



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2019

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2019

Sixty-third General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, Brendan Maguire

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, with the unanimous consent of the House, I would ask that we have some comments from all three Parties with regard to recent events that happened in metro that brought on a terrible tragedy to one of our fellow Nova Scotian families.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I ask for a moment of silence after my few words.

We love our children beyond all reason. They're our joy even when they're wild. We have never loved anybody the way we love our children. A parent's love for their child is like nothing else in this world.

The image of a house, only days before full of life, now empty and burnt will forever be in our memory. The seven tiny coffins will forever be in our thoughts. The tears, the grief, the pain, always in our broken hearts. An unimaginable tragedy, a nightmare so horrific, so devastating, and so destructive.

The love of countless Nova Scotians who gave, who came together, who grieved for the Barho family. February 19th will forever be etched in our souls. The Barho family will forever be part of our communities, our province, our prayers, and our hearts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TIM HALMAN: I want to first say thank you to the member for Halifax Atlantic for the leadership he has shown in his community during a very challenging time.

Mr. Speaker, it is a sad honour today to pay tribute to the lives of the seven Barho children: Abdullah, Rana, Hala, Ola, Mohamad, Rola, and Ahmed. Theirs was a family for which Nova Scotia was a beacon of freedom, safety, and security. Just 16 months ago, they fled their war-torn homeland for refuge here in Nova Scotia.

Like any parents, I'm sure Mr. and Mrs. Barho dreamed of a better, safer life for their children in our province. It is an unimaginable tragedy that their dream was cut so short. None of us can imagine the pain they must be feeling or the loss they must accept.

I know many Nova Scotians have wept for the Barho children and their parents since the days of the fire. Mr. Speaker, although we felt their grief, Nova Scotians were not paralyzed by it. The outpouring of sympathy, love, and resources that our fellow Nova Scotians offered this family is an inspiration. I sincerely hope it was a source of comfort for the family. I have every confidence that we will continue to support the family as they struggle through this terrible loss.

I also want to take a moment to thank all of the first responders who answered the call on the terrible night in question. The professionalism and compassion they have shown under such heartbreaking circumstances is remarkable and a very poignant reminder of the difficult circumstances they are prepared to face every single day.

Mr. Speaker, through you, I want to offer the sincere condolences of the Progressive Conservative caucus to the Barho family. We will continue to keep them and their seven children in our hearts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker and fellow members, I cannot fathom the grief being felt by Kawthar Barho and - consciously or unconsciously - by her husband, Ebraheim. Their loss of seven children is just too immensely huge and tragic.

Grief is the price that we risk paying when we love. First, we choose to love, as parents, as neighbours, as firefighters and other first responders, as community volunteers like the members of HEART - Hants East Assisting Refugees Team Society - as Nova Scotians, and as members of this Legislative Assembly. Then, because we are open to loving, we share the grief and only wish that, in grieving, we could lessen the burden on Kawthar Barho and all those who directly knew and loved her children.

Of course, we cannot, and for that I am truly sorry, as are all my fellow members.

THE SPEAKER: I would ask that all members please rise as we observe a moment of silence in memory of the Barho family.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

THE SPEAKER: We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Internal Services.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table Deloitte's Incident Management Review and the department's updated action plan in regard to the April 2018 FOI breach.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 710

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

Whereas the month of February is recognized as African Heritage Month in Nova Scotia, a time to celebrate and share the culture, history, and contributions of African Nova Scotians; and

Whereas the 2019 provincial theme, Our History Is Your History, recognizes the distinct history of African Nova Scotians and how this story is interwoven throughout our province's past, present, and future; and

Whereas when we all acknowledge, understand, and appreciate the history of African Nova Scotians, together we will be able to facilitate positive change in our province;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly please join me in recognizing February as African Heritage Month in the Province of Nova Scotia and continue to learn about the amazing achievements of African Nova Scotians all year round.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 711

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

Whereas in the hours and days following the unspeakable and tragic loss suffered by the Barho family, we have seen a tremendous outpouring of generosity and community support; and

Whereas as Minister of Immigration, I am incredibly proud and grateful for the compassion shown by Nova Scotians and the support of our settlement service providers and volunteers during this time, especially the Hants East Assisting Refugees Team Society (HEARTS), the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), the YMCA, the YWCA, and others; and

Whereas I want to thank our province's first responders for their courage and compassion, and extend condolences to the Barho family and their community;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in keeping the Barho family in their thoughts and prayers and thank all first responders, businesses, community groups, faith organizations, sports teams, and individuals that took it upon themselves to organize fundraisers and memorials in response to this tragedy.

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

THE 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 Finance and Treasury Board.

[1:15 p.m.]

RESOLUTION NO. 712

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall:

(1) read and table the message from His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, transmitting the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020 for the consideration of this House;

(2) table the Estimate Books;

(3) table the Government Business Plans;

(4) table the Crown Corporation Business Plans;

(5) table the Estimate and Crown Corporation Business Plans resolutions;

(6) deliver my Budget Speech; and

(7) move that the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, being Supply to be granted to Her Majesty, and the Crown Corporation Business Plans be referred to the Committee of the Whole on Supply.

Mr. Speaker, for the information of the House, the budget will be presented on March 26, 2019.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 713

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

Whereas Mr. Brian Adams of Pleasant Bay, Inverness County, Nova Scotia was recently inducted into the Atlantic Canada Marine Industries Hall of Fame at the 2019 Eastern Canadian Fisheries Exposition in Yarmouth, joining a prestigious group of mariners, processors, and industry builders from all four provinces of Atlantic Canada; and

Whereas Mr. Adams has recently retired from the fishery after several decades, where he served many leadership roles with the industry including president of the Area 19 Snow Crab Fishermen's Association, director of the North of Smokey-Inverness South Fishermen's Association, roles that have contributed to the success and growth of one of the province's most important industries; and

Whereas Mr. Adams is known to be a champion for many important industry issues through his strong leadership, his influential voice, his co-operative approach, and his commitment and dedication to the fishing industry over the course of his career;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House thank Brian Adams for his tremendous contribution to the fishery and congratulate him on the important recognition of his distinguished career in the Atlantic Canada Marine Industries Hall of Fame.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Thank you. With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce Mr. Adams. In the East Gallery is Mr. Brian Adams whom I just read the resolution on and I am so pleased to see him here today. I want to personally congratulate him on that fantastic award. (Applause)

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

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I too would like to make an introduction before I introduce a bill. In the gallery opposite, I'd like to draw your attention to Frank Boudreau and Darcy Henn, if they would please stand. These are members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary and this bill we are introducing today will be to show our appreciation for you and your fellow volunteers, so thank you for joining us. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 84 - Entitled an Act to Express Appreciation for Members of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary (Hon. Karen Casey)

Bill No. 85 - Entitled an Act to Establish a Task Force on the Future of the Forestry Industry in Nova Scotia (Tim Houston)

Bill No. 86 - Entitled an Act Respecting Emergency Room Accountability. (Tammy Martin)

Bill No. 87 – Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 32 of the Acts of 2014. The Health Authorities Act. (Karla MacFarlane)

Bill No. 88 – Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 33 of the Acts of 2010. The Auditor General Act. (Karla MacFarlane)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

CUMMINGER, JOANNE - RECIPIENT: SENATE 150 MEDAL - CONGRATS.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, today I want to acknowledge Joanne Cumminger, a recipient of the Senate 150th Anniversary Medal. Along with Senator Michael

MacDonald, I was honoured to make the presentation to Joanne who is one of the most deserving people I know.

She was a nurse for 38 years, 12 of which she was the cancer navigator in the Northern Region and although she officially retired, she still does two days a week at the Aberdeen Hospital.

Joanne works tirelessly at the Ladies Auxiliary of the Plymouth Fire Department, volunteers at her church, the Race on the River and much more. Joanne is a consummate volunteer and I am proud to call her a friend. Thank you, Joanne, and congratulations on your Senate 150th Anniversary Medal.

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

CASEY, BILL - MP: CAREER ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Bill Casey on the occasion of his 30th anniversary as Member of Parliament for Cumberland-Colchester. Bill is one of the few politicians able to claim that during his long career in public service he managed to run successfully for the Conservative Party, as an Independent, and more recently, for the Liberal Party of Canada.

Over three decades, under three different banners he has faithfully served the people of Cumberland-Colchester and indeed all Nova Scotians, especially when he famously voted against his own Party's budget because it undermined the Atlantic Accord. That action got him kicked out of caucus by then Prime Minister Stephen Harper, but when he ran as an Independent in the following election his constituents remained loyal to him in return.

