol and marijuana and these things, a lot of people would say that they are part of life experiences. Sometimes they become part of fun times and sometimes not so much fun.

At the end of the day, this legislation is going to forever change the culture in our province. It's not a bill to pass lightly, and that's why I think many of us are speaking tonight, because the consequences of our actions tonight - the government's actions - will have consequences, and they are going to change the culture of the province.

Madam Speaker, I think legalization sends the wrong message to young people. Yes, the federal government has decided that it's going to make it legal in the country, but as my colleague, the member for Cumberland North said, why didn't we put up a little fight to that?

I recall the Prime Minister saying, well, if provinces don't comply in retail marijuana, then we'll mail it to them, anybody who wants it. To that, I would be tempted to say, well, go ahead, Mr. Prime Minister, go ahead and mail it. I go back to my point that I think the real crime of this bill is that it is going to normalize marijuana use, and it's sending the wrong message to young people.

You know, I can understand people who do use marijuana who are adults. I can understand how having police come after you, and always being at risk of being discovered as a user of marijuana, how that can be inconvenient to say the least. I could use some other terms, but they would be unparliamentary, Madam Speaker, and I won't use them.

I could see decriminalization in that sense, but to legalize marijuana use, and much in the way we're seeing it in this bill - the way it's being legalized - it's going to have

consequences. It is going to normalize the use of marijuana in the province, and for years, we've said to young people, "say no to drugs."

What does this message send when it's in the newspapers tomorrow? I don't think it's going to say no to drugs anymore. It's going to say, marijuana is now legal. If it's legal, it sounds like it's okay. If we hear the Minister of Justice say it's for "... the health and safety of Nova Scotians, especially children and youth." - now, we could say, well, gee, does that mean that all those things that the Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia are saying are wrong? The Minister of Justice says this is safe. It's for our health and safety. (Interruption) Well, that's what you were quoted as, minister.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please. The member for Inverness has the floor.

MR. MACMASTER: That was pulled right out of a press release, Madam Speaker: for "... the health and safety of Nova Scotians, especially children and youth."

What does that message send? That message, to me, is going to send out there that it's okay to use marijuana. It's not going to be cautioning young people. There is no education program from this government, nothing in this legislation about telling young people what they may be risking if they use marijuana.

We've heard discussion tonight about alcohol and all the terrible things that alcohol can do to people, and there's no question that it can, but my question would be, why normalize another societal ill? We look at the Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia, and they talk about some of the potential things that legalization will cause. They say that cannabis can have harmful effects on developing human brains which are in development up to the age of 25, and I've heard the statistic that one in 25 people who try marijuana may be subject to triggering a psychotic event. They may be subject to triggering something that they may be predisposed to have, and then it's too late. So, why does the government say this is for people's health and safety, when it's obviously not the case?

You know what is interesting? We've never heard the Minister of Health and Wellness say this is for the health and safety of Nova Scotians. In fact, we've never heard the Minister of Health and Wellness say anything about this legislation. Yet, who in this province is going to be most affected by this? People's health - Nova Scotians. In fact, we had a - I don't want to be stealing a line from another one of my colleagues here, but we had a health professional introduced today, somebody who has advocated for youth mental health and talked about how youth mental health between the ages of 15 and 25, I believe it was, is such a critical point in time in a young person's life. How is marijuana going to impact all of those young Nova Scotians? Well, if we hear the figure that one in 25 may suffer a psychotic event or trigger mental health issues, it's too late Madam Speaker.

[7:45 p.m.]

This is a very serious bill that the government is about to pass tonight. There were other groups. We have heard from police concerned about how the technology is not really there, as I understand it, unless you do a blood test to determine if someone is intoxicated while they're operating a motor vehicle. We have seen MADD Canada appear in the gallery. The government has said, look, this is okay - we have MADD Canada here supporting this. I would say that I'm very confused by that because that organization is about safety for our roadways, and we're about to legalize something here tonight and create rules around it that are not going to put any protections in place for that, maybe because we're not ready to put those protections in place or maybe because they don't exist right now. I'm concerned about that. I'm confused when I see MADD Canada in the gallery.

I want to make a comparison. Madam Speaker, I remember when the NDP was in government, and they were faced with the decision, should we get into the online gaming business? Credit to the NDP, they chose not to get into the online gambling business. Do you know why they did that? Because they looked at it, and they thought, you know what? This is not going to serve people in our province. Yes, maybe we'll make some money at it. Maybe we'll make some of the money that's currently being lost to other online gaming offerings to the public, but what are we really doing for those in our province who may be subject to becoming addicted to online gaming? We're just feeding them. The government, credit to them at the time, chose not to enter the online gaming marketplace, and I think that was a good decision.

I compare that to what we're seeing tonight, and there is no comparison. This is something that is going to affect Nova Scotians. It's going to have a negative impact on Nova Scotians who may never have gotten into marijuana use if it was not normalized. With this bill, it will become normal.

We have made amendments. We provided a detailed list of amendments to the government. All of them were voted down by the government. I think just about all of them were made with the interest of protecting people's health and safety, particularly children and youth - if I may borrow a quote from the government. They were designed for that purpose.

We hear a lot of things about legalization, that it's going to mean money for the government, that it's going to be safer for the public. But Madam Speaker, we know, based on the budget, that it's not going to bring money into the coffers of the province. It's going to bring money for some people who are manufacturing it and selling it, absolutely. But the province has admitted that, to be competitive with the illegal market, it's not going to make any money off of marijuana, because it's going to have to be priced low to compete with the illegal market. There is no money to be made from marijuana for the government.

Safety, I think I have said my piece on that, Madam Speaker. If people don't understand what I have said to this point, and they just choose to ignore it, well, so be it. That's their choice.

Another one of my colleagues mentioned productivity tonight. I think that is an issue as well. This is going to become a new reality for our province, for employers, and it's not going to help with productivity. One of the things that we can do in this province that makes a difference - we talk about all the money that government spends on training, to help people get trained to realize their full potential. Normalizing the use of marijuana is not going to help people realize their full potential. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, it's not going to make a positive difference in the workplace.

I am not going to be supporting this legislation - and I am curious. I suppose some of the government members will get up now at the tail end of this debate and make a few points. I would like to have heard them earlier so they could be debated, but at the end of the day, I think that shows the government's colours.

MADAM SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Thank you for the members' attention as I add my voice to this debate, which I have not yet spoken on, around this legislation.

The reason I want to speak - the reason that I asked in caucus for my colleagues' approval to speak, is because I feel like some things have not been said in this debate. Often, particularly as my colleagues in the Official Opposition have spoken, I feel like they are debating a strawman where, in this case, the strawman is the world that we would like to exist as opposed to the world that actually exists.

The fact is, we already spend a lot of public money on policing drugs. There may be different costs - there may be costs for slightly different forms of enforcement as we move to regulating legalized cannabis - but there have already been costs for years of criminalized cannabis. Those costs have also been borne by communities, and those costs have been borne by communities differently depending on who we are talking about. So that is one thing I want to talk about, and the other is, of course, the concern for public health.

There are already costs to public health. There is already public ill-health as a result of cannabis, but it is very difficult to tackle that and address it - it's very difficult to work towards public health using criminal law as your tool.

These are the two themes that I want to address, which I do not feel have been addressed sufficiently thus far in the many, many words that have been spoken as we have debated this bill.

I would like to suggest that the sky is not falling with the legalization of cannabis. If anything, the sky has already fallen and some of us just haven't recognized what's lying around our feet in our communities.

I went back - it's interesting when you go to do a bit of research on cannabis, a lot of the top hits in Google now are actually provided by folks who are interested in getting into the business of providing cannabis, so I had to sift through a few pages of results to find something that I could trust as a neutral source of information about some of those costs to our society of both cannabis use and cannabis criminalization.

I ended up finding a 2002 Special Committee on Legal Cannabis that was done by the Canadian Senate, and it was referring back to the Le Dain Commission, which was 30 years earlier. We have been discussing this and recognizing some of the folly of the criminalization of cannabis for a long, long time.

Some of the stats that I use may not be the most recent, but they speak to the long-standing fact that we use cannabis in Canada and we have been using it for a long time. In 2002, the stats that they were referring to said that 30 per cent of Canadians had used cannabis at some point, Canada has one of the highest rates of use of cannabis among youth, and the average age of introduction to cannabis is 15 years old.

Again, the sky is not falling - the sky has fallen, and if we look around in our communities, we can see that already. How do we deal with the actual society we are in, recognizing, too, that no, in fact, I would push back: legislation does not change culture, culture evolves. Culture has its own methods of production and reproduction and evolution. We can say that the age at which people may legally acquire cannabis shall be 21 years old; I guarantee you that will not convince a single 15-year old offered a toke at a party to not inhale. So let's dispense with that.

In terms of the cost of drug enforcement - and, again, this is a little bit old but I appreciated the writing in this report, the fact that I could easily access it, the fact that it wasn't written by a company that is invested in making profits off cannabis. These slightly old stats say that the cost of prosecuting drug offences in 2000-01 was \$57 million with approximately \$5 million, or roughly 10 per cent of the total budget, relating to prosecuting cannabis possession offences. So as a society we have invested a significant amount of money in prosecuting cannabis and prosecuting possession.

In 1999, it was estimated that Canadian criminal courts heard 34,000 drug cases, which involved more than 400,000 court appearances. I can think about all kinds of ways that I would rather spend our public dollars than prosecuting possession. Again slightly old stats, but Correctional Service Canada said at the time it spent an estimated \$169 million annually to address illicit drugs through incarceration, substance abuse programs, treatment programs, and security measures.

This report mentioned that a criminal conviction can negatively affect a person's financial situation, career options, career opportunities and restrict travel, and it can be an important factor in future dealings with the criminal justice system.

Like I said, I appreciated finding this report from 2002. I think where our understanding or maybe our public conversation has evolved since is on unpacking for whom those negative impacts on their future is - who is most likely to be affected by that. I'm quite - proud is not the right word - I'm pleased that in this session of the House we have had the opportunity to talk about street checks. It's certainly a very alive topic, a very important subject of conversation and of learning for all of us in Nova Scotia right now as Scot Wortley continues with his work with the Human Rights Commission. Much of that conversation is informed by conversations that have been happening in Ontario.

We know that here African Nova Scotians and other people of African descent are three times more likely to be stopped by police in street checks. Guess what happens sometimes when you get stopped randomly by the police on the street? Sometimes they find that you are in possession of marijuana. Strangely, or not strangely at all but quite predictably in fact, in Ontario where some studies were done on this, they found that Black people were arrested for minor cannabis possession at three times the rate of white people in Toronto, and we don't have that breakdown of the data here but I think it's fairly predictable that if the data were crunched that way, the findings would be similar.

[8:00 p.m.]

What we know is that some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, and people who have been made vulnerable through our history, through a history of slavery and then unequal treatment in a range of different ways, including where people were allowed to settle and what rights they were given to that land and so forth, and just our deep-seated racism that is part of our culture - we know that some people have been disproportionately affected by the criminalization of drugs. In fact, in 2014, of 2,200 federal inmates serving sentences for drug possession, 12 per cent of those inmates were Black, which is three times their proportion of the population.

We know that this change is coming. We know that the current status quo, which some of my colleagues seem to want to hold on to, has not worked for public health, it has also actually been a disproportionate burden of injustice on some people in our society. (Applause) Again, this is coming from Toronto and I don't have access - and maybe those statistics are out there, but I don't have them. In Toronto, Black people with no history of criminal conviction have been three times more likely to be arrested on possession than white people of similar background, the only difference being their race. There is no evidence that Black people use drugs more often, or more (Interruption) They just get stopped more, exactly.

What does that mean moving forward? I mean, I heard it in my community as dispensaries started to pop up in this sort of grey zone between the announcement that marijuana would be legalized and this July 1st date, which maybe will become a September 1st date, and you know, I live in a community where many people have had those impacts either on them, on family members, or on friends - a criminal conviction for drug possession. Now, in our community I think I have - I certainly have two dispensaries in my community, and people are looking and saying oh, and so these guys are just able to come out from the shadows and go into business, and how is that? I still can't get, for example, a summer job because I have a criminal conviction on my record. So, I think that there is more work to do to actually redress some of the injustice that has been visited on people through the criminalization of cannabis over many, many years, and I look forward to seeing how the province may move forward with that.

Then I guess, on the public health aspect of things, let's also talk about the world we're actually in, where young people if they are of a mind to, or they just make a bad decision or just you know, where it's so easy to end up trying pot and of course, there's a story in our society of marijuana being more natural or less harmful, and that is true to some extent, but we also know that the drug supply, the marijuana supply, the cannabis supply - when did it go from marijuana to cannabis? I think that's also just part of like changing the story, but that the cannabis supply has changed over time such that now it is much, much more potent than it was in the 1960s. It has been bred to be strong.

I guess as a parent I look forward - no, I don't look forward, actually - my kids are not yet 10 years old, my daughter will turn 10 this summer and I anticipate a time when I will go to a dispensary and I will ask the staff at the dispensary to find me the brand of cannabis with the lowest THC and I'm going to stock it in my house and I'm going to tell my kids where it is and I'm going to say please don't ever use this, or please don't use this until you are away at university but take it with you and use this one because I'm terrified of them using just what would come out at a party without knowing, the same way as I have, on occasion, gone through the craft brews looking for the beer that is like 4.5 per cent alcohol instead of like 8.5 per cent or 9 per cent alcohol.

I want to be able to look at the cannabis on offer, not because I necessarily want to smoke any but I want to be able to find the stuff that feels safest because we are talking about public health and we're talking about harm reduction, and that is the conversation we should be having for the society that we are actually living in and that we are actually legislating for.

I have a dear friend whose son suffered a psychotic break after using cannabis. To her understanding it is the only time that he ever used cannabis and the THC in that cannabis was at the very, very top end. It used to be below 10 per cent, now it's typically over 20 per cent and for whatever reason he was vulnerable, and their life has not been the same since.

There's debate about the science but we certainly know that those young people are particularly vulnerable. I think all we can do moving forward is try, through regulation, through education, through having honest conversations about the society we actually live in and what the actual problems are in it, try to give young people options that are as healthy and as safe as we can. Certainly, that will be easier to do moving forward in an environment where we do have a monopoly on cannabis, where the supply of it is regulated, and where at least we can make the best choices possible, given the tools at our disposal.

A number of my colleagues have sort of waxed nostalgic for the "say no to drugs era" and that simple message. Well simple doesn't necessarily mean truthful. I remember watching a TV show - I think it was *Different Strokes* - I remember when Nancy Reagan made (Interruption) a different political family - made a guest appearance and did a lecture on saying no to drugs. What we know, in fact, was that whole era, not only did it not work, it caused damage to communities. It was a way of continuing to invest a lot in drug enforcement instead of true justice. I, for one, am perfectly okay with trying to tell our children and tell our communities and the residents of Nova Scotia a more nuanced but more truthful story about what cannabis is and about what choices we want to make around where we spend our public dollars to support public health, to support harm reduction and to support true justice in our community. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Hello, Mr. Speaker. I don't get to speak a lot in this Chamber. I guess as a minister, you're usually speaking on your own bills. So for me, it is a rare treat to be able to speak on this, and listening to the members' comments opposite has certainly been beneficial.

