



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS:	
TIR: Delays in Springville Bridge Repairs - Emerg. Resp. Concerns: Act, T. Houston.....	2235
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 833, Ntl. Soc. Work Mo.: Real People, Real Impact - Thanks, Hon. K. Regan.....	2237
Vote - Affirmative.....	2237
Res. 834, World Kidney Day: Health Awareness - Recog., Hon. R. Delorey	2238
Vote - Affirmative.....	2238
Res. 835, Fishing Indus. Research: Research Discussion - Thanks, Hon. K. Colwell	2238
Vote - Affirmative.....	2239
Res. 836, Uni. of King's College: Scholarship Recipients - Congrats., Hon. T. Ince	2239
Vote - Affirmative.....	2240

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:

No. 114, Lobbyists' Registration Act, E. Orrell.....	2240
No. 115, Public Procurement Act, S. Leblanc	2241
No. 116, Biodiversity Act, Hon. I. Rankin.....	2241

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:

Russell, Ron: Death of - Tribute, T. Houston.....	2241
VETS Ctr.: Veterans' Drop-In - Welcome, C. Chender	2241
Frecker, Temma - Teacher: GG's Excellence Award - Congrats., K. Irving.....	2242
Livingston, Omarrahn: Death of - Tribute, B. Johns.....	2243
Do Crew: Student Kindness Club - Changing Their World, Hon. M. Furey.....	2243
Rushton, Bayley: Birthday - Best Wishes, T. Rushton.....	2244
Cap-and-Trade & Climate Change: Grave Concerns - Act, L. Roberts.....	2244
MacDonald, Betty: Retirement - Congrats., Hon. L. Metlege Diab	2245
Joyce, Vincent: GG's Sovereign Medal - Congrats., K. MacFarlane.....	2245
Norton, Scott - Q.C.: Appt. to N.S. Sup. Ct. - Congrats., Hon. K. Regan.....	2246
E. Lodge 8686, Buffalo Club: 65 th Anniv. - Thanks, B. Adams.....	2246
Conrad, Donna: Volun. of the Yr. - Thanks, Hon. L. Glavine.....	2247
Denny, Erin: Mi'kmaw Athl., Hockey Excellence - Congrats., K. Bain	2247
Chisholm, Hugh - DVM: Feline Protection - Recog., Hon. I. Rankin.....	2248
Paris, Doreen: Death of - Tribute, Hon. P. Dunn.....	2248
O'Donnell, Jack & Judy: Death of - Tribute, Hon. R. Delorey	2249
Bauer, Max - Recipient: Schulich Scholarship - Congrats., T. Halman	2249

Mills, Lynn: Outstanding Cdn. Principal - Congrats., Hon. K. Colwell	2250
Burgess, Karlee: Ntl. Curling Excellence - Congrats., L. Harrison	2250
Burnside Bus. Pk.: Chamber of Commerce Awards - Congrats., S. Leblanc	2251
Duncan, Norm Sydney: Death of - Tribute, R. DiCostanzo	2251
McDonald, Haley: Uni. Basketball Victories - Congrats., J. Lohr	2252
Chamber of Commerce: 4 th Open E. Hants Day - Recog., Hon. M. Miller	2252
Riverview Redmen: Red Cup Title - Congrats., Hon. A. MacLeod	2253
Murray, John: Retirement - Thanks, K. Masland	2253
Guys. Acad.: <i>Shrek: The Musical</i> Encore - Congrats., Hon. L. Hines	2254
Clothe-a-Fam. Proj.: Making a Difference - Thanks, E. Orrell	2254
Beck, Robert Lawson: Death of - Tribute, Hon. L. Metlege Diab	2255
Isle Madame Volun. Fire Dept.: Decades of Serv. - Thanks, A. Paon	2255
Hawks Hockey: Tourn. Champs. - Congrats., Hon. P. Arab	2256
Our Backyard BBQ: New Bus. - Best Wishes, E. Smith-McCrossin	2256
City Water Proj.: Joint Venture - Celebrate, B. Horne	2256
Lyon's Brook Women's Inst.: 90 th Anniv. - Thanks, K. MacFarlane	2257
Madeline Symonds MS: African N.S. Quiz Challenge - Congrats., B. Jessome	2257
Edgar, Jim & Judie: Cancer Survivors' Garden - Recog., B. Adams	2258
Calkin, Joy: Com. Ldrship. - Thanks, H. MacKay	2258
Trailblazers/Huskies: C.B. Collegiality - Inspiring, K. Bain	2259
Meredith, Betty: Photo to Cdn. Stamp - Congrats., S. Lohnes-Croft	2259

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:

No. 441, Gov't. (N.S.): Lobbyist Pressure - Disclosure, T. Houston.....	2260
No. 442, H&W: Alt. Level of Care/Long-Term Care - Numbers, G. Burrill.....	2262
No. 443, TIR: Hantsport Aboiteau - Saltwater Prevention, J. Lohr.....	2263
No. 444, H&W - Emerg. Depts.: NEDOCS Score - Crisis, T. Martin.....	2264
No. 445, H&W: Health Care System - Breaking Point, K. MacFarlane.....	2265
No. 446, I.S. - Gov't. Transparency: EFF Ranking - Reconcile, Hon. C. d'Entremont.....	2266
No. 447, Justice - Info. & Privacy Comm.: Added Power - Comment, T. Halman.....	2267
No. 448, EECD - School Site Select.: Public Consult - Comment, C. Chender.....	2268
No. 449, EECD - Vaping at School: Data Collect. - Confirm, K. Masland.....	2270
No. 450, H&W - NSHA: President's Comments - Comment, J. Lohr.....	2271
No. 451, TIR - Springville Bridge: Replacement - Update, T. Houston.....	2272
No. 452, H&W - ER Assessments: Hallway Medicine - Frequency, B. Adams.....	2273
No. 453, Environ. - Emissions Reduction: Target - Clarify, L. Zann.....	2275
No. 454, H&W - Buchanan Mem. Hosp.: Point-of-Care Tech. - Implement., K. Bain.....	2276
No. 455, TIR - Potholes: Dept. Response - Update, T. Halman.....	2277
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
HOUSE RECESSED.....	2279
HOUSE RESOLVED INTO CWH ON BILLS AT 2:59 P.M.	2279
HOUSE RECONVENED AT 3:55 P.M.	2279
CWH REPORTS.....	2279
PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 109, Pension Benefits Act	
Hon. K. Casey.....	2280
A. MacMaster.....	2281
C. Chender.....	2284
Hon. K. Casey.....	2285
Vote - Affirmative.....	2285

No. 106, Coastal Protection Act	
Hon. M. Miller	2286
B. Johns	2287
L. Zann	2289
Hon. A. MacLeod	2290
K. Bain	2291
Hon. M. Miller	2291
Vote - Affirmative.....	2293
No. 112, Education Act	
Hon. Z. Churchill	2293
K. Masland	2294
C. Chender	2296
Hon. Z. Churchill	2297
Vote - Affirmative.....	2297
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Fri., Mar. 15 th at 9:00 a.m.....	2298



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 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. We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a petition. I have affixed my signature to it. There are 331 signatures.

“The East River Valley Fire Department has significant concerns with the ability to provide timely responses to emergencies, by both the E.R.V. Fire Department and our Mutual Aid departments, in addition to EHS. If Ambulance or Mutual Aid FD responders come from Stellarton, Plymouth or Eureka, the alternate route adds upwards of 12 KM to their response.”

Mr. Speaker, the Springville Bridge provides vital transportation between the east and west sides of the East River Valley and connects many communities.

“ . . . [T]he people of the East River Valley are concerned with the delays in repairing the bridge, and are requesting that the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure repair and re-open the bridge as soon as possible.”

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 Community Services.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

KELLY REGAN: For the information of the House, March is National Social Work Month and today, in the East Gallery, we are joined by a group of Community Services social workers from around the province. I would ask them to each rise as I mention their names:

Megan Power, Child Protection Social Worker, from Sackville; Laura Thompson, Child Protection Social Worker, from Dartmouth; Heather Carrington, Permanent Care Social Worker, from Halifax; Rachelle Williams, Disability Support Program Supervisor, from Halifax; Kim Landry, Disability Support Program Coordinator, from Halifax; Jennifer Moore, Child Welfare Program Audits Coordinator, from Halifax; Jacqueline Duggan, Child Protection Social Worker, from New Glasgow; Janine Bateman, Child Protection Social Worker, from New Glasgow; Winnifred Grant, Senior Advisor African Nova Scotian Affairs, from Halifax; Kelly Byrne, Social Worker Children’s Residential Services, from Truro; Kim Smith, Disability Support Program Social Worker, from Truro; Michelle MacLean, Child Protection Social Worker, from Truro; Kathryn McCarthy, Disability Support Program Care Coordinator, from Bridgewater; and Alison Considine, Foster Care Social Worker, from Dartmouth.

