



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2019

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2019

Sixty-third General Assembly

Second Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, Brendan Maguire

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, I'd like to draw members' attention to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today visiting the proceedings: Mr. Tyrone Cotie, Vice President, Treasury, of Chorus Aviation.

I ask the members of the House to please give him a warm welcome. (Applause)

We'll now move on with the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, as the Chair of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I'd like to table the annual report for 2018.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS****GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, before I do a couple of Government Notices of Motion, today is International Women's Day. I know all of us will reflect on the women who are in our lives - those who are currently still in our lives and those who are in our hearts who have had a tremendous impact on our pursuit of growth as individuals as well as our lives as we continue to pursue whatever it is we dream to do.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 805

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

Whereas March 8th is International Women's Day, and is an important opportunity to recognize the accomplishments of Nova Scotian women in the past and celebrate the achievements of women and girls in our province today; and

Whereas all Nova Scotians recognize that gender equality is essential to the success of this province; and

[9:15 a.m.]

Whereas we are dedicated to ensuring that women are able to succeed and feel inspired and supported to pursue a career in any field. There are organizations such as Women Unlimited and Techsploration working diligently to increase the number of women and girls entering occupations in which they are traditionally underrepresented, such as science, technology, engineering, math and skill trades;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature recognize that gender equality benefits everyone and that advancing women's leadership is central to creating a stronger and more dynamic Nova Scotia

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 Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, may I do an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, with us today in the East Gallery we have a group of young women called Sisters of Science. They are the only female First Lego League team. I'd like to ask them to stand as I read their names: Kenzie MacNeil, Kayley Jefferson, Maya Costain, Amelia Blatch, her sister Hallie Blatch and Abigail Murphy.

Mr. Speaker, we also have with us Carmen Glavine, who is one of the three granddaughters of the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage; I know her other grandparents are here as well.

I want to tell you that I'm sure all of your grandparents and parents are proud of you for what a great, fine example you young women are, not only for your peers, but also, for all of us in this great province.

Mr. Speaker, with them today I want to recognize Crista MacNeil, Sara Chisholm and Jonathan Murphy. All three of them, at one point, worked for Michelin. Both Sara and Crista still work at Michelin as engineers. Jonathan was at Michelin and he has now gone back to pursue higher education, he will go back and become a teacher. So, I guess you young ladies have inspired him.

So, we want to recognize your team leaders that are here as well as recognize Michelin, who obviously has demonstrated gender equality matters in their organization. Out of three of the engineers that are standing before us, two are women. So, thank you for showing great leadership to the young ladies and to all Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome members of the families that are here to demonstrate support for these young ladies, but also to demonstrate how proud they are and allow us to celebrate them. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 806

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

Whereas the Sisters of Science and the all female First Lego League robotics team from Kingston, Nova Scotia, recently competed at Acadia University's annual Robotic Programming Competition, placed third overall and won the event's project innovation award; and

Whereas they are working to secure a patent for their innovative entry, which has the potential to help female astronauts stay in space longer; and

Whereas the Sisters of Science inspire young women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature congratulate the Sisters of Science on their outstanding achievements and thank them for being an inspiration to others, and for making us all proud.

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. (Standing Ovation)

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Immigration.

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LENA METLEGE DIAB: With us this morning in the East Gallery is Samia Eldik. I would ask Samia to please stand; she's the Nova Scotia Council of the Federation Literacy Award recipient this past year. I would ask members of the Legislature to please give her the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 807

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 Samia Eldik is a graduate of the Nova Scotia Community College and the Nova Scotia Council of the Federation Literacy Award recipient; and

Whereas Samia came to Canada from Sudan, persevered through challenges such as learning English while caring for her family and she is committed to doing her absolute best when given the chance; and

Whereas she has demonstrated outstanding achievements in literacy and was honoured with the Nova Scotia Council of the Federation Literacy Award.

Therefore be it resolved that today, on International Women's Day, all members of this House congratulate Samia on receiving this award and wish her even more success in Nova Scotia.

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 Deputy Premier.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I would like to read this on behalf of the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

RESOLUTION NO. 808

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

Whereas Joyce Carter, President and CEO of Halifax International Airport Authority, has been named Business Leader of the Year by the Atlantic Business Awards; and

Whereas since joining the organization in 1999, Joyce Carter has become known for her strong leadership and her contributions to Atlantic Canada's airport community; and

Whereas her accomplishments, including being named one of Atlantic Canada's top 50 CEOs by *Atlantic Business Magazine* in 2017 and again in 2018, are an inspiration to all Nova Scotia women who aspire to become leaders in their sectors.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature congratulate and recognize Joyce Carter for her accomplishments and wish her success as she continues to lead and inspire all Nova Scotians.

Madam 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 Municipal Affairs.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Madam Speaker, I beg leave for permission to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: It's granted.

CHUCK PORTER: Thank you. I would like to call attention to our guests in the gallery opposite. Visiting us this morning from Kings County we have with us Emily Lutz who is the Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of Kings; and with her is Brittany Mastroianni who is also a good friend I haven't seen for some time. I want to welcome them both here at the Legislature this morning. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 809

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Madam Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Deputy Mayor Emily Lutz and Councillor Megan Hodges of the Municipality of the County of Kings took a leading role to ensure elected municipal officials in any Nova Scotia municipality can make personal decisions about pregnancy and parental leave without the need for debate; and

Whereas their hard work and determination helped pass Bill No. 118 - An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act and the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, and the Municipal Elections Act, respecting parental accommodation; and

Whereas by championing this important legislation, new parents on municipal councils can miss up to three meetings without risk of losing their seats.

Therefore be it resolved that today, on International Women's Day, all members of this House congratulate Deputy Mayor Lutz and Councillor Hodges on their dedication to creating a stronger, more family-oriented political atmosphere for all Nova Scotians.

Madam 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 Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 810

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

Whereas Jane Roy is a leader in the promotion of healthy, positive lifestyles for Nova Scotian youth; and

Whereas Ms. Roy's work creating the Catapult Leadership Society will continue to give life-changing opportunities to young Nova Scotians with limited opportunities by building future leaders; and

Whereas Ms. Roy's volunteer work earned her the Commonwealth Points of Light Award.

Therefore be it resolved that today, on International Women's Day, all members of this House congratulate Jane Roy on receiving this award and thank her for her tireless work improving the lives of Nova Scotian youth.

Madam 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 Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Madam Speaker, if I could make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: You may.

LEO GLAVINE: We have some folks who got up early to travel from the Valley today to be here with daughters and granddaughters. The first, Rick and Sharon Anscombe if they could rise - and also Elizabeth and Ward Blatch, who are neighbours in North Kingston, Elizabeth being one of my former students.

I'd like them to receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Madam Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Granted.

LABI KOUSOULIS: I'd like to draw attention to the East Gallery. Today we are joined by Hana Nelson, CEO of the female-led team at Afashionado Fishmongers

Incorporated, as well as Laurie Starr, Manager of Operations and, also, we have baby Daphne in the gallery.

If we could all give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 811

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Madam Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas March 8th is International Women's Day; and

Whereas opening doors and creating an environment where women are encouraged to grow, succeed, and feel comfortable to pursue any career they so choose contributes to an inclusive and resilient province; and

Whereas government's Graduate to Opportunity and Innovate to Opportunity programs are helping researchers and graduates like Laurie Starr, a member of the female-led team at Afashionado Fishmongers Incorporated, pursue exciting careers with local employers and are increasing the number of women and girls entering the occupations in which women are traditionally underrepresented;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize that gender equality is critical in building a dynamic, inclusive workforce and a stronger Nova Scotia, and that by working together we can help women and young girls reach their full potential.

Madam 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.

RESOLUTION NO. 812

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

Whereas during the 21st Annual Fisheries and Aquaculture Minister's Conference, the Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association received the Minister's Award of Excellence; and

Whereas the Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association received the award in recognition of the association's leadership, its contributions, development and advancing the interests of its members in the fishery and the communities where they live; and

Whereas the Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association played a key role in developing the Chedabucto Bay shrimp trap fishery which has proven to be a high-value, sustainable fishery for communities in eastern Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House thank the Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association for their dedication to their members and their contribution to the advancement of the Nova Scotia fishing industry.

Madam 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 Environment.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Madam Speaker, may I please make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Granted.

MARGARET MILLER: I am pleased today to rise to make an introduction. I ask my guest to please stand when I call her name - Captain Mary Cameron-Kelly. Captain Cameron-Kelly is a pioneer in aviation.

Madam Speaker, I ask that all members of the House join me in welcoming Captain Cameron-Kelly to the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 813

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Madam Speaker, on behalf of the honourable Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Captain Mary Cameron-Kelly is a pioneer in aviation; and

Whereas Captain Cameron- Kelly's unrelenting determination, after being rejected from pilot training four times, made her known today as the first female pilot of the Aurora, a long-range patrol aircraft; and

Whereas her career, including the training of pilots since 1994 and with 7,000 flying hours, has earned her the recognition of the Canadian Ninety-Nines;

Therefore be it resolved that today, on International Women's Day, all members of this House congratulate Captain Cameron-Kelly on receiving this award and thank her for her contributions to the world of aviation and women in the field.

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

[9:30 a.m.]

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 Education and Early Childhood Development.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Madam Speaker, I'd like to bring the House's attention to the East Gallery, where we are joined by Karen Bernard from Eskasoni First Nation, who's also a member of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of

Women. If the House could join me in welcoming Ms. Bernard, that would be greatly appreciated. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 814

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Madam Speaker, on behalf of the honourable Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Karen Bernard is a strong advocate for women's rights and a member of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women; and

Whereas she is a proud Mi'kmaq community leader and educator who organizes workshops and cultural teachings in First Nations communities across Cape Breton and has been working with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; and

Whereas after many years working in the helping field, Ms. Bernard returned to school in 2018, made the dean's list in her first year, received the Sister Dorothy Moore Mi'kmaq Education Scholarship, and is currently in her second year of the Bachelor of Education program at CBU;

Therefore be it resolved that today, on International Women's Day, all members of this House recognize Karen Bernard for her many accomplishments advocating on behalf of women and for her dedication and passion for Mi'kmaq culture and heritage, and wish her all the best as she continues her studies.

Madam 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 Internal Services.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I beg leave to make an introduction, Madam Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

PATRICIA ARAB: In the East Gallery today we have with us Ulrike Bahr-Gedalia. I ask her to stand, please, and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Internal Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 815

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Madam Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Ulrike Bahr-Gedalia is the president and CEO of Digital Nova Scotia; and

Whereas her career, which spans over 20 years in the public, private, non-profit, and academic sectors, has made her an inspiring role model in the STEM fields; and

Whereas Ms. Bahr-Gedalia's work has made her a Women's Executive Network 2018 Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100 winner four times and a hall of fame inductee;

Therefore be it resolved that today, on International Women's Day, all members of this House congratulate Ms. Bahr-Gedalia on receiving this award and thank her for her dedication to creating a better world of STEM for all Nova Scotians.

Madam 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 Business.

RESOLUTION NO. 816

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

Whereas Eleanor Beaton is an award-winning journalist, speaker, and coach; and

Whereas Ms. Beaton is highly motivated to make a difference with her career, as her work will help Nova Scotia reach its goal of a more inclusive and diverse future for all of us; and

Whereas Ms. Beaton's hard work and determination assisted her company in winning the Export Champion of the Year Award;

Therefore be it resolved that today, on International Women's Day, all members of the House congratulate Eleanor Beaton on receiving this award and wish her continued success in the future.

Madam 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 member for Halifax Atlantic on an introduction.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Madam Speaker, I'd like to draw attention to the East Gallery and two individuals who came here with me today. One is Mary-Frances Lynch, the community outreach officer for Spryfield who works out of our local office and does a lot of great things for our community and also keeps me in line, and Gracie Weir, who's a Grade 9 student from Elizabeth Sutherland who is actually volunteering for the next little bit out of our office and is interested in Nova Scotia politics.

I ask that everybody give them a warm round of applause. Thank you. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy and Mines.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I'd like to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Granted.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Joining us in the gallery today is Dalhousie student Shannon O'Connor. I'd ask her to stand and please accept the welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy and Mines.

RESOLUTION NO. 817

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Madam Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Shannon O'Connor is pursuing a degree in engineering at Dalhousie University that focuses on sustainable, renewable energy; and

Whereas O'Connor is highly motivated to make a difference in her career, and her work could help Nova Scotia reach its climate change goals and create a cleaner energy future for us all; and

Whereas O'Connor's talent and determination earned her the Pengrowth-Nova Scotia Energy Scholarship to help her pursue her studies here at home;

Therefore be it resolved that today, on International Women's Day, all members of this House congratulate Shannon O'Connor on receiving this prestigious scholarship and wish her the best of success in her studies and her career.

Madam 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 African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 818

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

Whereas Daurene Lewis was an educator, a businesswoman, and Canada's first Black woman mayor; and

Whereas Ms. Lewis was the first African Nova Scotian woman to run in a provincial election and her work, career, and attitude are an inspiration for all Nova Scotian women; and

Whereas Ms. Lewis was recognized for her lifelong work through the Order of Canada, a posthumous naming of the Annapolis Royal Town Hall, and the unveiling of a bronze bust in her likeness, as well as many other honours and awards;

Therefore be it resolved that today, on International Women's Day, all members of the House please reflect on Daurene Lewis' remarkable life and important contributions to Nova Scotia.

Madam 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 African Nova Scotian Affairs.

HON. TONY INCE: Madam Speaker, may I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Granted.

TONY INCE: In the East Gallery opposite, there is a gentleman here who has been introduced a couple of times. I'd like to introduce him again today. If he would stand: Quentrel Provo. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 819

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

Whereas Quentrel Provo, an anti-violence activist from Halifax, has been nominated for the 2019 Most Influential People of African Descent, Under 40, Global 100 List; and

Whereas the Most Influential People of African Descent recognizes 200 high-achieving individuals under the age of 40 from over 50 countries who have excelled in making a difference in the world; and

Whereas Mr. Provo is the founder of the Stop the Violence, Spread the Love organization, which aims to be part of the solution to prevent violence and bullying through peace walks, marches, fundraising events, youth gatherings, and family support;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly please join me in congratulating Quentrel Provo on his nomination for the 2019 Most Influential People of African Descent, Under 40, Global 100 List, and recognize his outstanding contributions made to our community where together, we can end violence.

Madam 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.

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Madam Speaker, may I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LENA METLEGE DIAB: With us this morning is Faten Alshazly who I would ask to please stand. She's principal and CCO of WeUsThem.

THE SPEAKER: Order, order. It is too loud. I can't even hear what the minister is saying. Can we keep the chatter in the Chamber down?

The honourable Minister of Immigration, you may start your introduction from the beginning.

LENA METLEGE DIAB: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With us today in the East Gallery is Faten Alshazly, principal and CCO of WeUsThem, an internationally recognized local ad agency. I'd ask all members of the House to please give her our warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 820

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

Whereas Faten Alshazly has led all creative endeavours at WeUsThem, resulting in six industry awards, including a number of firsts for the East Coast, and has been recognized as Female Executive of the Year in Canada by the Stevie Awards, which celebrate women in business internationally; and

Whereas Faten was born in Egypt and immigrated to Canada and is dedicated to mentoring and teaching, specifically women in STEM and for professionals in executive positions; and

Whereas Faten received various honours for her work and her advocacy for diversity in the workplace and was named twice to Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women by the Women's Executive Network, this time as a trendsetter and a trailblazer;

Therefore be it resolved that today, on International Women's Day, all members of the House join me in congratulating Faten on her incredible success and wish her the best in Nova Scotia. Thank you.

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 the Public Service Commission.

RESOLUTION NO. 821

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

Whereas Laura Lee Langley is the head of the Public Service Commission, Clerk of the Nova Scotia Executive Council, Nova Scotia Public Service Commissioner, and CEO of Communications Nova Scotia; and

Whereas she is best known as a champion for diversity and inclusiveness and is passionate about employee engagement and revitalizing the Public Service; and

Whereas Laura Lee's inspiring leadership was recognized by Women's Executive Network 2018 as one of Canada's Most Powerful Women, Top 100 award winner;

Therefore be it resolved that today, on International Women's Day, all members of the House please congratulate Laura Lee Langley on receiving this award and thank her for her dedication to creating a better, more diverse, and inclusive Public Service for all Nova Scotians.

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 member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make an introduction first, please.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

[9:45 a.m.]

LENORE ZANN: I'd like to draw everybody's attention to the West Gallery. Please welcome Linda MacDonald of Truro, if she could stand to receive the welcome of the House.

Linda is a woman who's been working very hard to bring about attention and raise the alarm about the sexual exploitation of women and children. In particular, through human trafficking and non-state torture. So, please give her a great welcome. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 102 - Entitled an Act to Make Universities and Colleges Safer Places. (Lenore Zann)

Bill No. 103 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 244 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Justices of the Peace Act. (Hon. Mark Furey)

Bill No. 104 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 18 of the Acts of 2006. The Midwifery Act. (Tammy Martin)

Bill No. 105 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 240 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Judicature Act. (Hon. Mark Furey)

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 Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LARRY HARRISON: In the West Gallery, I want to introduce a young woman who has a very, very lofty goal. Olivia Gourley and her father Chris are joining us in the gallery today. Olivia and Chris are working to raise money for an expedition that would see them ski together to the South Pole. Apparently, it's not cold enough here for them, but anyway. So, I would ask Chris to stand with Olivia and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

GOURLEY, OLIVIA/GOURLEY, CHRIS: SKIING TO S. POLE - GOOD LUCK

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker next year accompanied by her father Chris, 14-year-old Olivia Gourley hopes to be the youngest person ever to ski to the South Pole. Olivia's goal is not only a personal challenge but a demonstration to young women of what they can achieve through dedication and hard work.

Olivia and her dad are preparing for a rigorous experience of up to three weeks in adverse conditions and harsh terrain, skiing all day, pulling a 45-kilogram sled. At 13, a year after spinal surgery for scoliosis, Olivia and her dad hiked 15,000 feet above sea level to Salkantay Pass in Peru.

I wish Olivia and Chris good luck and fair weather.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, in the gallery opposite today we have a family visiting us from the community of Dartmouth North - in particular, a young woman from John Martin Junior High, Emily Hooper. Also her mum Melanie, her dad Shaun, and her little brother James. I'd like to ask the House to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

HOOPER, EMILY: STUDENT/COM. LDRSHIP. - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, on this International Women's Day, I rise to recognize an exceptional young woman from Dartmouth North, Emily Hooper, who is a leader in our community. Emily is in Grade 9 at John Martin Junior High where she is widely recognized as an outstanding student. She is part of the student leadership group where she helps organize the annual Christmas dinner for students and community members, school dances, fundraisers, and the activities of Spirit Week.

She is an academic leader and leads by example by maintaining a very high average. She plays saxophone in the school band and uses her strong voice to speak up about things she cares about. Emily also volunteers in the community, helping with the Alderney Landing Haunted House, with food drives with Feed Nova Scotia and, by all accounts, she is a fantastic big sister to her five-year-old brother, James.

As we celebrate women and our struggle for equity and justice throughout the world, it is so inspiring to know that Emily is leading the pack of a new generation of

female leaders. I am grateful for her contribution to our community of Dartmouth North. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

INT'L WOMEN'S DAY: BALANCE FOR BETTER - RECOG.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, today on March 8th, International Women's Day, women from around the world will join together with a shared purpose - we will reflect on the amazing strides we have made and how much more we have to do to achieve gender balance. This year's theme is Balance for Better, and it's a call to action for women and men to take down the barriers that prevent gender balance. We all know that our communities, jobs, and businesses are better when there is a balance of perspectives.

Last year, we witnessed the #MeToo movement. Brave women came forward to stop harassment based on gender. This year, we are building on that watershed moment in history. Balance for Better doesn't mean giving women something they haven't earned; it means putting an end to the roadblocks that keep women out of the boardrooms, professions, and opportunities simply because they are women.

