



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2018

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 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

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to the east gallery where we're joined today by Mary Hamblin. Mary is the executive director of the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia. The foundation, established in 1976, grants funds to support the legal needs of Nova Scotians who face barriers in accessing justice.

I want to thank Mary for the work she is doing, and that of her colleagues. I ask my colleagues to provide her a warm welcome to the House this morning. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as the Attorney General of Nova Scotia, I hereby beg leave to table the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia Annual Report, 2017-2018.

MR. SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. DELOREY: I draw the attention of the members to the east gallery where I'd like to introduce a special guest, Mr. Lloyd Brown, in the gallery. He is the executive director for the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia. I request that members give him the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 147

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

Whereas stigma and misinformation about dementia can be a deterrent to identifying Alzheimer's disease; and

Whereas Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia; and

Whereas there is currently estimated to be over 46 million people worldwide living with dementia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize September as World Alzheimer's 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 African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 148

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

Whereas today, September 21st, marks the grand opening of the Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute’s new offices, an Africentric Learning Institute with a mission to create educational change and opportunities for learners and communities of African descent; and

Whereas since 1991 the Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute has been successful in creating educational change and opportunities for African Nova Scotians by using a collaborative approach of working directly with African Nova Scotians and Canadian organizations, educational institutions, and the Government of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas our government is committed to ensuring all African Nova Scotian have equitable access to the opportunities our province offers and see themselves reflected in all institutions across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating the Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute on the grand opening of their new offices, and thank them for their leadership and vision in increasing opportunities for African Nova Scotians to reach their full potential in all aspects of society.

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 149

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

Whereas the Accessibility Act was passed last year with unanimous support of all in this House, an historic piece of legislation that sets a goal of becoming an accessible province by 2030; and

Whereas Gerry Post and his team with the Accessibility Directorate, the Accessibility Advisory Board, chaired by Doug Foster, Nova Scotia public servants, and citizens from across the province have contributed an enormous amount of time and input into the development of a strategy that will guide our work to eliminate the many barriers faced by persons with disabilities; and

Whereas, later this morning, I have the distinct pleasure of celebrating their tremendous efforts as we release this strategy and government's own plan for how we will improve access to information, infrastructure, workforce, programs, and services;

Therefore be it resolved that we all join together in acknowledging the commitment of so many in advancing this work and thank them for their continued efforts to achieve an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.

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

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

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 49 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 4 of the Acts of 1994-95. The Gaming Control Act. (Hon. Karen Casey)

Bill No. 50 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 5 of the Acts of 2008. The Naturopathic Doctors Act. (Ms. Karla MacFarlane)

Bill No. 51 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 8 of the Acts of 2014. The Halifax Convention Centre Act. (Hon. Geoff MacLellan)

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

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. ADAMS: I would like to draw everyone's attention to the west gallery in the front row and I have a special friend of mine there who is a breast cancer survivor, Rhonda Vickers, and she is seated next to my constituency assistant, Lisa Rochon. I'd just ask everyone to welcome her to the Legislature.

Bill No. 52 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 4 of the Acts of 2004. The Health Protection Act. (Ms. Barbara Adams)

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

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. BURRILL: Thank you. In the west gallery today, it's our pleasure to have with us three representatives of Unifor. Koren Beaman is here, the chair of the Atlantic region's Women's Committee from Unifor. Jennifer Dartt and Vicki Berg are with her. They are representatives from the Atlantic region's Women's Committee for Unifor. They're here in support of the bill providing for paid leave for victims of intimate partner violence and I'd ask the House to welcome them to the Chamber.

Bill No. 53 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Labour Standards Code, to Provide Paid Leave for Events of Domestic Violence and Other Emergencies. (Ms. Tammy Martin)

Bill No. 54 - Entitled an Act to Amend the Occupational Safety General Regulations. (Ms. Tammy Martin)

[9:15 a.m.]

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.

PICTOU MOTORCYCLE SHOW: VETERANS FUNDRAISER - THANKS

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate Pictou on hosting its first annual Pictou Motorcycle Show organized by the Pictou Motorcycle Show Society.

This event was created to raise funds for Wounded Warriors Canada, an organization which helps veterans deal with post traumatic stress disorder. Bikes were lined along Caladh Avenue for the public to enjoy. The day also included prizes, vendors, a bike safety course by the RCMP, and a silent auction.

I would like to thank Rev. Gary Sinclair and David McMullen as well as all the devoted volunteers who gave their time and talents to make this event successful. I look forward to many more years of this fine event.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DRAMA, *CHASING CHAMPIONS*: UPCOMING - BEST WISHES

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the creative team of Chasing Champions as they prepare their remount of the play in Dartmouth.

The play, based on the life of Nova Scotia boxer Sam Langford, premiered in Parrsboro at Ship's Company Theatre over two years ago. Written by and starring Nova Scotian Jacob Sampson, Chasing Champions will be on stage in Dartmouth in late October before it makes its way to the prestigious National Arts Centre in Ottawa.

The outstanding and hard work of this Nova Scotian theatre team has paid off. After its first run in Parrsboro, *Chasing Champions* garnered six Merritt Awards, including outstanding production and outstanding new play, during its first remount with Eastern Front Theatre.

Mr. Speaker, I'm excited that the people of Dartmouth will get to experience this humbling, inspiring, and tragic Nova Scotia story and I want to thank all involved for sharing their work. For both their run in Dartmouth and their journey to Ottawa, to them I say break a leg.

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

BRUCKSCHWAIGER, GERD: RETIREMENT - BEST WISHES

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a long-time business owner in Sydney, Gerd Bruckschwaiger. Gerd, after 55 years, is retiring from his business Gerd's Tailor Shop and Art Gallery. He started his craft when he was 15 years old and came to Canada when he was 19 to work with his uncle in his tailor shop in Glace Bay.

For 55 years, his business has been an important part of our community and many across our community would say that he was the best tailor in Atlantic Canada. Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place today to wish him a very happy retirement. He has a bucket list which includes continuing to do his artwork, do a bit of travel, and take a philosophy course.

I ask all of my members to recognize Gerd Bruckschwaiger for his 55 years of business success and wish him all the best in completing his bucket list in his retirement.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

RUSHTON, NANCY/HENLEY, BILL: BIRTHDAYS - BEST WISHES

MR. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge my mother, Nancy Rushton. Her upcoming 67th birthday is on Sunday, September 23rd. Mom has always been a great supporter of me and my family and I'm looking forward to celebrating with her this weekend.

On her 7th birthday she received a baby brother, not necessarily what she wanted, but a gift she grew to love. So, I also wish a happy birthday to my uncle Bill Henley on his 60th birthday on Sunday, as well.

I ask the members of this House to join me in congratulating my mother Nancy Rushton and my uncle Bill Henley on their birthdays this weekend.

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

E. RIVER COMPOST FACILITY: OPEN HOUSE - COMMEND

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Each year, Louisiana-Pacific Canada's East River compost facility, located in East River, Lunenburg County, holds an open house to ensure good communication between its facility and our community. Louisiana-Pacific has a strong commitment to environmental sustainability. Its records show that it has diverted over 420,000 tons of biomass from landfill since the initiation of its composting facility in 2000. The plant sends less than three per cent of waste materials to landfill.

I attended the open house this past June where I enjoyed displays, workshops on composting, including a talk by local gardener Niki Jabbour, a plant sale, and last, but certainly not least, a barbecue presented by the young members of the 2 Bays 4-H Club.

I ask members of the House of Assembly to join me in commending the Louisiana-Pacific Canada's East River compost facility for being an active member of our local community and providing good jobs for Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member from Cumberland North.

KOOL AID KIDS: CAMP TIDNISH FUNDRAISERS - RECOG.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I rise today to recognize the Kool Aid Kids from Amherst Shore and Lorneville areas. They are children of local cottagers who have been supporting Camp Tidnish for over 50 years. Led by co-president Ella Christine, this summer the Kool Aid Kids raised another \$1,500 for the camp. These children have held fundraisers, such as sports tournaments, over the summer to contribute to the camp. Their motto is Kids Helping Kids. The children got to visit the camp this summer to see how their help has contributed to Camp Tidnish. Their efforts have purchased sports equipment and supplies for the camp.

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

BAHAY KUBO: NEW LOCATION - CONGRATS.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I rise to recognize a local business, Bahay Kubo, which just recently expanded its business within Fairview-Clayton Park. Bahay Kubo is a popular Filipino and Asian grocery store in Fairview. Its success has allowed it to move to a brand-new store in the Boss Plaza on Dutch Village Road. The establishment is known for some of the best smoothies in town, as well as many Asian delicacies, including avocado ice candy and halo-halo. The grocery store is a popular place for residents to stop by, especially in the summer, for a refreshing treat. We are lucky to have a wide range of diverse

businesses in Fairview and we are extremely thrilled that Bahay Kubo was able to relocate and stay within our community.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Bahay Kudo for its success in the community and wish it the best in its new location.

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

**MACQUARRIE, TAYLOR/HENNESSEY, ANNIE:
NTL. COMP., HIGHLAND DANCE - CONGRATS.**

MS. ALANA PAON: I rise today to highlight two local highland dancers who participated between June 30th and July 4th in the ScotDance Canada Championship Series in Calgary, Alberta.

Taylor MacQuarrie and Annie Hennessey are both members of the Port Hawkesbury Highland Dance Association and won the right to compete with Team Nova Scotia as a result of their placings at the Nova Scotia Championship and Selection meet held on May 5th in Pictou. The national championship week in Calgary is an annual event attended by over 800 dancers from Canada, the United States, and Scotland.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend sincere congratulations to both Taylor and Annie for their national level competition and to the organizers of the Port Hawkesbury Highland Dance Association, led by Sabra MacGillivray, for their commitment for the cultural traditions and competition.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

FIN ATL. INTL. FILM FEST.: LOCAL TALENT - CONGRATS.

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: As the FIN Atlantic International Film Festival wraps up, I want to take a moment to congratulate again all the local filmmakers, producers, crew, performers, and everyone involved in the industry who contributed to such a successful film festival and who continue to contribute to our local industry.

I want to take a moment to congratulate particularly two amazing women in the film industry who live in Dartmouth North. Shelley Thompson who I have talked about before in this House and will probably again, has been awarded a Best Actress award from the festival for her amazing portrayal in the opening gala movie, *Splinters*, where she plays a woman in mourning for her husband and trying to connect with her family. It is a beautiful performance.

Shelley is also a director and she has teamed up with Sylvia Bell, who lives in Dartmouth North, to create a beautiful short film called *Duck Duck Goose*. They were

awarded Best Short. I want to congratulate both of them and we'll hear more about them, I'm sure.

MR. SPEAKER: Before we move on, I would just like to say that there's a lot of chatter going on. Just to be respectful of the speakers, if we could just keep the chatter to a minimum.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

CAMP KADIMAH: JEWISH SUMMER CAMP - CONGRATS.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 75th Anniversary of Camp Kadimah in Barss Corner. Camp Kadimah is the only Jewish summer camp in Atlantic Canada. It hosts approximately 350 Jewish youth, ranging from age seven to 16, every summer. Campers travel from all over Canada, the United States, and Israel to take part in a six-week-long experience that affirms their religion and culture as well as music, sports, and recreational activities.

On July 29th, I attended the 75th anniversary Visitors' Day celebration by invitation from the board of directors of the Atlantic Jewish Council. Again, I received a warm welcome, which included a tour of the camp, including viewing recent upgrades. This day also included a reunion of former campers, many of whom include generations of families.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and all members of the House of Assembly please join me in congratulating the board of directors of the Atlantic Jewish Council on the 75th Anniversary of Camp Kadimah.