I would ask the members to give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 833

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

Whereas National Social Work Month is a time for all Nova Scotians to recognize the important contributions social workers make to our society; and

Whereas this year's theme, Real People, Real Impact, is a fitting description of how social workers bring about social change by working with people who are in a tough place in their lives, and often give people who need support a chance to restore their dignity by helping them overcome barriers; and

Whereas social workers are patient, skilled, adaptable, and flexible professionals, ready at a moment's notice to attend to a situation to help someone in need;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly thank social workers for the important work they do every day for Nova Scotians.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

RANDY DELOREY: Joining us in the Centre Gallery we have Cydney Kane, Hazel Muise, Carol Singer, Michelle MacMullin, and Ed Saunders. Cydney and Carol are local leadership volunteers for the Kidney Foundation of Canada and are especially involved with the Kidney Walk campaign and assist the foundation raising funds for research and patient services. Hazel has supported the Kidney Foundation by fundraising in honour of her husband, who passed away from kidney disease. Michelle is the

development coordinator for Nova Scotia, and Ed is the development manager for Atlantic Canada for the Kidney Foundation of Canada, Atlantic Branch.

I would ask my colleagues here in the Legislature to extend Cydney, Carol, Hazel, Michelle, and Ed the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 834

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

Whereas one in ten Canadians have kidney disease; and

Whereas organizations like the Kidney Foundation of Canada aim to promote education and research around kidney health, raise awareness about the prevention of kidney disease, and provide support for people living with the burden of kidney disease; and

Whereas March 14th is World Kidney Day, a time to promote awareness of kidney health, risk factors, and kidney disease;

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

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 835

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

Whereas the Fishermen and Scientists Research Society held their annual conference and AGM on March 7th in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia; and

Whereas this important meeting allows members, fishermen, scientists, industry workers, students, and the public to meet and discuss recent research findings within the fishing industry; and

Whereas the Fishermen and Scientists Research Society is a non-profit organization that exists to promote the long-term sustainability of our marine fisheries resources;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House thank the Fishermen and Scientists Research Society on the important role they play in the sustainability of a marine fishing industry resource.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

TONY INCE: In the East Gallery we have with us today the president of King's College, Bill Lahey, and an alumnus, Doug Ruck. Please give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 836

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

Whereas the University of King's College awards two major scholarships to make education more accessible, the Dr. Carrie Best Scholarship for African-Canadians and Indigenous students and the Prince Scholarship for African Nova Scotian Students; and

Whereas the University of King's College first offered the Prince Scholarship in the 1960s - it was the first university in Nova Scotia to offer a scholarship for African Nova Scotian students and is dedicated to strengthening the academic success of young, diverse scholars and contributing to the intellectual, social, and economic fabric of our society; and

Whereas government is committed to making a difference in the lives of all Nova Scotians by promoting, encouraging, and creating diverse institutions and workplaces across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly please join me in congratulating Mairi Spencer, Marlee Sansom, Kiera Doyle, and Eddie Cuevas who received the Dr. Carrie Best Scholarship in 2017 and 2018, and in thanking the University of King's College for developing our young people and helping them achieve greatness.

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.

[1:15 p.m.]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 114 - An Act to Amend Chapter 34 of the Acts of 2001. The Lobbyists' Registration Act. (Eddie Orrell)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I beg leave to make an introduction. I'd like to draw the House's attention to the gallery opposite where we have two distinguished guests today, Ms. Tanya Markovich and Nathan Rogers. Tanya is a board member with the Licensed Professional Planners Association of Nova Scotia and Nathan is the president of the

Licensed Professional Planners Association of Nova Scotia. I ask the House to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

Bill No. 115 - An Act to Amend Chapter 12 of the Acts of 2011. The Public Procurement Act. (Susan Leblanc)

Bill No. 116 - An Act to Provide for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Nova Scotia. (Hon. Iain Rankin)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

RUSSELL, RON: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'll be asking the indulgence of the House for a moment of silence after this.

I rise today in remembrance of Ron Russell. Ron Russell was an institution in this House serving eight terms as the MLA for Hants West. Ron served in many cabinet portfolios most ably and respected as a revered Speaker of this House. All this after a distinguished career in both the New Zealand and Canadian Armed Forces.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to rise and join me in a moment of silence to honour Ron Russell.

THE SPEAKER: We've been asked that all members please rise in a moment of silence to recognize the former member of this House of Assembly, the honourable Ron Russell.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

VETS CTR.: VETERANS' DROP-IN - WELCOME

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Debbie and Jim Lowther, who yesterday celebrated the opening of the Veterans Emergency Transition Services (VETS) drop-in centre on Ochterloney Street in Dartmouth. VETS caters directly

to veterans who have left the military, offering immediate help with navigation, resources, and support.

Re-integrating into civilian life is a challenge compounded by the residual impact of experiences in the military. Veterans are often at risk for homelessness or are struggling with PTSD. With funding help from Hockey Helps the Homeless and private donors, VETS is providing a safe, stable, understanding place where veterans can get help navigating and accessing services to help find suitable jobs, housing, and health care.

They've only been open for a week, Mr. Speaker, and before they made it official yesterday with their grand opening, they had already assisted 40 veterans in need of support.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to welcome Jim, Debbie and their amazing staff and all of the veterans they help, to downtown Dartmouth.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**FRECKER, TEMMA - TEACHER:
GG'S EXCELLENCE AWARD - CONGRATS.**

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, the impact of remarkably skilled teachers cannot be overstated. They influence and inspire young minds. New Minas teacher Temma Frecker is one of those teachers.

Recently, Temma was recognized for her work at the Booker School as the 2018 recipient of the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching. The project undertaken by Temma's class that drew national attention, focused on the removal of the Cornwallis statue in Halifax.

Students researched the history of Cornwallis, Nova Scotia's British and French settlers, and the Mi'kmaq, and the context around the creation of the statue in 1931. From this research students created their own unique solution to the debate over the future of the Cornwallis statue and submitted their proposal, titled *The Conversation*. They submitted it to the committee charged with considering the future of the statue.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Temma Frecker on this extraordinary national award in teaching excellence.

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

LIVINGSTON, OMARRAHN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I stand today on a sad note and recognize the passing of an HRM icon. Omarrahn Livingston - Roy to his friends - passed away yesterday March 13th, at 73 years of age after a brief illness.

Many of those who grew up in the Halifax area and attended any local bar or restaurant over the past 30 years would know Roy, the Rose Guy, with his signature cowboy hat and bucket of roses. The first rose for some, a rose to show your significant other that you still love them after many years as you did in the beginning, or a rose just to tell somebody you care. Roy always took great pride in knowing that he had a hand in many relationships.

Mr. Speaker, I want to extend sincere condolences to Roy's son, family members and friends. Rest in peace Roy, the Rose Guy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

DO CREW: STUDENT KINDNESS CLUB - CHANGING THEIR WORLD

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, the Do Crew is a club at Hebbville Academy with students from Grades 6 to 9. Together they identify ways that they can help their school and community, and then they just do it.

They made Christmas ornaments for every student in the school, provided Christmas dinners for students who don't usually receive them and sent thank you notes to people who contribute to the school. This winter, they visited seniors' homes and had shovels in hand to help those who can't shovel their driveway. They also plan to create a community park in Hebbville and invite community groups to contact them to lend a hand with their initiatives.

The Do Crew was created by Emily Strong, the school's music and band teacher and Cameron Strong, who teaches Grades 7 to 8 English. Emily always wanted to create a kindness club and it was also a perfect fit for Cameron, who used to teach community-based learning. Although they started the club, Emily said that the kids have completely taken over.

I would ask members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in thanking the Do Crew for their good deeds, and for making a positive change in their school community and the world around them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the floor to the Speaker's Gallery, where I have my birthday boy, 12-year-old son, Bayley Rushton. If we could give him a Happy Birthday and rise. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

RUSHTON, BAYLEY: BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish my oldest boy a happy 12th birthday from his mother, Tracy and I. Bayley is not only getting the day off school to spend it with his father here in the Legislature, but I would also like to draw attention to the fact that Bayley is doing his heritage school project on the 200th anniversary of this Legislature. Following Question Period, one of the staff has graciously offered to give Bayley a full tour of this great building. Happy birthday, Bayley.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

CAP-AND-TRADE & CLIMATE CHANGE: GRAVE CONCERNS - ACT

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I'm continuing today with my resolution to talk about climate change. I'm still working my way through *Carbon* by Kate Ervine; however, I have finished the section where she explains and debunks cap-and-trade initiatives which have proven spectacularly ineffective at incenting greenhouse gas emission reductions.