Today, together, let's celebrate International Women's Day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LISA ROBERTS: In the West Gallery, we're joined today by my children, Gabrielle and Ben, if they could stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

FAM. TIME: POLITICAL LIFE - BALANCE

LISA ROBERTS: On this International Women's Day, I'd like to acknowledge that time away from Ben and Gabrielle, and their dad Andrew, is the greatest cost that I pay for the role that I have chosen as MLA, particularly at bedtime during cuddles, which we really enjoy. I can also say that time with them and my relationship with them is truly what has enabled me to step into this role, and also what motivates me to continue in it.

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

**MORASH, CINDY/CARNIVAL COM.:
CHRISTMAS PARADE OF LIGHTS - THANKS**

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to bring recognition to an amazing woman, Cindy Morash, and the carnival committee of Eastern Passage, Nova Scotia, for their hard work and tireless dedication to bringing the first-ever Annual Eastern Passage Christmas Parade of Lights. There were so many participants, like the Eastern Passage Pirates Minor Baseball Association, hundreds of cadets, as well as Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus, just to name a few.

Although the air was very chilly, community members from near and far lined the path of the parade. The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 164 of Eastern Passage also graciously hosted afterwards with hot chocolate, cookies, and books.

I ask all the members of the Nova Scotia Legislature, today on International Women's Day, to join me in thanking Cindy Morash, the carnival committee, and everyone who participated in the event for their time and effort to provide such a wonderful event.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

WOMEN'S WELLNESS WITHIN: COM. ADVOCACY - THANKS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on International Women's Day to recognize an outstanding feminist organization, Women's Wellness Within.

Run by the inimitable Martha Paynter and a fearless crew, Women's Wellness Within is a non-profit organization that provides support to criminalized women and trans individuals who are pregnant or parenting young children in Nova Scotia. They also advocate for access to housing, income, resources, and health care.

Women's Wellness Within has provided one-on-one support to over 30 clients at the Central Nova Correctional Facility, the Nova Scotia Institution for Women federal prison, the Nova Scotia Youth Facility, and within the community. In partnership with the Elizabeth Fry Society and East Coast Prison Justice, they've also published an important community resource guide.

In addition to facilitating over 50 monthly workshops for women at the Burnside jail, they've delivered countless guest lectures, including an invited address to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Physical and Mental Health - and that only scratches the service.

It is organizations like this that do the hard work of helping the women that our systems have failed, Mr. Speaker, and giving love and hope to those whose trauma has often made them feel that those things are beyond their grasp.

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

CBU CAPERS: PROMOTING HEALTHY LIVING - THANKS

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, on February 21st Boularderie Elementary students received valuable lessons on high jumps and high fives with members of the Men's Cape Breton University's Capers Varsity Basketball Team - the lesson in finding your rhythm and moving your muscles was delivered to students by coaches, retired teachers, and four players.

The program's purpose was to promote healthy living and to instill the method of how important nutrition, hydration, exercise, and proper sleep allows students to perform their best. Capers Head Coach Matt Skinn said: "Volunteering and being connected to the wider community is an important of being a CBU player."

I rise today to give a special thanks to the players and coaches and to retired teacher Gary Maclean, principal Brenda Lavery, and gym teacher Shane MacRae for organizing this life-learning lesson to encourage the students to adopt daily healthy life routines.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege.

Yesterday, during Question Period, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and the House Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party both suggested to this House that the Attorney General and Justice Minister wrote to the committee to add a name to that committee.

Mr. Speaker, that is completely false. The documents that they tabled, which I hope they would have read, clearly shows that is not the case. On June 13th Chief Judge MacDonald wrote to the Justice Minister and Attorney General, and on that correspondence there are two names. One name was recommended, and with only the résumé of only one name - I'll re-table that for you today - as well as a document that was tabled yesterday by the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, which very clearly lays out the process associated with that. It says that the committee should submit to the Minister of Justice a short list of recommended candidates, with the précis of information on all candidates.

They also tabled a document yesterday, a letter from the Attorney General to Chief Justice MacDonald, Mr. Speaker. In that letter the Attorney General very clearly lays out the process and asks for the résumé of both candidates. At no time in any of this documentation did the Attorney General say to add a name to the list.

What the Attorney General asked for, Mr. Speaker, was for them to follow the process. Both the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and the House Leader stood in this House with misinformation that they should know was not true.

Mr. Speaker, further to that, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party stood in his place yesterday and to try and draw a link to impugn the reputation of the Chief Judge Williams, he said the Chief Judge schedules with judges here which cases, keeping in mind that the province is one of the biggest litigators with provincial court . . . (Interruption)

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

THE PREMIER: . . . the Chief Judge will decide which judges hear each and every case. This is the provincial Family and Criminal Court, Mr. Speaker. Litigation with the province would end up before the Supreme Court Trial Division, which would be Judge MacDonald.

Further to that, Mr. Speaker, Chief Judge Williams was appointed in 2003 by then-Attorney General Michael Baker. This is a highly qualified individual and we welcome the addition. Further to that . . .

This is a highly-qualified individual and we welcome the addition.

[10:00 a.m.]

Further to that, Mr. Speaker, under the New Democratic Party, Chief Williams was then elevated to Associate Chief Judge in 2011, and then she became the Chief Judge. (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, on the bottom of the release it says, “Cabinet chooses Chief Judges based on the Justice Minister’s recommendation. The family and provincial court recruitment committee provides a list of candidates.” That’s exactly the process that was followed.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you, it’s one thing for members in this House to take the great leap to try to call into question those of us who sit in this House and our integrity, but to call into question the integrity of Chief Judge Williams, it’s really . . . (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: On International Women's Day in 2019, the Premier of this province still has to stand . . . (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, in 2019 it's unbelievable that the Premier of this province has to stand up to defend the reputation of a competent female judge whose reputation was impugned yesterday by false information.

I look forward to your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, thank you. (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the members of this caucus - and, I assume, all members of this House - have great respect for those who work in the justice system and sit on the bench.

We did not for one second refer to anything in the abilities of any judge in this province. That Party did, over and over. What we referred to, Mr. Speaker, was correspondence that clearly laid out a process - a process that we believe the Minister of Justice did not follow.

In the rules that the Premier references, it says that the committee will make a recommendation and forward the precis of the recommended candidate. We know that this committee made one recommendation. That's what happened.

It is not lost on me that the Premier misrepresented the words of the Leader of the NDP in Question Period and had to apologize for it after Question Period the other day. I suspect that's what we'll see happen here again today after Question Period.

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

LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, every March 8th we celebrate the achievement of women worldwide . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

I want to finish with the point of privilege here.

I will take the point of privilege under advisement and come back to the House.

We have one last member's statement, which we will allow.

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

MCDONOUGH, ALEXA: POLITICAL PIONEERING - THANKS

LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, every March 8th, we celebrate the achievement of women worldwide, and we recognize efforts to achieve equality, justice, and respect. I'd like to have respect here in this House at this moment.

As we celebrate this day, I'd like to recognize a particular trailblazer for women in politics, Alexa McDonough, who approximately 35 years ago stood in this same House as the only female MLA, the only NDP MLA, and the first female Leader of any Party in Canada.

I'd like to recognize Alexa for her passion, her caring, and her empathy for the people of Nova Scotia. I'd like to say that we need to continue on in her spirit to fight for the rights of women and girls, to improve life for girls and women in Nova Scotia and around the world.

On this day, I call on all Nova Scotian communities to develop community-based, zero-tolerance frameworks to eliminate violence against women.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, before we get into Question Period, you will note earlier today in accordance with Rule 43(2) I wrote to you indicating my intention to request an emergency debate on the subject of lack of access to primary health services for people who live in the remote northern tip of Cape Breton Island. It puts their lives at danger.

I move that the business of the House be set aside for the purpose of discussing the lack of basic health services for Cape Breton Island residents in the northern regions who rely on Buchanan Memorial Community Health Centre as a matter of urgent public importance and I will table the letter that I had sent to you earlier today.

THE SPEAKER: So, under Rule 43(4), I'm required to decide whether the matter is proper to be discussed. I have considered the factors set out in Rule 43(4A): This is a matter of grave concern to Nova Scotians and which "... concerns the administrative responsibilities of the government or could come within the scope of ministerial

action . . .”, is not on the order paper for discussion, and I have no indication that it is likely to be debated within a reasonable time by other means.

So, I will read the motion and ask the honourable Leader for the Official Opposition if he has the leave of the House for the debate to take place.

TIM HOUSTON: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the business of the House be set aside for the purposes of dealing with an issue of urgent public importance and the subject of the issue has been described by the House Leader for the Official Opposition as a lack of access to basic health care for Cape Bretoners who rely on the Buchanan Memorial Health Centre.

Does the House agree to give leave for the motion to be debated?

Agreed.

It is agreed.

The leave has been given and this debate will take place today at the moment of interruption as provided under Rule 43(11).

We will now move on to Question Period, which will be extended by seven and a half minutes.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

PREM. - HUMAN TRAFFICKING: WARNINGS TO KIDS - PROACTIVE

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The RCMP has said that human trafficking is on the rise in Nova Scotia and I know that the Premier acknowledged this last session.

Traffickers target all genders, but the majority of these victims are young women. Many of the girls are taken out of the province and, once they're gone, it's nearly impossible to get them back home. Those who stay in the province are often brainwashed and made to believe that there is no escape for them.

My question for the Premier is: What data is actually being collected and made public regarding human trafficking in this province?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (THE PREMIER): I'll ask the Minister of Justice and Attorney General to respond.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague. This is a very serious issue in the Province of Nova Scotia, quite frankly across the country, but we know the data that we are receiving from Statistics Canada indicates that the circumstances are compounded here in Nova Scotia.

We're working very closely with our law enforcement community. We're working very closely, actually, with our federal government and I'm looking forward to an announcement in the very near future that will help address this emerging and very exigent concern.

KARLA MACFARLANE: I thank the minister for his answer and, absolutely, it's being compounded. It's amazing what's happening in rural Nova Scotia. We know that RCMP officers are now trained to spot trafficking. We know that even flight attendants are being trained to spot trafficking. We are arming people with these tools to stop trafficking but once it has already happened, unfortunately. We are falling short when it comes to preventing it from happening at all together here in Nova Scotia.

I guess my question would be though: What are we doing right now to be proactive in warning our young people within the schools about the dangers of human trafficking and, more importantly, putting an end to this?

MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, there are dedicated resources in the province that are responding to the enforcement elements. We saw yesterday, Halifax Regional Police in their integrated policing model with the RCMP, advance the matter before the Court with the arrest, detention, and charge of four individuals.

A second element to both the RCMP and Halifax Regional Police specific to this subject is that public education and awareness for the very reasons my colleague has identified. This is not restricted to any one area. As a matter of fact, our young women, our youth, in rural Nova Scotia are more vulnerable and the efforts that are undertaken by our law enforcement community in consultation with stakeholders across the criminal justice is to do just that: bring greater awareness and education to the issue.

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

PREM. - WOMEN'S HEALTH: PROGRAM CUTS - EXPLAIN

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, on International Women's Day, I'd like to direct a couple of questions about women's health to the Premier.

Four years ago, the program of in-person prenatal courses had its funding discontinued by the province, and this was a great concern for people because this was a place where soon-to-be parents could meet other soon-to-be parents and ask questions of an instructor. That program was replaced with an online program. In January, that online program was discontinued. The result is that, today, in a province where we have over 8,000 babies born every year, the total amount of prenatal preparation courses that are being funded by the government is zero.

My question to the Premier is: On what grounds could the government cut such a crucial program for maternal health?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I will look into why that program was changed. I don't have the details associated with it.

I do agree with the honourable member. Many of these prenatal classes during the nine months that our mothers and daughters are carrying our children is an important part. Also, the important relationships that happen after the child has been born and the relationship between mothers who share their experiences back and forth, for many of them, these are lifelong friendships and people they rely on when they have concerns and questions.

I take the question from the honourable member, and I will see what I can do to get him an answer.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Premier's answer. Last month, in Antigonish, midwifery services were suspended. They were suspended last year on the South Shore because of understaffing. Antigonish and the South Shore are the only places in Nova Scotia outside the HRM where publicly-funded midwifery services have been offered. It's not hard to understand why advocates of midwifery, and there are a great many advocates of midwifery, have been comprehensively disappointed in the government's failure to advance on this important front.

My question to the Premier is: When a government has lost ground on midwifery and has cancelled prenatal programming, how can they be taken seriously when they talk about regarding the importance of women's health?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The issue of midwifery he talks about is an important service that should be offered in communities

across the province. We have expanded it in the two communities that he referred to. It is my belief, though, that that service should be an option for expecting mothers and families. We'll continue, as we are continuing to recruit now for new clinicians, to make sure we can roll that service out in other parts of the province.

GARY BURRILL: When the government's three-year sexual-violence strategy expired, funding for trauma-informed therapeutic counselling in places like Yarmouth or Truro or Antigonish came to an end. This was funding that allowed hundreds of women to receive this counselling who would not otherwise have received it. The result is that, today, in those communities where that counselling is continuing, it's being funded by the local fundraising efforts of the women's centres.

Mr. Speaker, recovering from sexual assault trauma is not something that corresponds to the tidy timelines of a pilot project. It's often a long road and on that road, the long-term continuity of the therapeutic relationship is something that's very important.

[10:15 a.m.]

What rationale can the Premier provide for cutting funding for counselling for survivors of sexual assault?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. He was referring to a program that was in place that was part of the 2013 election campaign, where we put three years of funding available. When that funding was coming to an end, he would know that those services are being provided in other departments, some through the Department of Health and Wellness.

We know there is still more work to do. I can tell you that the Deputy Premier, the member for Colchester North, is continuing to make sure that we provide SANE service in the Truro area. We know that has to be there. We will continue to provide that training. Let me tell you, we are continuing to provide support for women and children who are suffering from sexual violence. It's unacceptable in any of our homes. It's unacceptable in any of our communities.

We as a government are the first government to have dedicated funding, and we will continue to make sure across the department disciplines that we all have a role to make sure that we deal with this issue.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

JUSTICE - CHIEF JUDGE SELECT. COM.: INDEPENDENCE - CONFIRM

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Yesterday, the minister suggested that the Chief Judge selection committee was formed for

the purposes of transparency. In the letter I tabled yesterday from February 14th, from the minister to the Chief Justice, the minister specifically states that the committee is being struck for the purpose of ensuring independence of the judiciary.

I will read from that letter. The minister says in his letter: This process honours the independence of the judiciary in the selection of its chief. I would very much appreciate receiving the short list of recommended candidates by June 2018, if possible.

My question for the minister is: Will the minister confirm that the Chief Judge selection committee was actually struck for the purposes of honouring the independence of the judiciary in the selection of its chief?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, the correspondence is self-explanatory, but as I said yesterday, within the legislation and processes, the Minister of Justice is not required to strike the committee or ask the chair of the committee to start their work. The Minister of Justice has the authority to reappoint.

What I said yesterday was that in the spirit of transparency, I chose to ask the committee to be struck for purposes of advancing a process. That was the intent. The outcome of a process that we followed resulted in the appointment of a competent and proven Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia.

TIM HOUSTON: Perhaps the committee's work didn't matter to the minister, but I'm sure it mattered to the committee. They probably thought they were actually doing something on behalf of the minister.

In his letter of February 14th, the minister lists five people who will form the committee. Among the four members that I listed yesterday, according to the minister's February 14th letter, the committee was to include the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court where they are not seeking reappointment.

On February 21st, the Chief Justice wrote to the minister and requested the process and criteria for the appointment. The terms of reference that the minister provided to the Chief Justice, dated March 9th - so, almost a month later - have only four people listed on the committee. The Chief Judge has been omitted by that stage, Mr. Speaker.

The Chief Judge, where not seeking reappointment, was included in February 14th, but not on the March 9th instructions. I'd like to ask the minister: Why was the Chief Judge omitted on March 9th?

MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I want to correct my colleague again. Quite the contrary to his initial comment, I do value the work of the committee. It's an important element in the selection process for a Chief Judge.

My colleague would know that it is one element of the process. There are a number of factors that have to be considered. The fact that the incumbent was not included, when we know clearly that the incumbent was an applicant to the process, allows me to look at the collective circumstances in the selection of our Chief Judge. The Chief Judge was not part of the committee because the legislation doesn't allow it, if the Chief Judge has expressed an interest in the position.

TIM HOUSTON: I'm so glad the minister closed with that comment because the letter from the Chief Justice on February 14th includes that the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court will be on the selection committee where they're not seeking reappointment, but as we demonstrated, the terms of reference on March 9th omit the Chief Judge. So, between February 14th and the transmission of the terms of reference on March 9th, how did the minister come to know that Judge Williams was seeking reappointment?

MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, it's quite clear the Chief Judge at the time had expressed an interest and desire to retain and continue in that position. What my colleague has said, and I know average Nova Scotians would understand, when legislation says a sitting judge who expresses an interest cannot be part of the process, I know Nova Scotians understand that. I cannot understand why the Leader of the Official Opposition does not.

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

GOV'T (N.S.): STRAIT AREA WOMEN'S PLACE - FUNDING INCREASE

LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for International Women's Day. This particular question today is for the Premier. Women's centres in Nova Scotia do essential work in providing direct services for women and girls and advocating for social change. The nine women's centres across the province are struggling to fill the gaps left when government services are centralized or cut completely. They need funding that covers the real cost of operating.

Currently, the Strait Area Women's Place receives only a fraction of the funding provided to the eight other centres. Would the Premier please commit today to increase funding to the Strait Area Women's Place in Port Hawkesbury in the upcoming budget?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I, too, want to add my voice of thanks to the women's centres across our province who are providing a valuable service to our communities. They're partnering with many organizations across the province, as well as a number of departments. They do work for the Department of Health and Wellness and the Department of Community Services.

The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board announced that she will be tabling her budget on March 26th. At that point, we will be able to communicate what's in it.

LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the Premier's gratitude to women's centres, I would really like to see their funding advanced, especially for the Port Hawkesbury centre, which is in dire need.

Women's centres are providing individual support and programming to address poverty, domestic abuse, mental health issues, and sexualized violence against women and girls. They're serving more and more women with increasingly complex problems. The staff of these centres have demonstrated skills and expertise, and they're looking to the government to be their partner. However, despite multiple requests, they've not been able to meet with the Minister responsible for the Status of Women once in the past five years.

My question for the Premier is: Does he think it's appropriate that the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women has not met with the province's women's centres and would he be willing to meet with these women's centre representatives himself?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I have met in my own constituency office the women's centre in my area. I met with women's centres across the province at various times. I look forward to continuing to partner with them and continuing to work with them. I know the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women will continue to work with our partners.

I think it's important also to recognize that we continue to provide funding to these organizations, to continue to provide the services and supports that are needed in our communities. I want to continue to thank them for the work they've been doing with us, for some of the innovative ways that they've been supporting women in communities across this province. Not only when they find themselves in a vulnerable position, but providing them with opportunities for self-employment, opportunities to take an idea and create it. They're providing them with a myriad of supports and we thank them for that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

JUSTICE: CHIEF JUDGE SELECT. COM. - RECOMMENDATION

TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Minister of Justice. The letter sent from the Chief Justice to the minister on June 13th states very clearly that there are two candidates for the appointment; it also states very clearly that only one candidate is recommended.

The terms of reference state: "The Committee should submit, to the Minister of Justice, a short list of recommended candidates with a précis of information about each."

The letter from the Chief Justice references two candidates, but they only put one name forward.

Did the minister not understand that it was implicit that the other candidate was not a recommended candidate?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker I am glad my colleague has referenced the terms of reference. It is unfortunate that he is being selective in what he is pulling from the terms of reference.

Allow me, Mr. Speaker, if I may read from the terms of reference - and I can table that. What my colleague has said is quite right: "The Committee should submit, to the Minister of Justice, a short list of recommended candidates with a précis of information about each. (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order please. The honourable Minister of Justice has the floor.