Many of you know why and how I came to seek a seat in this Legislature. We all have a story that has brought us to our seats, but mine is maybe a little bit different, certainly because of this impairment issue. I had somewhat retired in Fall 1999, but you know what happens when you tell God your plans: He laughs and finds something else for you, and that was certainly my case.

In 2004, I got involved with MADD Canada after the death of our son Bruce. Bruce was a 26-year-old police officer and he was killed by an impaired driver. The driver was doing 178 kilometres an hour and had a blood alcohol of 2.43 - three times the legal limit.

As a mom, you're devastated, obviously, and then you think, who does something about this? Then you say, how can this happen? How can this happen in a society? Why does this still happen, and what can I do about it?

I had a choice. The choice was either to fall apart and do nothing or to do something about it. Two weeks after his death, I got involved with MADD. Two years later I became the national president of MADD Canada, and made it my mission to make sure that as few

other people as possible had to live with the death of a child. I can't tell you what it does when I come in and see a police officer in the same uniform, looking the same. Every time my heart just snaps a little bit. This is very important to me.

I shared Bruce's story, going all over the country. Sometimes I encouraged people to change the laws right across the country, and other times I had to shame them. What I would do is look politicians in the eye, and I would say, "You have the power to make change. My son died." I would tell them Bruce's story, and then I would remind them that but for the grace of God, it could have been their own story. It's tough when you look at somebody and remind them of this.

We made sure that laws were changed, and probably more than a few lives were saved across this country. I think I've been to every Legislature across this country, and now I'm all too familiar with this one. Anyway, even in Ottawa - I remember going to my very first meeting with MADD, and I wasn't the national president yet, I was the incoming. We went to go see the Justice Minister of Canada, and they said to me, "Aren't you nervous? Like, you're seeing the Justice Minister, doesn't this make you nervous?" I said, "No, because he's one election from being me" - not knowing what I would eventually do. It shows that all of us have a role to play, and for all of us, it's very important.

So, MADD Canada. We all know about MADD and the work that we do, and the work that they've done. We know the strength of good legislation, and MADD Canada has good legislation down to a fine science, with some of the best addiction scientists and researchers available to them. They can give the best advice right across this country.

Even during my time with MADD, the trend was growing about impaired driving with drugs. Over half of all impaired drivers were impaired with drugs, mostly with cannabis. DRE officers were becoming more common, and if you've never seen one in action, it is a really amazing sight.

There's actually an officer here, Scott MacDonald, who comes in quite often. He is a trained DRE officer, and he's done numerable presentations at MADD events. He can tell just by looking at somebody and evaluating them exactly what they're on, basically how much, the level of - it might be a prescription drug, it might be something else. There's five or six different classifications of drugs. He's got it down to a fine science. They all do, and I agree, we do need more DRE officers. We need one in every police station to make sure that the right person is there to be available to evaluate impaired drivers. I do recognize that we need to train more officers in the days forward.

The problem with marijuana is that in the past it was, and still is, an unregulated illegal drug. Drivers know that they are not liable to be caught or charged as easily as they would have been with alcohol. When we began this process in the province, I enlisted support from MADD Canada, in the form of advice, and they were very forthcoming. They, along with many other stakeholders, influenced the legislation that we have here today. It's

important to get it right the first time. We listened, and MADD Canada supports our legislation. As a matter of fact, they're saying it's the most comprehensive legislation in this country today. (Applause)

[8:15 p.m.]

This is not the end, Mr. Speaker, but the beginning. It's the start to get us ready for legalization this year. As we learn more our model may evolve but, right now, we're being careful and we're taking the time to get it right. As we work towards the legalization of cannabis, the health and safety of Nova Scotians especially children and our youth remain our top priority. One of the speakers earlier spoke about not understanding why MADD supports this, it's confusing. Well, I can tell you why. It's because they're not naïve. They know that this is a reality. It's what's happening and we have to deal with the situation very carefully, and they've made sure to do the work to do so.

As I prepared for this third reading, I researched the time of prohibition of alcohol in Nova Scotia. I found it strange and interesting to note that the very first Act proclaimed in this Legislature in 1758 was about alcohol - just a second. There are so many similarities, and so many of the comments that I've heard from the members opposite reflect the fears about alcohol in the early part of the last century. David McDonald in the library here provided me with a ream of different information from 1886, from 1910, stories about the prohibition in Nova Scotia from 1910 to 1929. We know that that didn't work. Some of the things I was reading about and I was seeing were the same things I was hearing here now. Our young people will be out of control. We heard that. Society as we know it will never be the same. I think we heard that here today too. The brains will be affected. Many will become addicted. These actions will have dire consequences. We heard that one tonight. Families will be destroyed, marriages and men ruined. This was the conversation about alcohol 100 years ago.

The Hansard from 1910 talked about gentlemen being inebriated. Often, they would take a nap after an event before they ventured home. Mind you, the horses probably knew their way home. In all seriousness though, drinking was more of an issue in those days than it is now. Even 50 years ago or less, drunk driving was simply a reality everywhere. But, in recent years, society has changed. Its attitude and laws have changed, and social responsibility has changed. We have changed and, now, instead of snickering when we see somebody driving impaired, we call 911. Abuse is not tolerated when our families are at risk. So, why would anyone think that the legalization of cannabis in our society would be any different? Why would it be any less responsible?

We have discussed education, educating our youth. Yes, we will need more awareness programs to change the attitudes of many that impaired driving by alcohol is different than impaired by cannabis. It's not different. Impaired is impaired, be it with alcohol, opioids, cannabis, or even prescription drugs. Officers have often told me that they're stopping old people for driving impaired or suspected impaired and finding out

they're impaired with their prescription medications. Education programs will be released in the near future from the province, and MADD Canada is already sharing this message. In recent years, the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation has funded multimedia shows. For over 10 years they've been doing this in most schools in the province. Most recently, it has been all about drug abuse and drug impairment as well as the alcohol impairment. The message is out there.

The most often repeated critique in this Opposition is about the age of 19. Soon after becoming the national president of MADD, I went to an international MADD conference in Dallas, Texas. It was the same conversation going on there about the age. The discussion was, you know, some states were at 19, some 20 and some 21. The same argument about the brains maturing, not fully maturing until 23 or 25, the same as we now hear from the Opposition about cannabis. But what was the reality of what was happening in the states? Cross-border drinking, youth drinking in a state that had a lower age and then driving home. They also criticized Canada because so many American students would cross the border to Canada, party for the weekend, and then go home. Do we honestly believe that the youth in the U.S. don't drink until they're 21? In a frank discussion with my 15-year-old granddaughter last night, she told me - she's in Grade 10, she's 15 years old - that 45 per cent to 50 per cent of her peers are already using cannabis and this is in a rural, primarily middle-class community. So for those who worry about the normalization of the use of cannabis, it's already about as normal and as real as it gets.

If you want to discuss the fear of normalization, it should be that buying cannabis from a dealer at school is now normal. That makes me afraid. If you think that making it legal until our youth are 25 is a prudent thing to do, the only thing it will do is encourage that black market and that I will not support, Mr. Speaker.

The age of 19 for cannabis only makes sense in the continuity with other provinces and unless you want it to remain underground in the black market, it needs to be a reasonable age for legal compliance. Law enforcement supports this age. MADD Canada has always supported the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation and gives them kudos for their social responsibility programs and the way they enforce our laws. Having the distribution in their hands will ensure that the government controls as mandated will be enforced. We take this very seriously, Mr. Speaker, and want the most effective controls in place. Private vendors will not accomplish this.

I am not going to go over all the details of the bill, Mr. Speaker. As I said, my main issue today is about road safety so let me close with these points - and these are somebody else's points and I will explain at the end. Canada has a drug-driving problem. That has been clear since we started collecting coroner's data on drug presence in crashes since 2011. The number one issue in road fatalities is drug presence, and cannabis is the drug that is most commonly found. Nova Scotia's statistics parallel the national numbers. Laws to address the drug-driving impaired problem need to happen at both the federal and provincial levels. Federal Bill C-46 will establish Criminal Code limits for cannabis while

driving and make new roadside testing measures for drugs available. MADD Canada has been very vocal in its support of these measures.

We also need measures at the provincial level, just as we have provincial administrative laws and sanctions for alcohol and driving. Key among these measures which are also supported by MADD Canada are administrative licence suspensions and other sanctions for drivers under the influence of drugs, similar to the warn range sanctions for alcohol and a zero drug requirement for all young drivers. The zero drug requirement is especially important to help protect our most vulnerable road users, young people.

The Nova Scotia Government is on the right track with these provisions. This legislation will reduce drug impaired driving and related crashes and will assist us as we prepare for the legalization of cannabis - that comes from MADD Canada.

A little note from them, as below, are some highlights you can use, which is now above, to counter some of the Opposition Parties' negative comments. This bill makes total sense and you would think it would have all-Party support. Let me know.

Anyway, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With that I will take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: I find myself again speaking to this bill which also, as the minister just spoke, opens up a very painful chapter in my life, having experienced the loss of a son which was partly a factor of marijuana usage - it was certainly a factor in that series of events on which I will not fully elaborate. I do respect the minister who just spoke - I recognize her pain and I do believe that we have to do everything we can to prevent drug driving. Certainly society has changed but here we see society changing in a way that will allow more marijuana usage.

We know from other countries that when marijuana is legalized, it does have more usage. We know there's no doubt at all that it has these impacts on the developing brain up to age 25. In fact this government had a choice of ages that they could set that it could be legal to use, and granted, there are grade school students using this product, we know that, and the illegal product - that's quite clear.

This government had a choice of making the age any age they wanted and we know that the medical associations across the country said that up to age 25, young people were vulnerable to psychosis and to mental illness because of marijuana usage. The medical community said they would accept 21 as a compromise and this government said 19. We know there are going to be young people who, at 19, are going to go, ah, it's legal now, I'm going to give that a try.

We had a chance to set a different standard here and we are very disappointed, as a Progressive Conservative Party, that that standard was not adopted. Granted, the legal market is out there and I've said publicly before, I do not believe that the illegal market is going to go away just because its legalized. We see that in the cigarettes. The illegal cigarette market has not gone away; in fact, the illegal market has proliferated - if I can say that word.

We know, from my anecdotal evidence from my friend, and I've yet to hear it refuted, that 40 per cent of cigarettes sold in Ontario are sold in the illegal market. What percentage is there in the Nova Scotia market of illegal cigarettes sold?

We know that we have the convenience store owners come - this is one of the big issues when they come and see us, that they do what they call butt counts and the illegal market continues to be alive. Anywhere there is a dollar to be made, the illegal market is going to be there.

Our Party has said that the message needs to be sent to young people. One of the disappointments I have in the fact that we are here at third reading is that we brought in a number of amendments that were all turned down by this House, and one of the amendments was age - that it be brought to age 21.

Another amendment was that the education program that the bill proposes be put in before its legalized, and that's not going to happen. We are very disappointed about that. I believe that there needs to be plain packaging rules. There is a very active and live drug culture out there.

There are drug pushers - the harm that it does to our society is almost incalculable in human lives lost, in wasted endeavour, and legalizing this product is not going to change that. I'm very disappointed all around, that we are at this juncture with the age of 19.

I personally have no problem with the fact that there is a medical side to it. Every drug that we have in our formulary virtually has a legal and illegal side. In fact, I have farmers I've met from the island of Tasmania who are the only legal heroin growers in the world and I can tell you that the island of Tasmania is the source for our legal heroin, whereas Afghanistan is essentially, mostly, the source of the illegal heroin in the world.

There is a very good use for many of these products - a good use, a good legal use which is prescribed, and we have an illegal side which we struggle to work against.

I've said in the House before that I believe that the idea that we could not accept 21 is a false idea. We tell people to wear bicycle helmets because we know the cost to society of a brain injury. In fact, we know that the brain injuries that we will see from marijuana usage are far more significant, have a far greater number of people affected, and a far greater cost to our society than the bicycle helmet law.

I would say, that if we can tell an 80-year-old they have to wear a bicycle helmet or a 50-year-old that they should wear a bicycle helmet, we can tell someone you have to be 21 to smoke marijuana. I don't think it would have been that difficult; I think it could have been done. It was there to be done. This government could have been leading the country in that area, too, and I think it's a shame. (Applause) It was within your grasp. It could have easily been done and it would not have significantly affected - I think it would have been a very positive move and maybe if you'd done that we would have been saying 25, but the reality is that the medical experts have said it should be 25, but they would accept 21. We were shocked when it wasn't 21, frankly. We were very surprised; I was very surprised when it wasn't 21.

Another shock or surprise to us is that it is co-located with alcohol and we were very disappointed about that, as a Party, and I'm disappointed about that. Why be disappointed about somebody picking up their marijuana and picking up their alcohol together? We know that when alcohol and drugs of any sort are mixed, the best thing you can say about it is that individual results will vary and, in fact, that is the case with using marijuana in many cases - individual results will vary. Some people will use it with no effect, but we know that the psychoses that will happen from young people using marijuana, I've heard my colleagues say, is one in 25.

[8:30 p.m.]

Not only are there psychosis effects, but there are other effects. There's lack of motivation. What rate are we going to see with marijuana usage of fetuses being affected by marijuana? What effect will that be? There are a lot of effects in our society that are very disturbing about this. Some of them are happening now because it's available illegally. I think I mentioned in the Legislature before that I heard that there were approximately 5,000 places in Nova Scotia to buy marijuana, somebody said. It's very readily available.

We recognized that, and we recognize that the laws that we had were not adequate. Decriminalization would have been better. Legalization with a higher age limit would have been better than what we have. I actually don't believe somebody with a few grams of marijuana in their pocket should have gotten a criminal record.

I think that the situation we are in is just, what is this bill saying, and where are we at with this? As I said, it has been a very painful episode in my life that we saw psychosis in our son. The effect is real. This is not something we're making up.

I know that this government has patted itself on the back very thoroughly about the fact that MADD Canada supported the legislation. We recognize that. They supported the part that was about not having marijuana smoked in a vehicle (Interruption) But not the rest. In fact, I would suggest to you that MADD Canada got thrown under the bus on the rest of it because they didn't support the rest of it.

Another aspect of this is, we know that smoking marijuana will cause a certain number of people to start smoking cigarettes. In our culture, as a society, we have fought a very aggressive battle against smoking cigarettes. The packaging has been very restricted. The advertising has been very restricted. The reason is that there are very severe health effects from smoking. It doesn't really matter what you smoke. You're going to have health effects from smoking marijuana equally as much as cigarettes in terms of what happens inside your body, in your lungs.