Kate generously spoke in favour of the NDP's Green Jobs Plan earlier this week, and toward the end of the press conference, as the media were about ready to pack up, she said, I don't think we're scared enough yet of what's coming.

Her kids, I happen to know, are just a couple of years younger than mine. Recently judging that I could no longer shield my 10-year old, I did not turn down the radio when news came on about climate change. She asked me a couple of questions, which I answered to the best of my ability, and then she said, I'm scared - and I answered, so am I.

My question to the government and to those who profess to be interested in governing is: Where is the urgency, the action, and the leadership that she deserves, that the high school students marching tomorrow deserve, and that indeed all Nova Scotians deserve?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LENA METLEDGE DIAB: With us today in the East Gallery are long-time Armdale community residents, Betty and Bill MacDonald. Betty is a notable public servant and city builder who brought her expertise in economics to her roles in HRM, at ACOA, SMU, and most recently as the executive director of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities. She is joined by her husband Bill, who is a committed public servant who has worked for a quarter of a century using his legal expertise in the Workers' Advisers Program.

I ask both of them to please rise, and I ask my colleagues to give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

MACDONALD, BETTY: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Betty MacDonald, former executive director of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, on her recent retirement. Betty has applied her expertise to a number of challenging roles over her nearly four decades in academia, public service, and advocacy.

She served 15 years at the federal level working as a senior policy analyst for ACOA, 10 years with HRM as Director of Governance and Strategic Initiatives, five years as Director of Continuing Education at Saint Mary's University, and these last seven and a half years as Executive Director of the Federation of Municipalities. In these roles she has helped build our province and spoke effectively for the needs and concerns of our municipalities and citizens.

As she moves on to her next chapter, I, along with current and past Ministers of Municipal Affairs, want to congratulate her on her leadership and wish her and her husband Bill the very best.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

JOYCE, VINCENT: GG'S SOVEREIGN MEDAL - CONGRATS.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I stand today to congratulate Vincent Joyce on receiving the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers from the Governor General of Canada. This medal is presented to only 40 Canadians each year.

In 2006, Vincent had a vision to create a museum to recognize, honour, and preserve our extensive military heritage. This effort led to the creation of the Pictou County

Military Heritage Museum. At times Vincent was the only volunteer, yet he managed to keep the museum doors open.

During his time as curator, Vincent has been instrumental in obtaining uniforms and artifacts from high-ranking military personnel. These are currently housed, along with over 1,500 other artifacts.

I applaud Vincent for his dedication to preserving our vital military heritage for generations to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

NORTON, SCOTT - Q.C.: APPT. TO N.S. SUP. CT. - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate a Bedford resident and neighbour on his recent appointment to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia. The appointment of the Honourable Justice Scott C. Norton, Q.C., was announced late last year. His robing ceremony was held on January 25th.

Judge Norton was called to the Bar in 1984 and was a partner with Stewart McKelvey for the past 17 years. His practice focused on civil litigation and he has extensive trial and appellant experience, which includes appearing before the Supreme Court of Canada.

He has volunteered with a variety of organizations, including Autism Nova Scotia, the IWK and Saint Mary's University. Judge Norton will preside mainly in Pictou.

I would like to congratulate my friend and neighbour on his recent appointment. I know his wife, Audrey, and his son, Jack, are proud of and happy for him, as are his colleagues, friends, and family.

[1:30 p.m.]

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

E. LODGE 8686, BUFFALO CLUB: 65th ANNIV. - THANKS

BARBARA ADAMS: I rise today to bring recognition to our Cow Bay Buffalo Club for all that they offer to our community members. The Eastern Lodge #8686 Order first opened its doors in 1954.

The Buffalo Club helps community members in so many ways, like helping financially with a medical device that could not be afforded otherwise, property maintenance, utility help, and providing a great venue for community fundraisers. They

even went out the other day and helped shovel out an elderly gentleman who could not do it on his own.

The Eastern Lodge Buffalo Club relies mostly on fundraisers to keep the generosity going. Their most recent fundraiser, the second annual casino night, raised almost \$4,000 and was a great success.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking the members of the Eastern Lodge Buffalo Club for their time and compassion while giving back to their community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

CONRAD, DONNA: VOLUN. OF THE YR. - THANKS

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I am proud to say that strong leadership-driven women are well-known in Kings West, one of whom is real estate agent and community volunteer Donna Conrad. As Berwick's 2018 Volunteer of the Year, Donna has been recognized for her service to the AVABF, the Atlantic Theatre Festival, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Campaign for Kids, Red Doors, Berwick Teen Fit and Youth Activities, Berwick Recreation Committee, and countless fundraisers for local women's groups and youth, and furthermore, the Stockings Were Hung campaign.

Perhaps Donna's most notable work has been with the Berwick Gala Days, where she has transformed the local pageant into an opportunity for young women to develop and focus on their leadership skills, feel empowered, and understand the importance and honour of community representation.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the House to join me in recognizing Donna Conrad for her exemplary community volunteer work and for continuing to inspire the young female leaders of our province.

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

DENNY, ERIN: MI'KMAW ATHL., HOCKEY EXCELLENCE - CONGRATS.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Erin Denny of Eskasoni First Nation. Erin is the first Mi'kmaq woman to ever play for the Team Nova Scotia hockey team. Since she was in Atom, she has been called up to play higher levels of hockey as an underager, and in every level she has continued to excel.

Erin has collected some prestigious titles in the last few years. She recently received the 2018 Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Female Athlete of the Year, the Anastasia Sylliboy Award (High School), the Rick MacDonald "Leadership" Award, the NSSAF Female Athlete of

the Year, and the Lydia Dixon Award, and was recently crowned the 2018 Nova Scotia Mik'maw Summer Games Queen.

Erin is truly an inspiration for young and old and a role model for young girls who want to play hockey. I ask all members to join me in wishing Erin every success in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

CHISHOLM, HUGH - DVM: FELINE PROTECTION - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing Dr. Hugh Chisholm, the proud owner of the renowned late Tuxedo Stan and his brother Earl Grey, the world-famous felines who ran for Mayor of Halifax and Premier of Nova Scotia, respectively, under the Tuxedo Party of Canada.

The felines jumped into politics at the bequest of Dr. Chisholm, owner and campaign manager for the pair, to raise awareness of animal cruelty and bring attention to the feral cat population in Halifax. The campaigns caught the attention of not only the international media but also this government, resulting in the first legislation on animal protection in Nova Scotia, making it illegal to release a cat into the wild.

Dr. Chisholm continues to advocate for the protection of cats and should be acknowledged for his work to have Nova Scotia become the first province to ban cat declawing. As Director of Atlantic Canada's Paw Project, Dr. Chisholm recently announced that other provinces have followed Nova Scotia's suit and adopted the declawing ban. The Paw Project is now working on legislation to move throughout the United States, starting with California.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in thanking and congratulating Dr. Hugh Chisholm for the admirable work he has undertaken to protect and care for all of our feline friends.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

PARIS, DOREEN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, Doreen Paris was one of those people who had the gift of giving her entire life. Her family, her church, and the greater community were the recipients of her gift. Doreen passed away on February 26th, surrounded by her loving family, and the entire community will grieve her loss.

Doreen was a plain talker and a straight shooter. You never had to wonder what she was thinking because she would tell you. She was an honest and forthright person. Our

constituency office will miss being able to reach out to Doreen for her advice and assistance when dealing with many of our constituents. I would ask that the members of this Legislative Assembly join me in sending her family our condolences and thanks for Doreen's many years of faithful service to her community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

O'DONNELL, JACK & JUDY: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, Antigonish lost two of its own last fall, husband and wife, Jack and Judy O'Donnell. Jack passed away October 25th and was joined 25 days later by Judy, his beloved wife of 57 years. Both Jack and Judy were key figures in the Antigonish community and leave an impressive legacy.

THE SPEAKER: Order. There's a lot of chatter in the Chamber. I ask that everybody keep it down. The member can start over if he likes.

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Antigonish lost two of its own last fall - husband and wife Judy and Jack O'Donnell. Jack passed away October 25th and was joined 25 days later by Judy, his beloved wife of 57 years. Both Jack and Judy were key figures in the Antigonish community and leave an impressive legacy, Jack with his music and Judy with her work for volunteer communities.

Judy was a driving force in helping establish a workshop for mentally challenged adults at what we now know as CACL. She then led the charge with support from Jack to establish L'Arche Antigonish and she also played a key role in founding the Antigonish Creative Dance Association and served many other community organizations in Antigonish.

Jack O'Donnell was a professor emeritus and former chair of the Department of Music at his beloved alma mater, St. Francis Xavier University. In addition to serving the university for 40 years, he also served for 50 years as conductor and musical director of the Men of the Deeps, the famous Cape Breton coal miners' choir.

