



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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

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

Second Session

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS:	
Gov't. (N.S.) - CSAP Sch.: New Constr. Needed - Revive French Culture, Hon. K. Murphy	2150
TIR - Trenton Connector Improvemt.: Roundabout Suggested - Act Immed., K. MacFarlane.....	2150
Gov't. (N.S.): Hantsport River Aboiteau - Repairs Needed, Hon. C. Porter	2151
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 831, Liver Health Mo.: Symptom Awareness - Recog., Hon. R. Delorey	2152
Vote - Affirmative.....	2152
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
No. 112, Education Act, Hon. Z. Churchill	2152
No. 113, Plastic Bag Reduction Act, L. Zann	2152

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:

Acadian Fish Processors: Ground Fishery Ldr. - Congrats., Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	2153
DeMarsh, Peter: Death of - Tribute, G. Burrill.....	2153
Haworth, Victoria: Dal. Athl. of the Wk. - Congrats., B. Horne.....	2153
Collins, Ruth/Cumb. Perf. Arts: Delightful Productions - Congrats., T. Rushton.....	2154
Rehhorn, Angela: Death of - Tribute, L. Roberts.....	2154
Cedar Bay Grilling Co.: Excellence Award - Congrats., H. MacKay.....	2155
Pharm. Awareness Mo.: Dedicated Professionals - Recog., E. Smith-McCrossin.....	2155
Ervine, Kate: Book, <i>Carbon</i> - Recommended, L. Roberts.....	2156
MacDonald, Carrigan: Dance Scholarship - Congrats., B. Jessome.....	2156
Kehoe, James: Honorary Doctorate, CBU - Congrats., A. Paon.....	2157
Lamerson, Cheryl: Volun. of the Yr. - Congrats., S. Lohnes-Croft.....	2157
Team N.S. Athls.: Can. Winter Games - Thanks, B. Johns.....	2158
Moore, Danielle: Death of - Tribute, S. Leblanc.....	2158
De Lara, Victoria: Serv. to Filipino Com. - Recog., R. DiCostanzo.....	2158
Arsenault, Andrew: Volleyball Athl. - Commend, T. Halman.....	2159
Armview Storm: Volleyball Achievements - Recog., B. Maguire.....	2159
Burgess, Lindsey: Outstanding Curler Award - Congrats., L. Harrison.....	2160
Kosciukiewicz, Douglas - Medallist: Can. Winter Games - Congrats., K. Irving.....	2160
Cdn. Maritime Engineering: Expansion - Congrats., E. Orrell.....	2161
Ferguson, Phylecia - Inventor: Natl. Science Fair - Congrats., Hon. M. Miller.....	2161
Veinot, Jayda/Veinot, Keevan: Ntl. Basketball Champs. - Congrats., J. Lohr.....	2162

Gran Fondo: Growing Popularity - Thanks, G. Wilson	2162
Collins, Jasmin - Fire Chief (On Leave): Inspiring Women - Congrats., Hon. A. MacLeod	2163
Wellness Fund: Supporting Non-Profits - Congrats., Hon. L. Hines	2163
Woodford, Timothy - Phys.: Sailor of the Yr. - Congrats., K. Masland	2164
Ryan, Cindy: Student Career Opportunities - Thanks, Hon. L. Metlege Diab	2164
Boularderie Elem.: Piano Fundraising - Congrats., K. Bain	2164
St. Anthony's Parish/St. Faustina Mission: Furniture Bank - Thanks, S. Leblanc	2165
Deep Sky Eye Observ.: Tourism Bus. of the Yr. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	2165
Colclough, Evan: Young Cdns. Forum - Recog., B. Adams	2166
Chickenburger: 79 Yrs. in Bus. - Congrats., Hon. K. Regan	2166
J.A. Participants: Inspiring Entrepreneurs - Recog., K. MacFarlane	2167
Rogers, Wayne: Book, <i>Walking Guide... Old SMB Rd.</i> - Recog., Hon. I. Rankin	2167
New Glasgow Police: Officer Promotions - Recog., Hon. P. Dunn	2168
Therapeutic Paws: Therapy Dog Cert. - Recog., Hon. P. Arab	2168
Cormier, Zoey: Cumb., 1 st Baby of 2019 - Welcome, E. Smith-McCrossin	2168
New Ross: Com. School - Congrats., H. MacKay	2169
Hendsbee, Chad: Death of - Tribute, B. Maguire	2169
Lucas, Kiara/Lucas, Mekhi: Fire Rescue - Recog., B. Johns	2169
MacDonald-Miles, Sarah: Jeans 4 Teens - Commend, B. Horne	2170
C.B. Nordic Ski Club: Loppet - Congrats., E. Orrell	2170
Kozera, Daniella: Dance Conference - Congrats., S. Lohnes-Croft	2171
Lunn, Tiffany/Lunn, Jessica: Mental Health - Needs Consistent Care, J. Lohr	2171

Nicholson, Greg - Pastor: Generous Com. Spirit - Commend, R. DiCostanzo	2171
Port Morien Fire Stn.: Stand-Alone Status - Congrats., Hon. A. MacLeod	2172
Warp Tech Int'l.: Export Achievemt. Award - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	2173
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:	
No. 426, H&W: #HowManyNSHAIWK - 60 Stories, T. Houston.....	2173
No. 427, Environ.: GHG Emissions - Commitment, G. Burrill	2175
No. 428, H&W: Intl. Med. Grads - Fairness, E. Orrell.....	2177
No. 429, H&W - Dart. Gen. Hosp.: Pressures - Action, C. Chender	2178
No. 430, TIR: Promised Hantsport Aboiteau - Update, J. Lohr	2179
No. 431, H&W - Ambulance Avail.: Rock Bottom - Respond, K. MacFarlane.....	2180
No. 432, H&W - Opth. Services: Adequate Level - Ensure, E. Orrell.....	2182
No. 433, Environ. - Single-Use Plastic Bags: Prov. Ban - Implement, L. Zann	2183
No. 434, H&W: MS Rates High - Research Needed, Hon. A. MacLeod	2184
No. 435, H&W - Midwifery Prog.: Supports - Ensure, K. Masland.....	2185
No. 436, H&W - Continuing Care: Client Info. - Protocol Follow, Hon. P. Dunn.....	2186
No. 437, Housing N.S. - Client Supports: System Review - Undertake, L. Roberts.....	2187
No. 438, H&W - Yarmouth Reg. Hosp.: Specialist Shortage - Address, Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	2188
No. 439, TIR - Trenton Connector: Traffic Study - Update, K. MacFarlane.....	2189
No. 440, H&W - C.B. Hospitals: Physician Shortages - Address, Hon. A. MacLeod	2190
OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS:	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 85, Forest Industry Sustainability Act T. Rushton.....	2192
Hon. G. MacLellan	2195
G. Burrill	2199
T. Houston.....	2203
Hon. Z. Churchill	2207

No. 88, Auditor General Act	
K. MacFarlane.....	2209
S. Lohnes-Croft.....	2212
T. Martin	2216
E. Smith-McCrossin.....	2220
C. Chender	2223
H. MacKay	2224

ADJOURNMENT:

 MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5):

Gov't. (N.S.) - Climate Change: Transitioning to a Prosperous, Clean Economy - Urgent Need, Plan Lacking,	
C. Chender	2225
Hon. D. Mombourquette	2228
B. Johns.....	2231

ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Thur., Mar. 14th at 1:00 p.m.2233

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3):

Res. 832, Turner, Emily: Appt. to CDKL5 Bd. - Congrats., Hon. I. Rankin.....	2234
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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

Sixty-third General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, Brendan Maguire

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, I would like to read the topic for late debate for the moment of interruption this afternoon, as submitted by the honourable member for Dartmouth South. It reads:

Therefore be it resolved that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change makes clear that urgent actions to mitigate the worst impacts of global warming are possible and necessary, and such actions can create thousands of well-paid jobs and community prosperity, and after six years in power the Liberal Government still has no plan to transition Nova Scotia to a prosperous clean economy.

That's late debate, submitted by the honourable member for Dartmouth South, at the moment of interruption.

Before we roll into Presenting and Reading Petitions, I would like to direct all members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have some guests visiting us today from the great constituency of Eastern Shore. We have members of l'École des Beaux-Marais Action Committee, and they're here to witness the presenting of their petition for a new school for Francophonie students on the Eastern Shore.

As I call your names, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House: Martin Tremblay, Margie Comeau, Michelle Burgess, and Ashley Hilchie. Please give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

We will begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I would like to present this petition on behalf of the honourable member for Eastern Shore. There are 795 signatures on this petition, and the operative clause reads:

“We the undersigned ask that the Government of Nova Scotia build a new Pre-Primary to Grade 12 CSAP school in the Porters Lake/Chezzetcook area as soon as possible to retain our students within the community, and to revive our French Culture.”

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Pictou West.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition with the operative clause being:

“WHEREAS we the citizens of Pictou County, Nova Scotia, travel the roads of Pictou County regularly, specifically the Trenton Connector; and

WHEREAS this connector has been the location of many accidents over the years, taking lives and causing injuries; and

WHEREAS there have been improvements to this area, however other solutions must be implement[ed] by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to decrease the possibility of life threat[en]ing accidents.

We, the undersigned, request that the House of Assembly direct the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to take immediate action to improve the state of this connector by implementing a roundabout.”

Mr. Speaker, I have affixed my name, as per the Rules of the House, along with 886 other signatures on this petition.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Hants West.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: I beg leave to table a petition. The operative clause reads as follows:

“We the citizens of the Community of Hantsport Petition and Demand that the Provincial Government of Nova Scotia repair/replace the Hantsport River Aboiteau.”

Mr. Speaker, there are 677 names affixed, including my own.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS, AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

RANDY DELOREY: Joining us in the East Gallery is Dr. Kevork Peltekian. He is a hepatologist, professor, researcher, and the head of the Division of Digestive Care and Endoscopy at the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

He is a passionate advocate for Atlantic Canadians with liver disease, who has also served as the past Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Canadian Liver Foundation and is the current Chairperson of the International Advisory Committee of the Canadian Liver Foundation.

I would ask Dr. Peltekian to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 831

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

Whereas there are over 100 liver diseases that can affect anyone at any age; and

Whereas one in four Canadians may be affected by liver disease, and organizations like the Canadian Liver Foundation aim to educate the public about the importance of liver health and highlight risk factors for liver disease; and

Whereas March is Liver Health Month, a time to promote awareness of liver health and some of the invisible signs and symptoms of liver disease;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly show their support for raising awareness about the importance of liver health.

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.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 112 - Entitled an Act to Amend Schedule A of Chapter 1 of the Acts of 2018. The Education Act, Respecting Student Protection. (Hon. Zach Churchill)

Bill No. 113 - Entitled an Act to Reduce the Use of Plastic Bags. (Lenore Zann)

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 Argyle-Barrington.

ACADIAN FISH PROCESSORS: GROUND FISHERY LDR. - CONGRATS.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the economy of southwestern Nova Scotia continues to be led by a well-managed fishery. Lobster is the species we talk about the most, but the groundfish fishery still continues to grow and provide for our families.

[1:15 p.m.]

Over the past 35 years, Acadian Fish Processors has grown from the deck of a vessel to a large company employing many people in the processing and freezing of haddock and other ground fish. Their use of technology and investment in their processes had made them a leader in the area.

I want to congratulate the employees at Acadian Fish Processors and its owners Bee, Bertie, and Julius for being such a great part of our local success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

DEMARSH, PETER: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I'm rising today to express my sorrow to the family of Peter DeMarsh. In doing so, I join so many others in mourning the tragic Ethiopian Airline crash of earlier this week.

Peter DeMarsh was known internationally as an advocate for sustainable forestry practices and for fighting, as many have put it, for the little guy when it came to private woodlot owners - an advocacy he took well beyond his home in New Brunswick in his role as chair of the International Family Forestry Alliance and president of the Canadian Federation of Woodlot Owners.

Peter's commitment to sustainability, environmental protection, and rural jobs inspired and was a model to legislators, environmentalists, and forestry workers across the country. His death in this crash that occurred as he was en route to a Family Forestry conference in Kenya is being registered throughout eastern Canada and beyond. Peter DeMarsh made an outstanding contribution to the world, Mr. Speaker, and like so many others, I wish to give voice to this great loss.

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

HAWORTH, VICTORIA: DAL. ATHL. OF THE WK. - CONGRATS.

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Waverley's Victoria Haworth on being recognized as Dalhousie Female Athlete of the Week. Tori led the

Dalhousie women's volleyball team in their three-match sweep over the Memorial Sea-Hawks.

In the first game, Tori earned a total of 15.5 points with nine kills in as many attacks and added six aces and digs in the Tigers 3-0 win, earning her Subway Player of the Game. Tori continued her dominance leading the Tigers to a 3-0 series win.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Tori and best wishes to her and her team during the playoffs.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

**COLLINS, RUTH/CUMB. PERF. ARTS:
DELIGHTFUL PRODUCTIONS - CONGRATS.**

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ruth Collins, Director of the Cumberland Performing Arts, and her production company on another outstanding performance.

Cumberland Performing Arts presented *A Charlie Brown Christmas* at the Oxford Theatre this past holiday season. The Charles Schultz Christmas special has been a mainstay of the holiday season for many years. Cumberland Performing Arts brought the magic to life before a delighted audience at the Oxford Theatre.

Ruth Collins and the cast - who are all students - and crew of Cumberland Performing Arts are now working hard on their next production, *The Lion King*, which will be presented sometime in early Spring.

Please join me in congratulating Cumberland Performing Arts on their outstanding performance and we look forward to many more.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

REHHORN, ANGELA: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, Angela Rehorn graduated from Dalhousie University's Bachelor of Science program in 2017. She has been described as a "bright star" and was building her reputation and career amongst marine biologists and environmentalists. On Sunday her life was cut tragically short when her plane crashed in Addis Ababa killing all 157 passengers.

Angela was one of 18 Canadians and was en route to Nairobi, as she'd been selected to participate in the United Nations Environment Assembly as part of the UN Association in Canada's Canada Service Corps program.

Mr. Speaker, this is such a tragic loss. So many activists and peers in Halifax and beyond, including the Canadian Wildlife Federation where she was part of the Canadian Conservation Corps group the Mountain Goats and the Canadian Sea Turtle Network, where Angela volunteered with another crash victim, Danielle Moore, have expressed devastation at the news of Angela's passing.

I'd like to join those people in offering my deepest sympathies and condolences to Angela's friends, colleagues, and family.

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

CEDAR BAY GRILLING CO.: EXCELLENCE AWARD - CONGRATS.

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Cedar Bay Grilling Company, a recipient of the Industry Excellence Award, presented at the 21st annual Department of Fishery and Aquaculture Minister's Conference this past February.

Cedar Bay Grilling is located in the South Shore hamlet of Blandford on the beautiful Aspotogan Peninsula. The company was founded by Doug Park and his father, Arnold in 2009, when they decided using a cedar plank was the best way to grill a salmon. Since then this innovative company has introduced a wide range of award-winning frozen salmon products, which are available throughout Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Cedar Bay specializes in easy-to-prepare products with a gourmet appeal to suit all tastes.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating Cedar Bay Grilling Company for being the recipient of the 2019 Award of Excellence, presented by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, and to wish them many more years of success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

PHARM. AWARENESS MO.: DEDICATED PROFESSIONALS - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge March as Pharmacy Awareness Month. I would like to thank the pharmacists of Cumberland North, and throughout Nova Scotia, for the contributions they make to our local health care system. Pharmacists play a vital role and have a wide scope of work that has them doing so much for their patients. Pharmacy technicians also have an important role in working with the pharmacists and other health care professionals to ensure that the patients are getting the proper medicine and dosage to meet their needs.

I'd like to make a special acknowledgement of pharmacist Sean Cheverie, who has been an exemplary business leader in our community, building a pharmacy and medical

clinic back in 2002, which today houses 14 physicians as well as other health care professionals.

Please join me today in thanking Sean Cheverie and other pharmacists in Cumberland North, and all of Nova Scotia, for their hard work and commitment to their local communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

ERVINE, KATE: BOOK, *CARBON* - RECOMMENDED

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, continuing with my resolution to talk about climate change, I want to recommend a book, *Carbon*, by Kate Ervine, associate professor in International Development Studies at Saint Mary's University. Kate explains the science of climate change in about 15 very well-written pages.

Here are a couple of facts that hit me in my gut. Carbon dioxide, once it goes into the atmosphere, stays there for anywhere between 200 and 2,000 years. Carbon emitted from coal burning trains and factory boilers at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution are still up there warming our planet. Carbon dioxide emissions are cumulative. Wildly, given that the science of climate change has been pretty clear since the 1980s and raising alarms since the 1990s, 90 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, according to IPCC data, have occurred since 2000. We're on track today to warm well beyond two degrees.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

MACDONALD, CARRIGAN: DANCE SCHOLARSHIP - CONGRATS.

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, today I'll recognize Carrigan MacDonald of Hammonds Plains. She attends École supérieure de Ballet du Québec in Montreal.

Carrigan, who began dancing at an early age, was awarded the Janice Merritt Flemming Award to help further her training at the Nova Scotia Talent Trust's scholarships and special awards that took place in December.

Carrigan is in her fourth year of training at the ballet school, which is the only francophone institution in North America to offer world-class training in ballet. Her passion for dance, specifically ballet and contemporary, led Carrigan to successfully audition to be accepted into their program and she began in 2015.

Mr. Speaker, through you, I would ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Carrigan MacDonald on receiving the Janice Merritt Flemming Award and wish her continued success in her future endeavours.

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

KEHOE, JAMES: HONORARY DOCTORATE, CBU - CONGRATS.

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dr. James Kehoe on being awarded a Doctor of Letters, honoris causa, by Cape Breton University in 2018. This award was given in recognition of the immense impact Dr. Kehoe has had on the economy of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Kehoe has been both a leader and mentor. He is dedicated to the growth and health of the business environment of this province, and, in particular, his beloved Cape Breton Island.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Kehoe was born in Rocky Bay on beautiful Isle Madame. He has been and is currently involved in many business ventures in the province. He participates in many organizations such as Talbot House, the Board of Directors of the IWK, and the Board of Governors of the Cape Breton University.

Mr. Speaker, I offer my congratulations to Dr. James Kehoe and thank him for his continued contributions and support to the people of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

LAMERSON, CHERYL: VOLUN. OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate Cheryl Lamerson who was recently named the Town of Lunenburg's Volunteer of the Year for 2019.

Cheryl, a retired colonel in the Canadian Armed Forces, is a hard-working, dedicated volunteer. She's being recognized for her work with the Lunenburg Heritage Society, the South Shore Genealogical Society, the Lunenburg and Area Garden Club, the Lunenburg Welcome Committee, the Lunenburg Comprehensive Community Plan Steering Committee, the Fishermen's Memorial Hospital Auxiliary, and the Lunenburg Community Consignment.

Cheryl is known for her leadership, dedication, and ability to inspire others to volunteer in the community. Cheryl will be attending the Nova Scotia Volunteer Awards on April 1st here in Halifax.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and all members of this House of Assembly please join me in congratulating Cheryl on being named Lunenburg's Volunteer of the Year for 2019.

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

TEAM N.S. ATHLS.: CAN. WINTER GAMES - THANKS

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge four students from Millwood High school who represented Nova Scotia at this year's Canada Winter Games held in Red Deer, Alberta. The games were held from February 15th until March 3rd.

Cassidy Currie, a Grade 12 student and her teammates defeated Team New Brunswick to take home the bronze in curling. Landon Duquette, also a Grade 12 student, captured the bronze medal in artistic gymnastics.

I also want to acknowledge Jacob Surette, a Grade 11 student for free-style skiing, and Kolby Boutilier, a Grade 9 student for archery. Although unfortunately they did not reach the podium, they were there and we certainly want to extend congratulations to them, as well, for representing our province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank all four dedicated athletes for representing Nova Scotia, and I wish each one of them all the best in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MOORE, DANIELLE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, as we know, the tragedy last Sunday in Addis Ababa has been felt very close to home. Danielle Moore, a young woman with ties to Halifax, was one of the Canadians who lost her life in the awful plane crash that killed 157 people.