The leading cause of death from fires is smoke inhalation. Here we are with a new product that, as I understand it - and I'm very disappointed about this - is not going to have the same plain packaging laws and the same rules around it as smoking cigarettes will have. It will have a serious affect on people. Second-hand smoke will have an affect on children. Second-hand smoke will have an effect on pregnant women. Second-hand smoke from marijuana will have very serious effects, and I'm very disappointed about that.

I want to table a couple of articles. We have in Nova Scotia one of the leading researches on psychosis in young people, and I want to table two documents. One is an editorial that says, the brains of youth are harmed by cannabis, and that's by Dr. Phil Tibbo. Another one again, by Dr. Phil Tibbo, is entitled "Cannabis and the Maturing Brain: the Role in Psychosis Development." This is on the risk factor of psychosis, and we know that. It says that exposure to THC in the fetal brain could thus result in unwanted inappropriate neurite outgrowth, with potential long-term physiological, behavioural and cognitive deficits.

This product is not benign. It is very harmful. I believe that we had an opportunity to put a stake in the ground on the age. This government had an opportunity to put a stake in the ground on co-location. In terms of plain packaging rules, again, I think this government had an opportunity to do something about that. We asked that the education programs about marijuana be brought in before the marijuana was legalized, and it hasn't happened. I'm very disappointed by all of those things.

I want to quote some words put out by Senator Seidman, in Ottawa. The most recent Canadian student tobacco and alcohol surveys, a national bi-annual survey conducted in partnership with Health Canada, found that cannabis use among teenagers Grades 7 to 12 has declined steadily, falling from 27 per cent in 2008 to 17 per cent in 2014. However, cannabis legalization in 38 different countries was associated with higher and more frequent use of cannabis. In other words, across the country - and I'm not saying that about specific schools and specific areas but across the country - cannabis use is in decline among young people.

We know that legalization will cause those rates to go up. This is what the senator quoted, this study. Adults are also susceptible to negative effects from cannabis. Again, I'll quote, marijuana use in youths is strongly linked to cannabis dependence and other substance use disorders. The initiation and maintenance of tobacco smoking, an increased

presence of mental illness including depression, anxiety and psychosis, impaired neurological development, cognitive decline, diminished school performance and diminished lifetime achievement.

We're talking about something that is (Interruption) In fact, my colleagues have just showed me a slogan: MADD Canada, no alcohol, no drugs, no victims. I would agree with that. As I've said, it's a personally painful episode in my life, and we find out things that we didn't want to know . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Kings North has the floor.

MR. LOHR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was saying I understand the member, the minister who spoke previously, her pain, I understand that. There's many things about this world that we would like to change. I believe our objective here in this Legislature is to make our world better, even if we can make it slightly better.

For all of the reasons I've just outlined, I'm disappointed with the legislation. I think it could have been significantly better and I believe there will be consequences from this, unfortunately, and individuals' lives will be impacted. I believe that drugs have a serious negative effect on our province now, and I think we need to fight those negative effects. Criminalization may not be the answer, but this type of legalization and to the extent that we've gone I believe is a mistake. I believe the government had the opportunity to make this legislation better. We brought in a number of very good amendments. Every amendment was rejected and, as our Leader said, strangely even the golf course one.

With those words I want to express my disappointment and take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to talk on Bill No. 108, the Cannabis Control Act. I want to thank my colleague for Kings North for his remarks on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I have been listening attentively to the concerns expressed by the Official Opposition as it relates to Bill No. 108. Many of those concerns can be summarized with terms like unanswered questions, confused, confused about the direction, a lot of questions about the nature of policing, the role of municipalities, the alarm that many have expressed regarding the lack of listening to our health professionals and the evidence they provided in terms of the process of input for this bill.

Certainly, you're hearing from this side of the House that there is a lack of clarity that pertains to the Cannabis Control Act.

Mr. Speaker, when I first took my seat in this esteemed Chamber last Fall I was asked by my eldest child, well what is it that you do? I said we discuss bills, we discuss public policy, we essentially set the law of the land here in the Province of Nova Scotia. Naturally she asked, well what will you be discussing? I said I think maybe we'll be talking cannabis. Well, Mr. Speaker, that never happened in the Fall. Here we are, only a few months to cannabis being legalized in Canada by our federal government, that this Legislature has before us a bill of such significance.

I believe the member for Pictou West said something very profound. This is a bill that lacks the best regulations, and when you look at a bill like this, we have to ask ourselves some key perennial questions. Certainly in my study, in my analysis of this bill, I've asked myself some key questions, and I can certainly tell members on this side in Her Majesty's Official Opposition have asked those key questions as well.

Will the measures outlined in the Cannabis Control Act mitigate the black market? I don't believe the federal government is completely focused on public health - I believe they are interested in breaking the black market. Okay, if that's the end goal, then why does the government come forward with a bill like this?

I recall the Minister of Justice indicating that we will never completely obliterate the black market. I have no doubt, with his esteemed career in law enforcement, which I have great respect for - I think at minimum we need to try to mitigate, and I just don't see those elements contained in the Cannabis Control Act.

Does this bill maximize public safety? My analysis is it doesn't achieve that end goal. Does the Cannabis Control Act promote overall health and well-being? I don't doubt in this House, all MLAs, we want our people in Nova Scotia to drink less or not to drink at all. We want people in our province to smoke less or not smoke at all. I believe we don't want people to smoke cannabis for recreational use.

I've heard my colleagues on this side of the House talk about how they would have been comfortable with decriminalization. Certainly, I can tell you as a former public school teacher in our beautiful province, I was asked countless times by teenagers, by my students, what's your position on this? Because this debate has been around for a long time, and I was always most comfortable with decriminalization. Yet, here we find ourselves on April 17, 2018, on the cusp of legalization, and for what purposes? It's out there.

Some people say this was one of the greatest vote-getters in the history of a federal election. Perhaps that was the case. Nonetheless, we find ourselves in a federal system where the federal government is forcing the hands of the provinces to move on this, and to regulate this drug, this dangerous substance.

Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, this bill represents a massive shift in our thinking, in our public policy, when it comes to cannabis. As it stands right now, the use of cannabis

is a crime. To some areas of society, it is a deviant act. Now, certainly my observations as a teacher, I saw the generational shift in attitude towards the use of cannabis. Certainly, I know many millennials do not see it as a deviant act, but nonetheless, that doesn't take away from the fact that this is a dangerous, harmful substance, and in the span of my career as a classroom teacher and as an acting vice-principal - many great memories but some of the most tragic memories I have, some of the most unhappy memories I have, were dealing with a young person who had done harm to their cognitive development as a result of the recreational use of cannabis.

So, this is a major shift in attitude and in our legal structures. There are so many questions around the safeguards which I believe the Official Opposition, the Progressive Conservative caucus, has certainly articulated. The bill before this House has many gaps and many flaws. It is a bill that lacks the best regulations that our province requires.

[8:45 p.m.]

I think my colleague, the member for Dartmouth South, made a very interesting observation which I'd like to build on. We live in an age, and this is a good thing, where when we develop public policy we emphasize the use of evidence. We emphasize the scientific method, with the idea that we will get better laws as a result of that. Time and time again I have heard in this House from the government side, well, we're moving forward with this because all the evidence says X, Y, Z. Yet, when it comes to the Cannabis Control Act, it appears that this government has made the choice not to follow evidence, not to follow best practice because, if that were the case, we'd have a bill before us that would see the age of 25 as the legal age. We would see a bill before us that would not be based on co-locations. We would see a methodology used to gather information in a much more scientific way. The survey that was done in the Fall, we know you could drive a Mack truck through the methodology that was used.

If the stated goal is to mitigate the black market, I am not convinced that this bill will achieve that objective. As the Education Critic for the Opposition, I've expressed my concerns about the fact that this bill has come forward to this House and it doesn't focus in any way, shape, or form on education of the general public within our public school program. Why is that? To me, it is such a no-brainer that we would have those monies allocated, we would have a plan in place to ensure that there would be a campaign to get out to the public that this is a dangerous substance. This is a substance that does not promote the health and well-being of our province.

On Supply, I spoke about my concerns about the lack of an education program. I've certainly been vocal with that in Question Period. It's missing, and it should be included. For that very reason, all of these gaps in this bill are reason enough for me to stand here in this House and say, no, I will not vote for the Cannabis Control Act, I stand here in this House and say I am proud to vote no against this bill because this bill is not doing the job. It lacks the best regulations that our province requires.

Mr. Speaker, one only needs to do a jurisdictional scan across North America. You look at jurisdictions that have legalized cannabis, in particular Colorado. You do see an increase in a jurisdiction like that of drug-related suspensions. Are the Nova Scotia schools prepared to deal with a new reality that will be coming to us very, very soon? Anecdotally, and in terms of my observations as a former teacher, I see a lot of risks: a lot of risks with legalization, risks pertaining to cognitive developments, to cardiovascular and pulmonary effects that it will have on our population.

I know many people in this Chamber are huge advocates of mental health. I have grave concerns that we are going to see an increased risk of mental illness. There are far too many questions that I have pertaining to this bill. There are far too many concerns that I believe have been expressed by the Opposition.

The bottom line is the government has rushed through this process. There has been little time for stakeholders to prepare. We know there is no plan for education; we know there is no concrete plan for policing and working with our municipalities; and we know that placing cannabis in our NSLC co-locations goes against the recommendations of the federal task force. That, in itself, is enough for me to say to this House that I will not be voting in favour of the Cannabis Control Act. Thank you.

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

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. MASLAND: I'd like to draw the members' attention to the west gallery. I'd like to welcome one of Queen County's finest, a dedicated volunteer in my campaign and most important, a very good friend, Mr. Mark Leaman. This is the first time I've had an opportunity to stand and introduce someone from my constituency in the Legislature, so welcome, Mark. (Applause)

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

MS. KIM MASLAND: I am pleased to rise to say a few words on third reading of Bill No. 108, the Cannabis Control Act, this evening.

The federal Liberals have decided that Canada will be a nation of legalized pot smoking. Not unlike carbon pricing, they have given provinces no choice - do it or we'll do it for you. We will allow online sales and you can simply deal with the fallout. It's a poor way to treat your partners in Confederation, but here we are. The Liberal Government has made the decision and they are now breathing down the neck of an arbitrary deadline.

Mr. Speaker, cannabis will be legalized. Some say this legislation has been too long coming and others say that it should never have come at all. Either way, it will be a huge shift in attitude for many people. Although Nova Scotians may differ in opinion on the legalizing of marijuana, we all know that cannabis is a mind-altering substance that has been illegal in our country for nearly a century, and in a matter of months it will be legal.

Although I have multiple concerns with this legislation, my fundamental concern is that there is simply not enough time to properly educate and protect Nova Scotians. Behavioural change does not happen overnight. People have to slowly learn a new habit or behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, we don't have much time. Cannabis could be legal in 90 days. During estimates, we were not able to find out from the government how much the educational campaign would cost, when it will begin, or even if who, if anyone, was working on it. This worries me.

Mr. Speaker, if you think about some of the big behavioural changes we've seen in society - mandatory seat belt laws, anti-smoking laws, recycling, and you think about those things, many people took their cues from their kids. That is because their kids learned about the benefits of those changes in school. A parent only needs to hear, hey Mum, my teacher says you're destroying the environment if you put that in the garbage. After a couple of times of hearing that, they start to change their ways. I think about how many times my girls reminded me about putting my seat belt on when we got in the car.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, pot is going to be legal before kids go back to school in September. Even then the only opportunity for cannabis curriculum is in Grade 9, a lost opportunity that may have far-reaching negative consequences - and I am extremely worried about our children.

We need to ensure Nova Scotians who choose to consume this product can do so in an informed way. Mr. Speaker, at home in the constituency of Queens-Shelburne, the Queens Community Health Board recently came together with stakeholders in a forum engaging our community in a cannabis conversation on how to go forth with a public health approach for our community. People are concerned and education is paramount.

Mr. Speaker, I will agree that we have heard of success stories for people using medical marijuana to help control or relieve some of the symptoms of cancer or the side effects of cancer treatments or to relieve long-term chronic or severe pain, MS, or anxiety, to mention a few.

I met a lot of them on my door-knocking, actually - people who shared stories with me that they are able to go on in life simply because of the medical marijuana. In my own family, I have a family member who has debilitating MS, and because of medical marijuana, she is able to at least function daily. But consumption can have serious health

implications, and this government needs to implement a comprehensive public education and awareness program focusing on responsible use. It's also very important to note when I'm talking about medical marijuana that that has a very low percentage of THC that is recommended by Health Canada.

Another concern I have is this government's reluctance to take the advice of health advocacy organizations when it comes to legalized cannabis. Many health organizations wanted a legal age of 21 or even 25, but this government chose 19. It has been stated over and over again that there are health risks associated with cannabis use. The College of Family Physicians of Canada has stated that cannabis is not appropriate for anyone under the age of 25. Doctors Nova Scotia requested a legal age of 21 because adolescents' developing brains may be particularly vulnerable to lasting damage from the drug.

I have witnessed the damage of heavy marijuana use in adolescents. I've also witnessed the dismal set of life outcomes that comes with it: poor school performance, higher dropout rates, greater unemployment, increased social service dependence, broken family relationships, lost childhood dreams, and simply lower life satisfaction. These brains were under construction, and sadly, during this period of neurodevelopment, their frontal cortex - the region critical to planning, judgment, decision making, and personality - was sensitive to damage from drug exposure. The brain under construction became the altered brain.

Mr. Speaker, 25 would have been better, but at least at 21 you would have given the brain two more years before this government marketed and sold them pot.

Then, of course, we have the co-location issue. Many organizations, including the federal experts task force committee, warned against co-locating cannabis and beverage alcohol, but this government is only selling cannabis where alcohol is already sold, in nine of our NSLC outlets.

Although I don't agree with this, it begs the question, how will this address the underground market - this so-called attempt to take on the black market, but swaths of the province do not have access to a store? The government's response to this is that you can order it online. Well, presumably, you can order it online if you have Internet. Let's take it a step further: what about a credit card? Many don't have credit cards.

I certainly would have been in favour of privatizing with strong regulations and enforcement. I feel this decision was to simply make it easier for the government. What if you're an employee at the NSLC and you're asked to move into the sales force for cannabis? Can you say no? Many people, especially of an older generation, will have great difficulty with selling a drug.

While we're talking about workplaces, this legislation also doesn't contemplate testing for cannabis for Nova Scotia workplaces. Employers may be stuck in a situation

where they don't want to violate the rights of their employees but they also don't want to take on the liability of having an employee operating a piece of equipment or some other activity while impaired by cannabis. There are many situations under which working while impaired could create a direct and immediate safety concern to the person who consumes cannabis and, additionally, there could be direct safety concerns to the other workers.

Has the government contemplated what tools are available to employers? How will an employer test for impairment? What about the employee? Without clear assessments and tests, employees could be vulnerable to unfair accusations of impairment.