On December 2nd, a capacity crowd gathered at St. Ninian's Cathedral to celebrate their lives and I invite the House to join me in acknowledging the two lives well lived.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

BAUER, MAX - RECIPIENT: SCHULICH SCHOLARSHIP - CONGRATS.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Max Bauer, a student at Prince Andrew High School in Dartmouth East. Max was recently awarded a \$100,000 Schulich Leader Scholarship. Schulich scholarships such as these are given out to

encourage students to pursue their dreams and become the next global leaders in STEM disciplines: science, technology, engineering, and math. I've seen how hard students work for scholarships. Max has gone above and beyond to be named one of Canada's 50 recipients of 2019. I ask all members of the House to congratulate Max Bauer on a job well done and wish him all the best in his academic endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

MILLS, LYNN: OUTSTANDING CDN. PRINCIPAL - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Ms. Lynn Mills, who has been chosen by the Learning Partnership as one of 30 of Canada's outstanding principals in 2019. Ms. Mills was previously principal of Bell Park Academic Centre in Lake Echo before she moved to Ash Lee Jefferson Elementary School in Fall River. Ms. Mills is described as true leader, securing support from the Boys and Girls Club through the Royal Bank of Canada to offer more resources to help students socially, emotionally, and with academic growth.

I applaud and congratulate Lynn Mills on her tireless efforts to improve the lives of her students and for being chosen for one of Canada's outstanding principals in 2019.

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

BURGESS, KARLEE: NTL. CURLING EXCELLENCE - CONGRATS.

LARRY HARRISON: Yesterday, I drew attention to a fifth-generation Burgess family curler, Lindsey Burgess. Today I want to recognize Karlee Burgess, also a fifth-generation Burgess family curler who was honoured with an Outstanding Female aged 16 to 20 award for her ongoing accomplishments in curling.

A member of the Kaitlyn Jones curling team, throwing second, Karlee has received five provincial titles, two national gold medals, which ties her for the most gold medals for a Canadian junior woman. These are just a few accomplishments of Karlee's athletic career. Most recently, Karlee has been invited to join Team Alberta at the world championships.

I'd like to congratulate Karlee Burgess on receiving the Outstanding Female award and wish her continued success throughout her athletic career.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

[2:30 p.m.]

**BURNSIDE BUS. PK.:
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AWARDS - CONGRATS.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate a number of businesses from Burnside Industrial Park, which is situated in Dartmouth North, which were recently honoured at the Halifax Chamber Business Awards. Totally Raw Dog Food won the gold prize for small business award. Congratulations to its owners, Karen Campbell and Doug Malloy; Moog Focal Technologies won the silver award in the Export Business category; InterTalk Critical Information Systems won Innovative Business of the Year; Mezza Lebanese Restaurant Group won the gold award in the Business of the Year category. Mezza has a location in Burnside, and we are very grateful for that.

Mr. Speaker, Burnside Park is home to businesses of many shapes and sizes, many of which are affiliated with the Greater Burnside Business Association, and who contribute in many ways to our economy and to our community fabric. Congratulations to all the winners and finalists from Burnside and to all of the businesses honoured by the Chamber.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

DUNCAN, NORM SYDNEY: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember a dear friend, Norm Sydney Duncan, who passed away this Saturday, March 9th, at age 71.

I first met Norm almost 30 years ago as a colleague at Head Office of Central Guarantee Trust, then as a board member of the Clayton Park West Liberal Association helping Diana for almost a decade. Norm continued helping during my campaign in 2017. He was also a member of the Halifax West Liberal Association.

Norm was a resident of Rockingham, where he and his wife, Nancy, returned to live in his childhood home after living in Wellington for over 20 years.

Norm volunteered at the St. Peter's Anglican Church, where he held various board positions. He also volunteered his time at the Rockingham Heritage Society. He had a passion for history and particular interest in World War I.

Mr. Speaker, would this House of Assembly join me in remembering a kind soul whose spirit and kindness will live on forever. Norm, you will be greatly missed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MCDONALD, HALEY: UNI. BASKETBALL VICTORIES - CONGRATS.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, Haley McDonald of Port Williams recently led the Acadia University women's basketball team to the AUS championship, defeating the Memorial Sea-Hawks.

Haley was named first team all-star and tournament MVP. She set an AUS record for scoring 51 points in the semi-finals.

In the finals against Memorial, Haley scored 29 points and had 10 assists, leading Acadia to the AUS championship and being named tournament MVP.

Congratulations to Haley and proud parents, Scott and Christine McDonald, of Port Williams.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: 4th OPEN E. HANTS DAY - RECOG.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: We are all well aware that operating businesses in rural Nova Scotia can be challenging. It takes creative initiatives to engage the local consumer.

The East Hants and District Chamber of Commerce is a champion of small businesses in East Hants.

Their Think Local First committee has been organizing a community-wide event for each of the past three years that brings residents and businesses together.

Saturday, May 25th, marks the fourth annual Open East Hants Day. Dozens of business owners will open their doors as usual but with the added allure of contests, entertainment, food offerings, and sales specials. Residents will receive a map pinpointing each participating business. It's a popular, well-attended event that includes a pop-up market for home-based business entrepreneurs.

The community takes on a festive appearance with signs and balloons adorning the businesses. Prizes are awarded to local shoppers.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this House to join me in thanking our Chamber and congratulate them for the successful and creative initiative, Open East Hants Day.

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

RIVERVIEW REDMEN: RED CUP TITLE - CONGRATS.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to congratulate the Riverview Redmen, who recently captured the Red Cup title at the 41st annual Red Cup showcase.

The victory marked Riverview's ninth Red Cup since the tournament began back in 1978. Riverview won the championship game over the Auburn Drive Eagles 4-3 and earned its first Red Cup title since 2013. The ending was a dream come true for 17-year-old Grade 12 student Andrew McCarron, from Coxheath, who dedicated the tournament in memory of his grandfather, Terry McCarron, who passed away last summer.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to acknowledge the Riverview Redmen team and coaches for all the time they give to make our high school hockey team such a success each and every year.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West on an introduction.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to introduce to this House a couple of young ladies who are here for the first time, and one who is a little bit older and has been here numerous times.

I will start with Viktoria Hartmann who is from Bautzen, in the Saxony of Germany, and she is here on the Rotary Youth Exchange program and joined our family in January, around January 1st I think, and will be with us until the end of the school year before heading off across the country and touring before she goes home to Germany.

Also, with her today is Veronika Zemenová from Mukarov, Czech Republic, who is here on the Nova Scotia International Student Program. She resides in the beautiful community of Falmouth and is also here until the end of the school year - and I think is maybe thinking over further education in this province in the years ahead.

It's great to have both of them with us today, and my wife, Leslie, who has been here a number of times. She's the one who's a little bit older than these two young ladies - I'll probably pay for that later - so welcome these young ladies to the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

MURRAY, JOHN: RETIREMENT - THANKS

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize John Murray who retired in December from the board of Queens Care Society. Queens Care Society was founded in

2015, and is a charitable organization run by a volunteer board whose goal is to improve the lives of seniors living in Queens County. John's leadership was invaluable to the board as members worked to identify and meet the needs of seniors through advocacy and the use of the resources, knowledge, and determination of its members.

I would like to thank John for his contributions not only to the Queens Care Society but also to the other local health care related organizations with which he has volunteered over the years, even after his professional retirement. I wish John and his wife Donna many happy, happy years ahead.

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

GUYS. ACAD.: *SHREK: THE MUSICAL* ENCORE - CONGRATS.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, *Shrek: The Musical* is a popular Broadway production that has been performed and toured countless times the world over since 2008, and thanks to Guysborough Academy's drama class we can add five more sold-out performances to the list.

The production was scheduled for two performances, but the greater Guysborough area was having none of it. They did such a spectacular rendition, the community demanded three more encore performances of this hilarious and engaging student production in the 300-seat Chedabucto Performance Centre.

I want to commend the drama students of Guysborough Academy, both on the stage and behind the scenes, for their talent, enthusiasm, and heart. I would like to also thank their teacher, Mr. Chris Martins, for his vision and guidance. There are also many volunteer community members to thank as well, whose participation and know-how helped elevate the kids to make this production worthy of Broadway. Congratulations to all.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

CLOTHE-A-FAM. PROJ.: MAKING A DIFFERENCE - THANKS

EDDIE ORRELL: I rise today to thank the Salvation Army, the Mayflower Dental Group, and the Sydney Radio Club. These community minded groups were key supporters for the Clothe-a-Family Project. The Salvation Army in North Sydney distributes clothing collected by the other partners at no charge to make sure anyone who needs a coat, boots, or other winter clothing can come in and take it home. These groups are making a major difference in the lives of so many Cape Breton families and individuals.