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

SAILORS MEM.: RELOCATED, INDIAN BEACH - RECOG.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: I rise today to recognize the relocation of the Sailors Memorial Monument to the entrance of the refurbished Indian Beach.

The monument is in memory of and to honour the men and women who left North Sydney Harbour to fight in the World Wars. It also recognizes the 137 lives lost when the *SS Caribou* was sunk by a German U-boat in 1942. It is also in memory of the corvette *NorSyd*, a naval ship named after the Town of North Sydney.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those responsible for moving this monument to a place of honour overlooking Indian Beach in North Sydney Harbour.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

NORTHWOOD: OUTSTANDING CARE - CONGRATS.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Northwood for their continued commitment to providing excellent care in their long-term care facilities and specifically commend them for their drastic reduction of bed sores.

Their prevalence rate has dropped from 12 per cent to 1.9 per cent over a few years, which is now lower than our national average. Workers, including nurses and continuing care assistants, have accomplished this by focusing extensively on preventive measures.

These same workers demonstrate their care and compassion through a fundraiser called the Live More Walk, which supports the Dignified Living Fund at Northwood. This fund helps many residents who are struggling to afford their basic necessities, such as glasses, hearing aid batteries, personal hygiene products, et cetera. This fund is unique to Northwood and has supported hundreds of requests to assist residents who are identified by workers as needing that sort of assistance.

On September 29th, I invite all members to join me at the Live More Walk fundraiser and support the Dignified Living Fund.

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

TAYLOR, GLENN: ROCKINGHAM HERITAGE SOC. - THANKS

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a man who has devoted his life to the Rockingham area. Glenn Taylor has been the Rockingham Heritage Society's president for the last three decades, and he was part of its creation on November 2, 1989. He is the chair of the annual heritage dinner, and portrayed the Duke of Kent in the society's celebration recognizing the 200th anniversary of Princess Lodge in 1994.

The Rockingham Heritage Society was created to promote and preserve the heritage of Rockingham, Birch Cove, Kearney Lake, and Princess Lodge. Each year, the group holds the Fall walk for guests to explore places such as Old Rockingham, Mount Saint Vincent, and Old Birch Cove. Glenn says the group is working on having the rotunda and the Princess Lodge property designated as national historic sites.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that this House of Assembly join me in thanking Glenn Taylor for helping to preserve the history of Rockingham and the beautiful riding of Clayton Park West.

MR. SPEAKER: Just a quick reminder to all members: all sides have been going over their one-minute time allotted. We need to keep it on time so as many people as possible can do their statements.

The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

LIVERPOOL REG. HS: NIGHT OF ART - CONGRATS.

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Liverpool Regional High School on their Night of the Arts event held on June 5, 2018, at the Astor Theatre in Liverpool. This multi-dimensional event showcased students' fine art, singing, acting, and musical instrument playing. These talented students performed in a band, sang solos, duets and ensembles; a jazz band; and a short play.

After 20 years without a formal music program, music teacher Chantel Corkum gave of her talents and time to put together this group of talented local students. Many congratulations to Chantel and the students for a truly awesome evening of entertainment.

[9:30 a.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

IRVING, SIMON: PACIFIC CREST TRAIL - CONGRATS.

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, in the world of hiking there is a trail that is legendary, and that is the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail that begins at the U.S.-Mexican border and ends at the Canadian border. I am pleased to advise members that yesterday Simon Irving - trail name "Rawhide" - of Wolfville crossed back into Canada at the northern terminus of the Pacific Crest Trail, after 133 days of hiking and wearing out five pairs of hiking shoes.

The Pacific Crest Trail challenges hikers with a little bit of everything, 700 miles of southern California desert in 30- or 35-degree days, followed by high altitude hiking in the High Sierras, traversing snow and mountain streams. In Northern California, Oregon, and Washington, he was forced to detour around a number of forest fires.

I ask the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join this very proud father in congratulating Simon Irving on his remarkable achievement of completing the Pacific Crest Trail, and wish him all the best in his next adventure in life. (Standing Ovation)

MR. SPEAKER: He clearly takes after his mother. (Laughter)

The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg.

BUCHANAN, CARL – PH.D./COACH: CAPERS HALL OF FAME - CONGRATS.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dr. Carl “Bucky” Buchanan who was inducted into the Capers Hall of Fame during a ceremony on Monday, as part of the inaugural Cape Breton University President’s Leadership Dinner.

Dr. Buchanan of Marion Bridge is one of the first inductees into the Capers Hall of Fame. The 1977-78 Capers Men’s Hockey Team, a club coached by Buchanan, was also inducted. That 1977-78 team will always have a special place in Dr. Buchanan’s heart. The former coach still keeps in touch with the players from that team.

Today I am proud to thank Dr. Carl “Bucky” Buchanan for his many years of dedication to Cape Breton hockey, and to congratulate him on becoming a Hall of Famer.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

YARMOUTH HOPE CTR.: NEW PROG.: THANKS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: The HOPE Centre in Yarmouth has created a new program, which will give members of the community an opportunity to socialize together for a couple of hours on weekday mornings. HOPE will make its beautiful new facility available to adults who wish to drop in for a cup of coffee, tea, or a game of cards, or just to socialize with others in a quiet atmosphere.

Admission to this new program is free; however, donations will be greatly appreciated and accepted.

I’d like to thank the Yarmouth HOPE Centre for offering this new program, which many adults in our community will benefit from and enjoy. I’d also like to thank the HOPE Centre for their decades of service to our community and to those living with disabilities.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

INTL. PEACE DAY - CONTINUING EFFORTS

MR. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, today on the International Day of Peace, it is time for people around the world to pause and reaffirm their commitment to World Peace. In 1981, by unanimous United Nations resolution, this day was established.

The world has changed greatly since 1981, but we still have far too many people living in a world where peace seems like an impossible dream.

This year, Mr. Speaker, International Peace Day is celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Many steps have been taken towards a world with universal human rights and peace but there are still many more to go.

Mr. Speaker, I know all members of this Legislature look forward to a world where people live in peace.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

FANCY, AMANDA: RETAIL HARDWARE AWARD - CONGRATS.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, the North American Retail Hardware Association has celebrated independent home improvement retailers for a century. For the past 11 years, the NRHA *Hardware Retailing* magazine has honoured high-achieving retailers through the Top Guns program.

Last April, NRHA announced that Amanda Fancy, owner of Gow's Home Hardware in Bridgewater, is one of four of the industry's 2018 Top Guns. After buying the family business seven years ago, Amanda has continued to grow the operation. By using proactive marketing and merchandising strategies, she has positioned Gow's Home Hardware as one of the top industry retailers in Canada.

Congratulations to Amanda Fancy, a sixth-generation owner of Gow's Home Hardware, for this outstanding achievement.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MACDOUGALL FAMILY: DONATION TO MILITARY MUS. - THANKS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the Pictou County Military Museum was recently the recipient of numerous medals, plaques, and other pieces of history when the late Gordon MacDougall's family donated them to the local museum. Gordon was a member of the First Special Service Force, a group of elite soldiers from the United States and Canada. This unit was highly trained and were taught special skills like parachuting, rock climbing, hand-to-hand special training, and night patrols. This group was named the Devil's Brigade, and their story was later developed into a Hollywood movie.

Mr. MacDougall received a bronze medallion from the United States for his contribution in the brigade, as well as the Legion of Honour medal from the French government for his service during the liberation of France. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the MacDougall family for their generous donation of their father's Second World War items to the Pictou County Military Museum.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

BEDFORD ACAD.: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, what the member for Kings South didn't have time to mention when he was talking about his son's trek is that, in fact, more people have summited Mount Everest than have ever completed that walk. It's a huge achievement, and clearly his father is very proud of him.

Mr. Speaker, today I have a shout-out to Bedford Academy for some medal-winning achievements. Bedford Academy is a non-denominational co-ed private school offering preschool to Grade 9.

At the Canada-Wide Science Fair in Ottawa in May, Janani Venkata had a repeat performance, once again winning a gold medal, and Abby Falkenham won bronze. These students were the only two girls from the metro area to represent Nova Scotia in the competition, and they both walked away with medals.

Also, Bedford Academy's jazz band recently competed in Toronto at MusicFest Canada and won gold - the first time ever that a band from Atlantic Canada has achieved this honour.

I want to congratulate the jazz band members, Janani and Abby, their teachers, and Bedford Academy director Nancy Wallace on their success. Terrific.

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

HENRY, JOHN: TRAD. LODGE CONSTRUC. - THANKS

MR. KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, during the 2018 Mi'kmaw Summer Games, an Eskasoni elder, John Henry, erected a traditional dome-shaped lodge at the Noel R. Denny Memorial Powwow Grounds. The lodge serves as a reminder of his culture and is an excellent teaching tool for passing on Mi'kmaq traditions to today's young people.

John, who learned the skills of the traditional lodge building from his father, uses a binding method to join lopped-off trees in the frame. The wood used for his lodge is of many varieties, including silver birch and maple. The process is about more than just building a shelter. It's about passing on traditional knowledge.

I ask all members of the House to join me in thanking John Henry for sharing his craftsmanship and Mi'kmaq culture experiences with all who attended the games. Wela'lin.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

HANDUP: OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITE - RECOG.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I want to share an inspiring message I heard last night from a member of HANDUP, the Halifax Area Network of Drug Using People. She said that everyone has something to give to community.

The woman who said that - I think Jill was her name - stood up in front of about 80 people to explain why, from her first-voice perspective as an addict, it's important to have an overdose prevention site. Such a site is currently proposed for Halifax Needham.

Cindy MacIsaac, the executive director of Direction 180, also spoke about how an overdose prevention site could help reverse a recent spike in HIV infection rates.

Addiction is a social problem, not a criminal problem. I very much appreciated learning from people who are experiencing that social problem in their lives themselves.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

DAVIS, NANCY: GRADUATE, NSCC - CONGRATS.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, a quote: "You are never too old to learn." I think I have a licence to say that. It's an expression that Nancy Davis believes in, and has proven to be true.

Nancy, now 62, dropped out of school when she was 15, at that time not seeing education as a priority. She married, raised a family, and during those years came to realize the value of education that she did not have. She thought about going back to school but something always seemed to get in the way of her plans. She worked at various jobs, some with food service, others in manufacturing, but her ambition was always to help the elderly or those with mental or physical handicaps.

The 18 months after her enrolment at Nova Scotia Community College brought further difficult challenges, dealing particularly with the sudden death of her husband of more than 40 years.

Graduating with both her Grade 12 diploma and a certificate from NSCC as a continuing care assistant, Nancy overcame all of the obstacles she faced. She is now looking forward to the next phase of her life and is proud to be able to go to work and be a contributing person once again.

I ask members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Nancy on this huge accomplishment.

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

KEMPTON, MICHELLE: MARITIME RACE WKEND. - RECOG.

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to recognize Michelle Kempton, the outstanding organizer of our Maritime Race Weekend. This is an annual event that takes place in picturesque Eastern Passage. The race offers two 5-k, one 10-k, and a half-marathon which many, including my son, Chris Lavoie, completed for Personal Best.

This not-for-profit society has raised over \$83,000, to date. The net proceeds from the race weekend are distributed among many not-for-profit charities in our community, decided on by a board of directors comprised of community members, runners, and professionals. The race weekend brings together increased tourism with participants from all over the world who are encouraged to have fun and dress up in pirate costumes.

I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Michelle Kempton and her amazing team of organizers and volunteers of the Maritime Race Weekend for another outstanding fundraising event.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

ART HOUSE: SUMMER SEASON - WELL DONE

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a new place in Antigonish for people to gather who are passionate about creating art and for those who are learning how to create it. The Art House has formally opened their doors to people of all ages, and its first summer of operation offered children's art and pottery classes.