MARK FUREY: I have the utmost respect for the position of the Leader of the Official Opposition and I will quietly listen to his questions, Mr. Speaker.

The terms of reference go on to say - and I believe I must read these in sequence, so I am asking permission to reread what I just read:

"The Committee should submit, to the Minister of Justice, a short list of recommended candidates with a précis of information about each.

The short list will normally contain not fewer than three nor more than six candidates, and the candidates will be ranked in order of the Committee's preference."

We know there were at least two applicants expressing an interest; one of them was the incumbent. It's reasonable, common sense, sound judgment that the incumbent would be considered, Mr. Speaker. There was no name excluded and there was no name asked to be included.

TIM HOUSTON: Now that the minister has had the opportunity to review the terms of reference, I am glad that he very clearly stated what they require and that is that the committee would submit a précis of information on all those on the short list of recommended candidates - recommended candidates.

The committee only submitted one précis of information, making it very clear that the short list of recommended candidates contained only one name. To suggest that there were two names involved and two recommended names is just patently false; it is not consistent with the letter.

Does the minister stand by his statement that there were two names on the short list?

MARK FUREY: I'm not going to draw conclusions on speculation or interpretation. I am going to speak specifically to the terms of reference and this is where I, as the Attorney General and the Minister of Justice, have a responsibility to ensure that the committee is following the process as well. I will reread what I said: "The short list will normally contain not fewer than three nor more than six . . ."

We had two applicants to the process; one of them being the incumbent – the sitting Chief Judge of the Provincial Court at the time - why would we not consider the incumbent who is a proven, competent leader as the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

JUSTICE: CHIEF JUDGE SELECT. COM. - INTERFERENCE

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I think this is getting a little confusing for members but let me bring it back down to reality.

The minister said yesterday that there were two names advanced by the committee, but in fact they advanced one name originally; one name because they did the work the minister asked that they do, which was to find and recommend a candidate.

They did that for the minister, but then the minister chose to go back to them and said no, this is not what I want - there is a problem with that, Mr. Speaker.

How is that not interference when a committee was set up to provide a name? They provide a name and the minister goes back and says no.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister acknowledge that he was presented a complete list of names? It was one name and it was in the original letter sent by the committee.

[10:30 a.m.]

MARK FUREY: Again, as the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, it is incumbent upon me to ensure that the committee is doing its work. I'm going to read from the terms of reference again, Mr. Speaker, so the member for Inverness understands as well: The short list will normally contain not fewer than three nor more than six candidates and the candidates will be ranked in the order of committee's preference.

Advancing one name in singular, Mr. Speaker, when we know there are two applicants who have expressed an interest, and the second one being the incumbent - a

proven competent leader of the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia - it's reasonable with an application of common sense and sound judgment that we consider the incumbent.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Forgive me, maybe I'm not smart enough to understand the terms of reference but the Chief Justice is. Surely he is, Mr. Speaker, and he resigned from the committee over this.

Yesterday the minister said that at no time did he instruct the committee to add names. Yet we know the original letter back to him from the committee recommended a name, and he did go back and instruct them, as the documents were tabled yesterday and they are very obvious, that he did go back and instruct the committee to give him more names.

Mr. Speaker, why does the minister deny that that very act was not interference?

MARK FUREY: For the record, I want to correct the member for Inverness because I did not, Mr. Speaker, and he clearly is not reading the document. What I asked for was a précis, a resumé, of the second candidate. I wasn't asking to add a name. There were two names, two applicants who expressed an interest in this job, one of them being the incumbent. That incumbent has proven herself to be a competent Chief Judge, a proven leader of the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, it is reasonable, and the legislation allows me, it is advice and recommendations from the committee, but there's an onus on me to use all of the information available to make an informed decision. We did that and, as a result, the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia, a proven competent leader, was reappointed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

JUSTICE: CHIEF JUSTICE SELECT. COM. - MIN. INTERFERENCE

TIM HOUSTON: The issue here is not the competence of anyone, except maybe some of the members in this House, but it's the fact that . . .

THE SPEAKER: I'll ask the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition to retract that statement.

TIM HOUSTON: I retract that statement.

The issue is that a committee was struck to make a recommendation. We have a sad history in this province of Justice Ministers overruling the recommendations of committees. People may know the Electoral Boundaries Commission issue that happened in this province not too long ago.

A committee was struck, a committee did put a name forward, and this minister picked somebody else.

The role of the Associate Chief Judge of the Provincial Court has been vacant since last summer. Presumably to fill that role, a selection committee must be struck. However, given the resignation of Chief Justice MacDonald, would it be fair to suggest that the minister has been unable to attract judges to form a committee, on account of the minister's interference in the justice system on the last committee?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, again my colleague is drawing conclusions. There are processes that we must follow. We have not - I have not asked the Acting Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia to strike a committee. We are in the process of doing a review; a jurisdictional scan of what happens across the country specific to this particular committee and its role. We continue with that work.

I am quite confident in the leadership of the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court where she can continue to assume the duties in her primary role and, in her absence, to appoint a competent senior member of the Provincial Court who could fill in as the Acting Chief Judge, Mr. Speaker. These are standard processes. We want to make sure, in a review of this committee's work, that the committee is established, and the committee is reflective of those who should be on the committee.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'll redirect to the Premier. Here's what we know. The Minister of Justice convened a committee to appoint a Chief Judge of the Provincial Court. The minister gave the committee a mandate wherein the minister acknowledged that the Governor in Council would act on the recommendation of the committee. It's right in the mandate.

Two individuals applied. The committee recommended one. The name put forward was not the name the minister wanted and, as a result, he directed the Chief Justice to provide the name and details of the other candidate, presumably so he could go with him. That's what he did. The minister ignored the name put forward by the committee and appointed his selection. Then, Chief Justice MacDonald resigned based on the minister's actions stating that he believed the minister's actions undermined the role of the judiciary.

Premier, based on everything you've heard yesterday and today, would you agree that the Chief Justice and the highest judge in the province resigned from the committee as a result of your minister's actions?

THE SPEAKER: I'd just like to remind the honourable Leader to keep his comments and questions directed to the Chair.

The honourable Premier has the floor.

THE PREMIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party tabled a letter from Chief Justice MacDonald to the Attorney General dated on June 13th. It says there are two candidates for the Chief of the Provincial and Family Court. He named both candidates, and at the bottom of that he said the committees recommend a preferred candidate.

Go back to what the Minister of Justice said about when that committee was struck. It's very clear. It's very clear that they lay out a short list that will normally contain no fewer than three, no more than six. The Minister of Justice then responded back and said he was looking for the précis, which is part of the work that the committee should do.

He raised the Electoral Boundaries Commission and the work that happened with the Electoral Boundaries Commission. What happened there is the Attorney General of the day interfered with the work of the committee and wouldn't let them do their job because they weren't following the process. What this Attorney General did was: Can you please follow the process and forward us the documents?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

STATUS OF WOMEN - MENSTRUAL PROD.: ACCESS - FUNDING INCREASE

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, in case my colleagues have forgotten, it's International Women's Day, and I'm going to ask a question in honour of that. My question is for the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act.

Imagine for a moment someone somewhere in Nova Scotia getting out of bed this morning, getting ready for work, maybe school, and realizing they've started their period. And what if they've just spent their last \$20 on food and they won't get paid again until next week? In the province with the lowest median income and the highest food insecurity, this situation is not imaginary. One-third of Canadian women under the age of 25 say they've struggled to afford their menstrual products. These products are not a luxury, and I'll table that. Is the minister taking specific actions to address period poverty?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question and bringing it back to International Women's Day. The Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act, who is also the Minister of Community Services, continues to work to improve the lives of women and children in our province. I want to remind the honourable member - she talks about the median income - the report that the New Democrats are pulling that stat out of also talks about the fact that fewer single-parent families are living in poverty in the province. That number is going down.

We also know with seniors, many of whom are widowed, we've seen that number continue to decline. She would also know we as a government have increased the largest single increase in income assistance in the provincial history. On top of that, when we

found ourselves to get ourselves to a fiscal balance, in reality, the single biggest largest tax cut that this province has ever had was in the basic personal exemption where it was geared towards low income.

I want to assure the honourable member that the Minister of Community Services, the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act, has a very strong voice at our Cabinet Table and continues to make sure women's and girl's issues are an important part of our government's agenda. It will always be and it's why we look forward to seeing the budget tabled on March 26th.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, starting this past September, menstruating students at Mount Saint Vincent University no longer need to pay for pads and tampons on campus. They are made available for free in all the main buildings of the school. The Mount's student union made this their major ask for the university's 2018 budget because they can't afford to pay for their products. I think they were onto something.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister agree to include funding in the budget to provide free pads and tampons in universities, schools, government offices, libraries, and all public buildings so that people who menstruate have access to these essential items?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The budget will be tabled on March 26th. I'm sure she will be interested in what is in that budget.

I do want to go back to this very important issue of living in poverty. It's why we continue to make investments that impact families across the province. The pre-Primary program is an important step to ensuring that we provide every four-year-old, regardless of the socio-economic circumstances they're born into, the same opportunity and start. Oftentimes it allows single parents to get back into the workforce earlier. That's a positive thing.

I want to continue to make sure she would know, we've created school breakfast programs across the province. I think we're almost around 95 per cent today, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to get to 100 per cent. These are all positive things that we're working for, for low-income families across this province. We'll continue to do that.

I want to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has a strong voice at our Cabinet Table. I continue to look forward to listening and working with her to ensure that those Nova Scotians who need our support will get it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MUN. AFFS. - MUN. OFFICE: WOMEN REP. - INCREASE COMMIT

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: A report recently came out from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives ranking the best and the worst places in Canada for women. The only Nova Scotia location, Halifax, ranked 22 out of 26. In terms of leadership, Halifax actually ranked dead last. Women only hold 12 per cent of the seats on HRM Council, well below the 34 per cent national average for cities.

My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs is: Does he feel women are sufficiently encouraged to run for municipal office in the Province of Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. She raises a very important issue. In 2013, when we were given the privilege to govern this great province, gender equality on the Provincial and Family Court bench was starkly different. Today we have gender parity on the Provincial and Family Court bench. I'm very proud of the fact that we, as a government, have appointed more women to the Executive Council than any other government in the history of our province.

I want to continue to make sure she looks at the senior levels inside of our government. She will see gender parity when it comes to deputy ministers in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, I will add to this. She's right, we need more women running not only municipally but for provincial seats across this province. It's why we invest in a program, a college for candidates. I know that many members of this House attended that college. We'll continue to make sure. It's why I continue to make sure that my own two children - my daughter and my son - take an active role in public policy so that hopefully one or both of them may decide they want to take a run. It's incumbent on all of us.

Today we were greeted with five - six - amazing young women. I'm very certain that someday we'll see one of them in this House.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of work to do. Fifty per cent of our population are female. In preparing for this question, it takes me back to when I was 16. It was the first time I was motivated to run for public office, when there were no females elected in a local municipal election. To this day, even in Cumberland County, there's only 17 per cent of women represented. Here in HRM, only 12 per cent are female, and across the province only 27 per cent of all councillors are female.

My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs is: Will the minister make a commitment to setting a goal in the next municipal election that 50 per cent of the councillors elected across this province are female?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think she should strive for higher than that. I don't think we should set a cap on it. We should continue to make sure that everyone who wants to aspire to elected office should be given the support and inspiration to do so.

It's my hope that we will see a selection of candidates across this province who reflect the reality of this great province on gender and diversity, making sure that under-represented populations are being here. I, too, share her hope that we will see 50 per cent of women someday in this House and on municipal councils across the province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

[10:45 a.m.]

EECD - SCHOOL CURRICULUM: HUM. TRAFFICKING - AWARE.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Our school system teaches about the dangers of the world; we teach fire safety, the dangers of alcohol. Someday we may even properly teach about the dangers associated with cannabis. But we don't teach about the dangers of human trafficking. These very real dangers need to be made clear from a young age, so fewer girls get brainwashed and taken advantage of. My question for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is: Is human trafficking awareness included in the school curriculum, and if so, at what grade level?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, that's a very important question. This is a matter of significant importance for all of us in this province. I can provide the member with the details on related curriculum. I don't know how enhanced the issues on human trafficking are, off the top of my head, but we can find that out. There is a process established for curriculum. Development is being led by teachers who come into the department and help us develop a curriculum that's needed to give the best, most relevant education possible for our students. If there is any good advice the members have, I'm sure we can make sure that group takes a look.

KIM MASLAND: Human trafficking isn't a new problem in Nova Scotia. Girls were picked up and trafficked from Mic Mac Mall in Dartmouth in the 1970s. A CBC news release of just yesterday outlines a human trafficking bust in Dartmouth. Nova Scotia RCMP recently said they were seeing a rise in suspected human trafficking cases in the province. I'll table that document.

We continue to react rather than prevent. My question to the minister is: Will he commit to adding human trafficking, not just related, but human trafficking, to the school curriculum, keeping in mind that girls as young as 14 years of age are being lured on social media?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, very troubling statistics and information that we all take very seriously and have great concerns about. We need to make sure that curriculum is age appropriate and is effective. We do have a process in place to review curriculum on an ongoing basis. That is not driven necessarily by the minister's office, but in fact, those on the front lines. We'll make sure our curriculum team has a look at this topic. If there are any specifics that we do have in our curriculum that the member would be interested to have on this topic, I'll make sure that she's aware of them.

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

FISH. & AQUACULTURE/AGRIC.: WOMEN WORKERS - STATS.

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of International Women's Day, I'd like to commend women who continue to make strides in fields in which they have been a minority in leadership for far too long. There is work that still needs to be done in traditionally male-dominated areas like fisheries, aquaculture, and agriculture.

I speak in no way disparagingly or to lessen the role of the fine men who work in these sectors. These sectors are some of the leading revenue generators in our province, contributing hundreds of millions of dollars annually to our economy, yet women remain vastly underrepresented. I would like to ask the minister if he is aware of how many women are currently working in, or even better yet, directly own a fisheries, aquaculture or agriculture business.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I was just recently talking to a young lady who was in the audience and she does have a licence.

ALANA PAON: Oh, my goodness. I thank the minister for the curt answer and I congratulate that one woman who has her fisheries licence.

The Government of Prince Edward Island recently took action to address the barriers preventing more women from becoming leaders in these sectors. They launched a survey asking specifically what barriers women are facing. Some of the topics included gaps in mentorship and adequate supports for families. The survey was inspired by a national report stating that women experience barriers in leadership roles in agriculture. From my own experience, I can say this rings true for Nova Scotia.

What concrete action has the minister and this government taken to encourage more women to become involved in fisheries, aquaculture and agriculture?

KEITH COLWELL: I can tell the member opposite that all the senior management in the Department of Agriculture are women.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

JUSTICE: CHIEF JUDGE SELECT. - MIN. INTERFERENCE

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. The terms of reference state that the short list will normally contain not fewer than three candidates. It doesn't require a minimum of three, therefore, a list of one is a complete list under the terms of reference.

Does the minister acknowledge that he was presented a complete list of one recommended candidate and any effort to expand that list is interference?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, that's my colleague's interpretation of the terms of reference. The short list will normally contain no fewer than three. We know there were two applicants; one of them was the incumbent. Common sense and sound judgment, in the absence of any information that questions the leadership of the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court, in my mind as the minister, I'm delegated that authority under the Act, the responsibility to ensure that it is an informed process. It's only reasonable that I ask for the précis and resumé of the sitting incumbent Chief Judge of the Provincial Court.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the committee would have considered all of the information before. They would've looked at the candidates. They would've analyzed the précis of all the candidates and the made a recommendation. I'm not weighing in here; I'm weighing in on what the committee has said. What we do know is that after that process, the Chief Justice of this province resigned saying that he felt undermined by that minister's actions. The minister forced the production of a resumé from the committee and refused to accept the experience and expertise of the committee members by not accepting the recommendation.

Why does the minister deny that this is interference in the process?

MARK FUREY: The legislation clearly lays out the policies and procedures, including the terms of reference. The work of the committee is one element of the selection process. It's an important element of the selection process. It is advice and recommendation to the minister. The minister gathers all of the facts, makes an informed decision, and makes a recommendation to Executive Council, Mr. Speaker. I will not exclude, and no one in a reasonable state of mind using common sense and sound judgment would exclude the incumbent, the proven strong leader of the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

FTB: LOW-INCOME WOMEN - GOV'T. POLICIES

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the House again that it's International Women's Day. My question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

In 2017, Nova Scotia had the highest percentage of women in the low-income category of all provinces in Canada. As of 2017, 20,000 more women are in low income compared to 2013. Our numbers have shot up while many other provinces are improving.

Will the minister acknowledge that her government's fiscal policies are driving women's wages down?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member and congratulations on having an opportunity to stand and ask a question today.

I do want to acknowledge that we use a gender lens when we are looking at all of our policies, all of our practices, and all of the programs. That gender lens goes beyond gender to look at equalization and making sure that we provide equal opportunity for all Nova Scotians. Every one of us, I think it has been stated here in the House, wants to see that representation of females rising and increasing. We have looked at, and do provide, supports in our programs where there are incentives for businesses and for government to hire women in our force.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I thank the minister for that answer, although respectfully I'm not sure that gender lens is working. During the NDP mandate, the median income for women increased by \$4,000; since the Liberals came to power, it has fallen by \$500 - and I'll table that.

Mr. Speaker, we know that jobs that have been traditionally considered women's work are underpaid and the women are overrepresented in low-wage sectors. One powerful way to raise wages for these women would be to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The majority of workers who would benefit from that are women.

So far that's a policy this government refuses to support and I'd like to take this opportunity, on International Women's Day, to invite the minister: Will she support giving over 70,000 Nova Scotian women a raise by increasing the minimum wage meaningfully to \$15 an hour?

KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the member raises a question of minimum wage that has been raised here in the House before. These are conversations that I have had as a minister, and previous ministers have had, in particular with the impact that minimum wage would have not only on the women who may be in the workforce, but on the employers, who will be looking at the costs to them to raise that minimum wage.

That's a conversation that has been had. It's a conversation that will continue, and I would be pleased to take the comments from the member to that group of small businesses.

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

H&W - SANE PROG. (TRURO): RFP - STATUS

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, today on International Women's Day, I am sad to report that 39 per cent of all Canadian adult women have reported at least one sexual assault since the age of 16, and it's most often by someone that they know.

I'm sure everyone remembers the tragic story last Fall of the young woman in Truro, who was the victim of a sexual assault, went to her local hospital for treatment, and was turned away. I was so happy when my colleagues from both Parties on this side of the House championed the issue, and the minister committed to bringing the SANE program to Truro. I will table that document. It gave me a sense of relief to know that this crucial service would finally be coming to Truro.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: When will the request for proposal for the provision of the SANE program and service make it to market?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising the question. First, I want to assure you and all members that services are available in emergency departments for victims of sexual assault, and I encourage people to take advantage of that if necessary.

With respect to SANE services, Mr. Speaker, these enhanced services are available in some parts of the province and we've been expanding those services. With respect to Truro, the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the department work with local providers that had previously submitted an application or proposal. Those efforts to fast-track and get that proposal implemented fell through, so it had to move to an RFP.

Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that the Nova Scotia Health Authority has recently provided that, just within the last few days, to the department, to move to procurement . . .

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

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, and I'd like to reference Rule 29(2).

Mr. Speaker, the Premier raised a point of privilege today, but according to Rule 29(2), the Premier must give two hours' notice before he raises a point of privilege. The Premier went on at length over what is normally ruled by you as a disagreement between two members.

I want to remind the Premier that while he may be able to step around the Rules of the House at the committee level, like his members have at committees like Public Accounts, he should not expect to be able to do it before you.

THE SPEAKER: I just would like to inform the House that requirement was met by the honourable Premier. (Interruptions)

The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, according to Rule 29(1), you have the opportunity to receive a point of privilege. That point of privilege, according to Rule 29(2), is that there should be two hours' notice prior to it, or when practicable.

