



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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

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

Second Session

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2018

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2018

Sixty-third General Assembly

Second Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, Mr. Brendan Maguire

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: Just to close a loop on the petition presented yesterday by the honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank, I have reviewed the prayer and confirmed that it does contain the proper information, so the petition as submitted yesterday by the honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 119

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

Whereas this Sunday, September 16th, Nova Scotians across the province will take part in the annual Terry Fox Run; and

Whereas this event commemorates the incredible accomplishments of Mr. Fox, who ran 5,373 kilometres across six provinces to raise money for cancer research; and

Whereas Mr. Fox's legacy and dream to raise funds and awareness continues today, with over \$715 million raised in his name to support cancer research;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize Terry Fox Run Day as a day to honour those who have battled cancer and strive to make a difference.

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 Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 120

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

Whereas the Fraser's Mills Fish Hatchery in Antigonish County was commissioned in 1928 and has been in continuous operation for 90 years; and

Whereas this hatchery sustains the province's stocking program, providing nearly two million speckled trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, and Atlantic salmon in 400 lakes and streams across Nova Scotia; and

Whereas exceptional leadership has been provided by managers Murray Hill, Don MacLean, Darren Murrant and, currently, Stephen Thibodeau for operations, awareness, education, and research since the province assumed ownership in 1982;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate the management and staff of Fraser's Mills Fish Hatchery for their important contributions to Nova Scotia's sport fishery, on the occasion of their 90th anniversary.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 121

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

Whereas sickle cell disease is an inherited blood condition which affects approximately 5,000 Canadians and is a disease that primarily impacts persons of African descent; and

Whereas the Sickle Cell Disease Association of Nova Scotia is a non-profit organization that raises public awareness and support to Nova Scotians diagnosed with sickle cell disease, along with their friends and families; and

Whereas recognizing the month of September as Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Month provides an opportunity to promote increased awareness, education, and understanding for those who are affected by the disease and living with the disease;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House please join me in recognizing the month of September as Sickle Cell Awareness Month in the Province of Nova Scotia and break the silence of Nova Scotians living with this disease across the province.

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.

RESOLUTION NO. 122

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

Whereas there are 137 types of blood cancers and related disorders affecting Canadians across this country; and

Whereas organizations like the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Canada have facilitated much-needed research and advocacy, helping create programs and deliver services to support those affected by blood cancers; and

Whereas September is Blood Cancer Awareness Month which aims to spread awareness, support the discovery of cures, and improve the lives of thousands of patients and their families;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House acknowledge September as Blood Cancer Awareness Month.

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 Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 123

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

Whereas this Sunday the Polish Emigration Memorial Society and Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland for the Maritime Provinces, Mr. Jan Skora, will unveil the Polish Emigration Memorial Monument at Pier 21; and

Whereas the monument honours the immigrants from Polish lands who have contributed to the creation and development of Canada for over 300 years, and is especially significant given that 2018 marks 100 years since Poland regained its independence following the First World War; and

Whereas the monument is composed of two large natural rocks, a base of rough bluish local granite to symbolize Nova Scotia, with Polish sandstone set on top, and is adorned with a stainless-steel eagle, made by local artisans, which has a double meaning as the bird features on the Polish crest and pays tribute to the significance of the eagle for the Mi'kmaq people;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Consul Skora and his team on this significant project, and thank the generous donors from Polish communities across Canada who made this monument a reality.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

RESOLUTION NO. 124

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

Whereas on September 13, 2018, a second Deputy Speaker was elected by this House;

Therefore be it resolved that

- (a) The honourable member for Lunenburg be the Deputy Speaker within the meaning of subsection 3(2) of the House of Assembly Management Commission Act and subsection 14(3) of the House of Assembly Act; and
- (b) The annual salary of the Deputy Speaker, established pursuant to the House of Assembly Act, be divided equally between the two Chairmen of Committees and Deputy Speakers.

[9:15 a.m.]

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 of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I request permission to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. FUREY: Joining us here today in the east gallery are two former colleagues, Staff Sgt. Steve MacQueen from the Lunenburg County district detachment and Constable Gord Giffin, also working under the Lunenburg County district detachment.

I ask my colleagues here in the House to bring them a warm welcome. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 32 - Entitled an Act Respecting the Control of Body Armour. (Hon. Mark Furey)

Bill No. 33 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 41 of the Acts of 2010. The Personal Health Information Act. (Hon. Christopher d'Entremont)

Bill No. 34 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 34 of the Acts of 2001. The Lobbyists' Registration Act. (Hon. David Wilson)

Bill No. 35 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 441 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Statistics Act. (Ms. Claudia Chender)

Bill No. 36 - Entitled an Act Respecting Police Street Checks. (Ms. Claudia Chender)

Bill No. 37 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 300 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Municipal Elections Act. (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.

MACLEOD, JOHNNY: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Johnny MacLeod of Toney River, who recently retired from his employment at the Shiretown Nursing Home in Pictou after 40 years of dutiful and friendly service. A surprise party was held in Johnny's honour and attended by staff and friends.

Throughout the years, Johnny performed custodial duties but expanded to running errands and keeping track of inventory. He is most well-known for the love of his job; his positive attitude, which lifted the spirits of all the staff and residents; and for being complimentary to everyone he came across at the facility.

Johnny and his constant smile will be missed by all at the Shiretown Nursing Home, and I wish the best for him with his retirement.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. ROBERTS: In the west gallery, we are joined by my constituent Andre Fenton. I'm going to ask him to stand while I read my member's statement.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

FENTON, ANDRE: BOOK, *WORTHY OF LOVE* - CONGRATS.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: I rise to congratulate constituent Andre Fenton. His second book - but his first young adult novel - is on shelves and I encourage all members to buy it and give it, especially to young people. *Worthy of Love* is published by Nimbus and tells the story of a young mixed-race man who struggles with poor self-image.

Andre Fenton is already an award-winning spoken word artist who has performed across Canada. He was featured in the movie *Black Cop*, performing on the steps of Province House. He is also a two-time NSCC graduate in screen arts and social services, and is a frequent invited speaker to groups both young and old. He is also a really funny and sweet and insightful person, and I'm glad to know him. Oh, and he's only 23.

I look forward to dropping by his book launch for *Worthy of Love* at the Bus Stop Theatre on September 25th, but I bought my copy yesterday and I'm already halfway through. Please join me in congratulating author Andre Fenton on the publication of *Worthy of Love*. (Standing Ovation)

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

SHOPS: NEW FACILITY - CONGRATS.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, after many years of fundraising, planning, and hard work, the Sherbrooke Opportunities Society day program has happily opened its doors in the St. Mary's Education Centre/Academy. Program manager Lyndsay Keith is now able to offer a productive learning environment for developmentally disabled clients in a new kitchen and open-concept workspace.

The mission of SHOPS is to offer work programs that help strengthen the physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being of each client. With this new location, they will now be able to receive training and useful life skills that will further their quality of life and enhance their self-esteem.

I want to extend a heartfelt congratulations to Ms. Keith, her team, and her volunteers on the opening of this new facility and wish them much success in their vision of providing new opportunities and lasting dignity to those who face special challenges.

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

RAFTUS, MANDY: SENIORS' LUNCH - THANKS

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Today I rise to acknowledge a good friend, Mandy Raftus, and her dedication to the seniors' lunch held each week in the community of Eastern Passage.

In addition to dozens of other fundraisers she does for the people of our community, Mandy provides a weekly lunch for seniors and their guests in the church hall at St. Peter's Anglican Church. The event provides seniors with a wholesome lunch and a wonderful chance to socialize with others in our area. Each week, the group of 10-20 seniors have come to rely on Mandy's service and are very grateful for it. The seniors' lunch is held all year round and continues to grow each year.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking Mandy for her compassion and kindness and for offering something so meaningful to those in our Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage community. We owe her a great debt of thanks.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

SEA DOME: MMA - CONGRATS.

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Over the summer, I was pleased to stop by the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic to experience the Sea Dome firsthand. Thanks to two grants from the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, the Sea Dome was able to deliver its 2018 season and move forward with market development activities.

I had the pleasure of meeting with Fiona Diamond of Armdale to learn more about the great programming that the Sea Dome offers, including this year's full-dome cinematic experiences, *A Whale Story* and *Bluenose The Legend*. Fiona and her husband, Brookes Diamond, are the driving force behind KA'NATA Productions and Brookes Diamond Productions, and are recognized as top producers and promoters in the local entertainment and music industries.

With decades of experience and an established partnership with Tourism Nova Scotia, their hard work is bringing the stories of the ocean to life for tourists and locals alike. I want to congratulate Fiona and Brookes Diamond on their success, and encourage all members to visit the museum before October 13th to experience the Sea Dome.

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

FRICKER, EMILY: FILMMAKER - CONGRATS.

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a young woman's passion for film, which led her to a career in filmmaking - Emily Fricker from Neils Harbour.

During university, she discovered an interest in filmmaking and enrolled in the Nova Scotia Community College's two-year screen arts program.

In 2016 Emily's film, *The Bench*, made it to the 2016 Atlantic Film Festival. Emily was noticed when her documentary entitled *Neils Harbour: A Day Down Home*, aired at several international film festivals.

On July 16th, community members gathered at the North Island Community Culture Centre for the debut of Emily's latest film *Lobster Sandwiches*, which explored her grandfather's lifelong love of fishing. She donated all the proceed from the event to the museum.

I rise today to ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Emily Fricker on her success and to thank her for donating back to her community.

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

COLE HBR.: COM. SPIRIT AWARD - THANKS

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate Cole Harbour. Our community has been celebrating community spirit, diversity, residents, and businesses since 2007 at the Cole Harbour Harvest Festival.

On September 8th, we took part in this great local festival once again, but the celebration this year was extra special. Every day we have community champions, organizations and businesses, and many others who do great work in our community. This year Connexions collaborated with over 15 such partners from our community to write the application for the Lieutenant Governor's Community Spirit Award.

I am proud to share that Cole Harbour was one of four communities across Nova Scotia to receive the Community Spirit Award. This awards ceremony took place in collaboration with the Cole Harbour Festival in order to share this great achievement with as many residents as possible.

I wish to thank the community partners and Community Connexions Network Nova Scotia for bringing everyone together and for writing this application essay.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

TRENTON STEELTOWN CENTENNIAL PARK: OUTDOOR ATTR. - RECOG.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, many hidden gems are located in our beautiful province. One of these treasures is the Trenton Steeltown Centennial Park. This popular park is located on the northeast edge of the town. The park offers a large number of walking trails within the 560-acre site, making it by far the largest public green space in Pictou County. Local residents use the park each day to socialize and engage in a healthy lifestyle.

Trenton Park offers many attractions such as the outdoor swimming pool, amphitheatre, fishing ponds, cross-country skiing, fishing, and a feeling of tranquility. The committee of citizens from Pictou County, known as the Hemlock Group, have been preparing for a major development of this truly amazing area. Pictou County will be looking forward to additional opportunities at Trenton Steeltown Centennial Park.

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

WILLIAMS, CELESTE: INTL. MUSICAL ACHIEVEMENTS - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the achievement of Celeste Williams, a young musical prodigy who was raised in Hubley before going on to achieve international fame as a concert soloist and concert master. She performs on both the violin and viola.

Celeste was welcomed into the studio at Dalhousie University at the age of six and two years later made her solo debut with the Symphony Orchestra. She studied under a scholarship at Mozarteum University in Salzburg, Austria, and completed both bachelor's and master's degrees with highest distinction.

While still in her 20s, Celeste has now performed in 16 countries, in North America, Europe, and Asia, often as a soloist with major symphony orchestras. She became the youngest-ever concert master of the World Youth Orchestra. She has been featured on radio and television channels in Canada, Austria, Hong Kong, and the Czech Republic.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in recognizing the work and achievements of Celeste Williams not only for her exceptional achievements but also for bringing international distinction to Nova Scotia and to Canada.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

RILEY, PAT: COM. LDR. - THANKS

MR. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Pat Riley, a music instructor at Long & McQuade in Dartmouth East and a community leader. Long & McQuade Summer Rock is a music camp that allows youth from across HRM to develop skills and play music together. Successful Summer Rock students include Joel Plaskett and Matt Mays.

As the camp enters its 34th year, Pat enters his 33rd year as camp director and long-time instructor. Pat is also a dedicated athlete and positive community member. Pat continues to play hockey and soccer, as well as having coached soccer for 31 years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join me in thanking Pat for being a role model for aspiring musicians and a great community leader.

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

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the members to our three guests with us this morning in the west gallery: Robin Smith, Joy Shand, and Paige Black. Paige is no newcomer here, having been a Page in the House. Robin Smith and Joy Shand are the co-chairs of the Nova Scotia Young New Democrats. I ask all members to give them a warm hand. (Applause)

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

FRACKING: COM. DEBATE - UPCOMING

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, last night in Pugwash, a group of citizens led by Gerard Lucyshyn, VP at the Calgary-based Frontier Centre for Public Policy, hosted a rational debate on the merits of fracking, supposedly. Arguing against was retired Dalhousie University economics professor, Michael Bradfield. Retired judge Elizabeth Roscoe was called to be the moderator.

The debate began at 7:00 p.m. at the Northumberland Curling Club and we will be hoping that we hear from that event that fracking is not welcome in Nova Scotia and that the government is not considering introducing it to our beautiful province.

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

JOS. HOWE SUPERSTORE: COM. FUNDRAISING - THANKS

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the efforts of the Joseph Howe Superstore, which recently raised nearly \$6,000 for PC Children's Charities. The Joe Howe Superstore has been a great community hub in the Halifax area for over 25 years. The staff at the store continuously put on events to give back to our community.

This past June, the store hosted a fundraiser barbecue, which included a lot of food, live music and face-painting as part of their Eat Together campaign. Proceeds of this fundraiser went to the March of Dimes Canada and their conductive education and recreation camp. This organization helps people of all ages with physical disabilities and rehabilitation, as well as advocating for equality.

Throughout the day, various staff members also visited Joseph Howe School where they handed out fruit, cereal, and juice to the children for breakfast and snacks.

Atlantic Superstore continues to show their dedication to giving back to their local community, which is something that is greatly appreciated in our Fairview-Clayton Park community.

I ask the members of this House of Assembly to join me in recognizing the hard work of the Joseph Howe Superstore and thanking them for all their efforts on such a wonderful cause.

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

STAND UP AGAINST BULLYING DAY: CONTINUING RESULTS - RECOG.

MR. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, yesterday was Stand Up Against Bullying Day. As was stated yesterday, in 2007, Grade 12 students Travis Price and David Shepherd observed a young student being bullied simply for wearing a pink shirt on his first day at school. The two Central King Rural High School students then brought and distributed 50 pink shirts for fellow students.

This anti-bullying initiative struck a chord with many and today, 11 years later, students and staff in schools throughout the country wear pink on the second Thursday of September.

In 2012, Mr. Price noted that it may take a long time to put an end to bullying, but he was doing all he could do to combat it. Unfortunately, Mr. Price's statement was right and bullying still exists six years later. However, as demonstrated by the number of members in this Legislature wearing pink yesterday, he is also right that we are still making a difference and so we are still making progress.

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

CAHILL, SABLE: TURNING POINTS WRITING CONTEST - CONGRATS.

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to congratulate Sable Cahill from George P. Vanier Junior High School in Fall River. Sable won first place in the Turning Points writing contest where she was up against 400 other students from schools across Nova Scotia.

Turning Points is an impactful program promoting character awareness, resilience and literacy among Canadian students through written expression. This program enables students to open up about significant events or experiences in their lives. Sable wrote her essay on a very personal story and how it changed her life.

Mr. Speaker, I ask members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Sable on winning first place in Turning Point writing contest.

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

MACLEAN, KELSIE: CREW, ATLANTIC WILLOW - RECOG.