The Art House is operated by the Antigonish Art Fair, a non-profit organization that supports artists in the community through the hosting of an Art Fair that is held every other Friday evening throughout the summer. The organization bought the building that had been previously used as a visitor information centre and opened the Art House as a place for all things arts related.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier and I had the opportunity to meet the organizers of the Art Fair and Art House this summer, and I look forward to seeing all the Art House has to offer as it grows. I have no doubt it will become a central gathering place for inspiring and established artists no matter their age.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

PROUDFOOT'S HOME HARDWARE: 10 YRS. IN BUS. - RECOG.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to mark the 10th anniversary of the new Proudfoot's Home Hardware Building Centre in Pictou.

In the early morning of February 12, 2007, fire almost immediately engulfed the building. Thankfully, and most importantly, nobody was injured, but the building and merchandise were a complete loss. This devastating setback was soon turned into a constructive experience as the newly built building was much larger, more modern, and it allowed lumber to be added to its product line.

I am positive that Proudfoot's Home Hardware Building Centre will remain a fixture in Pictou West, and will continue to serve residents of the area for many years to come.

It's a pleasure to congratulate the owners and their amazing staff on their 10th anniversary.

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

DIGBY CO. EXHIBITION: TRAD. EVENT - CONGRATS.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, as in most rural areas, for a few days at the end of August, we focus our attention on farming and everything related to agriculture in our agricultural exhibition.

The Digby County Exhibition is a traditional exhibition held at the exhibition grounds in Bear River. Unlike many exhibitions, it does not include big rides and carnivals but features many of my favourite activities to watch - the ox pull, the horse pulls, and the horse shows. There are competitions for prize recipes of local cooks and bakers and for the produce of local farmers. Local artists and crafters also have a prominent role, exhibiting everything from paintings to quilts.

The exhibition stresses the importance of farming in our communities and promotes fresh local products. It is also a place to spend time with your children and grandchildren, spending time at a petting zoo, watching the different pulls, listening to music and, of course, eating.

I would like to congratulate the volunteers and organizers of this exhibition, an exhibition going on strong since 1879. I'm sure they're already planning next year's 140th Digby County Exhibition.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

HICKS, BRENDA/HOWSE, RODNEY: DONATION OF HELMETS - RECOG.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, no one's head will go unprotected at the Amherst Lions Skate Park thanks to the generous donation of 40 bike

helmets by paramedic students Brenda Hicks and Rodney Howse from Amherst, who study at Oulton College in Moncton.

Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand today to recognize these students who, along with 20 of their classmates, brought an ambulance to Amherst in May and took blood pressure readings of those who donated to the cause.

The helmets will be available for people to borrow from the town's recreation department and these two students hope that their efforts will help keep residents' safe while promoting the town's goal to be active and healthy. I love their focus on prevention.

[9:45 a.m.]

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

MYATT, BRENT: STUDENT WELLNESS ADVOCATE - COMMEND

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, Brent Myatt is a 16-year-old Canso Academy student whose work with the Canso chapter of Jack.org over the past two years has uplifted many of his fellow classmates. Today I would like to thank him for his efforts.

Brent has been a leader in the Blue Lace campaign and with the coffee house series that offers students an opportunity to relax and partake in the therapeutic effects of music on one's mental health. He also takes every opportunity to advocate for those who feel they cannot speak up for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, Brent Myatt is committed to voicing awareness for mental health in the school community through his musical abilities and kind-hearted actions. He is already contributing to a positive step in the right direction and for that I commend him.

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

EVANS, LARRY - MUNIC. SOLICITOR: RETIREMENT - BEST WISHES

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, Larry Evans presided over his last town council meeting in his capacity as Port Hawkesbury's municipal solicitor on June 6th. Mr. Evans has been a partner in the Granville Street firm known as EMM Law and retired from the firm on June 29th.

Mr. Evans was in service to the community of Port Hawkesbury for 43 years in the municipality's solicitor role. He has been described as an asset to the town as well as a constant and stable presence throughout his career.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Mr. Evans for his years of service and contribution to the town of Port Hawkesbury and wish him a long and happy retirement.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

GOSSSEN, DAVID: BUS. PERSON OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, earlier this year I was pleased to attend the 11th Annual Cedar & Maple Gala hosted by the Lebanese Chamber of Commerce in Nova Scotia where David Gossen was announced as the recipient of the Lebanese Business Person of the Year.

David is a fellow Santamarian who joined IMP Group Ltd. immediately after graduation. From there, he ascended to the ranks of the company, working in a number of challenging positions in the field of aircraft maintenance, avionics repair, precision machining, and aero structures manufacturing.

Since 2002, David has served as president of IMP Aerospace & Defence, leading the company through its international expansion. Today the company's products are found on aircrafts around the globe and in orbit on the International Space Station. David humbly accepted the award and credited his success to his upbringing, faith, community, and most importantly his parents, Elias and Alice who immigrated from Lebanon.

I ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating David and wish him good health.

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

SYDNEY MINES: HOST, LITTLE LEAGUE TOURNAMENT - CONGRATS.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to congratulate the Sydney Mines and District Little League who will be hosting the 10-day Canadian Senior Little League Championship in 2019.

The tournament will feature the best 15- and 16-year-old players in the country, with the winner representing Canada at the 2019 Little League World Series in Easley, South Carolina. The host team is the Cape Breton Ramblers and they are already building the team for this tournament.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate head coach Josh Spooney and his team for winning the chance to host the tournament and wish them the very best in 2019.

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

HADHAD FAMILY: PEACE BY CHOCOLATE - RECOG.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about September 21st, the International Day of Peace. It is with great pleasure, and I stand here as a proud Nova Scotian and Canadian, to thank a family and a company that has moved to Canada, who has gone way beyond bounds in terms of meeting those words of peace: and that is Tareq Hadhad and Peace by Chocolate.

His company has done some amazing things. One thing that he is really known for today is his chocolate, it is out of this world. They are on the International Space Station today and we ought to be proud and thank a company that has gone to such lengths.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all of us to give Mr. Hadhad an applause for that great achievement. (Applause)

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

QUEENS MANOR: ADULT DAY PROG. VOLS. - COMMEND

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Queens County Adult Day Program which was established in 2006 to provide support for seniors living in the county. Two or three times a week, meaningful social and recreational activities which focus on the participants' interests take place at Queens Manor in Liverpool, including things like baking, art, music, exercise, gardening, cards, and bus outings.

Mr. Speaker, as well as providing stimulating activities for housebound seniors, this program also gives some respite to their full-time caregivers to attend to their own needs for a few hours.

I would like to commend all who assist with this very valuable program and thank them for providing this to the community.

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

**DUNFORD, MIA/MILLETT, REBECCA:
NARWAL FUNDRAISER - COMMEND**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mia Dunford and Rebecca Millett of McDonald Lake Subdivision. These 11-year-old girls just started Grade 6 this year. Their love and concern for protecting threatened animals prompted the friends to organize a bake sale and lemonade stand this summer in their neighbourhood.

All of the baked goods were prepared by both girls. The baked goods alone raised \$100 and all the proceeds will be donated to the World Wildlife Fund, specifically to help

save the narwhals. Narwhals are at the top of the food chain and play an important role in balancing the health and wellness of the marine environment and have become extremely vulnerable to climate change.

I would like the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to thank these young ladies for their entrepreneurial spirit and initiative to help keep the narwhals off the endangered list.

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

MACLEAN, ANGUS (GUS): MEM. PARK - TRIBUTE

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the late Angus (Gus) MacLean who passed away on May 13, 2017. Recently the East Bay ballfield was renamed the Angus (Gus) MacLean Memorial Park in memory of Gus.

About 350 people, including former ball teammates, attended the ceremony which featured a softball game followed by the unveiling of a memorial sign. Angus (Gus) MacLean was among the East Bay community members who helped establish the field.

Gussie, as he was known to his family and friends, taught school for more than 30 years and he was also a member of the East Bay Volunteer Fire Department, serving the community for over 35 years. A good friend to me and to many others, Gussie was a wonderful community-minded man who gave his time freely to East Bay and helped make it the great community it is today. He will be missed by many.

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

FAIRVIEW GARDENS: COM. VOLS. - THANKS

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Fairview Gardens, an inclusive outdoor space in the heart of Fairview. Located on Convoy Avenue, the Fairview Gardens is a local monument in the community. The project began in 2015 and has continued to grow ever since. The space was designed as an area for those without a yard to have a green space to plant a variety of items, including vegetables and flowers.

The project has expanded throughout the years, accommodating several community organizations and residents. It has allowed not only for access to fresh vegetables for residents, but also friendships to form.

The garden is kept up by members at the garden and is often supported by local businesses, such as Scotiabank on Dutch Village Road, which has planted flowers for other community members.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank and acknowledge the hard work of those at the Fairview Gardens.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

BELLIVEAU, KATHLEEN: ATHL., LIFESAVING SPORTS - CONGRATS.

MR. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Kathleen Belliveau, a Dartmouth East resident who has been competing on the international stage in lifesaving sports. Kathleen competes in sports such as the surf ski race, the rescue board race and the iron woman. In 2016, she was selected to join the Canadian National Team to compete in the Sanyo International Lifesaving Cup in Japan. That same year she was awarded the Youth Female Athlete of the Year by Lifesaving Canada.

In 2017, Mr. Speaker, Kathleen competed again with the Canadian National Team at the International Surf Rescue Challenge in New Zealand.

Kathleen Belliveau continues to train and compete in life-saving competitions around Canada and the United States. I have no doubt she is destined for even more greatness.

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

SMITH, MALCOLM: FR. LEGION MEDAL OF HONOUR - CONGRATS.

MR. HUGH MACKAY: I rise to congratulate 97-year-old Malcolm Smith of Seabright, who was recently awarded the French Legion Medal of Honour for his service during World War II. The Legion of Honour is the highest national order of France, illustrates the profound gratitude of the French people for the Canadian military, and is awarded to individuals for their personal involvement in the liberation of France during World War II.

Malcolm landed in France on the D-Day invasion. He vividly remembers that there were so many ships in the invasion force that if you had a long plank, you could have walked back across the English Channel. Malcolm fought his way through Caen and the Falaise Gap and then on through the wet mud and freezing cold of Belgium on the way to the liberation of the Netherlands.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking Mr. Malcolm Smith for his service to his country and to congratulate him on his well-earned French Legion Medal of Honour.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

PURCELL'S COVE BACKLANDS: PRESERVATION - COMMEND

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday was a historic day not only for the residents of Halifax Atlantic, but all of HRM.

Yesterday at the Neptune Theatre, a large group gathered to announce the coming together of all levels of government to form the new Purcell's Cove Wilderness Backlands. This will create the largest wilderness backland in all of HRM, one of the largest in all of Nova Scotia.

There's a lot of people to thank. First of all, I would like to thank MP Andy Fillmore, the member for Annapolis, the member for Timberlea-Prospect, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Craig Smith, HRM Councillor Steve Adams, Allan Shaw and the Shaw Group, for making this a reality and ensuring that this beautiful piece of nature will be preserved for many generations to come.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

PINE GROVE PLAY PARK: VOLS., COM. FUNDRAISER - THANKS

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: I rise today to commend a group of hard-working volunteers who made the Pine Grove Play Park Walk/Run fundraiser a success. On September 9th, participants took part in a walk/run that raised \$1,800, all of which will go towards the installation of a splash pad for the park.