I would like to congratulate Bill and wish him well in his retirement, which he has said will begin next Fall.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

DENNIS, SANDY: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: It's with great sadness that I inform the House of the passing of Yarmouth's Sandy Dennis, after her heroic and consequential battle with cancer.

Sandy was a passionate, energetic and compassionate elected member of Yarmouth's Town Council since 2012, for which she served on many committees. She was also a business owner and operator for many years as a downtown merchant. She was a great advocate for our ferry service and worked actively to help see it returned to our port.

But more importantly, Sandy was a driving force behind an initiative to assist cancer patients and their families with the financial and emotional concerns associated with travelling outside of Yarmouth to receive treatment, all while she was receiving treatment herself. Sandy loved her community and her community loved her right back.

She is gone too soon, and her kindness and generosity of spirit will be greatly missed by many, but her memory and legacy will live on in all the hearts and minds of the people whose lives she touched.

I ask this House to join me in extending condolences to the family and friends of Sandy Dennis and wish her the very best on this next stage of her journey.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East on an introduction.

TIM HOUSTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I did not forget - I just wanted to strategically time the introduction of my wife in the gallery this afternoon. Thank you, Carol, for joining us in the gallery. Maybe she can stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

RANKIN, IAIN - MLA: RECENT MARRIAGE - CONGRATS

TIM HOUSTON: As I acknowledge my wife's presence, I also want to congratulate the Minister of Lands and Forestry on his wedding this past weekend. Congratulations. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ADAMS, BRIAN: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Let us acknowledge Brian Adams who was just acknowledged by the minister here who was recently named Mariner of the Year at the Eastern Canadian Fisheries Exposition in Yarmouth. Often a leader in the industry, Brian has spent his working life dedicated to making things better for fellow fishermen and fisherwomen.

Northern Cape Breton Island is home to a wealth of the world's finest snow crab meat, and Brian was involved as this fishery began to grow significant revenues in the 1980s.

He helped form the Area 19 Snow Crab Fishermen's Association and was president for 25 years. Today it is one of the most lucrative fisheries in our province. He worked in conjunction with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to move the industry towards co-

management, which gave fishers ownership over decisions affecting the health of the snow crab population.

May we in this Legislature extend our congratulations to Brian Adams. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

AFRICAN HERITAGE MO.: RACISM - LEARN, LISTEN & ACT

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, today marks the last day of African Heritage Month, and all month people all over the province have been attending special lectures, concerts, dinners, and other events in celebration of the rich culture of people of African descent.

It has been a great time to celebrate but also to listen and learn. I listened to the voices of Kate MacDonald and Trayvone Clayton as they describe being racially profiled at the House of Commons. I heard African Nova Scotians relay experiences of being stopped by police for no reason except they are Black, and of the fact that African Nova Scotians are severely over-represented in our prison systems.

I listened and learned a lot, but it is not enough. Nova Scotians must take action on these issues and come to terms with the fact that our province has been built on the backs of African slaves and that systemic racism has been in place since then.

We need to end the practice of street checks, we need to support African Nova Scotian families connected with the child welfare system, we need to make sure Black students are getting an education in our public schools that will give them real choices when they graduate.

The people in this Legislature have the power to help bring justice to African Nova Scotian communities and I call on all of us present to work tirelessly to this end.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's on an introduction.

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, by leave I would like to make some introductions. Since marital harmony seems to be the order of this morning, I'd like to acknowledge my wife, Mary Lynne MacKay, in the east gallery, joined by our good friend and neighbour Connie Ivany, by my valued constituency assistant Penny Lawless. And, finally, by the newest member to my team, research intern Peter Jansen. Thank you and welcome.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**LANDRY, NICK - COMPETITOR:
TRACK & FIELD MEDALLIST - CONGRATS.**

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Nick Landry of Bridgewater. Nick received a bronze medal in the 400-metre hurdles at the Royal Canadian Legion Youth Track and Field Championships that took place in Brandon, Manitoba last August. This competition gives Canadians aged 17 and under a chance to compete against the best and develop confidence at the country's premier and only nationwide competition for this age group.

Nick is a 16-year-old who trains under Tanya Daniels of Bluenose Athletics said his time at the championship was unlike anything he had ever experienced. He was honoured to stand on the podium to receive his award in front of Team Nova Scotia and proud to represent his province, coaches, parents, and everyone else who has supported him along the way. Nick was one of two South Shore representatives on the 36-member Nova Scotia team.

I ask members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating this promising athlete and wish him the best with his future aspirations.

[1:30 p.m.]

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

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker and all members, I'd like to draw your attention to the West Gallery - we have several people here I'd like to introduce. We have Bud Baker; Robert Plante; Tyler Cameron from the PC caucus office; and Nicole LaFosse Parker - and last but not least, Dr. Lisa Bonang, who just came back from a medical conference down under.

We're very excited to have them all here on the first day of the session of the Legislature. (Applause)

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

KIERAN, KATHY: CNIB GUIDE DOG TRAINING - ACKNOWLEDGE

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge all the time and hard work that Kathy Kieran has dedicated to the CNIB guide dog training initiative.

Twelve months ago, Kathy took Sherman, an eight-week-old Retriever puppy, home and wholeheartedly took on the task of training him.

Kathy and her family focused on obedience and socialization. This meant bringing Sherman everywhere she went, including shopping, going to the movies, and getting groceries. This task truly is a 24/7 endeavour.

This volunteer program was new to Nova Scotia in 2018. Sherman came to Nova Scotia all the way from Australia.

Although Kathy was sad to recently say goodbye to Sherman in Ottawa, where he will begin his next round of training, she looks forward to May 2019, when she will meet her new puppy to train.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in acknowledging and thanking Kathy for all of her hard work and dedication.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**HFX. PUB. LIBRARIES:
35 YRS. SUPPORTING AFRICAN HERITAGE - CONGRATS.**

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, African Heritage Month was founded in 1926 by American Black historian Carter Woodson, but in Nova Scotia, the first celebration of what was at that time Black History Week happened 35 years ago this month at the Halifax North Memorial Library in Halifax Needham.

I would like to acknowledge the consistent support of the Halifax public library system for the celebration of African Heritage Month, which now extends from late January into March. Thirty-five years ago, youth librarian Terry Symonds led the organizing effort and was assisted by Craig Smith - now an RCMP sergeant - and Tracey Jones-Grant, both of whom have been involved virtually ever since and were present on January 24th at the standing room-only launch of this year's African Heritage Month at the George Dixon Centre.

I congratulate them and their collaborators across the province on 35 years of recognizing the heritage and contributions of African Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

RANKIN, IAIN & CHISHOLM, MARY: RECENT MARRIAGE - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, these members' statements give us the opportunity to mark noteworthy events in the lives of our fellow Nova Scotians. Today I would like to note an event of import in the life of one of our own members.

On February 22nd, our colleague the Minister of Lands and Forestry, the honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect, made a wise decision as he is wont to do. On that date, the honourable member married an intelligent, competent, lovely woman who is quite familiar to many in this Chamber: Mary Chisholm. I am so delighted for them both.

Mr. Speaker, life can be hard. It can be difficult. It is so much easier, so much better, when you share it with someone who has your back through life's ups and downs. As the late great Alistair MacLeod noted, we are all better when we are loved.

I want to extend my family's heartiest congratulations to the happy couple and hope my colleagues will join me in extending their best wishes to them as well. (Standing Ovation)

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

MURRAY, LINDA - RECIPIENT: FIRTH AWARD - CONGRATS.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, the North Highlands Nordic ski club was founded in 1977 by a small group of enthusiastic cross-country skiers who shared a love of winter and of the splendid scenery in the northeast highlands. Much of the club's success is due to an amazing volunteer, Linda Murray.

Linda, at the age of 72, still enjoys skiing and guiding youth on the trails. Recently, Linda was officially recognized for her outstanding contribution to the sport of cross-country skiing, receiving the 2018 Cross Country Canada Firth Award.

I rise today to congratulate Linda Murray on her award and thank her for her many years of volunteer contribution to both skiing and the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

**HOUSTON, TIM & MACMASTER, ALLAN:
HOUSE LEADERSHIP - CONGRATS.**

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to take a moment to acknowledge the change in some of the leadership positions that have taken place since we were here last.

I want to welcome the member for Pictou East to taking up the legislative component of the position that he was elected to last Fall as Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and to wish him well in carrying out these responsibilities.