I would like to take this opportunity also to give a shout-out to those who make donations to this organization every year. It makes one proud to be part of this community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

BECK, ROBERT LAWSON: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to share the passing of Robert Lawson Beck of Armdale, at the age of 72.

Rob was a kind soul who will be remembered by many for his good nature, his passion, his musicality, and his desire to give back to the community. He was a talented singer and guitar player who lived his Christian faith through his performances with the Nova Scotia Mass Choir. Rob brought his smarts and his enthusiasm in his 30-year career as an account executive with CTV Bell Media and always made time to volunteer. Diabetes Canada, Nova Scotia Leadership Prayer Breakfast Steering Committee, Habitat for Humanity, and the Christmas Daddies Telethon all benefited from Rob's efforts.

Rob also never missed a chance to get out on the water and was a valued member of the Armdale Yacht Club. Rob will be deeply missed, and I want to share my condolences with his wife Deborah, stepdaughter Laura, and the entire extended family and community.

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

ISLE MADAME VOLUN. FIRE DEPT.: DECADES OF SERV. - THANKS

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the contributions of the Isle Madame Volunteer Fire Department, located in Arichat. Recently, the Isle Madame Volunteer Fire Department recognized members for their years of service, and I wish to bring that acknowledgement forward today.

With 20 years of service to volunteer firefighting, Lyn Delorey, Neil Samson, Jarrod David, Joey Clorey, Nathan Boudreau, and John Wesley Embree; offering 25 years of service to the department is newly appointed Fire Chief Rodney LeBlanc; celebrating 30 years of service to the Isle Madame communities is recent Fire Chief Eugene Samson; and recognized as the longest-serving member of the department is Lloyd Pettipas.

I also recognize retiring firefighter Glen Richard for serving over 30 years with the Isle Madame Volunteer Fire Department. I wish to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Richard for his service to our communities and to all of the fire department members for their continued commitment to our safety.

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

HAWKS HOCKEY: TOURN. CHAMPS. - CONGRATS.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize two outstanding hockey teams from my community. In February, the Bantam AA Hawks won gold at the Canadian Cup tournament in Montreal. They defeated New Jersey by a score of 4 to 1 in the championship game.

The Bantam B Hawks followed this winning streak when they won their championship game at a tournament hosted by the Summerside and Area Minor Hockey Association on Prince Edward Island.

Watching the Hawks play is always a fun and exciting experience, and I'm proud of how far these two teams have come. Mr. Speaker, I ask that the members of this House of Assembly join me in celebrating the achievements of these two Halifax Hawks teams and in wishing them continued success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

OUR BACKYARD BBQ: NEW BUS. - BEST WISHES

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to welcome Our Backyard BBQ, a new business owned by Adam and Greg Howell here in Amherst.

They opened on January 28th and have already had lineups out the door, and their food is selling out. They have been working 16-hour days to get their food prepared for their new customers, and their hard work is paying off. These men have a passion for food and making their customers happy.

Today, I would like to welcome Adam and Greg to Amherst and wish them great success in their new business. I know they will be wonderful contributors to our growing economy in Cumberland County.

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

CITY WATER PROJ.: JOINT VENTURE - CELEBRATE

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, it was an exciting day in February 2019 when city water began flowing to Ash Lee Jefferson Elementary School in Fall River. The long-awaited project, some 41 years, was the result of the commitment of the governments of Canada, Nova Scotia, and the HRM to support local infrastructure projects enhancing safe, fresh water for Canadians.

The announcement was made in August 2016 and work began in September 2017. A second phase was added with an additional 3.1 kilometres, which included the business

district of Highway No. 2, and the final construction was finished in the Fall of 2018. Ash Lee Jefferson is the first of three schools that have been connected in Fall River; Lockview High School and Georges P. Vanier are the next connection stages.

It is exciting to see the youngest residents of Fall River benefiting from this important joint project.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

LYON'S BROOK WOMEN'S INST.: 90th ANNIV. - THANKS

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the Lyon's Brook Women's Institute on celebrating their 90th anniversary.

This organization held their first meeting on March 18, 1929, at the Lyon's Brook Hall. Twenty-one members joined that evening, with an additional eleven joining throughout that year. Some of the highlights in the last 90 years include donating to Tearmann Women's Centre, Roots for Youth, and Viola's Place, as well as membership in 100 Women Who Care, delivering gift baskets to shut-ins, working to improve the Lyon's Brook Hall, and donating to many nursing homes and the local hospital.

There have been exceptional women from this branch who have served as provincial presidents, once as a national president, and others serving on provincial boards and international committees.

I extend my gratitude and appreciation to the Lyon's Brook Women's Institute.

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

**MADLINE SYMONDS MS:
AFRICAN N.S. QUIZ CHALLENGE - CONGRATS.**

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, today I recognize the African Nova Scotian quiz team from Madeline Symonds Middle School for their impressive third-place finish at the African Nova Scotia Quiz Challenge held on March 7th at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library.

In February, the team finished first place in the qualifying round with a total of 115 points, placing them in contention at the finals. Team members included Curtis Smith, Treyvonne Gabriel, Jayreece Whiley, Malaika Williams, and Reagan Ewing. The team was coached by Mitchell Borden, Madeline Symonds' African Nova Scotia student support worker.

I ask members to recognize the initiative that enables an opportunity for learning about African Nova Scotian Heritage and congratulate the team at Madeline Symonds for their third-place finish.

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

EDGAR, JIM & JUDIE: CANCER SURVIVORS' GARDEN - RECOG.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge two cancer survivors, Jim and Judie Edgar, and their mission to implement a Cancer Survivors' Garden in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

Judie has survived breast cancer not once, but twice, and her husband Jim has survived kidney cancer. Their passion runs deep to see enough funds raised to start this project. The garden will have benches to encourage conversation and will be easily accessible and barrier-free for those with mobility issues. Inspirational and motivational quotes and plaques will be placed throughout the garden. Judie hopes that her story and her dedication will bring hope and inspiration to others. Both Judie and Jim also worked together with me to bring forward a bill that was passed, entitled the Cancer Survivors Day Act.

I ask that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature join me in acknowledging Jim and Judie Edgar for their passion and dedication to the Canadian Cancer Society and to all of those surviving cancer.

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

CALKIN, JOY: COM. LDRSHIP. - THANKS

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, as we celebrated International Women's Day last week, I would like to recognize the enormous community contributions made by Ms. Joy Calkin of Chester.

Joy's original profession of pediatric nursing evolved into teaching and administration at the university level as Dean of Nursing, followed by time as Vice-President at the University of Calgary and, finally, in a position as CEO of an international health care service organization.

It was our great fortune that Joy chose Chester as her retirement community, bringing her illustrious career in nursing and organizational leadership to our community. Joy was a key leader in a committee of volunteers in 2007, with the goal of improving access to health care in our Chester area communities. From this initiative and her countless hours of work, the group evolved to successfully fundraise for, then build, and finally open the much-needed health care centre in Chester.

I am privileged to work with Joy as a volunteer on several of my constituency working groups. Her motivation and knowledge helped me serve the constituents of Chester-St. Margaret's ever more effectively.

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

TRAILBLAZERS/HUSKIES: C.B. COLLEGIALITY - INSPIRING

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, the Cabot Trailblazers and the Cape Breton Highlands Academy Huskies, are basketball rivals, but the rural schools didn't let that get in the way of the bigger picture on Saturday, March 2, 2019.

Together, the Trailblazers and Huskies held a Cape Breton Island flag when they walked onto the hardwood floor of the Sacred Heart School Gym in Halifax, showing all who were in attendance how proud they are to be from Cape Breton and to be playing for the Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation Division 3 Girls Provincial Championship.

Cabot Trailblazers and Cape Breton Highlands Academy went undefeated in the round robin, securing the battle of Cape Breton in the championship game.

I rise today to express how truly inspirational it is to see two teams show such strength and sportsmanship, and to congratulate all team athletes and coaches. I ask all members to join me in wishing them every success in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MEREDITH, BETTY: PHOTO TO CDN. STAMP - CONGRATS.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Betty Meredith of Mahone Bay, who recently had one of her photographs of Mahone Bay's iconic waterfront made into a Canadian stamp.

Betty took the photograph of the Three Churches in 2015 from the town's public wharf. After uploading the photo to Facebook, it received many comments, likes, and shares. After Canada Post saw the photo on the We Love Nova Scotia's Facebook page, they emailed Betty asking if she would like to have her photograph considered for a stamp. Betty indicated she would be interested.

Years later, Betty's photograph of the Three Churches in Mahone Bay became one of nine stamps in a series Canada Post released this past January.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask you and all members of this House of Assembly to please join me in congratulating Betty on having her beautiful photograph immortalized on the Canadian stamp that will be seen all across the country.

THE SPEAKER: 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.