Thank you to the long list of volunteers who gave their time for the event: Tyler Swim, Anthony Crouse, Kaitlin Richard, Sandra Statton, Tammy Mercer, Grant Johnson, Ashley Veinot, Jill Nolan, Stephanie, Donnie, Reegan, Kipton Woodsworth, Kendra and Annabel Fevens and Amy Cahoon-Swim - also Stephanie Mailman-Crouse, who is chair of the Pine Grove Outdoor Playground Association.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and all members of this House of Assembly please join me in thanking these volunteers for giving their time towards this successful event.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

CBRM: HEALTH CARE - ONGOING CONCERNS

MR. TIM HOUSTON: It has been an interesting week here in the Legislature. We learned that this government is so open and transparent that they don't need to be open and transparent with the FOIPOP officer. We learned that some of the things the Premier says as promises he actually means as promises, and some he really doesn't.

I think the most interesting thing we've learned is that, despite the best efforts of the member for Northside-Westmount, the Minister of Health and Wellness really does not want to spend a Sunday afternoon with him listening to the concerns around health care in CBRM and Cape Breton in general. We have another few questions coming up here this morning. We'll see what happens over the next hour but - stay tuned. (Interruption)

The Premier has just assured us he's never going to the CBRM. (Laughter)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North on an introduction.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I would like to welcome our guest today, Mr. Jeff Knee. Jeff is the president of the Smart-Minded ATV Association. Welcome to the Legislature today. (Applause)

[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. - FOIPOP COMM'N.: RECOMMEND. - TRANSPARENCY

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Yesterday, when trying to explain why his government refuses to comply with the recommendations of the Privacy Commissioner, the Premier said his government must balance Nova Scotians' right to know with other considerations.

Through the examples the PC caucus has brought forward, it is clear that when the government considers these questions, the course of action that is the least difficult for the Liberal Government always wins, not the rights of the people of Nova Scotia. The whole idea of having a FOIPOP Commissioner is that she has the final say on questions of openness and transparency, not the government.

Will the Premier admit that his government is overruling the Office of the Privacy Commissioner to do whatever it wants with respect to openness and transparency?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I completely disagree with the question.

MS. MACFARLANE: Well, Nova Scotians definitely disagree with him.

Yesterday, during Question Period, the Premier, the Minister of Health and Wellness, the Minister of Internal Services, and the Minister of Justice were all asked to explain why information was being kept secret from Nova Scotians, against the recommendations of the Privacy Commissioner.

One by one, the Premier and his ministers spoke of wait times and volumes. Of course, wait times and volumes go down when the answer to every FOIPOP request is no. Their glib responses did everything but answer the questions they were asked.

When it comes to government transparency, does the Premier think that the opinions of his ministers trump those of the Privacy Commissioner, or does he just not care what they say? It certainly appears that way.

THE PREMIER: The reality is that when the FOIPOP officer makes requests, recommendations, many of them are adopted. As she would know with our government, it's the first time 82 per cent of the FOIPOP requests that come in are done within 30 days. It's the highest level that it has been. We continue to go through that process to improve the process, to ensure people have the information, but at the same time we have information of people we need to make sure is protected. It wasn't all that long ago when they were criticizing us that information actually came outside of government.

It is an important part of government to ensure we protect the privacy of individuals and we'll continue to do so, at the same time putting information that we're allowed to out in the public hands.

MS. MACFARLANE: A little refresher, Mr. Speaker. The Premier broke a written promise to make the Privacy Commissioner an Officer of the Legislature in 2013. Yesterday, four ministers couldn't explain why they refused to comply with the Privacy Commissioner's recommendations. This government has determined that it decides what Nova Scotians get to know, not the person accountable for actually implementing the FOIPOP Act.

The Premier thinks that overriding the person responsible for implementing the Nova Scotian law is reasonable and responsible - my question is simple: Does he think this is all ethical?

THE PREMIER: A little refresher, Mr. Speaker. The highest rating of any government in this province when it comes to delivering a FOIPOP within 30 days is with this government, with 82 per cent. The highest rating . . . (Interruption)

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

THE PREMIER: The highest rating for delivering FOIPOP's within 30 days is with this government, Mr. Speaker - 82 per cent and continuing to rise.

A little refresher, Mr. Speaker. The highest credit rating in the history of this province is with this government.

A little refresher, Mr. Speaker. The highest population in the history of this province is with this government.

A little refresher, Mr. Speaker. More young people are choosing to live in Nova Scotia than ever before.

Let me tell you, Nova Scotians are in tune with this government and we're continuing to grow and move this province forward.

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

PREM.: FISH. IND. - CONSULT.

MR. GARY BURRILL: Tuesday morning in Cape Breton, trucks couldn't get in and out from the Donkin mine for a number of hours because people in the fishing industry were forming a blockade. They say that they are willing to come back and do that again because they fear that their industry and their livelihood is being put at risk.

Two months ago, in Pictou, in one of the largest demonstrations in recent history in the province, over 1,000 people joined hundreds of people on boats in the harbour because fishers in that part of the province feel that their industry is being put at risk.

On the South Shore, in the last few weeks, quite a number of municipalities have passed motions of concern about under-regulation and offshore drilling because they feel that their way of life is being put at risk.

Will the Premier acknowledge that there is a growing province-wide feeling that our bedrock \$1.8 million fishery in Nova Scotia is being taken for granted by the government of the province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The concerns he's raised we've heard but the final question where he talked about the fishery being taken for granted couldn't be further from the truth.

We're continuing to work with that sector. It is the bedrock of our rural economy, Mr. Speaker. I live in southwestern Nova Scotia with the largest, most lucrative lobster fishery in this province. We continue to strike the balance on how we continue to have activity around, how we continue to have activity to make sure that we protect that

resource, at the same time ensuring that we maximize the other resources that we have, at the same time protecting the environment.

That is always the balance. We'll continue to go through that process, Mr. Speaker, to strike that balance.

MR. BURRILL: None of that changes the fact that the Premier has refused calls for a broadened environmental assessment at Northern Pulp and has allowed a tidal turbine to spin without environmental monitoring in the Minas Passage and has permitted offshore drilling without the availability of a capping stack.

I want to ask the Premier: Why wouldn't people in fishing communities and in the fishing industry, on the basis of these facts of the Premier's action, feel profoundly disrespected?

THE PREMIER: I appreciate the honourable member's question, Mr. Speaker. We continue to make sure that we strike the balance. There is a regulatory environment that any activity inside this province when it comes to that resource goes through, we're continuing, we'll go through that. We'll make sure the community is being heard, but at the same time the decision we make will be based on science and evidence and we'll continue to do so.

I want to reassure the honourable member that the turbine in the Bay of Fundy is not spinning, Mr. Speaker, at this moment in time, that he just alluded to in his question. The reality of it is it is not. I want to assure the honourable member we're going to continue to make sure in how we harness that energy the best we can.

MR. BURRILL: John Davis, Director of the Clean Ocean Action Committee, which represents almost 10,000 people who work in the fishery in the southwestern part of the province, said recently of weak offshore drilling regulations, they pretend to consult the public and then give the industry what it wants.

Ronnie Heighton, President of the Northumberland Fishermen's Union, said about the plans at Northern Pulp, we don't like to be bullied, we don't like to be lied to, and we don't like to be treated like our knowledge doesn't matter.

Will the Premier agree with me that his government could stand to do an improved job on listening to, on working with, on actually paying attention to, and consulting the industry, the fishing industry in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: As he would know, Mr. Speaker, that is independent from us. There are regulators going out, looking at how do we best make sure that we strike the balance of ensuring that we protect our traditional industries, but at the same maximizing the value of the resource we have off our coast.

This is not unique to Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker. While there are some challenges off our shore with the power of our ocean, the reality of it is that it coexists all around the world. We're making sure that if that can happen in this province that it will be done in a safe way and at the same time protecting the resources that we've relied on for a very long time.

I want to remind the honourable member that since coming into government in 2013, we've continued to go out and will promote the fishery across the world. We've increased our exports over \$2 billion. We've opened up a market in China. We know the value of that resource and one of the things we want to make sure is that fishers get the real value of that and not have the price be driven into the bottom like it has been for decades in this province.

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

PREM. - FOIPOP COMM'N.: NEUFELD CASE - INFO. RELEASE

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. This Premier will go to great lengths to keep information from Nova Scotians and releasing what the government wants to release and have information on within 30 days is definitely no achievement.

Take the case of Ronald Neufeld. He had concerns about the fish farm activity close to his property. In 2013, he submitted five FOIPOP requests. The Department of Fisheries withheld all or portions of each request.

The Privacy Commissioner recommended that the department release all the information, and the department refused. Why did the government overrule the recommendations of the Privacy Commissioner in the Neufeld case?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The reality of it is, as I said to her yesterday and again today, each time a FOIPOP comes in there's the information that we are allowed to put out. There is also proprietary information that is not put out. We always strike the balance. It goes through the FOIPOP protocol inside of government. They make that recommendation. When the FOIPOP officer makes a ruling, it's looked at. If information can be released based on what she said, it's released. If it's proprietary information, it's not released.

MS. MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, there are so many cases like this. Mr. Neufeld knew the government's actions weren't right, so his only option was to take the government to court. Let that sink in for a moment. A regular citizen had to take his government to court to get information the person hired to administer the FOIPOP law said he should have. In June, in Bridgewater, the Supreme Court upheld the Information and Privacy Commissioner's ruling and ordered - ordered - the release of the documents to Mr. Neufeld.

As of yesterday, he still had not received a single page. Is this government planning to thumb its nose at the Supreme Court the way it has at the Information and Privacy Commissioner or will it release the document?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we respect the FOIPOP officer. We continue to meet the recommendations she makes. We're continuing to do that. She should be very happy of the fact that we take this issue very seriously. Eighty-two per cent of our FOIPOP's are out on 30 days. It's the best record of any government in the history of this province. So, the reality of it is we're continuing to improve the process. We'll continue to do that and we will comply with the court's order as we always do.

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

H&W: COMMUN. HOSP. (C.B.) - ER CLOSURES

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. This weekend, emergency rooms at both the Northside General Hospital and New Waterford Consolidated Hospital will be closed. Residents who would normally seek treatment at these hospitals will have to go to the regional. I suppose it's a good practice for when they close the doors permanently. Is the minister trying to put Cape Breton residents through their paces to prepare them for the days when there will be no community hospitals in Cape Breton?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I think or hope the member is aware - I'll certainly remind her of the steps being taken to recruit primary care providers and other health care professions to Cape Breton and throughout the province. Since April of this year, 54 physicians have been recruited to the province. We've had over 8,200 people taken off of the family practice list that we monitor, the 811 Need a Family Practice registry. As of September 1st of this year, we're making changes in our compensation structure, our recruitment initiatives. All of these steps were taken for communities like Cape Breton and every community across this province.

MS. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I asked the minister if he'd give me a straight answer as to whether he would be coming to Cape Breton to hear from concerned residents who have planned town halls and rallies in response to his decision to close our hospitals and coming to actually listen and discuss rather than coming, dictating, and then leaving. Rather than answering my question, the minister told me that he had already visited Cape Breton in June when they came, told, and left when he and the Premier came to announce the closures. To my knowledge, he's not been back since. It seems to me and many residents that he is afraid to face the music.

I'd like to ask the minister again, if he can't make it to the Northside General Hospital this weekend, funny enough, we're having another one in New Waterford and I'd

love to invite him now to come to the meeting in New Waterford on October 14th and discuss with our community members.

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. As the member would know, we've outlined the planned investments for the Cape Breton region. That includes a new primary health care facility in New Waterford and North Sydney, along with approximately doubling the nursing home long-term care bed capacity in those communities.

On top of that, we're going to be refreshing, investing heavily in the emergency departments at Glace Bay Hospital and Cape Breton Regional Hospital, expanding them to ensure that they're modernized, that they're designed appropriately to service the population. We're doubling the size of the cancer centre. We're investing heavily into the health care needs of Cape Bretoners and all Nova Scotians.