HON. ALFIE MACLOED: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Kelsie MacLean who works on the tugboat, *Atlantic Willow*. The tugboat has an all-female crew that work the bridge, the engine room, and the deck as it chugs and tugs around Halifax Harbour and beyond.

Kelsie MacLean grew up in Marion Bridge, on the Mira River. Her grandfather is a fisherman out of Gabarus and she remembers her great-grandfather had his whole living room filled with model ships. Having studied at the Nautical Institute in Port Hawkesbury, she monitors in the engine room of the 95-foot *Atlantic Willow*. Three women work and live aboard the *Atlantic Willow*.

I stand here today to congratulate Kelsie MacLean for choosing the career she so wanted, and wish her the best of luck in her future endeavours.

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

JESSOME, RODDY/CARMEL: 60TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

MR. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, after taking the bus to visit Mary Carmel Hickey in Glace Bay for the first time, Roderick Jessome received a blunt, unamused indication from Nanie Hickey that he should consider when the next bus departing for Sydney Pier would leave.

Later, borrowing his brother's stylish new car, Roddy returned to the home and invited his bride-to-be and her grandmother to go for ice cream. Nanie Hickey, a diabetic who was not supposed to have sweets, seemed to change her tune, was quick to befriend Roddy and enquired about when he would visit next.

Having lived in cities all over the nation making their lives together, parenting four wonderful children, and proudly supporting 12 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, Roddy and Carmel celebrate 60 years of marriage this week.

I ask all members of the House to join me in wishing Nana and Grandpa a happy 60th wedding anniversary.

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

NICKERSON, WALTER: INTL. DORY RACING - CONGRATS.

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize a Shelburne County resident for his outstanding achievements in dory racing. On August 18th, Walter Nickerson and his partner, Willie Wells, won the men's category of the Over 50 Division of the Lunenburg 66th Annual International Dory Races. The win marked his 16th championship.

Dory racing is obviously a physically demanding sport and it is not for the faint of heart. The fact that Walter won in over 50 categories is a testament to his character.

On September 17th, the Town of Lockeport and the Municipality of Shelburne will host a celebration at the Lockeport Recreation Centre to formally recognize Walter's accomplishments.

I ask all members of this House to join with me in saluting Walter's remarkable career, bringing pride and recognition to our country, province, and the residents of Queens-Shelburne.

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

NEW ROSS FAM. RES. CTR.: NEW DAYCARE - CONGRATS.

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the New Ross Family Resource Centre on the grand opening of their new daycare facility, which took place this past Tuesday, the 4th of September.

The new daycare is licensed to provide care for 12 children from 18 months until school age. It will provide three full-time jobs in this dynamic rural community to meet the

needs of the working parents, many of whom commute to employment locations outside of the community.

The daycare centre will be open from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. The province, the Municipality of Chester, and the Government of Canada helped provide the financial resources for this new opportunity to serve the community.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the New Ross Family Resource Centre on the opening of this new daycare facility, and to wish them well in this new endeavour.

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

INDIAN BEACH COM. SOC.: MAJOR REFIT - CONGRATS.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the Indian Beach Community Society that recently completely a major refit of Indian Beach. Improvements include a new septic system, drainage systems, storage building, paving, parking lot upgrades, signage, and landscaping. Attention was given to an accessible gazebo, accessible playground equipment, and a special mat that will allow access to the beach and shoreline to people with disabilities.

I'd like to take this opportunity to applaud the volunteers of the Indian Beach Community Society and their partners for this wonderful transformation.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

LIFE.SCHOOL.HOUSE: COM. SERV. - COMMEND

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, Life.School.House is on unceded Mi'kmaq territory in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia in a house owned by Jennifer Brenton DeCoste and Scott DeCoste but is one that belongs to, and welcomes, the community.

All kinds of Nova Scotians come through the front door of the DeCoste family home to teach and learn everything from leather bookbinding to basic carpentry skills, taught for free by community members from all across HRM. It answers a number of thorny questions coming from the community, including how to create meaningful connections for newcomers to Canada, and also for those who have lived here for years and have never even met their neighbours.

With crowd-sourced funding, the DeCoste family organizes free classes and provides free use of their family home to build community. This is a part of their family's personal commitment to reconciliation in Canada. Balancing the gifts of shelter and protection for their family with the responsibility to the land and all who share it.

At Life.School.House, facilitators from the community bring their knowledge and expertise and exchange it for bartered goods such as home-made food, plants, crafts, and more. Bartering breaks down the financial barriers many people face when trying to access education. In simple exchange, neighbours meet, share time and tea, connect and learn from each other, in a simple but meaningful way.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

CLARK, DEBBIE: HERRING COVE SOCCER CLUB - THANKS

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the summer, as it has been for countless summers beforehand, the field at Herring Cove Junior High was packed with children, parents, and volunteers for the Herring Cove Sharks Soccer Club. The field was full of the sound of hundreds of children laughing, yelling, and having fun.

None of this is possible without Debbie Clark and her volunteers. A big thank you to Debbie and her volunteers and one of those children just happens to be my beautiful little daughter, Rufina. To Debbie and all her caring, wonderful volunteers, I want to thank you for creating a wonderful summer experience for hundreds of our local youth.

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

ST. PETER'S VILLAGE COMM.: WALL OF ART - THANKS

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, local artists of all ages in the St. Peter's area have a new way to display and sell their art to the public. On June 12th, the Village of St. Peter's hosted an official unveiling celebration for its Wall of Art at the St. Peter's Village Commission office on Denys Street.

Participating artists who have their work on display have the option to sell their pieces. In the early days of the project, 14 pieces of art had been sold and ongoing sales have been happening all summer. All proceeds go directly to the artists.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to offer a sincere thank you to the Village of St. Peter's Commission and wish continued success to all artists involved in the Wall of Art project.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

TAKE ACTION SOC.: EXPANDED COM. SERV. - RECOG.

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, with the school year beginning and with many working parents scrambling to find before- and after-school care for their children, I

want to bring the attention of the House to the incredible work of the Take Action Society of Dartmouth North.

Take Action was formed by a group of Dartmouth North mothers who saw the need to serve their children in our community and to offer services that were lacking. They provide before- and after-school programs to kids including picking up, and walking the kids to and from school, they mentor youth in the area to become community leaders, they partner with other organizations to present family games nights, soccer, baseball, movie nights, and community potlucks. And they have the most beautiful community garden on the grounds of Harbour View Elementary.

Recently, Take Action has expanded and now runs out of both the Dartmouth North Community Centre and the Demetreous Lane Community Centre where there's an amazing array of programs for children and adults.

I want to congratulate Take Action on their expansion to two hubs of community connections and to thank all of the volunteers for their inspiring dedication to the people of Dartmouth North.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

KREBES BERND & NICOLE: ART MAZE - RECOG.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Bernd and Nicole Krebs who opened Canada's first art maze, BernArt be aMAZEd on August 30th in Maitland in my constituency.

The maze contains almost one kilometre of path that incorporates a variety of artwork including 3D sculptures, murals, mosaics, free-standing sculptures, and paintings decorating the walls. Nicole and Bernd used the Internet to recruit 85 volunteers from across the world to take part in the maze's construction. The maze was a lifelong dream of Bernd, and both he and Nicole have experienced many setbacks along the way. The maze has been under construction for the past five years and the community is excited that it is now open for public viewing.

Both he and Nicole have experienced many setbacks along the way. The maze has been under construction for the past five years and the community is excited that it is now open for public viewing. Nicole states: "It's not just for kids. We see it as an outdoor art gallery." This maze can truly be enjoyed by the whole family.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and all members of this House of Assembly please join me in congratulating Bernd and Nicole Krebs on the opening of BernArt be aMAZEd art maze, and it is amazing.

[9:45 a.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I'd like to introduce Paige Black who is a born-and-bred fellow Cumberland County lady. She is a recent graduate from the International Development school from Dalhousie. She is a former page here in the Legislature, and also former president of our PC youth organization. Please help me welcome Paige. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

LEGERE, DARA: JOGGINS CENOTAPH - THANKS

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dara Legere of Joggins Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. Through his research, Dara was able to get 10 names of local soldiers lost in the First World War added to the cenotaph at Joggins. Volunteers with the Legion have been making repairs to the cenotaph, and a new walkway was built from the street to the base of the memorial making it wheelchair accessible.

Thanks to Dara's hard work and dedication, the cenotaph will be updated and rededicated in time for Remembrance Day this year.

Mr. Speaker, the sacrifice of the brave men and women who are commemorated on our cenotaph is an important part of our history, and we are grateful for people like Dara to help us remember.

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

HUB HOUSE TRURO: COM. OUTREACH - CONGRATS.

MS. LENORE ZANN: Almost a year ago the compassionate and dedicated volunteers of the Truro Homeless Outreach Society opened up Hub House Truro. Hub House offers some of our most vulnerable citizens a place to rest and have a hot meal. With no dedicated municipal, provincial, or federal funding, Hub House has been running this past year entirely on the efforts of volunteers who are responsive to the unique needs of homelessness.

I am grateful to live in and represent this kind of community, Mr. Speaker, a community that steps up and rises to the occasion and is willing to provide comfort and safety to those in need.

I would like to thank the volunteers of Hub House Truro and congratulate them on a year of hard work, because they are making all the difference.

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

MORSE, SAMANTHA: PADDLING ATHL. - COMMEND

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a constituent in my riding who seamlessly blended her love of sports and entrepreneurship. Samantha Morse is a member of the Maskwa Aquatic Club and will be representing Canada at the World Marathon Kayak Championship in Portugal this September. She has also represented Nova Scotia at the Canada Cup twice in the past.

Due to her love of water sports, Samantha started Paddle All, an initiative that promotes the inclusion of those with intellectual disabilities, in canoeing and kayaking. Since then, many athletes have joined the free eight-week program that includes water paddling and dry-land training.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Samantha on her many achievements. Keep up the good work, Samantha.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

HELPING HANDS, IOOF LODGE 34: 140TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, the Helping Hand IOOF Lodge No. 34 Odd Fellows and Rebekahs, recently celebrated 140 years of volunteering and service to the community of River John. The Lodge began on August 8, 1878, with six charter members. The organization currently has 21 members, and it is proudly noted that four of these members are under the age of 25.

Some of the initiatives undertaken by the Lodge include providing meals and toys to needy families, a \$200 prize for graduating students at North Colchester High School, a resident program at the Maritime Odd Fellows Home, and treats for local firefighters at Christmastime.

Mr. Speaker, I and all people of Pictou West would like to thank the dedicated volunteers of the Helping Hand IOOF Lodge No. 34 for their committed service to the community for over 140 years.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

BROWN, BEN: TRACK & FIELD ATHL. - CONGRATS.

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I would like to update my colleagues in the House and all Nova Scotians of the incredible athletic accomplishments of Ben Brown of Cambridge, Nova Scotia.

This summer, Ben broke into the top 15 in the world in the T53 Wheelchair class in the 100-metre, 200-metre, 400-metre, and 800-metre events. Ben is now a national champion in the 100-metre, 200-metre, and 400-metre by winning three golds at the Canadian Track & Field Championships held in Ottawa from July 4th to July 6th. He also clinched a silver medal in the 800-metre.

He wrapped up the track season with a 100-metre win and two personal bests in Quebec City in July. He is particularly proud of his fifth-place finish in the 800-metre race where he trimmed half a second off his personal-best time.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Ben Brown on his outstanding athletic achievements and wish him all the very best as he continues this remarkable career.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction. I would like to introduce to this House in the west gallery, Gary Bennett of Burlington. Gary was part of an unfortunate series of events in December 2017 when his wife was mistakenly cremated, greatly adding to the trauma for the family of her untimely passing. I would like to ask the House to give both our sympathy and our warm welcome to Gary today. (Applause)

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

WOLFE, JUANITA: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a woman who for hundreds of children and their families in Liverpool has been known as Mrs. Juanita. Juanita Wolfe announced in June that she was retiring from running her preschool and after-school business. Over 500 children have passed through her door over the past 19 years, and she has been involved in teaching children for 35 years.

Juanita truly saw each child as special and will be fondly remembered for the difference she made in their young lives and for preparing them for school and their lives

ahead. I am so pleased to congratulate Juanita for a job well done and to wish her a long and happy retirement.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

EMMANUEL PLAYERS: *I DREAM OF GENIE* - TRIBUTE

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, for 12 years the Emmanuel Players have been entertaining crowds at the Emmanuel Players Annual Dinner Theatre. This year's production is *I Dream of Genie*, which tells the story of villagers of McIntosh Run in 1963.

Sadly, the Emmanuel Church Players lost Dale Keigan this Spring. Dale was one of the founding members of the Emmanuel Players. This year's production is dedicated to his memory.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of this House to join me in congratulating the Emmanuel Players on their 12th season, and also extending our condolences for their loss of Dale Keigan. Dedicating this year's show to Dale is a fitting tribute to the man who gave so much to the Emmanuel Players and the community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

BLUENOSE CURLING CLUB: LONG HIST. - THANKS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the New Glasgow Bluenose Curling Club was established in 1853, making it the third oldest club in the province and the 16th oldest in Canada.

For the first 20 years, curling was played outdoors on the harbour and on various ponds and inlets. The first indoor facility was opened in 1874. Artificial ice was not available until 1937 at the North Provost location. For 30 years, beginning in 1968, the well-known club operated out of a joint facility with the Abercrombie club. The club built its fifth location, a four-sheet facility on Park Street, New Glasgow, in 1990.

Special thanks to all the presidents, boards of directors, and members that have shaped this club into one of the most competitive and popular curling facilities in the province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

KIMBALL, SAM: ALZHEIMER'S ESSAY AWARD - CONGRATS.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, Sam Kimball, an 18-year-old from LaHave, Lunenburg County, was chosen as one of two winners of the David Hearn Foundation Kia Grant. Sam is passionate about the game of golf. He plays about five times a week and works at Osprey Ridge Golf Course. He sadly lost his paternal grandfather to dementia in January, and his maternal grandfather is living with the same disease.

Motivated by his personal connection to Alzheimer's and his passion for golf, he entered an essay in the contest, writing about how dementia has affected his family. Sam's essay was chosen among junior golfers from across the country who are involved in their communities and their local Alzheimer society. Sam won a \$4,500 grant from the Alzheimer's Society of Nova Scotia and a trip to Ontario, where he met David Hearn, a pro golfer with a passion for supporting those on the dementia journey. Sam hopes that his grant will help other families.

Congratulations to Sam Kimball, an outstanding young man, who is making an effort to fight dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

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

MIRA TRIATHLON: INAUGURAL EVENT - THANKS

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the first Triathlon on the Mira. About 100 people came to the Mira boat club, the start and the finish of the race, to cheer on the 152 competitors who started with a swim. Rick MacDonald from Albert Bridge took part in his first triathlon on the recommendation of his trainer and daughter, Julia MacDonald, who won the women's triathlon at the event.

It is a pleasure to thank all the volunteers who made this first, of hopefully many more, Triathlon on the Mira a success. I believe that the beauty of this course and the community feelings surrounding the race will bring even more participants in the years to come.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

MCMACKIN, OLIVIA: FOREST CHILD NAT. BEAUTY - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate a Bedford business owner on her new venture. Olivia McMackin is known to many members of this House, and later this month she is going to host the grand opening of Forest Child Natural Beauty. Olivia created the line after she faced some health challenges while living in Toronto. She decided to reduce the chemicals she was being exposed to in her cosmetics so she created

natural, non-toxic cosmetics and body care products which became the Forest Child Natural Beauty line.

Olivia offers workshops like the September self-care one, which includes information on detoxification, as well as facials and a yoga session and more, and a \$10 night for moms to help them choose the right skin care products and makeup.

Forest Child's grand opening will take place Saturday, September 22nd, from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., at 1094 Bedford Highway. I wish Olivia every success in her new venture.