GOV'T. (N.S.): LOBBYIST PRESSURE - DISCLOSURE

TIM HOUSTON: Last week I asked the Premier a very simple question: If a company was applying pressure to the government in the same way that SNC-Lavalin was applying it in Ottawa, would Nova Scotians ever know?

The Premier took a very wide berth around that question, Mr. Speaker. He talked about exports and life in HRM and some wonderful things about Nova Scotia that are all very nice. What we didn't hear was an answer to that very simple question, so I would like to try it again.

My question for the Premier is: With our toothless Registry of Lobbyists still in place, how would Nova Scotians ever know if a company was lobbying our government or putting pressure on our government for any reason?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): We continue to make investments and work with companies not only in this province but around those who want to invest. We're very proud of the work we did with IBM today, an innovative program, the first of its kind in Canada. When it comes to ensuring that every young Nova Scotian gets an opportunity to find the skills that are required to move into the workforce, we're partnering with private sector entities.

The honourable member referred to a lobbying complaint that went to the RCMP, and they found there was no lobbying. I have all the faith in the RCMP. If the honourable member doesn't, he should stand in his place and say so.

TIM HOUSTON: A very wide berth yet again. I don't know why the Premier doesn't want to just disclose who he is meeting with. That's the question. What is being hidden here by the failure to disclose?

The Premier may remember that my colleague from Pictou West asked the Premier a similar question last year about the very case that the RCMP had to be called in for. The RCMP had to be called in, Mr. Speaker. The Premier didn't answer that question then when he was asked who he was meeting with. He did tell us about his wonderful friendship with

the former Prime Minister, and that's very nice too, but what we want is a little transparency.

Nova Scotians just want to know if their government is being lobbied. They just want to know how their tax dollars are being spent. Will the Premier acknowledge that there are serious dangers to good government when companies are allowed to lobby Cabinet ministers and the Premier unchecked and unreported?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member just referred to the question that was asked last year. In fact, the RCMP were called in, and they confirmed that there was no lobbying in this particular case. Again, I'm going to tell the honourable member, I will stand with the RCMP. If the honourable member doesn't trust the RCMP, he should stand in his place and tell us.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, there's a series of people involved in that equation, and the RCMP is one of them that I do trust.

Let me give a quick example of what I'm talking about. The government wants to amend legislation around credit unions. The Information and Privacy Commissioner has serious concerns about the impact on personal information, but this government figures they'll just plow ahead and disregard the concerns of Nova Scotians, including the Information and Privacy Commissioner. We don't know, and we'll never know with the way that the rules are now, who is lobbying the government for this change. Who is pushing on the government for this change? Who is pressuring the government? We will never know, the way the laws are now.

It's a simple question for the Premier. He might be able to break it down to yes or no for us. That would be good. Does the Premier believe that Nova Scotians have a right to know who the Premier of this province is meeting with and for what purpose?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I often tell Nova Scotians who I am meeting with, but the honourable member would know that there are times when you have meetings with people with proprietary information. There are times in negotiations when you continue to meet with those people. When it's something that impacts the province, we communicate that out many times. We're going to continue to move our province forward, continue to grow the economy of Nova Scotia, and work with the private sector to make sure we create good jobs in the province.

The population is at an all-time high. More young people are seeing a future for themselves in this province. It's not only the private sector in this province that sees a future, it's the global private sector that has looked into Nova Scotia. Again, Mr. Speaker, IBM stood with Nova Scotia today, the first jurisdiction in Canada to actually put a program together to give young people a hope for the future and a job opportunity in Nova Scotia.

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

H&W: ALT. LEVEL OF CARE/LONG-TERM CARE - NUMBERS

GARY BURRILL: Recently when we and the media have spoken about all the alternate level of care patients living in our hospitals as a result of the lack of new long-term care facilities, the government has responded that not all those alternate level of care patients are people waiting to be transferred into long-term care. Mr. Speaker, an awful lot of them are. According to documents that we received this week through freedom of information, of the 2,009 people discharged from alternate level of care beds last year, 1,246 of them were either transferred to a long-term care facility or they passed away.

Will the Premier acknowledge that a clear, preponderant majority of ALC patients last year in Nova Scotia were people who were waiting to be transferred to long-term care?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure of the number who are in those particular beds you're referring to who are looking to be transferred to long-term care beds. But what I can tell the honourable member is that those who are, who have been medically positioned if they're going into a long-term care bed, are on the long-term care list.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, here is a fact: from 2009 until 2013, the NDP opened 1,000 new nursing home beds and budgeted for an additional 350 beds and 780 replacement places in long-term care. Here is another fact: all of those plans came to one grinding, screeching halt when the Liberals came to power.

Will the Premier confirm this third fact, that the total bed capacity of the long-term care sector in Nova Scotia since October 2013 has been increased by exactly zero?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. He stood in this House, members of his caucus continue to fight against the long-term care beds that we were wanting to build in Cape Breton. I hope the honourable member sees that as a good sign and stands up and supports them.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has spoken about the planned nursing home beds in the CBRM, but I'm not speaking about planned beds. I'm not speaking about future beds. I'm not speaking about somewhere-on-the-drawing-board beds. I'm talking about bed-beds - real beds that real people have real pillows and covers and sheets on, that somebody's going to sleep in tonight.

I want to ask the Premier: Will the Premier confirm that the total actual bed-bed capacity in the long-term care sector in Nova Scotia has not increased one inch since he came to power?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, where do I begin? I want to thank the honourable member for the question again. He talks about plans. I want to remind the honourable member that the beds he's referring to, that he's patting himself and his Party on the back for, were initiated by the Rodney MacDonald Government. He put the plaque on them. I'll give him credit for that much.

What I would actually want him to do the next opportunity he gets to stand in his place is to endorse the redevelopment in Cape Breton, doubling the long-term-care beds in those communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

TIR: HANTSPORT ABOITEAU – SALTWATER PREVENTION

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Yesterday, I asked what I thought was a fairly straightforward question, whether the people of Hantsport would be getting a new aboiteau. The response from the minister was, "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."

I asked a simple yes-or-no question about an aboiteau, and the portion of the minister's response that dealt with the actual structure was 34 words, which did not include the words "yes," "no," or "aboiteau."

I'll try again. My question for the minister is: Will the new structure being installed at the mouth of the Halfway River prevent saltwater from entering the river?

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise and talk about the solution that has been implemented, that is being implemented. Piles are being driven today for the people of Hantsport.

I have here a letter from the folks in the Hantsport area who are thanking the government for the work that's being done. I'd like to table that. What we are doing is implementing an engineering solution, not a political one.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that answer and look forward to seeing that tabled letter. However, if that was the same letter that was tabled yesterday, that letter clearly states that the group expects the repair or replacement will create the conditions where in time the watershed will heal and become the lush green farmland it once was.

The Aboiteau Action Group has laid out their expectations that the structure will stop the inflow of sea water and only a fully functioning aboiteau will do this.

My question for the minister is: Does he acknowledge that in tabling his letter yesterday and claiming it supports his plan, has he now obligated himself to provide the structure the Aboiteau Action Group actually wants?

LLOYD HINES: We are very confident that the solution that is coming from our very talented engineers and the private sector contract will ensure the lush conditions will be restored to that beautiful area of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

H&W - EMERG. DEPTS.: NEDOCS SCORE - CRISIS

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. The standard measure of overcrowding in hospital emergency rooms is called NEDOCS. The measure gives emergency departments a score from 0 to 200, depending on the severity of overcrowding; where zero is fine and 200 is dangerously overcrowded. We learned this morning that just a few days ago the Halifax Infirmity emergency department had a NEDOCS score of 420 - remembering that 200 is dangerously overcrowded, we're now at 420.

Does the minister believe that this number indicates a crisis in the patient flow of emergency rooms?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising this important question in the Legislature. Of course, we recognize both as government and our partners at the Health Authority, and the EMCI that provide EHS services, recognize the pressures on our emergency departments.

That's why the partners have come together to work to identify solutions and those solutions are moved to action. We're looking forward to seeing improvements within that patient flow throughout our emergency departments.

TAMMY MARTIN: Sadly you cannot deny the numbers. This morning the Health Committee met and spoke with stakeholders from government, the Health Authority, EHS and the paramedic's union.

Because I live in Cape Breton, where ambulances sometimes come from as far away as Antigonish when responding to a call, I asked the paramedics what happens when a family member is in cardiac arrest at home, and you call for an ambulance? Terry Chapman of the IUOE told me, "You wait with the person who will be probably non-living when they arrive."

I'd like to ask the minister: Is it appropriate that people should expect to die because ambulances are backed up waiting to off-load patients?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for noting the important topic that was brought forward to the Health Committee respecting ambulance off-loads at emergency departments and how those delays, that have been ongoing since - I believe one of the witnesses referenced these issues - starting around the mid-2000s, that hadn't been addressed, are being addressed.