[10:15 a.m.]

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

H&W - EMERG. DEPTS.: HEALTH CARE SUMMIT - MIN. HOST

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the number of ambulances backed up is becoming a very serious concern to many Nova Scotians. We've heard time and time again that this government is very reasonable, open and transparent.

Mr. Speaker, a reasonable government should be outraged that it is common to see 10, 12 and as high as 14 ambulances backed up in emergency departments across the province. A reasonable government should be sickened that patients requiring emergency care have to wait because there are no ambulances available. A reasonable government would respect paramedics' concerns and would take every step to correct this problem.

The union representing paramedics is requesting the minister to host a health care summit to address the offloading issues at emergency departments.

My question to the minister is: If this is a reasonable government, will this government commit to hosting this event with paramedics?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I'm well aware of the concerns and I share those concerns about looking for opportunities to improve the offload times of our ambulances in our hospitals, particularly some of our larger hospitals, like here in metro.

Mr. Speaker, that work I've mentioned previously, a lot of great work done at Dartmouth General, changing the way that the emergency department offloads and

monitors the patients when they arrive via ambulance. This has been well received both by paramedics and the staff within the hospital system.

Mr. Speaker, I've been there, I've toured the facility twice over the summer to hear from both the paramedics and the staff on the front line, as well as administrators in the facility. Working with EHS as well as the hospital, they're continuing additional research to learn how that benefited and how it can be applied in other hospitals.

MR. ORRELL: It's great to be touring that facility, Mr. Speaker. Maybe he'll come to Cape Breton this weekend and tour a facility that's having a big meeting about health care. He only has to do it once.

Mr. Speaker, the minister tried to impress this House in his recent ride-along with Nova Scotia paramedics. When asked about this life-changing ride-along, he confirmed that the ride he did take was, in fact, with an area supervisor, not with paramedics in a 12-hour shift. That's like saying that because I know hockey, I'm Bobby Orr, and that's not the case.

My question to the minister is: Would he commit to signing a confidentiality agreement and participate in an actual ride-along with an on-duty paramedic, not just a Sunday drive with an area supervisor.

MR. DELOREY: It concerns me a little bit that the member opposite would flippantly disregard the value of the conversations that I had with front-line paramedics and health care professionals.

During my time, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to speak with many front-line paramedics during their day on their shifts. I heard from them their concerns. I've met with the paramedic union representatives, I understand the concerns and I take them seriously and we're taking action as well.

That work is ongoing and not just with paramedics but all front-line health care workers. We respect the work they do, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to support them in improving the work environments.

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

H&W: PARAMEDIC CONCERNS - ACCURATE ASSESSMENT

MS. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. A constituent living in Kent was recently found by his wife lying on the floor unconscious. She frantically called 911, thinking her husband suffered a stroke and waited while it took a staggering 65 minutes for an ambulance to arrive. Luckily this situation wasn't fatal, but it could have been.

If the minister had participated in an actual ride-along with paramedics, he would know exactly what is causing these delays. Mr. Speaker, my question is: Paramedics can't choose which calls they are sent to, so why does the Minister of Health and Wellness believe he can cherry-pick where he goes and still get an accurate assessment of the struggles Nova Scotia paramedics are facing?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as I've mentioned, I found the tour that I took with paramedics to talk to them on the front lines during the day to be quite helpful and informing. This time that I spent out there to talk to the paramedics in their place of work was helpful. It builds upon the meetings that I've had with their union representatives and with other health care professionals.

I've taken that information, Mr. Speaker. I've taken what they told me, particularly with respect to the offload times at our larger hospitals and our emergency departments. I took what they told me about how they were seeing significant improvements in Dartmouth General. I went to Dartmouth General to see first-hand how that system has changed and have asked for the work to be done with the data to see how those improvements have impacted the performance and how we could then roll it out to other hospitals as well.

MS. MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, a reasonable government wouldn't be dismantling the health care system piece by piece like this government has done. I understand I'm a newly-elected MLA, and I appreciate any advice I can get. So I appreciate the sage advice that I received from the Premier when I stood here advocating on behalf of my constituents worried about maintaining a full-service Roseway Hospital.

What I really would appreciate is if both of them could join me at the People over Politics Rally this Saturday in Shelburne. I have never been one to give up. My question to the minister is: Will he and the Premier join me at the People over Politics Rally on September 22nd so they both can hear from the concerned residents about the state of the health care system in Shelburne? A simple yes or no is all I'm looking for.

MR. DELOREY: I'm sorry that the member hasn't been listening to my responses, Mr. Speaker (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

MR. DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, the member suggested that we were - I believe the words were "dismantling the health care system." In fact, what we have been doing is investing in our health care system. We have unprecedented investments in our health care infrastructure, which have been ignored by successive governments over the past decades. We're investing heavily in modernizing our infrastructure here in Halifax, in Cape Breton, and in the member's own community - a new primary health care centre being opened up.

She knows full well we're investing in our health care system from one end of this province to another.

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

JUSTICE: INMATE ONLINE TABLETS - SUSPENSION

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: My question is for the Minister of Justice. We learned on Wednesday that the Department of Justice has suspended a program that gave Nova Scotia inmates unprecedented access to online communications and entertainment. Under this program, inmates were provided with free tablets.

A CBC news story claims that a number of incidents led to the cancellation of this program, and I can table that story. One inmate used the tablet to physically assault another inmate. Other inmates were using the tablets to access personal information of other inmates.

My question to the minister: As was the case for the FOIPOP portal fiasco, was a SWAT team sent in to retrieve the tablets?

HON. MARK FUREY: Coming to know my colleague for Pictou West as I have, I know that she did not write that question.

Let me say, my colleague brings a legitimate concern to the floor of the Legislature. There is a tablet program within our correctional facilities. The program is suspended in one of our facilities because of security issues. We are working with our correction's officer community and inmate community to re-establish that, to ensure the safety of employees and inmates within those facilities.

MS. MACFARLANE: The Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Centre in Pictou County was one of the facilities included in this project. Again, inmates were given unprecedented access to online entertainment while Pictou County residents and many of my constituents don't have high-speed Internet and don't even have cell coverage. I'm left to wonder if the quickest way to get Netflix isn't to commit a crime.

Could the minister explain the rationale behind this program and whether the department has any plans to bring it back?

MR. FUREY: I'm perplexed, to be quite honest with you. We're criticized on one hand for not providing basic human rights to those inmates within our facilities. Then on another hand, to suggest that that service is available within our institutions and not available within the community - we are striving to provide what Nova Scotians expect to be fair treatment of those in custody.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Business is doing an outstanding job in establishing a foundation to ensure that we have quality high-speed Internet across this province. I want to remind my colleague in 2008 they committed 100 per cent coverage to Nova Scotians and they failed.

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

LAE: DOM. VIOLENCE SURVIVORS - PAID LEAVE

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. Last session when the government passed amendments to the Labour Standards Code to allow for unpaid leave for survivors of domestic violence, the NDP voiced concerns. Survivors of violence need access to paid time off. They shouldn't be penalized with docked wages for seeking treatment or assistance during a crisis. Is the minister prepared to guarantee at least some paid leave to survivors of domestic violence?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. As I committed to last time, the department has gone out and done consultation. From my understanding, the consultation will wrap up in October. At that point, we'll have all the information and in the next session, I'll be more than happy to bring that information forward and see where we land with it.

MS. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, last session the minister mentioned that he'd be open to putting paid leave into the regulations of the Labour Standards Code rather than into the legislation itself. Not ideal, but a good start. However, we haven't heard anything since then about his plans to make sure workers escaping intimate partner violence don't have to sacrifice putting food on their table.

I'd like to ask the minister: Can Nova Scotians expect to see paid leave for survivors of domestic violence available before the end of this year?

MR. KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, we are currently doing consultation. We have been doing consultation for quite some time and I'm not going to make any decisions before finishing consultation. That's the whole point of doing the consultation. So, upon having that information, I'll be more than happy to share with the member and with the Legislature.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

TIR - CUMB. CO.: OHV PILOT PROJ. - TIMELINE

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is directed to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Nova Scotia is seeing more and more enthusiasts of all-terrain vehicles and off-highway vehicles. In fact,

there's 36,000 registered throughout the province. Since my election, I've heard a lot of frustration in the delays of the pilot projects. These delays are negatively impacting the tourism potential in Cumberland. My constituents keep asking when is safe, legal trail connectivity going to be expanded. My question to the minister is: Will he tell the members of this House when the off-highway vehicle pilot project in Cumberland will be launched?

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member very much for the question. The actual number that I have on the registration of vehicles in the province is a little bit higher than that. It's over 42,000. I agree that this provides a great opportunity to face that reality and increase the economic opportunity that is available there. The number we're getting from the ATVANS is \$189 million in expenditures.

Be assured that this government, unlike others in the past, is going to recognize, very shortly, the opportunity that this represents and we'll be establishing a pilot project very, very shortly to accommodate better trail enhancement for ATVs across the province.

MS. SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Thank you to the minister and we look forward to that. It did come to our attention this week that the minister will be introducing a pilot project in Eastern Shore in just a few days, and we're hoping that it's not just going to be another re-announcement of the same pilot project that was announced over a year ago.

Cumberland was also promised a pilot project at the same announcement over a year ago. We want to be able to realize the full financial potential through safe trail connectivity in Cumberland and throughout all of Nova Scotia. The numbers the minister has shared; New Brunswick is double the financial impact that they are having because of the work they've done. My question to the minister is: Can you tell us today when the pilot sites will be approved in Cumberland, and across Nova Scotia, and when the government will make the safety of the off-highway vehicle ATV enthusiasts across this province a priority?

[10:30 a.m.]

MR. HINES: Mr. Speaker, the pilot project was announced some time ago. It's very close to being vetted through our process.

You have to understand, of course, that there are various departments involved in this. This is a major step forward for Nova Scotia in terms of the availability of our highway system to accommodate the evolving nature of the ATV market in Nova Scotia. We've gone from three-wheeled vehicles in the early 1980s to side-by-side vehicles now that are more expensive than many cars.

We're looking at accommodating that, and we will have information very shortly for the general public about where and when those particular pilot sites will be enacted.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

EECD - SPRINGHILL ELEM. SCH.: SITE DESIGN/SELECT. - UPDATE

MR. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. On April 30th, the minister announced a new elementary school for the Springhill area in the multi-year plan for replacing schools in the province - which, I might add, was a welcome announcement from this government.

Since that time, little has been said about the site-selection process or the budget of the new school. This new school is meant to replace Junction Road Elementary School and the old West End Memorial School. Both of these facilities have had numerous maintenance issues in the past years, so residents are anxious to get the new school built.

Can the minister provide an update on when parents and students will get input on the site design and selection for this new school?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's question. The answer is: very soon. We are working on a new streamlined process for site selection that allows us to do the technical evaluation up front instead of on the tail end, and then consult with community members in the school community. We believe that will allow us to make that process better so that we can get schools built on time, whereas the previous process did lead to delays of up to three years in many cases.

We do have a better process that's coming down the pipe, and I look forward to being with that member and his community when that school is finally opened.

MR. RUSHTON: Thank you, I welcome that news.

In August, I sent the minister a letter asking for an update on the elementary school. In response, the minister stated that officials from his department, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, and the Chignecto-Central Regional Centre for Education met on July 3rd, which is great. The meeting was to begin the process for the review for potential sites.

Can the minister say that the project that was slated to start in 2018-19 - can residents expect a shovel in the ground this year, or will they have to wait a little longer? I'll table those documents.