If the Premier brought forward an issue that was brought to this House the day before, his opportunity would have been as soon as the House opened. As soon as you called order in this House, it would have been his opportunity to stand on a point of privilege on something that was brought forward yesterday. He did not give us two hours' notice, he did not give you two hours' notice and I say, therefore, that point of privilege should be thrown out.

[11:00 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member raised a point of question of Rule 29(2) - Notice to Speaker of question, which reads as follows:

"A Member intending to raise a question of privilege shall give notice to the Speaker before the meeting of the House if practicable." That requirement was met.

The authorities of O'Brien and Bosc state that the point of privilege can be raised up to the conclusion of daily business - the daily routine of the House. That was met.

I do thank the member for allowing me the opportunity to clarify Rule 29(2).

Just before we move on to government business, the honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River on a very quick introduction.

LENORE ZANN: While the gentlemen fight with each other across the aisles (Laughter), I would like to make an introduction on International Women's Day for a wonderful woman in the West Gallery, Cheyenne Jones, who is fighting the good fight against human trafficking in Nova Scotia. Thank you. (Standing Ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, given that it is International Women's Day and we've had so much effort with the government - the statements by ministers about international women and recognizing women who have played an important role in our lives, in our families, and in our governments, and for all the MLAs and for all citizens - I think it is important that we give every member an opportunity to rise and pay homage and say a word about the women who have impacted their lives and have impacted society.

With the unanimous consent of the House, I ask that we revert back to Members' Statements before we get into Government Business so that each member has the opportunity to make a statement on International Women's Day. I think that probably ten minutes would suffice, if the members are in agreement with that.

THE SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

We will now revert back to Members' Statements for ten minutes, which will conclude at 11:14 a.m.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MACLEAN, LYNN: BOOK, *A HELPING HAND* - THANKS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, New Glasgow writer Lynn MacLean has written a book, *A Helping Hand*, which is based on the historical events of New Glasgow's assistance to Halifax in the aftermath of the December 1917 explosion. MacLean, a former educator, hopes that her book will provide a fresh look at the Halifax Explosion for Pictou County youth.

The historical fiction is aimed for youth between the ages of 9 and 12. The story revolves around the efforts in New Glasgow to provide aid and to transport nurses and doctors by train to Halifax. Numerous injured people were taken by train to New Glasgow, where 12 classrooms were quickly converted to a hospital setting.

I would like all members of this Legislature to join me as I thank Lynn MacLean for sharing some very interesting local history.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

CLEVELAND, ROSEANNA: TAKE ACTION SOC. - COURAGE

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, as today is International Women's Day, I would like to recognize a courageous and inspiring member of the Dartmouth North community, Roseanna Cleveland.

For many years, Roseanna has been the driving force behind the Take Action Society, a volunteer organization that serves the community through its dedication to breaking the cycle. She has worked tirelessly for the community and has been a strong fighter for the young people in North Dartmouth.

Five months ago Roseanna started a new fight. She suffered a debilitating stroke which left her unable to walk and limited the use of her arms. Through rigorous therapy, she has been working to regain her mobility and to get home to her family.

At Christmas she was at the Take Action fundraiser and danced up a storm in her powerchair. When I recently visited her at the Nova Scotia Rehabilitation and Arthritis Centre, she was set to be set up to be able to work with voice recognition software and special computer mouse, so she could stay connected to Take Action and work in the hours when she is not in therapy.

Roseanna is strong. She is a fighter. She is kind and generous. She is loved by everyone who knows her. I am so grateful to know her, and I am inspired by her every day.

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

MILLS, LYNN: OUTSTANDING PRINCIPAL AWARD - CONGRATS.

BILL HORNE: I am very proud to recognize and announce Lynn Mills as an outstanding teacher for International Women's Day. She is principal of Ash Lee Jefferson Elementary and is one of the three Nova Scotia principals to receive Canada's Outstanding Principal Award and became a member of the National Academy of Principals.

Each year the Learning Partnership recognizes the top 30 exceptional educators across Canada. All 30, including Ms. Mills, will be recognized at an awards celebration in Toronto. The recipients will also benefit from an executive leadership training program at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management.

We are very fortunate to have Ms. Mills as part of our community and leading our students and staff to create the wonderful environment at Ash Lee Jefferson Elementary School.

I'd like to ask the members of the Legislature to recognize the accomplishments of Ms. Mills on her distinguished award.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TENWOLDE, PATRICIA: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

TIM HALMAN: On International Women's Day I rise to recognize Patricia Tenwolde, a former teacher at Ian Forsyth Elementary School in Dartmouth East. I know all members of this House recognize the impact a passionate and committed teacher can have on our students and on our communities. They often lay a foundation for our students for the love of learning. A great teacher allows their students to feel safe and take risks.

Patricia Tenwolde is a model teacher. Patricia is highly respected and loved in our community and is well known for her commitment to her students. At the end of January 2019, Patricia retired from a successful teaching career.

I'd like to thank Patricia for her dedication and wish her a happy retirement. I ask all members of this House to recognize the great teaching career of Patricia Tenwolde.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

FAM. MATRIARCHS: FOSTERING STRENGTH - HONOUR

TAMMY MARTIN: Today on International Women's Day I'd like to recognize the strong line of women that I come from. My grandmother, who has since passed away, was a widow at the age of 36. Her husband died in a mine accident and she was left raising 10 children, and never again was with any man or worked after that. She just stayed home and raised her children.

My mother fled an abusive relationship when I was just very young and raised me to be very opinionated and independent. I have continued that on with my daughter, who I raised as a single mother, from the age of five. Having independence was something very important to us. My daughter now is the light of my life, my biggest challenge and my greatest accomplishment.

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

WOMEN MLAS: VALUED/RESPECTED COLLEAGUES - THANKS

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, on this International Women's Day I would like to bring attention and to thank my other female colleagues who sit in this House with me, both in my own PC caucus and our neighbours here in the NDP caucus, as well as those who sit across from me in this House and who are sitting in government. I want to let you all know that I value you. We may not always have the same opinion about matters that occur in this House, but I value you and I respect you. You are strong women, you have come here to make a difference in this province.

It is very difficult at times to sit in here because it is a very adversarial type of environment we sit in here in this House, which I am not really used to. I will say that I try to deal with things in a little bit more of a comradery, loving fashion. I appreciate when we are outside this Chamber and we are in the side Chambers or in the real world, as I say, I appreciate the compassion and the comradery, and the gifts given to me in just a hug or even a pat on the back from those who are not from my own caucus.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, Happy International Women's Day to all the women who sit here in this House with me.

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

MACLEOD, SHIRLEY: WIVES - HONOUR

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I find myself saying thank you to the Government House Leader for allowing me to get up and talk about an inspirational woman in my life and that woman is my wife, Shirley.

I know I can speak on behalf of all my male colleagues who will tell you that we would not be able to do our jobs if it wasn't for the support and the encouragement of our wives.

My wife, Shirley, was struck with MS in 1995 and she has continued on to help raise three wonderful children, six great grandchildren, and she has a great sense of humour because she proved that the day she married me.

I think it's important on this day to recognize the contribution that our wives, our spouses, make to allow us to represent the people that we have the honour of representing in this House.

THE SPEAKER: I'm going to take the opportunity to say my member statement. I can't be left out here.

FAM. WOMEN: SUPPORT/STRENGTH - HONOUR

THE SPEAKER: I want to acknowledge the strong women in my life: my mom, Judy, who's been a rock for me through many ups and downs; my wife, Stephanie, who has been with me for 20 years and is still there beside me every step of the way; my daughter, Rachael, who is growing up way too fast and becoming a strong young lady in her own right; my sister, Kim, who has recently retired after 32 years of serving the country with the RCMP; my Aunt Carol, who served this government - not this government but the Government of Nova Scotia - as a deputy minister for many years; and, certainly, my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law, who provide great support to our family.

All of these women play a part in enabling me to come here to be the Speaker for you guys and the MLA for Eastern Shore.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

SECOND STORY WOMEN'S CTR.: SUPPORT - VALUE

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise on this International Women's Day to recognize the women's centres across the province for the necessary programs and services that they provide for women and gender-oppressed people.

Located in my constituency in the Town of Lunenburg is the Second Story Women's Centre. This Centre is led by Executive Director Rhonda Lemire who has a team of strong, hard-working, dedicated women that offer a safe space for those in need.

Second Story Women's Centre offers counselling support; crisis support; accompaniment to court appointments; social opportunities for women; programs and workshops; as well as, a variety of much-needed supports. They will be doing that today in great style.

I would ask that you and the members of this House of Assembly please join me in recognizing the Second Story Women's Centre and all other women's centres in Nova Scotia on this International Women's Day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

CDN. SOC.: SPEAKING OPENLY - CELEBRATE

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I was going to read a Member Statement but, instead, I would like to thank everybody here and this is almost a dream. Today, while I was listening to my colleagues saying about menstrual products, I thought of countries in the world who would be very surprised and shocked that words like this are said in the Legislature.

This, to me, is the most wonderful country for women. I have always said that God blessed me with two daughters, that I brought up the Canadian way. I will say it over and over, women here have no comprehension how lucky we are here, and I am so proud to be a Canadian woman.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please

[11:15 a.m.]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 101.

Bill No. 101 - Tourist Accommodations Registration Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Business.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act Respecting the Registration of Tourist Accommodations Act, read for a second time here today.

At the end of the day, this bill is all about building on an awesome tourism sector that we already have and making it even better for Nova Scotians. The past two years have been the best two years of tourism in the history of our province. It's an amazing story, and to be absolutely clear, the foundation of that growth is the long-time established tourism operators who have been here, working really hard with their risk, their investments, their sweat and tears for many years. That's why we have such a robust accommodation complement here in Nova Scotia.

Whether it is in tourism accommodations or experiences, all of our tourism players have given everything into building their business. Our goal is to get \$4 billion in revenue in the tourism sector by 2024. We are heading in the right direction; around \$2.7 billion right now, but we need somewhere between 5,500 and 7,000 new accommodation units to help us hit that target - those are a lot of rooms.

Short-term rentals like Airbnb are growing in popularity in every corner of the province and around the world. They are key to meeting our goal. That's why we created the working group on short-term rentals last year - to dig into the issues, consult the experts, and find a balance to harness the huge opportunity and ensure a level playing field for everyone. That was exactly the purpose of that working group. We feel at this point -

certainly looking forward to comments from industry stakeholders, but we think this legislation does both.

In the end, this bill takes us from 1995 to 2019. First, we are going to repeal the Tourist Accommodations Act, which was built and enshrined many years ago when tourism, access to accommodations and attractions was done much differently. We didn't do it on cell phones. We didn't even do it on computers to any meaningful extent so many years ago. Now that the game, the landscape, has changed entirely.

We will first repeal the Tourist Accommodations Act as it is outdated and part of a licensing system that typically takes new operators about 40 hours to complete. So, the cumbersome red tape and the costs associated with that is just too much at this point. It's a burden. It's really obsolete in terms of the tourism process by way of licensing and registration, so we will remove that.

It also requires operators to have things like at least eight coat hangers in their room, an ashtray - even in a non-smoking room - a clock radio, and certain rooms can't have carpet, things of that nature. It's gone entirely past its useful life and the landscape has changed by way of social media, how we review and rate rooms, et cetera.

In place of the dated Tourist Accommodations Act, we are introducing the new Tourist Accommodations Registration Act. The new Act will do two major things - it will encourage all short-term rental operators with simple light-touch regulations, much less heavy-handed than it was back in 1995, and secondly it will create a level playing field for registration as it relates to tourism accommodations operators.

Under the new Act, if you're offering short-term accommodations in your primary residence you won't have to register, period. Everyone else will be required to register through a simple online registration system. The fee will be worked out during consultations, but it will be less than what the majority of operators are charged for a licence now - and faster.

Typically, in Nova Scotia, the range for these licences are between \$90 and \$1,000. The fee for this registration system will be cost-recoverable, so you divide the full number of the cost of building this registration system by how many memberships we have, and that will be the cost. So certainly, it will be far less than what the bigger accommodation operators are paying now.

The bottom line is this will be simpler, smarter, and more affordable for everyone - for the more established tourism operators who have led the way for years to the ones just starting out. If we're going to hit our \$4 billion tourism goal, we need all hands on deck.

I'm encouraged by the support we're getting for the legislation from industry stakeholders, including the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS), and

Airbnb Canada. Obviously with legislation of this nature that's really uncharted water, we do wait for the reaction. Clearly, we've been consulting and having conversations with many stakeholders, but until the legislation is tabled and Law Amendments takes place, you don't know for sure what exactly the reaction is. While we look forward to that process unfolding, so far so good in terms of reaction from those key stakeholders.

The support from the region's biggest tourism operator, Dennis Campbell and his team at Ambassatours Gray Line, speaks for itself. As Dennis says, "By embracing the modern approach to travel, Nova Scotia is even better positioned to grow the tourism sector." In addition to that, Larry Peach who leads tourism in the Municipality of Clare, puts it this way: "Without our vibrant short-term rental accommodations, it would be a lot more challenging to host signature events like the Gran Fondo or bid for international events like le Congrès mondial acadien in 2024."

In 2019, the growth of short-term rentals like Airbnb and others have changed the game. People used to ask me about why there is no hotel in Glace Bay. That was a common question I got for many, many years as people felt as though we were shortchanged by way of not being able to provide accommodations if we were hosting major events. I don't hear that anymore. Obviously, the short-term rental Airbnb-type platform has filled that gap in the market. That's good news.

More tourists are getting to explore more parts of the province. We have a huge opportunity in Nova Scotia. It means we have more ways to attract visitors and events, more economic opportunity for entrepreneurs at restaurants, cafes, and breweries all over the province. Of course, nothing to this legislation is changing overnight. We are going to spend the coming months engaging municipalities and tourism stakeholders to make sure the regulations are just right. No changes will take place, and be in effect, for another year.

A couple of points about what the legislation does not cover. First, campgrounds are not covered in the new Act. That's simply because we are focusing this registration Act on what's known as fixed-roof accommodations. Campgrounds have their own different characteristics and issues. We will use the next year to consult with the campground industry to come up with a modern, simplified regulatory approach next year that works for them. Campgrounds are included in the Tourist Accommodation Act, which we're repealing, which will be in a year's time. We have to have that modern system and legislation and associated regulations that go with that, as well.

Secondly, in terms of what this bill does not cover, this provincial legislation will not have any effect on a local government's own authority to deal with short-term rentals through municipal bylaws and zoning. Local governments have the unique knowledge that includes understanding what is needed in their neighbourhoods and communities and that the ability to deal with municipal issues is theirs.

In closing, we have an opportunity to do even more to encourage everyone in the tourism sector, and people just dipping their toe in, alike. We're going to help do it with this legislation. With that, I look forward to the comments from my colleagues opposite.

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

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today to make a few comments on an Act Respecting the Registration of Tourist Accommodations. I'm very pleased to see there's obviously dated regulations that are within the current tourism Act that need to be taken out and completely replaced. We've heard a lot of commentary regarding what's being taken away, but not so much how what's being actually introduced is going to be affecting the smaller tourism providers that perhaps are right now sort of providing accommodations under the radar, if I can use that term.

I do understand the importance for traditional tourism operations to be able to have a level playing field with those who perhaps are just coming on board and with this new shared economy. It's a whole new world as far as how short-term rentals are able to be offered out to the global environment and to tourists who are coming here to our province. It's an extremely important aspect of providing accommodations in our province especially in rural Nova Scotia where perhaps we don't have the business case to be able to have a hotel, as the honourable minister has mentioned. We just don't have the numbers basically that would warrant on a full-time basis having a larger hotel, or maybe even a bed and breakfast in that area, that people are able to provide accommodations in their homes and I know many people who do.

It's good to hear that if it's your primary residence, there will be no need to register underneath this new Act. However, there needs to be clarification, I believe, as far as what occurs for someone who is in their primary residence, but perhaps has on the same property identification number an extra dwelling or two on their property. Will that be taxed at a commercial rate or will that be taxed at a residential rate? We still don't know.

With these sorts of things that come about, the details are always within the regulations and so, we're passing this Act without really knowing what's going to be in the regulations per se. Being that we do know that everyone now who is a platform operator or a host for a short-term accommodation rental situation, and that would be 28 days or less, they will have to register under this Act. They will not be permitted to offer short-term rentals unless they actually register. There will be a summary conviction fine associated with that of up to \$1,000, if you do not register. I want to make certain that is information that people do know about.

There is also an area within this Act that gives a little bit more leeway to, let me read it here, it says, "prescribing additional penalties for non-compliance with the Act that the Governor in Council may make regulations to prescribe additional penalties for non-compliance." I'm not really quite sure what that means, and I think we need further

clarification on that. Those people who are oftentimes offering short-term rental and I, please, would like to clarify that I do want to see a level playing field for those people who are in the tourism industry that play by the rules, who pay commercial tax rates, who are good citizens and good providers of tourism accommodations across this province. They are the backbone of what makes tourism so great here in Nova Scotia.

We do have this new sharing economy that really is taking hold as a whole other avenue of being able to provide accommodations. I certainly would not want to see that being harnessed in a way that potentially could really reverse the trend of people opening up either their own personal homes, or perhaps a cottage they have, or a family home that they're trying to maintain here in either the urban core or the rural core. A lot of the time, people rent them out for short-term rentals in order to be able to just pay for maintenance costs. I would really like to make 100 per cent certain the trend we are seeing - as far as the shared economy, specifically in accommodations - is not going to be held back in any way by these regulations that are forthcoming through the Act.

The other thing I would like to bring up as well, Mr. Speaker - I think that the minister has done a fine job as far as having stakeholders around the table. I know that's been ongoing for quite some time. I believe if my information is correct, there has been representation from the service providers like Airbnb around that table, but what concerns me is because again, this is very much a new industry, a new way of providing accommodations, I'm wondering who was around that table who would have been the voice for an association that as far as I know, does not exactly - it doesn't exist yet for those who are the actual hosts.

For those host families who are providing accommodation, there is no association representing member per member currently in Nova Scotia. I'm very concerned about how their voices could be represented at that table, if there's not an association driven by membership to be able to advocate on their behalf.

With those few words, or maybe a little bit more than a few words, I'll take my seat, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to anyone and encourage anyone in this province who may be affected by these changes, to come forward in Law Amendments Committee.

[11:30 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise and speak to this new tourist registration bill. This is something that we in the New Democratic Party caucus have been watching closely for some time and, in general, I would say that this bill seems to be going in the right direction. We do have some questions and concerns which we'll go through and, of course, we'll look forward to hearing from the public.

We're happy that the bill does seem to level the playing field somewhat with the traditional tourism industry and, importantly, makes the distinction between small hosts who are renting out a room in their primary residence and larger hosts who are essentially running some version of a hotel business, although my colleague's point is well taken that there may be more clarification needed for particular PIDs and dwellings on those parcels of property.

That's something we hadn't considered and I look forward to hearing from the minister and submissions on how that might be impacted. Notwithstanding that, there are two quite different uses of Airbnb-style platforms at the moment and they have very different outcomes. I'm renting a room or two or I'm renting out a suite in my home or I'm running a business essentially where I own several properties that I'm renting out as a hotel but I'm skirting the registration and fee requirements that go along with that that are different.

One question that we have is around enforcement. We see that there are fines and that there's the opportunity for enforcement, but we have no understanding of what that mechanism will be and where the burden of that mechanism will be. I know that this government talks about red tape reduction. Will that enforcement be more red tape for Nova Scotians or will the burden be on profitable, online platforms like Airbnb and will they have meaningful disincentives to flout the rules? That's something that we're really going to be watching.