Also, I want to say a word of welcome and congratulations to the member for Inverness as he takes up the position of Official Opposition House Leader. You will notice that both of them have moved more closely to the south from the northerly side of their caucus configuration. This is a great pleasure to us so that we'll be able to keep a closer eye on them in the future. (Laughter)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

MILLER, DAVID: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, on November 1, 2018, Antigonish lost an incredible community leader, philanthropist, lover of the arts, and mentor to many. David Miller passed away suddenly at home.

He was born in North Sydney and, after enjoying a varied and successful career in business and finance, David and his beloved wife Aida settled in Antigonish. In 1988, they opened and operated McDonald's franchises in Antigonish and Port Hawkesbury which they operated until 2012.

He left his mark on his adopted community, pursuing his many passions and bringing others along. He tirelessly pursued his passions in the arts being instrumental in establishing the summer Antigonish Art Fair and more recently the Arts House, where creative artists and students have access to a creative environment to develop and share their skills with others. In spite of living with an illness that required aggressive and sometimes debilitating treatments, David's positive attitude seldom wavered. He continued to pursue his passions when he could, whether it was art or planting potatoes on his hobby farm.

I wish to recognize David and to extend well wishes to Aida and David's many close friends and colleagues. He is missed and his legacy will live on.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MACDONALD, CARA - COMPETITOR: TRACK & FIELD - BEST WISHES

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to bring to your attention, the exploits of New Glasgow athlete Cara MacDonald. She was selected the U14 Female Athlete of the Year 2018 by Athletics Nova Scotia.

MacDonald, a middle-distance runner for Pictou County Athletics, broke five Athletics Nova Scotia Bantam-age in 2018. Pictou County coaches were impressed with her awesome year in track and field and look forward to her performance in 2019. MacDonald hopes to have the opportunity to compete at several events this year, including Legion Nationals.

Cara is looking forward to making the Nova Scotia Team that will compete in the 2021 Canada Summer Games in Ontario. I would like to ask all members of the Legislature to join me in wishing Cara MacDonald great success in her future endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

GIBSON, JOHN: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mr. John Gibson of Lake Echo who is an active and contributing member of the Royal Canadian Legion, Eastern Marine Branch 161, Gaetz Brook.

He is also an Elder in the St. David's United Church in Lake Echo where he contributes his time and energy on a regular basis.

He is often called upon by the Legion and by Saint David's to volunteer his talents in directing and working in the preparation for many wonderful dinners for the community.

I want to recognize and congratulate John Gibson for giving back to his community and making a difference in the legion and the church.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker. In the West Gallery, we have a former student of mine, Tristan Shaw. Tristan is in his final year of university and I have no doubt Tristan is going to go on to do great things for his community of Dartmouth and his Province of Nova Scotia. So, I ask the House to please give Tristan a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**BARRETT & NOAH, FERGUSON-LOSIER - ATHLETES:
SPEED SKATING - COMMEND**

TIM HALMAN: I rise today to recognize brothers, Barrett Ferguson-Losier and Noah Ferguson-Losier, students from Dartmouth East who both have a passion for speed skating.

Barrett began speed skating at a young age and has represented Nova Scotia at the 2015 Canada Winter Games in Prince George, British Columbia. Barrett is continuing his training and is competing at the 2019 Canada Winter Games in Red Deer, Alberta. Noah also began speed skating a young age and represented Nova Scotia at both the 2011 Canada Winter Games in Halifax and at the 2015 Canada Winter Games in Prince George.

Both Barrett and Noah give back to the speedskating community by being active coaches of the Dartmouth Crossing Speedskating Club. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join me in commending Barrett and Noah for their dedication to the sport and for being positive role models to younger athletes.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

TAKE ACTION SOC.: VOLS., WARMTH OF THE HEART - COMMEND

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the efforts and kindness of the Take Action Society's Warmth of the Heart initiative for volunteers during their annual winter clothes giveaway. This latest cold snap is, for many, a brutal reminder our most vulnerable community members suffer even more during the winter months.

The initiative by the Take Action Society strives to change this by making this cold season a little bit easier. Every year they knit gloves, hats, and scarves to hand out to those in need. The Warmth of the Heart giveaway is yet another example of the members of Dartmouth North coming together to look out for those who need a little bit of extra help.

I'd like to thank members of the Take Action Society, including Jody Livingston, who helped organize this year's giveaway; members of the Knitting and Crafts Club for their time and effort knitting all the garments; and a special thanks to the young volunteers who showed us that a little kindness can go a long way.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of the House join me in commending the volunteers of the Take Action Society's Warmth of the Heart initiative for another successful season.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

DRUMLINERS: MUSIC INDUS. CONTRIB. - THANKS

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize music teacher Heather Davis in the West Kings District High School drumliners on their achievements in notable creation of an incredible music program.

The West Kings District High School drumline is a unique music program in Nova Scotia that is creating a barrier-free opportunity and accepting a safe atmosphere for students to engage in the arts. The strong leadership of music teacher Heather Davis has established a collaborative student-centred approach that provides drumliners the space to choreograph their exceptional routines that have been showcased throughout Kings County and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, I would like all members of the House to recognize Heather Davis and the West Kings District High School drumliners for their remarkable contributions to the music industry and in designing a program approach that empowers young musicians.

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

SOBEYS & AUTISM N.S.: SENSORY-FRIENDLY HOUR - COMMEND

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, when something is done right it deserves recognition. Today I would like to shine a spotlight on the wonderful initiative implemented by Sobeys, in partnership with Autism Nova Scotia.

Making efforts to offer a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, Sobeys has recently introduced a sensory-friendly hour, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., in their stores across the province. Efforts to quiet the shopping experience include reducing lighting and volumes on the PA systems, music, telephones, and scanners at the register. They have even entrusted that cart collection take place before the hour starts, to prevent the sounds of carts crashing into each other.

I applaud Sobeys and Autism Nova Scotia for introducing this initiative and hope it can bring inspiration to other Nova Scotia businesses.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Could I give a word of introduction, Mr. Speaker?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

GARY BURRILL: It is our privilege to have with us in the House today members of the Nova Scotia Government Employees Union Political Action Committee who are here for meetings today. I'd like to introduce Hugh Gillis, Suzanne MacIntyre, Mary Otto,

Lindsay MacKenzie, Robert MacDonald and union president Jason MacLean. They are all with us and we're glad to have you here. We're also happy to have with us in the House today, on the opposite side of the House, Nan McFadgen, the president of CUPE, Nova Scotia, so welcome everybody. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

CHENDER, CLAUDIA - MLA: NDP HOUSE LEADER - CONGRATS.

GARY BURRILL: I would like to add, Mr. Speaker, to my previous words of congratulations, congratulations to the member for Dartmouth South on taking up her position today as House Leader of the New Democratic Party. Everyone who has worked with her knows of her passion for seeing that the work of the Assembly proceeds in such a way as to make a concrete difference in people's lives. Certainly, here in our caucus we are filled with pride of association as she takes up this position.

[1:45 p.m.]

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

BLACK, ELLIE - ATHL.: SPORTING EXCELLENCE - CONGRATS.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize my community's successful Olympic gymnast, Ellie Black. In November, I had the honour of congratulating Ellie on her incredible achievement as one of the youngest recipients of the Order of Nova Scotia.

Ellie has an impressive resumé. A two-time Olympian, she placed fifth in the 2016 Summer Olympics, posting Canada's best-ever performance in the all-around competition, and fifth in the team event in 2012. More recently, Ellie won gold at both the 2018 Commonwealth Games and the 2015 Pan American Games for her performance in the artistic individual all-around competition. In addition to her Order of Nova Scotia award, it's no surprise that in 2018, Ellie was named one of the greatest 15 athletes in Nova Scotia history.

I ask all members of this House of Assembly to join me in acknowledging Ellie on her significant achievements, and to wish her the best of luck in all of her future endeavours.

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

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

BRAD JOHNS: In the West Gallery across from me, today, is Mr. Riley Hill-Pettipas. Riley is a member of my Sackville-Beaver Bank constituency riding, and I want to welcome him here today. Riley is a recent recipient of the Paul Levy Memorial Award. That was awarded to him at the Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative AGM just recently.

I hear that he'll be leaving us Tuesday to go up into Quebec to work with the CPC on an election up there, so wishing you all the best, Riley, and it's good to see you here today. (Applause)

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

TIR: PROMOTING TRAFFIC SAFETY - THANKS

BRAD JOHNS: Today I rise on behalf of the residents of Sackville-Beaver Bank and Lucasville to extend a sincere thank you to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and the staff at his department.

As members may remember me discussing in this House last Spring, May 2018, there was an accident that occurred at the intersection of Beaver Bank Road Connector and the Old Sackville Road in Lower Sackville, where a 28-year-old woman lost her life. I'm happy to report today that on February 12th the province finally installed a left-hand turn signal at that intersection.