MR. CHURCHILL: I've been assured by our operational folks, who are in charge of managing these projects, that we're going to be on time. That, of course, has been a concern of our government's, of a number of ministers, because we have experienced delays in project commencement and completion in many cases. We're trying to do a better

job with that and identify the factors that contributed to those delays and make sure we're getting those schools built on time.

A lot of communities, in particular the community of Springhill - it's been a long time coming for these new facilities, and I know these new facilities are going to serve those students and the community for years to come.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

TIR - SPRINGVILLE BR. (PICTOU CO.): MAINTENANCE - STATUS

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. The Springville bridge in Pictou County is a crucial crossing on the East River. Over the summer, the department closed the bridge for some routine maintenance, but I understand that some structural issues were discovered during that process.

I wonder if the minister can update the House on the problems that may have been found, and what is the status of the bridge?

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. In the instance of the Springfield bridge, one of the 4,200 structures that the department is entrusted with across the province - it's a 100-year-old structure. The detour involved is seven kilometres in length.

In Nova Scotia, as I've said in the House before, being an old province, we do have an old highway network. We're also subject to changing traffic and settlement patterns over time. I will say that we have a huge increase in our capital budget this year, including the amounts allocated for bridges, and that would apply to that particular bridge also.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the bridge the minister was referencing in Springfield is very similar to the one in Springville. I thank the minister for that.

People often say that this government's strategy with bridges is a little bit like Russian roulette: when one fails, they just say, that's good, we'll leave that, and they don't actually fix them; whereas, they should have an actual strategy for which bridges are important and maintaining those ones that are important.

I guess my question to the minister is: Does the department intend to fix the Springville bridge or not, Mr. Speaker?

MR. HINES: A current review of our bridge process is actually under way in the province. It's a major part of our commitment and vital to our network.

Mr. Speaker, we're looking for what you might call more practical solutions to low-volume, short-span opportunities to see if we can find a way of doing this in a more cost-effective manner and provide the transportation networks that the people are used to, particularly in our rural areas. I will check into this one particularly and let the member know where it's at.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

JUSTICE - CORRECT. FACILITIES: CLOSE CONFINEMENT. - INMATE RIGHTS

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Earlier this week an Ontario Superior Court Judge ruled that a \$600 million class action lawsuit against the Province of Ontario could proceed. The lawsuit alleged that the Ontario government violated the rights of inmates by placing them inappropriately in solitary confinement. The statement of claim says that close confinement is grossly overused on a systemic basis in the Ontario system.

Just last week we heard of five individuals being held in provincial custody here in Nova Scotia who had applied to the court to be released from solitary confinement.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister confident that our practices in our provincial system will not result in a similar lawsuit being filed against the Province of Nova Scotia?

HON. MARK FUREY: I thank my colleague for the question. This is an important issue that can't be dismissed. Over the past number of months there has been great work done within the facility specific to close confinement. We have reduced our average days of time in close confinement from 5.5 to 3.5 days. That is significant progress.

The Ombudsman's Office and the Human Rights Commission have quarterly visits into our facilities, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that these practices are applied appropriately. Just here in the last two weeks we've had Supreme Court of Nova Scotia decisions challenging the habeas corpus that my colleague would be familiar with, where the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia has determined, when used appropriately, solitary confinement is a necessary and appropriate tool within our facilities.

MS. CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid that international precedents disagree, but notwithstanding, at issue in the Ontario case is the use of administrative segregation in which inmates are isolated either to ensure their own safety or that of others in the institution. Data obtained through freedom of information show that there are far more instances of administrative close confinement in our provincial system than any other reason.

This weekend the Schulich School of Law is hosting the Canadian Prison Law Conference here in Halifax. Experts in prison law are here from across the country and I wonder if what we have to show them is more of a cautionary tale than a best practice.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit today to a full public review of the use of close confinement in our provincial correctional facilities?

MR. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, we could not have a more public, transparent view of the close confinement process within our correctional facilities than what the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia has addressed on two separate occasions over the last two weeks.

Mr. Speaker, I know this is a very important issue but we are losing sight - in fact, there are individuals within our facilities who request to go into close confinement because they themselves are concerned for their own personal safety. The use of close confinement is a last resort, it is a resort used or a tool used to ensure the safety of the inmate as well as those who are employed within the facility. We will continue to prioritize the safety of all within our institutions.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

L&F - BLOMIDON PROV. PARK: STAIR REPAIRS - UPDATE

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Lands and Forestry. Blomidon Provincial Park is one of the most popular provincial parks in the province. One of the reasons is that it is a great place to see the tides of the Minas Basin. However, there is a 20-foot cliff requiring a set of stairs to go down. These stairs are the only way to access the beach, but they have been closed for some time.

The minister's department is well aware of this. My question is: Can the minister tell me when the steps will be finally repaired for Blomidon Provincial Park?

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I thank the member opposite for the question. As the member may know, I actually visited the site myself about a month and a half ago and I saw the area where the stairs are going to be repaired. That day we made sure that the tender went out - and I don't have the exact day when the tender closes but I can confirm the tender is out - for repair. I'll get back to the member when I have confirmation on that.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear the minister say that the tender has been issued and that he has visited the site; however, my constituents are upset that this issue was around all summer and now, at the end of the season, is finally being addressed. To keep the beach off limits in the summer is a monument to inefficiency of government and a testament to misplaced priorities.

Will the minister explain why common sense was discarded in this case and commit to taking a more practical approach in the future and getting things done more promptly?

MR. RANKIN: I thank the member for his advice and I regret that I didn't bring my tools myself that day, but certainly we'll get on top of anything that we can based on the process. The tendering processes require a certain period of time and, in fairness to all of our trades and our workers who work around the province, we have a budget that takes care of all of our parks. I will continue to look at the process and how we can improve it.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

LAE - WCB: MED. SPECIALISTS - INDEPENDENCE

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

I recently asked the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education to provide his definition of an independent medical specialist. I agree with his response that it would be both independent and not subsidized by WCB. Sadly, that has not been the experience of many of my constituents who have been denied benefits from WCB based on recommendations from specialists paid for by WCB. Often, these recommendations are contrary to the recommendations from other specialists.

My question: What is independent about an appointment arranged and paid for by WCB?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to clarify my remarks for the honourable member.

In terms of independence, when I was speaking about whether they were compensated by WCB, I should have further elaborated and said, "fully compensated or not." I would never question any of the findings of a medical professional. As we know, they are governed under the college and whether they are paid for a consultation by WCB, or any other, I assume that every single consultation coming forward from a doctor or a professional in the medical community is accurate and forthright.

MR. DUNN: Independent, Mr. Speaker, independent.

I've had a constituent who was flown to Chicago to see a specialist, all paid for by WCB. I've heard of Ontario and U.S. doctors used and paid upwards of \$20,000 for their service. It has been very commonplace that a few weeks later a letter will come, informing individuals that they have been denied benefits based on these doctors' recommendations. Unfortunately, the onus is then transferred to these injured workers to provide new evidence.

My question to the minister: With only 10 per cent of initial applications allegedly approved by WCB, does the minister believe that WCB adequately represents hard-working Nova Scotians?

MR. KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I definitely believe WCB adequately represents hard-working Nova Scotians. As well, I'll go a step further - the Department of Labour and Advanced Education funds organizations, there is one actually in Pictou, which helps individuals who feel that they are not being represented or are not getting the results they want through their Workers' Compensation Board applications, to be able to have them advocate on their behalf.

We have a balance here. We've struck a proper balance and any workers who feel that they are not getting the result that they want in terms of what workers' compensation is coming out in regard to their claim, they have avenues of areas that we fund where they can actually go and appeal these decisions.

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

H&W: PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE - SOLUTION

MR. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, recently, my constituency office received a visit from a partner of one of my constituents who is actually housebound. Mr. Reg Edwards, the constituent, has actually provided and signed the permission to use his name here in the House, so I will table that.

Mr. Edwards has a number of health issues, and he and his partner have recently lost their doctor through no fault of their own. My question to the minister: Does the minister have a solution for patients with serious health concerns who are orphaned by the minister's plan for health care?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as the member would know, we've continued to listen to our front-line health care professionals, like physicians through Doctors Nova Scotia, who came forward earlier this year with some recommendations to help address and improve recruitment and retention of physicians in the province.

[10:45 a.m.]

As a result of those discussions, we committed to just under \$40 million of increased investment in compensation for providing comprehensive family care. As part of that, we have invested in incentives for physicians to take additional patients. Through that, in the central zone, we have seen over 5,000 patients who have found a family practice because of that incentive. These are the steps we're taking to provide care to our citizens.

MR. JOHNS: I recognize, because I hear it over and over and over and over and over again, that the government's doing investments. I recognize that they probably are.

What I'll say is, when I'm getting complaints and constituents like Mr. Edwards, it's obviously not enough. There's still something wrong.

I have Mr. Edwards, who has to take an ambulance in order to get to a clinic because there are no walk-in clinics and there are no doctors. He has to pay \$150 for an ambulance ride each way to and from the clinic. This is putting Mr. Edwards at serious health risk every time he has to leave his adaptive environment.

This isn't a choice that Nova Scotians should have to be making. Can the minister please tell Mr. Edwards and others like him across this province how they get their medications renewed without further risking their health and adding to personal costs because there are no family doctors?

MR. DELOREY: As the member would know, as part of those investments that we have made, we have also increased the opportunities for physicians to provide non-face-to-face care for the first time in this province. For individuals like the constituent referenced, who may have trouble travelling outside of their home environment, our physicians now can provide care through phone and communicate through the MyHealthNS website, a secure portal to provide that service.

These are things where our investments are going to provide better care, more options, and more flexibility, and to ensure that more Nova Scotians get the care that they need and deserve.

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

MUN. AFFS.: N.S. FOR EQUAL. FAIRNESS – MIN. RESPONSE

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Nova Scotians for Equalization Fairness speak for many people in Cape Breton when they say that Cape Breton deserves the same quality of services as the HRM or any other part of the province. The minister is aware that they are an important voice in Cape Breton, but members have told me that they feel ignored. They have called and emailed the minister's office, with no response.

Can the minister please tell us why those calls and emails have yet to be answered?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: As the honourable member probably knows, the provincial Equalization Program is to the tune of about \$30 million annually. Mr. Speaker, 50 per cent of that goes into the CBRM. We have committed to working with our municipal partners, and we will work through a process and review this program.

I'm glad to hear that the honourable member is supportive of that review. Also, when we have that review done, if and when there is a new formula, she and the good father and all Nova Scotians will be aware.

MS. MARTIN: The minister should be aware that the CBRM needs to be a priority in his new role. CBRM is in a downward spiral because it doesn't get the provincial support it needs. The urgent challenges CBRM faces with its tax base, debt load, and funding for services can't be ignored any longer by this province, and neither can the residents who speak out about them.

My question to the minister is: Are unanswered phone calls the treatment that Cape Bretoners should expect from the new Minister of Municipal Affairs?

MR. PORTER: I want the honourable member to know that we have indeed received correspondence from Father Maroun. We have responded to that, as have other members of this government. We will continue to correspond with Father Maroun as we work our way through this process.

As I have said, we're committed to working with our municipal partners. I met recently with the NSFM, and they are certainly making this one of their priorities. We'll continue those discussions.

Again, if and when there's a new formula, we'll be happy to share that with all Nova Scotians.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Private and Local Bills for second reading.

PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 17.

Bill No. 17 - An Act to Incorporate the "Kenzieville Cemetery Company."

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on second reading of Bill No. 17 for the Kenzieville Cemetery. This is a housekeeping bill for the volunteers looking after the cemetery, basically trying to essentially change their Articles of Incorporation to allow for their annual general meeting for the corporation to be held any day in May, rather than only on the first day in May. It will increase the number of officers from two to three, by replacing the secretary-treasurer with a treasurer and a secretary. It's a straightforward bill. So with those few words I'd like to move second reading of Bill No. 17.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 17. 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 Private and Local Bills.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 39.