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

BURTON, BRIAN & SARAH: INSTINCT DOG TRAINING - BEST WISHES

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Sydney Mines native Brian Burton and his wife Sarah as they open Instinct Dog Behaviour and Training in North Sydney. This facility has its head office in New York and employs 25 people who do extensive training and behaviour advice.

Thousands of dogs from all over the United States have come for multi-week courses over the past 10 years. This company has been featured in the *New York Times* and NBC Nightly News.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish Brian and Sarah every success as they are about to expand into Canada.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

CHISHOLM, HANNAH: EGGCITABLES - CONGRATS.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to use this opportunity to share the story and remarkable success of a brilliant young woman and her company, Eggcitables. Hannah Chisholm has been allergic to milk, eggs, and nuts her entire life, and she had an idea to come up with a recipe that would allow those with allergens to enjoy eggs.

With a little bit of research, she found the power of chick peas. Her Eggcitables project is a plant-based egg substitute from chick pea flour. It's a dry mix formula that can be used as a substitute for eggs in any dish or recipe.

Mr. Speaker, Hannah has created a product that is free from eggs and other animal by-products, and free from all eight of the most common allergens, including gluten.

Her Eggcitables company has been gaining a lot of attention. She won \$10,000 at the 100 Entrepreneurs: Planting Seed\$ Atlantic competition; \$15,000 from Innovacorp's Spark Innovation challenge; and was chosen as one of seven ventures to participate in the 2018 Summer Institute hosted by the J. Herbert Smith Centre for Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management at UNB. Mr. Speaker, I wish her all the success in the future.

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

MORRISON, JAMIE: OUT & ABOUT RESPITE - RECOG.

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, in mid May, Ms. Jamie Morrison of L'Ardoise launched Out & About Respite, which operates the area's first adult respite program. Ms. Morrison worked in long-term care for 16 years and has been working in private home care since 2016. She believes that having a safe place for seniors can help ease pressure on full-time caregivers.

The program is designed so that seniors benefit from interacting with others. During the day participants have the opportunity to prepare and share meals together, play games, and engage in physical activity.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my congratulations and thanks to Ms. Morrison for her efforts in creation of this worthy initiative. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much for those member's statements. I just want to take this last couple of seconds to remind folks that the guidelines for Statements by Members indicate that statements may not be of a commercial nature; for example, directly promoting sales of a product, ticket, or event.

I note that several statements today kind of crossed that little bit of a fine line, so just keep that in mind when you're promoting the good things that are going on in your constituency.

[10:00 a.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

PREM. - PROV. ECONOMY: UPCOMING YEAR - OUTCOME

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Last week the government used a significant portion of the Speech from the Throne to paint a rosy picture of our province's economy. In fact, the speech claims at one point that there is a buzz about the province on the national stage and beyond.

There may be a buzz, but it's not a good buzz. RBC's provincial outlook says our province is facing economic headwinds that will keep it near the bottom of the pack in economic performance this year and next year. With the province's economy stagnating, why did this government fail to introduce a plan to create jobs?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the great success of the economy of the province and the great work Nova Scotians are doing. We're seeing youth populations growing. We're seeing jobs created in the tech sector.

I had the good fortune of being invited by all the major banks to go to Bay Street to talk about the great success of our province, wishing that other Canadian provinces they deal with that they've got to get their fiscal house in order, making sure they control cost of governance and make those investments. I was very pleased to meet the global chairman of IBM who recognized the best place in this entire country to do business is this province.

We're continuing to see major companies make investments. I'm looking forward to standing by them to make announcements in the future.

MS. MACFARLANE: The RBC disagrees. The Speech from the Throne says that there are numerous indicators that Nova Scotia is performing at a high level compared to other provinces. Mr. Speaker, that was last week.

This week, RBC says that Nova Scotia's economy will continue to lag behind the rest of the country. The province's stalling GDP will put it second to third last in the country this year and next year. What happened in the last week that would take Nova Scotia's economy from a high level to the bottom of the pack?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the federal budgetary office said the only two Canadian provinces on a sustainable path were Quebec and Nova Scotia. That's after its government inherited a \$500 million deficit to bring us back to successive balanced budgets. Every credit rating has recognized the good work that is happening inside this province. We're the only Canadian province to have their credit rating move up. It's all positive signs.

What I'm hearing most importantly is that Nova Scotians are borrowing and lending money to create economic opportunities and job creation in this province. We're

seeing it in communities from one end of this province to the other, and where it's showing up is young people are choosing to stay, work and build a life for themselves here in this province.

MS. MACFARLANE: We learned from the jobs report for the month of August that unemployment has vaulted up to 5.9 per cent from the previous month. I will table this information. In fact, roughly two out of three people joining the workforce are unable to find a job in Nova Scotia.

The RBC reported that a stagnant labour force is contributing to our under-performance, and the economic recovery in Alberta actually will be the one that restarts the flow for people to move back out there. Why should Nova Scotians trust that the Premier can offer them better options here than what they can find down the road?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question - as she was reading that report she would also recognize full-time employment is at an all-time high in our province. She would also recognize that youth retention is increasing. She would also recognize that we're seeing an expansion in communities around economic development and job creation, being led by the private sector.

She would also recognize that this government has its fiscal house in order, has been investing in programs and support of individual Nova Scotians, organizations at the same time making sure the economic environment here is one that is attractive - not only to Canadian organizations, but to global organizations who see this province is a bright light in the federation.

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

PREM.: PROGRESSIVE ECON. POLICY - NEEDED

MR. GARY BURRILL: I would like to continue with the note my colleague has sounded of harkening back to the Speech from the Throne. The Speech from the Throne spoke about how we are - the words used were - 'at a pivotal moment calling for progressive government policy'. This is certainly true, but I must say that in this session to this point, what we've seen from the government is more in the category of bureaucratic busy-work and housekeeping - less pivotal and progressive, more piddling and puny.

So it's a pivotal moment and it's calling for progressive policy, and I want to ask the Premier, when is he going to bring forward his progressive plan to deal with the fact that we've got 20 per cent of our hospital space taken up by people who are there because they are just waiting for long-term care.

THE PREMIER: I, first of all, disagree and I think he owes all the great hardworking public servants an apology for suggesting they're just sitting around. I would

also suggest to you that I wish the honourable member stood with us when we introduced 50 more long-term care beds in Cape Breton. Instead, all he did was complain. The fact of the matter is, we will continue to roll out investments in health care from one end of this province to the other to ensure the appropriate health care services are being provided in the appropriate communities at the appropriate times.

MR: BURRILL: The Premier disagrees with me, but I agree with him in one thing. I agree that that Throne Speech is right that this is a pivotal moment. It's a pivotal moment in which we in Nova Scotia are, today, 17 days away from again having the lowest minimum wage in the entire country. As Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario have continued on the path towards \$15 per hour.

It is a pivotal moment calling for progressive policy, and I want to ask the Premier, will he tell us when he is going to table a progressive policy to get Nova Scotia's minimum wage out of the Canadian basement.

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I noted he voted against the basic personal exemption increase that impacted the lowest-income people in our province.

I want to tell the honourable member what is progressive. It's actually running a government that can operate in the balance so that we're not borrowing on our credit card to pay for operations on a daily basis. That government buried successive generations, leaving them with a debt. We had to deal with issues that were left behind by a Party that simply doesn't understand what it means to govern, doesn't understand what it means to be balanced, and doesn't understand what it means to be fair and kind to all Nova Scotians.

MR. BURRILL: Progressive policy in a pivotal moment consists of a great deal more than the capacity to raise one's voice, Mr. Speaker. It is right. It is a pivotal moment calling for progressive policy. We in the NDP every day bring forward matters of progressive policy on climate change, on mental health, on children's rights, but we are facing a government that is set on jellyfish mode: formless, blobbish and drifting.

It's a pivotal moment. I want to know, where is the Premier's progressive policy for dealing with the fact - speaking on the subject of young people - that we've got the fastest rising tuition in the country, while in New Brunswick, it's free if you're under \$60,000.

THE PREMIER: I want to tell him about progressive policy - offering pre-Primary to every four-year-old in this province. I want to tell him that progressive policy is providing services in schools to ensure that we identify mental health issues at early onset, so we can deal with it early on. That's progressive policy, Mr. Speaker.

Progressive policy is when you make investments around ensuring that when you have the ability to make changes to the tax system, you impact those who need your support the most. When we changed the basic personal exemption, he voted against it. We want to modernize the health care system, he continues to complain about it. The fact of the matter is, Nova Scotians are with us. They're ready to work with us and we're prepared to work with them.

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

PREM. OFFICE: SUMMIT TRIP FUNDING - CLARIFY

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: My question is for the Premier. I was recently made aware of the Campaigns and Marketing Summit taking place in Washington this November. This summit is geared towards running more effective and successful political campaigns.

I will table a notice that invites people to join participants already registered for the summit. Not surprisingly, the Nova Scotia Liberal Party is listed as a participant, and rightly so. Shockingly, though, the Office of the Premier of Nova Scotia is also listed as a participant.

Is the Premier using taxpayers' money to attend a summit specifically tailored to partisan campaign activities?

THE PREMIER: When is it? Can I have a look at it? (Interruption) The answer to your question - am I using the Premier's Office and taxpayers' money to run campaigns? - is no.

It says the Office is, but I don't know when the date is. I'm in Asia in November. That's why we're in the House now. I made that very clear - I'll be travelling to Asia to continue to sell exports in the province. I'll continue to go to make sure that I make representation on behalf of our province and continue to grow the economy and create good jobs and make sure that the rest of the world knows we're open for business.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, this is a conflict. It's obvious to all Nova Scotians. This government can afford to take this trip and go to a summit, but they can't afford to go to Newfoundland and recruit doctors? It's pretty clear someone made a mistake and it's mindboggling that the Office of the Premier should need to spend taxpayers' money to also attend this event.

Will the Premier tell this House who from his office is attending the summit and how much is being spent to send them to this partisan event?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the honourable member that no, I don't know who's going from my office, but I'm very proud of the fact that the people who work for me actually tell the world they actually work for me in the Premier's Office of Nova Scotia. The fact of the matter is, if they go, it will not be taxpayers' money that will be sending them.

Again, I want to tell this House as I've told many times before I'm going to continue to travel to promote this province, the great economic opportunities, (Interruption) exports are on the rise, to make sure the global businesses recognize this province is open for business.

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

H&W - STRAIT RICHMOND HOSP.: RENO. FUNDING - UPDATE

HON. DAVID WILSON:, Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. This week, representatives from the Strait Richmond Hospital are seeking funding assistance from the municipalities. The hospital needs \$2.3 million to redesign the entrance to the facility. Right now, outpatients wait in the same space as ER patients, which does put them at risk. Those seeking routine care are put at risk when they're with patients who might have the flu or other illnesses or infections.

According to the hospital, the Nova Scotia Health Authority has offered less than 10 per cent for the cost, about \$185,000. So, I'd like to ask the minister is the minister concerned that his renovation to protect the health of patients is reliant on municipalities or even private donors.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. As the member noted, the work for capital projects does go through the Nova Scotia Health Authority, which is responsible for the hospitals and the infrastructure providing care to Nova Scotians from one end of the province to the other.

The way the process works is, as they assess all of the capital needs that they have for our health care system, they bring forward the requests and we consider what we can do based upon the budgeting process. We allocate a budget as part of that. Our budget was tabled in the spring and the Nova Scotia Health Authority is working within that for their capital decisions.

MR. WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the amount offered to the Strait Richmond Hospital by the Nova Scotia Health Authority is even more concerning when you consider that the health capital budget has been underspent by more than \$72 million over the course of the past three years. The renovation at the Strait Richmond Hospital will require only three per cent of that unspent funding over the last couple of years.

I'm wondering if I could ask the minister: Why has the government failed to spend the money budgeted for improvements to our hospitals when the communities are at need like at the Strait Richmond Hospital?

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to explain to the member and all members of the Legislature how capital projects work. These projects are often complex. They do get developed based upon a projection of when work will take place and an estimate of the cost of that work. Frequently, there are delays in that work. That's why the budget doesn't get fully spent in any given year.

However, I assure the member that, in fact, the budget does get spent. The timing may just be offset. The figure that was referenced for the capital budget being underspent in past years as the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has noted in fiscal updates those delays are based upon delays in the project, but the money gets spent as the projects get completed.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

SERVICE N.S.: FUNERAL HOME ERRORS - PREVENTION

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Service Nova Scotia. On December 27, 2017, while attending his wife's funeral, Gary Bennett discovered that Sandra had been mistakenly cremated. This mistake added to the grief of her untimely passing and I can only imagine the feeling of knowing that your loved one's last wishes were not followed any you were denied your chance to say goodbye.

Mr. Bennett is here today because he wants to make sure that no one else suffers a tragedy like this. However, legislation that was promised in the spring was not forthcoming and I'll table that. My question for the minister is: Will the minister commit to introducing legislation this session to protect Nova Scotians from funeral home errors like those experienced by the Bennett family?

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question and I certainly want to welcome Mr. Bennett here to the gallery to the House today.

Every once in a while in government, and I guess in life, you see things that are heart-wrenching, that are absolutely patently unacceptable, and that are terrible for a system in which we're bound to protect. This was one of those times.

For Sandra and the family, it's bad enough that this happened as part of life, that she passed away untimely, and to go through this is something that should never happen in

the province. This is one that we went to work with immediately with the Nova Scotia Board of Registration of Embalmers and Funeral Directors and with the Funeral Service Association to get this right.

I'll tell Mr. Bennett, his family, and the member opposite and all Nova Scotians that we are introducing legislation on Tuesday that will ensure this never happens again.

[10:15 a.m.]

MR. LOHR: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. Mr. Speaker, subsequent to the unfortunate events of Mrs. Bennett's treatment, Mr. Bennett had opportunity to advance a complaint with the Nova Scotia Board of Registration of Embalmers and Funeral Directors. While the board did hear the case, Mr. Bennett and his family chose not to participate. They made this decision because they were told that, while representatives of the funeral home would be able to question the Bennett family, the family would not be permitted to listen to the testimony of the funeral home staff nor ask any questions themselves. That just didn't seem fair.

My question for the minister is: Will the minister confirm that his department will address a more fair and transparent complaint review process for the Nova Scotia Board of Registration of Embalmers and Funeral Directors in future legislation?

MR. MACLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do, again, thank the member for bringing this to the floor of the House. The answer to that question is yes. Along the way, with this process with the Bennett family, there were things that we've identified in this procedure - the public hearings - that just didn't seem right. I think that the Bennetts, again, going through this loss of their loved one had to experience these things over and over - very unfair.

The public hearings will have a much different structure, to your point, honourable member, and to the points that the family had made. It will be much more open and transparent and it will give the opportunity for families to have their say.

This legislation will reflect a much better picture of how this process should work. We're going to hold more people accountable - not one person but the entire facility, the owners, everyone who's responsible for having these procedures in place and followed has to take accountability. This shouldn't fall on one person. This is an organizational question and this can never happen again in a funeral home.

We will reflect a lot of what we've learned through this process, and I'm sure the member will be on hand to see some of those details. I think we've got this right. This can never happen any other time here in Nova Scotia.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

EECD: STUDENT ATTEND. & ENGAGE. POLICY - EXPECTATIONS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Teachers inform me that attendance problems are persistent. Many students skip school because they don't face any real consequences. This government introduced a province-wide Student Attendance and Engagement Policy, which came into effect October 1, 2017. The policy was intended to help improve student attendance through a balance of supports, incentives, and consequences. There's great skepticism that this policy is having the desired effect.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: Does the minister believe that this policy has met all expectations and, if the answer is yes, can he provide the data to this House supporting his answer?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of the fact that we do have the first province-wide attendance policy in Nova Scotia under our government. We have that because teachers came together on the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions and actually wrote that policy themselves. This was a process that was led by our educators. They also decided to invest in attendance support employees who would help students overcome whatever their individual obstacles are in terms of attending school.