I also feel that the Cannabis Control Act should be linked to the Liquor Control Act, not only the Smoke-free Places Act. This would help protect the rights of non-users, non-smokers, seniors, and children. If we are linking cannabis to liquor for age and distribution, why are we treating cannabis different than alcohol?

I cannot walk down the sidewalk with a beer in my hand - why should cannabis be any different? I think about when I used to drive my kids to school and the smokers would be outside the school property smoking their cigarettes in the smoking section. Are we now going to allow a 19-year-old student in high school or an NSCC student to smoke cannabis 21 metres from a property?

We have come a long way to de-normalize tobacco smoking, but it has been years of tobacco education and we are still losing people to smoking. We are opening the door way too wide and too fast. I feel this is a huge mistake. MADD Canada does not support this position and neither do the myriad of other presenters at Law Amendments Committee. I encourage this government to ensure last year's crime doesn't become this year's nuisance.

Before I sit down, I want to mention one more of my concerns and that is the cost of legalized cannabis on police departments and, by extension, on the municipalities. It's not just the potential for the increased number of calls for police; it's the cost of ongoing training. To be quite honest, the law enforcement officers I've been talking to are concerned that they are not even going to be ready. Will we have enough DREs? I had a law enforcement officer say to me the other day, it looks like we are about to enter Fast Times at Ridgemont High. That's pretty sad.

These costs are substantial, and this government has only given vague answers on who is going to cover them. Municipalities have significant concerns about the weight of implementing legalized cannabis regulations: How much will the province pay? When and what process? I think of my own constituency, Queens-Shelburne. Shelburne Town is already feeling the strain of keeping up with policing costs.

Legalized pot will soon be a reality here in Nova Scotia and all across Canada. I wish this legislation represented the best way to prepare and educate and protect Nova

Scotians. I wish this government would have considered the well-thought-out amendments presented by our caucus, but not one of them was considered.

I fear that Bill No. 108 represents the easiest way to make pot legal by summer. Last year's crime is about to become this year's dime. Let's hope that dime is used to provide public safety, to properly educate Nova Scotians, and to protect our children.

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

MR. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I was kind of on the fence as to whether or not I wanted to stand up and talk about this. I know that members of my caucus will do a very adequate job of representing our Party's views and what our thoughts are. They will all say basically the same thing because we all agree on basically the same thing.

I wanted to stand up because I'm on the record of probably being a little bit of an anomaly on our caucus because I do and have always felt that, sooner or later, cannabis would be legal in this country and this province. I'm not necessarily as hardcore as some of my colleagues against this, but what I do want to say is that I think there are times in your life, there are sometimes some things that you sit back and think they are unique and they are historic. To me this is one of those things that is relatively historic and probably may be one of the most significant things that I get to speak on in this Legislature.

I think what I want to point out is why I will not, although I am supportive of the concept - I want to be very clear for the record so that 100 years down the road, Mr. Speaker, when some student at Dal or SMU or whatever university is around, is going back through Hansard and looking similar as we would at prohibition and the legalization of liquor, somebody will eventually go back and look at Hansard and review how this House felt and what the members of this House had to say as regards legalization of cannabis.

I want to be very clear on the record that the reason I will not be supporting this motion is probably significantly different, somewhat has been touched on, I guess, but different than others. The reason I don't, Mr. Speaker, I fundamentally feel that this is a significant, important piece of legislation to which the government listened to very little and that's why I can't support this.

Mr. Speaker, even a stopped clock is right twice a day. That means there has to be something, whether it is through the public hearings at Law Amendments Committee, whether it was through correspondence from the medical association, whether it was suggestions from the Opposition Parties - there were so many things that I've heard over the last couple of weeks in debate around cannabis. It seems to me that none of it, nothing other than where the track where we sat down here six, seven weeks ago - we are going exactly where we were going seven weeks ago, regardless of what was heard, what was said. I think there were a lot of really great points that came out that were discussed around this and they have been totally ignored, in my opinion, from the government.

So, although I am very proud and it's my pleasure to be here during this historic time, I certainly want it on record that I want no part of the historic legislation that they are going to pass here today. I think that none of us here, whether it's in the Opposition caucuses or the government, none of us are naive enough - this wasn't our decision, these were things that came down from the federal government - none of us were naive enough to know that it wouldn't go forward and we have to deal with it.

I do find when there are some really great amendments and suggestions coming forward, many of which I have listened to my caucus colleagues talk about and they are all ignored and there's absolutely no amendments and they are not listening to the public during Law Amendments Committee, to me that is why I can't support the legislation before us today.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Oh, not so easy, Mr. Speaker, you are not getting off just yet. Thank you.

I just want to stand up and echo the concerns that many in our caucus have shared about this piece of legislation. The government can say that this is a piece of legislation that will make things safer; this is in the interest of public safety is what we hear. I also heard the minister say at one point that he believed this would lead to reduced consumption going forward. I don't think either of those things are true.

We also know the reality, and the reality is that the federal government is pushing something down and there is really nothing that can be done against it. Yes, we could say that no, we won't do it and the feds would find a way to get it done because it's in their mandate.

When faced with this situation where we have to do something, we should do it right. That's the minimum standard we should hold ourselves to, as a government, to do it right. This is being done wrong on many levels. We've talked about the age, we've talked about the distribution model. I do think it is a huge mistake to sell cannabis through the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation. It's a very, very big mistake to distribute it in that manner. There are many alternatives.

I believe I share my colleagues' belief that it is being done this way because it's easy. It's cheap and it's easy, and that seems to be some of the criteria that the government is basing their decisions upon. We want the cheapest. We want the easiest. We want the quickest way to get this done, and that will tick all of those boxes. This system, this proposal will tick all of those boxes, but it doesn't make it right, and in the face of an opportunity to do it right, they should take it.

One of the things that they could be doing - many people would talk about, why don't we have a private distribution model? Why don't we let entrepreneurs sell cannabis? Why are we putting it through the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation system? I know the various parts of that argument. There's good and there's bad, but there's no doubt that the sale of cannabis should be highly regulated, and I think one of the opportunities that this government had was to think a little bit out of the box, just use their imagination just a little smidgen, and come up with an idea that would be a more effective distribution model.

I've been thinking about this model where the government could franchise locations to sell cannabis. They could have used a franchise model. People are familiar with the franchise model. We're familiar with fast-food franchises. They operate quite successfully. Many owners of fast-food franchises do quite well financially, filling a need in the community. But guess what? The franchisor also has a lot of say in how the operations are conducted, and people know that things around staff training, things around look and feel of the locations, are dictated by the franchisor.

So, if the government wanted to involve private interest, private enterprise, in the sale of cannabis, they could have. They could have put franchises out there, and the government could have then stipulated what computer system to use, so they could have some insight and some oversight into the amount of product that was being sold. The pricing could have been controlled to a certain degree. The training of staff could have been pushed down from a franchisor. I imagine we'd have a course at the Nova Scotia Community College, training employees in the sale of cannabis.

They could have dictated a look and feel to the locations, and everyone knows the professional look and feel of the Apple Stores, of the iStores, and in California, there's a move where many, many stores that are selling cannabis have that same professional feel to them.

These are the types of opportunities that were in front of this government, and this government chose just to look for something that was cheap, easy, and quick, instead of trying to find a real solution, instead of seeing an opportunity and again, it is one of the disappointments that we have in this government.

This government is known for its problem-stretching abilities and really, what we need are problem-solvers. Problem-stretchers out, problem-solvers in. Imagine if this House operated like that, Mr. Speaker. We'd see a whole turnover across the floor, but instead, we see a lot of problem-stretching.

Selling cannabis in the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation, we will look back and say, what a bunch of problem-stretching the Liberals did under the McNeil Government. What a bunch of problem-stretching they did.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd just like to remind the honourable member not to refer to members opposite directly, or refer to the government by the Premier's surname. The current government is the current government.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the record will be clear on what the current government accomplished and didn't accomplish in their time.

[9:15 p.m.]

The sale of cannabis has to be highly regulated. It has to be done in a way that will address the black market. If the minister is sincere that he wants to make it safer for Nova Scotians, then he can't limit the access to nine locations across this big province because there is an efficient market for cannabis in Nova Scotia already. It has existed for quite some time. If the minister thinks he will disrupt that market by putting cannabis in nine liquor stores across Nova Scotia, he is in for a huge surprise. That will not disrupt the market. It will not change anything in this province, and that is not helpful for what they are allegedly trying to accomplish.

The train is on the tracks now. This bill will pass tonight and, at some point, cannabis will be legal in Canada and in Nova Scotia. It looks like that's a certainty at this point and the train is on the tracks. I would urge this government to constantly monitor their decision, the decision they are pushing forward today in the face of many arguments against what they are trying to do here. The government could have hit pause at any point in the last six weeks and said, you know that makes sense. They are not going to do that at this stage, but maybe over the coming weeks they will do that and maybe we can look forward, as Nova Scotians, to an announcement from this government that they've come to their senses and they are going to change course on the distribution method they've taken.

They can feel free to use my suggestion of a franchise model, and I will not say I told you so if they choose to do that. That's some free advice for them tonight. I hope they take it because, if they are interested in making Nova Scotia safer and if they are interested in distributing it on a little more proper basis, then this is something they can take and brand as their own and run with it. And they'll do it certainly with the blessing of this side.

With those few words and my objections to the way this bill is presented and my objections to this government's plan, I'll take my seat.

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

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: This is one of those times when I wish I didn't have to speak to a bill. There's a lot of people here who wish I'd talk quickly. Neither one of those is going to happen tonight.

A funny story, when I was eight years old I heard from my older sister that some of her older friends were smoking grass. It sounded cool, so I snuck into my grandmother's cottage and I swiped one of her papers from her cigarette roller. I ripped some grass off the front lawn, I rolled it up and I smoked it. Then about 10 minutes later I was violently ill. That was my impression of smoking grass for a good five years. It wasn't something I wanted to do.

Then my next awareness of pot was the commercial This Is Your Brain and This Is Your Brain on Drugs. It's kind of like the P.E.I. number, 800-565-7421. That commercial was drilled into my brain and everybody else's. There wasn't a single person back then who didn't think that this type of drug hurt your brain. It really isn't any different today.

To use the words of Mrs. Margie Hartley of Eastern Passage, the Liberal Governments, both federally and provincially, are opening up a huge can of worms and we're not going to be able to seal that can back up again.

I remember when I was eight years old my father took me into a liquor store in Dartmouth because he couldn't leave me in the car. He made it very clear that I was not to touch any bottles in the liquor store. He made sure that he came out and stored the alcohol in the trunk of the car, and he told me why. That left an impression. I got a very early education that alcohol was for adults and that there were consequences for doing the wrong thing, and that is what I taught my children.

I am opposed to the legalization of cannabis, given how completely unprepared the federal Liberal Party was in setting up universal standards for how we are going to regulate and sell this product.

I've already spoken about the fact that you can't do standardized research in this country, moving forward, because the rules and regulations in each province are not going to be the same. That is a massive failure by this federal government. Then it was the province that had the opportunity to pick up the pieces. They did not do that, and Nova Scotians are going to pay that price.

There are a lot of people here who are viewing what is coming as a train that is coming down the track, and we are hoping to God that nobody is standing on it when it goes by.

I remember in approximately 1991, I was sitting at the old Infirmary, and there were 45 patients we were there to talk about that day. As we got going and people were reading their medical history and what brought them into the hospital that day, we were talking

about those who had drunk too much. We were talking about those who had eaten too much. We were talking about those who had smoked too much. We were talking about those who didn't move enough.

Just because it seemed to be a massive trend, we calculated how many people out of the 45 were possibly there because of something they had done to themselves. I remember that day that there were 42 out of 45 people who were there who might not have been had they chosen to take care of their own health.

Sadly, not much has changed. We now lead the country, sadly, in the number and the severity of the chronic diseases that we have. Already we are the leaders. Having something else to smoke and poison our lungs with is not going to make us healthier.

I am in favour of the use of medicinal marijuana. Having said that, the majority of health professionals in this province are not trained in how to use it. There's been nothing given to my profession as a physiotherapist, except for what I have taught myself.

When I mentioned the other day that I had read hundreds of research articles on marijuana, somebody from across the aisle rolled their eyes, so as a treat for everyone, I brought a whole bunch of them with me. I'm going to table them all at the end, because there are going to be a number of them, so the Pages can hold back.

I am speaking to you today as a health professional who dissected the dead body of a Nova Scotian kind enough to donate it, who died of lung cancer. I am speaking to you today as a parent who preached abstinence from alcohol and marijuana to my four sons.

I am speaking to you today as a politician who is sickened by the apathy, and as another member said, by the lack of urgency by the federal and provincial governments about the reality of the negative physical, psychological, and mental consequences that are coming. No amount of education is going to prevent it. You might mitigate it to some degree, but no smoking is better than reduced smoking.

One of the points that we haven't heard mentioned, and I'm going to bring it up more than once, is that health professionals are already busy enough. Lawyers are already busy enough. Social workers, police officers, guidance counsellors, teachers, parents, employers, and laboratories who test for drugs were already busy enough. We already have a strained enough health care system that I have people who've been waiting months just to get in to their own family doctor.

I'm speaking today as a physiotherapist who works with the elderly, where 30 per cent are already suffering from a fall every year, who are almost certainly going to fall even more when they start participating in the use of marijuana without any guidelines to help them. Their pharmacist isn't going to know what to say in terms of how cannabis is going to impact them with their medications, because we have no idea.

I'm speaking to you today as a chronic pain specialist who has watched desperate patients experiment with their lives and their health through both the legal and illegal use of marijuana in a desperate attempt to help their pain.

Let me be clear. I am in favour of the medicinal use of marijuana, except for the inhalation of it, because nothing needs to be burning down your lungs. Sadly, most of the medical clinics, or many that popped up that are prescribing marijuana licences are doing so to anybody who walks through the doors with no history of health problems that would justify the prescription.

We talk about not having advertising as an issue. Well, I hate to pick one out but the Trauma Healing Centre in Dartmouth, the letters stand for THC. I actually don't use marijuana and it was somebody who does who pointed out to me the irony that it is THC. So, if you think they are not going to be able to advertise the use of marijuana, we're kidding ourselves.

The people who are going to have to bear the brunt of the fallout from rushing through legislation by a government that would not accept a single amendment from the Opposition Parties - so there goes the collaborative aspect of this right out the window - the people who are going to have to bear the brunt of the fallout from this are the ones who presented at Law Amendments Committee who spoke so eloquently. It's going to be the parents whose kids were already drug addicts and who had a hope of getting them off. To quote the Lung Association, "There is no safe level for the use of cannabis."

Allowing every province in this country to establish their own rules and regulations means we are forever handicapping the health professionals and researchers of this country to do the high-level, randomized, double-blinded, placebo-controlled studies on the negative or positive consequences of cannabis use. You are permanently handicapping us from doing this, not just now but 10, 20, and 40 years from now.