It's a tricky bill because I think there are really some differences between the rural context with Airbnb and the urban context. I think both the minister and my colleague in the Opposition have spoken clearly to the opportunities that the sharing economy provides for rural Nova Scotia and those are very important, but they also provide some serious pressures for some urban municipalities. So one thing that we haven't seen discussed - and that I'm not clear that there has actually been consultation on - is the squeeze that the sharing economy is putting on rental accommodations particularly in HRM.

In my own constituency, this is an issue. In Halifax Needham this is an enormous issue where we simply don't have any - I mean, affordable housing is an issue, period, but it is, I would suggest, being strongly exacerbated by the rise in Airbnb. Where once someone would have stable long-term renters for a property, they're finding it more profitable to turn it into short-term rentals, so our affordable or even semi-affordable rental stock is really, really dwindling. That's something that we're watching and that we want to make sure there's some study and discussion of those impacts.

We haven't seen that. I'm hoping that we hear something about that at Law Amendments Committee and I hope that there is some consultation in that area, but I do think that even in that regard, this bill is a step in the right direction in making that distinction between folks who are renting a room which, again, that also has an impact on the affordability of housing. I know several people in the urban core who have only been

able to afford to purchase a home because they could then take advantage of the opportunities of renting a room.

We're not disincentivizing this but we're just saying that there are some very important distinctions that need to be made. We need to ensure that we're not negatively impacting the housing supply, because it's very important.

So, I'll leave it there for now. We'll really look forward to the Law Amendments Committee and to the minister's comments and, with those few words, I'll take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Business.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I do give a heartfelt thanks to my colleagues opposite for their comments and for their interest in this legislation. I think that for me and our team in the department, Tourism Nova Scotia, TIANS, it has been such a long conversation and you sort of get into the details and the weeds, so to speak, so often that when you actually get to a point where you're tabling a bill, it's hard to know how it's going to be received. There's so much backstory and context on all these points that the members opposite are making, but I can certainly appreciate their concern and positioning on it. I will obviously leave it for Law Amendments Committee, and I think we all get a chance again in Committee of the Whole House and on third reading to discuss some of these in length.

Certainly, I think for the member for Cape Breton-Richmond, there was a significant amount of input from Airbnb themselves on the short-term working group. We also had one actual host from Cape Breton, who is also a teacher. She would call in most times because she'd be busy at home, but she was phenomenal in terms of giving her input and insight as to how this works, and what would hurt her operation, which would be an anecdote that would be applicable to the rest of people who participate in the Airbnb sharing economy world.

I do appreciate the comment from the member for Cape Breton-Richmond. There will be more to discuss there. For the member for Dartmouth South, the NDP House Leader as well, we had been discussing this back and forth since the idea that this bill would come forward became a reality. I think her positioning around the housing stock, insurance, and enforcement are certainly reasonable ones. I look forward to some of the comments we'll get at Law Amendments Committee in terms of the public stepping forward to discuss these things.

Given the current parameters around the Tourism Accommodations Registration Act and what's out there with insurance and enforcement, I think that nothing is going to change largely out there. Certainly, there won't be more oversight in terms of provincial

red tape or anything of that nature, so it's moving in the right direction there. In any event, we will cover all those issues through Law Amendments Committee. I really do look forward to that process and then third reading as well.

With that, I look forward to the comments and I will now sit, closing debate on second reading for Bill No. 101.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading on Bill No. 101. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 99.

Bill No. 99 - The Assessment Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 99 - an Act to Amend Chapter 23 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, the Assessment Act - be now read for a second time.

To support our government's work to strengthen and grow the province's tourism sector, we are modernizing the Assessment Act to provide clarity on how small-scale, short-term rentals are taxed.

Mr. Speaker, the current Assessment Act does not include provisions for how short-term rentals, such as Airbnb, should be taxed. This leads to inconsistent interpretation of the status of residential or commercial properties. These amendments will ensure a consistent approach is used to assess short-term rental properties throughout the province. With these amendments, properties meeting the definition of a short-term rental will be taxed using the residential rather than the commercial property tax rate, effective 2020.

Mr. Speaker, in the coming months we will engage our municipal partners to develop regulations, which will define a small-scale tourist accommodation establishment, including the maximum number of rooms for a property to be assessed at the residential property tax rate. In addition, we will be working with the Department of Business and Nova Scotia Tourism as part of the larger stakeholder engagement.

For clarification, currently the Act for a bed and breakfast with four rooms or less that serve breakfast, and where the owner lives in the residence, are taxed at residential property tax rates. This, Mr. Speaker, is our starting point. Through our consultations with municipalities, we will determine what the maximum number of rooms should be. It could be more than four rooms, but it won't be less. Our municipal partners can be assured that they will be hearing from us shortly and we will be adhering to the partnership framework with regard to the consultation.

Mr. Speaker, the sharing economy is a relatively new concept, one that has transformed the travel and tourism industry globally. The reality is that it does exist in Nova Scotia. We can and should be leveraging the power of the accommodation-sharing economy to benefit Nova Scotians. Our role at Municipal Affairs is to ensure that legislation and regulations that govern municipalities on the property valuation assessment process is clear and keeps pace with broader trends that impact their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, each of us who sits in this House understands the importance of the tourism business in our communities. From Brier Island to Cheticamp, from Louisbourg to Joggins, and from Chester to Pictou, every area of our province benefits from the tourism industry.

I know we all want to support the growth of this industry. We want it to succeed. The short-term rental sector has the potential to help increase the number of visitors to our province. Short-term rentals are an important part of our tourism industry. That is why we must look for ways to leverage the growth of this sector while ensuring that the interests of municipalities are respected and protected. I think this legislation strikes a good balance.

I am confident these changes will provide the required clarity to our municipal partners for purposes of taxation. In addition, they will also support tourism growth in Nova Scotia by providing more business and employment opportunities. This will create strong local economies that will benefit municipalities and their citizens.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to thank the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, the Association of Municipal Administrators, and the Property Valuation Services Corporation, who provided us with their insight and support on these amendments. We look forward to having further conversations with them in the coming year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on an Act to Amend Chapter 23 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, the Assessment Act. The amendment to the Assessment Act comes in partnership with the new Tourism Accommodations Registration Act and this government's response to the new sharing economy.

The proposed amendments to the Assessment Act are stated as to ensure that small-scale operators will pay a residential property tax rate rather than a commercial rate. Municipal Affairs is going to engage with its municipal partners to develop regulations that will define a small-scale tourism accommodation establishment, including the maximum number of rooms. This is important for the Property Valuation Services Corporation to have definitions for taxing purposes.

In the Assessment Bill, Section 47 is repealed, which states, “In this Section, ‘bed and breakfast establishment’ means a private home in which the owner resides and provides accommodation to the travelling or vacationing public of a maximum of four bedrooms and a common living room and serves breakfast of which the cost is included in the price of accommodation.”

This is repealed and replaced with a definition of “small-scale residential tourist accommodation establishment” and exempts such an establishment from being taxed as commercial property. It is important to note that bed and breakfast establishments currently do not pay commercial property tax rate.

Will this change in the Assessment Act, remove the term “bed and breakfast” as we know it? Will the term “small-scale residential tourist accommodation establishment” be replaced? Will citizens be able to continue to use the term “bed and breakfast” in their advertising?

A further amendment in Subsection 179 states, “The Governor in Council may” . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I want to remind the honourable member that the purpose of second reading is to speak to the general principle of the bill, not to speak to the specifics of the line-by-line content of the bill. If you keep your comments high level, so to speak, that would be fantastic.

The honourable member for Cumberland North has the floor.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I suspect that these amendments in the Assessment Bill are relevant to the sharing economy as it applies to residential property having more than one dwelling on a single lot, and also looking at the taxable resource of the property, if it is owned by an individual who is ordinarily a resident in the province.

I am concerned with the general reference in the amendment and am curious to know more details on what the minister will be prescribing for notice of in this Section 45A. I’m allowed to say that. Will citizens who participate in the sharing economy be charged commercial property taxes, and in what circumstances will that happen? Will people be able to receive income from personal properties they are currently not residing in, such as an unused condominium or farmhouse, and how will these taxes be applied?

I think I can speak on behalf of most citizens in this province who feel they are already overtaxed and paying enough taxes as it is.

Our caucus is looking forward to Law Amendments Committee and hearing from our citizens and those who participate in the shared economy, along with representatives of municipal councils, on how the proposed amendments will affect them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

[11:45 a.m.]

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I have very few comments. As I spoke to earlier on the Tourist Accommodation Act, this bill also generally strikes me as going in the right direction on Airbnb and short-term rentals. It does help level the playing field and, again, makes the distinction that we think is important, which is the one between hosts who are renting a room in their primary residence and hosts that are essentially running a short-term business.

It does appear that, combined with the registration of tourist accommodations, large short-term rental businesses will start paying commercial property taxes, which frankly, I think is important because otherwise the playing field is not leveled with hotel operators and others that follow those rules. Importantly, we're not penalizing small hosts and regular Nova Scotians who just want to rent a room in their home, as we discussed earlier.

We are concerned about some decisions that are left to regulation here. We're not clear whether this will only apply to primary residences and how many rooms will be exempted. All of those are things that we'll be looking for in the regulations. We'll look forward to more information and to the Law Amendments Committee, and to ensuring that the consultations on this topic are adequate. With those few words, I'll take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues opposite, and I look forward to future debate. I move to close debate on second reading of Bill No. 99.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 99. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, before I get to the final conclusion of business, I would be remiss if I didn't mention something really quickly with the House's indulgence. Tomorrow is my daughter Georgia's eighth birthday. On International Women's Day, I want to say this. At 40 years old, I feel lucky for her, knowing what the world has in store. I think it will be different for women and girls her age than it was for my generation and obviously before me.

Georgia is surrounded by strong women at home, with her mom and both sides of the family, so she's in good shape there. I do want to say this from the bottom of my heart. Looking around this Legislature in this Chamber, there's a number of female role models here for Georgia. If she turned out like all of the women that I have the opportunity to spend the days with here in the Chamber, she would be in pretty good shape. I just wanted to say that this is a pretty remarkable place to be. (Applause) Happy Birthday, Georgia.

That concludes the government's business for today. I move that we do now rise, to meet again Tuesday, March 12th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Business will include second reading on Bill Nos. 103 and 105, and with time permitting, we'll move to Address in Reply.

I would also like to note for the House that the Committee on Law Amendments will sit on Monday at 3:00 p.m.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to adjourn to meet again Tuesday, March 12th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

The House now stands adjourned until Tuesday, March 12th, at 1:00 p.m.

We have reached the moment of interruption. Under Rule 43, the member for Inverness and the Official Opposition House Leader has submitted a topic for emergency debate which has met all of the requirements. We will engage in a debate to be no more than two hours with each speaker going for no more than 15 minutes per speaker.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 43

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

**GOV'T. (N.S.): ACCESS TO BASIC HEALTH CARE IN
C.B. REMOTE AREAS - LACKING**

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, let me first of all thank you and the members of the House for granting the opportunity to discuss the dire situation that faces a hospital and the residents that it serves in my constituency.

I wish that we didn't have to be here, but today's topic is of the utmost concern. Buchanan Memorial Hospital, located in Neils Harbour, Victoria County, serves the medical needs of residents of Ingonish, Neils Harbour, Cape North, Dingwall, Bay St. Lawrence, Meat Cove, and all the areas in between, as well as providing excellent services to the residents of Highland Manor Nursing Home, the only nursing home in the area.

The hospital is located where it is, Mr. Speaker, for a reason. Because of the large geography of the area, the nearest hospital would be either Baddeck or Cheticamp, at least two hours away. Because of winter weather conditions and the fact that there are mountain ranges on both sides of the Cabot Trail, the hospital in Cheticamp, as an example, has basically been off-limits because the road leading to Cheticamp has been closed more this winter than it has been open. As well, it is at least two and a half hours in the best weather, to the Cape Breton Regional Hospital in Sydney.

Residents have been told they can always go to another hospital. Well just recently, within the last month, due to weather and road conditions, both Smokey Mountain and North Mountain were impassable.

The hospital is staffed with three doctors, X-ray services and, until recently, lab services. The discussion on lab services is something that has already been discussed in this House and I'll be speaking about it further in my conversation.

For now, the urgent problem that presents itself today goes beyond the loss of lab services. We've learned that many times in the past week, emergency services in the hospital have been cancelled because of the lack of doctors.

Of the three doctors on staff, one is on maternity leave and one is off sick, leaving only one doctor to not only look after his own patients, but also to look after the patients within the hospital and provide services to the emergency room 24 hours a day. This is being done by a doctor who is ready to wind down his practice and retire but is so committed to the residents of the community that he has served for so many years.

One doctor cannot or should not be expected to provide this care by himself. You have to wonder, what would happen if this dedicated doctor himself were to get sick and have to be off for an extended period of time. And if he were required to continue to be forced to do what he is doing now, that could happen.

If this event were to occur, who would be held responsible? Would the Nova Scotia Health Authority assume responsibility and liability in this case?

As I mentioned before, the distance that has to be travelled if a person has to be transported to the Cape Breton Regional Hospital is about two and a half hours in the best of conditions, over both Smokey Mountain and Kellys Mountain.

Again this week, Mr. Speaker, we learned that a person from the area suffered a heart attack and required transportation to the Cape Breton Regional Hospital in Sydney where she could be treated. Once the doctor at Buchanan Memorial Community Health Centre made the call that she should be transported, another situation occurred. Of the two ambulances in the area, only one was available, that had to stay in the area, and there was no advanced care transport available.

As a result of this, this patient couldn't be transferred, after having a heart attack, could not be transferred until the next morning.

This is shameful, but yet, and in light of the issues I've just mentioned that are very serious, the Nova Scotia Health Authority in its ultimate wisdom, has said that lab services are no longer required at the hospital and could be replaced by point-of-care testing.

Dr. Bernie Buffet, in open letters that he has shared publicly, spoke that six years ago, point-of-care testing was introduced at Buchanan and it went over like a lead balloon.

Mr. Speaker, removal of the lab services at Buchanan has lessened even more the efforts of the hospital foundation and the community to attract doctors to the area. Doctors will think twice about going to an area such as Buchanan, with all its beauty and so on, if the services are not there for them to do their job. Two of the doctors, one of whom I have already mentioned, are ready to retire - and the Health Authority proposes this? Who in their right mind would do that?

During Question Period last week, the minister stated that the Health Authority with the departure of the lab tech, which in itself is questionable at best, had to make a decision. Since there were no lab techs available, decided on point-of-care testing. Well, we know that that is not correct, and there are actually lab techs available that would go to Buchanan and that none of the 35 NSCC lab tech graduates were even approached by the Nova Scotia Health Authority. It's ironic, too, that as of last Friday when I rose to question the minister on the lab services, coincidentally a representative from the Health Authority met at Buchanan Hospital with the Hospital Foundation and told them that, basically, point-of-care testing was a done deal.

I'd like to close by saying this - residents of north of Smokey feel like they're being treated as second-class citizens. The dollar has taken away providing adequate health care. You have to wonder if in preparation for point-of-care testing, hiring someone to do the

withdrawals without adding to the workload of the nurses presently on staff, and transporting the blood a minimum of two and a half hours away, is cost efficient.

I'll respectfully ask that the Minister of Health and Wellness speak to the Nova Scotia Health Authority to immediately address the situation of a doctor shortage, especially at this time, that ambulatory care services be expanded and a full complement of lab and X-ray services at Buchanan be maintained and/or improved. Keeping in mind that wherever you live in this province, be it urban, rural, or even the remote areas, you are entitled to adequate health care for you, your family, and your community. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party for 15 minutes.

GARY BURRILL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to add some comments to the excellent analysis of the health care crisis as is presenting itself north of Smokey at the moment, as has been spoken to by the member of Victoria-The Lakes.

There has been an exceptional piece of journalism in the last few weeks on this subject - the series of reflections on the situation out of Neils Harbour that has been provided in a five-part set of articles by Dr. Buffett with the interesting title, *My Buchanan Memorial*. If anyone wished to come to an understanding of how the current health care crisis affects, particularly, rural medicine and rural health care, that five-part essay would be a very good place to start. I would like to add to some of the analysis that the member's I would like to add to some of the analysis the member has presented.

[12:00 p.m.]

Some of the key points that are covered in Dr. Buffett's recent series reflecting on the crisis of the provision of health care north of Smokey. First, I want to say that he comes to writing this set of reflections with an extraordinary credential. To imagine that someone has spent their entire 30-plus year career operating out of one community hospital and that it's a community hospital that was, in fact, in part built by this doctor's father. His background in medical service in the hospital is that for many, many years his mother was a nurse there.

When you read what Dr. Buffett has written, he speaks about how to this day, when he visits his mother who lives in long-term care, she talks about the patients and the serving of the patients. It's clear we are listening hear to a voice that has this problem, this situation, this crisis deep in his blood. Dr. Buffett sounds a number of notes in his analysis.

The first is, the need to honour local voices when we deal with the health care crisis as a whole. Where this is in particular brought into view in his analysis, is on this question of the availability of a lab technologist in Neils Harbour. Something to this effect is written

in Dr. Buffett's analysis, we have to get to a place of a better balance between top-down and bottom-up in hospital decision making. It makes a lot of sense.

Then he provides a lot of analysis about how this is particularly the case with the question of a lab tech. That at Buchanan Memorial Hospital, there have been X-ray services and lab-testing services on site and these have been very important, Dr. Buffett explains, to help doctors and nurses be effective in doing their work. Particularly because they help a doctor determine whether or not, in particular, the patient that is being dealt with is someone who is facing a life-threatening diabetic emergency.

Dr. Buffett writes about the condition of diabetic ketoacidosis, which occurs when the body starts breaking down fat at a rate that is much too accelerated, which the liver then processes the fat into a fuel called ketones, which cause the blood to become acidic. This is the first time that I have ever heard of this condition. Dr. Buffett writes about it grippingly in his analysis. He speaks about how when you're dealing with this condition, the treatment requires IV insulin therapy, but if a diabetic is given too much of this insulin, this can be fatal.

It's crucial the doctor has an on-site capacity to adjust that dosage with a lab technician. Patients who have this condition, Dr. Buffett explains, can have blood sugar levels over 60. The problem with the system that has been proposed by the NSHA to replace the on-site lab technologist - the so-called point-of-care testing - is that it can only test this level up to 30. Therefore, the physician is in the position where they have no capacity to judge what is taking place if that patient's blood sugar is over 30, and therefore no way to determine if the dosage is the right one. The doctor can't administer the treatment that is going to help this patient.

Dr. Buffett goes on to speak about how important it is to have a lab technologist in their local situation, when people are in the context of chemotherapy. Of course, as we know, many chemotherapy patients have compromised immune systems and this makes them especially vulnerable to infections. He writes about how in order to treat those kinds of infections properly in a patient who is already vulnerable, as a physician he needs fast, reliable information about what's going on in a patient's body at that moment.

Lab techs, he says, can provide that information with a degree of certainty the doctor in that situation is able to trust. A degree of certainty that the alternative that the NSHA has proposed, point-of-care testing, in his view, cannot. Therefore he goes on to explain that the matter of an available lab technologist is deeply integrated with the whole question of being able to recruit or retain physicians in the area, that when people consider whether or not this is the place that they would come to give their service one of the first questions they're going to ask is, well, we know you're a small facility, we know that you're a comparatively remote facility, but do you have this particular service on-site? The answer had always been yes, but the answer now is no, and this place is a dark cloud over the community's efforts and anybody else's efforts to recruit physicians to the area.

So, there is, Dr. Buffett says, this real need to honour what the local voices on the ground are saying, and what the local voices on the ground are saying in Neils Harbour is we need an on-site lab technologist. That's one important chord that's sounded in that impressive series of essays.

A second is Dr. Buffett speaks about the crisis in ambulance service with real gripping attentiveness. I'm going to quote from the February 26th edition of the Post. He's talking about what happens when adequate ambulance service is not readily available as has been increasingly the case in and around Neils Harbour:

Recently I had a patient with a gastrointestinal bleed at 3:00 a.m. The patient had vomited up copious amounts of blood at home but on arrival to hospital he hadn't vomited again. IV lines were started and medicine to help control bleeding was started as we have no blood available for a transfusion . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, the Leader of the New Democratic Party has the floor.