Most of the information I have right now is anecdotal on the impact of this policy. The information I've been receiving seems to be positive, at this rate; particularly in the tri-county, I know attendance levels have increased. But if there is data that the member has that he would like me to take a look at, I'm happy to see that. We have to continually evolve our policies to make sure they are meeting the changing needs of our students.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, teachers want to see their students succeed. We know that student success is linked to regular student attendance. The Student Attendance and Engagement Policy is a province-wide policy that sets a clear expectation for students, parents, and teachers. However, it has been said that it doesn't allow much flexibility in individual cases. What works to engage one student may not work for another.

My question, Mr. Speaker: Does the minister believe the policy gives teachers, guidance counsellors and administrators better access to tools to deal with the root causes of absenteeism?

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we're trusting our teachers, they are the ones who developed this policy. There is flexibility built in to identify and address the individual causes that are impacting the student's attendance, whether it is issues at home, whether it's social anxiety or anxiety linked to work, whether it's bullying or whether it's other factors that may be there, so there is flexibility built within the policy.

We do collect data on attendance so we are able to take a look at those provincial numbers, but I just don't have them available for the member today. Any advice the member has, any data he wants me to take a look at, I am sure that will help us continually improve our policy framework so that we are meeting the needs of our students.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

AGRIC.: BEEF FARMERS - BULL BONUS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. I have been approached by a number of beef farmers in my area about the need to improve genetics in their bulls. I know the economics of this, Nova Scotia beef farming can be more expensive relative to other areas of the country yet they are selling beef at Canadian beef market prices. I'll ask the minister: Does the government believe beef farmers need a bull bonus?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: It's a very good question that the member brings forward. For about the last 50 years there has been genetic enhancement in the industry for bulls and that work we're examining now and we're looking at the best possible way to do it.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Federation of Agriculture is interested in having some of these measures, including a bull bonus. I'll table that, it's a letter that they've asked for that.

Some of their bulls have lost their enthusiasm. (Laughter) Now they should not be criticized for that, it happens. I may say they've lost the spark in their eye, they've lost that loving feeling, but the minister can fix that, Mr. Speaker. So I will ask the minister: Why not offer a bull bonus now, or at least start to build it into the Spring Budget?

MR. SPEAKER: I'll check my list of Parliamentary terms here first. The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

MR. COLWELL: That was quite an enlightened question, I must admit. It's very important to make sure we have the best beef herd we can have in the province and we're doing a lot of work around that. We'll continue to do that in conjunction with the Federation of Agriculture. We've met with them on several occasions regarding this, and also to the beef producers in the province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

EECD: SCHOOL BUS REV. - PARENT INCLUSION

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Yesterday in this House the minister accused me of defending the status quo and special interest groups. If the status quo means students being able to access safe, reliable transportation to get to school on time and if special interest groups are parents, then I suppose he is correct. Parents like Sarah Crawford, mother of seven-year-old Ava, who has to cross a busy highway with no crosswalk or traffic lights - seven years old - on her walk to school because she is not eligible for busing.

Ms. Crawford has contacted the Regional Centre for Education and Stock Transportation, but she has gotten nowhere and I'll table that. Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain how parents like Ms. Crawford will be included in the minister's promised review of school busing?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, in fact we're collecting all the concerns that are coming in to our regional office of the department right now. There is a lot of good information and data there, parents registering their concerns daily over the course of the last couple of weeks and that will help us move forward in a way that will address them.

The review is going to look at best practices. We're undergoing that right now within this province and within other jurisdictions in the federation, with the intent of ensuring that every single parent, every single student in this system has reliable, safe, efficient busing that gets them to and from school on time, Mr. Speaker.

We know we have some work to do and we're committed to doing it.

MS. CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, with respect, this entire situation is ridiculous. Last night I heard from a parent who emailed the minister about busing concerns. She has not received a response. After seeing no bus for her children for close to a week, she has gotten an update from BusPlanner that now says her children's bus will pick them up at 8:34 a.m. - the school bell rings at 8:35 a.m.

What parents need are local representatives who know their neighbourhoods, who understand their roads, who can respond to their concerns. I would like to give the minister another chance to explain how, aside from registering complaints, parents are going to be involved in the review of school busing.

MR. CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, every single parent has received direct communication means given to them so they can get to their regional office and speak to a person immediately. We met with Stock Transportation in the region last night. Call volumes are decreasing; that is a positive sign.

I do want to remind the member that we are at about 98 per cent of our buses being to school on time and getting home on time, but we know that we have to do better. The situations that the member and other members have referenced, the situations that we've heard about in the media, the concerns that are coming in to the department and the region are unacceptable. We've made that clear to the provider of the service. We've expressed our expectation that every single parent needs to have reliable busing service on time, that's safe, and we intend to deliver that to Nova Scotians.

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

H&W - HOSPICE/PALL. CARE: VIC. CO./CBRM - DISCREPANCY

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Those providing hospice and palliative care in Victoria County cover 1,700 square kilometres of territory - 1,700 kilometres. For a territory this size, there is only one part-time hospice nurse and one doctor for one day a week, with no backup for vacation or sick time. The caseload however remains steady at 22 patients, while CBRM, which has a similar caseload, has a full-time nurse assigned just to manage the work involved.

The Minister of Health and Wellness has deferred, has talked around questions, and he has been intentionally vague in his responses to this House. I would like to ask the minister again to explain why there is such a discrepancy between two municipalities with the same caseload numbers.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising the question. As the member would know, the Nova Scotia Health Authority provides the services for front-line health care in the province. The work they do includes the delivery of palliative care, end of life care for Nova Scotians. They continue to review the services that they offer throughout the province in communities and they make adjustments.

I want to remind the member that when he raises questions of discrepancies and services, that work continues - it is part of the structure of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, bringing together and standardizing practices that used to be delivered by nine separate organizations throughout the province under one single standard approach.

MR. BAIN: The bottom line here is that the Hospice Society of Victoria County requires a full-time nurse. The Hospice Society wrote to the minister's office on June 15th and is yet to receive a response - something we here in the House are used to every day. I'll table that letter, Mr. Speaker.

End of life care is a compassionate art and science that extends well beyond the simple provision of treatment of patients. The minister has an opportunity to ensure that anxious and grieving families in Victoria County receive support on how they can keep

their dying loved ones comfortable, and home support services to ensure that an individual can die with dignity on their own terms.

My question to the minister: Will he provide the Hospice Society of Victoria County a full-time nurse? A simple yes or no will do.

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned previously, the delivery of health care services and the allocation of those resources to ensure the care and delivery of those services in communities across the province is exactly the work that the Nova Scotia Health Authority is tasked to provide.

We do rely on the Health Authority and the experts within that space to identify what the needs are for the delivery of care in communities. So the answer to the member's question very clearly is the Health Authority continues to review and identify the palliative care needs and services to be provided in communities across the province they will make the necessary adjustments.

[10:30 a.m.]

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

EMO - S.W. N.S.: DROUGHT COND. - RELIEF

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for the Emergency Management Office and the Minister of Municipal Affairs. For the second time in three years, residents of southwestern Nova Scotia are experiencing severe drought conditions. Wells run dry and more and more continue to run dry every day. Hundreds of residents need assistance in getting access to a sufficient water supply to operate their homes. They can't shower. They can't wash their clothes. They can't wash dishes or even flush their toilet.

Like I said, this is the second time in three years and the prevailing weather patterns have definitely played a bit of a trick to those residents. Can the minister share what his department is doing to bring some relief to the residents of southwestern Nova Scotia?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I want to first start by thanking those municipal units, those affected areas of southwestern Nova Scotia, their volunteers. The fire service down there has been doing great service in the last number of weeks supplying the water to those affected communities.

Yesterday morning, I had the opportunity via conference call to speak with the wardens of Yarmouth, Barrington, and Argyle to discuss further their request and clarify their immediate needs, from there directed our provincial EMO centre to begin immediately coordinating efforts for drinking water, and for larger non-potable amounts of

water to be sent out to Argyle, and that we will also discuss further in the long term what that assistance may look like.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: I thank the minister for his answer on that. I know there are many people that are involved in this process, but it's a situation that is getting worse. I mean, we did have a great rainstorm on Tuesday night and I think that all of a couple of drops actually fell on southwestern Nova Scotia. It's quite something as we're looking forward, so I thank the minister for his response.

I'm going to switch over a little bit to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. As the neighbouring MLA, I'm sure his constituents are enduring some of the same conditions. In the drought of 2016, facilities around the area were open to those affected and I was specifically thinking of the Mariners Centre in Yarmouth, and area schools. The decision on schools, at the time, fell to the school board to help the municipalities come up with some options and, as I understand, that decision will now fall under the minister and his department.

Has the minister been involved in any discussions to make schools available - and I mean in Plymouth and the Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School and those kinds of things - outside of classroom hours and is it something that is under consideration?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I've been in contact with the district in my constituency, Yarmouth. We got them in contact with EMO. Today, we have not had any requests to open up school facilities but, of course, if that is needed, we'll be happy to take a look at that and take action. Our Regional Executive Director, Paul Ash, is very responsive to local concerns as they come in. He's been doing a great job managing that office on our behalf and we'll be sure that the system is there to support those in need.

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

TIR - CONST. TENDERS: CANCELLATIONS - EXPLAIN

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. I was recently contacted by a business that frequently bids on construction tenders posted by the department. They told me that they believe there has been an increase in the number of tenders that are posted, cancelled, and then reposted.

As I'm sure the minister can appreciate, construction firms dedicate resources to submitting these bids and become very frustrated when they are cancelled. Can the minister explain why his department would tender, cancel, re-tender, and sometimes cancel again?

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question and it's an excellent question. First of all, we're very appreciative in the department of the great

work that our local contractors do for Nova Scotians across the piece, and as part of that process is a very refined effort to make sure that we are defining what it is that we want, that it is handled in an excellent way. Our colleagues at procurement help us in that regard. Sometimes, specifications might change and, in the interest of making sure that it's a level playing field for all the bidders, things do get rescinded and we try to take as short a time as possible to get them back on the market.

MS. MACFARLANE: These are firms that are in competition with one another and have every motivation to bid the best price they can offer. If under those circumstances no firm can do the work at the tender price, then the problem is with the price or the way the tender explains the work, and that falls on the minister's department.

The life cycle of these tenders is such that quite often a cancellation and then re-tendering means the project is deferred until the next construction season. Meanwhile, Nova Scotians go out with key pieces of infrastructure creating, sometimes, safety hazards.

Can the minister explain why some of the tenders put out by his department are simply unrealistic in the current market?

MR. HINES: I certainly understand the frustration that the contracting community would feel about some of these processes. We don't control all the variables. As an instance, Mr. Speaker, the price of liquid asphalt this year has escalated by over 40 per cent within the tendering period, which has really driven some of our numbers on asphalt quite crazy. As a result, any particular alteration to a contract that exceeds 15 per cent, our procurement rules require that we go back to the market so we don't injure a contractor by awarding a contract which we know has escalated and would exceed that level and other people might feel excluded.

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

ENV. - FRACKING: ENV. PROT. - COMPATIBILITY

MS. LENORE ZANN: My question today is for the Minister of Environment. When the Premier was seeking re-election, he promised Nova Scotians that a Liberal Government would maintain the ban on fracking, but instead his government has reignited the debate. In January, the former Minister of Energy said it was a good thing to stimulate discussion and now fracking is filling our opinion pages once again. It is taking up space that could be dedicated to the conversations we need to be having in this province about our best path to a green economy.

My question for the minister is this: Does she believe that fracking is compatible with protecting the environment and taking action on climate change?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: I thank the member opposite for bringing this subject to the foreground today. Actually, in my role as the MLA for Hants East I'm very familiar with the issues because the Progressive Conservative Government at one time had brought fracking forward, and during the NDP time, fracking was done in the Kennetcook area. It was left with fracking waste water ponds with no plan to deal with those ponds. Our government actually cleaned up the site, Mr. Speaker, so we've made a commitment to it.

Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, there is a moratorium on fracking in Nova Scotia with no plans to change that.

MS. ZANN: I'm glad to hear her say there are no plans to change and I will definitely be holding her and this government to that, and so will our NDP caucus. I believe that any fracking that was taking place in Kennetcook was done before the NDP actually became government.

Mr. Speaker, four years ago we went through a proper formal consultation with Nova Scotians on fracking and Nova Scotians overwhelmingly said no to fracking. The Wheeler report was clear - there's neither the evidence nor the community support to justify the environmental risks of fracking. This a route we've taken before and it's a dead end; we need to move on to talking about green jobs and renewable energy.

My next question for the minister is this: I'd like to ask the minister, when can Nova Scotians expect to see her government's green jobs plan?

MS. MILLER: I thank the honourable member again for that question because it gives me the opportunity to really highlight all the green jobs that are happening in Nova Scotia - we're seeing companies like CarbonCure, that are putting carbon into concrete, which is an amazing proposal; we're seeing all the things that are coming across my desk now which are allowing the possibility of black bag garbage being used as energy and eventually we won't even need landfills. These are happening.

The green energy industry is alive and well in Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, and will continue to be. Government promotes it, we will continue to promote it for a better Nova Scotia and for a better environment for all Nova Scotians.

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

COM. SERV. - DRUG TESTING: CHILD REMOVAL - POLICY

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, with the family's written consent my question is to the Minister of Community Services.

In July 2018 Child Protective Services and the HRM Police raided the home of a new mother and her parents, based on an apparent positive methadone test and a false DCS report that a seven-year-old was home alone. CPS required the immediate removal of the baby and the seven-year-old. An emergency room doctor at the IWK Health Centre said that neither the mother nor the baby showed any signs of drug use or exposure. Less than a week later, the Department of Community Services called to say that there had been a mix-up. The positive test belonged to someone else.

When the province removes children from a family, it has to have more than bad data. My question to the minister is: Is it the department's policy to take a breast-feeding baby away from her mother based on one positive test that was not supported by the doctor and, in this case, turned out to be a test that belonged to someone else?

HON. KELLY REGAN: As the honourable member knows, I don't speak on individual cases because I don't always have all the facts at my fingertips. What I can assure the honourable member is, if she would like to bring that to the department, we would be happy to look into that for her.

MS. ADAMS: I thank the minister for her answer. I did bring it to her department's knowledge, so I will encourage her to speak with them. While I appreciate the really hard work of all the CPS staff, as you can imagine, this family was incredibly traumatized by this experience, especially when it took another three weeks before those two children were returned home to their mother and grandparents. In addition, the grandparents were forced to pay a lawyer to represent them, only to find out that the drug test was not their daughter's. DCS has yet to issue an apology to the family and has not reimbursed the family for the legal fees.

My question to the minister is this: Will the minister refund the outstanding balance of their legal fees to this family who should never have been forced to pay this amount, and will the minister personally apologize today to this family for the trauma her government departments have inflicted on all of them?

MS. REGAN: As the honourable member knows, I can't deal with an individual case here in the House because I do not have all the facts before me. What I can tell the honourable member is that I have indicated to her the department will look into this further.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

COM. SERV.: INCOME ASSIST. - DECISION REV.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: This question is for the Minister of Community Services. Last week, I met Henry Pettigrew. He is 62 years old, blind in one eye, requires hearing aids, has a heart condition, and three bulging discs in his back. It is nearly impossible for him to find employment. He was on income assistance but was

removed three months ago because the address on his driver's licence was different from where he was living. He has no money for food or for his medications and is having difficulty affording the necessities of life. The question for the minister is: Will the minister address the decisions made to remove someone from income assistance and the Pharmacare Program, taking away life-saving medications?

HON. KELLY REGAN: As the honourable member knows, I can't deal with individual cases here in the House because I don't have all the facts of the case before me. What I can guarantee is that any time that there is an issue like that, if the honourable member would like to bring it to my office, I would be happy to have staff sit down and look at the particular case.