Does anybody remember thalidomide? I grew up with a girl whose mother took that. We can't do those studies because the federal government took the gutless way out and left it to each province. We're not talking nearly enough about the physical consequences. We've talked about psychosis, but there are so many physical consequences to the use and overuse of cannabis.

I became an MLA to help motivate Nova Scotians to be healthier and to help improve our health care system. I am sickened watching our province deliberately do something that will single-handedly hurt us all and it will end up costing us more in lost productivity, marital breakdown, car accidents, and health care costs than you can possibly begin to imagine. I have already worked with drug addicts, I have already worked on mental health units, I have already worked on people who have had heart and lung transplants because they abused their bodies for 30 or 40 years and now they are being given a second chance.

I had a gentleman once 25 years ago, I got called up as a physiotherapist into the operating room because the doctor was going to suction out all of the phlegm that was clogging his lungs and I was going to be there to percuss his lungs for two straight hours while they sucked the phlegm out of his chest. Do you know where he was three hours later? Guess - in the smoking room. So, the thought of giving anyone else more access to something they can smoke makes me sick and it makes them sick.

But you don't have to just take my word for it, there are all sorts of people who have said the same thing. The Auditor General has said - there's a whole slew of recommendations he gave back in 2014-15. You only had to complete 80 per cent to get a passing grade and the Nova Scotia Health Authority got 44 per cent. That's just on the few things that they looked at. That gives me zero confidence that the Health Authority is possibly ready for what is coming. Because I'm a health professional, I was with that Nova Scotia Health Authority and there wasn't a single thing that came across my desk or the desk of my patients that talked about this.

When I moved into private practice I started to have patients with chronic pain who were coming to me, illegally using marijuana and whispering it to me and saying don't put that in your chart. I'm like sorry, it's going in the chart because I need to try to figure out how my treatment is going to be impacted by what you're doing. There was nobody else in my profession talking about this - it's better now.

[9:30 p.m.]

I wrote a book, and I'll table the cover. It's 400 pages on chronic pain. There's a section in here on marijuana. I wrote that years ago because I saw this tsunami coming. I'm not going to table the whole book, but I'll give you a copy, thanks. I saw the tsunami coming because I'd been working with the patients who were using it on a daily basis.

Do you know what one doctor at one marijuana distribution clinic told my first patient who went there at 23? He didn't ask her if she had a history of drug abuse. He didn't ask her where her pain was. She simply said she had pain. It has lasted there for a couple of years after a car accident. He said if you order before you leave you get 50 per cent off the first order. She said, how much do I take. He said take enough until you either fall asleep or your pain is gone. Would you ever prescribe Oxycontin or Tramadol or any other drug like that? That's the advice she got. Do you know how many family physicians are out there right now not willing to prescribe medicinal marijuana because they have no idea what it's going to do to their patients? They have no idea what the drug interactions are going to be because there's no research on it.

We talked a little bit about MADD Canada earlier. MADD Canada is quoted in this article and, again, I'll table everything. It was in Charlottetown, P.E.I., last year. The regional manager of MADD said that drugs can be tested through saliva, it can be done at roadside, and it can be done just as efficiently as a breathalyzer. However, she said there

are only 800 trained drug recognition experts across Canada at the moment. I think this was 2016. However, she said, it's not cheap to train drug recognition experts. She estimated it would cost \$17,000 to train one person to be a drug recognition expert. If every officer can have this disposable saliva test and the training, it would be a positive impact on road safety. You know what would be the positive impact on road safety? If people didn't use marijuana while they were driving. Seventeen thousand dollars per trained tester. I don't have a doctor in Eastern Passage, and we know that our government did not send anybody over to talk to the 650 medical students in Newfoundland and Labrador last week. I would rather that \$17,000 to train one police officer went for us to send somebody over to Newfoundland.

This is another one: a CBC article said a survey done for Health Canada shows that among pot users aged 20 to 24, 43 per cent had been getting behind the wheel within two hours of smoking weed and almost half of 16- to 19-year-olds who used pot drove after consuming cannabis in the past month. Have you ever worked with somebody who's been hit by a car? I have - thousands of people. Their lives aren't changed for the first few weeks or months. We're talking lifelong changes, permanent injuries, loss of income, losing their marriages, losing their homes. We've got half of 16- to 19-year-olds, who are probably texting at the same time, already admitting to using cannabis. Anyone who says that putting it in a liquor store isn't going to increase that has got their head in the sand.

I just read in that same article - I had a chuckle and then it made me sad - that the government released its legal limits for drugged driving but can't say how much pot is too much; and, for their marketing strategy for education, the government leans on emojis and selfies to sell its campaign against drug impaired driving. Well, my God, I don't want my granddaughters having to rely on emojis and selfies to convince them not to use marijuana. So, that's what MADD said.

The Office of the Ombudsman, 2016-17, Page 28 - sorry for the trifocals - source of complainers. The Minister of Health and Wellness will like to hear this because I don't understand it. Complaints for Health and Wellness in 2014-15 totalled 123 and then in 2016-17, 160. Community Services was 460; Workers' Compensation, 22; Halifax Regional Municipality, 43; Service Nova Scotia, 40; Justice, 259. Well, I would like to suggest to everybody that that number of complaints to the Office of the Ombudsman is going to go skyrocketing if you don't like what the government agencies have done, and you don't think they have done a good job.

The Office of the Ombudsman's job is to ensure that government decisions and processes are fair, consistent, and transparent. The Office of the Ombudsman's mandate is extended to individuals who receive services from the government or who are impacted by provincial and municipal governments. If they have a complaint, they should call their office. As a PSA, here's the number: 1-800-670-1111 or 1-902-424-6780.

For those who aren't going to like what's going to happen when this legislation becomes law and we start to enforce it, if you don't like how it has impacted your life, give them a call. Next year, we'll look at the number of complaints and see how this has impacted us.

I'm going to go back to my mantra that we were already busy enough. So I'm going to go through these articles, and I'll table them all again at the end. *Workplace Health and Safety* 2015, "Marijuana in the Workplace: Guidance for Occupational Health Professionals and Employers." They said we should educate them. I don't see that education being done.

"Marijuana and Alcohol Use as Predictors of Academic Achievement" in youth, *Journal of School Health* 2017, May. Guess what it says. "The importance of delaying or preventing substance use is evident in association with student performance and engagement." The use of these substances makes school performance worse, so let's put it in liquor stores while these guys are going off to university at the age of 19.

This one made me sick. This was five days ago in the *Cape Breton Post*, and I don't believe it's just them, "Trying to be cool by vaping in school." This is admitting that local high school students are saying that they are vaping in the classroom during class. They are using the pipe so that there's no odour, and they are joking about it.

It says here "The Preventive Medicine medical journal published a report in October 2017 which said 10 per cent of students in the United States have tried vaping at least once." These students in Cape Breton are bragging that they are doing it in the middle of class. Heaven forbid we take their cellphone away from them. Now we're going to have to ask them to put down their vaping pipe too.

This is another article from the *Chronicle Herald*, April 12, 2018, "Nova Scotia's Universities Working on Pot Policies. No-smoking rules expected to apply to cannabis." We don't know. I don't have a whole lot of confidence in this. In this Legislature, we brought forward something to try to get a stand-alone sexual violence strategy, which is required at all universities in this province, and it got defeated. How are we going to have any confidence that universities are going to have consistent standardized policies against pot? Who on earth is going to enforce them?

Vaughan Dowie - I know some don't want to hear that name - in an April 16, 2018 opinion piece says there has been unanimous agreement by the government that their objective is to protect youth. We know what the approaches and commitments have been from various governments, but there are two key areas not yet addressed. The first has to do with public education. The second has to do with treatment once addiction has taken place.

We're seeing that there is certain money set aside, but we're not seeing any plan put in place. There's nothing in the schools. They all know it's coming, and we still don't have anything there.

Everybody else has talked about the impact on justice and the impact on the classroom and the impact on court systems. But the impact on health we have minimized and we have glossed over. As I said, when you have dissected the dead body of somebody who died of lung cancer - this isn't a train that might be coming down. This is one that is already here. We are now just going to give another method for lung cancer to develop.

A research article in November 2017 said, "physicians should closely monitor cannabis-using patients and provide education surrounding the potential harms of using cannabis while receiving treatment for opioid use disorder."

We haven't trained the physicians yet. I'm part of the Atlantic Pain Mentorship Network. We haven't trained all the physicians in this province to do that, so how are we going to train the patients?

International Journal of Health Policy and Management, May 2016 - Legalizing and Regulating Marijuana in Canada: Review of Potential Economic, Social, and Health Impacts: We know that the legalization of marijuana is going to lead to health problems, including increasing the uptake of the drug, accidents, and injuries.

If you use a skateboard while using marijuana, you are going to multiply the head injuries. You ride a bicycle - more head injuries come from bicycles, by the way, than football, and now we are going to be magnifying it, because these kids are going to have that even more than they did.

This one is from an article, it's from Health World Canada: More than 95 per cent of the world's population now are already breathing unhealthy air. The only really healthy thing about going to Africa is that I actually got to be in healthy air because they don't have any industry there to pollute.

We already have a polluted world and now we are making it more polluted, and I guarantee you that every landlord in the country is dreading the day that people start lighting up in their apartment buildings and they have to become the drug police as well.

We already know what is going to happen. Anybody who is in health care knows what is going to happen. How are we going to monitor the effects of it, especially when we don't have standardized policies, procedures, and regulations across the country?

I already know that we don't know how many doctors we have in Nova Scotia. I also know that we don't know how many family doctors are seeing patients because we don't know how many numbers of visits are family doctor visits versus walk-in clinic visits.

The reason I know we don't know that is because we don't track that. So, how are we going to track the negative impact of marijuana when we can't even figure out how many doctors we have?

How are we going to track the use, the frequency, the dose, the multi-drugging? You would never give somebody a bottle of pills and say, take whatever you like whenever you like it, but that is exactly what we are doing with marijuana.

One of the things we also know is that it isn't just health professionals who know that using marijuana is associated with lower health. This province already has the worst health of every disease going. That's not anything we should be proud of. What we do know, though, is that those who smoke, whether it's marijuana or tobacco, if people rate themselves in terms of their health - this is *Prevention Medicine*, March 2017: Anybody who smokes automatically rates their health as lower. Anybody who smokes marijuana also rates their health as lower and with the exception of using it for chronic pain control, marijuana is not going to improve our health.

We've already got crowded ERs, if they're open. We've already got ambulances backed up at the door. How excited do you think ambulance drivers are going to be on Friday and Saturday nights? If you've ever been at the emergency room on a Friday or Saturday night, there are all sorts of people there who are highly intoxicated on alcohol, and I'm sure some of them are on drugs as well. If you think that the number of trips to the ER, once this is legalized, is going to go down, then I challenge you to track those stats.

This is an article from the *Journal of Emergency Medicine*, March 2018, called Cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome. This syndrome has become more prevalent with increasing cannabis potency and use, as enabled by various states, after they legalized the recreational use of cannabis. So, if you think we are going to discourage kids from using it, we are not. The United States is already ahead of us in terms of legalizing, and their health care system is paying the price.

You already know how much it costs for somebody to go to emergency, so if my mother, God forbid, has an issue and we have to take her to emergency and we're sitting behind five people who are on drug overdoses because we legalized cannabis, imagine how happy I'm going to be. We already have a wait-list for every surgery in this province. As I said, I have a relative who's waiting for an abdominal hernia who has to wait a year for that.

We are already too busy as health care professionals. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, September 2016: "Why it is probably too soon to assess the public health effects of legalisation of recreational cannabis use in the USA." It says, "Any increases in cannabis use and harm could be minimised if governments introduced public health policies that limited the promotional activities of a legal cannabis industry, restricted cannabis availability to adults, and maintained cannabis prices at a substantial fraction of the black

market price. So far, no states have chosen to implement these policies.” It’s kind of ironic that neither are we.

[9:45 p.m.]

“Medical cannabis: A forward vision for the clinician.” In the *European Journal of Pain*, March 2018: “In the context of prevalent use, there is an urgency to gather pertinent clinical information about the therapeutic effects as well as risks.”

You are all thinking that because medicinal marijuana is legal, we know what it’s doing to people. This was published a few weeks ago. Those who were using medicinal marijuana still don’t know what the effects are. I would rather the research be going to cure cancer, to slow down the rate of deterioration of arthritis or Alzheimer’s, and instead, a gazillion dollars - that’s two times a bazillion dollars - is going to be going to research this instead of other diseases that our country is suffering from.

But that’s sometimes talking about the end of life. *The Journal of Perinatal & Neonatal Nursing* in January and March 2018 says: “Although still illegal at the federal level, marijuana has been legalized for medical and/or recreational use in 29 states . . .” It has resulted in the increased use of marijuana by women who are pregnant - 16 per cent of women who are pregnant admit using marijuana. So now we are going to put it in a liquor store and make it more likely that those who are pregnant are going to get access to it.

Cannabis affects the lungs. It affects the teeth. It increases the risk of cancer. It increases the risk of all other diseases. The use of marijuana or cannabis is something that I have been witnessing for a long time. I have watched the increased use and I’ve watched the deterioration of health and the increase in drug abuse by many of those who are choosing to use it. It’s a freight train that has already hit too many Nova Scotians.

This is the biggest social and health care experiment to be introduced in the last 100 years. I pray to God with all my heart that I am wrong, but I find it more than disheartening that my children and grandchildren are going to be the guinea pigs in this national experiment.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Where do I start? Well, Mr. Speaker, it’s safe to say that the range of comments tonight from my colleagues in Opposition, and obviously even disagreement amongst those in Opposition, only highlights the complexities of this work that brings us here this evening. I think it appropriate to start by saying, using the words of my colleague from Halifax Needham, “the world that exists where we find ourselves now.” I think this really necessitates that we hit the pause button and ask ourselves that question.

I just want to quickly provide a summary of the bill itself, without going into the details or the specifics. The Cannabis Control Act, as it is known now, the legislation has three main components and objectives: to regulate and control the purchase, possession, sale and distribution of cannabis; to establish prohibitions relating to the purchase, possession, sale, distribution, consumption, cultivation, propagation, and harvesting of cannabis to protect public health and safety, protect youth and restrict their access to cannabis and ensure that non-medicinal legal cannabis is sold in accordance with this Act; and, as many have mentioned this evening in the comments, to deter unlawful activities in relation to cannabis through appropriate enforcement and sanctions.

Over the past two weeks through Question Period, Budget Estimates, second reading, Law Amendments, Committee of the Whole, and now third reading, we have had engaging debate about the legalization of cannabis. Regardless of one's opinion on a particular issue, we can all agree this is a very significant policy shift for both the country and the province, and I do want to take this time to acknowledge and thank my colleagues for the thoughtful and respectful debate that they have engaged in on this important topic.