Danielle graduated with a degree in Marine Biology and Oceanography from Dalhousie in 2017. She's being mourned by her fellow volunteers at the Canadian Sea Turtle Network and by many peers and classmates who said that she was kind and friendly, a promising young leader in the environmental world, and deeply dedicated to environmental and human rights issues. She was an advocate against climate change, for Indigenous issues and food security.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot imagine the grief that her colleagues, friends, and family are experiencing at the loss of her all-too-short life. She was 24 years old and had touched so many people. I offer my most heartfelt condolences to all those who knew her.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

DE LARA, VICTORIA: SERV. TO FILIPINO COM. - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I want to celebrate a woman from my riding who gives back through volunteerism.

Victoria De Lara immigrated to Canada 11 years ago. She is the chairwoman of the Women's Committee at the Filipino Language and Culture Program. Her team at the program have given clothing to the Red Cross and donated school supplies to less fortunate children in the Philippines. Also, they created a fundraising dinner for a fellow Filipino community member who had a stroke.

Victoria is happy to give back to a country that has given her many opportunities. She believes even the smallest bit of help can make a huge difference in someone's life.

Madam Speaker, I ask that the members of this House join me in applauding Victoria for her countless hours of volunteer work. She is an exceptional community role model.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

ARSENAULT, ANDREW: VOLLEYBALL ATHL. - COMMEND

TIM HALMAN: Madam Speaker, I'd like to recognize Andrew Arsenault, a student athlete from Dartmouth East.

While being a dedicated student during high school, Andrew competed as a top athlete in men's indoor volleyball. His dedication to the sport in addition to his leadership and team skills led him to a spot on the 2017 Canada Summer Games men's team in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

While Andrew will surpass the age limit for the 2021 Canada Summer Games, he is currently a member of Dalhousie University's volleyball team while studying engineering.

During the summer Andrew coaches volleyball to young athletes through summer camp programs.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join me in commending Andrew for pursuing his passion for volleyball during his post-secondary education and for being a positive role model to young athletes.

[1:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

ARMVIEW STORM: VOLLEYBALL ACHIEVEMENTS - RECOG.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Madam Speaker, this past Saturday the Armview Storm won gold at the U13 girls volleyball tournament at Acadia. The Armview Storm has had a

lot of success lately. This isn't the first time that they've finished at or near the top of the podium in provincial tournaments.

The team consists of Meagan Roy, Grace Driscoll, Jayden Kondiora, Victoria Berkman, Luchi Cohen, Jaycee Carmichael, Addyson Oakley, Laura Fallon, Sara Spellman, Kennedy Steeves, and Josie Steeves. What a bunch of superstars, Madam Speaker. A big thank you to coaches Rebecca Decoste and Paul Hunt for their hard work. Their future is bright.

Madam Speaker, I'd also like to take a moment to wish Corey Hendsbee a happy birthday.

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

BURGESS, LINDSEY: OUTSTANDING CURLER AWARD - CONGRATS.

LARRY HARRISON: On March 3rd, the Truro Sport Heritage Society honoured athletic accomplishments of local athletes.

Lindsey Burgess, a fifth-generation Burgess family curler, was honoured with an Outstanding Female (16-20) award for her ongoing accomplishments in curling. A member of the Kaitlyn Jones curling team, throwing lead stones, Lindsey has two provincial U21 title wins and has represented Nova Scotia for the past two national junior championships.

Lindsey and Team Jones were named the Nova Scotia Curling Association's Team of the Year and Nova Scotia Support for Sport Team of the Year.

I'd like to congratulate Lindsey Burgess on receiving the Outstanding Female (16-20) award and wish her continued success throughout her athletic career.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**KOSCIUKIEWICZ, DOUGLAS - MEDALLIST:
CAN. WINTER GAMES - CONGRATS.**

KEITH IRVING: Madam Speaker, last month Nova Scotia sent a fine team of athletes to the Canada Winter Games in Red Deer, Alberta. Among those athletes was a young man from Canaan, Kings County - Douglas Kosciukiewicz, who returned home with a bronze medal in male individual squash. His third-place finish puts him among the best young squash players in Canada. He has also competed in the U.S. and Ontario, and he hopes to continue to build on his Canada Winter Games success by competing at the upcoming Ontario Junior Open and the Canadian Nationals.

A recent graduate of Horton High School, Douglas started playing squash seven years ago, saying that the tactical side of squash appeals to him.

I ask members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Douglas on his bronze-medal performance at the 2019 Canada Winter Games and wishing him all the best in his athletic career.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

CDN. MARITIME ENGINEERING: EXPANSION - CONGRATS.

EDDIE ORRELL: I rise today to congratulate Canadian Maritime Engineering of North Sydney on a planned expansion costing \$3.16 million. This will add 20 to 30 new jobs to the plant, which at present employs 70. The focus of this expansion will be the creation of a transfer system, used to move fabrication projects to its nearby piers. The expansion will transform CME from a seasonal-based operation to a year-round processing facility.

I would like to take this time to thank CME president and co-owner Tony Kennedy and his staff for their industrial growth in the Town of North Sydney.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

FERGUSON, PHYLECIA - INVENTOR: NATL. SCIENCE FAIR - CONGRATS.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: It's not every day that a resident of East Hants gets to represent our province in a national competition, but Phylecia Ferguson did just that in 2018. As a Grade 11 student at Hants East Rural High, she entered the provincial science fair at Saint Mary's University.

As a dancer, she had witnessed the dramatic effect an injury can have on a dancer's performance, often sidelining them from an activity or the career they love. Using 3D technology, she created an orthopaedic device that would help minimize dancer injuries, and her innovation was chosen to be showcased on the national stage in Ottawa at a Canada-Wide Science Fair in May. Hants East is extremely proud to have had this dynamic young woman representing our province in this esteemed science fair.

I ask all members of this House to join me in recognizing the bright future of this young woman as I wish Phylecia success in all her future endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**VEINOT, JAYDA/VEINOT, KEEVAN:
NTL. BASKETBALL CHAMPS. - CONGRATS.**

JOHN LOHR: Madam Speaker, Jayda Veinot from the Acadia University women's team and her twin brother, Keevan Veinot from the Dalhousie University men's team, played in the national championship basketball tournaments this past weekend. Keevan was named the most valuable player at the Atlantic University Sport men's championships. Jayda played for Acadia at the women's national championship tournament in Toronto and was named an all-star at the Atlantic University Sport championships.

It's not surprising to see the Veinot twins achieve such success on the basketball court as their parents, Kevin Veinot and Jennifer Hale Veinot, were outstanding basketball players too.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Keevan and Jayda Veinot for their outstanding achievements in basketball.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

GRAN FONDO: GROWING POPULARITY - THANKS

GORDON WILSON: Madam Speaker, for the fourth year, the Clare area hosted hundreds of cyclists for its Baie Sainte-Marie Gran Fondo.

Since the first in 2015, the event has grown annually with the number of participants reaching 970 in 2018 - and this does not account for the 95 children who participated in the mini fondo on the Saturday.

For the main event on Sunday, participants would choose to bike one of four routes, ranging from a 161-kilometre Super Gran to the 35-kilometre Piccolo. This year, our local riders did very well. Stephen Jeddrey of Saint Alphonse finished first in the Super Gran and Roger Messenger of Digby finished first in the Medio.

There is also such a positive impact on our communities from the Fondo. On that weekend, there was not a room available for miles and the participants were impressed by the event's organization, our picturesque communities, and the hospitality of its people.

Congratulations to the organizers and the Fondo's 200 volunteers. The Fondo would not be possible without them and the support of our community, including the people lining the routes to encourage the cyclists. The 5th Baie Sainte-Marie Gran Fondo promises to be bigger and better.

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

**COLLINS, JASMIN - FIRE CHIEF (ON LEAVE):
INSPIRING WOMEN - CONGRATS.**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Madam Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Ms. Jasmin Collins of Louisbourg. Jasmin recently took a leave of absence after ten years as fire chief at Albert Bridge Volunteer Fire Department and 18 years in fire service. Jasmin was the first female elected fire chief in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (career or volunteer).

Amanda Morrison, the new assistant deputy chief of Albert Bridge Fire Department, said Collins is the reason that she is in the fire service today. Jasmin Collins feels the thing she is most proud of over her years as chief are the members of her department. She said it is like family being a member of a fire department.

I stand today to thank Jasmin for her years of service and wish her the best of luck as she is now doing a master's degree in counselling, which is something she was on the way to doing before but got involved with the fire service and put it on the shelf for a little while.

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

WELLNESS FUND: SUPPORTING NON-PROFITS - CONGRATS.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Madam Speaker, on January 23rd, the Guysborough County Community Health Board held an event at the Guysborough Legion to congratulate the many recipients of the 2018-2019 Wellness Fund.

This year, there were over 20 applications from non-profit community groups and organizations of which 11 were awarding funding for their charitable projects. The Eastern Communities Youth Association in Canso will be doing a preteen cooking class; the Guysborough County Adult Learning Association is heading up a project called Journaling using Technology; and the Mulgrave Garden Club will be making great use of their funding as soon as the ground thaws. These are just a sampling of the many wonderful initiatives being developed in Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie.

It is encouraging to see so many community non-profit organizations committed to improving the health and well-being of Guysborough County residents, and I wish them the best of success in their valued efforts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

WOODFORD, TIMOTHY - PHYS.: SAILOR OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.

KIM MASLAND: Madam Speaker, today I wish to recognize Liverpool family physician Dr. Timothy Woodford, who has been named Sail Nova Scotia's Sailor of the Year for 2018. Tim is a lifelong sailor, growing up on the beautiful Bras d'Or Lakes in Baddeck, Cape Breton. After moving to Liverpool in 1986, he continued to practice his passion, and several years ago began sailing lasers. He has competed internationally at the World Sailing Championships in Canada, Mexico, and Ireland where, in 2018, he finished third in his class at the Laser Grand Master World Championships.

Madam Speaker, please join me as I congratulate Tim on receiving this award and wish him every success in his forthcoming international sailing competitions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

RYAN, CINDY: STUDENT CAREER OPPORTUNITIES - THANKS

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Madam Speaker, growing our economy, increasing our population, and connecting young Nova Scotians and recent graduates with meaningful employment opportunities is vital to our success. Cindy Ryan of Armdale plays a role in this important process as the employer development coordinator in Dalhousie University's Faculty of Management.

For employers looking to hire recent graduates, MBA, co-op students and interns, Cindy is here to help. With over 15 years of experience in management, community development, recruitment and adult education, Cindy knows how to connect young people with the right opportunities. Cindy previously served as the provincial manager of the Federal Public Sector Youth Internship Program and as job developer for the YMCA, as well as the provincial coordinator of YREACH.

Helping more young people begin their careers here in our province is vital to our government and we thank Cindy Ryan for her work in this important field.

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

BOULARDERIE ELEM.: PIANO FUNDRAISING - CONGRATS.

KEITH BAIN: Madam Speaker, Boularderie school is more than a school. It's a true community school, a welcoming place to gather and many people speak of it as the gem of the community. When the school's 18-year-old piano outlived its usefulness, the communities in Boularderie pulled together.

On Sunday, February 24th, with only one month to prepare, the Boularderie Lakeview Choir - in co-operation with principal Brenda Lavery, the school advisory group,

the parent-teacher association and community volunteers - hosted a concert, Striking a Chord, to raise funds for a new piano.

The concert highlighted the talented school choir and band students and some Boularderie alumni. It was a spectacular array of talent and donations poured in. I rise today to congratulate all the hard work of the parents, volunteers and entertainers who raised an overwhelming support of \$4,456.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**ST. ANTHONY'S PARISH/ST. FAUSTINA MISSION:
FURNITURE BANK - THANKS**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the contributions of the St. Anthony's Parish Furniture Bank to the community of Dartmouth North. The St. Anthony of Padua Roman Catholic Church and St. Faustina Kowalska Polish Mission has served the community of Dartmouth North for many years and is currently overseen by Father Peter Hanna and Brother Nathanael Desroche.

In 2018 when the Circle of Care Furniture Bank started by Hector and Margie Muise had to close its doors, Father Peter and Brother Nathanael stepped in to take over the furniture bank's operations. Now located at St. Anthony's Parish Hall, the furniture bank is continuing the charitable work started by Hector and Margie all those years ago and can continue to serve those in need.

This is yet another example of how people in Dartmouth North have come together to support one another. In a community where many people struggle to make ends meet, the furniture bank is one way to help bridge the need and make that struggle a little easier.

I want to extend my thanks to Father Peter and Brother Nathanael on their work in caring for the people of Dartmouth North.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

DEEP SKY EYE OBSERV.: TOURISM BUS. OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce celebrated our local business community at its 2018 business awards and the Tourism Business of the Year was Deep Sky Eye Observatory. Deep Sky Eye Observatory provides amazing views of the night sky, the Milky Way, the Rings of Saturn. Guests at the observatory learn about astronomy while relaxing under the stars in comfort, with a blanket and binoculars and see into deep space with the observatory's large telescope.

I ask this House to join me in congratulating Deep Sky Eye Observatory on being named the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce's Tourism Business of the Year and

wish them continued success. I'll also add that I have been there myself, it's in the riding of the member for Argyle-Barrington, and it's really a great show that they put on there.

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

COLCLOUGH, EVAN: YOUNG CDNS. FORUM - RECOG.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to bring acknowledgement to Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage constituent Evan Colclough. Evan was one of approximately 450 high school students from across Canada chosen to attend the Forum for Young Canadians in Ottawa. Beginning in 1975 this non-partisan, bilingual educational program has been available for Canadian students.

Evan, an IB student at Cole Harbour High School, was grateful for this wonderful opportunity to experience democracy from such a unique and extraordinary opportunity. This was an unforgettable trip for Eastern Passage resident Evan, gaining leadership skills and insight into national politics and public affairs was an experience beyond measure. Meeting new people and developing new relationships and friendships has made this trip just as memorable.

I ask that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature join me in recognizing Evan Colclough as a representative of Nova Scotia at the 2019 Forum for Young Canadians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

CHICKENBURGER: 79 YRS. IN BUS. - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the owners and managers of the Chickenburger in Bedford for a couple of reasons: The Chick opened in 1940 and is believed to be the oldest drive-in restaurant in the country. On Saturday the Chick celebrated its 79th year in business. As well, last summer and Fall, the iconic Bedford restaurant held six free movie Saturday nights showing some classic Hollywood films. From *Footloose* to the *Princess Bride*, families had the opportunity to enjoy a free film under the stars creating a new tradition at this long-time Bedford landmark.

I'd like to send my congratulations to Micco Companies on providing a free fun-filled opportunity for families in Bedford and on continuing this business first started by the Innes family 79 years ago. Well done.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

[1:45 p.m.]

J.A. PARTICIPANTS: INSPIRING ENTREPRENEURS - RECOG.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize local Junior Achievement members. Currently there are six students involved in the program ranging from Grades 9 to 12. These students must design a product, take it to market, and perform all duties associated with a viable business enterprise. The product this year is a beautiful handcrafted necklace.

This program teaches these students about commitment, teamwork, workplace readiness, and finances. The primary objective of junior achievers is to inspire and prepare our youth for the global economy.

I am very pleased to specifically recognize Avery Glenn, VP of Corporate Social Responsibility. She is currently in Grade 9 at Northumberland Regional High School, and I look forward to the bright future she has ahead of her.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

ROGERS, WAYNE: BOOK, WALKING GUIDE . . . OLD SMB RD. - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Wayne Rogers, the author of *A Walking Guide to the Old St. Margaret's Bay Road*. During the early 2000s, Mr. Rogers, then a resident of Lake of the Woods subdivision, hiked deep into the lands now popularly known as Long Lake Provincial Park in search of the headstones and artifacts of families that had once inhabited this land, including the Umlahs, Wagners, Marriotts, Darts, and others.

This work led to the first edition of the walking guide. In 2001, Mr. Rogers also became a founding member of Five Bridges Wilderness Heritage Trust, an organization that continues to raise thousands of dollars each year to fund stewardship projects in and related to the Five Bridge Lakes wilderness area.

Mr. Rogers' most recent contribution to the community came in the form of the 2018 updated and expanded edition of *A Walking Guide to the Old St. Margaret's Bay Road*. This publication documents and makes available to the public a practical and enjoyable approach to learning about the natural and cultural history of the Chebucto Peninsula.

I ask the members of the House to join me in thanking Wayne Rogers for his significant contributions to the Timberlea-Prospect area and surrounding communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

NEW GLASGOW POLICE: OFFICER PROMOTIONS - RECOG.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, it's often said that no other profession demands a higher ethical standard than that of law enforcement. Police work is a career that requires the utmost dedication to doing the right thing. The good works that law enforcement does rarely makes the news. Members serve with fairness, courage, impartiality, and integrity.

Two of these members of the New Glasgow Regional Police Force have recently been promoted. Clare Corkum-Timmins became the first female to be promoted to corporal and Darryl Paris is the first African Nova Scotian to be promoted to sergeant within the ranks of the New Glasgow Regional Police Force. Both officers have been consistent with their duties and responsibilities to the local public.

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

THERAPEUTIC PAWS: THERAPY DOG CERT. - RECOG.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding achievement of a special furry someone in Fairview-Clayton Park. Stanley Paul Chisholm, a registered therapy dog at Fairview Heights Elementary School, recently completed a huge exam. Through Therapeutic Paws of Canada, Stanley became certified to work with young children. This means he's able to go to libraries and elementary schools for reading programs. He's also now able to visit and work with children at the IWK.

Therapy dogs are important resources for many adults and children who need help physically, mentally, socially, and educationally. Stanley will be an incredible benefit for many children at Fairview Heights.

I ask that members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Stanley and his owners for their hard work. I know Stanley will bring joy to many.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

CORMIER, ZOHEY: CUMB., 1st BABY OF 2019 - WELCOME

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to welcome Zoey Marie Irene Cormier as Cumberland's first-born baby of 2019. She was born at Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre weighing 6 pounds, 9 ounces, at 12:20 a.m. on January 1st, to parents Andrew Cormier and Lacy O'Blenis of Amherst. I wish Zoey strong health as she grows with her parents' care and guidance.

Please join me in welcoming Cumberland's first baby of 2019, Zoey Marie Irene Cormier.

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

NEW ROSS: COM. SCHOOL - CONGRATS.

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the dynamic community of New Ross on the transition of the New Ross Consolidated School to a community school. Community schools represent a partnership between the local municipal government, the regional school governing body, and the community.

When it seemed that the local school might close, Sheena Isenor and a dedicated group of local volunteers approached the Municipality of Chester to propose a community-school model. Under the new model, the school would be open for community use after school hours. The after-school operation administration for the programs and events that will take place at the school will be managed by the Municipality of Chester.

The municipal role will be ably handled by Nadine Hackney, the recently-appointed school coordinator who will oversee the scheduling of the space on behalf of the municipality.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating New Ross on the establishment of their community school and to wish them well in their future endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HENDSBEE, CHAD: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, January 30, 2019, was a heartbreaking moment for many of us in our community.

Chad Edward Allan Hendsbee passed away in a car accident at the young age of 45. Most of us had known Chad since we were kids, and Chad will be remembered for his bigger-than-life personality, his laugh, his heart, and his dimples. To his parents, Frank and Pam, you raised a heck of a man. To brothers Cory and Craig, we are all here for you. To his children, Chad Jr. and Kristin, we mourn beside you.

Our community will always remember and love you, Chad.

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

LUCAS, KIARA/LUCAS, MEKHI: FIRE RESCUE - RECOG.

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize 17-year-old Millwood High School student Kiara Lucas and 13-year-old Sackville Heights Junior High student Mekhi Lucas.

On February 27th, the two teenagers fought a kitchen fire in their home after an electric kettle caught on fire. After several trips outside for handfuls of snow, the two were able to finally smother the flames. All that was lost in their home were the kettle and a scorched pot. Although Kiara suffered minor burns to her hand, the situation could have turned out much worse.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize Kiara and her brother for their quick actions and wish them both best wishes in the future.

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

MACDONALD-MILES, SARAH: JEANS 4 TEENS - COMMEND

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to talk about the actions of some of our tremendous students and young leaders in the province's schools.

I was inspired to hear that Fall River Lockview High student Sarah MacDonald-Miles spoke to the ME to WE team at Georges P. Vanier Junior High. Sarah spoke about her Jeans 4 Teens campaign in support of Brunswick Street Mission.