I want to personally thank the minister and the staff for meeting with me, listening to the concerns that I brought forward, and acting on them. Because of this upgrade, I'm sure that the interchange is a safer place today for those residents of Sackville-Beaver Bank and Lucasville, who use it daily.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

WILSON, DAVID: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take one last opportunity to thank and say farewell to the former NDP House Leader Dave Wilson. We had a robust celebration of his retirement from this House and moving on to the next chapter, but we didn't have the opportunity to acknowledge it here in this Chamber.

Dave very rarely - I think I can call him Dave now - made members' statements, but when he did he never wrote them down. so I'm trying to follow his illustrious tradition and just say that as everyone in this House knows, Dave Wilson is a kind, humble, smart, strategic, and genuine person with whom I was very lucky to work, and whose presence in this Chamber will be missed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

**MARTELL, SHERRY - RECIPIENT:
CAREER EXCELLENCE AWARD - CONGRATS.**

HON. KAREN CASEY: At the annual general meeting of the chamber of commerce, executives of Canada Conference in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Sherry Martell, the executive director of the Truro and Colchester Chamber of Commerce received national recognition for her efforts supporting member initiatives.

Sherry was among the elite group of 30 chamber members from across the country to be recognized as an accredited chamber executive. It is the first time this designation was awarded by the organization to qualifying staff across Canada. Sherry was also presented with the national honour for chambers of less than 500 members.

She gave credit to the dedicated professional staff, directors past and present, and the more than 400 members of the chamber whose passion for their community is a source of inspiration for her.

On behalf of the members of this House, Mr. Speaker, I want to extend our congratulations to Sherry Martell of Colchester North and wish her continued success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

AL IKARI FAMILY: SYRIAN ARRIVALS - WELCOME

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, the Al Ikari family arrives in Halifax today at 3:30 p.m. They are the second Syrian refugee family sponsored by New Minas Baptist Church.

The family includes father Mohammad; mother Maha; children Oday, Raghad, Monthier, and Fatima; and grandmother Fatima Al Shtiwi.

Special thanks to New Minas Baptist Church Refugee Committee members Murray and Helen Lawson, Geoff and Kim Bishop, Jennifer Graham, Judy Martin, Neil and Lori Noseworthy, RaeAnne Bekkers, Tania Ward, and Heather Lohr.

Please join me in wishing the Al Ikari family a successful transition into Canadian life and a bright and prosperous future in our country.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

DATA: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the continuing effort of the Digby Area Tourism Association to promote our area as a unique place to visit. For its members these efforts often involve contributing hours of their time to the association's

various projects and initiatives. At a time when tourism numbers have been increasing at a provincial level, DATA has been working diligently to foster this trend in our region.

Prior to the last tourism season, the association introduced a familiarization tour available to local businesses. It is our local business owners and their employees that are most likely to be the first to greet visitors to our area, and DATA wants to ensure that they can inform our visitors what the region has to offer. Prior to last year's tourism season, DATA informed their members that bookings for the area were up and were positive about the upcoming tourism season. For many tourism operators in the area their expectations were surpassed.

Now the association is well into the planning season for 2019, working to make it more successful than the 2018 season.

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

**KELLEY, ANDREE/KEHOE, ROMA:
RETIREMENT, FEST. OF THE GREENS - THANKS**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to acknowledge Andree Kelley and Roma Kehoe on their retirement from the Festival of the Greens. The Cape Breton Regional Hospital Foundation's annual Festival of the Greens Gala was an idea that Roma and Andree came up with 15 years ago. This past gala raised \$137,000, which is enough to fund the Cape Breton Cancer Centre's alternative therapy program for the next five years.

Hospital foundation CEO Brad Jacobs said the community is "eternally grateful" for the legacy left by Roma and Andree.

I stand here today to thank Roma Kehoe and Andree Kelley for the many years they have given to the foundation and all the other charities that they have been involved with. Enjoy your retirement, ladies.

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

JONES, LYNN: BOOK, *R IS FOR REPARATIONS* - RECOG.

LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, on this last day of African Heritage Month, I would like to acknowledge the work of my good friend Lynn Jones who is the spark behind a new picture book. Lynn is quick to give credit to the dozens of children who she says were the book's true creators. *R Is for Reparations: Young Activists Speaking Their Truth* uses the voices of children to talk about and engage other young people in the global movement for

compensation and restitution in addressing the damage caused to African people by the transatlantic slave trade.

As chair of the Global African Congress, Nova Scotia Chapter, Lynn is advocating for reparations for the victims of the slave trade, colonization and crimes against humanity. As she says, “It’s time for everyone to hop on the reparations freedom train. You don’t need money, you don’t need luggage, all you need is the courage to get on board.”

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

REDDICK, ALONZO - DEACON: RETIREMENT - BEST WISHES

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of a man deeply revered in the Strait area, Deacon Alonzo Reddick of Lincolnville. Just this past summer in the Tracadie United Baptist Church there was held a grand retirement celebration in his honour. The reception hall was packed to the rafters with many well wishers lining up to give thanks for his dedicated lifelong volunteerism and guidance.

As a member of the Lincolnville Development Association, the Community Health Board, the Men’s Brotherhood, the Black Development Association, and many more organizations - too many to list - Deacon Alonzo has been an integral part of building a stronger, healthier and more connected community for the people of the greater Lincolnville area. His life’s work has brought joy and prosperity to countless citizens and we are all so grateful for his noble efforts.

The legacy that Deacon Alonzo Reddick leaves for us to emulate is one of integrity, humility, and grace. We have big shoes to fill, to say the least, but his example has inspired us all to rise to the challenge. I wish him many happy and healthy years in his retirement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MICHELIN: JOB CREATION - THANKS

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to update you on the Michelin Development Company program which was brought to Pictou County after the company announced the reduction of jobs at its plant in Granton.

Since launching this program in April 2014, with the goal to create 250 jobs in Pictou County within four years, the Michelin program has surpassed its expectations. The Michelin Development Company has assisted in creating a total of 271 jobs and counting. Based on the initial success of the program, it expanded into many other counties. The program, which provided loans to businesses, wrapped up in December 2018.

I want to thank Michelin for their vision and commitment to the economic well-being of the residents of Pictou County and beyond.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

LINK PERF. ARTS SOC.: CULTURAL CTR. - THANKS

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, in December, I was proud to join the announcement of a transformative project for the cultural sector in Nova Scotia, the Link Performing Arts Centre.

Through millions in federal, provincial and private funds, the Link Performing Arts Society will proceed with the renovation of the former Halifax World Trade and Convention Centre, transforming the space into a multidisciplinary cultural centre for the creation and presentation of theatre, dance, music, and film.

The new centre will support business incubation for cultural entrepreneurs. The project will give Halifax the capacity to welcome larger concerts and performances and will cement our city's status as the cultural capital of Atlantic Canada. That's exciting news for our artists, performers, audiences, and province.

Please join me in thanking all who helped move this project along, including Rob Power, Marc Almon, Devin Casario, Sarah Riley, Invest Nova Scotia, and Armco Capital.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

REID, EMILY - DONOR: QUEENS CO. FOOD BANK - COMMEND

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, in December of last year, I worked alongside volunteers to collect donations for the Queens County Food Bank. It was a very successful event and the kindness of the community was evident. One donor in particular especially touched my heart, however. Emily Reid, a Grade 5 student in Liverpool, had recently celebrated her 10th birthday. Instead of presents, she asked her friends and family to donate to the food bank. This selfless gesture by Emily should serve as an example to all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend and applaud Emily for her generosity and charity. I have no doubt that this very special and kind-hearted young lady will continue to work to help those who are less fortunate than others. Well done, Emily.

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

WATERMAN, VINCENT: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, this weekend our community will gather in Whitney Pier to celebrate the life of one of our community's greatest leaders. We celebrate the life of Patriarch Vincent Waterman.

Vincent was born in 1925 in Barbados, and his journey ended in our community as the worldwide head of the African Orthodox Church. He was one of our greatest community leaders, as I said. He was a past board member of the Black United Front, the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, the Red Cross Society, pastoral care, affirmative action, the Boys and Girls Club, the Board of Directors of Values and Ethics for 17 years, and Chair for the Educational Program Innovations Charity. In 2015, our community honoured him with the Tom Miller Human Rights Award.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, he was a servant of our community. The community meant everything to him and he meant everything to us. So, to his wife Isabel, his family, and to the entire Whitney Pier community and all of CBRM, I ask the members of this House to pass on their condolences to his family and to honour a man that was a huge pillar in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

SHOPPERS DRUG, N. SYDNEY: PHARM. TEAM OF THE YR. - RECOG.

EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Shoppers Drug Mart in North Sydney, which was named the Pharmacy Team of the Year for Nova Scotia. Pharmacist and owner Tanya Howley gives credit to her team of professionals who work to advance pharmacy services, customer service, and community awareness. Tanya offers medication reviews, prescriptions, injections, blood testing, naloxone kits, and a methadone program.

I'd like to take this opportunity to collectively thank all those community-minded professionals who made this award possible and well-deserved.

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

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

H&W: ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE - RESPONSIBILITY

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, many Nova Scotians will remember two famous, or infamous, pledges made by this government: one was a doctor for every Nova Scotian, and the other one was that this government would be the most open and transparent government in history. There's no hiding the fact that neither of these pledges has been delivered on. We have a crisis in our health care system.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Who is the person that is ultimately responsible for making sure Nova Scotians have access to health care in this province?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): First of all, I want to congratulate the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party on his first Question Period and accepting the challenge of leading his Party. I wish him well, but not really well, and I want to acknowledge his wife who is here. This is definitely a family journey, and this is a special day for them, so I'm happy that they're here. I will try to treat him nice while she is in our presence, and I hope he does the same. (Laughter)

To answer his question, Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of the work that has been happening by all members of our team, whether it's in the Health Authority or in the Department of Health and Wellness. We've seen an increase of family physicians coming into our province. Last year, we had an increase of 56, with specialists coming in.

We're excited about the redevelopment, not only here in HRM, but the redevelopment that's happening in Cape Breton Island. We're excited about that new infrastructure. Health care professionals are excited about that infrastructure. We're going to continue to work with our partners to ensure that we deliver the top-quality health care that Nova Scotians expect.

TIM HOUSTON: If that answer was on the board of Family Feud, it might be on there somewhere, but it wouldn't be at the top.

Mr. Speaker, the person that is responsible for making sure there's access to health care in this province is the Premier. That's the answer to the question and when you look at what's happening in this province, with 50,000 Nova Scotians without access to primary

care, paramedics at their wits end, somebody has to stand up and accept responsibility for the issue.

So, I ask the Premier again, a second time: Who is ultimately responsible to make sure that Nova Scotians have access to health care in this province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the last time he stood in this House, he said there were 100,000 Nova Scotians without access to a family physician. Today, he said there are 50,000 and that is a marked difference. What an improvement in a short period of time. So again, I want to thank all of our partners who are out there finding solutions to ensure that we provide primary care in all of our communities and access for all of our families. We will continue to work hard to make sure that more and more Nova Scotians have access to primary health care across our province.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier asked me to be kind, so I cut the number in half. There are tens of thousands of Nova Scotians without access to a family doctor and we have good people working in the health care system, there is no question, but we need political leadership. I can certainly sympathize with the Premier not wanting to take responsibility for the mess that is health care in this province right now, but I suggest to him that the only way forward is for somebody to take responsibility for trying to fix the problem.

I would urge the Premier to be that person, so I ask the Premier: Will he take responsibility for health care in this province?

THE PREMIER: Not only will we take the issue of providing primary health care to Nova Scotians as a top priority for them, it is for our government. We continue to see substantial improvement. The honourable member already recognized the number that he'd been using in previous sessions has been decreased by half, Mr. Speaker. As he began his supplement to the third question, it's tens of thousands, so the number's going down each time he stands up, so we're thrilled about that.

The reality is we have a responsibility to make sure that we continue to grow the economy, provide the services that Nova Scotians expect in health care and education, vulnerable citizens are looked after, population growth, all of the indicators in this province are leading the country. We're thrilled by what's happening and I want to tell the honourable member that any time he wants to pitch in and help, we'd be more than happy to have his help.

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

H&W - ER VISITS: INCREASE - ALARMING

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the Premier is familiar with the figures that we released earlier this week about increases in patients without a family doctor coming to emergency rooms around the province. From 2013 to 2018, the number of such visits has more than doubled at the QEII, in Amherst, in New Glasgow, in Bridgewater, and in Sydney. In Kentville, in Truro, and at the Dartmouth General the number of such visits over that period has increased more than threefold.

All told, since this government came to power, visits to emergency departments by patients without a family doctor have increased by 112 per cent.

I want to ask the Premier whether he is, as many others are, alarmed and troubled by these numbers.

THE PREMIER: I thank the honourable member for the question. As I said to his colleague beforehand, we continue to work with our health care providers to ensure they have access to primary health care gains across the province. We're investing heavily in infrastructure that had been ignored, Mr. Speaker, for decades. Our health care providers are excited about the opportunity to work in new infrastructure. We're the first province to continue to bring in an immigration stream specifically around health care, leading the country when it comes to that.

We have had success when it comes to recruiting more physicians, but we also recognize the delivery of health care in this province will be a collaborative approach. It will be nurse practitioners and family practice nurses. You have heard me say many times that in some communities a social worker will be part of that team. Then we're continuing to make sure how we not only provide access to primary health care, but how we support those emergency teams across our province that are looking for a new model of delivering services to our citizens.

GARY BURRILL: A woman named Tiffany MacLeod who lives in Port Medway has a 12-year-old son who needs regular prescriptions and specialist referrals because of a chronic condition. Last year, they lost their family doctor. The result is now they are spending five to 10 hours every month in the emergency room in order that he will be able to access these prescriptions and these referrals. They don't want to be adding to emergency room overcrowding, but they don't have any choice.

I want to ask the Premier, as his government is now in the seventh calendar year of their record: What does he have to say to people like Tiffany MacLeod?

THE PREMIER: Tiffany and many Nova Scotians, Mr. Speaker, had fallen into a situation where a decade or more ago successive governments would not transition the health care system into the new delivery models required.

We are challenged, Mr. Speaker, as you would know, and we're trying to support Tiffany and others like her in communities. We have seen support in our community hospitals. There will be innovative ways to how we support those communities to be able to access primary health care as close to home so that when they require either, as he referred to in his question, a subscription renewed or access to a specialist, they will be able to receive that in a timely manner.

The issue that you described that Tiffany and her family are experiencing is not where we want to be. We continue to work on how we can do innovative ways at a time that not only in Nova Scotia, but indeed nationally when it comes to accessing primary health care is a challenge. We know we will continue to work with her because what you bring to the floor is a real issue for a Nova Scotia family, and it is on our mind to continue. How can we find innovative ways to continue to address those issues?

GARY BURRILL: Our Party has pressed the government this week to make the number of visits to emergency departments by people without family doctors publicly available without anyone having to file through freedom of information. We have also asked that similarly publicly available would be information about how long it's taking to transfer patients from the care of paramedics to the care of emergency rooms and how long it's taking for patients to be seen in emergency rooms. The NSHA has said they are willing to publish this information, so I want to ask the Premier: Will he ensure that this information is publicly available by the April 1st?

THE PREMIER: I think the honourable member tabled a bill or is tabling a bill related to this issue. I want to tell him that at first blush, we'll have a look at what's happening.

As he would know, when we first came into government, Mr. Speaker, we looked at wait times and began to break down the information in and around wait times for specific surgeries, physician wait times, where were the shorter wait times across the province in different hospitals, all of the things we believe are important to Nova Scotians, that they should know when they're trying to access primary health care. We continue to make information available.

The idea that he's bringing forward is one that we will look at. I'm not sure it requires legislation, Mr. Speaker, but the idea he has brought forward is one that we will look at as we go forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

L&F: ECONOMIC BENEFIT - IMPORTANCE

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, our economy in this province is fragile, and our fishing industry is important to our economy. Our forestry industry is important to our

economy. All sectors of our economy are very important to making Nova Scotia run. We do need to grow the economy in this province, and we need to acknowledge the importance of our forestry industry. In 2015, our forestry industry was \$2 billion of our economy. It is very significant to our economy in this province.

I would like to ask the Premier: Does he realize the importance of our forestry industry to our economy? When did he realize? It seems like he doesn't realize how important it is to our economy.

THE PREMIER: It's nice to hear the honourable member talk about the economy. I am very proud of our record when it comes to economic growth in the province. The employment rate is at an all-time high. We have received the highest credit rating in the history of this province.

The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board today gave ample notice that, on the 26th of this month, we will be delivering our fourth balanced budget. He talked about the resource sector. We continue to see growth in our exports of our seafood products where we're getting an all-time high in prices. That's happening and spinning off in rural coastal communities. Those are all positive signs of an economy growing.