In April of 2017, the federal government introduced Bill C-45. Provinces and territories were tasked with development of legislation around age, distribution, purchase and retail, possession, cultivation, consumption, administrative sanctions specific to drug-impaired driving, and of course penalties. I just want to touch briefly on some of the comments that my colleagues shared this evening because they were worthy of reply. I'm not going to go into all of them, I'll assure my colleagues of that, but there were some consistent themes that I think are important to speak to and acknowledge and reinforce.

One of those was a suggestion from a number of my colleagues around economic growth. The research and the work that we've done, particularly the advice and guidance out of Colorado and Washington State, was to control it, to regulate it, to ensure that the initial introduction was manageable and that you could mitigate some of those unintended consequences. I'll say this, Mr. Speaker, and I've said it in this Legislature - we would not advance economic growth and compromise our youth. We said that from day one.

There were comments and questions asked about how we educate our children about cannabis. I want to refer my colleagues - everyone in the House because I think there's an opportunity to further educate all of us in this particular area - I want to table a package that the federal government has prepared and introduced and it's available on the website. It's called the Cannabis Talk Kit - Know How To Talk With Your Teen. It provides valuable information, an important element in the education and awareness campaign, that will help parents and family members understand the challenges that we face.

There were comments made, as well, around the consultation process. My colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition has taken great exception to the survey that

was used. I have explained in the House that we do put validity in the survey, recognizing that there is a margin of error with every survey.

As I've explained to members of this House, the unique users - the 38,000 people who went on site and the 30,000 or 31,000 who completed it, in fact, give the survey confidence, recognizing there is still a margin of error. As I've shared with my colleague in the past, if there were 10,000 unique users and 31,000 completed surveys, we would have a concern, but that survey was one element and we believe a valid element in the overall decisions that were made.

Another area that my colleagues raised was consultation with municipalities. I want to ensure my colleagues that we advanced genuine and extensive dialogue with our municipalities. We spoke with 41. We engaged 41 of the 50 municipalities in the province. Nine municipalities did not respond, and that's their decision. We held four stakeholder groups with those municipalities to solicit their feedback.

On January 24th, I met with the executive for the UNSM. It was a minister's roundtable, hosted by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, the Minister of Business, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, and other colleagues were there.

We talked extensively about the legalization of cannabis. We spoke openly about municipalities having the ability to enact bylaws that would place further restrictions on consumers. The executive of the UNSM endorsed that position that evening. That is part of the dialogue and discussion that we have had with municipalities.

There was also a discussion around impaired driving and some suggesting that we haven't gone far enough. There are a number of elements to the administrative sanctions that the bill contains, as it relates to sanctions for impaired driving by drug.

The most comprehensive, and when I use that language - the most serious penalties in the country for impaired by drug, I think that speaks to the attention and the need to focus on anti-drug driving messages. I'll allude to that momentarily, but one of the things I do want to share with my colleagues, because there has been a lot of discussion around law enforcement and references in a number of discussions around the drug recognition experts, or the DRE, is that Nova Scotia has the most drug recognition expert officers per capita in the country.

There has been significant attention by this government and previous governments to support law enforcement in this particular area. Yes, these are expensive options, but they are absolutely necessary options. As my colleague mentioned earlier in her comments this evening, there is a desire to expand on those numbers so that we do address the incidence of impaired driving.

I want to share with my colleagues, because many have spoken about their engagement with the law enforcement community - I can tell you that in my five years in government, there is no single topic of discussion that I have had more feedback on from the community-at-large, including my former law enforcement colleagues. They endorse this legislation. They recognize the need.

To speak to the comments from my colleague the member for Halifax Needham, the sky isn't falling. It's already fallen. The law enforcement community has been dealing with this for some time.

[10:00 p.m.]

I'll just quickly go through my notes. Again, I don't want to belabour these points, but I think there are elements that we have to acknowledge.

I know the member for Inverness has taken great exception to the language I use around enhanced public safety. My colleague used the word "safe" in his address to the Legislature. There is a significant difference in the context of the word "safe" compared to enhanced public safety. Nobody is suggesting that the consumption of cannabis is safe. We've never taken that position. We've acknowledged that the consumption of any drug is harmful, but there is a safer way - there is an enhanced public safety opportunity for all of us to advance in this discussion.

There has been a tremendous amount of work that has gone into the development of the Cannabis Control Act. There has been exhaustive and thorough work within the Department of Justice and across multiple government departments; extensive consultation within the province across multiple sources including health, law enforcement, municipalities, and the public at large; extensive and ongoing dialogue with our federal, provincial, and territorial colleagues, their departments and multiple committees; as well as the guidance and advice of Colorado and Washington State.

As I've said before, I recognize, acknowledge, and value the differing opinions and views of every single stakeholder and contributor to this dialogue and this discussion. I have the utmost respect for the passion and sometimes ardent positions of individuals and groups, including my colleagues in the Opposition - and to the surprise of some, the views and opinions of those who believe we did not go far enough in the legalization of cannabis.

I will say this, Mr. Speaker, this collective work, the consideration of all those opinions and views has, in fact, informed our legislation. We believe it is the most comprehensive in the country because of the steps we've taken and the feedback that we have received from all those individuals who have taken the time to contribute.

It has been absolutely necessary through all of this discussion, through all of this dialogue and earnest discourse, that we find a balance an application of common sense and

sound judgment, a measured approach to protect public health and safety, to further protect youth and restrict their access to cannabis - illegal or legal - and to further deter illegal activities of cannabis through appropriate enforcement and sanctions.

The status quo - my colleague, the member for Halifax Needham referenced it earlier - the unfettered access to illegal cannabis, the unfettered access to unknown products by unimaginable amounts of herbicides and pesticides used to drive the volume of product and inherently the unimaginable profits of organized crime, estimated to be in the area of \$7 billion annually, has been at the expense and well-being of our youth, and it's simply unacceptable.

It is well known - and my colleague mentioned in her comments earlier this evening - the availability of cannabis in the school community. You can go into any school in our province to this day, and to try to buy alcohol, individuals will have a very difficult time, but cannabis is available through any number of dealers in our school communities. That is an accurate statement.

My colleague, the member for Kings North used a number earlier in his comments - about 5,000 drug dealers in the Province of Nova Scotia - which is a very close estimation of what we actually see and know.

We also know that youth in Nova Scotia - the highest consumption rates among youth here in Nova Scotia, and as a nation, we know we have some of the highest consumption rates in the world. There's a need to address consumption by our youth.

I recognize and respect that, from a principle political position, we differ with the Official Opposition. There has been a reference in this Legislature to the affiliation and the alignment with federal political Parties - a tough-on-crime approach versus a restorative justice methodology, prohibition versus regulation. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you from my 32 years in policing that the tough-on-crime approach has not worked. In my experience, the prohibitionist approach has not been effective in pursuit of public safety, particularly when it comes to our youth.

I stated from the outset that our priority has been to establish a piece of legislation that protects public health and safety, particularly our youth, and to deter unlawful activities and mitigate the involvement of organized crime. I believe our legislative framework does just this. We have taken a measured approach to this complex and evolving work. We believe our efforts in legislation have struck the right balance between enhanced public safety and our responsibility to address the role of organized crime as well as a recognition of individual rights of those who choose to consume and those who choose not to consume.

I save my final comments for those in the public service who have committed their time and work, often beyond the normal workday - evenings and weekends - to bring this bill to its present status. Many individuals, too numerous to mention, across multiple

departments have contributed their skills, their knowledge, and their abilities in the best interests of all Nova Scotians. For that, I thank them on behalf of all Nova Scotians. (Applause)

I'll conclude with a comment from my colleague, the member for Kings North, who said our objective here is really to make the world better - even slightly better. Mr. Speaker, I think those words are so true to what each and every one of us in this Legislative Chamber aspires to do on behalf of our constituents.

With those few comments, I move to close debate on Bill No. 108.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 108.

There has been a call for a recorded vote.

We'll ring the bells until the Whips are satisfied.

[10:08 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Are the Whips satisfied?

Before we proceed with the recorded vote, I'll just remind all members to remain completely silent while the Clerks record your vote. I'll remind all members to stand up with a simple "yea" or "nay."

The Clerks will now proceed with the recorded vote on Bill No. 108.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[10:09 p.m.]

YEAS

Mr. Churchill
Mr. Furey
Ms. Regan
Mr. MacLellan
Mr. McNeil
Ms. Casey
Mr. Glavine
Mr. Delorey
Mr. Colwell

NAYS

Mr. MacMaster
Mr. MacLeod
Mr. Dunn
Mr. Bain
Ms. MacFarlane
Mr. d'Entremont
Ms. Smith-McCrossin
Ms. Paon
Mr. Houston

Ms. Miller	Mr. Orrell
Mr. Kousoulis	Ms. Adams
Mr. Porter	Mr. Lohr
Mr. Gordon Wilson	Mr. Johns
Mr. Hines	Ms. Masland
Ms. Diab	Mr. Halman
Mr. Ince	
Mr. Rankin	
Mr. Mombourquette	
Mr. Horne	
Mr. Maguire	
Mr. MacKay	
Mr. Jessome	
Ms. Lohnes-Croft	
Ms. DiCostanzo	
Mr. Irving	
Mr. David Wilson	
Mr. Burrill	
Ms. Zann	
Ms. Roberts	
Ms. Martin	
Ms. Chender	

THE CLERK: For, 31. Against, 15.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 65.

Bill No. 65 - Psychologists Act.

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

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 65, the Psychologists Act, be now read a third time and do pass.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill No. 65, the Psychologists Act. Psychologists are important members of our health care delivery team, and the demand for psychologists in hospitals and our community-based settings has dramatically increased. Clinical health psychology has become one of the important disciplines in health care.

The wait-lists for mental health services in Cape Breton alone is 363 days, just two days short of a year. Psychologists play a major role in understanding how biological, behavioural, and social factors influence health and illness. Psychologists help to modify their behaviour and lifestyles so as to prevent and recover from health problems.

Psychologists are equipped with training, skills, and knowledge to treat their patients through difficult times. With the mental health system in crisis, we need to support our psychologists now more than ever. This bill will bring psychologists in line with other self-regulated health care professionals, and we like it because it was stakeholder-driven. However, I would once again like to caution the government about some language that concerns the Nova Scotia psychologists. They are worried about the use of the word “character.” They feel that the definition of character is very subjective, and it’s a term that is open to moral judgment that could have huge, lasting impact on someone’s career.

The Progressive Conservative caucus supports this bill and supports Nova Scotia’s psychologists. It is our hope that the government reaches out to psychologists to discuss any further changes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I have only a few words to say, really based on the President of the Association of Psychologists, a witness at the Law Amendments Committee. Dr. Todd Leader spoke to his concerns that the association does not have, in this Act, official standing with the examiner of psychologists, and that, to me, is concerning. I think the amendments that the Association of Psychologists brought forward should have been considered as part of this Act at this time, rather than waiting for some future date.

I think any group of professionals that seeks to self-regulate would want to be sure that there is collaboration between the association of those being examined and those being regulated and the examiner and the regulator. I think that collaboration and that communication is really necessary for this bill to accomplish its intent, and so I think it’s unfortunate that that amendment was not considered and I urge the government to consider a second round of amendments at the nearest possible date. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[10:15 p.m.]

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the members opposite for their comments. The member for Cumberland North has certainly articulated the importance and the significance of the role psychologists play in our health care system.

Just briefly, to the reference with the concern around the term “character” being used, it’s certainly something we heard from some of the stakeholders, and I want to assure the members that this is addressed through regulations that are going to be updated that will further define that definition and the application of the term with respect to character and that there is a commitment by the college to complete consultation with the membership, psychologists, to ensure that the wording and definitions applied do satisfy those concerns around interpretation and so on.

It’s also worth noting that I believe in the current framework there are aspects within the college where they’re already using the term character and it’s a professional character obviously that they’re meaning and not delving into kind of social judgments and so on, which I believe is where the concern at some future date - so, I just wanted to assure the member that that’s not to be too much of a concern.

To the member from Halifax Needham raising concerns again for some feedback from the stakeholder group, the association, about not having the association membership represented on the college - indeed, I believe in earlier comments that the member through debate made reference to a letter submission made by the association through the college. I want to assure the member that in that letter it does make reference requesting that it be provided to government. Indeed, I want to assure the member and all members of the House that it was submitted to government, that indeed I had that letter, that feedback on those recommendations prior to Law Amendments Committee, and so those suggestions were fully considered before moving forward with this bill.

It was a conscious decision to not have the association members on the board and that really has to do with what the mandate and the responsibilities and objectives of the association is versus those of the college and the college’s role as the regulator, the association’s role as an advocate on behalf of the membership. Certainly, there will be relationships and opportunities for feedback to be shared from the association on behalf of members to the college, but it’s also worth noting for the member that in fact, the membership of both of these organizations are psychologists themselves.

So the membership through the college, through elections, nominations and elections of board members will always have the opportunity to have their voices heard

and the association certainly as a major stakeholder can engage with the college as well. But as far as regulatory bodies, it's not best practice to have those members actually sit on the regulatory board, and that's the rationale for not having considered or moved forward with that particular request.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I do move to close debate on third reading of Bill No. 65.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 65. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 114.

Bill No. 114 - Gaelic College Foundation Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Gaelic Affairs.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I do move that Bill No. 114 be now read a third time and do pass.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 114. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 118.

Bill No. 118 - The Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 118, the Municipal Government Act and The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter respecting Parental Accommodation, now be read a third time and do pass.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a moment and voice my support for this bill and to say that on the 100th Anniversary of women receiving the right to vote in this province, it seems as though we are finally getting around to reducing the barriers for them to, in fact, run for and serve in elected office.

Thank you to the government for working with municipal partners to get this bill passed, and I hope it is the start of a lot of other initiatives that will help bring gender parity to this House and to our municipal counterparts across the province.

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

MR. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative caucus does support this, as well, and we are proud to be able to stand and do so. We also want to commend the government for bringing this forward in such a timely manner.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, very quickly, I just want to thank all members of the House for their support on this bill, particularly the member for Dartmouth South for her advocacy on this, and my colleague for Sackville-Beaver Bank. Most importantly, I wanted to thank the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education and the Premier for their direction and support of this legislation.

I don't know if they are watching tonight, but Emily Lutz and Meg Hodges are the reason why this bill is passing tonight. If you are watching, the Kings County Councillors, thank you very much for your advocacy on this bill.

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to remind the honourable minister not to speak to the viewing public directly.

The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 118. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 107.

Bill No. 107 - Labour Standards Code.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 107, An Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, of The Labour Standards Code Representing Leaves of Absence be read for a third time and do pass.

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

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a few words to Bill No. 107 on Leave of Absence.

This is a good start. It's a good start for allowing people who are victims of domestic violence to get the help they need. The concern we have is that there are no paid days in there for the victims to get either the doctor's appointments or the legal appointments or the chance to move out of a domestic assault situation.