MS. SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Thank you to the minister. I have addressed it locally but haven't gotten a favourable response for Henry. I am worried about him. I did take Henry to Nova Scotia Works in the hope they could assist him in finding employment that would suit his physical limitations, but I'm not confident that's going to be able to happen. Henry is feeling helpless. He is worried. He's not taking his medication that he needs for his heart condition. He is left with no income, no job, no medications, and no hope.

Transitioning from income assistance to employment is a struggle for many Nova Scotians. I'm wondering if the minister could look at options, before someone is removed from income assistance to have the caseworkers in Community Services working with people from Nova Scotia Works, working with Pharmacare, so that people are not left without medications, without money, and without hope.

MS. REGAN: In fact, that is something that we are working on, sorting of transitioning us away from the kind of old-school system that we've had to one that is more compassionate, more accessible to folks so that they are not penalized when life's difficult circumstances intercede.

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

H&W: PHYSICIAN SHORT. (NORTHSIDE) - HEALTH CARE NEEDS

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: As we know, and all Nova Scotians know, our health care system in this province is in a crisis. We see it in this government's reckless dismantling of health care services in Cape Breton.

One family doctor on the Northside was finally able to retire once she had the peace of mind that she had someone else to take her patients. Unfortunately, the doctor who had taken over the practice has had to retire due to a sudden illness, leaving a whopping 5,000 patients without a family doctor.

My question to the minister is: What should these 5,000 patients do when they require a family doctor's note to access services such as MRIs, specialist referrals, or health care professional referrals that walk-in clinics can't provide?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising the question. As the member would know, there are times in professions across the province where if someone's health takes a turn, as the member noted in this case, those are circumstances outside of anybody's control. I think Nova Scotians, including the patients of the physician he referenced would understand that.

With respect to responding to the situation, the Nova Scotia Health Authority continues - not just with its recruitment efforts, but also the Department of Health and Wellness is evaluating and identifying opportunities to improve recruitment efforts. We continue to invest and make changes, listening to front-line health care workers. We've increased our investment in compensation, our locum programs. We've taken a number of steps based upon the feedback we've heard and will continue to do so.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, those 5,000 patients are asking for an answer, what to do when they need the services of a family doctor, not how great they're doing and what the recruitment process is. They want to know what to do.

The truth of the matter is, we have a doctor shortage in this province and it's affecting our most vulnerable, our hard-working men and women, and our seniors at their moment of need. The stories that I hear from my constituents each and every day are heartbreaking because the system has failed them and their government is failing them.

To add more stress, people are concerned that this government hasn't shared the plan to replace the lead physician recruiter and the former vice-president of medicine and integrated care for the Nova Scotia Health Authority, if they have a plan to do it. Expanding hospitals while closing others will not address the doctor shortage crisis for most of the 100,000 Nova Scotians.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Will he travel to North Sydney with me on September 23rd to attend a community meeting and hear first-hand what it's like not to have a family doctor? A simple yes or no will do - yes or no.

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as the member should be aware, we established about two years ago an 811 Need a Family Practice Registry. This is a registry that allows Nova Scotians to let the province know that they are in need of primary health care services. We make use of this list to identify where the needs are in communities across the province. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness has the floor.

MR. DELOREY: That information helps us and our partners at the Nova Scotia Health Authority when they are doing recruitment initiatives. We try to match physicians and nurse practitioners to those communities as part of the recruitment process. We've been having success with - even in just the last month, in the month of August - about a dozen new physicians that were recruited by the Health Authority.

We are listening. We are adapting and we are continuing our recruitment efforts to improve primary care access across this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Lands and Forestry. As the province continues to sit on the recommendations of the Lahey report, the same short-sighted policies that the report condemns are continuing to happen.

This week, we learned that in West Hants there is a proposed cut on Crown land in a designated deer-wintering area. Local hunter, Mark Kehoe of Upper Vaughan, says that the remaining patch of mature forest is crucial for deer survival and also important for mainland moose, owls, and martens. The Lahey report . . .

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

Just before we go on to Government Business, the honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development on a point of order.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Drummond School is open for water. It has been open as of yesterday, from 6 to 8. I just wanted to inform . . . (Interruption)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. That is not a point of order. That's a statement of facts.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 50.

Res. No. 50, re Rule 60, Rules and Forms of Procedure - Amendments - notice given Sep. 12/18 - (Hon. G. MacLellan)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I read this resolution on Wednesday, September 12th. It's quite lengthy and involves many subsection changes. Ultimately, what the resolution entails is the establishment of a Standing Committee on Health as well as the merger of the Standing Committees of Natural Resources and Economic Development. I now move that resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: I do want to thank the government and the Government House Leader for bringing this resolution forward. For a number of years, Opposition Parties have been asking for a place to bring their health concerns forward in committee form. Many times, we end up having to discuss it in Public Accounts because it's the only opportunity that the Opposition has to actually bring these issues forward.

As with anything, and I think my colleague, the member for Sackville-Cobequid mentioned it in his scum, yesterday or the day before, the devil is in the details on this one. When we set up a committee, what kind of committee is it? I know the member for Inverness will speak in a few moments, and he'll talk about his experiences in Public Accounts and the way he thinks things should work there.

I do agree with him that there are mechanisms available to us to discuss the issues that are important to us, that come forward from our constituents. When they relate, of course, to health, the majority of them do end up in Public Accounts because it's our only opportunity to bring those forward. There has been no health committee as such. We have had the Community Services Committee, which is the one that should have encompassed health care issues, but because of the limitations of that kind of committee, they were still coming to Public Accounts. It is a dollars-and-cents kind of discussion that we try to have often at that committee.

That being said, I think we have an opportunity here to think things differently when it comes to the supports needed for that kind of committee, the frequency of that kind of committee, and how that committee affects the other committees. We don't want to see a health committee brought forward into the House of Assembly if it's simply a Standing Committee as Human Resources, Natural Resources, and those kinds of things, and then takes away our opportunity in Public Accounts to ask the questions in a different way,

because they are different. There are many details that we're going to have to consider as we go forward.

I hope the government and the Government House Leader are open to a discussion of how this might operate. Is once a month enough? Is there an opportunity for emergency issues to be brought forward? Will we have the capability to compel or subpoena individuals who come forward to it? There are questions that we do have to ensure that this is a new and improved committee for this House of Assembly, because it has been a long time since we have created one here in the House of Assembly.

With those few comments, I know the minister and the Government House Leader will speak a few moments on that. I know I have had the reassurance from them that we will all sit down and have the opportunity to battle out those details.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: It's a pleasure to rise to speak for a few moments on this resolution. I think the creation of a health committee is definitely timely here in Nova Scotia. We know that there have been many challenges over the last number of years within our health sector. I think Nova Scotians want us as elected officials to make sure that we're bringing their concerns to the floor of the Legislature, and not just there but to the committee structure that we have.

As was stated by my colleague, health doesn't fall under any of the Standing Committees that we have currently. Often the default is for Opposition Parties and even government members on Public Accounts to bring forward health initiatives - health topics, health issues - to the Public Accounts Committee so that we can discuss it, we can engage with officials that really do the daily work of providing health services to Nova Scotians. The ability to come forward, answer questions, bring details of a new program - how is the money being spent in health care? Is it appropriate? Is it meeting the needs of Nova Scotians?

When we look at the budget of Health and Wellness where we're over \$4 billion, pushing that 50 per cent mark of our overall budget, it definitely warrants a committee like a health committee to be established in our system that we have here in the Province of Nova Scotia. We know if we look at other jurisdictions, both on a provincial level and on a federal level, health committees have been around for some time. It begs the question: We're glad to see that the initiative by the government here is to create a committee for health, but is there an opportunity for us to truly transform our committee system on the ability to really, truly reflect and respond to the issues that Nova Scotians face every day?

If you look at the House of Commons, for example, there are a number of committees, from safety committees to committees that deal with child and youth initiatives. It's wide open. I've been here 15 years, and I'm glad to be at this point, and we

haven't really had any changes in those 15 years to the committee structure, so I think this is an opportunity for us.

I know that the Government House Leader and my colleague in the Progressive Conservative Party, the House Leader for their Party - we have been working over the last number of years on a number of initiatives to try to make sure that we can get co-operation around issues that Nova Scotians are facing with something that is being delivered in the context of government initiatives or, really, legislative initiatives. We look at the boundary review, for example. We worked extremely hard to try to make sure that each concern of each caucus was met and that the concerns of the constituents that we see and hear from every day - and there has been a number of occasions of that.

I'll be the first one to say that we don't always agree in the Legislature here. I know it's a shock for people, but there are initiatives like this that we should be working together on. It really can show Nova Scotians that yes, we may represent our constituents and we may represent certain political Parties, but I think overall our main priority and concern should be the well-being of our citizens here in Nova Scotia. That means having a good, robust committee structure, public policies, regulations, legislation, all that, and here's an opportunity for us to continue the discussion.

I know this resolution pertains specifically to a health committee, but there may be more changes that are needed. I respect and appreciate the comments from the Government House Leader that we will look at the details of this health committee and the makeup and try to make sure that we can come to some kind of agreement and understanding of how it will look and what the makeup will be. But more importantly, what's at stake here is making sure that Nova Scotians have an ability to see the legislative process not only just in legislation, but in a structure that we have here at the House of Assembly in the Legislature of a good committee structure that can address concerns.

I want to echo the comments of my colleague around the need for the health committee to meet, if it's decided that it's a once-a-month committee that meets like the other committees. Especially in Health and Wellness there are emerging issues of concern that should be addressed quickly, that the committee should potentially have the ability to have an additional meeting so that it's not put off for months on end while we maybe have a subcommittee on agenda setting. It delays things. This committee, of all, should have that ability to react when something happens in one of our communities that we represent in the health sector, or something is of dire concern of having to have an issue resolved.

I would hope that could be within the discussion we have with the Government House Leader, that we make this committee the best possible committee to understand the issues in health, one, but to react to concerns that Nova Scotians bring to all of us as we represent our communities, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to those discussions and I thank the Government House Leader for bringing this forward to address the issues. I know my colleague has a few words on the Public Accounts, so I didn't get into that so much, but I appreciate this opportunity. Thank you.

[11:00 a.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: I would start off by saying that I think this Health Committee is a good idea. I know it won't interfere with the mandate of the Public Accounts Committee. I think the big difference between these two committees is with Public Accounts, people working for government - whether they are in the Health and Wellness Department or with the Nova Scotia Health Authority - will still be able to be called as witnesses to the Public Accounts Committee to testify and to answer questions about how the public's money is spent in delivering health services.

With this new committee, I think the biggest challenge - because when you consider that upwards of 45 per cent of the provincial budget is spent on health, there are going to be many people who want to present to this new committee. People who want to present who may not be on the priority list for government or for the Opposition, for that matter, in terms of solving what many members here refer to as the health care crisis . . . (Interruption) I'm not going to say that.

My point being, Mr. Speaker, that I think one thing the government should be thinking about in setting up this committee is managing the expectations of the many people who are going to want to come in and have their say. The committee is going to have to direct who they want in. They are going to have to prioritize who they want in because there are issues that need to be solved. Some issues are more important than others. I just want to make that point.

Also, the point that as I look over at the vice-chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, about the importance of acknowledging that this committee will not be interfering with the Public Accounts Committee's mandate.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I support this committee. Legislative committees are an important tool. We need to use them more effectively and more broadly. There are a number of committees of the Legislature already; there's a Community Services Committee, Economic Development Committee, Public Accounts Committee, Human Resources Committee, Veterans Affairs Committee.

When you talk to Nova Scotians and you ask them about committees of the Legislature, often their eyes might gloss over a little bit. They don't really understand what happens at a committee. They don't necessarily understand the value of a committee. Even with our Law Amendments Committee, which is the opportunity of Nova Scotians to come to Province House and appear before legislators and talk about their concerns with legislation that is before this House.

Most Nova Scotians really aren't aware of that right they have, of that possibility they have. When you think of the list of committees we have and how they are used and how they are communicated to Nova Scotians, we do need to modernize the structure. As my colleague from Inverness pointed out, a new health committee should not be to the detriment of existing committees in the House already, but it should be in addition.

I'm glad to see the government side moving forward with the acknowledgement that we need to look at our committee structure, glad to see them moving forward by establishing a committee on health. It's a major expenditure of the province, now and into the future, there's major issues. There are major opportunities in health care and Nova Scotians have a lot of ideas on health care and they know where the issues are and they can be part of the solutions.

I also believe that it's time for a committee on education. When we look at how we are offering up opportunities for Nova Scotians to communicate with this Chamber, it is time to refresh and renew and it is time to make sure that Nova Scotians know that they have the ability to appear here and have their voice totally heard and documented - and I do agree that that's an important thing that will ease the conscience of a lot of Nova Scotians. A lot of times, I find in my role as an MLA - as members of this Chamber would know, people don't often go to their MLA's office on their best day. They usually go when there's an issue and they want to be heard on that issue. It doesn't mean that you have to agree with them, but they certainly want to know where they stand.

I find that with my own constituents when they come to my office. I'll listen to them, I'll understand their perspective, and then we'll either agree and I can help, or agree and I can't help, maybe, or disagree. But they want to know where they stand.

I think the committees of the Legislature - the Law Amendments Committee is an opportunity for Nova Scotians to come and have their voice heard. Maybe the government doesn't agree with them, but at least they've been heard. I think if we are always looking to improve the way we deliver services as a government and improve the effectiveness of the money that's spent by government, we can only do that by listening to Nova Scotians, and the committees are a powerful, powerful tool.

I applaud the government for moving forward with a health committee. I'm sure the devil will be in the details of how they structure that committee and how they use that committee, but I think the intention to establish it is a good one. I'm happy to see that. I

would like them to continue with the restructuring of some of the other committees to make sure that they're effective.

I thank the government for moving forward with this committee, and would offer that we would be here to help them structure some of the details of how it may operate. Hopefully we can work together on some of that to make sure that we get the results from such a committee and that Nova Scotians feel welcome to come and present and be part of that and sit in the gallery to watch or listen or whatever the case may be, so that they know how their government is making decisions. That's an important thing.

Thank you to the government for bringing this forward. We're here to help.

MR. SPEAKER: If I recognize the honourable Government House Leader it will be to close the debate.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it's my honour and privilege to speak quickly on this resolution and close debate. I do want to thank the Opposition House Leaders, the member for Pictou East, and the member for Inverness for their comments.

It's certainly nice to know that we're on the same page on issues of this importance. I think it's a chance for Nova Scotians - the public - to have better access and to reform what's been in place for - I think the NDP House Leader, the member for Sackville-Cobequid, said it's been 30 years - a number of decades since these structural changes have taken place.

With the health committee, we know this is an issue that's very important and critical for many Nova Scotians, and having a Standing Committee that reflects those issues is of a critical nature. The time for that is now.

To the member for Pictou East and the member for Inverness, who do sit on Public Accounts, I think that your points about the importance of Public Accounts are well taken. I would argue that maybe this is an opportunity to strengthen what we do there in terms of fiscal management, of seeing numbers and understanding and having a better sense of what's important to Nova Scotians.

The Auditor General, Michael Pickup, has reached out to the House Leaders, and I think to some members of Public Accounts, on having discussions about how he could better serve this House and the people of Nova Scotia. I think that consultation is important. I would love to hear from him directly about how he sees Public Accounts changing, improving, altering its format in whatever way, or how the agenda's set - any of those things, to encompass what he sees as the critical pieces of information - presentations, presenters, topics that are relevant for Public Accounts.

Having a separation between Public Accounts and a health committee certainly doesn't mean that we completely eliminate those things from each other's mandate, so to speak. There will be opportunities for presentations and for things to come forward at Public Accounts that may be health-related, but certainly with respect to the health committee, that would be the place where a lot of those health issues are housed and heard.