He would know we were only one of three Canadian provinces and we led the way to get the exclusion around softwood lumber because we know how important the forest sector is in this province. It is why we continue to work with that industry to diversify. Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that we continue to find the solution to ensure that Northern Pulp is operating in the future.

I see the honourable member tabled a bill. It's almost like he gave up on Northern Pulp. We think we can do both - protect the environment and, at the same time, ensure that mill there is providing jobs.

TIM HOUSTON: The lowest projected growth in the country, the highest child poverty rates - somebody has given up on this province, but it's not me.

I would like to ask the Premier: Given the importance of the forestry industry to this province, what message does he have for forestry workers? Does he feel that they feel supported by this government for the last four years?

THE PREMIER: The forestry sector across this province continued to work with us when it comes to the Lahey report laying out a long-term futuristic look at our province. We continue to work with the mill in the Strait area to ensure that we continue to provide a high-quality product. We continue to work with the entire sector to get an exclusion in the United States. They stand up and say they were supported by this government.

The challenge is when a community looks at Northern Pulp. The reality of it is that successive governments have ignored the issue of the environmental racism that has taken place in and around Pictou Landing.

We took five years and gave plenty of notice. I see at the front bench, there are three Pictou MLAs. They have been silent in this journey. It's about time they stand up and decide whether they want the mill to be here or they want the mill to close. We're looking for solutions to move this forward to ensure that the forestry sector is there.

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

GOV'T. (N.S.): CHILD POV. - STATISTICS

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, my colleague the Progressive Conservative Leader is right when he points out that Statistics Canada this week has reported that, here in Nova Scotia, we have the worst child poverty of any province. But what he has said, is in fact, incomplete - the situation is quite a bit darker than that. Not only are we 10th out of 10 in all the provinces, it is also the case, it has been reported this week, that nine of those provinces are improving their positions on child poverty. Only one of the provinces is going backwards on this subject, and that is ours.

I want to ask the Premier: Does he agree with me that these figures on child poverty released in the last few days by Statistics Canada stand as a gross indictment of his government's record?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. We, too, saw the stats he is referring to. We have seen that in Nova Scotia the rate around poverty is declining amongst our seniors. We have seen that the rate of poverty in those same statistics are declining around single-parent families.

We also are troubled by the stats. We have asked Statistics Canada to demonstrate where they came up with those numbers, quite simply, because we continue to invest year after year, whether it is rent supplements to help low income Nova Scotians. The largest single increase in income assistance happened under our government. We continue to make investments in low-income housing. We, too, are troubled and share his concern.

We are going to continue to work and find ways to ensure that we support the most vulnerable in our province. It is why, when we had an opportunity, after getting back to balance after this province had been run through successive deficit governments, the first tax cut we gave was to the vulnerable Nova Scotians when we issued around the basic personal exemption. Low-income Nova Scotians received the biggest benefit of that.

[2:15 p.m.]

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier wants to have an inquiry as to why we are the one province in this category. I can answer the inquiry: because we have the lowest minimum wage in Canada; because at a time when we have 20 per cent of our people paying over 50 per cent of their income in rent, we have no rent control; because in social assistance over six years we only increased the income assistance rates by a total of \$20. That's the formula for being the only province that's in the tank on solving child poverty. That's how they did it.

Furthermore, last week we read that our Premier in Nova Scotia has the highest salary top-up of any Premier in the country, while this week we read from Statistics Canada that the median income of the people of Nova Scotia is the lowest in the entire country.

I want to ask the Premier: Does he not think that at some foundational level something is out of sync and out of whack when he is at the very top while his government's decisions keep so many people at the very bottom?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The reality is that we see more people joining the workforce in successive years. We see more young people choosing to live in Nova Scotia than leave. We continue to see the financial picture of our province improve. Not only is it being recognized here, it is being recognized nationally. We continue the work that we're doing in transformation and income assistance.

What we know doesn't work, Mr. Speaker, is what the NDP did: ignore every problem, write a cheque for everything they could find, and find no solutions to the things that were impacting families at home. It is why we've continued to improve, to make sure that we continue to invest when we have an opportunity.

Those citizens in this province - they stood in this House when we tried to ensure that those of us who are doing okay slowed down the wage growth so we can invest in vulnerable Nova Scotians. They voted against it . . .

AN. HON. MEMBER: Except for yours.

THE PREMIER: I hear one of the honourable members talking about my own salary, Mr. Speaker. I want to tell her that it was set by a Progressive Conservative Premier and it was reinforced by a New Democratic Premier. I have not changed the salary at my job in seven years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

H&W - MACGILLIVRAY, DR. JEANNIE: HEALTH COM. - APPEAR.

KARLA MACFARLANE: I hope the Premier is okay. He found his seat. My question through you, Mr. Speaker, is for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

In recent months, Dr. Jeannie MacGillivray was forced to resign from St. Martha's Regional after pleading with the Nova Scotia Health Authority for better working conditions. Dr. MacGillivray made a simple request to help avoid burnout and keep her here in Nova Scotia, the province she loves. We still don't know why the NSHA pushed her out, and my attempts to get answers in the matter have been repeatedly rebuffed by the members opposite.

I want to ask the minister: Does the minister agree that having Dr. MacGillivray come forward in a public discussion around physician working conditions would help us collectively begin to solve these health care crises?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I think the details the member suggested she had been looking for around the specific situation - I hope she appreciates that does really delve into an individual person's workplace and work environment, which is generally, for privacy reasons, not discussed and certainly not discussed in a public forum.

As it gets to the heart of the matter that I think the member is trying to delve into, in a broader context, the recruitment, the retention, and the support for physicians, and indeed all of our health care workers, is one of the many important priorities of our Health Authority and this government.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Dr. MacGillivray is willing to come forward. She wants to come to the various committees - PAC, the Health Committee - but this government keeps turning down our requests to have her. She wants to go public.

Dr. MacGillivray is loved in her community. She is a valuable member of the medical community, and we need her. She is not alone in expressing the burnout and anxiety over the mismanagement that this Liberal Government has created in our health care system. We have witnessed a sustained effort by the members opposite to prevent her full story from being aired publicly.

I'll ask the minister: Is it true or false that the minister asked government members on the Health Committee to block Dr. MacGillivray's testimony because it would effectively force the minister to respond to this matter publicly?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, that's false. As a minister, I'm not a member of that committee. (Interruptions)

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

RANDY DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not a member on that particular committee, so I'm not involved in the deliberations and the work of that committee at all.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

H&W - CODE CRITICAL: AMBULATORY CARE - CRISIS ADDRESS

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. On February 12th, Nova Scotia paramedics said nothing has changed after one year of their Code Critical campaign.

Terry Chapman of the International Union of Operating Engineers indicated that the minister has failed to convene a full meeting of all stakeholders to begin to address this issue. The minister contends, Mr. Speaker, he feels the pain and pledges that something will be done about the critical state of ambulance off-load and response times right across the province, and I will table that. Clearly, that is not happening quickly enough.

I'll ask the minister: When will he do something about the catastrophic situation with ambulatory care instead of simply talking about it?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Indeed, work has begun in taking steps to improve the ambulance off-load times. As I mentioned in the Fall session when we had this discussion, Mr. Speaker, Dartmouth General here in the HRM Central Zone implemented a model of transition to support and expedite the transition from paramedic to hospital care. We've seen very positive results over the course of the year. That's a model that's now being implemented at the Valley Regional, and we're looking at other hospitals that could benefit from that as well.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with our partners in the Health Authority, and EMC for the EHS system, to find more improvements as well.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, between November 2018 and January 31st of this year, there were more than 900 instances of ambulances being partially staffed or out of service. Now, EHS contends that 90 per cent of the time their response time is less than nine minutes. But Mr. Chapman indicated that in one recent event three critically injured HRM patients waited well beyond this target time. They were in mortal danger and the response times recorded were 28 minutes, 37 minutes, and 48 minutes. I'll table that.

The ambulance station was only seven minutes away. The only word that comes to mind is disgraceful. Will the Minister of Health and Wellness commit today to making sure that a critically injured Nova Scotian will not have to wait 48 minutes for an ambulance?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member opposite of the importance of our ambulance system. It's been just over 25 years since the modernization of our ambulance services began. This work continues, we've initiated a review of that system. I look forward to getting that report later this Spring, which has assessed exactly what's going on in our EHS ambulance system, to provide recommendations and advice on how to continue to make improvements.

We continue to work with our partners in the Health Authority and the hospitals to help support our EHS system. What we do know is we have to improve those times for the transition from the paramedic ambulance, to transition that care into the health care providers within the hospital system, and that work is actively under way.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

H&W: FLU VACCINES - SUPPLY SHORTAGE

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. As of February 5th, the supply of flu vaccines literally dried up across Nova Scotia, just at the peak of flu season.