We do know that there are other provinces - Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and the federal government - who do provide some paid leave. I did hear the minister say earlier that they are going to consider it. I hope we can take the minister at his word, that it's not just lip-service to get this bill passed - that they will consult and that they will try to find a way to work with the federal government to allow them to work it in to something like an EI claim or find some way to reimburse small businesses to allow this to happen so the victims can get the help they need. With that, I will take my place.

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

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to say a few words to this, I would like to say congratulations and I'm thankful to see this come into effect. There are some really good things about the bill, like the ability for wide inclusion for all types of relationships, and the verification process is not burdensome or cumbersome.

However, I will reiterate what my colleague has said and what I've said before: paid leave for domestic violence is imperative for those, primarily women, who predominantly take up the majority of low-wage earners, who are single parents for the most part, and not in a partnership with the father or the parent of the children. It leaves

these people in a precarious situation in order to stay in these relationships, because in order to feed their children, they need to stay in these relationships to pay their bills.

I will not go on. I'm glad to see it introduced. However, I will continue to urge this government and push this government to follow in the footsteps of Manitoba and Ontario to at least allow five paid days for victims of domestic violence.

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

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my colleagues for their remarks, as well as the great discussion we've had on this bill.

As everyone knows, at Law Amendments there was an amendment brought in that will allow for paid leave to happen through regulation, not through having to introduce an amendment to this bill at a future date. So if after doing public consultation, whatever the process and the outcomes are, the amendment can happen a lot more quickly than having to come into the Legislature.

As I've said before, the intent from day one was to get the minimum standard here, which is the protection of individuals. Going through this process, we also discovered some other parts within our Labour Standards Code which were a little troublesome for me. If an individual becomes sick at work, they don't have job protection. That's another thing we're going to look at as well, and look at other areas where we can ensure that people at their work feel safe and secure and get the supports they need.

I do think this is a great bill. I think it will make a difference in the lives of Nova Scotians who are in a very unfortunate situation.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 107. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 99.

Bill No. 99 - House of Assembly Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 99, the House of Assembly Act, be now read for a third time and do pass.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: M. le Président, je vais essayer de tenir mes commentaires assez courts de ce projet de loi. Écoute, j'ai travaillé très fort pendant ma carrière ici en législature essayant d'écouter ma région acadienne, d'écouter les autres régions acadiennes, de qu'est-ce qui est important pour eux quand ça vient à la représentation effective. Je dis que c'est toujours vraiment difficile quand on travaille ensemble et on essaye de trouver un type de solution quand ça vient à comment bien représenter des communautés qui sont minoritaires dans nos provinces.

J'aimerais premièrement remercier le gouvernement pour la traduction simultanée que la communauté a pu avoir pendant qu'ils ont fait leurs présentations au comité d'amendements. C'était vraiment très bien vu que le gouvernement a pu faire ça pour eux

Mais comme ils ont dit pendant leurs présentations, ils sont vraiment déçus que le gouvernement ne voulait pas sortir les clauses dans le projet de loi qui appartiennent à l'idée des circonscriptions non contiguës, que des circonscriptions qui ne touchent pas un à l'autre, c'est quelque chose qui n'est pas vue de la scène du gouvernement fédéral ou dans d'autres régions du Canada, même dans d'autres régions du monde. Donc, ils ne comprenaient pas pourquoi que c'était dans ce projet de loi.

[10:30 p.m.]

Deuxièmement, c'était un changement qui était proposé par les néo-démocrates, c'était vraiment l'idée que le comité de sélection ou le comité spécial sur les frontières, peut décider le nombre de de sièges en chambre. Donc, l'idée était si que la commission sur les frontières pourrait faire ses décisions elle-même, avec la consultation avec les communautés de la province. Donc, même avec nous c'est vraiment difficile de trouver vraiment une base pour vraiment, agréer sur les choses qui sont importantes pour nous. Mais, je trouve qu'on peut vraiment travailler avec ce projet de loi et on va voir si le gouvernement va continuer avec leur travail à travailler avec les Partis d'Opposition quand ça vient à le comité spécial qui va se prendre place prochainement.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to be able to do that in French. I thank the Assistant Clerk, who monitors what we say in French. I know simultaneous translation is always difficult in this House of Assembly, and of course we try our best to stay parliamentary in our comments.

Quickly, it's always very difficult to find a common ground on many of these discussions, especially when it comes to boundaries. Boundaries are very important to political Parties, and very important to us. We hope that the government continues to work with the Opposition Parties as we go forward through this boundary process. We were discouraged that they were unable, or unwilling, to take the issue of non-contiguous constituencies out of the bill, as was asked for by the Acadian community, but I'm hoping that they stay true to their word, that they'll look at those things seriously going into the future. With those few words, I thank you very much for the opportunity.

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

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to express the position of our Party in support of this legislation, but a significant part of the context of that support at the same time, is our regret at the government's failure to amend the legislation as we had earlier proposed. To restate the position, at the Committee of the Whole, our Party proposed an amendment which would have deleted the clause of the present bill, which provides the select committee with the authority to determine, in advance of the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, the minimum and maximum number of electoral districts that the commission may consider.

That is the exact wording of the clause which our amendment would have deleted from the bill that is before us. The wording ". . . that the select committee may determine the minimum and maximum number of electoral districts that the commission may consider." Mr. Speaker, no one should underestimate the enormous difficulty of the task which is going to be before this Electoral Boundaries Commission. (Interruptions)

You'll be good enough to re-establish the floor for me, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

No one should underestimate the level of difficulty of the task that is going to be for the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Theirs is going to be the responsibility to reconcile the two principles of, on the one hand, the right of every citizen to have an equal voice in the election of their government, and on the other hand, the right of Acadians and African Nova Scotians, in the context of epic and historic struggles to have effective representation as peoples. It is truly a problem of Solomonesque proportions, one which has been grappled with by judges, governments, politicians, advocates, and citizens, often - as I have said before - without laying bare the ground or the formula for establishing the proper balance.

The potential means by which this very difficult circle can be squared are not limitless. One of those potential means by which this difficult circle can be squared is to adjust or extend the number of seats we have in Nova Scotia.

Now, the voice of the Commission on Effective Electoral Representation points in a comprehensive, across-the-board way in this direction. I think at this moment it's worth

our hearing the commission on this subject. In the commission's report chapter titled "The Demographic Challenge to Effective Representation," the commissioners write this: "Nova Scotia faces a choice: either create more seats in the legislature or have progressively fewer and larger rural ridings."

Mr. Speaker, I want to read from three or four sentences of the commission. I'm going to table them together, if that's acceptable. The commission goes on: the option of creating more constituencies "... would allow a boundaries commission greater flexibility and is consistent with other measures in support of effective representation of rural residents in general, and Acadians and African Nova Scotians in particular."

In its concluding chapter, "Advice to the Select Committee and Boundaries Commission," the commissioners formulate their thoughts this way: "The more constituencies there are, the more responsive the electoral boundary setting process can be and the less deviation is required to ensure effective representation across the province and particularly in exceptional circumstances."

Moreover, the report on effective representation makes the especially pertinent and sound point that an expansion in the number of seats in Nova Scotia would - these are the commission's words - "bring Nova Scotia closer to the Atlantic Canadian norm."

We can just briefly review the numbers about this. New Brunswick, for example which has 80 per cent of the population of Nova Scotia, has 96 per cent, or 49 of the total of the seats that we have here in Nova Scotia. Newfoundland and Labrador's population is 56 per cent of Nova Scotia's, but its Legislature has 78 per cent, that is 40 of the total, 51 here, of our seats.

As a consequence, the average number of residents per riding today in Nova Scotia, at 18,110, is significantly higher than the average number of residents per riding in the neighbouring provinces of New Brunswick, where it is 15,247, or in Newfoundland and Labrador, where it's 12,993.

Under these circumstances, why would an increase in the maximum number of seats not be one of the issues, one of the considerations that the Electoral Boundaries Commission, when it is established, would very reasonably, very naturally want to have in a paramount place, a central place, on the list of those things which they would wish to consider and to weigh? The difficulty is that the clause in this bill that we unsuccessfully proposed deleting, and which the government has insisted on maintaining, gives the select committee the authority, the power, the capacity to preclude the Electoral Boundaries Commission from making that weighing and giving effect to that consideration.

It also seems to me that a plain reading of what is being said in the January 2017 decision of the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal on this matter, the decision which is at the foundation of this whole enterprise of this legislation, would also speak against the wisdom

of the select committee being given the capacity to curtail the discretion of the Electoral Boundaries Commission in advance of the commission's work, in the way that this un-amended bill is going to allow for. So much of the overall import of the court's decision in January 2017, as I am able to understand it at least, looks in a negative way upon anything which prevents, as it is expressed in the decision itself, the commission from "performing the balance." Those are the words used. It looks in a negative way at anything that would hold the commission back from performing the balance. Then it says it looks in a negative way at anything - these are the decision's words - which keeps the commission "from expressing its authentic view of effective representation."

My point here, Mr. Speaker, isn't at all to establish the case for an expansion in the number of seats of Nova Scotia - this would be a much longer consideration of course. My point, rather, is to argue against the select committees in this situation having the authority, the capacity, or the power, before the Electoral Boundaries Commission picks up a pencil, to prevent that commission from giving, to use the court's words again, "its authentic view" of the important question of the number of seats. In our Party's opinion, it is an ill-considered thing on the government's part to extend this power to the select committee, just as it would be an ill-considered thing in a dramatic measure, should the government majority on that select committee in fact exercise this constricting and limiting power as it is provided to them in this un-amended legislation.

In closing Mr. Speaker, maybe it's useful for us for a couple seconds to think about where the word "Solomonesque" comes from. It refers to the figure in the Hebrew scriptures of King Solomon. King Solomon had to exercise political power under very difficult circumstances. When he was asked by the Creator what gifts and blessings he would wish to have bestowed on him so he would best be able to carry out this work, Solomon asked not for increased resources, not for increased power, not for increased influence but, rather, for a wise and understanding mind, which he then received.

We in the New Democratic Party wish the select committee and the Electoral Boundaries Commissions Solomon's own blessing in their work.

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

MR. BRAD JOHNS: I'll try to be very quick. I was somewhat disheartened during Law Amendments Committee to notice that although the Acadian community was well-represented - and I do recognize the history behind their interests in this process - there was no representation from the African Nova Scotian community. I know that we are looking for effective representation as we move forward. I did have an opportunity to speak with the Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs, and he has assured me that he has and will continue to reach out to the community.

As a member from our caucus, I just wanted to reiterate that today and also to encourage any MLAs from across the province who may have an African Nova Scotian

community in their constituency to ensure that they're aware of the process as well. I would just bring that.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: As my Leader has said, we are supporting this legislation, although we are disappointed that the amendments that we had put forward on behalf of the Acadian representation at Law Amendments Committee and also here in the House during Committee of the Whole House on Bills were voted down by the majority Liberal Government.

We're supporting it because we believe that it will result in more effective democratic representation for Acadians and for African Nova Scotians. We are disappointed because the Liberal Government has chosen to maintain powers for itself, through the select committee, to place limits on the Electoral Boundaries Commission by insisting the select committee should have the power to limit the number of electoral districts the Electoral Boundaries Commission can consider, it's clear that the Liberal Party wants to stay in control of what the results of the Electoral Boundaries Commission may be, even if that means all of the mechanisms for best representing African Nova Scotians and Acadians may not be explored.

[10:45 p.m.]

I'd like to take this opportunity to emphasize to the Liberals, who will hold the majority on the select committee, that I hope when the committee is doing its work that it will be guided by the principle of giving the Electoral Boundaries Commission as much independence as possible to fully explore all of the possible routes to effective representation for African Nova Scotians and our Acadian people. That is the clear message from the decision of the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal on the subject. It's a decision that we, as a caucus, very much accept and support. The clear message that decision gives is that the governing Party should not be limiting what the Electoral Boundaries Commission can consider and recommend.

The African Nova Scotian and Acadian communities have had to work so hard throughout this process. La Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse has been working especially hard, and I'd like to acknowledge their passion, their dedication, and their determination to get us to the point we are today. In particular, I would like to thank my friend, a family friend, Ron Robichaud from Truro, who is the former President of FANE and a direct descendant of one of the very first French families to arrive in Acadie over 400 years ago. I'd also like to thank the current directrice générale, Marie-Claude Rioux. I'd like to thank Ghislain Boudreau who is the current president of FANE, Norbert LeBlanc, Daniel Thériault, Brenda Pickup, and Elaine Thimot.

I truly hope that the select committee and the Electoral Boundaries Commission will make transparent decisions that reassure Acadians and African Nova Scotians that their voice will be heard. As incorporated in October 14, 1968, la fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse was established especially in order to promote the overall development of Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone communities in collaboration with its members, which are made up of regional, provincial, and institutional French language organizations. In fact, we have a wonderful francophone centre in Truro and l'École acadienne de Truro, which is the fastest, most rapidly growing Acadian French-speaking school in the province.

The Fédération acadienne brings together 28 regional, sectoral, and client-based organizations that seek to work to advance the Fédération acadienne's mission.

French-speaking Acadians have been living on this land for several centuries now, even before the creation of the Province of Nova Scotia. Before the Treaty of Utrecht the Acadian people were prosperous and concentrated on the territory of Acadie that would later become Nova Scotia. We are proud in my family, Mr. Speaker, to have my young sister, who was the first born in this country after we moved here from Australia. We named her Evangeline as her middle name because we fell in love with the story of the Acadians, and we felt so strongly about their plight.

As Irish Catholics ourselves, who had been persecuted in Ireland in our own home country and many of whom were forced out of that country by either the potato famine or for fighting for their independence for an independent Ireland, the Fenian Risings of 1867. My family were also sent away from their home. They were sent away on prison ships, convict ships, to Australia which is where the British worked them very hard, were very cruel and to this day there is a distinct distaste for the Poms, as the Australians like to call them. When you come from a convict background, as we do, there is also the sense of being displaced, being sent away from your home, and having to start a new life in a new country, and you carry with it the love of your homeland. Many of us in Australia never get to go to that old homeland, but in fact, I did manage to get there at one point in time, and it was a very emotional thing.

So, we as a family, personally understand how it must feel for the Acadians who were deported by the British. Unfortunately, the deportations that took place between 1755 and 1763 radically and negatively changed the face of Acadian society, considerably reducing the Acadian presence in the Maritimes, and in Nova Scotia, by dispersing them against their will.

Of the roughly 13,000 Acadians living in Nova Scotia before the deportation, only 2,300 remained in what would become the Maritime Provinces after the hostilities ended. With the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, Acadians received permission to settle in Nova Scotia, but on the condition that they take an oath of allegiance and that they spread themselves out in small groups to avoid too large a concentration of Catholic Acadians that could constitute a threat to the British.

Acadians maintained, with reason, a fear of a new deportation and they withdrew within their communities, avoiding most contact with the British authorities. Moreover, this fear of government authorities was confirmed following the royal proclamation adopted by George III in 1763, whereby the Acadians were subject to new regulations. Common law replaced the French civil code, and no Catholic could aspire to public office without renouncing their faith through the test oath. The test oath was only abolished in 1827 following a passionate plea by Thomas Chandler Haliburton to allow Catholics in general, and Acadians in particular, to participate in the political process.