GARY BURRILL: Thank you. I'll continue:

. . . as we have no blood available for transfusion at Buchanan and the distance to the nearest blood and the need for a gastroscopy to diagnose the problem, the specialist physician at the regional accepted the patient in transfer. However, on calling EHS to transport the patient to Sydney, I was told there was only one ambulance in the area and they could not take the patient - mind you, this is a story written about 3:00 a.m. - they could not take the patient until 7:30 a.m. that morning.

So, he draws a great deal of attention to the difficulty about the ambulance situation in that part of Cape Breton, but it relates to the overall situation of the availability of ambulances across the Island.

I was interested not very long ago in having a conversation with the paramedics' union in Sydney and they were explaining some of the difficulty - the code criticals they've been calling, what the lay of the land with that actually looks like in terms of ambulance availability across Cape Breton. In that conversation at one point I said, well, if there were one thing that our Party could advocate for that would be helpful to you in the campaign to head adequate ambulance service in Cape Breton, what would it be?

Now, you might think at first that the answer would have been, well, more ambulances. You might think perhaps the answer would have been more paramedics - but that wasn't the answer. The answer was, the number one thing that you as a political representative could do for us here as paramedics in Cape Breton in the way of advocating

for something is to advocate for more long-term care beds to be created in the province because, at the moment, the core thing that is causing ambulances to be backed up all over everywhere and therefore not to be available when they're needed like in situations of Neils Harbour is . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. Hansard is having problems recording your voice. Can you speak towards your microphone? They may have missed some of this speech.

GARY BURRILL: Yes, would you promise, Madam Speaker, to tell my mother that you actually found me not talking loud enough?

So, this is the second note that has been sounded in Dr. Buffett's analysis.

The final note that I want to speak to is in the last piece of Dr. Buffett's five-part series - he outlines real, practical solutions and I want to just outline some of the things that he speaks about because I want to outline that these are pieces, not a kind of a set of complaints. It comes to an analysis about what if we have the right priorities we can accomplish.

Number one, we need to have more than one registered nurse on at nights in the Buchanan Memorial Hospital. He said this is something that would make service here much more attractive to doctors and nurses. We only have one at the moment and we need to have more people than that. We need to double the number of people we have.

Secondly, he makes a very practical suggestion in terms of x-ray technologists and lab technologists. He recognizes when you have one lab technologist or x-ray technologist in a small hospital, it is very difficult for them to provide the 24-hour, around-the-clock coverage. But it would be possible to establish floaters between Baddeck and Cheticamp and Neils Harbour, who could provide the backup and would make this a much more attainable, long-term service to be provided.

He also speaks about, in his view, it would be a major improvement to re-establish the system Neils Harbour had previously. They did their own sterilization of surgical instruments.

Then he reflects overall, concluding about the question of primary care and the availability of doctors. He says we can't possibly deal with the fact that we haven't got an adequate number of physicians for the people of the area unless we're able to make a providing medical service out of the community hospital, something that is tenable for the physician to offer.

Therefore, all these matters - the lab technologist, the x-ray technologist, the availability of ambulance services, all of those have been going together - is the picture he paints, to create an increasingly less tenable situation for medical services to be provided

in a less tenable situation for the professional to offer what they have. Therefore, the whole area is under the gun from the point of view of potential physician retention and recruitment.

I want to just say in closing, these are not solutions that somebody's picked out of a hat. Dr. Buffett has written here, and I recommend what he has had to say to all members of the House, out of his own 34 years of working in this particular hospital. This is someone who has dedicated his professional life to serving the community he grew up in.

The details around the crisis in their hospital has been provided by the member for Victoria-The Lakes, and I am certain that the member would join me in imploring the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, the Premier, and the Minister of Health and Wellness - as we are in these final days towards the preparation of the budget - to give serious and thoughtful considerations to the expert analysis and advice that has been provided on this question by Dr. Buffett.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister for Health and Wellness.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Madam Speaker, I do appreciate the topic of debate today and appreciate the members for bringing it forward.

The specific topic of debate is the Buchanan Memorial Hospital and the circumstances there, as the members who have already spoken noted in their remarks. But I believe much of what is being debated, while in some respects are specific to that facility, does relate broadly to and can resonate with residents in communities with community hospitals throughout the province.

What I can advise the members is, yes, recently there have been a couple of closures at that hospital with emergency department closures. However, it's my understanding it has reopened as of this morning. I believe the shifts are covered for the foreseeable time. The history at this particular site for closures is not one that has been seen as having many. For example, the last number of emergency department closure reports that are tabled annually have not noted unscheduled closures of the emergency department at this site. So notwithstanding the circumstances that we would all, I assure you, Madam Speaker and the members opposite, and indeed to the residents of Neils Harbour and surrounding areas, prefer to have it open. That's why some of the things that we as a government, and/or in partnership with the Health Authority and other partners in the health care system, have been doing to help alleviate the pressures and improve the situation for communities.

The Leader of the NDP noted, I believe, that there was a multitude of variables and factors. It is the complexity of our health care system that makes moving forward seeing the improvements in an instantaneous kind of fashion - which would be the preference - the challenging part of my job and the job of health care administrators.

The fact of the matter is that we as a government have recognized where we see challenges in the health care system. We come to that realization by listening to health care providers and responding in kind.

[12:15 p.m.]

We know that there are pressures on emergency departments in two main areas. One is in our community hospitals, where staffing, be it nurses or physicians, to have the appropriate complement to maintain safe operation of those emergency departments is one of the main challenges.

The other, about which there were some brief mentions, is the challenge in other locations where the emergency departments are extremely busy, resulting in other pressures in the emergency system relating to ambulances and their ability to efficiently transfer patient care from the paramedics into the hospitals. These are two challenges that do have impact and that we, along with our partners, are working to address.

A couple of those things that we are doing and have done, recognizing both the short- and the long-term opportunities, to try to strike improvements in the short term, for temporary closures at Buchanan Memorial, as I believe led to bringing this debate to the floor: late in the summer and early Fall, we made some changes to incentive opportunities, so there are the emergency shift premiums as well as locum changes to help cover shifts. Through programs like these - just since the Fall through to now, I believe we've had over 220 shifts covered as a result. Had we not taken these steps, we would have seen more closures potentially in some of our community hospitals across the province.

As I've noted, we recognize the challenge. We work with our partners. We listen to professionals. We're told that with some of these incentives it may be an opportunity. So within the locum space for those temporary short-term closures where you have staffing challenges, we understood that and pursued changes to that program and have been seeing positive results.

Madam Speaker, short-term initiatives like that are not the solution to the underlying challenges. We recognize in those challenges, as was referenced - I believe by the Leader of the NDP, and the member from the PC caucus may have made reference as well - to the role of primary care services in communities and how the reality is that through greater access to primary care, we can reduce pressures on our emergency departments.

I believe one of the members cited heavily from publications in the *Cape Breton Post*. I believe there was a recent publication of a physician who noted that a number of people in emergency departments who may leave, not having necessarily an acute emergency, but rather a condition or symptom that could be treated by primary health care.

That's why we've had so much focus on improving our primary care access in communities, attaching Nova Scotians to primary health care providers. Some of the things we've been doing on the recruitment side for family physicians, which are a critical part of our collaborative teams, and the delivery of primary health care; Madam Speaker, we again have worked with our incentive programs like tuition relief, debt forgiveness, for recruiting new physicians to the province. In return for these compensations, we sign physicians who participate in a Return of Service Agreement. That means if they take advantage of the incentive, they commit to the province or the community for a period of three or so years.

These programs we've been working to tweak to increase the uptake, and I have seen some positive results there. In addition, we recognize the supply as well.

That's why over the past couple of years we've worked to expand our residency program in partnership with the college, the health authorities, physicians and obviously our Dalhousie Medical School. The residency seats were part of this year's intake, which right now, is going through the matching process. That is to match residents with the training opportunities throughout the country.

With the expansion that we committed to, 10 additional family medicine seats and 15 additional specialty seats have been allocated and added to the residency program in Nova Scotia.

We are the only jurisdiction in the country, that I'm aware of, that has expanded our residency program. It's worth noting that we already had a ratio of our medical training seats to our residency seats that was one of the highest ratios in the country.

With the update that we've made with these additional seats, we far exceed the recommended or requested ratio of residency seats to medicine seats that has been advocated for by resident associations and medical associations nationally. So, we are recognizing and investing in those opportunities.

What people should realize is that these residents, of the ten family medicine residency seats, six of them are being committed to the Northern Zone, which like other parts of the province has been challenged, but it was one of the only regions that didn't have access to residents.

The reason that ensuring that they do have access to resident training, is because we know that somewhere in the vicinity of 75 to 80 per cent of residents stay in the areas where they've trained. So, by making the availability of residents more accessible throughout the province, we will see a greater retention rate.

In addition to that, it's important to note that these residents are providing care and providing health care services during their training period as a resident. As these additional

seats are filled, and the residency training begins in July, Nova Scotians will be seeing additional coverage.

A year ago, I had the opportunity with my colleague, the Minister of Immigration, to announce a new immigration stream targeted at physicians. This is an innovative program to streamline the residency process for physicians who would sign up in the province. Within that time period we've seen 25 physicians take advantage of that entry point to come to Nova Scotia as licensed physicians to provide care to the citizens here.

So, these are initiatives that we've been taking to help improve the recruitment of health care providers. We've seen in less than a year, since April of 2018, somewhere over 120 new physicians recruited to the province. That is almost half-and-half with family physicians, primary care providers, and specialist positions. I believe it's somewhere in the vicinity of 55 to 60 family physicians and the remainder as specialists.

The member raised some concerns specific to Buchanan Memorial Hospital and the recent shift being implemented by the Nova Scotia Health Authority to what's known as a point-of-care testing for blood and lab testing. What I want to assure the member, and I hope they take this to heart, the technology that is developed that is available now, as we all know, the advances in technology, be it in our personal lives, in our professional lives, the health care sector is by far not immune to these advances in technology, and rapid advances at that.

Point-of-care testing is one of those areas that has seen advances. The technology today, I'm assured by clinicians, is that it does meet many of the needs for lab test results with meeting the accredited needs of the health care delivery system, that is providing the level of accuracy and the timeliness required within the delivery of these test results.

While I understand, I've been to communities and I've heard from people where this transition has taken place elsewhere in the province. What I've heard is people articulating the same concerns and resistance that has been articulated here, that has been articulated by Dr. Buffet. I've also heard from health care providers on the front line who have acknowledged they were critical when point-of-care testing was coming to their community hospital, and yet within months they realized the benefits and the value and that they were able to continue to provide the care and the services that were needed by their patients, and in fact, found some of those benefits.

Some of those individuals actually work with other health care providers, and if the member for Victoria-The Lakes would like, I can certainly look into getting the names of some of those people who could reach out to share their experiences with health care providers at Buchanan Memorial to explain what the experience has been, and how they are confident that they are still able to provide the level of accuracy and care in their communities they believe would be equally applicable in the communities served by Buchanan Memorial Hospital.

I have much more I could say, but I understand my time is running out. Again, I would like to thank the member for bringing the debate to the floor and look forward to hearing from other members this afternoon.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

EDDIE ORRELL: Madam Speaker, I believe I just heard the minister say he will go to Neils Harbour to Buchanan Memorial to speak with the health care professionals there to explain to them what's going on with the health care system and the hospital down there. I don't know why people would believe that because we've been asking for that now for the last six to eight months, to come to Cape Breton after their announcement about health care in Cape Breton and explain to us what's going on.

When we ask the questions, we get no answers. We've asked them to come again and again, with no answers. It's a shame we're here today to talk about the situation at Buchanan Memorial Hospital. If anyone has ever travelled the Cabot Trail or to Ingonish or Neils Harbour, anywhere north of Cape Smokey, they'll find one of the most beautiful areas in the province. But it's remote. The people who work there, go there because they have a connection or tie of some sort and they want to be there. Once you're there, you become part of the community.

Dr. Murray went there years and years ago. He's now 70-plus years old, and he's still working. I'm sure as a young fellow in medical school, figuring he could make a decent living in his life and retire at a decent age and enjoy that. He didn't plan on working until he was 70-plus years old.

There's another doctor there that's off on maternity leave, and one on sick leave. Not only is Dr. Murray working in that hospital alone, he's doing all the emergency room shifts. He's doing his own office.

Madam Speaker, I don't know if people have talked to doctors around this province, the older doctors are working, but they're not just doctors in that community, they are now members of that community and they will not abandon their patients and leave them without a doctor, without the care they need. That's why we're here today to talk about the need of Buchanan Memorial Hospital, why it's closed.

I'll get into a few other things later on, but we talked earlier - and the minister just got up and explained to us how great the health care system is and all the great plans they have for improving it. We've talked about hundreds of new doctors coming to the province. My biggest question, and we've asked it over and over is, how many have left and where are these new doctors going? Obviously, they're not going to Neils Harbour to Buchanan Memorial. If they would, we wouldn't be having this debate right now. Where are those doctors going? We have people who would like to go to those areas and this health care system wouldn't allow them.

[12:30 p.m.]

Madam Speaker, we know the challenges of health care. We've talked about the reason that the doctors stay in that area, and that hospital remains open and there were no closures - it's because of the dedicated health care professionals they have working in that system. There are many that do that. I hear about all the incentives - where are they? Where are the people that these incentives were designed to recruit and retain? It's not working North of Smokey and it's not working in the rest of Cape Breton.

We talk about the recruitment process and the new positions they're going to have in the residency program and how someone who goes to a residency program usually stays there. We introduced 10 new residency seats in this province, and to my knowledge - and I haven't been told this - not one of those new seats has a Return of Service Agreement with it; not one of those new seats are guaranteed to be a Nova Scotia student.

So we're bringing people in from other parts of the world. Great idea, Madam Speaker. Some of our best doctors have been foreign-trained. Some of the surgeons that we have and some of the best doctors for recruitment in Cape Breton were foreign-trained and came to Cape Breton because they want to be here. But they have to write an exam and the people who live in remote areas like North of Smokey and work in the Buchanan Memorial Hospital aren't given the opportunity for time off to study, access to the study materials, access to the materials at Dalhousie University Medical School because they can't leave their area, because they can't go to school to help with that study. What people don't understand is that if they don't pass that exam, they cannot practise anywhere else in this world because they're not a member in good standing in the Province of Nova Scotia.

We're bringing foreign-trained doctors in from foreign countries and we're setting them up to fail. That's why we have no doctors going to remote areas. They'll come here to Halifax where they have access to Dal and access to time off. They can take that time off and go to the Dal library and study. They have access to the professors at these universities. We're not getting that in rural Nova Scotia, especially in Ingonish and Neils Harbour. How many doctors have stayed? We talked about all the new doctors we've got, but how many have left?

When we come to stuff like lab services, Madam Speaker, we had a gentleman in the lab down there. My understanding was he was willing to stay another two years to help with the transition from him to another lab person there. In our infinite wisdom, we were told he was told he had a choice of where he went, but one of them wasn't staying in Ingonish.

So, we're going to bring in point-of-care testing. From what I can understand, point-of-care testing is great in a busy emergency hospital or emergency room service where they can get something right away with the backup to a lab tech and lab services, because it doesn't cover all the necessary tests that are needed. If you've ever driven in Ingonish in

the winter and down north of Smokey, if you can even get over Smokey because of the weather - if you watched it this year, you'll see on YouTube and on the news, snow blowers and high hoes go in there to clear the roads.

If someone goes into that hospital and needs blood work that they can't do with the point-of-care testing machine, or even worse than that, the point-of-care testing machine is broken - we're talking about technology; no technology is perfect. You can't get anyone to repair it if you can't get in there, and if that blood has to go to Sydney or Cheticamp or Baddeck, it can't get there.

As we heard earlier, we had someone in a cardiac situation who couldn't get out of there for two days. I don't know about anyone else, but to me that's not timely care. That's not access to primary care the minister is promising every Nova Scotian. If we remember the 2013 election, it was a doctor for every Nova Scotian. Now it's a primary care worker for every Nova Scotian. What is it going to be next week? A point-of-care testing machine for every hospital and every Nova Scotian?

Madam Speaker, we're talking about people's lives. We're talking about people choosing to live in these remote areas because when they go there, they have a hospital. They have the services they need when they decide to move there.

North of Smokey is a big fishing community. Tragedy can happen at any time. If we don't have that health care system down there to support that, people are not going to go there.

We're talking here in this Chamber about what a great export we have in our lobster and our fish and our crab and our industry here. If that doesn't happen in Ingonish where people can go to live and obtain the services they need, that industry suffers, so the whole province suffers.

You have Dr. Murray there by himself. He is expected to work the emergency room, run his own practice. Where is his quality of life? Madam Speaker, he is 70-plus years old. I've worked in the system. Dr. Murray is a great doctor, but he is not Superman. He can't do it all. That's why we have the dedicated professionals in the lab, in the X-ray department, and people who work in the emergency room to help him do what he has to do, to help the other two doctors do what they have to do. But through no fault of their own, one doctor is off sick, and the other doctor is off on maternity leave.

When you look at the emergency health system, the EHS, the ambulance system that is there, paramedics in that area work 24 hours at a time. Their shift is 24 hours because they can't get in and out as easily as everybody else can go to work from their home in the daytime. They have to travel on some of the worst road conditions and winter-driving conditions in this whole province. Even by the time an emergency health care person gets there and gets them to the facility, time elapses. Access to timely care is essential when it

comes to health care. If that is not happening because EHS is either backed up or then are not even there at all - they are in Sydney, they are in Glace Bay, they are in New Waterford, they are in the Northside, they've gone to Baddeck with a patient, or they had to go to Cheticamp because there was no professional there to deal with what they had to deal with.

The distance from Neils Harbour to Baddeck, Cheticamp, Northside, or Sydney is two-plus hours, and that is in the dead of summer with excellent weather. But in the summertime, Ingonish, Neils Harbour, anywhere north of Smokey, has a lot of tourists that go there as well. Tourism is one of our biggest industries in this province, Madam Speaker. If people know they won't access services if they have an emergency, they're not going to go there either. It's not just the emergency care of people; it has to do with the economy of this province. That area contributes a lot to this economy and with that, people expect to have the care that they pay the taxes for, which they deserve to have in a timely fashion.

Madam Speaker, I heard earlier today one of the reporters ask the Minister of Health and Wellness if they're closing Buchanan Memorial Hospital. Is that the ultimate plan? I don't think they got an answer, but I'm going to tell you that I asked that same question about the Northside General. Is that emergency room going to close? I was told no. Numerous times in this House I was told that no, that wasn't going to happen. But last year, what did we find out? That it was going to happen.

If I were the people north of Smokey and if I were the people working in that hospital, I'd be worried. I got a commitment they weren't going to close it. I believe the reporters out there today didn't get that commitment. That tells me something. So, when you fire in distance, weather, not enough staff, not proper equipment or care, or personnel to do that care, I think you're setting things up for disaster.

What is the cost going to be if we have no lab tech there and our point-of-care testing system doesn't work, or it doesn't cover some of the tests that are needed? They have to put that blood work in a taxi, with a driver who drives taxi, or a courier service. God bless them for doing what they do, but they're not health care workers.

That blood has to get to a machine in a timely manner, and if that's not happening, that's not access to timely care. Why should the people who live in remote areas of this province receive different care than the people here in this city?

We know they're going to build a second institution out in Bayer's Lake, because that will allow timely care for the people who live in the city. You know what, I think that's great. It allows some people from outside the city to get timely care, but what about the people who live north of Smokey or in Cape Breton.