The Bedford ScotiaMed Family Medicine & Walk In Clinic only found out about this crippling shortage after attempting to order 100 doses late in January, and I'll table that. I'm confident the minister will agree flu vaccines are a critical piece of prevention that keeps our already overwhelmed health care system from further stress, and many were unaware they would not be able to receive a flu shot until it was much too late.

My question for the minister is: Does he think he did a sufficient job informing Nova Scotians of the rapid usage rate of flu vaccines this season?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I think what's important to note, for the member opposite and indeed all Nova Scotians, is that when we notified about the flu vaccine availability, that was referring to the product that was ordered by the province and then distributed. That was indicating that we had distributed our supply out to the providers who would actually provide the flu shot to other Nova Scotians. That was not an indication that there were no flu shots available in the province. I think that's very important to note.

I think what is important is that the work of the province and our public health officials to encourage Nova Scotians to get their flu shot - we've seen an uptick. We take the data from each year. That helps inform the order that we put in for the next year.

JOHN LOHR: We see reports that this is the earliest that a shortage of flu vaccines has ever hit Nova Scotia. The minister is no doubt aware that between January 20th and January 26th, four Nova Scotians died from the flu, and 14 adults and one child required treatment at ICUs. The province's Chief Medical Officer felt that the situation was bad

enough to issue a plea for providers to prioritize vaccinations for only the very young. This is another unnecessary symptom of a mismanaged health system in crisis.

My question for the minister is: What lessons has the minister learned from this mess, and what steps will he take to improve the supply of flu vaccines next year?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I think the questions reflect more on the member's understanding and appreciation of the complexity of managing the flu vaccine. The challenge here is in the development. You can only order this product once in the year because it takes so long to produce the vaccine. You have to anticipate. Health officials look at strains and try to anticipate which type of flu strain is actually going to come to the province. They have to anticipate that, not knowing, and then have to predict how many Nova Scotians are actually to come out to receive that vaccination. We do that using historical data and information as best we can.

We ordered the appropriate amount of vaccine based upon the best data that our clinicians had available. They distributed that throughout the province. I'm very pleased to see Nova Scotians went out looking for the vaccine. We're going to look forward to ordering more for the coming year so that next year, hopefully more Nova Scotians will take their flu shots in the Fall.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

LAE - FIREFIGHTERS: CANCER COVERAGE - LEGIS. UPDATE

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. Firefighting is dangerous work. Firefighters risk their lives in emergency situations on a regular basis. But the danger doesn't end when they leave the site of the fire. Fires are more toxic now than they have ever been before. According to a recent study by the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety, firefighters have a significantly higher incidence of cancer than the general public, regardless of their race or gender.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister agree that this situation constitutes an occupational health and safety crisis for the firefighting profession?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: I'd like to thank the member for the question. I'd like to thank all our firefighters and first responders for the tremendous work they do every day on behalf of Nova Scotians. (Applause)

This is an aspect of workers' compensation that we're actually looking at as a government. It has been brought to my attention that other provinces have more robust - and other provinces have less robust - programs in place for firefighters. I have asked

Workers' Compensation to do a jurisdictional scan across the country, bring that information back to me, and look at what cancer coverages we do have for our firefighters.

I will add, Mr. Speaker, that as well as our firefighters, I have also asked the Workers' Compensation Board to also look at our volunteer firefighters, because they're exposed to the same risks in terms of cancer and even PTSD. I'm also looking into extending our PTSD coverage to that group, because they deserve it.

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia was a leader on this issue in the early 2000s. We were one of the first provinces to implement presumptive coverage for firefighters. We are now at the back of the pack compared to other provinces. Our legislation has not been changed for 15 years. Firefighters in Nova Scotia have been calling on this government to update the list of cancers firefighters have presumptive coverage for. I'll table that list of updates that they are seeking.

Will the minister commit to updating the Workers' Compensation Act to expand presumptive coverage for all cancers related to firefighting for both paid and volunteer?

LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, once again I will repeat that this was brought to my attention and what it was. I engaged with Workers' Compensation Board to give me a jurisdictional scan to tell me what our options are. That work is underway and when that work comes to me there could be changes to what presumptive coverages are. I don't have that information. Workers' Compensation is bringing it to me and when it comes to me our government will look at it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

H&W - SOUTH SHORE HOSPITAL: SERVICES REMOVED - EXPLAIN

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Over the last few months, people have been quitting their jobs at the lab at the South Shore Regional Hospital in Bridgewater. I learned that not only were they not being replaced, but in January microbiology was being moved from Bridgewater to Kentville. This means our regional hospital will no longer have microbiology services at all.

On top of short-staffed hospitals, overworked staff, and ERs that are closed more often than not, now services are being removed entirely from a regional hospital. My question for the minister is: Why was microbiology moved out of the South Shore Regional Hospital?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, what I can assure the member opposite is that various lab services that are provided by the Nova Scotia Health Authority by individuals, they work to ensure they provide the appropriate tests for the population, that

they're available in the timeframes that are needed for the clinical services being provided, and they look to do so in the most efficient way possible.

There are advances in technology over the past number of years so as technological advances improve, so does the ability to provide different types of tests in different ways. I think that's part of the decision factor that took place in that situation.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, it started with nurses taking blood instead of lab assistants. Then came the wave of resignations. With the removal of the department, wait times will increase as we wait for the samples to be transported by taxi to Kentville. Maybe when I make my weekly Facebook post informing my constituents about Roseway Hospital being closed, I'll have to start adding a list of services that have been removed from our area. I'm no expert, but I don't think cutting services and making things less accessible to rural Nova Scotians is a solution our health care system has been looking for.

My question for the minister is: Will he commit to keeping the current services at the South Shore Regional Hospital and adequately staffing it?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I think the reference the member made to the drawing of blood services, in fact, provides better response times with point of care testing in some situations for conditions.

I've heard from health care professionals who too have had these point of care systems; that the technology I was referring to implemented, who expressed some reservations when they're being introduced into their community hospitals but months afterward they've seen improvements there. I want to recognize Minister Furey . . . sorry, the Minister of Justice for his work advocating on behalf of the constituents there at the South Shore Regional Hospital, because he continues to advocate for his constituents, as do all of my colleagues.

THE SPEAKER: The minister is self-correcting there. That's a good thing.

The honourable member for Cumberland South.

H&W: NORTH CUMB. HOSPITAL CLOSURES - ADDRESS

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Health and Wellness. The Emergency Departments in Cumberland South are of primary concern to my residents. Last year the emergency departments in the Northern Zone were closed for a total of nearly 6,000 hours. North Cumberland Memorial Hospital that serves residents in Eastern and Northern parts of my constituency were closed for 2,200 hours.

My question to the minister is: When will he have a plan to address the closures in North Cumberland Memorial Hospital?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I assure the member that we and our partners in the Nova Scotia Health Authority take the care and the emergency care of Nova Scotians very seriously. Indeed, closures of emergency departments only happen when they're unable to staff adequately to provide safe care to the people through that emergency services.

In fact, we've taken action, Mr. Speaker. We've changed programs. We have an emergency shift premium now that we've implemented. We know of eight hospitals across the province making use of the emergency incentive premium. We have a locum incentive program that we changed in the summer. We've seen about 150 days or shifts being covered because of these changes, so we're taking steps to improve the situation across the province.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, we just heard the Premier say that there were doctors coming in droves - 56, I think, last year. Maybe we can take a collection up and send them through the toll to come to Cumberland South. South Cumberland was closed for a total of 1,700 hours. Residents in Cumberland South are travelling to the Amherst hospital which is already bursting at the seams with stretchers.

Is the minister satisfied with the emergency coverage that we're receiving in all of Cumberland County?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as I noted, the emergency services that are provided in communities across the province, we want to make sure that it's the appropriate quality care that Nova Scotians need. That's why we continue to make changes. We continue to make changes to the incentive program to fill those shifts that are hard to fill. It's why we continue to invest in our collaborative practice to strengthen our primary care space.

We know that there are many people going to emergency departments where it could be served in the community through a primary care provider. We've seen over 120 physicians, actually it's about 55 or 56 of them are family physicians since April of last year. We are making steps. We are making strides, but there is more work to do and we're committed to doing that work.