When Sarah returned to the junior high a month later, the ME to WE students had collected 200 pairs of jeans for Sarah's project. The group was amazed at what they were able to accomplish and how good it felt to see how many students wanted to help. The students involved said this was a lesson in everyone working together to help make life better for others.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend and thank all the youth who took the time for these projects and are seeking ways to help others.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

C.B. NORDIC SKI CLUB: LOPPET - CONGRATS.

EDDIE ORRELL: I rise today to congratulate the Cape Breton Nordic Ski Club on their loppet. The term "loppet" is used to describe a great gathering of skiers who ski on a specifically groomed trail. The Nordic club has a strong partnership with Seaview Golf and Country Club and teaches cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Races and a cornucopia for all ages and skill sets were planned for the loppet.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate club founder John Hudec and the ever-increasing membership on a memorable loppet.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

KOZERA, DANIELLA: DANCE CONFERENCE - CONGRATS.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: I rise today to congratulate Daniella Kozera of Pine Grove on attending the British Association of Teachers of Dancing North America Highland Scholarships competition in Banff, Alberta.

Daniella's invitation to the competition came after she received honours in her dance exam marks. The weekend's events included a welcome reception, opportunity to meet with the executive members, officers, and North America's Highland coordinators. Attendees participated in classes, lectures, attended social events, and had the opportunity to have their dancing examined and critiqued.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you, and all members of this House of Assembly, please join me in congratulating Daniella on her accomplishment and wish her success in her future dancing career.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**LUNN, TIFFANY/LUNN, JESSICA:
MENTAL HEALTH - NEEDS CONSISTENT CARE**

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, when Tiffany Haley Lunn was on her way to the hospital for emergency mental health care, she insisted the hospital wouldn't help her and would just send her home. Her big sister, Jessica, took her to the ER anyway, determined to get her the help she needed.

For seven hours, Tiffany waited for treatment. For seven hours both she and her sister grew more and more discouraged, and more and more scared. Tiffany wasn't given the help she deserved because she would be returning to Manitoba for school a week later. She was given a prescription and sent on her way. Tiffany should have been wrong when she thought the hospital would turn her away and not help her.

I commend her sister, Jessica, for ensuring her sister see a doctor and doing everything she can to help create change.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

NICHOLSON, GREG - PASTOR: GENEROUS COM. SPIRIT - COMMEND

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a man who has been a devoted member of Clayton Park West and his parish for decades. I've known Pastor Greg Nicholson for years as a soccer dad, when our daughters were part of the Halifax Dunbrack Soccer Club.

For the past few years, Pastor Nicholson has provided a loving space for the Filipino Language and Culture Program at the Halifax Christian Church. He is no stranger to acceptance; he has opened his doors to 25 different nationalities which includes Persian, Ethiopian, and many others, for their events and functions. His reputation of encouragement is known throughout my riding.

Greg is on the board of directors as a treasurer for the Maritime Christian College in Prince Edward Island. He has coached his children's soccer and volleyball teams in his spare time.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the members of this House of Assembly join me in commending Pastor Greg Nicholson for his tremendous contributions to our community. He's a man who keeps on giving without expecting anything in return.

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

PORT MORIEN FIRE STN.: STAND-ALONE STATUS - CONGRATS.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to spread some good news regarding the Port Morien Fire Station. The Manitou Report, ordered by the CBRM Fire Services, recommended that the Port Morien Fire Station have stand-alone status. That's really good news for this community; it means longevity and infrastructure.

This means that a new facility will be built as soon as possible in the heart of the village, on a portion of land granted by CBRM, adjacent to the former Gowrie School. This facility will be post-disaster rated, which means that it can serve the community in times of disaster. Plans for fundraising and help from all levels of government, and this is what is very important, I hope the government is listening - all levels of government - are being worked on.

I stand here, Mr. Speaker, to congratulate the Port Morien Fire Station and the men and women who have served in it over the years for a job well done in supporting their community.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring the members' attention to the East Gallery, where today we are joined by a former Page of this House of Assembly and a very good friend, Colleen McNeil. I would ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth - with 40 seconds.

WARP TECH INT'L.: EXPORT ACHIEVEMENT AWARD - CONGRATS.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce celebrated our local business community at its 2018 Business Awards. The Export Achievement Award was won by Warp Tech International.

Warp Tech is the leading manufacturer and custom fabricator in the netting industry for over 50 years, custom designing and offering a broad range of netting products, including applications for aquaculture and fisheries, sports netting, safety netting, construction, automotive safety, and military applications.

I ask this House to join me in congratulating Warp Tech International on winning the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce 2018 Export Achievement Award and wish them continued success.

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

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY**ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

H&W: #HOWMANYNSHAIWK - 60 STORIES

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, our caucus shared stories from the mental health system failing Nova Scotians. Some of these stories came from the #HowManyNSHAIWK, which is an advocacy group pushing for client-centred mental health care. They presented 60 stories of Nova Scotians' experiences with the health system to directors at NSHA and IWK, and they were told their stories would be shared with the Premier and the Minister of Health and Wellness. I'd like to ask the Premier: Can the Premier confirm that he has seen the 60 stories?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I have not seen those 60 stories at this time. I look forward though to having a chance to review those. I want to tell the honourable member we continue to make investments in mental health, support those families who require support. We all know early detection is an important part. That's why we're continuing to provide those wraparound services for early detection to make sure that we support families and those individuals who require support as quickly as possible.

TIM HOUSTON: The admin team of the #HowManyNSHAIWK group hasn't heard from anyone since the meeting took place with the directors over a year ago. These

are 60 stories. They are important first-voice stories of people's experiences with our mental health and addictions systems. I'd like to ask the Premier: Since the members of the public that came forward with their stories were told that they would be shared with the Premier and the Minister of Health and Wellness a year has passed. He hasn't heard from those, hasn't seen the stories, hasn't heard from the group. I wonder if the Premier can just give some thoughts on what he feels about a whole, entire year passing and those files being shoved to the side.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. He would know Dr. Stan Kutcher, now Senator Kutcher, along with Starr Dobson, who put together a panel, and I'm sure those stories were part of formulating the response that we had. It was very clear that the investments we need to make need to be evidence-based. Not only would those stories have been part of that but talking to clinicians and other health care providers across the province would be what would formulate the investments that we have made.

I know he would know the investments we've made in the public education system in and around putting wraparound services around early detection, supports that we're providing both through health and community services to help families and those who are requiring support who continue on. I look forward to the budget being tabled on March 26th so we continue to build on that work we've already been doing.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, to improve the system we need to be listening to those who have experienced this system and those that are working in the system. The mandate of this advocacy group was very simple. They have experienced the system. They have identified the flaws and they want to work with government to improve it. These are important first-voice accounts and they should be welcomed by this government. Who knows better what can be done to improve the system than those who have experienced it. There are 60 stories right here in this instance; 60 people shared their experiences from their darkest moments of trying to deal with this system. They want to create change.

My question for the Premier is: How many people need to fall through the cracks of this system before this government says a year is too long, I want to hear those stories, and I want to act on them?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue that all members of this House take seriously. To suggest that those 60 stories wouldn't have been part and then provided to the people who are making public policy is just simply unfair to Dr. Kutcher, to Starr Dobson, and to other members. This is a very, very serious issue that we're trying to provide supports around families.

What we've done is based this on evidence. We've heard very clearly we need to provide early detection. How do we support the wraparound services within our schools, that has come from clinicians who have listened to stories, who have been out working

identifying and working with families and those who require our support? That's why we've done the same thing in and around community services, providing supports in and around those families who would require that support and will continue to make investments.

I look forward to the budget being tabled on the 26th, but let me be clear about something. This is evidence based. Those stories are an important part of the journey we're on, as well as many other Nova Scotians and families who have come forward with their own experiences. Let me be very clear, it has helped formulate the policies and the direction of this government and those who put those policies together, the experts.

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

ENVIRON.: GHG EMISSIONS - COMMITMENT

GARY BURRILL: Over the last decade, Mr. Speaker, in Nova Scotia, we have reduced our emissions by six megatons. I think we all recognize that this is the path, the trajectory that we want the province to be on. But the government has committed to reduce our emissions for the coming decade by just 1.3 megatons.

The IPCC says that what's needed is a rapid escalation of the level of ambition about reduction of emissions. I want to ask the Premier: Does he think that a drop from six megatons to 1.3 qualifies as a rapid escalation of the level of ambition?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for his question. I want to thank Nova Scotians from one end of this province to the other who have continued to work alongside successive governments when it comes to the issue of reducing our greenhouse gas emission. We are currently at about 30 per cent of 2005 levels, we will be on track to be at least 50 per cent below that level by 2030. We're continuing to see a decline in the reduction of greenhouse gas and improving of what's happening inside our own province.

Efficiency Nova Scotia has done an outstanding job of working with communities and individuals - Nova Scotians and businesses - to ensure that we green up our own footprints. There are many stats that will tell you that the green economy in this province is going to outpace the rest of the economy as it is right now, there's about a 5 per cent growth in the green economy and about 2 per cent across the rest of the economy. Those are all important signs that not only are we improving the environment, but we're also growing the economy with it.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, none of this changes the fact that the IPCC report made clear that our emission reduction targets are not strong enough to avoid the cost associated with global warming above 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Information acquired through freedom of information by our caucus shows that government staff recommended a more ambitious target of 50 per cent below 2030 levels, but that the government opted for the weaker target of 45 per cent below those levels. Will the Premier explain why his government chose a weaker emissions reduction target and was actually recommended by the government's own staff?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member would have been in this House, he's listened to me each time, I've never said 45 per cent. We're on target to be below 50 per cent. I think we can actually achieve higher.

We continue to make investments to help individual Nova Scotians reduce their footprint whether it is investments in insulation programs; transition to give people new opportunities to heat their homes; all kinds of innovative ways that we're partnering with communities, businesses and many other organizations with Efficiency Nova Scotia, to continue to use the dollars that we have to help Nova Scotia reduce their footprint.

At the same time making sure that we, like all across the country, reduce our use of coal, but doing it in a way that doesn't shock the pocketbook of Nova Scotians. We're doing it in a balanced approach that is stabilizing energy prices for the first time in over a decade and at the same time reducing our greenhouse gases and growing our economy.

GARY BURRILL: In our province we've been fortunate to have a framework for tri-partisan support on climate action, the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act (EGSPA). That Act, when it was established, was precedent setting and attracted attention from many places, but the Liberal Government has ignored and neglected the Act since that time.

Under that Act, there's a provision for a comprehensive review and consultation to take place every five years. It took place as scheduled and called for in 2012, but it didn't take place in 2017, it didn't take place in 2018, and by now it's fallen two full years behind. I want to ask the Premier: Why has his government allowed the consultation and review process for EGSPA to be ignored and neglected now for two full years?

THE PREMIER: Again I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As he would know, that process is ongoing. I think I heard the minister yesterday was talking about that work with our partners to ensure that we continue to do that review. He would also know the very program he's talking about has two components: protecting the environment of the province, continue to green the economy, and at the same time growing the economy.

I want to remind the honourable member that we continue to reduce our greenhouse gas production in this province. We'll be 50 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. At the same time, as I said a few minutes ago, we're growing jobs in this province. More young

people see a future for themselves, they're seeing the green economy outpace the rest of the economy. All in a positive way.

We have balanced budgets, we're able to invest in the economy, we're investing in the environment. At the same time, we'll invest in our people so they see a future for themselves here.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

H&W: INTL. MED. GRADS - FAIRNESS

EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. A report in the *Cape Breton Post* this morning tells a story of Mr. Bill MacPherson, and I will table that report.

Mr. MacPherson is from Glace Bay and his journey brought him from a housekeeper at a community hospital to medical school graduate. But because he is an international medical graduate, he can't get a local residency. He applied for residency in Inverness, but he wasn't selected. That residency position is still unfilled.

My question to the minister: Was he aware of Mr. MacPherson's story and, if so, does he think it's fair that international medical grads struggle for residencies here when we have such a high demand for physicians?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I am pleased to take the opportunity to remind the members of the Legislature that Nova Scotia recognizes the important role that residency positions play in the completion of the training for medical graduates; indeed, part of a national program that matches applicants to the seats.

We added 10 family physician seats and 15 specialist seats that are part of this year's match program, so there are more opportunities for medical students to obtain residency positions here in the Province of Nova Scotia this year.

EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, one empty residency position. One medical school graduate looking for a medical position. It doesn't take a genius to figure out one plus one equals two. It works out. I wonder if the minister can grasp the bind we're in here. We have qualified, hard-working graduates from this province. They want to practise here. They want to grow their families here and contribute to their communities. These communities need these graduates but, as Mr. MacPherson says, an international medical graduate is always considered lesser.

Is the minister satisfied that the NSHA is doing enough to help our own international medical graduates stay and work here in Nova Scotia?

RANDY DELOREY: As the member would know, the matching process is done nationally. The fact is that international medical graduates, I believe we have four positions reserved for international medical graduates in the first round of matching. Mr. Speaker, that just finished that round, as the member noted, there are some vacancies. In the second round of matching, which is under way now, international medical graduates are as eligible as any other Canadian medical school graduate.

I encourage that individual and other international medical graduates to apply for any of the vacancies. I assure the member opposite that the member for Glace Bay has brought the concern forward. We've had the opportunity to talk and explain what the process is for the matching of medical students to residency positions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

H&W - DART. GEN. HOSP.: PRESSURES - ACTION

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Yesterday the situation at the Dartmouth General Hospital reached a crisis level and not for the first time. There were 23 patients without beds. Fifteen of them were in the emergency department, completely blocking flow to emergency care, five were in overflow areas, and three were being treated in the family lounges. People waited hours for triage and elective surgeries were cancelled.

The Dartmouth General Hospital is constantly beyond capacity and needs assistance from the NSHA and the Central Zone. The waiting room is full of people without doctors. There are no beds available for the critically ill. They are filled with patients waiting for placement in a nursing home or transfer to Halifax.

Mr. Speaker, while we know that investments are being made for orthopaedics and other things in the Dartmouth General Hospital, none of that is going to stem this problem. Can the minister tell the House what the NSHA is doing now to alleviate the pressure on the Dartmouth General Hospital?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: As the member would be aware, as we talked about yesterday, I believe attaching people to primary care physicians and providing primary care services is one means to improve access to care and reduce pressures on emergency departments. That work is under way across the province, including Dartmouth.

I've previously mentioned through the immigration stream, Mr. Speaker, we've had five family physicians commence work in the Dartmouth area. Each of them who have been here since the Fall are taking on full patient loads because these are individuals who have several years of experience and are able to ramp up their practices very quickly.

We are taking the concerns very seriously and we're working to attach more people in Dartmouth and across the province to primary care services.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, five new family doctors in downtown Dartmouth is great; our office has referred lots of people to them. It's a drop in the bucket for what we need and it's not what I'm asking about. I'm asking about the Dartmouth General Hospital.

[2:15 p.m.]

Doctors and nurses at the Dartmouth General have been ingenious when it comes to solving problems. We have heard about it from the minister, and we have heard about in this House. They established an offload program to actually help ambulances get back on the road way before we saw that in other facilities. Now that program is being expanded. They have had to do it. With a catchment of over 130,000 people - 130,000 people, that's the number of people on Cape Breton Island - they're one of the largest hospitals in the province. They cannot continue to operate with 25 per cent of their beds full of patients waiting for transfer and no added resources.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to finding a solution for the seniors stranded at the Dartmouth General who need long-term care and the people waiting in the emergency room?

RANDY DELOREY: As the member would know, infrastructure investments are being made for the central region. The system took a broad look at this to identify what the long-term needs of the system for infrastructure are going to be. That plan was released. It identified additional beds throughout the system. Dartmouth General, as the member noted very clearly, is receiving many upgrades and expansions to services within that facility. Other aspects are being added to other locations, the new clinic expansions and redevelopment here in metro.

This is all part of the work that we recognize needs to be done to bring the system into a modern state and provide the infrastructure for those clinicians to provide the care that all Nova Scotians require.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

TIR: PROMISED HANTSPORT ABOITEAU - UPDATE

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. In January, the Leader of the Official Opposition and I attended the protest in Hantsport held by the Aboiteau Action Group. At that time, the local MLA told the protest that a temporary fix would be in before the Spring melt and that a permanent solution would follow. Well, the Spring melt is now under way. I know it's cold out, but Spring weight restrictions are on, so we're in Spring now.

My question for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal is: When will the residents of Hantsport get the aboiteau they were promised in January?

HON. LLOYD HINES: I really appreciate the question from the member opposite. Perhaps he could visit the site and see the busy construction site that it has turned into with a solution which has turned out to be a permanent solution. That is being implemented, and we expect to have it in place and completed in the next several weeks.

I would also like to table a very supportive letter from the Aboiteau Action Group in Hantsport thanking this government for the excellent efforts they have made to restore that important piece of infrastructure.

JOHN LOHR: The Oxford English Dictionary defines aboiteau as follows, “Especially in the Maritime Provinces of Canada: a sluice gate in a dyke, which allows water draining from the land to flow out but does not allow sea water to enter,” and I will table that.

This government’s release stated that the fix for the breached aboiteau would place two concrete culverts where the former wooden structures failed. At a public meeting last summer, the department staff indicated the new aboiteau was estimated to cost \$6 million to \$8 million. The difference in the estimated cost and the announced cost have people wondering just what type of structure the province is planning.

My question for the minister is this: Will the people of Hantsport be getting a new aboiteau or simply culverts for the water to pass through?

LLOYD HINES: I thank the member for reminding all Nova Scotians about the tremendous ingenuity that was shown by our forebearers in the instance of the Hantsport aboiteau. We have records going back over 115 years. Absolutely, the aboiteau is a gate valve to hold back the tides, which of course, is really a challenge.

The truth is with the Hantsport aboiteau, the wooden culverts had actually failed for a long period of time and were acting as a culvert. In our foresight, we are providing a solution to equally divide the water that was available through the wooden culverts, but with the proviso of being able to add gates to those two new concrete structures.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

H&W - AMBULANCE AVAIL.: ROCK BOTTOM - RESPOND

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians are rightfully fearful of the growing problems with ambulance offloads right across this province. Just yesterday, first thing in the morning, Halifax had only one ambulance available, and those responders were actually already in overtime.

Over the course of the day, there were only two units available in Cumberland County; there were only two units available in Queens and Lunenburg; and there were no units - zero - available in Colchester County. I am sure the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is deeply concerned about that.

My question to the minister is: Does the Minister of Health and Wellness believe that we have actually hit rock bottom with the chaos that we are witnessing in emergency, or can we expect that the worst is yet to come?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for the question. The fact of the matter is, I've had our partners - Nova Scotia Health Authority and EHS - come together to evaluate the situation.

We know that part of the challenges with ambulance availability relate to ambulance offloads - that is, the transition from paramedics to hospitals and emergency departments. They have identified ways to improve that and they are taking action to do just that, to get those ambulances back out in the communities that they serve.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Evaluation period is over. It is time to act.

I know the minister can appreciate that this is the reality facing paramedics and emergency care workers in this province every single day, 24/7. Just imagine being a paramedic and not being able to tell your family when you'll be home, because if you don't put in those extra hours, you're putting other people's lives at risk. Imagine being someone with a compromised immune system living in fear that an ambulance will take hours when they need it the most.

Will the minister please admit that his government has failed the emergency care system so that we can start moving forward?

RANDY DELOREY: Again, to reiterate to the member, in fact, action is under way.

As I indicated to the . . . (Interruption)

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

RANDY DELOREY: Dartmouth General, as has been noted earlier today, introduced a new program to speed the transition between the ambulance and the hospital. We are seeing progress in the Valley to implement a similar type of model.

We know that there were recently, within the last month or so, reports out of the Halifax Infirmary where the Health Authority has been focused on rapid assessment unit space that was supposed to be dedicated to the emergency department services, which has

been used by other services, being reclaimed and dedicated where it should have been to help improve the situation there, as well. Action is under way.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

H&W - OPTH. SERVICES: ADEQUATE LEVEL - ENSURE

EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

It has come to my attention that another doctor is closing their practice in Cape Breton. Dr. Sivakumar announced that she will be closing her ophthalmology practice this summer, and effective immediately, she will no longer be accepting referrals. She serves approximately 9,000 patients. The remaining two clinics are now recommending that their patients seek referrals off the island.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Does he have a plan to ensure adequate ophthalmology services in Cape Breton?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as the member would know, the Nova Scotia Health Authority's recruitment initiatives are underway.