In closing, this will be an exercise in co-operation. I've said to the media and to my colleagues, the House Leaders, that we have no agenda here. The only reason we brought this forward over the summer was to talk about some of the committee forms and structure and reforms that we could bring to the House. Combining economic development and natural resources made sense with where we're at in terms of our resource development here in the province and, of course, the health committee which has been a live debate and a live request for a long time now. So it made sense to do this and that we would do this in principle with this resolution and backfill with some of the details.

I certainly trust that my colleagues opposite, the House Leaders, and I can sit down and talk about some of these issues. Quite frankly for me, I looked at the health committee being a status-quo Standing Committee only because I wouldn't know the difference and I don't sit on Public Accounts Committee. I don't know what the structures are that are drastically different other than, of course, the public presentation, the chairman's role, etc. I think that this is an opportunity to talk about things like schedule, composition, how the agenda is set, all of those things that matter to the Opposition, of course, the government and the people of Nova Scotia. I certainly agree that this is the chance to get that right and make some of these changes.

With respect to our conversations with House Leaders, the member for Inverness referenced managing expectations. I think that in some of that sort of structure setting and understanding what the best way is to proceed with this committee and how we can improve Public Accounts Committee, I think that's how we manage expectations by getting the structure right and having a format that is workable for all sides of the House and the stakeholders who will want to come present to any of our committees, quite frankly.

I think this is a good chance to work together on this. I've given our commitment to the Opposition that we're only in this for the right reasons in terms of bolstering these committees and having something that Nova Scotians can access when information and issues are critical and dire and they want to get something to the floor of the House and in front of all Nova Scotians. So, this is a great opportunity for us. I do appreciate the Opposition's cooperation on this. I know that we'll sit together very quickly to start to form how we're going to go about this and some of the detail that we need to finalize this committee and get this up and running as soon as possible.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I close debate on this resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: Would all those in favour of the motion please Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 16.

Bill No. 16 - Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 16, the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identify Protection Act, be read a second time.

It's my pleasure to speak to this bill today. This is new legislation for Nova Scotia and, with it, we will become only the third province in the country to have legislation that prohibits the use of harmful interventions on young people who are 2SLGBTIQ+. This legislation will protect the rights of young Nova Scotians. The act will specifically prohibit the use of practices that would try to change the sexual orientation or gender identity of a young person under the age of 19.

These harmful practices have no place in our province. These are not legitimate services. There is a pressing and substantial need to protect young people from these harms. Earlier this summer, a practice inappropriately referred to as conversion therapy was in the headlines when it was reported in the media that a Bible camp had invited speakers to the camp from outside the country to talk about this disturbing practice. I think most Nova Scotians were deeply troubled by this. I know I was and I know my friends and colleagues in government and in Opposition felt the same. In fact, to the credit of all members of this House, we are all galvanized to act on this matter.

I would be hard pressed to think of a time when all three Parties introduced legislation within days of each other to address an issue of such mutual concern. I congratulate each of the Opposition Parties as well as my own colleagues, advocates, and ordinary Nova Scotians for recognizing the dangers to our youth and for their quick action to look for a legislative remedy to this clear threat to young Nova Scotians who identified

as 2SLGBTIQ+. Although our bills may differ, we are all one on this. We recognize the threat to our children and we are taking steps to protect them.

So, as I mentioned, the news of this harmful practice service served as a wake-up call for all in the province. It caused us to ask the question: Are we doing enough to protect our friends, neighbours and family members in the 2SLGBTIQ+ community. It has especially highlighted the fact that as a province we did not have legislation in place to better protect young people, some of whom are at a vulnerable stage of their adolescence, and for others still exploring and discovering their sexual orientation and gender identity.

[11:15 a.m.]

These practices and interventions imply that being 2SLGBTIQ+, two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, or plus, is an affliction. We all know this is not true. These interventions are harmful to both the mental and physical health of young people and have been widely condemned by human rights and credible health organizations quite literally around the world: the World Health Organization, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Medical Association, the Canadian Psychological Association, as well as many others.

As I told the media when we introduced this bill on Tuesday, a person's sexual orientation is something to be respected, especially in a proudly diverse and inclusive province like Nova Scotia. We are a province that cherishes and embraces the uniqueness of every individual. We want our youth to be proud of who they are and to know they have their community and their government standing behind them.

This legislation will specifically prohibit people in a position of trust or authority from providing this discredited and illegitimate intervention to individuals under the age of majority, which in Nova Scotia is 19. This will protect the emotional and psychological health of children and youth, we know a vulnerable group in our society.

The bill will also prohibit regulated health professionals from offering this intervention to young people. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia has declared strongly its opposition to this kind of intervention and that it has no place in the practice of medicine. Our legislation supports that stance and makes it clear that these interventions are also prohibited by law.

The legislation we are debating today will also enshrine in the law that these false and hurtful interventions are not medically insurable services within Nova Scotia. In addition, the bill will ensure that no public money will be used to support organizations providing these harmful practices. It makes it clear that substitute decision makers and parents or guardians cannot consent to these practices.

Importantly, the bill specifically protects and excludes services that are aimed to support, counsel, and help people cope, as well as gender-confirming surgeries and associated services. This is the right thing to do.

We consulted on this legislation. We received important input and feedback from members of the 2SLGBTIQ+ community, the health sector, and academia. Based on what we heard, we have landed on this bill as it is presented to this House.

Some have said that this legislation, once passed, will be the most progressive in the country, and that's an accurate assessment. No other legislation exists in the country addressing people in positions of authority or in trust prohibiting the use of public funds to cover the cost of any change effort.

There has been some criticism over the exceptions outlined in the bill, and I acknowledge those. Even some people who strongly support this bill would have liked for us to have gone even further by making no exceptions to anyone under 19. The fact is, health laws across Canada have to be respected. They are set out by the Supreme Court of Canada and have recognized that in some situations people under the age of majority can be capable of consenting to decisions about their own health. It is a well understood health-law concept that a mature minor can be capable of giving consent on their own care as early as 12 years of age.

Our legislation goes further and has limited the exception to those 16 and over in order to protect them from this harmful practice. We believe this is a balance to ensure we are protecting young people while respecting their autonomy at a certain level of maturity.

Our provision is both stronger than the Ontario legislation and the legislation proposed in the Progressive Conservative bill because we've set that exception at those 16 and over. Both the Ontario legislation and the Progressive Conservative bill have exceptions, but they are silent on the age and therefore leave people between the ages of 12 and 16 vulnerable.

The legislation we have tabled is a good piece of legislation and we believe that. The community has provided feedback and endorses that. It strikes the right balance. It is strong, it is progressive, but it is not so rigid that it takes away the rights of mature individuals who are deemed able to give consent to make decisions about their own care.

With this legislation, Mr. Speaker, we are demonstrating clear and unequivocal support for and a commitment to maintaining the rights of the 2SLGBTIQ+ individuals. With it we are standing against harmful social attitudes, the negative historical narratives, and the widespread discrimination of this community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: It is with great honour and privilege that I rise to speak on Bill No. 16, respecting sexual orientation and gender identity protection. I just want to say that I am thrilled that this is here. This is something that has been on my radar for a long time. We really have to look at this as a non-partisan bill. This bill has everything to do with human decency. I'm so pleased to know that all Parties in this Chamber agree to ban gay conversion therapy.

I was asked in an interview a few days ago if I felt, why is everyone introducing this bill after we've been out speaking on it for months. I said you know what, it really doesn't matter who brings the bill to this floor, it's that we work together collectively and create the most comprehensive bill possible to ensure that we are protecting our youth and ban this really horrific practice.

Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of full disclosure, I will share a story with the members about my very first Gay Pride parade. I believe it was 1991. I was living in Portland, Maine, working for the Department of Tourism and Culture for the Province of Nova Scotia. A friend of mine who lived and grew up in Maine asked if I wanted to hang with them and their friends on this particular Saturday, so I attended my first local Gay Pride parade.

Eager to know what this was all about, I happily joined them and I have to admit that it is an experience and memory that was the most fabulous, jovial, sincere, hilarious, meaningful experience of my life. After this experience my circle of friends became more diverse, which allowed me to innately open my heart to a world that perhaps I truly wasn't familiar with growing up and living in rural Nova Scotia, which by the way, I loved but it certainly did open up my heart.

It was in the 1990s that I learned about gay conversion therapy. For those of you who would like to know what it is, I can explain. It is a practice of trying to change individual sexual orientation from homosexual or bisexual, using psychological or spiritual interventions. There are secular organizations that promote conversion therapy, as well as fundamentalist religious groups.

I have friends who have gone through gay conversion therapy. I am not certain I can even try or put into words to describe how this experience played a colossal negative role in their lives. We all know, the statistics are out there, that many youths struggling with their sexuality or have been made to go to counselling therapy end up depressed, usually become addicted to alcohol/drugs. The suicidal rates are skyrocketing and it's scary. There is much evidence to prove that such interventions are actually truly harmful and, as a result, conversion therapies should not be part of any behavioural health treatment of children or adolescents.

In 2012, the World Health Organization wrote a physician statement that included that reparative or conversion therapies have no medical indication and represent a severe threat to the health and human rights of the affected persons. They constitute unjustifiable

practices that should be denounced and subject to adequate sanctions and actual penalties. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is a pretty solid statement from the World Health Organization.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, there is no greater gift than feeling a sense of belonging, and I often say there is no greater freedom than the freedom to be yourself and to know that you are unconditionally loved for who you authentically are.

I want to just let everyone know that there's this incredible movie coming out in November. It's called *Boy Erased* and Russell Crowe and Nicole Kidman are in it. And if you have an opportunity to Google and look at the trailer of this movie, I'm certain if you have an opportunity to go watch it, it will be heart-wrenching actually.

We all know that Ontario, Manitoba, Vancouver too, have banned this practice and my understanding is that there are many provinces where we are today, and that is to find the most comprehensive bill possible. I like the bill; I'm very, very happy with the bill. I'm a little concerned about the age but, as stated, I think there are some federal reasons around that. It's unfortunate because I do think it should be 19 and under.

Together we will be protecting future generations from this practice and making our relationships stronger and sincere with our gay youth and the LGBTQ2 community - and we are, together, doing the right thing. I look forward to listening to some of the presenters that I know will be coming to Law Amendments. Thank you so much. We are doing the right thing here today and I thank the minister.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the Minister of Justice for bringing forward this very important and essential legislation - an Act Respecting Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection. I'm not going to say too much that repeats what my colleagues have already said. We know that this is a bill that's important to pass and pass quickly for the protection of Nova Scotians. I really appreciate that the government has listened to the calls from the Opposition on this issue and has tabled this legislation. Clearly, it's a matter that is important to everyone here.

From the perspective of some people - and we talk about living in Facebook bubbles and that kind of thing these days - it seems that we've come a long way when it comes to LGBTQ rights and the protections of LGBTQ communities. When I was in high school in the 1990s - I know you don't believe that - there was no one openly queer in my high school. Now, a generation later, we see GSAs in many schools across the province and the country.

We see young people who believe that being gay or trans is no big deal. You see the streets packed with members of the queer community and their allies - their families, their children - out at Pride Parades throughout the country. Our Pride Parade is an amazing

celebration here in Halifax. This year I was especially taken by the many, many young people standing on the streets with T-shirts that said things like - parents wearing T-shirts that said things like “I’m proud of my queer kid.” A great one that I saw a young woman wearing, a T-shirt that said, “My mother knows.” I was very moved by those shirts. It’s a different time.

When I posted information on my Facebook page about this legislation, there were many comments where people were shocked that this type of therapy actually happens, and why do we even need this legislation because, surely to God, this doesn’t happen in Canada, in our society. But, of course, we know that it does happen. We know that with all of the media attention around the camp in Pugwash this summer but, also, we know from first-hand accounts of people in our province who have been subjected, and who are subjected, to conversion therapy. We also know that it’s not just young people that this is happening to. People who are coming out or struggling with gender identity or sexual orientation - this happens at all ages, Mr. Speaker. We need to make sure that this so-called “therapy,” this practice, does not happen to anybody.

We want to make sure that we’re putting protections in place for . . . to anybody. We want to make sure that we’re putting protections in place for all Nova Scotians. I agree that youth are particularly vulnerable to this, but we do know of many, many situations where people who are over the age of majority are also being subjected to this dangerous, harmful and, of course, unnecessary practice.

[11:30 a.m.]

I also have concerns about a couple of aspects about the bill. Before I talk about that, I do want to say that one of the strongest points of the bill that I really appreciate is Clause 7, where it says, “No person in a position of trust or authority towards a young person under the age of nineteen years shall make any change effort with respect to the young person.” I think that’s a really important clause. This will make sure that camp counsellors are not allowed to engage in this kind of practice, teachers, religious leaders I would suspect, and I think it’s an essential part. I thank you for including it.

Like my colleague, the leader of the Progressive Conservatives, my biggest concern is around the age of 16 to 18, that age of consent. I also understand why it’s in there, but I have been talking to many people in the community who really want to see that go. I look forward to continuing talks with people in the queer community, listening to folks who show up at Law Amendments Committee. I know there will be many. There are many people who care about this legislation and want it to pass quickly, and I look forward to working with all parties to make this bill as strong and as effective as it can be.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues from both Pictou West and Dartmouth North for their comments. I think we all, as I mentioned earlier, are looking to achieve the same outcomes and, although there may be a differing of opinion around the age, we do have to respect some of the decisions out of the Supreme Court of Canada around mature minors - whether we agree with it or not. I accept the thoughts and the positions that my colleagues have advanced. The challenge that we would face if we actually were to remove the clause that references the exception for 16-year-olds, 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds by default then, all of 12-year-olds to 18-year-olds, inclusive, become vulnerable to these most inappropriate practices.

I would say to all of us in the Legislature and to those Nova Scotians, particularly those who are impacted from the 2SLGBTQ+ community, this has been an education for many people. I have had a number of people stop me in the street and endorse the discussions that all three Parties are advancing. This is not a political position. This is very apolitical. This is a concern that many people have identified and addressed and support the legislation.

For the benefit of all of us, I would only offer that the terminology and language, as inappropriate as it is - conversion therapy - is terminology to which the 2SLGBTQ+ community actually takes exception to. I am very careful in limiting the use of that terminology. I would only ask that in our future discussions we avoid that terminology because, in many ways, it is actually endorsing it as a recognized therapy.

The language that Kate Shewan and others have shared with me - they've been very helpful through multiple discussions around these types of very sensitive issues - the language that we are using to displace the common reference is "sexual orientation gender identity change efforts." If we could use that terminology going forward, it would be helpful to the discussion.

I know in part on each and every one of us, a little more knowledge and understanding of the challenges that our adolescents face and the challenges that this community faces.

With that, Mr. Speaker, and those few comments, I move to close debate on Bill No. 16.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 16. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 23.

Bill No. 23 - Canadian Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Trade.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure to rise and speak on this bill, the Canadian Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act. Obviously, with respect to NAFTA, some of the international partnerships and trade agreements we're working towards and involved in, while this seems to be a pretty standard piece of legislation, an Act within the Federation, it's certainly one that's important and that keeps Nova Scotia in good standing, a good position as it relates to our sister provinces and territories in terms of trade and the interprovincial trade that happens here within Canada.

I'm very proud to be on my feet today to talk about this particular piece of legislation. The Canadian Free Trade Agreement entered into force officially on July 1, 2017, after a federal, provincial and territorial negotiation to strengthen and modernize the agreement on internal trade. The agreement works to enhance interprovincial commerce, a key driver of economic growth, something Nova Scotia supports wholeheartedly.

This legislation meets our province's obligation under the agreement to ensure it is enforceable in Nova Scotia. All provinces and territories and the federal government have committed to a similar enforcement mechanism to be in place by December 31, 2018.

At its core, Canada's new internal trade framework is designed to do four things: enhance the flow of goods and services, investment, and labour mobility; eliminate technical barriers to trade; greatly expand procurement coverage; and promote regulatory co-operation within Canada.