Our partners have been coming together and we anticipate with the changes that have been identified and that are in the process of being implemented, that we'll see those transfer times improve and have more ambulances out in the communities, because they're spending less time transferring patients into the emergency departments.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

H&W: HEALTH CARE SYSTEM - BREAKING POINT

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. At a local meeting held on Tuesday, March 12th at the NSGEU main office, dozens of nurses gathered to talk about what is going on in the workplace. Their message was clear, the health care system is at a breaking point. The Nova Scotia Health Authority refuses to deal with the critical shortage of nurses. Front-line health care workers are being left to drown, and I can table that quote.

Nurses at this meeting reported that their new norm is being over capacity at 150 per cent; working two nurses short on a unit and being told, just tough it out, get through your shifts.

I want to know: Does the minister believe, with this information, that it is acceptable and safe for anyone to be in those working conditions?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, again I want to acknowledge to the member opposite that the concerns of front-line health care workers are shared, in terms of when the system is feeling pressure. But as far as the reference to shortages, the workforce information around nurses is that there has been a lot of work with partners in the unions, as well as with the employers, to ensure we do have adequate nursing supply in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the work continuing to ensure that we have the appropriate staffing available, because the people are trained and available here in the province.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Ok, so as my colleague said earlier, to give an example of just how chaotic and unsafe our hospitals are right now - NEDOCS is a universal program and it's used to score and track the severity of overcrowding in our emergency departments, and I know the numbers were given out. Of course, we know that 200 is

considered dangerously overcrowded, but guess what? In Halifax, we're seeing a number of 420.

The NSHA used to disclose those numbers, so the public would know, but since 2016, they no longer do that. So, I want to know, will the minister today, promise he'll start making these numbers public, so Nova Scotians know what's going on in their emergency departments?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, what I can advise the member is that that data that she is referencing, is shared within the department. It's data being used as part of the administration and the operations of the hospital system.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's the information I have. As far as overall, we continue to recruit and hire nurses. We work with our partners to identify through the nursing strategy, where to best target our resources. Recently, that's been a focus on nurse practitioners in particular, expanding the number of seats for more nurse practitioners through the Dalhousie Medical School Program, investing to help financially support those nurses who want to upgrade their skills to become nurse practitioners.

Those are the steps that we are taking, Mr. Speaker, to ensure we have the right nursing mix within our province to deliver care for Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

I.S. - GOV. TRANSPARENCY: EFF RANKING - RECONCILE

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Internal Services. I'm sure the minister is familiar with the Electronic Frontier Foundation. The EFF is one of the world's leading non-profit defenders of digital privacy and liberties. This week, they ranked this province, alongside the CIA, as "bad actors who attempted to thwart the quest for truth" in 2018. I will table that document.

The province earned this distinction from its handling of the FOIPOP leak last Spring. My question to the minister is: How does she reconcile this government's claim to be the most transparent ever, with EFF's assessment that it has actively thwarted the quest for truth?

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the question. We had two independent reports that came out in January talking about our privacy breach from last year, which that particular article was referring to. Within those two reports there were a number of recommendations that I and the department accepted 100 per cent and took action on immediately.

We've already made some significant strides, not just since the reports were released, but also prior to the breach itself and since the breach itself. We continue to move forward on all of those recommendations to make sure that we do better in the future.

CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: You know, these judgements are coming from a non-partisan organization based in San Francisco. So, nobody nearby, but somebody that's watching privacy issues from the world. They said that some seriously terrible security practices by Nova Scotia officials caused this debacle. Once again, that is the message that is being broadcast out to the world, that our Department of Internal Services failed repeatedly to safeguard personal data.

My question to the minister: Given all of this, does she maintain that having the people in charge of the FOIPOP leak be in charge of fixing the leak is a constructive idea?

PATRICIA ARAB: We have moved forward as a department, within shared services, within ICTS, and have taken the lessons learned from the breach and how we've evolved within technology extremely seriously.

Already, we've moved on the Auditor General's recommendation No. 1. So, we've completed and communicated a web technology guideline. We've completed privacy impact assessments, and we've engaged an external consultation to review the Architectural Review Board.

Effective on April 1st, at the start of the new fiscal, there's going to be a new structure, a single project management office in place at IST. So yes, I feel very confident that my team is going to be able to move forward and have proven to be able to move forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

JUSTICE - INFO. & PRIVACY COMM.: ADDED POWER - COMMENT

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Yesterday at the Public Accounts Committee I asked the Deputy Minister of Internal Services if he thinks the Information and Privacy Commissioner should have order-making power beyond merely making recommendations. The deputy minister stated that it is not in her power to say and said that would be a question for the Minister of Justice.

My question is this, Mr. Speaker: Does the minister agree or disagree that giving order-making power to the Information and Privacy Commissioner would increase governmental transparency?

HON. MARK FUREY: I thank my colleague for the question. We certainly appreciate the work that the Information and Privacy Commissioner does on behalf of Nova Scotians. We believe she has all the authority she needs in advancing recommendations to government.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, at the Public Accounts Committee yesterday the deputy minister was also asked if he felt the province should update its laws to comply with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, which is quickly becoming an international standard. The General Data Protection Regulation helps protect people's data and it gives them more control over that data. Again, the deputy suggested that we ask the Minister of Justice.

My question that I'd like to ask the minister: Does he disagree that updating our laws to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation would help protect the personal data of Nova Scotians?

MARK FUREY: I want to assure my colleague that protecting the data of Nova Scotians is a priority of our government. We are looking at the reports that have recently been filed, Mr. Speaker. The department continues to do work on reviewing legislation that presently exists, and I look forward to bringing something forward in the future to address that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

EECD - SCHOOL SITE SELECT.: PUBLIC CONSULT - COMMENT

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

When this government eliminated local, democratically-elected school boards, they also eliminated public input in the school site selection process. Siting of a school used to be guided by a board-level selection committee that included SAC members, school board members, the African Nova Scotian representative, the Mi'kmaq representative, and members of municipal council.

The revised Education Act regulations that came into effect last year eliminated any requirement for community involvement in consultation. The site selection process is now entirely an internal government process - and we know how those go.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister think it's appropriate that this government has eliminated all public accountability and transparency in decision making about school site selection?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: In fact, Mr. Speaker, that's not true. We changed the governance model of education because we had three independent reports identifying the fact that that governance model was contributing to there being a variance in the achievement level of students. We made those changes for students.

The member speaks of that system as a epitome of democratic achievement. We have only 3 per cent of our population voting in those elections; close to 70 per cent of our school board members were acclaimed. This wasn't a process that the public was thoroughly engaged in, Mr. Speaker, so we do have to make our decisions based on the needs of our students and that is exactly what we're doing.

When it comes to site selection, Mr. Speaker, we are changing that process because the last site selection process contributed to delays up to three years for building our schools. We want to make sure we get our schools built on time.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, with respect, I'm not talking about school boards, I'm talking about site selection. The three-year number that the minister keeps trotting out is a red herring. Maybe once or twice, in general, the average time of actually consulting the public - which I know this government has a hard time doing - was closer to six months.

Schools are an important part of any community, Mr. Speaker. The decision of where to build a new school should include community voices. I can't believe this is an issue. Consultation should be a given.

The Musquodoboit Harbour and Area Chamber of Commerce has been trying to engage in this process for almost a year, notwithstanding the comment that it is coming. They are extremely frustrated with the lack of communication - and I'll table that from the department. In July they wrote to the minister to ask, first, that the new school be built in the centre of the community and, second, that the minister provide a defined, transparent and collaborative process for them to follow, and they have gotten no response.

Will the minister please table the plan for public engagement, not talk more about school boards, in the site selection process?

ZACH CHURCHILL: The member mentioned elected school boards in the preface of her question. I thought that was an important item to address.

When it comes to site selection, the reason why we did have delays of between six months and three years, on average, was because we did not do a technical evaluation first of sites. We are moving from a process where the community selects a number of sites to be evaluated to a process where we do the technical evaluation first beginning with the current site of the school. Once the technical evaluation is done, if the building can actually be serviced, we then go to the community and ask for input. We do that through the

municipality, through public consultation, through dealing with the SAC, and in the case of the CSAP, the school board.

We are streamlining a process to create an efficiency to get rid of delays, hopefully, in the system. That process will continually involve the public.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

EECD - VAPING AT SCHOOL: DATA COLLECT. - CONFIRM

KIM MASLAND: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Teachers and parents have had enough issues dealing with the slow infiltration of cell phones in classrooms. Now they have reason to be concerned about vaping, not just on school grounds but inside schools.