We talk about times and distances from hospitals. We say it's okay to close the emergency room at the Northside General Hospital and/or New Waterford, it's only a half-hour away, but that's a half-hour from the hospital. That's not a half-hour from where

people live. If you live in remote areas, that half-hour turns into 45 minutes or more. And then, when you get there, if there are ambulances in front of you that are waiting to off-load, that time turns into more time again.

If someone from Neils Harbour needs acute, chronic care and they're stabilized in Neils Harbour, they have to be transferred elsewhere. That takes the ambulance system out of service in the area there. If someone calls an ambulance there and they have to come from Baddeck, or elsewhere, that, again, is distance depending on the weather.

It's a shame that we're here today having to ask these questions and having people come to us fearful of their ability to receive health care not just in Neils Harbour but in other rural areas of Nova Scotia.

I again ask the question: Why should people north of Smokey who rely on Buchanan Memorial Community Health Centre receive different care? Can we get the commitment of the minister to make sure that the services they have there now will stay there so those people receive that care and health care is delivered in a timely manner?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: As we know, Buchanan Memorial Community Health Centre serves the communities of Neils Harbour, Dingwall, Bay St. Lawrence, Meat Cove, Ingonish, and the surrounding areas. Anyone who's driven the beautiful Cabot Trail as we've talked about today, knows how unique and how remote these communities are. This is a great example of how one size does not fit all in health care in our province.

I had the good fortune of spending a couple of weeks in beautiful Inverness County a couple of summers ago with my family. We took the occasion to drive the Cabot Trail, and when we stopped in Pleasant Bay, there was a young girl working at the Whale Interpretative Centre.

I was fascinated just by the difference of her life to my own children's lives, growing up in an urban centre. We talked about how she gets to school and what she does in the summers. One of the themes of that conversation, in fact, was transportation. She has to go over a mountain to get to school every day, and a lot of times that mountain is impassible, and she doesn't get to school; when she does, she's on the bus for maybe four hours a day. That's just quite a different reality than many of us, myself included, who live here encounter. That's one thing for children to get to school, it's quite another thing to get the health care services that they need.

As we've been discussing, the reduction of laboratory and X-ray services at the Buchanan threatened the viability of that hospital and that directly further threatens the health care of Cape Bretoners. Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, that's unacceptable. Dr. Margaret Fraser, President of the Cape Breton Medical Staff Association, said recently in

an interview that the work environment in Neils Harbour is already difficult. They are very isolated; they're two and a half hours from Sydney by road on a good day. So, if they have a major emergency up there, they're on their own until we can get the patient stabilized and get them out - and I can table that.

[12:45 p.m.]

I think this is how many Nova Scotians have been feeling about the amalgamation of the Health Authority, Madam Speaker, they're on their own. Without leadership and local decision making, who is standing up for the vital services provided by these community health centres? They're dying.

We hear about it in this House every day, Madam Speaker. All of these community health centres are under threat. I'm glad that this debate was accepted today, because when a community health centre is located in such an isolated region it has a particular impact that is different. We have challenges at the Dartmouth General, we have challenges at hospitals across the province, but for many of us we've got good roads and flat geography and the ability, even if it is by taxi, which it never should be, to get somewhere else - these residents don't have that same luxury.

A doctor recruitment site for the Buchanan Memorial includes testimonials from community members, including Barb and Rob Costello. They say they feel very fortunate to have raised their children north of Smokey: our children have had lots of exposure to arts and culture, sports, the great outdoors, the sense of belonging that comes with living in close-knit communities. We also feel it has been a blessing to have the medical services available to us at our local hospital and pharmacy. We've received the best of medical care and this has been a great comfort to us in raising our family.

Madam Speaker, it is that comfort, that access to timely essential health care services that this government seems willing to sacrifice, either in the name of or as a by-product of centralization and austerity. Before this decision was made to reduce health services, did anyone talk to Barb and Rob? Did anyone talk to these community members? As my colleague over here, the member for Northside-Westmount, said, this has been an ongoing issue that many members on this side of the House have raised around the redevelopment of health care in Cape Breton. Where has the consultation been? Who has the conversation been with, if anyone?

These are the questions. Has anyone actually looked at a map? Does anyone know where Neils Harbour is? In 2017, the hospital's charitable foundation sold raffle tickets to raise \$35,000 for a portable ultrasound. At that time an EMT said: as paramedics we've seen two-hour transfers to the Sydney hospital turn into three- and four-hour trips in snowstorms, it would be nice to have an ultrasound in the community. They said at the time, and I would agree, that an added machine might free up waiting lists at other clinics in Cape Breton.

This is such an important fact that front-line staff in our health care system understand all too well. Closing community-based hospitals adds to the bottlenecks in other parts of the system. Emergency rooms are closed, ambulances are waiting for off-load, emergency rooms that are open are at capacity and are sending people away, asking them to come back tomorrow. All of the alarms are going off, but we are not responding, Madam Speaker. This government is not responding to the scale of the emergency.

Right now, we're talking about X-ray technicians, but what we're actually talking about is the viability of a community hospital and it's so important, Madam Speaker, that Nova Scotians, wherever they live, have access to health care and have equal access to health care.

When we see that people's lives are quite literally on the line, I respectfully implore the government to take a different approach. In this case, Madam Speaker, we are asking that the government restore X-ray and laboratory services to the Buchanan Memorial Community Health Centre. Give the people of Neils Harbour, Dingwall, Bay St. Lawrence, Meat Cove and Ingonish the services, support and comfort they deserve. Thank you, to my colleagues for bringing this issue, and with those few words, I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy and Mines.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise in my place to offer a few comments for debate.

First, I'd like to recognize all the health care providers, whether they're in Neils Harbour and surrounding communities, or across the province. On behalf of all of us, thank you for all the work that you do to support our families every day.

I also want to recognize my colleague the member for Victoria-The Lakes. I'll tell you, he's a great guy and if you drive anywhere within the woods in Cape Breton, I recall at any event you are going to see him there. Sir, I appreciate you bringing this forward.

As a fellow Cape Breton MLA, we always want to make sure that regardless of political stripe we do whatever we can to support the residents of the island. To you, thank you for bringing this forward and to all my colleagues from Cape Breton.

I'm just going to take a few moments to talk about my thoughts around being an MLA on Cape Breton Island and the transformation we're going through. I'll talk a bit about some of the successes we've had in regard to recruiting and retaining doctors and offering primary care.

I will start by first saying specifically to the residents of that area that my wife actually taught at North Highlands Elementary for a year or so. For a period of time, she was a big part of that community. She saw first-hand how tight-knit the community is and

how wonderful they were to her and how beautiful, as anybody knows, that area is, if you've been there.

To the community we want to do whatever we can, regardless of what side of the floor we sit on, to support not only the health care needs of the community, but the other important services that government provides to Neils Harbour, Ingonish, Dingwall, Meat Cove, and surrounding areas.

The minister talked about a number of incentives we've been putting in place to attract health care professionals to rural parts of the province. I believe some other members will have the opportunity to talk about them from their own experience. We have seen benefits from them. We have.

We've seen over 13,000 Cape Bretoners now, regardless of whether they were urban or rural, receive access to primary care since 2016. That is a significant number of residents who were without primary care to receive it.

We are continuing to provide those incentives to encourage doctors to practise in underserved areas of the province. The member for Northside-Westmount talked about, it is a rural community. There is a distance between communities for those residents, whether they are accessing care at times and they must leave the community or for other services. We have provided those incentives. We are seeing success with that. That policy is actually consistent across political stripes.

I know that in the recent PC leadership, one of the candidates, their platform was exactly what we are offering right now. That was to provide tuition relief incentives for physicians to come and serve in underserved areas for a period of five years.

We are on the same page when we are looking at some of those incentives that we are trying to provide to residents. We've seen that, and we've hired a number of nurse practitioners, family practice nurses, and social workers throughout the island to strengthen those collaborative care centres to ensure we are meeting specific needs within communities. From a health care perspective, we are going to continue to make those investments.

I am following that conversation with rural Cape Breton and to the good doctor who has been making those comments in the *Cape Breton Post*. I am more than happy to have a conversation with him, if he reaches out. The same goes for the local MLA. If he wants me to come to the area, I'd be happy to do it. We will continue to make those investments to support his community and communities across the island.

We are about to embark on the largest investment in health care Cape Breton has ever seen when it comes to our infrastructure, to ensure we eliminate decades of indecisions

from all political stripes to address the root cause of the challenges we have been facing of health care in the community.

My colleague from the NDP, she made a point that said not one size fits all, and she is absolutely right. We have been under the same system of health care, whether it's in Sydney or Ingonish or Inverness, our mindset has been the same for a generation.

Now what I am saying as a local MLA who represents Cape Breton Island is that I am willing to make some tough decisions that are very difficult to make. Change is very difficult at times when you're established in a system as long as we have been to try to break this challenge and decline and try to bring new medical professionals on to the island.

I'm very excited about those investments that we're making as a government and we're going to continue to make them and we're going to continue to diversify the services we provide to Cape Bretoners and residents in his community because we need to. We know that if we continue down the path that we are, we're going to continue to face challenges and we're going to continue to hit walls, and we're going to continue to have these debates and conversations about what we need to do as communities to recruit and retain medical professionals in our communities.

Again, it goes back to the conversation as a local MLA on the island. We are really in a state of transition. I really saw it the first time in my former portfolio as the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I had the opportunity to travel right across the province. It was a great experience. I got to see many rural communities for their beauty and uniqueness and the challenges they face. They were great conversations. I would encourage anybody to travel across our province. It's an absolutely amazing experience.

There were consistencies in what they're trying to accomplish in a community, and it goes outside of the investments that we make in health care. We are seeing progress with the investments we're making in health care to retain and recruit in underserved areas. As important as those investments are, it's the investments outside of health care this government is making that is going to reinvigorate economies. It's going to bring in a new level of entrepreneurship and attract new residents to these communities.

I always say that one of the biggest and most significant investments that this government is going to make to recruit entrepreneurs and to provide economic boosts into the community is the investment that we're making into highspeed Internet. Those investments within communities are the stuff outside of health care that when I have conversations with doctors or medical professionals, it's about ensuring they have the tools to succeed, but it's also ensuring that their families have opportunities within communities to succeed.

We need to keep that top of mind as well when we're looking at these rural communities and how we're going to recruit and retain doctors and other medical professionals. We're going to continue to make those investments as well.

I guess for me, and I've said this in these debates before and I'm going to say it again, with all due respect to my colleagues. The minister outlined a number of incentives. I talked briefly about them. I talked a bit about my thoughts as a local MLA on Cape Breton Island, but I'm still waiting to hear a suggestion from the other side of the floor. I haven't heard one yet, and I'm approaching my fourth year in office. As a local MLA in Cape Breton, I made some very tough decisions, decisions that are going to result in the largest infrastructure projects in the history of the Cape Breton Island when it comes to health care. They're tough.

We're providing tuition incentives for doctors in underserved areas. We're providing other important programs that support nurse practitioners, family practice nurses, and a whole other array of health care professionals that I'm talking to in my community who are very excited about what we're doing. We have an amazing local doctor on the ground who is leading the charge for us, Dr. Kevin Orrell. He's doing tremendous work with his colleagues on the ground. (Interruptions)

THE CHAIR: Order. The member for Sydney-Whitney Pier has the floor.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: We have amazing medical professionals on the ground all across Cape Breton who are having these important conversations. As I've said, we've talked about some of the investments that we're making, but we're always going to diversify what we're doing as need be, because that has really been our challenge. We've been status quo for so long. Our infrastructure suffered, our recruitment efforts have suffered. Now what we're seeing as a government is that we're pushing the reset button, but that reset button is major investment in the health care our communities deserve on the island.

Again, this is the fourth or fifth time I've been on my feet in a debate, four years later, no suggestions from the other side of the floor on how to recruit or retain doctors . . . (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order. I call this House to order.

The honourable Minister of Energy and Mines has the floor.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, and I used the example before, there are consistencies between platforms that I've seen over the years, but I have a plan and I'm sticking to that plan. It was a plan that involved some tough decisions, but decisions that were based on consultation with our medical professionals in the community who want to see health care expanded for communities across Cape Breton.

[1:00 p.m.]

Again, I'll finish off by saying that I appreciate the opportunity to offer a few comments. I appreciate the member for Victoria-The Lakes bringing this forward. This is an important issue for his community. I make the commitment to him that I am more than happy to continue the conversation to ensure that if he wants to bring some ideas or suggestions forward, we would ensure that as a local MLA and as a Cape Breton MLA, I would do my best to advocate for all residents of Cape Breton.

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

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: I'd like to start off by congratulating my colleague, the member for Victoria-The Lakes, for bringing this forward. He has remembered what his job is. His job is to represent everybody who needs his services and the services of the Buchanan Memorial Hospital in Neils Harbour.

Sometimes it would be nice if the government would remember what their job is. Their job is to make sure there is health care available for every individual Nova Scotian, regardless of what the geography is, regardless of where they live. This government has failed drastically when it has come to that.

Now, for those who don't know where Neils Harbour is, it is in the centre of a large national park - 300,000 visitors through that park last year, I was told by the superintendent, who rely on the services of that hospital - 300,000, not to mention the people who live there.

The area itself at one time was recognized by the Canadian Revenue Agency as having a remote designation. They actually had an isolation deduction they could put on their income tax. That is the area we are talking about.

Now, I listened intently to my colleagues from all the Parties. At any time, Mr. Speaker, I'd be glad to give up my time to the Minister of Health and Wellness so that he can challenge some of the things we have said. The member for Sydney-Whitney Pier has said there was no plan. Wow. We didn't offer a plan. His plan was to come in in the dark of night, into this Port Authority's building in Sydney, and say, oh, we're going to close all your hospitals. That was his plan.

If anybody had ever seen his picture on the front page of the *Cape Breton Post* that day - now he's talking about the largest single investment in infrastructure on Cape Breton Island, and he's right. But do you know what, Mr. Speaker? The people I talk to, the people that I have the honour to represent, are wondering what we're going to do with all these empty buildings, because if you do not have people, if you do not have doctors and lab technicians and all the other people that are needed to provide service in the health care of

this province, a building means nothing - a building is just that. It's the people who make up the service.

Now, I heard the Minister of Health and Wellness go on about the incentives that they had trying to get doctors there and about all the doctors they brought in, but never once has he ever said how many doctors have left. We've brought it forward time and time again in this House and never will he acknowledge the fact that there's still a net shortage of doctors in this province. He said that he's working with the Minister of Immigration to bring people in from other countries. That's a good initiative, but at the same time we had hundreds of people in the health care industry at a meeting in Newfoundland and Labrador looking for people who wanted to go and place their names in different areas to go to work and we didn't send anybody there to have a talk to them to see if they wanted to come to Cape Breton or Nova Scotia.

The minister seems to think that you can do a cookie-cutter approach to health care. I know they tried to do that with government - and see how that's working out, but when you look at the unique circumstances of a place like Neils Harbour and you look at how well that system must be working, we talked about Dr. Murray being the only doctor available there, he'll tell you he came - he was going to be there for two years, he was just going to wet his feet, and what happened? He fell in love with the people; he fell in love with the place; and he dedicated his life to making it a better place for all of them to live in.

Dr. Buffett went back home and has given service to his community - 34 years of service. He is so concerned he took the time to put his thoughts to paper, to step out in that area of no-man's land and take on the Health Authority to let everybody know his thoughts and concerns about the health care system in his community. And the young lady that's off on maternity leave - it tells you something when a young person will move into a community like that. It's about quality of life. It's about giving her child an experience as they grow up.

For the government to say we have a plan but everything they talk about is just about recruiting doctors - and that's a part of it and it's a big part of it and we need it. I can tell you from personal experience, and I'm sure everybody in this building can, that there are a lot of really good people in this system who give more than their share back to their communities. They work hard to make sure health care is promising in this province.

Point-of-care testing, the technology, I heard the minister say that the technology has grown, and he is probably right. What I also heard Dr. Buffett say is it's not enough when you're in an area like Neils Harbour that doesn't have backup available, and that's what we should be thinking about as a community: about the people who are living there, about the quality of care that they deserve. It's about making sure that we treat our fellow Nova Scotians fairly, the same as we expect to be treated.

I don't believe this government understands that their responsibility is to all Nova Scotians, regardless of where they live. It's not about just finding out where the majority of seats are so I can get re-elected. It's about representing the people who gave you the opportunity to be in this House. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, we can go on and on, and I heard the member for Sydney-Whitney Pier say we don't have a plan. You know what? I actually like the member for Sydney-Whitney Pier. I was at his wedding. He even turned off the air conditioner to see if I would leave. (Laughter)

The reality is we need to grapple with this situation now. We've heard about all the symptoms, and there are symptoms. We hear about the ambulance issue and they say, well you're not allowed to unload your ambulance unless you have somebody in outpatients that can take your patient. But we can't give you the outpatient's bed unless we get somebody upstairs an acute care bed. We can't get somebody an acute care bed unless we have a long-term care bed to put them in. It's not just a little problem. It's a very huge problem.

An example of that was at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital just a short time ago. They have 33 beds in the emergency department; 27 of the 33 beds had people in them waiting for an acute care bed in the regional hospital. That left 6 beds for the emergency room doctors to work on the patients that were coming. By the way, it's a regular occurrence now to have the Northside General emergency room shut down, for the New Waterford hospital to have its emergency room shut down, and even the Glace Bay Hospital. This weekend, for example, all three are closed until Tuesday.

Then you have acute care beds that are being taken up by people who are waiting for long-term care, and you have emergency room beds that people have to get into, but they can't. Not too long ago, in the last week and a half, the doctor in charge of emergency physicians in the Cape Breton Regional area was in the newspaper saying he doesn't have enough doctors to even man the Cape Breton Regional Hospital, let alone the rest of the outpatients, if they were open. We're going to expand, we're going to go back to the investment talked about by the member for Sydney-Whitney Pier, the outpatients' rooms at the Glace Bay Hospital, but we have nobody to man those rooms.

I went to that movie one time and it was called *Field of Dreams*. Build it and they will come. Well, so far that hasn't worked very well, guys. It's not working at all. You should be sitting down and talking to the doctors that are leaving and asking them why they are leaving. (Applause) But you won't do it. You have no intention of doing that because you don't want the truth. You just want to balance your budget.

This is not a laughable situation. When I hear of a person having a heart attack and having to wait until the next day before they could get transported. If we would have had a storm, there's a good possibility that that transportation couldn't take place. The effect

on that family and on that community could have been very devastating. We have a Health Authority - and I've often heard our minister say, well, that's in the purview of the Health Authority. As far as I know, the money for the Health Authority comes from the provincial government, which is the folks across. The member responsible for that money is the Minister of Health and Wellness.

[1:15 p.m.]

So, at the end of the day, the people of this province decided they wanted this party, the governing party, to rule this province. They did not want them to abdicate their responsibilities. They want them to give them the good health care that they deserve.

We've gone from a 'doctor for every Nova Scotian' to a first aid kit for every Nova Scotian. Any member sitting on the government side of the House should be ashamed of themselves for allowing this situation, to get to this position, in a place like Neils Harbour. Our job, collectively, is to look after all Nova Scotians and this government has failed all Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

TAMMY MARTIN: First of all, I would like to start off and comment on my colleague's comments from - well, he's actually my summertime MLA - Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg.

It's not personal. What happens in this House is not personal. I had a brief conversation with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development on the way down the stairs; it's true, what happens in this House is sometimes completely different than what happens on the outside of this House. I think sometimes we all have to be mindful of that.

But let me tell you, I've got some suggestions. I would be happy to say and to provide the member from Sydney-Whitney Pier - I've emailed the members from Sydney-Whitney Pier and all of the Cape Breton MLAs, I believe, and the Premier and the Minister of Health and Wellness - with some suggestions.

A resume, for example, from one person that I had come to me because he didn't get any response from the Minister of Health and Wellness. He is a doctor, he's from Glace Bay and wants to practice in Glace Bay. He applied for a residency, this is probably his second or third time. I've emailed the members opposite this resume asking for their help and I've yet to hear back from them, Mr. Speaker.