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

**H&W - EAST. PASSAGE NURSE PRACT. POSITION:
NOT POSTED - EXPLAIN**

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I know it's been awhile since we've been in this House, so I'd like to start off by reminding everyone that my constituency of Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage is the only one in the province without a single family doctor. Sixteen months ago I requested and was approved for the funding by the Minister of Health

and Wellness for a nurse practitioner. Last week, I asked the Nova Scotia Health Authority CEO about the job advertisements online because that nurse practitioner position in Eastern Passage isn't one of them.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is this: Why are there 29 positions for clinical nurse practitioners posted online but there is no posting for the position in Eastern Passage that the minister approved 16 months ago?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I'd have to look specifically at the one. It's the Nova Scotia Health Authority that focuses on the recruitment; I don't see every single item. I can advise the member opposite that I'm aware that the position she's referring to has been posted on at least two occasions. I'm not sure what the current status is if they've had candidates in the latest ones. I'm just going through a hiring process, the interviews, or if they're re-evaluating how they actually can fill if they haven't had applicants for the first couple of times when that position has been posted.

What I can tell the member opposite about the region in Dartmouth is that we have recruited ten physicians, family physicians, doctors to Dartmouth since April of 2018 and two more have accepted offers of employment that are going to start in the next six months and - I just met with five family physicians in Dartmouth yesterday who have taken somewhere in the vicinity, I think in just a few short months upwards of 1,400 patients, each, off of the April numbers.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I had asked the Premier once before when he told us how many he had hired, how many had left and he didn't answer me. So, it's not my question but I would love to know of all the doctors who were hired how many left.

The previous MLA for my area campaigned on the very promise of a collaborative health centre for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage. I've tabled this before, but I'll table once again the flyers that were left on the doorsteps announcing a collaborative health centre and a doctor. There was an announcement planned and the community members were invited to come to that announcement and it was cancelled at the last minute, a week before the election to my best knowledge. Now, here we are, almost two years after that election: no doctor, no nurse, no advertisement for the nurse practitioner, and no collaborative health centre.

My question for the minister: Can he tell me why a collaborative health centre was a priority for his government before the last election but has ceased to be a priority since the election?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member opposite that primary-care access and service for all Nova Scotians remains a priority for this government. That includes the support of collaborative practices, the expansion and implementation of new collaborative practices throughout the province to support physicians through these

collaborative practices we've hired over 120 health professionals to support physicians in communities across the province.

Many of those, I think somewhere in the vicinity of 50, are nurse practitioners supporting physicians. I think almost 100 of them are nurses, so it's almost a 50-50 split between family practice and nurse practitioners, and then other allied health professionals rounding out. These are supports we are providing to help improve primary care for all Nova Scotians.

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

H&W: SACKVILLE WALK-IN CLINIC CLOSURE - EXPLAIN

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, one year ago today I mentioned to the Minister of Health and Wellness about the retirement of a long-term family physician in Sackville who would be leaving 2,000 patients without a family physician. I asked the minister at that time what those 2,000 residents of Sackville were supposed to do. Rather than actually answer the question, the minister at the time replied with a discussion about the investments that were being made in health care, but he never did tell me what to do with those 2,000 residents.

Mr. Speaker, my office was contacted this week and we've discovered that the Community Care Walk-In Clinic located at 159 Cobequid Road in Lower Sackville is going to be closing permanently, as of April 2019. Last year this clinic saw over 19,000 patients. Is the minister aware of this closing and what can he tell the residents of Sackville, to give them peace of mind that this clinic will stay open?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: As the member knows, as I just stated to his colleague's question, the access to primary care does remain a priority for this government. The member noted in my response the last time and the response continues, that we continue to work with our partners, we continue to invest in collaborative care practices, we continue to invest in incentive programs, Mr. Speaker. We see success.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, about a year ago, with my colleague and the Minister of Immigration, we launched a new immigration stream for physicians. We've seen success in that program. We've had about 25 physicians who have agreed to come to the province to provide care to Nova Scotians, because of that program. This is just one example of the many good things we're doing to provide care to Nova Scotians.

BRAD JOHNS: I'd say these answers are kind of garbage because you know respectfully . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd ask the honourable member for Sackville-Beaver Bank to retract that statement.

BRAD JOHNS: I retract that, and I apologize. Mr. Speaker, there are 2,000 patients currently without a doctor. I've got another clinic that's closing. It's not a temporary closure, it's a permanent one.

I hear the minister say things are getting better. He talks about how things are getting better. Things aren't getting better. I mean we have physicians leaving, people in hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, I need the minister to clearly explain to the residents of Sackville where they are supposed to go for non-urgent medical care starting May 1st. Are they supposed to go to the ERs that are backed up? Are they supposed to wait in the ambulances to be seen? What are these residents supposed to do?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, what I want to again remind the member opposite is with the additional physicians that have been recruited in the province, they continue to choose where they practice. As I mentioned just yesterday, I met with four out of five new physicians who have come internationally, providing family care in a Dartmouth clinic.

I had a great conversation to learn about the practice and the transition here, learning how we can do things a little bit better to help with those transitions. We're very pleased to see how many patients they were able to take from retiring physicians in this province.

Mr. Speaker, as we continue our recruitment efforts, whether it is in Sackville or other parts of the province, we continue those recruitment efforts and that would be the care being provided to replace retiring physicians.

[2:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

INT. SERV.: NEW PRIVACY ACT - COMMIT

LISA ROBERTS: My question is for the Minister of Internal Services. Yesterday at the Public Accounts Committee, we heard from Information and Privacy Commissioner Catherine Tully. Ms. Tully stated in no uncertain terms that our province's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act is obsolete. As she shared at the committee, when the law was written in 1993, there were only 130 websites in the world, and Google did not exist.

Will the minister commit to beginning consultations on a new privacy Act during this session?

HON. MARK FUREY: My colleague would know that there was a report prepared by the privacy officer most recently, Mr. Speaker. In addition to that, a review was completed by the privacy officer as well as the Auditor General. We are presently reviewing all of that material and will respond appropriately.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, Ms. Tully was very clear in her presentation yesterday. Unlike modern laws in other jurisdictions, our current FOIPOP law does not require the government to take action to prevent a data breach. Without updated legislation, Ms. Tully says Nova Scotians are left behind to wonder when the next breach will occur and if they will even hear about it. Thousands of records belonging to Nova Scotians were accessed through a web portal developed by the Department of Internal Services.

Can the minister explain why updating privacy laws was not part of the department's action plan in response to this preventable and abject failure?

MARK FUREY: As I indicated in my earlier response, there are three elements that require extensive review. It's important that we do that. To change legislation prior to review of the information that has been advanced would be premature.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

H&W: LYME DISEASE - EFFECTIVE TREATMENT

KARLA MACFARLANE: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. I am extremely concerned with the increase of Pictou West constituents who have Lyme disease. Actually, I'm very concerned for this whole province with regard to this matter.

I was sad to learn recently of young mothers who have given birth to babies who were born with Lyme disease and who were given only five weeks of antibiotics. That's the standard duration for treatment in Nova Scotia, but it's not sufficient to treat their conditions. Now they are travelling to Maine for prolonged and better treatment.

I would like to know: Does the minister believe that it is acceptable for these young mothers and their babies who have Lyme disease to have to travel outside of their province, as well as their country, to find effective treatment?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: What I can advise the member and all members of the Legislature is that I do accept the clinical advice and recommendation and the standards established nationally, which form the adoption of the standards and clinical treatments that our public health officials have established here in the province.

I do not have the background to make those clinical recommendations in terms of the best form of treatment. Perhaps the member for Pictou West does have the clinical

expertise to do that, but I'll defer to the physicians and the medical experts as to the best form of treatment for this and other conditions.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Look, Mr. Speaker, we have Dr. Sommers of NSHA who is going around the province contacting MLAs to make awareness about the hot spots. It's increasing in this province, and it's very concerning to all of us. I know it is.

It's my understanding that Nova Scotia follows treatment guidelines from the Infectious Diseases Society of America. In Maine, physicians take advantage of the recommendations from the International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society, which promotes the use of long-term antibiotics.

My question is: Will the minister commit today to begin following these guidelines so that those suffering with Lyme disease can be treated effectively and efficiently without having to pick up their babies and leave their province and their country to be treated?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I commit to continuing to take the advice of medical professionals here in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The time allotted for Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers has expired.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, this concludes the government business for today. I know it's disappointing, but we're going to come back tomorrow.

I move that the House now rise to sit again tomorrow, Friday, March 1st, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. After the daily routine, we will move to second reading of Bill No. 84. Following that, with time permitting, we will move to any Address in Reply that members would like to address here to the House.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to adjourn to meet again tomorrow, Friday, March 1st, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 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 Friday, March 1st, at 9:00 a.m.

[The House rose at 2:50 p.m.]