For family physicians and specialty services, when a vacancy comes up, efforts are made to fill those positions - to advertise and promote. Of course that work is underway for vacancies throughout the province. Whether it is ophthalmology, family physicians, or other vacancies throughout the health care system, work is under way and will continue as we work to fill those vacancies to ensure Nova Scotians get the care they need.

EDDIE ORRELL: We had six ophthalmologists a short time ago and now we are down to two, who are either working part-time or not taking new patients. The minister should have seen this coming.

More than two and a half years ago, Dr. Sivakumar was quoted on working conditions for the Northside doctors. I will table that article, Mr. Speaker. She said that doctors who were leaving cited management at the root of the problem, and she suggested that doctors should be given an anonymous exit interview. What a novel idea, Mr. Speaker.

So, I want to ask the minister: When will the minister open his eyes, admit there is a crisis in health care and have his department or the NSHA reach out to Dr. Sivakumar and other doctors to find out the reasons they are leaving their practices?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as we know people who choose to finish their careers, sometimes that's retirement decisions. We know that the medical industry, medical services, is not the only area where the demographics are at a stage where people are

reaching that point in their life, where they would be choosing that it's time to finish their work careers and move on to the next stage of life.

That's important for those individuals who have served their communities, served Nova Scotians well. We want to recognize that service, Mr. Speaker. But again, as has always been the case, when someone gets to that point in their career, we need to replace them. We do recruitment initiatives and we will continue that work to replace those physicians, to provide care for all Nova Scotians.

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

ENVIRON. - SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAGS: PROV. BAN - IMPLEMENT

LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Environment. Businesses, community groups, and municipalities have all called for a provincial ban on single-use plastic bags, but government is refusing to listen. The result is, municipalities that want to reduce waste and protect our oceans, are starting to go it alone. We're going to end up with a patchwork of regulations unless the province takes responsibility.

So, my question for the minister today is: Why does she refuse to implement clear province-wide standards to reduce and eliminate single-use plastic bags in Nova Scotia?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, it certainly is a timely question that I appreciate from the member opposite. This is something that we have discussed at broad length in our own caucus. I've talked about it in the department with department staff. We know that single-use plastic bags are one to 2 per cent of what is in the solid-waste stream going into landfills right now. We know there could be some solution.

We're certainly working with our stakeholders. We're working with the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities. We are speaking with them and other stakeholder groups. We may have something in the future or we may decide to put it off for a bit.

LENORE ZANN: Let me make it easy for the minister - just pass our bill. We just introduced a bill banning plastic bags across Nova Scotia. I'll make it very easy for her. Just say yes. Just pass our bill, I think that would be a great solution. The statistics the minister gave of 2 per cent actually came out before China refused to take our plastic bags, our one-use single plastics. So, we need to get up to speed with those.

Mr. Speaker, Montreal is doing it, P.E.I is doing it, Australia is doing it, Victoria is doing it, Halifax is doing it. Jurisdictions all around the world have introduced bans. Why? Because plastic is the single biggest killer in the oceans.

Now, Nova Scotia is a coastal province. We rely on clean oceans. Nova Scotians are ready to do it, but without a provincial ban it will be slower, less effective, and more confusing.

THE SPEAKER: Does the member have a question?

LENORE ZANN: The time for talk is over; it is time for action. What will it take for the minister to support a provincial ban on single-use plastic bags now?

MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I have here a resolution from the HRM Charter, that they have the authority to make bylaws for municipal purposes respecting bags. I will table this document.

Beyond that, I have certainly looked at her proposed legislation here - it is one page. Before the province goes forward with any kind of legislation, we have to make sure we do our due diligence. We have to make sure that we're talking to the stakeholders, that we're talking to the public, that we do a full consultation. When we are ready to table any kind of a bill, Mr. Speaker, it will be one that has substance and will work for Nova Scotia.

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

H&W: MS RATES HIGH - RESEARCH NEEDED

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you, is to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Canada has the highest rates of multiple sclerosis in the world. As a matter of fact, it's been described as Canada's disease. This incurable, degenerative condition impacts hundreds of thousands of Canadians. The majority of them are women. The statistics are staggering, Mr. Speaker. For every one man diagnosed with MS, three women are diagnosed, and due to the symptoms of the condition, it is frequently misdiagnosed.

My question to the minister is: What work is this government doing to help with the early identification of MS, a condition that affects many, many women in our province?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I sincerely want to thank the member for bringing his question about this condition to the floor of the Legislature. It is a very debilitating condition. What I will do is I will get some more details.

Some of the information, I have off the top of my head - I know, from a research perspective, there's a program that about 18 months or maybe two years ago was established at Dalhousie University. I know that at St. F.X. University just this past Fall there was a new lab that received some investment. Some of the work being done there I believe does connect back with work that's being done at Dalhousie as well.

[2:30 p.m.]

We're seeing our academic institutions that do have some clinical research being able to put things together to help further research in the space. Nova Scotia has the opportunity. It is something, but as far as more specifics, I'm happy to look into it a little further and get more details about what is going on in this space.

ALFIE MACLEOD: Thank you, minister, for that answer. As the country with the world's highest MS rates, the expectation is that Canada will be a place that helps to find the cure. Mr. Speaker, 80 per cent of the people living with MS are unemployed because of the way the disease attacks their body, leaving them unable to work. This is especially troubling for mothers who are responsible for caring for their children and find themselves unable to do so because of their illness. Research is the only way to beat this disease. This is not a record we as Canadians should be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, is this government going to keep working to stop the rise of Nova Scotians having MS?

RANDY DELOREY: Again, I really sincerely do, both personally and professionally, thank the member for bringing this to the floor. It is a condition that hits home to many members. I know of at least two of us in this Legislature that have family members who have MS, at various stages. We know how close and how quickly it can hit home. Of course, we're committed to continuing that research. We know we rely on the many fantastic clinical and academic researchers that we have across this province to do that.

I'm looking forward to seeing the work at Dalhousie, St. F.X., and our other institutions coming together, collaborating along with our clinicians to come up with - hopefully it is the cure coming out of Nova Scotia. It would be fantastic. We certainly have the researchers and the human capacity to do so.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

H&W - MIDWIFERY PROG.: SUPPORTS - ENSURE

KIM MASLAND: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. It was only a year ago that midwives on the South Shore marched on MLA offices demanding more supports. Now the fight is in northern Nova Scotia, where on December 22nd, expectant mothers were told that midwife services they had been relying on at St. Martha's were being suspended. Between the ongoing issues retaining midwives and the cancelling of government-run prenatal classes, this government is making it very difficult to have a baby in this province.

Could the minister please advise if there is any collaboration happening with the Association of Nova Scotia Midwives to ensure proper supports are in place for midwives?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: What I can advise the member is certainly we recognized the challenges that presented themselves about this time last year. We took the initiative, the action, hearing from both the association and midwives that having only two members available in a community was not sufficient to maintain the services if one was off on leave for any reason, which is what happened last year. We added additional resources. We increased the number of physicians recruited to fill those positions, not just in the South Shore region but also in Antigonish, in the Eastern Zone, which has another site, and we've added a position in the city.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, with multiple leaves coming together at the same time, the third position was not sufficient at that time, but we continue to work to stabilize and provide these services.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, the Association of Nova Scotia Midwives is saying there is a lack of understanding of what midwifery is and how it should be implemented, and it is at the root of the staffing issues at St. Martha's. A midwife came to Antigonish to pursue an opportunity and left only two months later. A 2011 report said midwifery in Nova Scotia could not survive in its current state.

Mr. Speaker, it's eight years later, and we're on the brink of collapse. My question to the minister is: What is being done right now to save the midwifery program in Nova Scotia?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, again the first priority is to stabilize those sites that we do have, fill those vacancies. The services that have been established and committed to need to be stabilized and secured.

As part of that, the next step is looking at the potential for further expansion, but we do need to ensure that we have the stabilization of those services in the communities in which the services are being offered. Again, that recruitment and those efforts are under way.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

H&W - CONTINUING CARE: CLIENT INFO. - PROTOCOL FOLLOW

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. In our roles as elected officials, we are all aware of the importance of the confidentiality as we deal with our constituents. In our constituency office, as in most, we have authorization forms signed by those individuals wishing our assistance on their behalf. These forms permit MLAs to share and gather information that might otherwise be only released to that individual, and they allow us to work with few difficulties. That does not seem to be the case for Continuing Care in some of their offices.

My question: Is the minister aware that even with signed authorization, Continuing Care refuses to do more than make general comments?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: To answer the question, I'm not aware of that in a broad context. Certainly, there have been a couple of instances. I believe the member's colleague, the member for Argyle-Barrington, did raise concerns in that community, but it's not a widespread issue or concern that I'm aware of. Again, we work to educate and ensure that people know the right processes that should be followed.

PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, this agency refuses to acknowledge the direction of the constituents' wishes to have an issue handled by someone on their behalf. Most agencies are very accommodating. In my office, we have had constituents request our assistance, and during our efforts, we are advised by the agency's supervisor that they could not share particular information, even after the authorization. Privacy and confidentiality are very important, but so is the ability of all of us to assist our constituents.

My question to the minister is: Could the minister look into this matter and find out why this agency will not follow the protocol that is followed by most agencies?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I certainly will do that. I'll get the specific details from the member offline. As I said at the beginning, by and large, we do see people following the processes and ensuring that they get the information the people - residents, clients, or substitute decision makers - are looking to have that information brought to.

I was aware of only one other instance where that was brought up as a concern. If the member is raising it, we'll dig in to that and get that rectified.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

HOUSING N.S. - CLIENT SUPPORTS: SYSTEM REVIEW - UNDERTAKE

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Housing Nova Scotia. I was distressed and frustrated this winter to learn of a woman who is under-housed and vulnerable and unable to access support in housing because of the Metro Regional Housing Authority's policy on arrears. This woman has a debt to a housing authority from 20 years ago, and that policy requires that she make a payment on that debt, which she cannot afford to do, before she can even get on the wait-list. As a result, she remains vulnerable and in unstable housing. This story is not unique.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister think it is right that someone should be blocked from housing support because of a decades-old debt?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the honourable member for bringing this question to the floor of the House. What she and her constituent should know is that all

they have to do is make a very tiny payment. It could be \$5 or \$2 or whatever, but make arrangements. They just have to deal with it, and they can get on the housing wait-list.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, indeed, my understanding is that once a tenant is in housing, there can be a payment arrangement with a tiny payment each month. However, I spoke yesterday with a front-line social worker who is supporting an individual who needs housing, and in order to get on the wait-list, he has to pay \$480 on a 30-year-old debt of \$600.

This is not working across the system. I want the minister to please undertake a review across the system so that there are fair policies in all housing authorities.

KELLY REGAN: Again, I want to thank the honourable member for bringing this matter to my attention. I want to assure her that we'll be dealing with it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

H&W - YARMOUTH REG. HOSP.: SPECIALIST SHORTAGE - ADDRESS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, in order for a modern hospital to operate it needs a number of special doctors, surgeons, radiologists, anaesthetists. Yarmouth has a rotation of four doctors that can provide the service so that surgery and procedures can be done at our regional hospital, but only three doctors were providing the service. Two are leaving, and I hear one is set to retire.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: What is the Health Authority doing to recruit or at least provide help to the remaining anaesthetist?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, again, as with other vacancies, the Health Authority recruitment efforts are ongoing. I can advise the member that it's my understanding that there is a new recruit identified to start, I believe, on April 1st to help in this situation.

I can also assure the member opposite that the physician leadership team at Yarmouth Regional have taken this situation seriously. They've contacted their colleagues in other parts of the province, and I've been assured, and they've been assured, that other regions will provide support to Yarmouth as the recruitment efforts continue and they fill those vacancies.

CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, the Yarmouth Regional Hospital is very important for our area, especially with the constant closures at Roseway and a lot of Digby as well. Quite honestly, it could be one of the solutions for the problem that we're seeing of the long surgery wait-lists at the hospital in the Valley, the Kentville hospital.

My question is: How are we going to preserve surgeons in Yarmouth if we're unable to recruit or even fill that full rotation of four anaesthetists?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I'd certainly agree - and I think my colleague, the member for Yarmouth, would agree as well - having been to the Yarmouth Regional on a number of occasions. That it is a fantastic facility with a lot of great staff there providing great services to the region.

As I had indicated, the leadership team there, including the physician leadership team, has taken the concerns and the situation seriously. They've connected with their colleagues to ensure that they do have the support. I'm pleased that their colleagues within - and this is one of the advantages of having a provincial health authority - that they're able to lean on the services and availability of specialists in other parts of the province to backfill and support while recruitment positions get filled.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

TIR - TRENTON CONNECTOR: TRAFFIC STUDY - UPDATE

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Time and time again my colleagues and myself from Pictou County have asked the minister questions with regard to the Trenton Connector, which is located in Pictou West but borders on Pictou East and Pictou Centre. This is a very dangerous intersection.

In Fall 2018, I asked the minister to provide an update on the future of a roundabout being built there. His answer was that he had a chance to visit that location and that his department was reviewing the information and the traffic study that was presented to him.

Can the minister give me an update with regard to further improvements at this location?

[2:45 p.m.]

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the question from the member opposite. In our department of course, safety is paramount and in this particular instance we are reviewing the particular intersection.

No decision has been made at this point in terms of what the way forward is. It is certainly on our radar and I would be more than happy to share the progress with the member whenever she is available.

KARLA MACFARLANE: It's disheartening that you're still reviewing it and that there has been no consideration given to a roundabout. We are patiently waiting. We

recently had a meeting with over 75 people that included municipal councillors, RCMP, paramedics, firefighters, et cetera.

This intersection actually was the cause of five deaths. Five deaths, and we don't want to see a sixth. Although I can appreciate it does take time, it takes money to build a roundabout, which is what we're requesting, I would ask that the minister to commit today to lowering the speed limit from 80 to 50 in that area, so we don't have to witness that sixth death.

LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the information provided by the member. I was unaware of the public meeting and I'm not sure if we had any staff there or not. It would be unfortunate if we weren't included in the process. If they were there, I will find out who they were and what the actual situation is because one death in Nova Scotia is too many for our program.

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

H&W - C.B. HOSPITALS: PHYSICIAN SHORTAGES - ADDRESS

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. As is known, the government announced that it would close both the Northside General Hospital and the New Waterford Consolidated Hospital in Cape Breton.

Government has also promised to expand the Glace Bay Hospital and the Cape Breton Regional Hospital. Mr. Speaker, the Glace Bay Regional ER has already been closed most of 2019. In fact, it has been closed so they can use the doctors to keep the Regional Hospital open.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Cape Breton already suffers from a shortage of skilled physicians, and expanding infrastructure without addressing the human resource piece will only heighten the need for more skilled physicians without actually addressing the major problem.

So, Mr. Speaker, the question for the minister is simple: How will the minister address the desperate need for physicians and specialists for these Cape Breton hospitals?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as I've previously indicated we have been engaged to understand what types of programs. We have incentive programs that the department provides to support physicians for a commitment of return of service. We provide some compensation, whether it is tuition relief or opportunities to help offset other debt, for setting up their practices in order for a commitment for a return of service.

We've made changes, Mr. Speaker, to various incentives for short-term filling of positions; the locum programs, including the ED department shifts. We anticipate, of course, that the infrastructure itself will help as the overall plan for the entire region is implemented and the physicians in the region are providing services at the two hospitals and two primary care centres.

ALFIE MACLEOD: Thank you very much for that explanation about build it and they will come. I think they call that the field of dreams, Mr. Speaker.

As I stated, this minister stands up time after time in this House telling us about all the incentives. We've asked a simple question on more than one occasion: How many doctors have left?

Twenty ready to go. We had a resignation last night of a very skilled specialist, going from a department that had six down to one, two people. Mr. Speaker, when in the world will this minister finally tell the people of Cape Breton how bad the situation is? There are doctors leaving daily. There is no plan in place to bring doctors into our community.

We're going to build big buildings. Well, maybe the plan is they're going to make it long-term care beds, because we don't have any of them either. Mr. Speaker, when is this minister going to realize that infrastructure does not replace human doctors?

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 85.

Bill No. 85 - Forest Industry Sustainability Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to bring the voice of the forestry sector to this floor of the Legislature, through Bill No. 85, the Forest Industry Sustainability Act. When questioned, this is not a bill that will replace the Lahey report. As a matter of fact, this is a bill that we believe the stakeholders, once created on that task force, should use the Lahey report as a tool; a tool to secure their industry, something that they're fearing for.

We're in dire straits here in the forest industry and I'm sure many MLAs here on the floor have heard calls throughout their constituency. We're asking to create this stakeholders task force, if you will - remove the elected officials off it, remove the bureaucrats - put it in the hands of the people that know the industry best. They're fearful, they're unknowing what will take place.

Forestry is one of the main industries that built this great province, along with fisheries and agriculture to name a few others. Forestry in this province is like a spider's web. There isn't a corner that isn't touched with this sector. It reaches from Cumberland, Colchester, Shelburne, Digby, Cape Breton, Guysborough. The whole province is affected with this economy. As I speak a little bit about the economy, there have been numbers that range around from the sector - \$2.1 billion industry that we've seen a couple of years ago within this province for the forestry sector.

We have families that are involved with the forestry sector, whether it be woodlot owners, sawmill owners, contractors, harvester operators. Some families, it's sixth or seventh generation, that are living off their land, tending to their property to ensure it's a sustainable forest. This is their culture in life. Where do we go from here? If this industry comes to an abrupt stop, how do we retrain those thousands of people?

There are mechanics, technicians, operators looking for the future of this industry. Eleven thousand Nova Scotians, either directly or indirectly impacted, with forestry in Nova Scotia. This is a huge economic issue for our province.

Let me take you on a little tour through rural Nova Scotia. In fact, let me take you to my constituency of Cumberland South, where a man just up the road from my residence employs 20 people in this sector. He owns many pieces of equipment and he is scared to death. He is scared to death. He doesn't know what's going to happen in the next year or two within forestry and this is all he and his family have known. He has four boys. His question to me a few weeks ago was: Do I just walk away, do I hand down a business to my boys that I know will not profit for them, that will leave them in debt, that their children will never benefit from in this great province?

These are hard-working people that work in the woods, day in and day out. Many times, they have no idea what's happening on the floor of this Legislature. There is a lot of unknown. So, does he hand his business down? Does he try to sell his equipment off now and his assets and take a major loss? Does he call up that local fuel delivery guy that has

delivered upwards to \$300,000 of fuel for his equipment and say, "Guess what, you're also losing out?"

Mr. Speaker, it's scary. The local babysitter or daycares that take care of those children while these people are out at work, hard at work - where are they going to look to when those children aren't in their rooms any longer? On a Friday night at our local pizzeria where it's family night, they actually get a night out of the woods to enjoy a pizza - that will be no longer. This will be the scene all over rural Nova Scotia and right here in the HRM and in the CBRM as well.

What do we do with those individuals who are working in the forestry, when that is all they've known? How do we retrain those individuals? Presently we're in an industry that is not stable. Last year the instability was waiting for this government's response to the Lahey report. Yes, we did have a response, albeit very minimal. In the Lahey report, as Mr. Lahey appropriately pointed out to our caucus, he recommended that the report be accepted in whole, not in part.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we await this year, as the good Minister of Lands and Forestry has said, he will bring to this floor a biodiversity Act, which the forestry sector is waiting for patiently, again, with the unknown.

Mr. Speaker, the report also calls for a low-grade wood fibre market. This industry needs a secure low-grade wood fibre market that is profitable in order to succeed.

We have many woodlot owners in this province who are looking to us for answers. I know they have spoken to all caucuses involved on this floor here today. No matter big or small, there is uncertainty. Without this industry their woodlot values are nothing.

What will that do to our real estate in the Province of Nova Scotia? Where will we go? Mr. Speaker, I can speak from experience - the farmers who grow blueberries had a real rough year last year. Many of those blueberry farmers have looked to their woodlots to offset some of those costs or losses.