Bill No. 39 - Cemetery and Funeral Services Act and Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act.

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

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I move that Bill No. 39, the Cemetery and Funeral Services Act and Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act, be now read for a second time.

Mr. Speaker, back in the Spring I made a commitment to implement more stringent regulations in the funeral home industry and to strengthen funeral home oversight. The commitment was made following an incident in the Valley and an inquiry conducted by the board. The incident was tragic. It's one that no family should ever have to experience, and, from our perspective, it was unacceptable.

What transpired highlighted the need for more stringent regulations and greater transparency and that is why we are here today. Mr. Speaker, the amendments we are making will introduce more stringent rules to improve the care and handling of the

deceased in both funeral homes and crematoriums. Amendments will require funeral homes and crematoriums to label human remains as soon as they are taken into custody.

We will inspect the province's funeral homes and crematoriums to help ensure the new rules are followed. Also, we will increase the accountability of and consumer representation on the Nova Scotia Board of Registration of Embalmers and Funeral Directors. There will be two official positions for consumer representation on the board. This means that non-industry members, including the registrar, will increase the 43 per cent of the board makeup. The amendment aligns us with other provinces and will enhance the funeral profession's ability to regulate itself in the public interest.

We will also significantly increase the fine amounts for funeral home staff and its owners. The fines for individuals will increase from \$500 to up to \$25,000. Fines for businesses will increase from \$500 to up to \$300,000. Licensees will be able to be prosecuted for offences up to three years after an incident happens or the registrar becomes aware of the incident.

Mr. Speaker, the public has said they want to know what happens at hearings involving funeral homes that have violated the Act. Today we are taking steps to make that happen. Hearing schedules, along with decisions, convictions, fines and penalties for licensees will be made public for the very first time. Families will be able to attend hearings.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a clarification. We certainly appreciate the family's need to get answers to their questions and we will do everything we can to make that very thing happen. This legislation allows families to attend the disciplinary hearings and have access to all documents, including a detailed decision.

If a family is attending a hearing as a witness, they can ask questions to the hearing Chair and request that those questions be asked to the licensee. Due to the legal parameters of the disciplinary hearing, only the Chair is permitted to ask questions. This is to avoid any conflict of administrative law proceedings. It is similar to what you would see at other disciplinary hearings for self-regulating professions including Ontario.

I only mention Ontario, Mr. Speaker, as questions about how we compare to Ontario were raised during our media briefing earlier this week as a province that has a different approach than us. If a family does not want to be a witness at a hearing, we will work with them outside of the hearing parameters and get answers to their questions.

I did have a chance to speak with Mr. Bennett following our announcement on Tuesday. Staff reached out to Mr. Bennett's lawyer and the Wilson family to tell them about the amendments we are making prior to our announcement. It was important for them to know what we are doing to try and avoid this devastating situation from ever happening

again. It's certainly very unfair that they've experienced this and we want to make sure that no one else has to experience this very thing.

The changes that I just reviewed, Mr. Speaker, will come into effect upon proclamation and the steps we are taking today will help to protect families during one of the most difficult times of their lives - of all of our lives - and improve the public trust and accountability in the funeral home industry. It will improve the province's funeral industry itself, including the processes and increased protection to all of us.

Before closing, it's important to mention the Funeral Service Association of Nova Scotia, and the Nova Scotia Board of Registration of Embalmers and Funeral Directors were consulted to help inform us on these amendments. I want to thank them for their participation and their ongoing commitment to the province's funeral home industry and to increase consumer protection. With that, I'll conclude my remarks and look forward to the comments from the opposite.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, this legislation is a step in the right direction. I know that we can never, as a body of legislators, end human error, but having the processes in place and requiring these homes to be documenting the body at every stage of transition may help. We certainly hope that it does.

I believe that fines going up is important. If laws do not have teeth, nobody is going to treat them with the same sincerity and I think that putting the fines up, from people I've spoken with in the industry - the industry wants that as well. I think that one of the reasons they wanted that, Mr. Speaker, is because the industry wants to have integrity. They want to ensure that stories about what happened to Mr. Bennett and the late Mrs. Bennett do not happen to somebody else. My heart goes out to that family and what happened.

Having consumer advocates added to the board is also a positive measure. I believe if the board is having a hearing and hearing from both a consumer and from an operator, having consumer advocates on the board ensures that somebody on the board is looking really from the angle of the consumer and that's important.

I think we will have more to say on this bill as it proceeds through the House. I think I'm going to reserve any further comment at this point, but we do like most aspects of the bill and we look forward to seeing it pass at the next stage here in the House.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to make a few comments to this bill. As this House knows, on two occasions Mr. Gary Bennett - who is family of the member who was at the centre of the event on December 27, 2017 in Berwick which has

triggered this - has been here. Gary has shown a considerable amount of interest in the bill and I do want to convey some of what he has conveyed to me. Certainly, parts of the bill he's very pleased with, such as the increased fines and the greater certainty in the labelling and marking of bodies. Really, Mr. Bennett's goal in this is simply to have no other family ever have to go through this. He expressed his appreciation for the bill in that respect.

[11:00 a.m.]

He did express some concerns, and I believe I heard the minister just say that he was bringing in an amendment, and I'd be interested in seeing that amendment to the bill. But where Mr. Bennett's concerns lay were in the fact that when they did make a complaint to the embalmers and funeral directors and they only had the opportunity to make a presentation themselves and be questioned themselves but not hear any of the rest of the testimony given by any other party, or not have any participation in the process other than that. As their part of the story was extremely well-known, having received a very huge amount of publicity, they didn't feel there was any added value to that for them.

They did not participate at that moment but they believe that families in the future who have complaints should have the opportunity to be a full party to the complaint process and hear both sides of the complaint, hear the other side when they make a complaint and to hear what the people who are the subject of the complaint have to say back, the funeral home.

So, that is the concern that Mr. Bennett has conveyed to me and I look forward to hearing - I believe I heard the minister say that they were bringing in an amendment to that to address that and, if not, we will bring in an amendment to address that concern. So we look forward to Law Amendments Committee and seeing what the minister has to say about that.

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I truly want to thank the two members opposite, for Inverness and Kings North, for their comments. I look forward to the Law Amendments Committee process and the conversations we'll have regarding these amendments to this particular Act.

I do appreciate the member for Kings North having that relationship with Gary Bennett. He's a real good man - I had a chance to meet him through the member. The whole purpose of this, as the member said and I've said in my comments, is to get this right. I think that we're here today because of what happened with the Bennett family and that in honour of their situation and in honour of Gary's wishes and his late wife, Sandra, we're going to do whatever we can to make this work.

Seeing it through their eyes with Gary telling the story about what they went through - the processes and how they have to change and be better and have directors, in particular, owners, overall, be more accountable by way of the fines, the public hearings, the labelling process - that's what we're trying to do. The only reason we have this here is to get this right for Gary and ensure, again, that this doesn't happen to anyone else.

With respect to the hearing process, and I do - I think Law Amendments will bring some of this out and the member from Kings North may advance something if he sees fit. He'll talk to Gary about that, but the hearings will be open to the public.

The families can come - it's open to the families to participate. They can come and ask questions through the chairman. The legal challenges with respect to a direct cross-examination - again, we're hindered by the law in that regard. That's one of the questions that I think the nuances - and before we get to Law Amendments Committee and the final passage of this bill, I just want to make sure that we tighten up across the floor here and make sure that we're reflecting what Gary sees and what the family sees.

That's one aspect of it, and the other aspect is just around the public nature of the hearings. Everything from the documentation, the scheduling, the participants will be granted to the public, but it's not an open hearing really because of issues of confidentiality. So if some general person from the public wants to go and listen in, that's not permitted under these current amendments. I'm not sure if that's something that Gary is looking to advance. I think that's the Ontario model and I think it's something that is at their discretion.

At the end of the day, I think that given all the amendments here and what we've put forward I think if these are the few things we have to iron out we're in a pretty good place here within the Legislature working together with all Parties. So with that, again, I do thank the members opposite for their comments and I look to close debate on second reading of Bill No. 39.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 39. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 45.

Bill No. 45 - Senior Citizens' Property Tax Rebate Act.

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

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 45 be now read for a second time. It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to amendments that will better meet the needs of low-income seniors in Nova Scotia.

We know older Nova Scotians want to lead independent lives for as long as they can. In July 2018, full ownership of the Senior Citizens' Financial Aid Act was transferred from the Department of Community Services to Service Nova Scotia. With it, a valuable program to many Nova Scotia seniors now resides with Service N.S.

We are taking this opportunity to introduce service delivery efficiencies to that program. The property tax rebate for seniors' program helps low-income seniors remain independent in the comfort of their own homes for longer. The program provides eligible homeowners with a 50 per cent rebate on the actual residential municipal property taxes paid during the previous tax year, to a maximum of \$800.

Every year, we hear from Nova Scotia's seniors about how much they depend on and benefit from this particular program. We know that many seniors face financial hardship on fixed incomes. The amendments we have brought forward will extend the eligibility criteria for the property tax rebate for seniors' program to allow a rebate to be issued when a Nova Scotia senior moves out of their primary residence, but has paid the previous year's municipal taxes.

The change in eligibility criteria could allow up to 150 additional Nova Scotian senior households to qualify for this very important rebate. It will help low-income seniors with this household expense which we know is important when you are on a fixed income.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments support Nova Scotia's low-income seniors by alleviating some financial stress when their property tax bill arrives and help them remain independent longer.

With that, I conclude my remarks and I look forward to the comments from the opposite side.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MCMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I feel like I'm being awfully agreeable today. We like this legislation. It makes sense. The big change, as the minister is indicating, is for people who have sold their homes in the past year. It's certainly key to the philosophy of the program that they should be able to obtain the rebate, as well.

Our party has been very supportive of things like the property tax cap for people to ensure that property taxes don't increase to the point where it becomes unaffordable for them to continue owning their homes. With a platform commitment in 2013, we've even gone so far as to suggest that the program should be expanded to anybody who is earning upwards of \$30,000, which is a lot more than the current limit which is just over \$18,000 under this program.

We are supportive of these changes. We look forward to them passing through the House.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: As we looked at this bill, it is mostly an administrative matter of moving one program to another department, which is okay. We do appreciate the change that allows seniors to receive the rebate if they've moved out of their primary residences. I know this piece of legislation will allow, under regulation, for the minister to make changes to that program. I encourage the minister to look at expanding the access to the program for our seniors.

We know that seniors are the fastest growing demographic in our province and many seniors struggle to make ends meet every day. The price of maintaining a home continues to go up. Unfortunately, it's not reflected in their income every year. It's great to see this, but we hope and we encourage the minister to continue to look at ways to support our seniors who want to stay in their home as long as possible.

Often, we talk about the long-term care aspect of seniors remaining in their home but there's a big portion of our senior population who struggle to keep a roof over their heads. The cost of maintaining that home is a big barrier and a lot of seniors, especially in our rural communities, live in poverty and they go without because they make sure they pay their mortgage, if they have one, but they pay their heating bill, they pay their taxes owed on their home and then often go without.

I hope that this isn't just the only changes we'll see with this program, that the government will look at how do we ease the burden and the cost on our seniors when they're trying to stay in their homes longer, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to the minister announcing, maybe in the next session, that maybe it's 300 or 3,000 more seniors who will be able to gain access to this program. I know the potentially 150 seniors will benefit, will thank the government for this, but let's see if we can draw that number up even more.

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

MR. BRAD JOHNS: As my colleague from Inverness said, our caucus is supporting this. I did want to rise because there are a couple of things in this. Whenever I think we're doing something that is good for seniors across this province I think it's beneficial and certainly recognize the challenges that seniors have.