Trade between provinces and territories plays a central role in supporting jobs and economic growth in all corners of this great country. In fact, it amounts to \$370 billion, representing roughly 18 per cent of Canada's GDP.

The domestic market is very important to Nova Scotia businesses and in 2016 over half of our trade was interprovincial, totalling more than \$8.4 billion in export of goods and services. That's why it is of critical importance that I move that Bill No. 23 be now read a second time, Mr. Speaker.

Goods flow from Nova Scotia businesses to other provinces, not just to be consumed here but also to be used in other provinces and other products destined for international markets. We are working to ensure our province has the workforce it needs to compete in the global economy and by removing barriers to labour mobility. It helps Nova Scotians work in other parts of Canada. It also enables certified professionals from across Canada to live and work here in Nova Scotia.

It is important that we look for economic growth opportunities and this modernized agreement helps us do just that. To put it simply, Mr. Speaker, fewer barriers to trade, investment and labour mobility within Canada creates jobs and opportunities for our province.

We recognize the critical importance of a domestic market to our economy and we are viewed as leaders in advancing the core objectives of the CFTA. In fact, this summer at the meeting of Canadian Premiers, the Premier of Nova Scotia agreed to take a leadership role in advancing accelerated trade agenda with Manitoba Premier Pallister.

I am also looking forward to assuming the Chair role of the Ministerial Committee on Internal Trade in January 2019, where I will lead my federal, provincial, territorial counterparts to further address internal trade barriers.

With respect to the legislation, the proposed Act focuses on implementing dispute resolution articles. The proposed legislation takes steps to ensure dispute resolution borders are legally enforceable, meaning that if a panel awarded monetary penalties against the government, the order would have the same force in Nova Scotia as an order of the local courts. This feature of the agreement is an incentive for all jurisdictions to abide by the agreement's rules and that benefits business, Mr. Speaker. It also addresses certain administrative issues like appointing dispute resolution adjudicators.

There are also labour mobility compliance provisions that balance the interest of regulators in setting and enforcing professional standards with a need to ensure that government's obligations under the agreement are met. The labour mobility provisions reflect the CFTA obligations that enable individuals to move throughout Canada in their certified occupation and encourage the provincial alignment of professional standards. These are the same obligations regulators have had since the 2009 amendments to the AIP.

By formalizing them in legislation, however, we can add new tools to help regulators and government meet these very important obligations. For instance, there shouldn't be any reason why an architect or an engineer cannot easily move from anywhere in Canada to Nova Scotia and be able to meet the certification requirements so they can begin working here.

National and local stakeholder groups are advocates of this modernized internal trade agreement and were engaged throughout the negotiation process. In order for businesses to benefit from CFTA, compliance with the agreement's obligations by all jurisdictions and enforceable dispute settlement is very much necessary.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, this legislation accomplishes three main goals. It helps the province meet its obligation by making dispute resolution enforceable; it signifies the province's acceptance of the legislative requirements and moves Nova Scotia forward to help improve the province's economic growth and export growth; and, it supports the

government's commitment to encourage interprovincial trade by promoting Nova Scotia's trade interest, cultivating existing ties, and advancing new trade opportunities for our province.

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

MS. ALANA PAON: I thank the honourable minister for his commentaries on an Act to implement the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, and I also thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to give these few words towards this bill.

A market-based economic growth is generally very favoured obviously by a Progressive Conservative Government. It can be a double-edged sword, however, when workers from other provinces come work here or if outside companies win contracts and we're not prepared to be able to bid at the same standards.

A key battleground is movement of alcohol, a growing sector in Nova Scotia, and provinces which have exclusive government-run sales work hard to protect their market share from other provinces' products and prices. The Supreme Court recently upheld New Brunswick's right to limit alcohol entry from Quebec. So we all like to know how this agreement and legislation will address that. There are specific timelines set out in this agreement. Yet these appear to be in the creation of processes and groups primarily. So I have a question, and we should all have a question, about how this bill actually accomplishes and what it actually accomplishes for Nova Scotia businesses and workers.

I have a lot of questions overall about this bill. This bill, obviously, at the end of the day has a really huge impact on our province and it's extremely important that it's rolled out well and that we adhere to timelines. I'm not sure exactly what the actual plan is regarding the enactment of this bill. I do know that we're already behind schedule with regard to timelines of putting certain things into effect.

I know that the CFTA came into effect in July 2017 and we have not adhered obviously to putting together some of the timeline requests by a year later. So we're already behind schedule. The federal Trudeau Government signed off on the agreement in July 2017 and we're required to have legislation to be in effect obviously by the end of December of this year. So I'm really hoping that this is just not something that we're pushing through really quickly here without having an overall plan.

There seems to be an underlying theme with this government of having, you know, these grand ideas and ideas are all well and fine. However, if you don't have a plan in place to make sure that you can implement obviously the changes that you are putting forward, it causes hardship and undue stress on the people of Nova Scotia.

We've been burned in the past. I know that voting for Liberal bills that appear to be supported by our principles only to find out that there's very little happening beyond

the passage of the bill, or that it actually has made things quite worse. My Liberal predecessor, for example, proudly passed an economic development bill that trumpeted the fulfillment of a campaign promise made by the Premier, and it extended the film tax incentive credit. I think we all remember what happened after that.

[11:45 a.m.]

I was reminded of that yesterday when I attended the opening for the Atlantic International Film Festival. It was a very proud moment for me to actually go to the train station yesterday, after the House rose, and pick up my 28-year-old son who used to work in the film industry here in Nova Scotia. Unfortunately so many of my other friends and colleagues - as I used to work in the film industry myself - have had to move to other places within Canada to be able to continue their work because of the decimation that happened in our film industry.

I'm sure that perhaps my colleagues across the floor wouldn't agree with me, but with the spending of the same amount of money basically, currently in the film industry from the province, we're definitely not getting the same return on our investment. It's nice to see that my son has come home for a while. It's nice to see that there are still some people in that theatre last night who are here and still able to work in the film industry, but it saddened me that there were so many other faces that were not there, Mr. Speaker, any longer.

A few short months later, after this government made that promise to extend the film tax incentive credit, the same government gutted it, and with it the multi-layer return on investment. It's quite ironic, really - the government missed the economic point by a country mile and now they spend as much as ever on the industry but so many fewer people live and work here year-round in that industry any longer. So while it is so tempting to jump at the possibility that this bill will actually lead to a better economic outcome in this province, we need government to engage in this debate and answer some key questions.

All members in this House, I think, would agree with me that we need to see more opportunities to see Nova Scotia businesses across Canada. In enhancing business in this province - making them stronger and interprovincial trade - it actually gives them a platform to be stronger on an international stage as well. But will this legislation accomplish that? I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker. Is this legislation another media relations plan? I'm not 100 per cent sure about that either.

I know we're being pushed and there's an obligation again to put this Act and this bill into place. We have an obligation to do that, to the rest of the provinces in Canada, to make certain that this is in place before the end of this year but, again, I would like to see what the rollout plan is on this. It's all well and fine to put legislation forward in this House, but what is the plan to enact this on a provincial scale?

We still have some of the highest commercial tax rates and personal tax rates that we have across Canada. It makes it very difficult for businesses, and even just regular people to survive here in this province, and that's just the reality of things at the moment. We don't talk, I think, enough about what the average person is going through in trying to just make ends meet on a daily basis. When you have higher taxes that you have to pay on a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly basis, it makes it really difficult to think that you can be competitive on a national scale.

We do have a growing need for skilled tradespeople in Nova Scotia and our strong post-secondary education is important; it's very important. We have a wonderful post-secondary education in this province. We should all be very proud of it. It's important for Nova Scotia to be part of a national labour mobility program which will be part of this agreement. We need to attract more workers to come back home from other provinces, but this is a vicious circle, Mr. Speaker. With the jobs numbers declining in this province and no jobs plan - which I said again yesterday and I'll state it again and again, we have no jobs plans for this province - what worker is going to be attracted back to Nova Scotia? Who is it that we're exactly trying to attract back to our province?

This bill applies broadly to workers who hold certificates, licences, registrations, or other forms of official recognition issued to the worker by a regulatory authority and a Canadian jurisdiction, so let's consider that for a moment. Tradespersons, skilled workers, doctors, nurses, health professionals - without a plan for jobs in this province, who is the government exactly trying to target? Just as important, which sectors and workers in Nova Scotia are left the most vulnerable?

Mr. Speaker, government messaging needs to be stronger when it comes to supporting businesses with their labour needs and what programs are available to secure workers to grow our economy. We are not hitting our targets with regard to our immigration strategy. Government brought in legislation because the agreement again was signed in 2017 and it requires the implementation of this legislation to be in force by December 31st of this year - 18 months for this government to simply update the existing law. I want to know, when does the rubber actually meet the road?

The Government appears to have had no idea when the regulations will be ready when the agreement came into effect in July 2017. So the Trade Minister is responsible for the CFTA, I read this in the Act, and the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education for labour mobility. To me this diffuses the accountability even further.

Mr. Speaker, I know that we have to go through Law Amendments Committee with this bill and I really look forward to the presentations that will come from stakeholders and I certainly hope that people will come forward. I look forward to hearing from them. This is an extremely important piece of legislation that we are bringing forward in this province. Again, without a plan for how we're going to be able to roll out jobs in this province, without a plan of how to put more people to work, I'm really concerned about how this

will affect us at the end of the day. The trust me kind of messaging that is coming from government, to me anyway, is no longer an acceptable response.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I wish for all of us to be able to actually have an informed decision when it comes to being able to put legislation, not only forward, but before it's enacted in this province. I said it a couple of days ago and I'll say it again, these are such important pieces of legislation, they affect every single household in this province, they will affect every single business in this province. They will affect us for a long time to come.

We are under an obligation federally to be able to enact our obligations within Canada to the other provinces. We need to make it 100 per cent certain that we get this right, so I look forward to further debate and I look forward to further presentations from those people who do come forward.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to rise and speak for a few moments on Bill No. 23. The Canadian Free Trade Implementation Bill is actually a requirement of the agreement that our province signed onto, and is working under, well over a year ago. I believe last July is when the province started to abide by the agreement that was signed by jurisdictions across the province.

One of the criticisms I do have about seeing this piece of legislation in this bill now is that we've had two sessions of the legislative process that I think would have been a better timeline for a piece of legislation like this to be brought in. Of course, having legislation prior to actually doing what's in the agreement probably would be optimal, but I understand how complex it is around getting agreements across the jurisdictions here in the province and in the country and of course with the federal government.

Saying that, as I said, it's been well over a year. My concern with the timing would be that if this legislation isn't up to par or if it doesn't meet the requirements of the agreement that we signed onto, this is the only sitting we have by the end of the year. By the end of December 31st, provinces across the country who have signed onto the agreement are required to have standalone legislation that reflects what's in that agreement. If there is an issue that is unforeseen as we debate this, we would have to have an emergency session of the Legislature, to be called back to address it. If we were to have seen it last Spring or last Fall, those who will be impacted by this, and there are many.

Many Nova Scotians may hear Bill. No. 23, the Canadian Free Trade Implementation Act and say, well that doesn't pertain to me, I'm not into exports, I don't own a business. But it does affect them. It does have ramifications on their daily lives and on the flow of the economy here in Nova Scotia. That's one of the concerns, the timing. We're only three months shy of the drop-dead date of the requirement of having a stand-

alone piece of legislation. Not much time to change it, if there is a need for change in the future.

From what we understand, this legislation is based on the British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island model. National cooperation is important, especially with this trade agreement, but regional cooperation is extremely important for our province. It's something that previous governments recognized a number of years ago and something that has worked extremely hard to make sure that, as a region - especially the Atlantic Canadian region - we work together, that we team-up to make sure we're not left out on some of the major national issues and discussion that happens around trade and other things that affect Nova Scotia.

I know that in government, I worked extremely hard with my colleagues in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador to try to make sure we improve the way we do business in Nova Scotia and improve the way we provide services for our citizens. We want to make sure that we can provide the services here in Nova Scotia, we can support the economy and our business community here in Nova Scotia as other jurisdictions do, maybe the bigger jurisdictions in Upper Canada, or out West. That's why I think a number of previous governments and this Government, I believe, is working in the same manner of making sure that regional cooperation is top of mind when we are looking at how do we best serve the citizens of our province.

One of the things in this bill, and the requirement of the agreement, is to make sure that we establish a monetary penalty for any disputes and to make sure we have a dispute resolution mechanism in place. That's an interesting topic and interesting component of this because that's what is very much at play with the NAFTA trade agreement with the United States. The United States and President Donald Trump want to get rid of that dispute mechanism that we have for NAFTA. It's been a bone of contention with the current president of the United States.

That's an extremely important part of any trade agreement because if there is a disagreement, of course in Nova Scotia, we're going to stand behind the processes, the public policy, the requirements, and regulations that we've put in place to, hopefully, best serve the people in Nova Scotia. But for example, if there is a disagreement between us and New Brunswick, or Prince Edward Island, or Quebec or Ontario, or the other provinces, that there is a fair way to try to have a resolution to that conflict or that issue at play.

I don't like to jump into what's going on with federal politics, but I hope the federal government stands strong with the ability to make sure that the dispute resolution mechanism is still there in whatever comes out of the NAFTA talks or whatever President Trump wants to call it in the end because he doesn't like that NAFTA name.

Here in Nova Scotia, it's important for us. We don't have to look too far, we look to the north of us, to look at how trade impacts the lives of our citizens. I think the most notable case over the last couple of years was that of Mr. Comeau in New Brunswick who went to Quebec and purchased a larger quantity of alcohol than was permitted by the law and transported it back across the border and into New Brunswick. He was charged because there are limits set on how much alcohol you can bring into Nova Scotia, into

And transported back across the province into New Brunswick, and of course he was charged because there are limits set on how much alcohol you can bring into Nova Scotia, into New Brunswick, and into Canada if you're coming from the States. Mr. Comeau took his fight to the Supreme Court.

[12:00 noon]

It's interesting to see that the ruling from the Supreme Court indicated that Canadians do not have a constitutional right to buy and transport alcohol across borders without impediment - meaning that the responsibility and the authority is with the provinces. So, the provinces can stand up and say this is what you're allowed to bring into the province.

We know with that justice panel, it indicated that the provinces have the right to restrict the importation of goods from another province as long as the primary aim of that restriction is not to impede, which you have to go to lawyers and figure out what that really means. Was Mr. Comeau's ability to transport the alcohol - was the quantity he had something that fell within his right?

It clearly shows from the Supreme Court of Canada that the jurisdictions, the provinces, the territories, have the ability to make those limitations and put restrictions in place when it comes to trade, the economy, and the transportation of goods across our borders.

We know in the last number of years how important that is to allow for our economy here, especially our wine industry - and now our growing beer industry that we have here in the province - that there is the ability for those individuals, those business owners, to get their product out and across the country. Having strong, transparent, and open trade agreements will hopefully allow us to do that.

That's why Nova Scotia should be concerned and should have their antennae up when we see trade agreements and trade legislation like this on the books here in Nova Scotia, because it does impact their daily lives. For example, if you're a Nova Scotian who moved across to another province, hopefully with this agreement and with some of the breakdowns of the barriers that we've had in the past, you'll be able to get product from home, for example. If it's a wine that you like from the Valley, you'll be able to get that.

I know a lot of work has gone into breaking down those barriers over the last number of years. I think there was a commitment from the Premiers to look at beer itself in Atlantic Canada, on how we harmonize and how we make sure that we have the same limitations that we have.

We know New Brunswick has moved in the direction to look at lower beer prices, but Nova Scotia is still pretty high. I'm not saying we need to go like Ontario - and their Premier there who leaves a lot to be desired when you have people in the gallery being handcuffed and removed because they disagree with you, but I won't go there either.

I think it's important and I know Nova Scotians recognize that the government has a role to play and that an agreement like this Act should hopefully open up the possibilities of ensuring that people are heard.