Many people are utilizing their woodlands as a retirement plan. Just last week a constituent of mine came to me, explaining to me that his accountant has actually recommended that he get rid of his land, take a loss and continue to work for another five to ten years, a man who planned on retiring in two years. Where does he go, Mr. Speaker? The people he had hired to tend to his forest, where do they go? They are coming to us for answers.

What about the families who were banking on those woodlots to send their children to post-secondary education? Where are those children going to go to further their education? These are just a few examples of things that are going to happen in rural Nova Scotia without a forestry sector.

Where do these families go when the equipment goes silent, when the forests are no longer tended to and their savings dry up? Who do they go to? We need to turn this industry around. We need to look to this industry for answers and give them the voice they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, this is an opportunity for all of us, as MLAs, in this great province to take this chance and take the politics out of this sector right now. We presented a bill a couple of weeks ago to create this task force. There's nobody who knows it better than the people who work in it. It's not us, we can educate ourselves as best we can, and I believe that it is a great job we have to do as elected officials, but we still cannot answer many of those questions.

Mr. Speaker, I am calling on this government to move this bill forward, to give those stakeholders in the forestry industry a chance to speak on their behalf. We need to stand up for the forestry industry. Without it, the report that was made by Mr. Lahey and all his assistants for the last number of years will sit on a shelf. The forestry industry has called on all of us to help. This is an opportunity for us to reach out and help them.

I don't know all the answers. I'm just a small voice here on this floor. I do know one thing for sure: that this is going to impact every single one of us. We need answers. We need to help them get answers. We have been called upon for a solution, and we are willing to work on that solution in this caucus.

We want to see this sector grow. We would love to see the Lahey report implemented so we can sustain our forestry for years to come. As many of those industry operators have already told us, we are working to strive for those goals if they haven't already met them.

Mr. Speaker, this is of very high importance, and it's a chance to take politics out of the forestry sector by moving this forward. I'm not sure where we go from here, but if we put our minds together as a solid province, we can do better, and we must do better.

I encourage this bill to move to Law Amendments Committee to allow those people to come out of those woods, speak here and give their voice. Let their recommendations be put on record and not silence them anymore. These are well-educated people within forestry.

I have had the opportunity within the last number of months to go tour places that I toured many years ago that would have normally been clear-cut, but they are thinning. They're doing selective cuts and allowing our forest to mature. There is an ability here to still have the industry wide open, have a thriving industry, and still have a forest for our children and grandchildren to enjoy.

Again, I will ring out the call for us all to step up as elected officials and give the forestry sector a voice that they so well deserve.

I look forward to the comments from my colleagues on this floor, and I will leave you with this thought, Mr. Speaker. As I have stated, the sector is in trouble. They are looking to us for help, not a handout. After all, in this industry - in very many ways - money does grow on trees.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Business.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it certainly gives me pleasure to rise today to speak for a few moments on behalf of our government and our caucus with respect to this particular bill to establish a task force on the future of the forestry industry in Nova Scotia.

I do appreciate the member for Cumberland South's opening comments. I certainly respect where he is in terms of his position, but it is a larger issue and a very specific issue today that we are talking about. I agree with him, and again, I'm not an expert with respect to the global forest industry in Nova Scotia in terms of the impact. It is certainly dire by way of the number of employees, the number and people impacted - the direct and indirect jobs associated with the forestry, the mills, the woodlots, etc. I wouldn't question anything that the member said with respect to the overall picture.

I know that the member for Clare-Digby has discussed this with me many times. We have talked to different organizations and lobby groups on behalf of the forest industry sector. Many of the people who in our caucus are impacted by the forestry sector that there is a significant amount of work to be done. So isolate the issue for today, the forestry needs a lot of changing and support on the policy side, also changing with respect to accessing markets, technology, et cetera. There are a lot of things that the forestry sector needs part and parcel to their survival. Today isn't brought in that broad context. What we're talking about here is Northern Pulp and that's specific to the legislation that has been tabled on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition. That's the focal point.

The member used a couple of quotes, look to this industry for answers, and turn things around. I couldn't agree more, again on the bigger picture, that that's the reality. We're not talking about that future, so to speak. We're talking very specific to what is happening in Pictou and Northern Pulp and around the Boat Harbour issue, the Boat Harbour Act, and what ultimately has put us here today.

My final comment from the member's opening remarks - I was hoping to speak after the Leader of the Official Opposition, so I could take a few jabs at him, but it looks like the tables are turned, Mr. Speaker. I'll have to tone down my remarks.

The member said to take politics out of this - I guess on sort of the negative aspect of politics, absolutely. But on the greater aspects of politics - political Parties in the

Province of Nova Scotia, the government and Opposition - there is no taking anybody out of this. We're all very much accountable for what happens in the next year or so. We're all responsible for what happens in Pictou. At the end of the day we're all going to have to wear what we decide, when we decide again from the voting and the legislation around the Boat Harbour Act, to what happens as we near January 2020. There is a lot at stake. It's important to have this debate publicly.

Look, this is one for us that has been a longstanding issue for our government. I'm going to say that within a week of being sworn in in 2013, this was a cross-departmental meeting we had. We were all kind of getting used to the functions of government still in that early stage of transition and we're rounded up with our senior people from each department. Of course, the Premier leading that conversation about this very issue and the leadup to why we're here today.

With respect to the Boat Harbour cleanup, that was one that again there was no second option for us, there was no plan B. We were cleaning up Boat Harbour. Look, that's one that we're very proud of. It will certainly be a large investment, one that has to be very delicate and having experience with this type of thing in Cape Breton, as citizens we see the impact it has and the enormous costs it takes to remediate this type of site.

Also, in fairness, clearly by way of the voting and the legislation - overall there was no one in this House, there was no one connected to any Party that would suggest we would delay that. That was never on, so a statement of fact is that Boat Harbour is being cleaned up.

Then you immediately pivot to so what happens with the economic aspect of this? What happens with Northern Pulp? What happens in Pictou? The direct hundreds of people who work there and the indirect who are connected?

When you look at the forestry sector and all that entails in terms of logistics, transportation, this is a very serious issue from an economic perspective. There is no questioning that. It's one I've been concerned with, we've all been concerned with and it continues to be an issue as we talk today.

From my quick sort of reference on this, when I was at that table it was in my role as the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and the logistics and the planning around the design around the Boat Harbour cleanup. Fast forward to the Department of Business, it has been one that has occupied a significant amount of my attention with respect to meeting with a number of people: the large, private landowner groups, the non-industrial piece; of course, the sawmills with WestFor; we met with the four major sawmills; and, of course, Northern Pulp.

I would also say for the record they are tremendous people. They are very fair. They give a full account of what their perspective is and of course it is to create a new system

that diverts the issue and the effluent that created Boat Harbour in the first place and that's why they're here. Talking of all the different aspects of this file, Northern Pulp have been very reasonable to deal with and they are always open and their communication publicly has been balanced and fair from their perspective and we get that. Obviously, at the end of the day, once we have Pictou Landing, Chief Paul and the Boat Harbour issue covered off and made sure that we had that plan cemented, then we could move to this conversation with Northern Pulp.

I just would say quickly, not to self-aggrandize or be self-serving here, but for the Cape Bretoners in the room, and those who are close to Cape Breton, we've lived both sides of this. To think back, how stark the differences are in some ways with Northern Pulp and Boat Harbour, versus what we've dealt with at home. They're very different things in causal effects, but on the higher level overall, the tar ponds were certainly an issue of massive environmental remediation challenge, one that went far too long, one that was ignored by all stripes. All of those things were the reality. It sat in the middle of Sydney, but really had its greatest negative impact on Whitney Pier, the African Nova Scotian community - a very proud group and very proud community - that rallied to get the tar ponds cleaned up. Obviously we see the same here with Chief Andrea of Pictou Landing and Boat Harbour.

There are major issues, and I can tell you when it's cleaned up, the days you start to see the remediation and you see the actual impact, it's a phenomenal feeling. In one way or the other, we all look forward to the day where Boat Harbour is opened back into the strait and that situation is addressed.

On the other side, of course, you have an economic downturn - again, not related to Devco and Sysco in the way that Northern Pulp and Boat Harbour and Pictou Landing are, but connected in the sense that the whole island changed. Devco and Sysco were very close together - they were just different. Demographically, of course, people moved away. Those who were lucky enough to get pensions did that, they stayed around, but it certainly changed their economic reality. Those who weren't got a severance and they had to figure out the next step. Lots of them tried to stay and couldn't. So the threat of what happens not only on the site at Northern Pulp but across the board with respect to the sector of forestry and all the other related indirect jobs - it's a very big concern.

All MLAs have been fielding those, and it's something real to talk about. It's not about Parties and blame and things like that, but when Devco and Sysco disappeared, things became very different. I think that's a fear the people of Pictou have, but it's way bigger than Pictou. It stretches into Cape Breton and Yarmouth and all points in between. That's why we're here.

At the end of the day, all we can do as a government is try to do the right thing and be in a balanced place. I can say that for the government, for the Premier, for the ministers associated, but all of our caucus, the decisions and the things that happen are significant. For the Opposition side, particularly the members for Pictou, it's significant.

This is an anecdote for me. This isn't a statistic, and it's not something that I can verify in any way other than what I feel and what I see. I don't know if I've ever had an issue in my almost six years in government that was 50/50. Everything I hear, for every environmental address, Northern Pulp and Boat Harbour and the economic part, is second to the reverse. It's been down the middle and even more so lately. There's no easy political answer. Doing the right thing is where we all have to be, and that brings along different perspectives, but that's certainly the reality of the situation. Given all that, seeing that we are where we are, the timelines, these things are entrenched.

I can say, probably politely, that I don't see the value in this legislation. I know the Leader will stand up and tell us what the value is. It's at best a half measure. I think that it doesn't - based on the one page of this bill, it focuses around a task force that's conversations with respect to the industry. I can tell you, again - back to my original comments, and the member for Clare-Digby has told me so many times - there are significant issues in the forestry industry that must be addressed.

That's not with respect to Northern Pulp. With respect to Northern Pulp and what's happening here, a task force is already in place. The task force is the Premier, the Ministers of TIR, Business, Aboriginal Affairs, Environment, Natural Resources, LAE, and the list continues. It's our deputies. It's our senior people. Environment, of course, on the Boat Harbour side, but not on Northern Pulp specifically.

The task force is the best people that we have and the best decisionmakers trying to figure this out in the best way we can. To start now to look at a different task force of some other focus, to me, it's not a new idea. It's not something that's going to change the game in any meaningful way.

[3:15 p.m.]

Secondly, again respectfully, this absolutely, positively sends the wrong signal to Northern Pulp. It sends the wrong signal to the sawmills; to the forestry sector; to the people who rely on this; and, it sends the wrong signal for the economy overall. This is not the place where we should be.

This is an issue that we all have very much on our front burners. Again, the impact of this, the aspects of Boat Harbour and Northern Pulp are real and it's one that could change the landscape certainly, of that county, but across the board. That's why from day one, well maybe day seven, of our time here on this side of the House, we have been focused on this. But there's no task force now at this point that's going to come in and ultimately make the industry feel better.

We've had discussions, again I listened to stakeholders, the member for Clare-Digby and I, and all of our caucus, had these detailed discussions. They are quite frankly not interested in Plan B. That's not where they want to be. So, I know the Leader will

address this, but this is a signal that we've given up. That the process between now and that legislated date, we'll just jump right now.

Again, based on our conversations with industry, that's not where they want to be. I think that the signal that that's sort of where we've landed at this point, will be very concerning to them. The Opposition may know differently, but for me and my experience, that's certainly not going to be the case.

I think that we are now into, and this is one that's very important for me and when you have an intimate understanding and connection to a particular file, it matters what's said about it. I have been very proud personally, and it's one of the things that I'll take from this House, my involvement and experience with the Yarmouth Ferry.

I was there for the final days of the old operator. I was there for the procurement of a new operator. Mark MacDonald and Bay Ferries are the best possible option on this planet. I can guarantee whenever anyone cracks open those books and looks at those details, looks at how we got here, we are in the best possible position to make the Yarmouth Ferry as good as it can possibly be and that's because of Bay Ferries and Mark MacDonald.

The books are open, Mr. Speaker, and we are now talking about - we've thrown this red herring of a management fee, the same way we're throwing a red herring of this bill, about a task force.

I watched the Progressive Conservative members yesterday get up one after another having to verify their support: I do declare that I support the Yarmouth Ferry. That exact piece is not necessary, you can't say that in the House and then advance a court case. You can't do that. They're a very different thing.

Mr. Speaker, they said that they're forced to sue this government, but the Municipality of Yarmouth is forced to be an intervenor in their court case. We have people who are backing away from investing in Yarmouth.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Business has the floor.

GEOFF MACLELLAN: People are backing away from investments in Yarmouth, and today is an important day on Boat Harbour and this conversation because actions speak louder than words.

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

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, the bill before us has often been referred to in, these couple of weeks since it was first submitted, as the Progressive Conservative's Plan

B with respect to Northern Pulp. I want to take the occasion of the bills being debated this afternoon to make a few comments on what should have been Plan A.

First, let me say a word about the perspective that I bring to this question. I don't have the experience of working at Northern Pulp, or in the woods, or in any sawmill. I've never lived in Pictou although two of my children were born there. I certainly don't have the wealth of personal relationships and experience to bring to this question that the members from Pictou County have.

I do, however, have a perspective. For the biggest part of my adult life I was the minister to the United and Presbyterian churches of the upper end of the Musquodoboit Valley. Through most of those years, until its bankruptcy in the great downturn, Upper Musquodoboit was home to the largest sawmill east of Montreal, MacTara, a mill that was deeply financially integrated with Northern Pulp. MacTara Lumber defined the community. Millworkers, contractors, chip-truck drivers between Upper and Abercrombie, operators of harvesters, and porters, and feller bunchers defined the congregations that I served.

In addition, from 2009 to 2013, I served Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley as its MLA and had an opportunity, especially in the context of the discussions around the natural resource strategy in those years, to work quite closely with some of the main mills, which today are living under the shadow of uncertainty surrounding Northern Pulp such as Ledwidge, Sproule, and Taylor in Middle Musquodoboit. It is the perspective of these thousands of jobs that informs the comments that I want to make now.

My late father, whenever someone would come to him with a really gnarly, difficult decision or problem, would often start the conversation by saying, well, what are the considerations. The first consideration in dealing with the Northern Pulp situation, in my view, is that we are dealing with a company which, together with its predecessor corporations, has to an extent that is actually quite rare in Nova Scotia squandered its social licence.

What I mean by social licence is that general sense, without which it's very difficult for a company to make its way in a community, that that company is at some fundamental level trustworthy or at least an entity with which people can play ball and do business. Scott, Neenah, Kimberly-Clark, Northern Pulp, all of them for over half a century mistreated the great asset of that trust. Certainly, this is true amongst contractors, all of whom had understood that if at least one of them didn't go under every year, then the company would take that as a sign that they were paying too much in the rates. The same is true for truckers. It's particularly true at the level of the community of Pictou County, with whom the mill has had a relentless record of evasion and non-transparency with respect to its emissions.

This is true in a way that does not appear to have ever been true with Stora or with Bowater. I think of a friend of mine from Westville who was telling me the other day about his mother's view of the mill. His mother is a woman who was married to a coal miner and who, when he was growing up, when the coal dust got all over the clothes on the line, would prohibit anybody in the family from complaining. She would just take the wash in and do it again because that went along with the jobs. That woman, my friend said, when asked now about the current controversy with Northern Pulp, said in a very pointed way, I hope they shut it down. That's not my view, I want to be clear, but it is striking that it's her view.

I think of a highly respected professional in Pictou with whom I was talking this over recently, who kind of half-snarled, "They've got their nerve asking for an extension." These are the kinds of conversations that happen when a company has squandered its social licence. I have heard it said, in the company's defence, that that was the predecessor. That Paper Excellence is doing much better on this front. That may well be, but I must say that this wasn't very much in evidence when the New Glasgow bookstore was pressured over holding a launch for Joan Baxter's book nor when the company's social gathering was removed from a venue because of its association with Friends of the Strait. Nor most recently in January when Northern Pulp held its press conference announcing the submission of its effluent proposal on the very morning marking the community's celebration of the year before the closing of Boat Harbour in Pictou Landing. This is the first consideration.

The second consideration, in my view, is that in such a situation, when a company is so broadly mistrusted, the government is especially responsible to ensure that any proposal from that company with a major environmental impact is subjected to the highest level of scrutiny, assessment, and review. Nothing less, in such a situation, can be expected to lead to the level of public assurance that is much of the purpose of having an environmental assessment. Nova Scotia's Class 1 environmental assessment system simply lacks the general scope, and the robustness, to lead to this level of public assurance and acceptance. Class I reviews have been widely criticized for a kind of small-scale perfunctoriness - a consultant study here, a consultant study there, a dash here and there of community consultation. Even the Auditor General has raised a skeptical eyebrow about Class I environmental reviews, pointing out not long ago the extent of the Department of Environment conditions and stipulations that are never followed up on.

The Northern Pulp effluent question, that is, has been a perfect candidate for a broader, deeper, far more thoroughgoing level of environmental review, a Class II at the very least or, as I have come to believe would ultimately make more sense, an environmental review at the federal level. The government's insistence on the Class I constricted form of environmental review of the Northern Pulp effluent proposal has been a major error of judgment because it cannot lead to the generalized level of legitimacy at the community level, which is a significant part of what is aimed for with a successful environmental assessment.

Consideration 3 is that the Liberal Government in my view has been culpable and negligent in its having allowed Northern Pulp to fail to bring forward a proposal in such time as would have allowed for a broader, more thorough and extensive review. Over and over in the Legislature as the clock ticked past 2016, 2017, 2018, Ministers of Environment were questioned about what they were doing to ensure that a Northern Pulp proposal was brought forward, and time and time again the answer was no, no, not us, that has nothing to do with us. There's no role here for us; we have to wait until the company brings forward its proposal.

And so, that's what they did - wait and wait and wait as though the words "responsible" and "government" never really belonged together. Well, the time went by in which they could have provided for the level of review the situation called for within the framework of the Boat Harbour Act and what hurt, what hurt and what a miserable cloud of uncertainty has been brought over so many thousands of people by this willfully negligent government approach.

Everyone who works at the mill is certainly affected. I met recently with a delegation from UNIFOR, the Northern Pulp mill union, and I left the meeting with a sense of hot stomach rage that the Liberal Government has permitted 250 people to be put in this position. Everyone who works at a sawmill that sells residuals to Abercrombie absolutely is affected. I think about a friend of mine in Pleasant Valley, Halifax County, where most people who don't work in the woods work at Taylor's mill and who, when he talked about what could happen, thought about the community and said simply, well, it will put everybody I know out of work.

Then, we can think of all the people who worked for contractors out of all these mills, many, many of whom are working with gear today so worn out that it's impossible for them to make any money, but who in the present uncertain climate cannot reinvest in new equipment.

Everyone who owns a woodlot is affected as they face the impact of potential loss of value. Everyone whose living is related to the Northumberland Strait fishery is utterly, of course, affected, and everyone - everyone - in Pictou County has been affected as the fabric of wonderful, strong communities has been ripped at, torn at, and clawed at by division on this question - and why? Because the Liberal Government failed to take up, to carry out its responsibility. The responsibility of a government is not just words on a plaque behind them on a wall. It means that the government's role is to determine the course of action most in keeping with the interests of the people they serve, and then to contribute to that action and that outcome taking place.

I have heard the Premier on occasion say, oh, if the people of Pictou County come together - but the government is not the people of Pictou County; I've heard the Premier say, oh, if the three Pictou County MLAs wanted to amend - but the government is not the three Pictou County MLAs; and I've even heard it said, well, if there were such and such

a view in Pictou Landing - but the government is not the people of Pictou Landing. The government is the Premier and these 26 others who ask the people of our province for the privilege of carrying out the responsibility of governing, a privilege which they received and then did not carry. They put it down; they threw their hands in the air and said no, no, not us and, as a consequence of the negligence of this evasion, large parts of Nova Scotia today are living in the vise.

Consideration 4, and final, none of this terrible failure of responsibility and leadership at the corporate and at the government level is the fault of anyone in Pictou Landing.

[3:30 p.m.]