I guess where my concern is that it seems like to me, personally - I know it's 150, but when we look at the seniors across this province it would certainly be nice to see other programs coming forward similar to this, to benefit more than just 150 seniors across the province.

I'm somewhat perplexed in regards as to why it is that we're coming forward with an entire new bill with this. I know there's currently a bill in place that sounds very similar to this, it almost seems identical to the previous Senior Citizens Financial Aid Act. It is almost laid out identically, the purposes are identical, almost everything is identical. I'm not really quite sure why it is, Mr. Speaker, that we're not bringing forward amendments to that Act, versus bringing in a whole new Act that almost seems identical. It makes me somewhat skeptical.

I really haven't read through and made real comparisons, given the fact this was just brought forward yesterday for first reading and it's only 24 hours later, so it's really kind of hard to jam that in. I am looking forward to this when it comes forward at Law Amendments and if it doesn't seem to be anything significant I'm going to be raising it at Law Amendments Committee, as well as third reading.

Other than that, I think that any time we are able to keep some money in the pockets of Nova Scotians, particularly in the pockets of those seniors, that it's a positive thing, so we do support it and we look forward to Law Amendments Committee.

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: As always, Mr. Speaker, I thank the members opposite for their comments and for their support on this bill. I will quickly offer a little bit of clarification on some of the points made. First and foremost, for the two Sackville members who spoke with respect to this, the 150 represents the number of seniors in the last couple of years, sort of on average, that left their principle dwelling halfway through a season. So they paid their property taxes for the year before, they are moving to a different province with family, to a long-term care facility or what have you, so they don't get the benefit of this rebate up to \$800.

For me this is a bit of a gap or a loophole in that policy, so when people pay it, regardless of their fixed address the next year, they still get access to this money, so 150 is the number on average that would be caught up on that for the last couple of years. The

actual property rebate program is realized by exponentially more than that, the Nova Scotia seniors across the province. That's one point of it.

Secondly, with respect to moving it from one department to another and why it's a new bill, they are sort of tied into each other. The old legislation was reflected that it was a DCS program, so this one just modernizes the language in terms of its new home at Service Nova Scotia. With respect to why that's the case and the rationale for moving it from one place to the other, DCS is service delivery and they deliver programs that are critical to people, and they do a tremendous job. Service Nova Scotia, number one, is at the lead in terms of digitizing government and the new digital government that we're striving towards. We're modernizing the delivery of these programs.

[11:15 a.m.]

Think of the example that many members and constituents use - the HARP program. The HARP program is now completely online. It's a few clicks, and it's very simple and easy to apply versus what it used to be with paper and fax and having to snail mail applications forward.

The reason why it came from DCS to Service Nova Scotia is largely because of our ability to make it more efficient - get it in and out quicker. Because there's a lot of cross-references with other programs, we have the ability to identify seniors who would qualify. For the member for Sackville-Cobequid, his point about expanding these services and getting more people - it's staggering the number of seniors who don't apply for the rebate because they don't know, and for the number of low-income Nova Scotians who don't access HARP because they just don't know.

With Service Nova Scotia building that database and having the ability through the Access Centres and other means to get direct contact with seniors and with Nova Scotians who are low-income that would be eligible for these programs, it just makes it more efficient. DCS entrusts us to take the program delivery and make sure that we're communicating with the appropriate people so we're maximizing that program. There's always room to spend more and we'll do that with each budget deliberation, and the more Nova Scotians who can have access to these programs, the better.

I do thank you across the way for your comments and, with that, I'll close second reading on Bill No. 45.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 45. 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. 48.

Bill No. 48 - An Act to Amend Various Statutes Administered by Service Nova Scotia.

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

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 48 be now read for a second time.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments being made to the various Service Nova Scotia Acts will streamline processes, clarify and strengthen language and the very purpose of the law. Service Nova Scotia has been working and continues to work diligently to modernize their legislation and streamline regulations to support government's commitment to making programs and services more accessible and more efficient for Nova Scotians.

Last Fall, Mr. Speaker, I introduced amendments to the Marriage Act to make it more inclusive; to align with federal legislation; and to provide enhanced security to those who are marrying. I'm pleased to say we are continuing our work to modernize this Act. The Deputy Registrar General will now have increased enforcement responsibility to terminate a cleric's and a religious body's registration to solemnize marriages if they are not adhering to their own requirements. These could include stated beliefs, who can conduct marriage services, and the marriage rites to be followed, or failing to comply with the Act.

Mr. Speaker, we are also amending various Service Nova Scotia Acts which include updating and harmonizing limitation periods at three years to make the Acts consistent. This means if someone is in violation of the Act, we have three years to charge that person. We are making these changes to the Collection Agencies Act, Consumer Creditors' Conduct Act, Consumer Protection Act, Consumer Reporting Act, Direct Sellers' Regulation Act, and Mortgage Regulation Act.

We're also updating and correcting language in the Consumer Protection Act, Petroleum Products Pricing Act, and the Consumer Reporting Act. For example, gender terms like "his" and "workmanlike" will be removed to ensure the Acts apply equally to all Nova Scotians, regardless of their gender or marital status.

Correcting typographical errors in the Direct Sellers' Regulation Act is also part of this bill, as well, clarifying and enhancing regulation-making authority in the Consumer Protection Act and the Consumer Reporting Act. This includes allowing the registrar to set new application form requirements, updating and/or repealing reference to courts and programs that no longer exist in the Money Lenders Act and the Unconscionable

Transactions Relief Act. This includes removing references to county court and appeal division.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that our law reflects today's society. The team at Service Nova Scotia is constantly looking to see how they can become more client focused and efficient to improve Service Nova Scotia and the delivery we apply to Nova Scotians with respect to these services and this, of course, includes modernizing legislation and our regulations. I look forward to continuing this work. With that, I'll conclude my remarks and turn it over to the members opposite.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, there are quite a number of items in this bill and I know it's second reading. We're not supposed to get into the individual items, but more look at the bill from a broader perspective. A lot of these changes that appear to be, they appear to be sensible. A lot of them to do with things like changing wording that may be dated in Acts, I think is valuable and better representative of the population. It probably would have been better representative of the population back when those Acts were written too but they weren't written like that.

I know that there are some clauses I think are going to be changed about limitations on when people can pursue, as I understand here, collection agencies and those things. We'd like to hear at the Law Amendments Committee if there are any thoughts from people about that. I know sometimes there are limitations on when you can pursue organizations in these cases.

I guess one that caught my eye was one the minister focused on in his comments; it appears the bill is giving power to the minister to cancel the ability for a religious representative to perform a marriage if they fail to comply with the Solemnization of Marriage Act. I don't know what exactly that means other than I know if people are seeing that they might quickly think, well gee, does this mean that maybe the minister is going to have power to start deciding who can and cannot marry people based on some beliefs? I don't think that's the intention and I'm sure that'll be clarified as this bill moves through the House. I see the minister agreeing with that.

So, there are a lot of items in the bill and I don't want to get too ahead of myself and agree on this one, too, just yet, but it looks pretty good at first glance. We'll wait until the bill is examined further as it moves through the House.

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

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I would have to agree with my colleague who just spoke. When you see an omnibus bill like this and those in the past, definitely red flags sometimes go up. Often, it's an ability for government to maybe put something in a

bill that you don't want a lot of spotlight on or a lot of attention on. I'm not saying that this is the case in this one, but we've tried to go through the Acts, the 10 different Acts, to try to see, okay, is it just the language change, is it just wording, is it a number of changes. We're going to continue to do that and that's why we appreciate the process that we have here, where we do have the ability for anybody impacted by the changes in these, in this bill here, with any of the Acts in particular, they have an opportunity to hopefully register or to come forward to go make a presentation at Law Amendments Committee, but also to get in contact with their local MLA or the caucuses here in the Legislature.

We often hear from people after the bill is introduced, when they find out that there are changes coming. We do certainly appreciate the language changes to make wording gender neutral. It's something we've been advocating for on a number of occasions, on different bills, here in the Legislature from our caucus and my caucus colleagues. I expect that we'll hear if there are any concerns and we look forward to the process here as we move along.

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

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to say ditto to what my two colleagues have said of this bill. Again, when they're omnibus bills come through, they seem to be ominous. What is it when things are a little scary? So, we just need to make sure we understand what's in it.

The other reason I stand today is, I just want to quickly wish everyone a good weekend and, of course, to wish the member for Halifax Atlantic, the member for Glace Bay, and the member for Yarmouth well for taking on Easter Seals Nova Scotia today and going down the building at 1801 Hollis. They're going to be descending the building. My only caveat is I hope to see you, of course, on Tuesday.

I know the member for Yarmouth broke his knee playing golf. He blew out his leg playing volleyball. If you don't mind, Mr. Speaker, I hope those two other members take care of the member for Yarmouth because we do like him and want him to come back here on Tuesday. (Laughter)

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I do thank the members opposite for comments on Bill No. 48.

To the Official Opposition House Leader, we're all very much afraid to do the rappelling today. I was hoping we had some more omnibus bills so we could stay here a

bit longer. Once we're finished here, we have to go down. We were trying to delay for as long as we could

AN HON. MEMBER: We could ring the bells.

MR. MACLELLAN: We're going to have a recorded vote on the adjournment.

I do thank him and the members opposite for their warm support for what we're going to do in an hour or so here.

To the members opposite on Bill No. 48, there's nothing of any substance or concern that we're moving through here. It is complicated language, but by and large it's dated. It's really just modernizing and cleaning up what is an antiquated set of language around some of these Acts.

The only one specifically I would address is what the member for Inverness said, because I had the same questions way back in the summer when we were doing briefings around this one. What you're seeing a lot in modern times is that people sort of pop up out of nowhere, they put a chapel in their backyard, they're quasi-religious of one organization or another, whatever their denomination may be, and they do marriages under the auspices of being a minister or a member of the clergy. That's very much unacceptable. Obviously, the legalities are such that sometimes these weddings aren't valid.

With respect to religious organizations and those who register as justices of the peace and similar designations, we want to make sure we protect the integrity of those positions. It's not someone purporting to be a Catholic minister or a Catholic priest doing services. That provides that protection, to strengthen the integrity and the credibility of the marriage system and the marriage ceremony. That does it for that.

Again, this is very much housekeeping. I do look forward to Law Amendments Committee as well. If there are some people out there who have a vested interest in any of these, and they want to bring forward concerns, obviously we'll be happy to listen to those. With that, I close second reading of Bill No. 48.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 48. 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 government business for today (Interruptions) Sorry everyone.

I move that the House do now rise to meet again Tuesday, September 25th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Following the daily routine and QP, business will include second reading of Bill Nos. 49 and 51, as well as third reading of Bill Nos. 2, 4, 10, 13, 16, and 23, and with time permitting, Address in Reply. I would also note that the Law Amendments Committee meeting will take place on Monday at 3:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to rise to meet again on Tuesday, September 25th, 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 25th, at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 11:29 a.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)

RESOLUTION NO. 150

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Finance and Treasury Board)

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

Whereas the Wilson Family Scholarship is awarded yearly to support its employees, their children, and their grandchildren as they further their post-secondary education at university or community college, having achieved success at school or a trade and are involved in their communities through volunteering, sports, or the arts; and

Whereas Kathleen Smith of Great Village, Colchester North, is a recipient of a 2018 Wilson Family Scholarship; and

Whereas Kathleen was a member of the Cobequid Educational Centre soccer team and volunteers at her church and with Tim Bits soccer;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kathleen Smith for her organizational skills and her academic ability, as she is now enrolled at Saint Mary's University with the goal of becoming a teacher.