The labour mobility is also extremely important. We know over the last number of decades we have had many, many Nova Scotians who leave our province to work in other jurisdictions, most notably going out West, working in Alberta and in other provinces. We need to make sure that when they do that - say they finish their training here through NSCC or if they're in that sector where the education requirement is there - that we have the ability to get them back here, if they are doing their work and they're getting their training in another jurisdiction that it's easy for them to come home and continue to work in that field.

I come from a field of paramedicine that for many years was very restrictive of where you could go and work, and then if you did choose, you had to jump through many hoops and many requirements. There are still some barriers, but for the most part through co-operation and understanding of the educational system of how you become a medic - for example, in Atlantic Canada - that transition is much easier.

Especially in Nova Scotia, I know that there is a requirement and there are some voids in communities. We need to attract other paramedics to come to the province to make sure that we have coverage here, but vice versa, if you do choose to leave the province, that the education you received here, the training you received here, is recognized across the country.

We look forward to this going through the process. We're putting a lot of confidence in the government (1) that this Act meets the requirement of the overall Canadian Free Trade Agreement that we signed onto - there's nothing we can do, it's a done deal - but (2) that it reflects in showing that Nova Scotians' best interests are being taken care of here, both on the labour mobility aspect but, more importantly, the economy aspect, so that we don't have any barriers for business or the economy here in Nova Scotia.

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

The honourable Minister of Business.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I thank my honourable colleagues across the floor for their comments. I can appreciate the importance of trade, obviously in my portfolio, CFTA; again, all the international agreements that we're part of and the co-operation that we share with many jurisdictions and many regions across the world. For those watching at home who are riveted by the CFTA discussion and debate, I want them to not worry too much about the fear that's been stricken here by the Opposition. Nothing's melting down here, there's nothing to be concerned about. There's not going to be an emergency session overnight. The economy's not going to fall apart. This is okay.

The CFTA and the co-operation that has taken place, it was in fact in place as of last July. This is about the legislative requirements to make sure that this agreement has teeth, to make sure that when our businesses are in other jurisdictions, they're protected as well, and to make sure that we're being stewards of the market-based trade that we're all very proud of. The member for Sackville-Cobequid referenced Chapter 19 of the dispute resolution; this is exactly it. This formal legislation gives us the ability, and cements us in the process, under CFTA, whereby we're participants in that. If it's not, for some reason, which it will be - if it's not fully proclaimed by December 31, 2018 - it's not going to nullify the agreement. Nothing's going to happen with our economy, with our businesses. That's the worst-case scenario. It means that we wouldn't be formally part of the dispute resolution mechanism. But we will be, Mr. Speaker.

The pieces around the flow of goods and services, and all the things that are connected with interprovincial trade inside this country in terms of trade with provinces and territories, it's not impacted by this legislation. This is to give teeth. This is to give protection to our businesses with respect to legislative, solidified rules around dispute resolution and how we use the Legislature to put that in law so that when we compete in other jurisdictions, and when others compete here, there's an absolute clarity around what exactly the rules are, how fines are imposed, and the like.

Again, all the specifics around CFTA have already been settled and figured out, and B.C., New Brunswick, Northwest Territories, and Saskatchewan haven't put the CFTA legislation into force yet either, so we're not the only province. We're not the ones threatening this whole federation to fall apart and be in chaos over trade, Opposition, so we're okay here.

The members did reference, and rightly so, one of the key pieces for this and the reason why we had - even though the agreement was in place on July 1, 2017 - the reason we have until December 31st of this year is to make sure that we are absolutely crystal clear on some issues. One of those issues is, without question, labour mobility. Working with my colleague from Labour and Advanced Education to be sure that the regulators in certain sectors - and the NDP House Leader referenced paramedics, and that is a great example of the certifications and how the flow of those certifications and ensuring that someone can come to Nova Scotia, or a Nova Scotia paramedic can work somewhere else, is defined,

crystal clear, and the fact that there is legislative teeth to support that mobility. That was a key part of this.

To be very clear, we're not behind on this. We're very much in the game and the timelines. We will meet all our requirements for the CFTA dispute resolution piece.

Finally, I just want to reference alcohol. This is one that is very prominent and important to everybody in Nova Scotia, and all our provinces and territories are concerned about this flow. That's why the Canadian Premiers identified our Premier as being a champion in this particular area. He will work with Manitoba's Premier Pallister to look at these issues, to work with the other provinces and territories, to make sure that we've got a fair, open, transparent system for how alcohol flows from the personal-consumption perspective.

That's important, and we'll be a leader on that. We will answer any questions moving through this debate, but I want to be very clear: Nova Scotia's been a leader with respect to NAFTA, working with the national government's Minister Freeland. Our input, our positioning, our support for the Canadian story has been rock solid. It's no different here, with interprovincial trade. The CFTA is something that we've been part of. We've been champions for getting this right.

This particular piece of legislation is the formal and last part of cementing it within our province's laws, so we all follow the rules of the game for all provinces and territories in Canada. That's exactly what this bill does.

With those few remarks, I will close debate on second reading of Bill No. 23.

MR. SPEAKER: Just before we get to the motion, I'm obligated to remind the minister and all members of this House that we will not be directly addressing the millions of viewers of Legislative Television and will keep our comments through the Chair.

The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 23. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 29.

Bill No. 29 - Labour Standards Code.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 29, an Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, the Labour Standards Code, be read for a second time.

I would like to take some time to share with you amendments we're making to the Labour Standards Code, which provide employees with enhanced leaves and better support and care for their families. Nova Scotians want to feel secure in their jobs when they need to care for a new child or a loved one. These changes will not only support Nova Scotians and their families, but will also better align provincial legislation with recently-updated federal regulations.

The federal EI benefit for pregnant employees is 15 weeks with a one-week waiting period. This has been reduced from two weeks to one week. Our legislation will mirror this, so that is why we will also be reducing from two weeks to one week. That will take the totality of it from 17 to 16 weeks.

Pregnant employees will see an overall increase in combined pregnancy and parental leave from 52 to 77 weeks. Eligible employees may receive up to 76 weeks with EI benefits.

We're also increasing the parental leave from 52 to 77 weeks so that all parents will have an opportunity to take the 77 weeks of leave. While other provinces afford this luxury to parents who are biological parents, we also include foster parents and adoptive parents.

Under the federal EI program changes, eligible employees are able to choose parental benefits paid out over a period of either 35 or 61 weeks. This does not increase the overall amount of EI benefits that parents can receive. Parents who choose the 61 weeks of benefits will receive a lower weekly amount of EI than if they had chosen 35 weeks.

The Labour Standards Code currently provides for a number of leaves, including compassionate care leave and critically-ill child care leave. The amendments we are proposing will create a new 16-week critically-ill adult leave. Eligible employees may receive up to 15 weeks of EI benefits.

This new critically-ill adult leave will apply to immediate family as well as other relatives and persons who are like family. This will also now capture guardians caring for a child who becomes critically ill. This broad definition of a "family member" includes individuals who are like a close relative, whether related by blood, adoption, marriage, common-law partner, or not. This same definition applies to compassionate care leave included in our existing legislation.

Additionally, this broad definition of a “family member” to include a person who is like a close relative will also apply to the existing critically-ill child leave. This significantly broadens the scope of eligible employees who may provide care and support to their loved ones beyond parents, guardians, foster parents and persons who have legal care and custody of the child. This change will increase the options available to Nova Scotia families dealing with difficult caregiver situations.

[12:15 p.m.]

The proposed amendments will provide Nova Scotians the time they need to care for their families, knowing that their job will be safe when they return, Mr. Speaker, and that is the essence of this. The changes will allow us to close the gap between the province’s protected leaves and the federally available EI benefits. This will help employees and Nova Scotians care for their families while having stronger job security.

However, it is important to know, Mr. Speaker, that all Nova Scotians are entitled to leave protection under the bill, regardless of whether they apply and/or are eligible for EI benefits. With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing what the Opposition has to add to this bill.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

MR. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, it’s my honour to stand here today and speak on Bill No. 29, the Labour Standards Code. In summary, I believe this is just to bring everything up to date with the federal errors, but this bill must be read carefully. Life throws us many challenges, whether planned or unplanned, and knowing that government is supportive to your family and your needs, that’s the Canadian way and the Nova Scotian way. Understanding family challenges are supported during critical illness, we all support that.

In Nova Scotia, we do have to be relevant to the economic situation that we have right now. Economic measures and whether it’s immediate or long-term impacts, we all have to be incumbent on these contacts.

On its face it appears that this is just an administrative nature yet it has far-reaching effects, public and private, with employees and employers. While I think that government feels they have consulted broadly, I’m not convinced until we hear from the Law Amendments Committee.

Will this impact Nova Scotian families in a positive way or negative way? I would believe positive. Will it impact on small or medium-based businesses? It’s great to be faced with this question and important to be able to reflect and seek from Nova Scotia’s input. Bills such as this appear highly technical but what really matters is what’s inside, the impact that they have at home where we each live.

I will reserve my support on this bill until we are able to hear from the stakeholders within Nova Scotia.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: I want to thank the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education for bringing this bill forward, the Amendments to the Labour Standards Code. We in the NDP caucus agree that the three major points made with the amendments are good ones, they are positive; adjusting the pregnancy and parental leave provisions under the Nova Scotia Labour Standards Code to align with changes to the federal EI, extension of parental leave and shortening of the EI waiting period from two weeks to one week is excellent, thank you very much.

It adjusts the caregiving for critically-ill child leave to make immediate family members, relatives and other persons who are “like family” eligible, that this definition of family member also already applies to the compassionate care leave is excellent. It adds the caregiving for a critically-ill adult leave in line with a new EI program. This is good as well because it provides protection for 16 weeks of leave, for 15 weeks of federal EI benefits.

We approve of these amendments and I look forward to seeing the bill come forward to the Law Amendments Committee.

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

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I’d like to thank Opposition members for their comments. I would like to respond to the Progressive Conservative Opposition. There was broad consultation done on this bill and that’s why we did not introduce it in the Spring session, which would have been three months after the federal government made changes to their extended leave for pregnant mothers.

I think the consultations were very positive. While our other neighbouring provinces were rushing the bills into legislation, we went out and consulted and we actually put an enhancement in this bill that’s not available in other provinces. The 77 weeks applies to all parents, not just biological parents. The current rules under the federal government are a shorter period for parents who are adoptive parents or foster parents. We felt that they deserved the same extended leave so we have them captured in our bill. I do believe we are the only province in the nation that has that in there for adoptive parents and foster parents. (Applause)

I had many people contact my office, many expectant parents, many people who are also currently on paternity leave, and I do want to point out one thing in the bill, that parents who are currently on paternity leave can, once this bill receives Royal Assent when the House rises, they will be eligible for the extended period of paternity leave so they can change their current situation. I think that's a very big positive. With those few words, I rise to close the debate on Bill No. 29.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 29. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 27.

Bill No. 27 - Animal Protection Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of Bill No. 27, an Act to Protect Animals and to Aid Animals in Distress. We know that Nova Scotia is among the leaders of animal welfare in Canada. The Animal Defence Fund ranked the province third in the country in 2017.

Since the Animal Protection Act was last amended in 2014 we have consulted with stakeholders. I set up a minister's forum on animal welfare, which includes animal welfare advocates, enforcement officials, and other interested parties. They brought concerns forward and we found these justified.

As a result, we're proposing changes that will further strengthen our legislation for animal protection. Under the new legislation, animal welfare inspection and enforcement will be stronger. SPCA inspectors and police will gain the ability to issue tickets and lay charges immediately for animal fighting.

Animal welfare inspectors will be able to enforce court orders related to animal ownership. If the owners of an animal are in violation of a court order, the inspector may take possession of the animal. Inspectors will be able to cross adjacent properties when carrying out their responsibilities.

This legislation will ban cosmetic surgery, unless medically necessary and carried out by a veterinarian. This includes tail docking, ear cropping, de-barking and de-clawing.

The practice has already been banned in the U.K., Europe, and Australia, and is under review in other parts of Canada and in the United States.

Nova Scotia has now become the third province to prohibit cosmetic surgery and the first province to ban cat de-clawing. These changes provide the authority to licensed kennels, breeding, and animal rescue facilities, along with retail pet stores if necessary in the future.

We are clarifying the process for Animal Welfare Appeal Board in the future. Hearings will be held in the open. We believe these will improve transparency and understanding of animal welfare. We know that families are deeply committed to the welfare of their companion animals.

I want to thank the minister's forum on animal welfare, the Nova Scotia Veterinary Medical Association, the SPCA, the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture for their feedback and support in these changes. Nova Scotians can have confidence that their animals are protected.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

MR. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister opposite for his presentation. It's my honour to speak on the Animal Protection Act, Bill No. 27.

We've reviewed briefly this bill and we do have some concerns about the definitions and the differences in the Act with companion animals versus the Agricultural Animal Protection Act. More expenses coming out of this for some of the owners, veterinarian bills and such.

We really need to grasp the stakeholders on this from a Law Amendments perspective. I think we're going to reserve comment until we do get to speak with those stakeholders at the Law Amendments Committee.

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

MS. LENORE ZANN: As the NDP spokesperson for Agriculture, I am happy to rise to speak to this bill today. Bill No. 27, an Act to Protect Animals and to Aid Animals in Distress.

The spirit and intention of this bill is something that we here believe is a good news story for Nova Scotia and the NDP is happy to support it. Basically, the intention and the spirit of the bill is to protect and improve animal welfare in Nova Scotia, so I can't see why that is not a very good thing. It's a bill that has several different aspects and our Party has

received a few concerns about the bill from Nova Scotians who are concerned that aspects of the bill are not carefully thought through and may have unintended consequences.

We will be looking at those concerns, especially during Law Amendments Committee when people come forward, as we hope the other members in government and Opposition will as well. We look forward to hearing feedback and suggestions when we do hear from people at the Law Amendments Committee. Overall, we believe in and support the intentions of the bill to do more for animal welfare in Nova Scotia, and the bill coming forward is a testament to the work done by folks like Dr. Hugh Chisholm and the many other animal advocates in our province. I have to say I am definitely one of those advocates. The work that veterinarians, the Nova Scotia SPCA and so many farmers and animal lovers do right across the province to protect and promote animal welfare is so important to all of us. I want to thank them all. On that note, we will leave it to Law Amendments and I look forward to bringing the bill forward to that committee.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: I'm going to reserve my comments about the bill itself. I had the opportunity to sit in the minister's seat a few times over a few years and I understand the challenges between companion animals and animal husbandry when it comes to our agriculture industry.

My comment really is for the Government House Leader. We introduced the bill yesterday, we're debating it in Second Reading today. It really doesn't give the Opposition Parties enough time to truly reach out to some of those stakeholders, understand the intricacies of a bill, to truly come up with a yea or a nay when it comes to a bill of the size of this and the implications that it has not only for thousands of pet owners but for the rural way of life, the rural infrastructure that we have in agriculture.

Anything I can say on this is simply that this is one of those bills that might have taken a couple more days to give us the opportunity to consult with those who needed to be consulted with so that we can actually debate it correctly here in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Law Amendments Committee will have the opportunity hopefully to hear from interested individuals and I do hope that they are able to come. The indications we have at this point is that Law Amendments could happen as early as Monday evening or Monday afternoon, so we're hoping that those groups are ready to come present on this bill.

With those short comments, I thank you for the opportunity.

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

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: It's interesting to hear the comments from the Opposition Parties and they will definitely be taken into consideration, as they always are. With that, I would like to move second reading of Bill No. 27.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 27. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again Tuesday, September 18th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Following the daily routine and Question Period, business will include the second reading of Bill No. 32, an Act Respecting the Control of Body Armour, followed by Address in Reply.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now rise to meet again Tuesday, September 18th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

The House now stands adjourned until Tuesday, September 18th, at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 12:30 p.m.]