I was privileged to attend the celebration on January 31st at the Pictou Landing school, marking one year until the closing of Boat Harbour. The auditorium was full in more ways than one. It was full of meaning as a procession of children spoke about the importance of the recovery of what in Mi'kmaq is called A'se'k - Boat Harbour.

The auditorium was full of memory, as a timeline along the school's auditorium wall marked the 52 years of Boat Harbour with the pictures of community members who had passed away and had not lived to see this day.

The auditorium was full of words with power, as Chief Andrea Paul said through tears, "What does this mean? It means we are turning back the colonization they forced on us. That end date is so sacred to us. Fifty-three (53) years we have carried this with us." What a wonderful victory that Boat Harbour is resurrecting back into A'se'k.

All of Nova Scotia should be able today to be partaking of that joy without divided minds, without conflicted thoughts, without economic fears. That's where we would have been if the government had not fallen so far short on what should have been Plan A.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: Government should understand the ramifications of its decisions. That's a number one requirement of government - they should always understand the ramifications of its decisions.

What we've seen in the case of the Boat Harbour Act, and certainly in the case of many other pieces of legislation this government has brought forward, is that it doesn't have the vision to see the ramifications of its decisions. Indeed, in this situation, government has failed us all tremendously.

This government has made a couple of serious mistakes over the last few years on this situation in particular. We foresaw those mistakes. We tried to give some input to this government, to avoid the mistakes, to mitigate the mistakes.

Way back when this bill was first introduced, we tried to amend it - include a timeline in the bill that would have laid out certain hurdles of things that have to happen by a certain date to make this bill effective - to get to that joyous point where Boat Harbour could be cleaned up. But that was kind of laughed out because this government didn't have the foresight to understand that a plan was necessary. There had to be a plan. Instead, they passed the bill, they buried their heads in the sand for four years - four plus years - and now here we are.

The forestry industry is incredibly important to our economy. Our fishing industry is incredibly important to our economy. We need every segment of our economy functioning at a high level. We need them all.

It's very, very poor governing from a government that instills conflict and tries to match one segment of our economy against another - jobs versus jobs. Very, very poor governing and that is exactly what we've seen here. It didn't have to be like that. It didn't have to be like that if this government would have understood the ramifications of its decisions and had a plan, had a timeline.

If this government would have understood the importance of a proper environmental assessment. A Class 1 assessment is not enough. It's not enough and it's perceived by many people - me included - as falling well short of what would be required. It feels like corners are being cut and when that happens, anxieties ramp up.

We know that there is a significant amount of anxiety across the province right now over this situation. Certainly in the forest industry, but in all industries, really. Our caucus has met with a number of groups that are concerned about their future. That are concerned about the impact that government policy will have on their future.

We've met with the large, private, non-industrial landowners. We've met with large and small private landowners, loggers, silviculture workers, Forest Nova Scotia, sawmill operators, and with fishing groups. We've met with many, many groups of concerned Nova Scotians who are wondering why we are here.

Governments need to understand the ramifications of their decisions, and this government decision has put a cloud over the forestry industry. This government hasn't acted to mitigate those concerns, hasn't acted to say to the industry: We value you and we want a successful, thriving forestry industry in this province. That hasn't happened.

I heard the Minister of Business say that some of the brightest minds are working on this situation. Of course, then he went on to suggest that it was the Premier, the Cabinet, the deputies, and some other senior people. That's the group of people who brought us here, Mr. Speaker. If we want to send a message to the forestry industry, we can't say that that same group of people is going to steer us to a vibrant, successful forestry industry. They're not going to do it.

This bill is not meant to be a signal that anyone has given up on anyone. Rather, it is meant to be a signal that this government is ready to start, ready to get serious about making sure there is a market for our products.

We have great forests. We grow good trees, and we can make good products with them, but we need a government that understands that and supports that. Instead, we have a government that doesn't know where to go. They just don't know what to do. They have steered us into this corner, and now they have no idea where to go.

What we are offering them is a helping hand, Mr. Speaker, but you need to have courage and vision to understand when you need help. It's not enough for the Premier to go into the scrum - the Premier of Nova Scotia said in an interview on February 22nd that the bureaucrats are working on Plan B for the forestry industry, and once they have developed a plan, it will be communicated with the industry.

Mr. Speaker, you can't actually make that up. That's the way this government sees the world - the bureaucrats will make up a plan and then they'll go and talk to the people it will impact. No, that doesn't work. Talk to the people impacted, and help them help you get a plan. That's what this about. Let's get the brightest minds in the industry talking about markets for the products of this industry. Let's get them involved.

We have seen this same approach, this backward approach. This government takes it with teachers, it takes it with health care workers, it takes it with the tourism industry - they know best, but they don't talk to the people on the ground. That's why we have introduced this bill. This bill, the Forestry Industry Sustainability Act, is to give this government the opportunity to admit their mistakes, to admit that they have failed for four years on this file and say, now we're ready to listen. That's the opportunity that's before this government. The question remains: Are they ready to listen? That's the question, Mr. Speaker.

The government has failed, and it's time to take the action to get the input from those who know best. We have given the government flexibility around that task force. I personally think that that task force would have people from various industries - fishers, First Nations, foresters. We have given the government the opportunity to take the flexibility and send a message that they want the right people involved in the discussion about making sure that we have a vibrant forestry industry, but we need a path forward.

There's no doubt the deadline exists, Mr. Speaker. I have been very clear that I wouldn't extend that deadline. Based on what I know today, I wouldn't extend that deadline. I have been very clear on that. I have been very clear that a Class 1 assessment is not enough. This government settling on a Class 1 assessment has undermined the entire process. It has caused a lot of harm to the process, because they have sent a message that they're not ready to do their job. It's the job of government to properly scrutinize projects that come before it. They're not ready to do the job, and that has caused a lot of problems in this situation.

Governments should understand the ramifications of their decisions, and by not understanding the ramifications of their decisions, this government has failed us, has failed foresters, has failed almost 11,000 Nova Scotians. But it's not too late. It's not too late. That's what we're offering here today.

Now, I know that this government, and the Premier in particular - they understand that they made a mistake. They want somebody else to take responsibility for it. This is a Premier who would not accept responsibility for the delivering of health care in this province when asked on the floor of this Chamber - wouldn't even take responsibility for health care. He's definitely not going to take responsibility for this mess he's created. He can't put the ball in somebody else's court.

This is a majority government right here. They need to do their work and they need to say to the industry: We support you, we want you, we want this industry in this province and we see a future for this industry. That message is not going to come, with all due respect to the task force of the Premier and a few Cabinet ministers. It's not going to happen. They got us here, Mr. Speaker. They just need to ask for help to get us out.

I hear the Premier say, if the Pictou County MLAs want to do something, they can suggest it. We've suggested amendments before. The reality is that only the Premier can amend this bill. Only the Premier can do that with a majority government.

I would suggest if the Premier doesn't know what to do, I'll give him a word of advice: walk down to the Lieutenant Governor's house, and 30 days later, I'll figure out what to do.

As it stands, the government says, all we can do is do the right thing. That is true, Mr. Speaker, and we're happy to be part of the process of doing the right thing. We've asked this government, if you're serious that you want us to solve it, then share some information with us. We've written to them saying, share the information. You have all the information. Share it with us. Send us the briefing notes, send us the reports that you have, send us the economic impact study.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you what we've received back: nothing, nothing. Unfortunately for Nova Scotians, I believe that's because this government hasn't done any of the work and doesn't even have any of the information, because they didn't understand the ramifications of their decisions. That's a shame. This bill is the opportunity to give people who are seriously concerned about the future of forestry in this province, the opportunity to have a voice in what that may look like.

I won't presuppose what that might look like. I will leave it to the experts who are impacted to have a talk about it. Some of those people who have been running family businesses in the forestry industry for over a century - they know the industry and they need to have a voice at the table.

The Premier has challenged us time and time again to put the solution forward. Mr. Speaker, the Premier well knows that the rules of this House don't really allow us to do that. What we've done today is confined by the rules - a private member's bill put forward, and the rules say that ". . . debate under the order of business PRIVATE MEMBER'S PUBLIC BILLS shall not be for more than one hour and, upon termination of that one hour, no question shall be put."

We don't even have the ability to put something on this floor to a vote. The rules don't even allow us to do that. You can't get any more disingenuous than the position that has been suggested in the media. We can't even do it.

I will tell you one thing. I feel very strongly that this piece of legislation is the opportunity to start a discussion about what forestry looks like in this province. I feel very strongly about this. Perhaps some of the other members feel strongly about it as well. I would love for the rules to allow me to call a vote, but they don't.

[3:45 p.m.]

Perhaps we could have the unanimous consent of the House and we could vote on this bill. We could stand up in our places on a recorded vote and every member can stand up and say whether they're happy with what the future of forestry looks like in this province; whether they're happy with where their Cabinet and Premier are leading the future of forestry; or whether they're happy to play a part in ramping up the anxiety of Nova Scotians from one end of this province to the other. I would love for the members in this Chamber to stand up in their place and have that vote. I would love to see that happen.

I'm not happy about the anxiety that's been caused to people in this industry, and in the fishing industry, by failing to do their job and not asking for a proper level assessment - truckers, people working in the woods, just Nova Scotians that want to get up and go to work.

If I could have the unanimous consent of the House, maybe we could have a vote. I hear the members opposite very quickly say, there will be no unanimous consent because they don't have the courage to support the position that their government is taking.

With those few words, I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is not agreed.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to stand up and speak to this bill that's been tabled by the members of the Official Opposition. First, I want to

recognize the fact I'm very proud of being part of a government that has taken the historic action to right a long-term injustice in this province and cleaning up Boat Harbour, a situation that was created by a Progressive Conservative government, that was protected by a Progressive Conservative government, and that has existed to this day because of the Progressive Conservatives on that side of the House, and their predecessors. Nothing was done by the NDP to address this either. I'm very proud of the fact that this government has taken the action to right this historic environmental injustice in this province. It's been a long time coming.

The bill that's been presented by the members of the Official Opposition does not provide any solutions to the current situation. The only solution that the industry is looking for is a prolongment of the deadline, which the Leader of the Official Opposition said he doesn't support anyway, and in fact, all Parties in this House are in agreement on that. This is coming directly from the industry.

Let's talk about this task force. This bill is redundant. People have been looking at this question of transitioning the forestry sector for a long time. The challenge is that there are no alternative markets for chips that are of the same value. It's no secret. The industry knows this, government has been working on alternatives with the industry since my time in Natural Resources, and that was six long years ago.

This bill provides nothing. This Party opposite has provided no solutions to this. In fact, the Leader of the Official Opposition stated a few minutes ago in this House that the real solution to tackling this is to call a snap election and to make him Premier. What arrogance. The fact that the member can stand up and say, I really don't have any solutions here but so long as Nova Scotians give me the power to be Premier, you will be guaranteed I'll come up with some then. What a ridiculous statement to make in this Chamber.

Let's talk about the messages that are being sent to the industry. Talk to the sawmills. You ask them if this piece of legislation is going to be helpful. Their answer will be unequivocally no. This sends the wrong message to them that we are losing Northern Pulp. That impacts lending, investment, it impacts the flow of money in that sector. It's the same thing we've seen with this Party's attack on the ferry service in Yarmouth. It has impacted investment, it has impacted lending. Don't take my word for it. I will table all the quotes from the tourism operators, the chamber of commerce, the developers, and investors who have taken money out of Yarmouth because of that.

I think the one quote that can encapsulate all this is from the chamber of commerce: "The continued attacks on the service are resulting in lost investment for our region This only serves to raise more concern about what other investment has been lost as a result [of the attacks]. We know that this service is an essential part of our region's infrastructure and supports the tourism industry of the entire province. We implore the opposition parties to stop using this critical investment as a political game." I urge them to listen.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, it's a shame the government won't support the bill, but we'll move to another bill.

Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 88.

Bill No. 88 - Auditor General Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for allowing me to stand in my place today to speak on a piece of legislation propelled by the people of Nova Scotia with regard to the lack of basic primary health care they are not receiving right now in Nova Scotia.

Bill No. 88, an Act to Amend Chapter 33 of the Acts of 2010, the Auditor General Act, if passed, would benefit all Nova Scotians. Mr. Speaker, amending this Act to allow the creation of a health care outcomes auditor, I am certain this is a bill all Nova Scotians would support, given the new level of crisis we are now facing within our health care system. This bill simply defines health care outcomes auditor, it provides for the appointment of a health care outcomes auditor, and it establishes the duties and powers of the health care outcomes auditor.

The function of the potential new health care outcomes auditor is to independently attest to the performance of the IWK Health Care Centre and the Nova Scotia Health Authority in delivering quality health care to all people in Nova Scotia. The creation of this auditor position would be for the enrichment of healthy living in Nova Scotia for all. This position would allow audits or investigations to be conducted in ensuring standards of care, outcomes, and governance with respect to the IWK Health Care Centre and the provincial Health Authority, and that they are met.

Mr. Speaker, this province has a budget of almost \$11 billion, with nearly half of that amount being dedicated to health care. Yet we continue to hear stories daily on how the Liberal government has failed in providing every Nova Scotian with a doctor. We continue to receive calls from people begging us to find a spot for their loved one in long-term care facilities. Daily I am hearing from paramedics and front-line workers across this province who are feeling defeated. They are angry at this government who they say is not listening to their concerns but, more importantly, to their solutions and their ideas in fixing a broken health care system.

Mr. Speaker, we know better and we know better that the front-line health care workers have these solutions and ideas and they just want to be heard. They are imploring this Liberal government to listen to them. Nova Scotians are crying out for help, asking

this government to address their concerns regarding access and, more often, non-access to primary health care.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill No. 88, the Auditor General Act, in 2017 and 2018, the Auditor General's Office had completed 19 chapters on the finances of the province. Three of those have been on what can be considered a health care outcome. That's less than 16 per cent of the Auditor General's work - 45 per cent of the budget, less than 16 per cent of the chapters.

By placing a health care outcomes auditor in the Auditor General's Office, we have the opportunity for someone, or a group within that office, to develop expertise in the area. At the end of the day you can only improve what you measure. We all know that. We need the data and we need the information to do better. Clear, reliable data must come from an independent source or else it will always be subject to doubt.

We all know we can do better. One piece of this legislation that resonates well with myself, my colleagues, and more importantly, Nova Scotians, is that the health care outcomes auditor can survey patients of the IWK Health Centre and the Nova Scotia Health Authority to get to the grassroots of a system that is not working in so many areas.

Yes, we must admit there are areas in the health care system that are working efficiently and effectively, but we need to focus on the areas that require improvement. We need to dive in deep and identify the root causes of a failing health care system in order to help build it back up to the point where it can once again be efficient and effective for all Nova Scotians.

A health care outcomes auditor can make recommendations respecting standards of care outcomes and governance. They shall also make the results of any audits and investigations public immediately, and on March 31st of each year, an annual report summarizing any of these audits and investigations would be reported to the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is about accountability and measuring the outcomes of health care in Nova Scotia. This position would be one of great responsibility. The Auditor General, the Governor in Council, would appoint a health care outcomes auditor. This individual would be qualified as a licensed public accountant. It would be a position of great authority and control, but of course of leadership and duty in performing audits and investigations to ensure that Nova Scotians are receiving the quality care that they so deserve.

Everything we talk about in this Chamber can be better understood if we have a clear outcome and a good sense as to how this province is measuring up against those outcomes that we look at from a distance, such as doctor wait-lists, ambulance coverage,

ER wait times, mental health access, long-term care beds, and ambulances that are lined up at hospitals as I speak.

It's not just stats and national standards. It's understanding whether a dollar spent is improving those stats or getting us closer to those standards. When the province is making an investment in health care, is that money getting us the closest it can to the care that Nova Scotians expect, or is it not moving the needle?

When you know better, you do better. If it means something to you, you will find a way, and if it doesn't, you will find an excuse. If we continue to maintain the approach of the past, you will no doubt encounter more challenges than those who embrace innovation or those who seek solutions and take risks. That's the new modern government Nova Scotians are looking for, and this bill represents that.

Let's not stand in this Chamber today and find more excuses not to try to solve the health care crisis we all are witnessing in our beautiful province. Let's take action and show Nova Scotians, by passing this piece of legislation, that we are collectively working together to show Nova Scotians that they matter, that their well-being matters. This bill proves we are solution focused. In going forward with this bill, it proves that we are taking a humanitarian position together and not a partisan political decision.

Mr. Speaker, daily I am receiving calls, messages, texts from front-line workers. Normally, it was starting out with nurses. Then it went to paramedics, and in the last month, every single day I'm hearing from doctors. They are deeply, deeply frustrated. They are deeply concerned, and they are burnt out. They need help. They just need us to listen. I do listen, and I return everyone's call, but I don't have the resources or the information that the Minister of Health and Wellness has.

I understand the great responsibility and the weight that is on the minister's shoulders. I think about him every single day, and I can't imagine having that kind of weight. I really, really can't, and I truly appreciate it, but we have to do better. No one is expecting this minister to have all the answers, to have all of the solutions, or to be able to do it himself. No one can do that.

[4:00 p.m.]

Last week, there was an Order in Council for \$8.1 million to the NSHA for master planning. I'd like to hear from someone knowledgeable and independent whether that money is best spent on master planning. Maybe it is or maybe it could achieve more if spent on direct patient care, if spent right with the front-line workers - and \$2.1 billion on the QEII Redevelopment Project raises a big red flag for so many Nova Scotians, \$2.1 billion on a redevelopment.

We have to ask ourselves, Mr. Speaker: Is this the right way to spend that money? Is it the right amount to spend on that project? How would we know? We're not allowed

to see the report from Deloitte on that - again, information that this side of the government is able to read but we're not able to read, or Nova Scotians. It's their money. Why are we not being transparent, why are we not allowing that report to be disclosed? What is there to hide? Government benefits from the opportunity to be able to have so much more information than the rest of us. They know more than citizens have the time or capacity to even learn. An independent health outcomes auditor can help to close that information gap.

I would ask that all consideration be given to this bill. Again, I believe that it is through the spirit of communication, through the spirit of working together that we can see better outcomes, that we can work collectively together in formulating new ideas and solutions to the many issues that we're seeing right from Yarmouth to Neils Harbour in Cape Breton.

I was called by a paramedic the other day who was quite distraught, and I couldn't take the call right away, so I promised him I would call them back, and I did. It was a few hours later and they were still pretty upset. They were upset because they were in a lineup to off-load the patient that they were transporting to the hospital and at the same time, while they're in the lineup for hours and hours, they have no lunch and they're now in overtime but they're still willing to continue working because they care so deeply - they are saddened, they are frustrated and they almost feel, as they put it to me, guilty. Guilty that they knew there were other calls coming in that they couldn't get to because they had to stay in that lineup and stay with that patient and, sometimes, those patients definitely need to get to emergency but they're not as serious as perhaps maybe an accident that just occurred down the road, a life-threatening situation.

I would ask that we all take a moment to think how that would feel if you were a paramedic and you couldn't get to help those people. I know myself and I know everyone else in this Chamber would feel pretty helpless, especially knowing that there is a solution. We know that we need to start discussing and finding out if we need more long-term care beds because we know that a lot of these situations around off-load troubles originate from the fact that we have a lack of doctors, that we more than likely have a lack of long-term care beds. I'm certainly not an expert and I don't know all the numbers and, as I said earlier, I don't have the information that this has. I just believe, though, that it's everyone's tax dollars and everyone should have the right to know where that money is being spent. What better way to know where your money's being spent, than approving and putting this bill forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from Pictou West. I believe this is a private member's bill that she's submitted. I think last week I spoke to another private bill she had submitted.

This is Bill No. 88, called the Auditor General's Act (amended), and it asks for an auditor for health outcomes. That's an interesting concept and it took me a little bit to get my head around it. I was obviously thinking of financial audits, so I was reflecting a lot in my head, about the most recent IWK audit that was out in December. Although governance plays a part in what this ask is for, it's more about health outcomes in our two health authorities, the IWK Health Centre and the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

What this bill is asking for, because I'm sure most of my colleagues may not be familiar with it, is to have the Auditor General make a recommendation to the Executive Council who should appoint a Healthcare Outcomes Auditor, whose job and purpose is solely focused on health care outcomes here in Nova Scotia.