In a famous speech at the Legislature, Haliburton stressed the following: “every man has a right to participate in the civil government of that country of which he was a member without the imposition of any test oath . . .” After all, who created the Magna Carta? Who established judges, trial by jury, magistrates, sheriffs, et cetera – Catholics?”

It took another 10 years - 82 years after the beginning of the deportations - to see the first Acadian MLAs elected. Simon d'Entremont of Pubnico and Frederic Armand Robichaud - related to the Robichauds of Meteghan, Clare - were the first Acadians elected in the Maritimes from 1837. Unfortunately, Acadian representation in Argyle would be short-lived, due the changes made to electoral boundaries. Nowadays, the forced dispersion following the Treaty of Paris remains evident, as can be seen in the Acadian communities of Chéticamp, Isle Madame, Baie Sainte-Marie, Par-en-Bas and Pomquet - created by the families of Canadian survivors after the deportation. Due to this dispersion, Acadians in Nova Scotia have never been able to benefit from the political weight needed to elect sufficient Acadian representation in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the recognition by the Acadian and francophone community by the provincial government, allows Nova Scotia's Acadians to hold their heads up again - to rekindle their pride and their sense of belonging in their Acadian community and to feel that they're an integral part of the province.

For people used to kowtowing and not rocking the boat for fear of disturbing the sleeping giant, and not speaking French in public to avoid bullying or losing a coveted job, the French Language Services Act was passed, which allowed Acadians to partly regain the confidence to be able to ask for services in French without fearing any negative consequences, as evidenced by the growing number of Acadians and francophones asking for services in their mother tongue. That is why la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse has so fiercely and determinately fought to make sure that the efforts and sacrifices over the past centuries - as well as the results achieved after long struggles - will be protected by proper electoral constituencies.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to finish with saying the Electoral Boundaries Commission will have a lot of work to do following up on the work of the Commission on Effective Electoral Representation of Acadian and African Nova Scotians. At the time of the Effective Representation report, elected school boards still existed. Well, the

importance of those school boards, and the designated seats for African Nova Scotians, came up again and again in the Effective Representation report. Now that the English-speaking boards have been eliminated, the context has changed, and African Nova Scotians have lost important opportunities for electoral participation and representation. The Electoral Boundaries Commission should keep this in mind.

Much of what the Commission on Effective Electoral Representation heard from members of the African Nova Scotian community also focused on an interest in reserved seats for African Nova Scotian representation in the House of Assembly. However, ultimately, the Commission on Effective Electoral Representation recommended against the use of reserved seats. So, the Electoral Boundaries Commission will need to grapple particularly deeply with how to ensure African Nova Scotians have effective electoral voices, and make special efforts to ensure that African Nova Scotian communities are also able to easily participate in that process.

I look forward to seeing the work of the select committee and the Electoral Boundaries Commission with the understanding that their work will be guided first and foremost by listening carefully to the Acadian and African Nova Scotian communities, and by making sure that their interests are reflected in the final recommendations. Thank you. Merci.

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

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate what my own colleagues have said about us supporting this bill, and I'm going to appeal to the current Minister of Justice that he not interfere with the process as the last time the process was done. There was interference by the current minister of the day, who happened to be a New Democratic Party member, and it's a shame that that member didn't have that speech four years ago, and we wouldn't be sitting here today having this mess.

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

MS. ALANA PAON: It seems I'm standing, Mr. Speaker, to speak to this bill. I'm not going to make it long. It's been a long day. Mais, je veux seulement dire, Monsieur le Président, que aujourd'hui ça marque le 35^e anniversaire de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés. What a day, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the 35th Anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I haven't yet heard that stated in the House. I thought I might mention that. We're pretty busy with everything else today. The Charter protects a number of rights and freedoms, including the freedom of equality.

La Charte protégé un nombre de droits à l'égalité and I particularly appreciate that, as I am, obviously, a woman, but also, as many people may not know, and it surprises me all the time that there are some people within my own constituency - my constituency is very large now - that they don't realize que moi, Monsieur le Président, je suis acadienne

aussi. I speak French. French was my mother tongue before I started school, and I continue to speak French at home avec ma mère, you know, cette semaine si j'étais à la maison comme on dit à Richmond - c'est pas maison, c'est maisongue.

There's these subtle nuances that, unless you're an Acadian from one of the four different regions, as was pointed out in Law Amendments Committee, you wouldn't understand some of the small, cultural nuances but I do understand them, Mr. Speaker, because I am an Acadian, and I am from Richmond. It's Cape Breton-Richmond now, but it has been Richmond in Richmond County my whole life. I'm from Isle Madame.

I wanted to make mention that, although we're going through this process of looking at reviewing the boundaries, and obviously it's a process that happens every 10 years or so, even though I am an Acadian, I find it ironic that this broad-minded, outspoken kind of "tell it like it is, shoot from the hip" woman - an Acadian no less - won her seat even though the boundaries were changed. I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that within my constituency even though it's extremely important that, obviously, Acadians are represented, and that we are protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, that an Acadian, and a woman no less, was able to actually win the constituency of Cape Breton-Richmond.

[11:00 p.m.]

I would also like to point out that the two Acadians who do sit in this House belong to this Party and I am very proud of that, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of that. (Interruption) Sorry I didn't realize that, so there's another member in the NDP caucus who is Acadian too. Thank you for pointing that out. (Interruption) Okay he's not. He is. He's not - well, okay nevertheless.

I would like to say this, that as we go through this process and having been obviously just newly elected to this House, I also want to make certain that I encourage the voices of all Nova Scotians to come forward in this process because this boundaries review affects all Nova Scotians no matter what your cultural background is. In my constituency there are Irish, there are Gaelic, there are British, there are German, and I can go through a ream of my own historical background of being here since 1642 as well, Mr. Speaker, but I won't go and belabour those details.

My main message here is that I want to encourage, especially those people within my own constituency, which currently is Cape Breton-Richmond, to please come out and make your voice heard in this process, no matter what cultural background you come from, because we need to hear from everyone. We do need to hear from everyone because it affects everyone in Nova Scotia. It really does, Mr. Speaker.

With those few words, I will take my seat and I thank you for this opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak very briefly to the really commendable work of the Commission on Effective Electoral Representation and to their report, which I found when I had the chance to review it, and I'm not sure actually that I got all the way to the end, I found very instructive and very useful for understanding the context in which we are doing our work here as representatives in the provincial Government of Nova Scotia.

Many of the things that are spoken about in that report are quite a bit broader than this very specific task of studying the electoral boundaries. I think it would be a shame if we moved on from this point and considered this select committee and the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission to be the only channel through which that report can benefit us and inform us. There's quite a lot of good work in there which actually should be carried out by our political Parties. It should be carried out by all of us as we encourage people to consider applying to agencies, boards and commissions.

I can see that some of that work has actually been taken up by the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act, and by the Office of the Status of Women, through the campaign school and the particular focus on encouraging diversity in the campaign school that is coming up in May. That's wonderful, but I think the best thing that could come out of having members from all Parties on the select committee is that hopefully each Party then ends up with a couple of champions who are actually familiar with that report, and familiar with the recommendations that they can take away, and make sure that we don't just let good work lay on a shelf.

So, thank you very much, that's all I wanted to contribute to the debate tonight.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: I recently had the opportunity to spend some time with the Robichauds who were originally from Meteghan. I have to say, I don't think they would be terribly impressed to hear a member of the NDP standing in this House quoting their family history. I dined with some Thibaults in Church Point, and I think they would be particularly surprised to see a member of the NDP trying to claim the moral high ground on this issue.

I couldn't just let it pass by, in honour of my discussions with them, knowing how strongly they feel about this particular issue and what happened to them under the NDP Government. I think they would find it a bit rich to hear some of the comments from the NDP tonight. I wanted to put that out, that we are thinking of them at this time.

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

MR. SPEAKER: If I recognize the Government House Leader, it will be to close the debate.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I do want to thank all the contributors on Bill No. 99 this evening. I will be very brief. I just want to mention a few things just for context, and then I will leave it at that.

Working backwards quickly, the member for Halifax Needham and the member for Cape Breton-Richmond made two very good points that I think we all have to remember in the broader context.

Number one, of the Keefe report, only seven recommendations are directly connected to legislation. The balance of the 29 is about broader things that we can do as government, as departments, as members, as communities, and as political Parties. That's important to remember, and I think that is good to have on the record.

Second, to the member for Cape Breton-Richmond, this is about everybody. We get lost and, of course, effective electoral representation focuses on Acadian and African Nova Scotian communities and how those communities across the province are impacted. When the ridings are shifted and adjusted, it affects a great many of us most times. In this particular instance, it will have a great impact on probably all of our constituencies, if not most.

These are two very good, overarching things to keep in mind.

I want to make quick reference to the two amendments respectively made by the PCs and the NDP. The PCs amendments are around non-contiguous ridings. The House Leader for the PC Party - we have had a number of discussions on this, and I know where FANE landed with this. We get it, and we understand what the balance of the challenge is for FANE, and some of their concern is about how this impacts what they see as formerly protected ridings.

Certainly, that argument is legitimate. But again, the whole focal point of the court challenge, the result of this, the effective representation commission that came to these 29 recommendations, the reason we are here with the MLA select committee and the final commission, which will ultimately make these decisions on behalf of Nova Scotians - this is about not getting involved and not tinkering and not changing anything.

Recommendation No. 6 clearly states that non-contiguous ridings should be considered. The Keefe report, quite frankly, did not go as far as recommending them. They just said that, for context and to fully consider the independence of the commission, this should be a tool that they have. Should they use it? That's up to them. That's the reason

why we left this in. It is important to address that. I do appreciate where the member for Argyle-Barrington came from and the representation on that one.

I would also say, for the member for Sackville-Beaver Bank, that the African Nova Scotian community was very well represented in all of these discussions the whole way through, from the Keefe report, the representation there, and the committee and the conversations that we had leading up to this legislation. The stakeholders from the African Nova Scotian groups that came forward were very well represented, and the minister certainly was there every step of the way with us. We can assure you that African Nova Scotians will see themselves in this legislation and in the final commission when the work is done.

Quickly, with respect to the NDP amendment, it became about the number of ridings. Should the MLA select committee have the power to select what the range would be - ceiling and floor? In my personal opinion, and I think the members of the government committee who will be part of the select committee feel that it isn't our place. Without prejudging the entire work of the MLA select committee, I don't think that is our decision. I think that should be the commission's. There's no doubt about it.

When you look at Recommendation No. 7 of the Keefe report, they talk about the status quo of 51. The members suggested that you could also pick a ceiling such as 54. Even in the recommendations, they use the number without any sort of rationale or discussion as to why it was 54. It was just used as an example.

As I said many times, and I mentioned on second reading, I don't know how any select committee MLAs would ever decide what the ceiling should be. How do we ever decide what that top number should be? We know the bottom is 51 - we're not going to reduce the number of seats in the province - but how do we get to that higher number? I don't think we have the ability. There's no jurisdictional scan that will give us that number. Again, we should leave that to the commission. I think that's where we landed.

Having said that, though, and in reflection of that recommendation - and the legal folks who helped us craft this legislation agreed - maybe a number of years from now, when this comes up again, in a decade or sooner, it will be a different context for the MLA select committee. Maybe they will decide at that point that there is a way to identify the number, based on what we do here in this commission. If the number jumps up, maybe they'll decide that it should stay, that it should be in a different range. So that shouldn't be for us in 2018 to decide. We should leave that in there as the MLA select committee.

I can certainly assure the members that we're not going to try to identify that number on the government side. I think the Opposition will land in the same place. But we don't want to limit that for the next committee. Again, we believe that's in line with the recommendation that came forward.

The Leader of the NDP suggested that the work of the commission is enormous. I couldn't agree more. I think we all very much agree with this. Again, this will affect every riding. It will affect all of us, so let's let them do their work. Let's ensure that we make good decisions on what that commission looks like, but then we let them do their work.

Again, I think that the important message here is that all Nova Scotians have to be encouraged to go out and share their views. Whether it be metro in the representation on the peninsula and in metro Halifax, whether it be the non-contiguous ridings and what that looks like, what happens with the minority seats with respect to African Nova Scotians and with respect to Acadians and with respect to other groups that want to come forward, it's critically important for all MLAs to encourage their community members to come out and speak to this commission. The more data, the more information, the more breadth and depth they have, the better the work will be and the better their final outcome.

It is all important, without question, and again, we have to make sure that we get this right. That's at the focal point of this.

I do want to thank, from the government side and from all members of the Legislature, the work that was done by the Acadian and African Nova Scotian stakeholders and representatives here. They did tremendous work. (Applause) I know that the impact for them has been felt in the past and it will be felt in the future. We just want to pick up the pieces and make sure that this structure and this system work moving forward. Again, the quote that the Premier uses so often, we want African Nova Scotian and Acadians to see themselves in this province and all Nova Scotians to be reflective of what Nova Scotia is. That's important.

I do also want to thank Doug Keefe, Sharon Davis-Murdoch, and Kenneth Deveau for their tremendous work with the commission. They set the tone here. They didn't go in with any prejudgment around what it would look like or where they should land. They are just good Nova Scotians who are dedicated to making sure they gave the commission and the select committee a foundation to do their work and make sure that our boundaries are reflective of what Nova Scotia should be for the next election and the next decade - critical work that they are going to have to do.

Finally, I do want to mention the MLA select committee itself. We talked about the preconceived notions of what we want to see or what we don't want to see. That doesn't exist here. I can say that from the beginning, the Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie and the Minister of African Nova Scotia Affairs have been working very closely with us. The House Leaders, my colleagues, have done tremendous work in setting the tone.

We've identified the select committee that will take place and are very proud of all members on all sides of the House. We've got tremendous people and tremendous representatives from this Legislature who will sit down together and make the best

decisions on behalf of Nova Scotians. This isn't going to be a fight. It's not going to be a battle. We're never going to have to worry about what is unanimous and what isn't. We're going to figure this out as human beings and we're going to come out of this united. That's the most important part of this.

At the end of the day, this is about achieving effective electoral representation. I believe this legislation gets us there and the human beings who are going to drive these decisions and this final outcome, I think, will get it right. With that, I would like to close debate on Bill No. 99.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 99. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

[11:15 p.m.]

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, That concludes government business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, Wednesday, April 18, 2018 between 1:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.

With tomorrow being Opposition Day, I ask the House Leader of the Official Opposition to provide tomorrow's agenda.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Tomorrow, after the daily routine and Question Period, we're going to be calling Bill No. 122, which is the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; and Bill No. 123, supporting people with disabilities. That's all we're going to call.

With that, I move that you now do rise to meet again between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to rise to meet again tomorrow Wednesday, April 18th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

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

[The House rose at 11:16 p.m.]