I believe this gentleman from Glace Bay is now practicing as a nurse practitioner in Ontario, because he cannot get a residency in Nova Scotia. I know the story that we've expanded residencies, I know all of that but there were residency seats in Inverness this

past posting that he applied for and weren't filled. So he wanted to go to Inverness and he was not answered. So, that's one solution.

I know the member from Northside-Westmount knows who I'm talking about and I'm sure the rest of the members from Cape Breton know who I'm talking about. Because he's willing to go to Inverness today, and I'm sure he'd go to Neils Harbour, because he just wants to be a doctor, and this government is not allowing him to be a doctor.

Another suggestion: post the job for a lab tech. Didn't do that. The NSHA did not do that. I know that. You can't fill a position if you don't post it. Post the job. Let's see. Post it.

People want to work. People in Inverness, people in Neils Harbour, people in Meat Cove want to work. Maybe there's a lab tech out there that wants to work. I will tell you for 100 per cent certainty, what the doctors are telling me is that without a lab tech, Neils Harbour Hospital will close.

We can talk about point-of-care testing until we're blue in the face, but do you know what? I've had doctors come to me, like I know they've talked to the members opposite, that tell me point-of-care testing doesn't go far enough. If you present with sugar above 30, point-of-care testing doesn't register that. So you have to treat assuming you know the best treatment. If that was somebody that belonged to me let me tell you, I'd have a few choice words.

Point-of-care testing does not go far enough. I'm not a medical professional, so I can't tell you the other problems that it may not pick up, but we are talking about life and death. We are talking about people possibly dying and the member for Northside-Westmount - nope, my summertime MLA - said, and it's true, why should people in Neils Harbour be treated any differently? Okay, you said it too. Why should they receive lesser treatment because they live north of Smokey?

My parents had a trailer in Cheticamp for 25 years on Cheticamp Island. It is absolutely spectacular, but boy oh boy, in the winter, it's not pretty. I'm sure every member in this House has seen the pictures of the mountain where the snow is almost as high as this building. You're not getting through. If that was somebody who belonged to one of us in this House, is it going to be acceptable that you can't get emergency care? That you have to let your loved one die because this government is reorganizing health care?

They are making investments, absolutely, but they are closing my hospital and they are closing the hospital in North Sydney. What about the seniors who are at home who cannot get out, who can't get to Sydney or who live 45 or 55 minutes away and can't afford a cab? What are they going to do, Mr. Speaker?

You know what they do? They just decide it's not worth it. I'll take a Tylenol because I can't get there, and I can't afford to get there. What do you do? Take a cab from Neils Harbour to Sydney?

I feel like I am repeating myself, I know I am, but I just had a tweet - zero ambulances right now available in CBRM. In all of CBRM, not one ambulance is available. That is a disgrace.

I have several more suggestions, some of which were in legislation that I've - in fact, one of the - I'm sorry, I don't know their proper name - somebody has said to me (Interruption) Clerks. One of the Clerks said to me, is that all you do, is introduce legislation? But that's how many ideas we have. That's how many ideas we have on how to fix health care.

Again, it's nothing personal, but I don't believe - I'm not going to say that. I'm not going to say that. How can we call it progress when we are taking away health care? How can we call it progress?

Believe me, I know that Dr. Orrell has just been appointed to the team, and I know that there must be some wonderful position in it for him, because two years ago - and the members across the way were at the same press conference that I was at, where he talked about how terrible this government was. (Interruption) Do you want me to pull it up for you? Because I can. I can pull up the video where Dr. Orrell talked about . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order. The member for Cape Breton Centre has the floor.

TAMMY MARTIN: Thank you. The video where Dr. Orrell stood up and led a press conference with his colleagues and talked about how you need to get out and vote, how you need to change this government because health care in Cape Breton is in crisis.

I can pull that video, Mr. Speaker, and I will gladly table it, but now, all of a sudden, he's on their team. Well, the rest of the doctors who I've talked to have no idea what's changed. Where has the change been? They haven't seen it.

The other day, 20 doctors in CBRM resigned from in-patient care - 20. Just let that sink in for five seconds. Twenty doctors resigned from in-patient care and my summertime MLA is absolutely right. We did a tour of the Cape Breton Regional emergency on the day that there were 27 admits - admitted to the ice machine, admitted to the ward clerk desk, admitted to hallway - 27 admits.

In fact - and the Leader of the NDP can testify - my daughter was working that day, and she ran up, said hello, and continued to run. That's what they do, Mr. Speaker. That's what they do. They run. Yet we are talking about solutions for Neils Harbour.

I've also come to find out that when these lab techs and/or X-ray techs or whatever stay overnight - because it's easier for them to stay overnight, because that's how dedicated they are. They know if something comes in in the middle of the night, they need to get back to the hospital. Mr. Speaker, once you leave there is no guarantee, with the weather in that area, that you are getting back so they sleep at the hospital to ensure that they give the utmost care to the people who come in. But do you know what? The NSHA decided to stop paying them callback because they physically are not leaving the building. (Interruption)

Isn't that disgraceful? Their collective agreement says that you get paid for every callback you get back to the facility, but these dedicated employees are so dedicated that they won't leave because if John Doe comes in, they might not get back to take his blood, so they stay. You know what the reward was? We're going to stop paying you callback.

Mr. Speaker, it's like we're just saying out loud, let's not do anything to try to solve this health care problem, let's just do whatever we can to close as many hospitals as we can. It's not everybody else's fault. We should be in this Chamber working together to fix health care. By not investing in one long-term care bed - as the member said, 27 admits. They couldn't move because so many EHSs are backed up, so many people are upstairs in acute care beds. What are these people in Neils Harbour supposed to do, and what are they supposed to think? That we are here, not coming up with solutions?

Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ that we haven't presented solutions. I find it very amusing actually that any time a member from this government talks about health care I hear two words - excited and central. Janet Knox was here two weeks ago at that foolish Health Committee and talked a lot about "central" and "excited". Let me tell you, not one person that I've ever talked to, including doctors - and I've put this out there on social media, please let these people come to me and talk to me - who is excited? Please let me know who is excited. Please let me know who you've talked to because I don't know one person who has been talked to. I don't know one doctor who has been talked to.

I know the member opposite says they've talked to people. Please share that information because I would love to know that. I would honestly love to know that, Mr. Speaker. We've talked to so many people, I have so many calls, I have so many people - doctors who reach out to me all the time because they are scared of what is happening.

I don't know who the government talks to that we're not talking to, because it's completely different. The stories are completely different. I understand that this government has one idea but sadly, Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians have another idea. Nova Scotians are tired; Cape Bretoners are tired. Let me tell you that for sure - Cape Bretoners are tired. Cape Bretoners are tired of not being included in decisions. Cape Bretoners are tired of not having any input into their lives, their health care. Like we've heard, there is supposed to be a doctor for every Nova Scotian.

Now instead of moving toward better health care, we're looking at closing hospitals. Mr. Speaker, Neils Harbour is a wonderful, wonderful community that deserves the same care as every other Nova Scotian. The day that announcement was made, on Black Monday, June 26th, that changed the water on the beans for a lot of people, I'll tell you, because people who haven't spoken out before are speaking out now. People are tired.

I'll tell you something else, people are tired of not being listened to and they will make sure, one way or the other, that their voices will be heard. I don't know about anybody else, but I put myself out there as the other members did, I am willing to work with anybody to improve health care across the province - of course not just on Cape Breton. Cape Breton is the home of my heart but of course for the rest of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, closing facilities is not the answer. Let's show the respect that these people deserve. Let's give them health care. Let's allow them to live where they want to live and not be afraid to die because they don't have anywhere to go when they're sick. Thank you.

[1:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Just a quick reminder, we've all been here for many years and using words like foolish is kind of walking the line. Just a quick reminder, thank you.

The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I have 15 minutes I believe, yes. First, you know, I think a few people know that when we talk about health care I take a chance to stand up every chance I can. Since 2013, my community has been probably a subject of discussion around health care. Just to draw a quick picture of my community, I represent an area that is probably as far away from Neils Harbour as you can get but similar in a lot of ways. We have some areas that I would call extremely remote down on the islands that are serviced by ferries that, in some instances when we have nor'easters blow through there, are completely isolated from the mainland and you can't get there.

I have one regional hospital. I have five clinics. One of these clinics is on the island. It's run by the Nova Scotia Health Authority. I have a clinic in Meteghan that's operated actually by the Municipality of the District of Clare. They're the ones that subsidize that an awful lot and they're the ones that established that. I'll mention a little bit more about them later.

I have a clinic in Bear River that's run by a nonprofit organization supported by no municipal units and does get some core funding from the province. They do a wonderful job there. I have a clinic in Digby that's a newly-built clinic that was funded mainly by the health foundation. And I have a clinic in Weymouth that is supported by the Village Commission in Weymouth and the people there. I have a very broad area that is served in

a lot of different ways and I just want to share some of the challenges and some of the ideas that have come up in my area.

I think we all want the same thing and, as MLAs that represent areas that are especially in remote rural areas, I think when I listen to the earlier comments by the Leader of the New Democratic Party and he had talked about the local voice. If there's one message that I can bring, it is that. I know we all want to have a local voice and we all want to make sure our communities are represented as best they can be.

My experience has been one that, when I got elected in 2013, we didn't feel we had that and the old nine Health Authorities that we had with the South West District Health Authority I even myself had difficulty in reaching them. One of the areas that I felt is let's build on that. With the support I must say and thank the previous Minister of Health and Wellness who is now the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, we were able to float an idea that built on that ability to have the community voice and that was to build a stakeholders group that had representatives of all those clinics that I mentioned, the health foundation.

So all of our elected representatives from our municipal units were part of that. Equally and most important also, we had the NSHA at the table and this was with the support of the NSHA and Department of Health and Wellness and we started our conversations around the table and sharing experiences and challenges in getting educated. It was probably the best form. I would suggest if you have an opportunity to build on that model. I know I've spoken to some of my colleagues opposite about it.

It still garners a lot of benefit in my community and for me. Actually, just this week, we met. I did have the opportunity to go to Digby Wednesday night and meet with our stakeholder group. Every time I go there, I learn something, and not only do I learn something but the NSHA does, our clinics do, and we built on that.

Just to give you an idea of what that group does, we've created a dialogue to be able to have the community's voice brought forward directly to the NSHA and to learn what the frustrations are also in doctor recruitment, in staffing ERs, and in all the different things that we're challenged with.

We've also created a group, which I must say is equally important - we have three primary principal areas with the two municipal units and with our health foundation that are key in having resources for incentive programs to help. They have purchased an apartment that is available for any locums, for any residents, for any doctors who might want to come into an area and stay for free, because sometimes accommodations in rural areas are difficult.

They have several packages that are available to assist with administration. We have a new family practice doctor who just came to Weymouth, and that group stepped up

and put together an incentive package to help with the administrative costs that are needed to run a non-collaborative business, which is what doctors' offices are.

More importantly, we've created a position there and I've stuck a name to it - they don't like the name, because it's too long - but it's the primary health care recruitment and retention coordinator. So we now have one person focused in our community who coordinates all of the different incentive packages that the municipality might have, all the different low-hanging fruit where we have students who might be leaving our area and going off to medical school, anybody that's in residency. We have one individual person who keeps an eye on that for us and coordinates, not only being a resource for those people when they come to our community but also reaching out to them on an occasional basis.

This is something that we learned. I think more importantly, I mentioned the Municipality of Clare and their support for the medical clinic, and I think probably some of you have already heard about the example they have and how they fostered collaborative centres years ago and built one about 18 or 19 years ago and started that whole world of reaching out and taking the role of the community and the community's voice in recruitment and retention.

One of the most interesting things for us in the rural areas to understand is that we need to have the support of our community, and we need to have coordinated support with our community. We need to find innovative, outside-of-the-box ways to do things. I'll share one of them right now that is going on. I'm not sure if everybody is aware of it, but Digby is very fortunate to have one very passionate doctor, Dr. Dave LaPierre.

He has been very willing to start a pilot project on a virtual family doctor practice. We have virtual practices that have happened in the past with specialists, which worked quite well. Instead of a specialist from Halifax coming down to Digby, they can do that interaction online with a teleconference. The new part of this - that this is something now that we have for family practice doctors. Dr. LaPierre is running the clinic, I believe, two mornings and one day a week out of his Kentville office, where he will actually see patients in Digby in a consultation room where a nurse is there. The feedback we're getting is tremendous. He is not only seeing rostered patients that he has but also seeing unattached patients.

So along with two other clinics that we have for unattached patients, we've come up with an innovative way to assist with providing primary health care in rural Nova Scotia that I think is something that could be expanded to basically anywhere in the province.

It's a new pilot. It has been about five weeks in the running, and I can't overestimate how excited we are, not only for the support of Dr. LaPierre to do that, but the NSHA and the Department of Health and Wellness to support that.

I'd mentioned our emergency department, and one other exciting thing I just want to mention - and I know the Opposition doesn't like it when we talk about exciting things - but these are things that we need to take away and remember are happening, and we need to advocate for them to happen in our area.

One big thing that is also going on, and I believe it's going to be starting around April 1st . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. There is a lot of chatter. I would just ask that everybody keep it down, please.

The honourable member for Clare-Digby

GORDON WILSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know we know there's a challenge in our emergency departments in staffing and we're all experiencing that. We have advocated for, and I believe are going to be successful very soon, to have a nurse practitioner staffing our emergency department to assist with providing primary health care there. It's another thing to keep your eye on down the road.

Recently, I mentioned also the Village of Weymouth and I need to emphasize how important these small communities are. The Village of Weymouth isn't maybe quite as remote as some areas, but it is an area that certainly has been challenged. People in that community stepped up as a group, the Village of Weymouth Commission, and did something I thought was virtually impossible to do. They recruited a solo family practice doctor to that community and I cannot commend them enough for how they did it. They took on the personal note themselves to meet and to take this person around, offering the clinic services and everything that they can do there.

Again, I go back to the Leader of the NDP and his talk around local voice and how we need to, as MLAs, look at addressing and bringing our communities together. We need to look at addressing and bringing all our municipal leaders together. But more importantly we need to find ways that we can work with the NSHA and the Department of Health and Wellness. We all want the same thing at the end of the day. We all bring very powerful things within our communities that sometimes the province cannot bring. Sometimes the province cannot offer the welcoming, cannot offer the mentoring. Showing them the lobster fishing trips that we put them on. The packages that are put together for getting out golfing or even just simply meeting people of common ways of thinking when these health care professionals come into our communities.

I just want to close with a message, each and every one of us, as an MLA, come here to Halifax and we work very hard here, we do, to create legislation and support our communities that way. Equally, we all know very well that we spend a lot of time in our communities meeting, listening, and engaging whatever it might be, from health care to transportation. We bear a responsibility as MLAs to continue to keep our minds open to

try and bring everybody together and not be divisive. To be thinking outside the box, like virtual health care where underserved areas seem to be an extreme challenge for doctors to see opportunities to go there.

We need to work with everybody on both sides of the House. I'd welcome anybody at any time if they want to talk to me about my experience that I've had in my area and what I think has been extremely successful in changing the conversation more than anything. I know we have a lot of challenges yet to go through. I'm not saying that we're there yet, but I believe we have a group of people that are there that believe that they can do it, that have the resources to be able to do it, that has the support of everybody in the community that is needed to have that happen. If there's one word I could offer in my six years that I've had here of experience, is that is truly more powerful than anything we can do legislatively. I hope that someday that all works for everybody.

In saying that, I didn't open by thanking but I do want to thank our member for Victoria-The Lakes and all those who have spoken here today. I think we're all wanting to come to the same conclusion. We all understand the uniqueness, and that's the other challenge that we have in our areas.

I only felt it was important for me to stand up because, again, maybe being at opposite ends of the province as Neils Harbour and maybe not being quite the same, we are the same in a lot of ways. I have areas that are cut off sometimes for days because the ferries don't run, bad weather.

We found innovative ways to work around that and we found ways to bring our communities together and build on our health care system in our area.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, what we are talking about here today is an emergency. It was good to see all sides of the House recognize it as an emergency. What's happening in Neils Harbour, there's a lot of factors and the members have summarized it very well and I hope I can summarize it here as we close.

This is about nursing home beds being full. This is about hospital beds being full. This is about ambulance beds or stretchers being full. For that reason, we see the contagion, we see the result of no ambulances being in the area. That is a great risk to people; that is why, for people living in that area, it is an emergency for them, this issue. The government has to recognize that and has to start working on those issues to resolve them.

What they are doing by having all the beds full, may be saving the government money, but at what cost does that come. I think about when, I'm going to talk about physicians in a moment, but when you consider investigative procedures like gastroscopies

and colonoscopies. If they are delayed, what cost is there to the health system when those things don't happen because there's a lack of physicians.

I think about people having to travel for minor procedures to other areas where there are long wait-lists and how those delays can result in people's conditions growing worse and the cost to treat them growing higher.

I think about emergency situations, like I'm describing, where there is no ambulance in the area. We know that the provincial standard for ambulances is 30 minutes in a rural area just to get to the person who needs care. That first hour is critical, if something has happened to them, that ambulance has to get there and sustain them within that first hour. If there are no ambulances in the area, that is something of grave concern to me, and the member for Victoria-The Lakes which is why he raised this issue on behalf of his constituents.

For that reason, we call upon the government to start addressing these matters. Will they be addressed in the upcoming budget? We certainly hope so. What good is it to be praising oneself for a balanced budget if you are putting people at risk because of poor decisions about how you are spending the money?

What good is it doing when we have physicians who are leaving, I can think of surgeon Jeannie MacGillivray in my own area, when surgeons are leaving because of conditions they are put in by the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

We are losing people who want to be here, who want to serve in rural Nova Scotia and want to help the people. People who are asking us, people who we all represent in this Legislature, they are asking us to help them.

THE SPEAKER: The time allotted for emergency debate has expired.

The House will resume Tuesday, March 12th, at 1:00 p.m. Have a great weekend.

[The House rose at 1:49 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 822**

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Rhyno's Landscaping Inc. has won a nationally recognized award for commercial work over 100k for a green roof at the new library; and

Whereas they have done residential maintenance for planting vegetable garden that supplied a local food truck and harvested the vegetables each week; and

Whereas they are the winners of the 2018 community choice award, out of 1,100-plus companies nominated and had the third most votes overall, securing first place in the landscaping category.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Rhyno's Landscaping Inc. on their achievements and wish them well as the company continues to grow.

RESOLUTION NO. 823

By: Ben Jessome (Hammonds Plains-Lucasville)

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

Whereas Ashely Card of Hammonds Plains is a sprint kayaker from the Maskwa Aquatic Club who aspires to be an Olympic athlete; and

Whereas Ashley Card participated in the RBC Training Ground, a talent identification and athlete funding program designed to uncover athletes with Olympic potential and provide them with the high-performance sport resources they need to achieve their podium dreams; and

Whereas Ashley Card, based on her performance, was one of the 30 chosen out of the 3,182 who participated to receive Future Olympian funding;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Ashely Card on receiving the RBC Training Ground Future Olympian funding to assist her in her continued training to become an Olympic athlete.

RESOLUTION NO. 824

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Bill Elliott of Bass River, Colchester North, has been involved with music all his life as a part of the talented Elliott Family, playing the fiddle, guitar, banjo, mandolin, and bass; and

Whereas in 2015 he was named the first recipient of the Canadian Certified Guitar Player because of his skills on the guitar and has performed across North America, and has opened for both Merle Haggard and Waylon Jennings; and

Whereas Bill put out a new album in June and has been nominated for an East Coast Music Award for jazz recording of the year to take place in Charlottetown on May 1st to 5th this year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Bill on his new album and wish him the best of luck at the East Coast Music Awards, as he stands proudly as a Nova Scotian, whose province has recognized his huge contribution to the music industry.