The salary of that person would be determined by the Auditor General, keeping in guidelines with the salary scales that various deputy ministers would receive. They would also be entitled to the same benefits and privileges that any civil servant would receive here in Nova Scotia.

The Auditor General would also have authority with this person as far as, if this person was no longer able to do their work for some reason, illness or maybe a job replacement or something, the Auditor General could appoint an acting Healthcare Outcomes Auditor or delegate powers to one of the staff people already employed in the Auditor General's office.

The money for this - where would this come from? But it's clear, it's to come from the Legislature so I'm assuming that would be built in the budget of the Legislature. (Interruptions) Well, I don't know.

The proposed amendment really wants to focus on the health outcomes of the IWK and the Nova Scotia Health Authority independently. We have a process here in Nova Scotia already with Accreditation Canada. The two main duties of this accreditation program are to: independently review and attest to the performance of both the IWK and the Nova Scotia Health Authority and how they deliver services and high-quality services in health care to the people of Nova Scotia; and, also oversee the standards and the governance with respect to both the IWK and the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

This is a rigorous process. The IWK and the Nova Scotia Health Authority are audited every four years through Accreditation Canada. They are an independent, non-profit, organization and they are responsible for assessing and improving the quality of healthcare services in all health authorities that they oversee.

Accreditation Canada's health standards and care organizations give a third-party assessment, so they are sort of like the Auditor General, an arm's-length organization. They get a lot of their insights and focus from global health authorities from all over the world. They're looking at the best practices from all over the world, not just here in Nova Scotia

and Canada, but other countries that do high-quality health care. NSHA has already done a survey, and they have done the accreditation process in October 2017.

They were very thorough when they went into the Health Authority. They surveyed staff. They overlooked the governance. They were meticulous in all their oversight. On November 23, 2017, they presented their survey report and a decision letter which gave accreditation to the Nova Scotia Health Authority. It also had requirements for the Health Authority. Everything wasn't perfect, and they noted that. There were some areas where they were to have follow-up tasks completed with a timeline of April 1 and also October 2, 2018, specifically for different areas.

They met all these requirements, Mr. Speaker, and they were able to maintain their high level of accreditation. Anyone can access the full report on the Nova Scotia Health Authority website. It's thorough, and it speaks to the good work that is going on in the Health Authority.

I'll speak to the areas of success. They found that the Nova Scotia Health Authority was diverse, experienced, and engaged with their board of directors. They were very good at governance. They were managing resources and balancing budgetary processes. They had a strong leadership team in the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

Staff, physicians and volunteers were very committed to the people they were engaged with. I think we heard that from the member for Pictou West, how engaged our health care workers are. They really care. They love the work they do, and it is evident. They work over their lunch hours. They work past their shift. They're very dedicated. I myself have two sisters who work in the health care system, and I know how long their hours and days can be, but they love their work. They love their patients. That comes first and foremost with them, their delivery of their services to their patients.

They had areas of improvement too - advance health service planning, strengthening public and community partnerships and engagement, and enhanced focus on people, pace and resiliency. They needed to reduce the variation across the health authorities - they found there were inconsistencies in how delivery of services took place - and address building and infrastructure challenges. Those were met.

There were still some more that they really needed to follow up on with a stronger review of task completions. Those were information transfers to client identifiers, narcotics safety, client flow, falls and prevention strategy, and suicide prevention. Those were thoroughly looked into. There will be continued oversight on those areas by management of the Health Authority.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it is rigorous and comprehensive. It includes self-assessment, external peer on-site review - sometimes that can be the most difficult, having peer reviews because they are the ones who see what you're doing each and every day - assessment of

the work environment, patient safety, culture and the governance of the organization, as well as the client experience. They were speaking to patients as well.

An audit of this magnitude, Mr. Speaker, requires specialized understanding and expertise in the standards, outcome and quality care delivery. The person doing these audits needs to have those qualifications and this accreditation process does provide that for it.

[4:15 p.m.]

The Canadian Institute for Health Information provides comparable and actionable data and information that are used to accelerate some of the process for improving our health care system and we rely on that organization. That too is an arm's-length organization, it's an independent third party looking into ways that we can speed up our process for improvement.

This bill also speaks a lot to the outcome that falls under the Auditor General's Reports. Since I've been on Public Accounts Committee from 2013 there have been 10 health-related audits done by the Auditor General. The most recent one was the IWK in December 2018. I have to say I've nothing but great respect for the Auditor General and his staff. We know he has 37 full-time staff. They are highly qualified, they are highly certified, they are meticulous professionals, and they are very direct with their recommendations. There is always follow-up with the Auditor General's Reports. He looks into the department thoroughly, checks in on them to make sure they are following up on the recommendations, and he will pick up if it isn't picked up by management.

I really feel confident in the work of the Auditor General. Our last budget had increased his budget so that he could hire more staff. We added \$368,000 to his already \$3,800,000 to do their oversight. Besides having this rigorous accreditation and also the Auditor General's oversight, the two institutions themselves, the IWK and the Nova Scotia Health Authority, are doing their own internal oversight. They do monthly financial reporting, annual business planning. They do audited financial statements, and they go over reports that are looked at intensely by the executive leadership teams before they go to the board, and then the board discerns them. Also, the Department of Health and Wellness and this government look after reading and discerning the reports of the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK on a monthly basis. They check into what their forecast is, and whether they are meeting the goals of the forecast.

They have an annual budget and business planning process, both organizations. They have annual and quarterly accountability reporting. They have financial reporting and annual budget approved with the Department of Health and Wellness, and everything has to be submitted to the Treasury Board for approval.

The annual financial statements, of course, everything comes here. We have Supply, and I think Health and Wellness, because I sit on Supply as a Chair. I know we sit and discern at least three days we get Department of Health and Wellness, sometimes it

has even gone longer. It is thoroughly looked over by members of the Opposition. It is their opportunity to really critique the finances of our province and ask questions to the minister about the delivery of services in our health care system.

I want to say we do have oversight. Can we improve? We can always improve. Does the minister care? I'm glad the member for Pictou West really spoke about how challenging the Department of Health and Wellness is, as all departments are. It is huge. It takes over half our budget. We really need to be on top of all things with Health. It's a work in progress, and we all have that same goal: to keep making improvements in our health care system.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, we need to be thinking about outcomes in health care, and not just about the convenient ones. This government likes to measure the convenient outcomes, the ones that show improvement. We're happy to see the improvement, but we need to be truthful about where there is still much work to do.

My colleague talks about accreditation. It's funny, because when you work in the health care system, around accreditation time everything is so pretty and shiny, and the health care workers are always above and beyond, regardless of whether it's accreditation or not. Management seems to think that everything needs to be shiny during accreditation, that that will make things go a lot better.

Sadly, there's still a lot of work to be done when it comes to mental health care for kids and adults. There's still a lot of work to do when it comes to ensuring that everyone gets emergency care in a timely fashion. We have our work cut out for us when it comes to long-term care and recruiting more doctors and nurses.

I'll reiterate again that 20 physicians in Cape Breton have just recently resigned from their in-patient services. We spoke about a member today - who I've emailed to the Minister of Health and Wellness, the Premier, and the MLA for Sydney-Whitney Pier, along with the MLA for Glace Bay - who is dying to be a doctor. Finally, his story is in the *Cape Breton Post* today, so at least now everybody is aware.

We have our work cut out for us when it comes to keeping the doctors that we have, to keeping the staff that we have, because they are worked to death and they are run off their feet, regardless of if it's accreditation or not. The government says that they're working on these issues, but we need the government to set goals. We need to know what they're aiming for, to give us actual specifics about what goals are being set, and we need the government to establish these outcomes.

Last week, we talked about statistics and numbers that are already produced. These reports are produced every day or every week or every month: the number of people

waiting in emergency rooms, the number of patient stays, the number of people leaving without seeing a doctor. This is not costing anything more to this province, to the system, or to the government. This is just providing us with the access to know where the problems are so that we can actually work to bring around some solutions instead of just sitting by and doing nothing.

When we talk about outcomes, we're talking about so much more than just wait times and than just what's going on in our facilities on a day-to-day basis. We need to have systems in place to measure whether the health care we're providing is actually working, because I beg to differ. I say the health care that we're providing is not working. We need to be getting better and staying better, and we need to know how to do that. Wait times only measure access to care. Access is crucial, but it's only the first step. In order to get better at what we do in the health care system, we need to have thoughtful ways of measuring our success in place from the beginning.

When we start new programs or implement new systems, we need to think about how we'll know if this new thing is working or if we should try something else. We need to be informed by something other than just the bottom line. Patient outcomes, along with everything else, determine whether or not we're doing the right thing and are improving health care in Nova Scotia.

Take nursing homes, for example. While the number of people on the wait-list is only one measure of how well our system is performing, the number of bedsores any given facility reports is another. We know that bedsores are being reported at an all-time high. We know that because the rules have changed for admission to long-term care beds, those numbers may have decreased when that is not actually the truth. While nursing home access across the province has struggled to prevent and treat bedsores, the St. Anne Community and Nursing Care Centre in Arichat hasn't had to deal with a bedsore in years because the facility takes those outcomes seriously.

Residents at the St. Anne Centre are assessed as soon as they arrive. A staff member checks the skin condition, nutrition, mobility, continence, and general well-being and determines whether or not they need a specific mattress or seat cushion. Each resident also meets with a dietitian to develop a meal plan which is customized to their particular nutrition needs to keep them healthy.

What a novel idea, to actually engage with each and every resident coming into our nursing homes to know exactly what they need and not just assume that three minutes of care every day is enough to assess their needs.

Compare that to the approach this government has taken to the nursing home wait-list, as I've just said. They've cut their wait-list in time, but again I will say that they've changed the criteria. However, hundreds of people are still waiting in hospitals for nursing home beds and receiving home care that doesn't come close to meeting their needs. These people are not included on the official wait-time lists.

We know that people are now waiting for home care. We know that the government says they want to age in their place, but a lot of times that's not possible and by the time these seniors actually get to long-term care, their needs are much greater, and we are not meeting those needs.

This is an approach to outcomes that only cares about the bottom line and not about the quality of the outcome.

We need to be talking about quality and not quantity. We are talking about people's lives and how much they should matter more than the bottom line and, I will say this again - more than a balanced budget.

We need to set expectations high for our health care system. Our people deserve quality health care and we can provide it because, let me tell you, we have the staff who can provide quality health care if we make a plan to get there and take the need to invest in it.

We can't get there without significant investments and without changing the way that - changing the rules halfway through because that's what we are doing, and health care workers are being penalized for that. They haven't changed their outlook or their level of quality care provided to everybody in health care.

Another place we could be doing better is measuring the general health of our population. If we measured the health of our population in a more systematic way, we might be compelled by the data to make real investments in our social systems to improve population health outcomes.

We know that the social determinants of health play a huge role in people's health. I had the privilege of meeting with a doctor from the Dartmouth General and the doctor told me that the first thing that they put on a chart when they see a patient is social determinants of health - poverty - and then their diagnosis. Whether it be asthma, flu, broken leg - their first diagnosis is poverty.

We all need to realize how important that plays into health care in this province and because we are not investing where we should, we are not spending - and I will continue to say this - we are not spending our money wisely. We are not spending our money where we need to be spending it. We need to be spending it in health care and we need to be spending it so that people can come out of poverty and actually buy some fruit and vegetables for their children, rather than just Big 8 pop and Cheezies, because that is what's happening.

You can get pop a heck of a lot cheaper than you can get milk. When people have \$2 and they have to give their child something to drink, they choose the Big 8 pop for 88 cents. That is a disgrace - this government should be embarrassed about that.

The research is very clear on the fact that poverty and chronic stress have huge negative impacts on our well-being. We can make upstream investments in our health care and see the outcomes. They will show up in lower rates of Type 2 diabetes, in fewer sick days taken, and in wounds that heal faster because people have the adequate nutrition.

If we think about caring for people as an investment rather than a cost, then we can measure those health outcomes as well.

I say again, it's about being proactive instead of being reactive. If we invest, as I've said numerous times, it may cost a lot up front, but over time we will reap the benefits of these investments.

Being transparent about outcomes will build public trust. What a novel idea, Mr. Speaker. Being secretive about them undermines that trust, which is exactly what is happening right now because in order for us to get information we need to FOIPOP it. Keeping people from finding out what is going on undermines that trust. Forcing private citizens to pay a fee to find out whether or not our system is meeting its own internal standards undermines trust.

Mr. Speaker, imagine that you have to pay to find out if this government is actually doing what it says it should be doing. The thing is that people know what is happening on the ground, they know their experience. I spoke about that at length on Friday and, let me tell you, people are aware of exactly what is going on. They know that it's going to be a long wait at the emergency department. They know if they call their doctor that they may not be seen for six weeks.

Mr. Speaker, I had a constituent who was in a car accident and the earliest she could see her family doctor was six weeks. It's a good thing she wasn't severely hurt because others don't have six weeks to wait.

They know not to put their loved ones on a wait-list for long-term care until that person has passed the point of no return. People know what is going on. People see what is going on, or not going on, in long-term care, I should say. People see that we haven't invested in one new bed in long-term care. People see the 27 admits to the emergency rooms, and they know they are there because of the lack of investment in health care.

Mr. Speaker, we shouldn't have to assume that. We should have ready access to this information and we need somebody to oversee it. This government should be measuring health outcomes so everyone can see the true impact on the policies they are having, instead of trying to hide behind information that is not publicly available. You can't fix something if we don't know it's broken, and we should all be working together to ensure that health care in Nova Scotia is improving, not declining.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I stand today to speak in support of this bill that my colleague has presented, an Act to Amend Chapter 33 of the Acts of 2010, the Auditor General Act. There's so much that could be shared.

I thought I would approach this by looking at the seven health outcome measures that would be dramatically impacted with having a health outcomes auditor. I'd like to table a document that outlines these seven areas. I'll start with mortality.

Mortality refers to the population health outcome measure. Here's an example of why we need to be measuring this, Mr. Speaker, and coming up with solutions to fix it. Here in Nova Scotia the suicide rates in 2000 was 75. In 2016, there were 134 suicides. We know these rates continue to rise. Measuring health outcomes and mortality is important.

Measuring the health outcome of safety of care refers to the measures pertaining to medical mistakes. An example of this in Nova Scotia is the rising increase of bedsores, which refers to skin breakdown. The CBC reported two days ago, Mr. Speaker, that there was an increase. In 2018 the first quarter results of stage three to four bedsores in in-patient acute care beds, there were 10 cases in 2018, and in 2019 in the first quarter there were 26, almost three times the increase. Safety of care is important to measure.

The third one is readmissions following hospitalization. This is heartbreaking. One example, Mr. Speaker, I heard from a mother this morning that her child has been readmitted after 29 suicide attempts. Clearly, we need to be looking at readmissions and why.

The fourth is the patient experience. I don't think we have to go far, Mr. Speaker, to listen to the people of this province of what their patient experience is in health care and their perception of their health care system. Just today is a perfect example where an organization presented our Premier and Minister of Health and Wellness with 60 experiences of people who had poor experiences trying to access mental health care in this province. The Premier had not yet seen that report after one year.

The fifth is effectiveness of care. This refers to the compliance with best-practice care guidelines.

I'd like to table a document, but before I table it, I am going to read from it. This is a document that outlines the clinical guidelines for emergency department physicians if someone presents with suicidal ideation. That means they are either contemplating suicide or they have already overdosed. This evaluation tool for the emergency department physician, based on clinical guidelines, asks a series of questions. If the patient answers yes to any of those questions, the emergency doctor is supposed to refer them to a mental health specialist, which is a psychiatrist. That does not happen in this province in the emergency departments, or if it does, it's very rare. I would like to table that document.

Effectiveness of care should be based on best-practice guidelines, and we're pushing for our government to be measuring those outcomes.

The sixth is the timeliness of care. This refers to overcrowding in emergency departments. It has been associated with increased mortality, increased length of stay in hospital, and increased cost of admitted patients. Do we have timeliness of care here in this province? Well, it's not being measured consistently, but a couple of examples that my colleagues have brought to the floor of this Legislature are the issue with paramedics.

We know that currently in this province, our EHS system is not meeting the standards that are being set out. This is no fault of our paramedics. This is due to many reasons, but it is because of the crisis in our system. Paramedics and ambulances are being held up at our emergency departments because they cannot offload.

My colleague for Sackville-Beaver Bank was upset this morning because his citizens are being turned away from the Cobequid Health Centre. Patients who are triaged as a less-urgent level are being sent away with no access to care. So timeliness of care is a very important health outcome that we should be measuring.

The seventh is effective use of medical imaging. The reason we should be measuring this is because it contributes to improved patient outcome and more cost-effective health care. Some of the examples around this would be the discrepancy between the length of wait times for medical imaging throughout the province. Sometimes you may have someone in the Valley who waits four months for a CAT scan, and in another part of the province, the wait time is two weeks. We do need to be looking and measuring effective use of medical imaging and seeing if we can find ways to create more efficient uses.

I would also like to identify three essentials for successful health-outcome measurements. The first one is with data transparency. If we do not have data transparency, and we don't have these health outcome measurements, we can't make improvements. Right now, our bedsores rates in nursing homes are not publicly reported. There is a lack of transparency. This is something that rings through in many areas that my colleagues and I have identified. By being more transparent, we can fix the problems.

The second essential for health-outcome measurements is integrated care and transitions of care. This refers to providing the right care in the right setting. Last week or the week before, I identified frustration with health care professionals in my area, where nursing home beds are being left vacant for weeks while people waiting on long-term care are lying in hospital beds for weeks and months on end. That is definitely a health outcome where the patient is not receiving the right care in the right setting. We must be measuring these outcomes.

The third essential for successful health-outcome measurement is data interoperability. We need to have an integrated data system and one example that's been discussed recently is some criticisms is around the One Person One Record. We've heard

from many people, especially those in health care, that the process followed, the process used to choose the One Person One Record was riddled with conflict of interest by this government.

This is too important to mess up. This is a very important component of the health care system. There should be a committee of doctors, nurses and IT specialists together. They should be the ones determining what is the best software and IT for this government to be buying and making sure it's not outdated before it's actually even purchased.

Measuring health outcomes should focus on quality and improving the care experience for Nova Scotians. We must create an environment of clinical excellence where health care flourishes. May I suggest that the auditing start right at the top.

Look at the culture of denial. We see it in the *Chronicle Herald* today, by a denial of Nova Scotia Health Authority leadership executive - totally discrediting the doctors that spoke out about their concerns in the Valley Regional Hospital. We see the culture of denial by the Nova Scotia Health Authority CEO, in a letter that she sent out to physicians across this entire province, totally discrediting patients that came forth last week sharing their experience in the mental health care system and the lack of access to care.

They put themselves out on the line, they were vulnerable. What happened? Instead of our CEO showing some empathy, she sent out a letter discrediting them. It's so discouraging.

Yesterday, we saw it with the Minister of Health and Wellness telling me that I was, "categorically false" when I shared there's a lack of access to acute care for those in mental illness. (Interruption) I said none or a lack of . . . (Interruption) You think it's funny? I don't think it's funny.

What I was referring to is that when a patient goes to the emergency department and has suicidal ideation or has taken an overdose, based on clinical guidelines that I tabled here they should be referred to a psychiatrist, and they're not. In almost all circumstances, they are not being referred to a specialist.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, if you went to the emergency department today with chest pain, you would be assessed, they would draw blood work, and they would hook you up to a cardiac monitor. If it was deemed that you were having a cardiac event, you would be referred to a specialist, an internal medicine consultant if you're in the emergency department already.

If you go with suicidal ideation or if you've gone with an overdose, you are not always referred to a specialist. It is not right. I don't appreciate a Minister of Health and Wellness mocking me and telling me that I'm "categorically false" when this is not the experience of people of this province.

I will reinforce that the culture of denial needs to be assessed and needs to be measured. It should start today, not when we get a health outcomes auditor.

The audit of the governance of this should start with the Minister of Health and Wellness. It should look at the board of directors of both NSHA and the IWK, measuring their effectiveness; it should also be looking at the effectiveness of the CEO.

Based on the Health Authorities Act, it is this Minister of Health and Wellness' responsibility to ensure we have an effective board; as well, that the board is responsible to ensure we have an effective CEO. I would like to see some performance evaluations done, whether it's through a health outcomes auditor general or whether it's through another form, but we must call for that. This minister is accountable to the taxpayers of this province, and so are we.

[4:45 p.m.]

The importance of an auditor general - I'm just going to go over what is the purpose of an auditor general. The one here in Nova Scotia is an Officer of the House of Assembly, he is non-partisan, he is independent of government. The Auditor General's mandate includes issuing opinions on government financial reports and conducting performance and information technology audits on public sector operations.

Health outcomes - which we're asking for a health outcomes auditor - is defined by CIHI - the Canadian Institute of Health Initiatives - as changes in health resulting from measurements of specific health care investments or interventions. Health outcomes can include preventing death after a heart attack through in-patient hospital care; it can include improvements in patients' quality of life following surgery for a specific health issue - an example would be improved eyesight following cataract surgery.

I would like to reiterate, I believe we need a change in the culture of leadership. Culture begins at the top managerial level and infiltrates every process, including managing employees and treating patients. I support this bill calling for a health outcomes auditor general and thank you for this opportunity to speak, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Before we move forward, I just want to remind the member for Cumberland North, and all members of this Chamber, to not accuse other members of negative or personal actions. In this case it was mocking.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I'll take the last few minutes we have left on this important topic just to say that whether it is a health outcomes auditor, whether it is some other form of accountability, I believe that what we're talking about right now is the fact that we need answers to what is going on in our health care system.

I stood up this morning and I asked about the Dartmouth General Hospital, a hospital that serves 130,000 people. There are five or six MLAs or more, depending on closures, who are sending their constituents to the Dartmouth General Hospital and the Dartmouth General Hospital is maxed out - it is stressed, the ERs are overloaded, the operating theatres are full, the family lounges are full of patients.

It has been six years. Not only do all Nova Scotians not have a family doctor, we have a huge primary care issue. It's growing, Mr. Speaker, it's not getting any better. In the meantime, the Health Committee that has been established.

We don't have the ability as the Opposition, the people who are sent here to ask questions of the government, to set the agenda. The Public Accounts Committee has been scaled back by at least half. What we want, those of us on this side of the House, I believe, and I can be in concert with my colleagues on this one point, are some answers; we want the ability to understand.

Health care is a huge, thorny, expensive, complex system. I don't think any of us think differently, but I believe that all of us want to get to the bottom of it. We want to understand what is going on and we want to be able to solve it for our constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I think the spirit of this bill and the spirit of much of what we've been asking for and pointing to is just that we'd like the ability to ask some questions and get some answers. So, with those few words, I'll take my seat.

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

HUGH MACKAY: Beautiful Chester-St. Margaret's.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank my colleagues for the thoughtful comments brought here today. Successive governments of all Parties have under-delivered on the advancement of the health care system in the province. I think the Opposition members opposite have noted several of these today, some of the shortcomings that have not advanced things.

Unfortunately, when the Opposition comes to health care, they never apply critical thinking, they're just critical, Mr. Speaker. (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, that concludes Opposition business for the day.

I'd like to turn the floor back over to the Government House Leader.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Thanks to my colleague opposite, Mr. Speaker. After a day of tremendous debate, that concludes government business and House business for the day.

I move that the House now rise to sit again tomorrow, Thursday, March 14th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Following the daily routine and Question Period, we'll move to business including the Committee of the Whole House on Bills to consider Bill Nos. 84, 90, 91, 92, 95, 97, 99, and 101. Also, with time permitting, we'll move to second reading on Bill Nos. 106, 109, and 112.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on March 14th 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.

We've now reached the moment of interruption. The Adjournment notice was submitted by the member for Dartmouth South and reads as follows:

"Therefore be it resolved that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change makes clear that urgent actions to mitigate the worst impacts of global warming are possible and necessary, and such actions can create thousands of well-paid jobs and community prosperity, and after six years in power the Liberal government still has no plan to transition Nova Scotia to a prosperous, clean economy."

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

GOV'T. (N.S.) - CLIMATE CHANGE: TRANSITIONING TO A PROSPEROUS, CLEAN ECONOMY - URGENT NEED, PLAN LACKING

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, this won't be the first time that I've risen in this House to refer to an international instrument. We've talked about the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as a number of other international instruments, mostly by the UN, that govern some very fundamental ways that we order our society.

When I have raised them on this floor, in every case, it's been because I have been of the opinion that we are not in fact living up to them. This is no exception. However, this in particular is an issue that requires international co-operation, that requires everyone to play their part.

I'm hopeful that most members of this House will have noticed that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change tabled a report this year that was chilling. It makes clear that urgent actions on climate change are possible and that they are necessary. Aside from all the terrifying information imparted by that report, which the members ought to be familiar with, the by-product was a conversation around the fact that if we do take the necessary and dramatic actions to mitigate some of the worst effects of climate change - because we will not be able to mitigate it entirely - we could create prosperity. We could create community prosperity and we could create thousands of well-paying jobs, something that this government talks about regularly. But it's our opinion that this government, after six years in power, still has no plan to transition to a clean economy with the boldness required.

What I see in my role as Finance Critic and Business Critic is a Liberal Party and a government that is stuck in the mindset of jobs versus the environment. This is the dialogue that we have, but in fact that's not true. We need good jobs and we need to ensure that our children have a world to grow up in.

The government talks a good game, but our job growth for the past six years has been sluggish. It's lagged behind the rest of the country. Thirty to forty thousand Nova Scotians are out of work every year. There are 9,000 fewer people working than when this government took office, and while median incomes across the country have been growing, ours have been stagnant. That's not the way to grow a healthy economy that works for everyone.

It's clear that the government has not been living up to its promises in this regard, notwithstanding paying any attention to the climate file. As the world economy shifts green, many Nova Scotians who rely on jobs that are fossil fuel intensive, as we've been discussing today, are worried about their future. Are they going to fall through the cracks? Will their families suffer? What's the plan B? What's the mitigation plan, Mr. Speaker?

This isn't new. Since 2012, jobs in oil and gas in Canada have been collapsing, and in fact oil and gas is now, and has been for many, many years, the ones who are speaking a great amount of truth on this topic. The CEO of BP said in 2018, don't be fooled by the recent firming in oil prices; the rapid growth of renewables is leading to a challenging marketplace. The 2009 outlook from that same company predicts oil demand will remain flat and production will plateau. We need an economic strategy, Mr. Speaker, that ensures that Nova Scotian workers are not left behind.

There is a huge potential for job creation by investing in climate action and taking bold action. It's a necessity, not just an opportunity; \$0.5 trillion dollars is invested in renewables and energy efficiency every year around the world. In the U.S., investment in renewables over the next decades is going to triple the investment in fossil fuels. To quote again from the BP Energy Outlook, hardly an environmental activist organization, they predict the pace at which renewable energy penetrates the global energy system will be faster than any fuel in history.

Where are we on this, Mr. Speaker? Every dollar government invests in energy efficiency in homes and offices not only reduces people's heating bills, reduces business costs, reduces greenhouse gases, it also adds \$7 to the gross domestic product. Every \$1 creates \$7, and that's an opportunity. The Green Economy Network has calculated that over 30,000 jobs can be created in five years through a major investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and clean public transit. That is job creation. We don't need to reinvent the wheel to accomplish these goals. We need to significantly support existing models like Efficiency Nova Scotia, renewable energy projects, public transportation projects, and so many initiatives many organizations and municipalities and First Nations communities and others are already leading the way on. A simple increase of investment can have huge returns.

It won't just create jobs in engineering and construction. It can create jobs in agriculture, forestry, fishery, and manufacturing. Nova Scotia has a long tradition of sustainable industry, including in the fisheries, forestry, and agriculture. Creating a clean economy means building on those traditions and shifting some of our focus back to the local economy to import replacement. Nova Scotians are ready to build and innovate on our traditions. We know that without action, global warming will drive up the price of food, for instance. We can strengthen our local food supply. Nova Scotia could create 15,000 jobs, according to the Centre for Local Prosperity, and generate \$8.8 million in new wages by importing 10 per cent less and producing and consuming more locally. This is achievable. A green economy is about growing the sectors that are already clean, as well, and making sure that they create jobs that are reliable and pay well. We can also innovate in new green industries.

I had the great fortune of meeting with Myrna Gillis at Aqualitas recently at the old Bowater site. Here's a green industry. They have a closed-loop system for growing a new product. They are employing Ph.D.s, engineers, they're bringing them to rural Nova Scotia. They're rehabbing a former heavy industrial site. But guess what? They're not eligible for payroll rebates. They're not eligible for loans or bridge financing that many of the people that they're competing against are. I ask this question - I've been asking it for two years when we were talking about legalizing cannabis, when we talk about all kinds of other local industries: What are our incentives for small local businesses that are doing things in a sensible way? And I'll give you the answer, Mr. Speaker: there's not much.

It's not just new industries. The film industry, creative industries, ecotourism, the service sector, education, and child care. These are all clean sectors that are crucial to our

green future, but we treat them as an afterthought. These are not where our economic development dollars go. We need a plan and we don't have one. It needs to be democratic and everyone needs a seat at the table: First Nations, our African Nova Scotian communities, both of whom have suffered so much environmental racism.

Professor Kate Ervine told the media yesterday that everyone must be able to participate in choosing Nova Scotia's future. We and the whole world are facing a climate emergency. We are feeling it here in Nova Scotia. We've had frost and droughts and floods, and every member of this House has experienced that. We can't avoid the most serious impacts, as I said at the beginning.

[5:00 p.m.]

Our children's world will look different than ours, but we can avoid the worst. If we act now, we can choose a different future. We need leadership and investment.

We've taken the wrong direction. We are slowing down our emissions reductions. We are choosing weaker emissions targets. We are advocating for deep sea oil-drilling and mineral exploration. We are supporting tire burning and plastic burning. We are not properly consulting our First Nations, including Sipekne'katik.

We can do better. If we make an ambitious investment in a clean economy right now, we can turn the Nova Scotia story around. We can be a beacon for other provinces, municipalities, and even countries, all of whom will have to make this change, like it or not.

I hope that the Liberal majority will listen to today's debate and finally take seriously that we are in climate emergency. Not only does that have meaningful and terrifying prospects for all of us and all of the people that we serve, but it is also an enormous opportunity to start now and to do things differently.

I invite the government and I invite my colleagues to be bold, to take their heads out of the sand, and to join us in starting to plan for what is an inevitable future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy and Mines.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and provide a few comments for the debate.

I want to recognize my colleague for bringing it forward from the NDP. It's an important discussion that's been had by successive governments about how we can all play a role as Nova Scotians to support reducing our carbon footprint, and how we can support Nova Scotians from coast to coast, whether it's at home or whether it's through private sector or industry, to support a cleaner energy future.

I will disagree with the comment that we need to change direction. Nova Scotia is a leader in reducing our carbon footprint and supporting initiatives for climate change.

As we've talked about in the past, we have hit our 2005 targets and we are on pace to be between 45 and 50 per cent reductions by 2030. These are excellent numbers; these are being driven by Nova Scotians. These are everyday Nova Scotians who have taken on the task for a cleaner future and they are stepping up.

We've made significant investments. When you look at the Maritime Link and you look at some of the other projects through successive governments, that's \$4 billion - an investment by Nova Scotians to support cleaner energy and a cleaner carbon footprint.

There are multiple departments that provide different initiatives that support the work of Nova Scotians. I call it the work of Nova Scotians, because it is Nova Scotians who are stepping forward, and their government is there to support them along the way.

I look specifically to my Department of Energy and Mines. I want to recognize the staff there, the staff at Environment, at Municipal Affairs, and other departments who, every day, are doing excellent work supporting municipalities, supporting Nova Scotians as they come forward to seek programs.

This year alone, if you look at 2018, you are looking at the expansion of programs. There has been \$50 million invested in Efficiency Nova Scotia programs across the province. If you look at the home programs, for example, you are looking traditionally at programs that were for homes that were heated by electricity. Now those programs are expanded to homes that are heated by oil and other methods, and we've seen hundreds of homes participate in those programs.

Just in the efficiency programs alone, 1,400 jobs have been created right across Nova Scotia, with over 200 businesses that are part of a network. Energy works to ensure that those businesses have up-to-date information; that they are accessing the programs that government is offering and we've seen a major uptake.

We are making the investments necessary in companies right across Nova Scotia, specifically rural Nova Scotia, because these jobs are very significant to them. They are doing the work.

I want to talk a bit about some of the other programs we do offer. I've mentioned the home efficiency programs. We've seen hundreds of homes access them. We've seen a huge uptake in solar. We've seen over 200 homes apply for the solar program. We're learning now that 50 additional jobs have been created in the industry because of this. Nova Scotians are up to the challenge of what we're offering. I know we talked about Mi'kmaw communities, so in 2018 at a glance, 2,000 energy efficient upgrades to homes in 13 Mi'kmaw communities across the province. That's a significant number, we have a very

strong relationship with our Mi'kmaw leadership in supporting all of the energy efficiency programs that we offer.

To Nova Scotians overall, you're seeing an annual savings of \$180 million. We're seeing significant savings for Nova Scotians. We're reducing our heating costs by 35 per cent, our electricity use by 11 per cent, and again, training more than 200 businesses to support these programs in communities across the province.

We talk about being world leaders in innovation. I can tell you as the Minister of Energy and Mines of the exciting work that is happening in our tidal. We have an opportunity ahead of us with the Bay of Fundy. We have companies that are investing here in Nova Scotia because they see Nova Scotia's potential to be a world leader in tidal innovation. We're seeing direct jobs out of that. We're seeing suppliers in that area benefiting from investment whether it's from other levels of government or private companies investing millions of dollars there. We're seeing amazing support.

We're seeing amazing support throughout our municipalities, which are applying for our flood reduction programs, our capital investment programs to support clean technology within their communities. We're having conversations with them about electrification of their transportation, whether it's transferring from traditional gas to natural gas and other fuel supplies to electrification of transit buses and cars to make sure we have the infrastructure necessary across the province to support these technologies.

We know they're coming. We're having these conversations with industry on a daily basis, and we'll be prepared when the time comes. This is very exciting. Look at the Department of Environment and the work the minister and her staff are doing around our landfills. Those jobs are exceeding 3,000 and 4,000 across the province to support that important work for environmental sustainability. I'm very excited about what Nova Scotia is doing. Right across the country and around the globe people see Nova Scotia as a leader. They see us as a leader in our energy efficiency. When it comes to tidal, they see us as a leader. When it comes to our electrification of products and services that Nova Scotians use every day, they see us as a leader. Our cap-and-trade program, we're going to continue to make those investments.

We are going to continue to diversify as industry comes forward with new and innovative ways to support Nova Scotians. We're going to continue to make those investments we have continued to make to support the hundreds of Nova Scotian families that have taken advantage of installs and solar, of a wide array of energy efficiency products that have significantly reduced our carbon footprint across the province.

I'm very honoured to have the opportunity to take a few minutes to talk about what we're doing. I know they've cited their own information and I appreciate that. What I say to Nova Scotians is thank you because really the work we do as a government is because Nova Scotians fundamentally have said we want to be a leader in reducing our carbon

footprint, that the environment is important and that we support policies as such. Regardless of what department they come from, Nova Scotians have continuously stepped up to take a leadership role across this country when it comes to emerging technologies. I can assure all members of this house that as a government, we're going to continue to make those investments.

So, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words about this and again, I'm very proud of the work that this government has done and that has been done with successive governments. As we've always said, this has been an important conversation for government for a long time. Our government is going to continue to make those significant investments to ensure that Nova Scotians can access them and we're going to continue to be a world leader in reducing our carbon footprint.

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

BRAD JOHNS: I listen to the honourable member for Sydney-Whitney Pier and some of the things that are being discussed, and it gets me all riled up. I want to talk about so many other things that he's mentioning, but I want to stay on topic to what's here before us today because I think that it's very important, and I do commend the NDP for bringing this forward. As a PC caucus we do support what's coming forward here and the discussion we're having, and we appreciate having that.

Of course, I'm very proud to stand here as a member of the PC caucus, as everybody in this House knows, the Party that brought forward the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act, EGSPA, back in 2007. I would recognize the Leader of the New Democratic Party this afternoon did bring up some questions to the Premier as regards the lack of the government to follow through on that. I do appreciate that that hasn't been updated for a while.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the debate topic that is before us and I think of a couple of things. Most people, I've discovered, understand that there's something called global warming and that it's something that is affecting us all, but I don't think most normal, everyday Joe citizens really understands the significance of what global warming is, and the potential of what's coming. The topic here does touch on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the speaker from Dartmouth South, she touched on that, but she didn't really go into detail about exactly what that is.

For those who aren't aware of what that is, it's a panel that was struck by the United Nations as well as the World Meteorological Organization back in 1988. Its goal was to actually look at - it's not to go out there and do studies, it's to evaluate the studies that are done. Currently, it's comprised of over 195 separate countries that are all members of that.

So, it's a pretty significant organization and when it comes forward with some recommendations, or it's saying something, it's well-educated, it's backed up by thousands of scientists across this world. That report that the member for Dartmouth South touched

on, which is the global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius, that report has been referred to as probably one of the most important reports that has ever been published in regard to the environment. The reason for that is because it does highlight the impact - 1.5 degrees Celsius doesn't sound like a whole lot, but it is significant, and that global warming temperature would have a huge impact on the world.

We saw Monday that the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Minister McKenna, tabled a study in regard to how they are going to transition from fossil fuels, i.e., particularly coal, into a green economy, and what effect that is going to have on those industries. They've actually come up with a report that was tabled where they said that it would cost over hundreds of millions of dollars to be able to make that transition. But in the report they do recognize that coal needs to be phased out, fossil fuels need to be phased out. They refer to them as the old system, the era of coal and fossil fuels, and we're moving into this new era.

[5:15 p.m.]

It's an exciting era to be in. I think there are a lot of opportunities, and certainly the member for Dartmouth South listed off numerous ones, so I won't redo that. I do think that there are a lot of opportunities there.

When we look at where we've been, federally as well as provincially, in regard to fossil fuels and the subsidies that have gone into fossil fuels and that infrastructure - if we were to stop providing those long-standing subsidies for fossil fuels and actually invest that into green technology and clean alternatives, I think that's where we as a country, as a province, really need to be going.

There are so many opportunities with green technology. The member for Sydney-Whitney Pier talked in regard to the solar program. I certainly do recognize that the current government has done some stuff toward the environment. The question becomes: Have they done enough toward the environment?

A \$10,000 solar program, although it is an initiative, it doesn't necessarily - when you are looking at a \$35,000 install for a regular home, and then on top of that, the issue really is the batteries and being able to keep that, feeding it back into the system. There's a perfect opportunity for a green economy, which is to look at batteries for electric vehicles as well as residential homes. I think there are many opportunities there that we can look at when we start looking at a green economy.

Studies across North America have done comparisons between green jobs and regular employment opportunities. Time and time again, it is showing that a green economy actually offers better-paying and more sustainable jobs. It seems to be the way it is going.

The Canadian National Sector Council and the Environmental Careers Organization have both said that a green economy is the way that we need to be looking at going. Those are the jobs that we should be investing our dollars into.

I do think there is merit in looking at investing more money into a green economy, as the former speaker from the NDP talked about, even down to farming and opportunities like that.

I know I'm all over. It's a big topic.

One of the things that people seem to miss - and I'm kind of wondering whether or not the NDP missed this as well - is that there is actually a distinction between green jobs and a green economy and a clean economy. I know there was a bill that was tabled here yesterday which refers to green jobs, and then here we are today debating a clean economy. There is a distinction between the two of them, but we won't get into that today. I'll just point that out. I did touch on that, that green jobs do pay higher.

I guess that's it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I wish to thank all the members who participated in this debate this evening.

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:00 p.m. Sleep well.

[The House rose at 5:19 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 832**

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 Emily Turner is a busy mom to four amazing children, with a professional background as a residential counsellor at a mental health agency; and

Whereas Emily's youngest daughter Lyla was diagnosed shortly after her first birthday with CDKL5 Deficiency Disorder (CDD), an ailment characterized by seizures that start in infancy followed by significant delay in development; and

Whereas Emily has been actively fundraising, advocating, and raising awareness in both the CDKL5 and epilepsy communities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Emily Turner on her appointment to the Board of Directors for CDKL5 Canada, and wish her continued success.