Teachers at the Cobequid Educational Centre in Truro report instances of students vaping in washrooms, hallways, and even in the classroom, and I'll table that document, Mr. Speaker. Vaping is far from harmless, as established by the Lung Association of Nova Scotia, and the provincial Smoke-Free Places Act treats it the same way as smoking cigarettes.

My question to the minister is: Does the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development maintain data on students disciplined for vaping on school property?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: We currently have rules in place that prohibit vaping. There is a challenge with those particular devices because the scent is obviously not the same as using tobacco or other products, so enforcement of those rules is a bit more challenging.

The best thing we can do in our education system, however, is empower our students with information so they can be strong people, confident people, in making their own decisions when it comes to their health, their bodies, and how they act, Mr. Speaker. That is why we're focused on curriculum, on teaching, and ensuring we're getting every one of our students in the system the information that they need to make good decisions.

KIM MASLAND: I haven't found a curriculum yet that's talking about vaping. Our students are engaging in an increasing number of behaviours in the classroom that we simply should not tolerate. Teachers I am talking to are saying that students are becoming more casual about the use of vaping devices in school. The Lung Association of Nova Scotia says they're at a red alert state when it comes to youth and vaping. Clearly the provincial education policy is not doing enough to deter students from vaping in our schools.

My question for the minister is: Will he consider amending the provincial code of conduct to impose serious penalties on students caught vaping in school?

ZACH CHURCHILL: We're always open to hearing suggestions from the members opposite about how to enhance our policies and practices, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of the day, smoking and vaping are in our Health and Wellness curriculum. I'm happy to give that information to the member. It is up to our teachers to implement that curriculum as they see fit. In schools where they're having a greater problem with this, my hope is that the administrators and teachers will have a greater focus on teaching and learning in that regard.

At the end of the day, that's the best impact we can have on our students: to give them the information they need and empower them to make appropriate decisions for themselves and to be good, responsible peers and role models for those around them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

H&W - NSHA: PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS - COMMENT

JOHN LOHR: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. On March 8th, the NSHA president and CEO wrote a newsletter and posted it on the NSHA website. In the letter, the president and CEO states, "The suggestion that every day people seeking help are being sent away from hospitals and told to make their own decisions is not only false - it is dangerous." I'll table that.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, sadly that very suggestion is the truth. Possibly the minister heard about 60 Stories in 60 Days or the stories we read into the record as member's statements last week, and there are many more. This despite treatment guidelines requiring suicidal non-intoxicated adults to see a specialist, not to be sent home, and I'll table that.

My question for the minister is: Does the Minister of Health and Wellness stand by the comments made by the NSHA president and CEO last week?

[2:30 p.m.]

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member again for bringing this important question about mental health and mental health services to the floor of the Legislature. This is a topic and an area of our health care system that I and, I believe, my colleagues throughout the Legislature share.

What I can advise the member opposite is that much work is being done by government and our partners, not just in the Health Authority but through our education system, to provide new and additional investments and support and provide more supports

in our community and investments in the adolescent outreach model, known as CaperBase in Cape Breton, and expand that to other communities. I believe over 40 additional schools have access to that, so our youth have access to those supports in their community where they need them.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, if someone comes to an ER department in this province while having angina and chest pain, they would be monitored with a cardiac monitor and blood work would be done. If it was determined they were having a life-threatening heart attack, they would be admitted and referred to a specialist in that field, an internal medicine physician.

If someone comes to an ER in this province while having thoughts of suicide or even having made an attempt on their own life, often no assessment or treatment is done. ER doctors in many cases have no acute care beds for an acute mental illness and maybe even no beds at all in some cases. In many cases, ER doctors have no specialists in the mental illness field to refer the patient to.

My question for the Minister of Health is: Why does his health care system not have adequate services for acute mental illnesses like we have for acute heart disease?

RANDY DELOREY: In fact, the province does have acute care specialists for mental health conditions. (Interruptions) We have psychiatry specialists . . .

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

RANDY DELOREY: . . . to provide specialized acute care. Some of the things that we have been doing recently are recognizing that having access to some specialists is leveraging technology and allowing video consults in our communities to access other specialists from across the province. That has been working, and we have been working to advance other support mechanisms to support those specialists we do have in communities like clinical assistant programs. We recognize the challenges, and we're investing to improve our mental health access across this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIR - SPRINGVILLE BRIDGE: REPLACEMENT - UPDATE

TIM HOUSTON: The Springville Bridge is a crucial crossing point on the East River. I tabled a petition today asking for a swift replacement of this bridge, but I understand that significant structural problems were discovered, and the bridge remains closed for quite some time now.

My question to the minister is: Can the minister share the problems found with the bridge and update the House as to the status?

HON. LLOYD HINES: I do appreciate the question from the member. I took the opportunity to actually visit that lovely community and stood on the bridge last Fall to have a look at what we're doing. We are in the process of coming up with a solution to replace the bridge. That's being actively considered at the present time, sir.

TIM HOUSTON: I appreciate the minister's response. It's a crucial crossing for people who live in the communities in that area. The required detour adds an extra 20 to 25 minutes to travel times for residents each way. The results are students on the bus almost an hour a day extra, and it's a big delay for emergency response and for hospital staff getting to work, as well.

I would like to ask the minister: Can he shed a little more clarity around the timeline for the expected work on the Springville Bridge?

LLOYD HINES: The responsibility we have in Nova Scotia is for 4,000 structures across the province that are constantly being monitored and scheduled for work being done, of course based on volumes. I would like to point out, however, to the members of the House the following information: fiscal year 2017, \$215 million in capital; fiscal year 2018, \$225 million in capital; fiscal year 2019, \$285 million in capital; and the year ending in 2020, \$300 million in capital. That amounts to over \$1 billion that this government has committed to our capital program, including bridges in Nova Scotia. That's the most sustained amount of capital expenditure - I've gone back 16 years, and I can't find a period where we've had more.

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

H&W - ER ASSESSMENTS: HALLWAY MEDICINE - FREQUENCY

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. We keep hearing stories of how emergency departments are forced to provide care under harrowing conditions, if they're open at all. We hear stories at the QEII of doctors apologizing, including one to me, for having no beds, private rooms, or even spaces. I got treated in the hallway, with people walking past me. We hear about patients examined surrounded by family, sick patients, and total strangers, and while the quality of care is good, doctors are growing tired of always having to perform hallway medicine.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: During those 600,000 emergency room visits per year, how many times in the run of a month is a patient assessed and treated in the hallways of our emergency departments?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising this question. Of course, the access and flow in our emergency departments and throughout our health care system is important to the government and to our partners at the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK.

We recognize some of the space constraints and challenges. That's why, in the Central Zone at our Halifax Infirmary and Dartmouth General, we do have an extensive capital program with the QEII redevelopment, investing in modernizing our infrastructure and providing more space and more beds within the system. In Cape Breton, we're doing the same thing, expanding - the first time I was in Cape Breton, I toured the emergency department, and space in that emergency department was raised as the number-one concern from physicians on the ground. We are expanding that by over 40 per cent.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, this is Question Period. Perhaps that doesn't always require an answer, but I'm actually looking for the answer to how many times someone is treated in the hallway. Perhaps if the minister isn't measuring that, he could.

Thirty-five years ago, I went to my first lecture as a physiotherapist and learned that over 90 per cent of ER visits should have been managed elsewhere. It's sad to me that 35 years later we're not much better off. Almost every other week there's an article in the newspaper about the sad state of our emergency rooms and the backlog.

When he toured the Dartmouth General Hospital, the minister happened to run into me, because I'd been in the emergency room the night before, and they'd sent me and 25 other people home. There have to be practical solutions, and we want to hear what they are.

Can the minister please explain to me why there are still so many patients going to the ER in non-emergency situations, and how much that has to do with the fact that over 100,000 don't have a family doctor?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to advise the member that the latest data, I believe, shows about 51,000 Nova Scotians, not 100,000, who have registered as waiting for a family (Interruptions)

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

RANDY DELOREY: I'm pleased to advise the member opposite that that's for the fourth month in a row that we've seen a decrease in the number of Nova Scotians who have registered looking for access to primary care services. We're seeing improvements with the investments we've been making and the supports we've been providing to improve our recruitment initiatives. I think that speaks volumes in terms of the work that's being done.

Again, I've talked about the infrastructure expanding to provide the space for those physicians and front-line health care workers to do the work that they need to do, in space that's modern, to meet the needs of Nova Scotians.

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

ENVIRON. - EMISSIONS REDUCTION: TARGET - CLARIFY

LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Environment. According to the IPCC report, the next decade of emissions reductions is absolutely critical, but I'm sad to say that this government's emissions-reduction target for 2030 is weak - extremely weak.

That's troubling enough, but to make matters worse, the Premier made comments in the House yesterday that differ from his government's stated targets. In November, the government made a commitment to only 45 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, saying that maybe if we're good, we'll actually get to 50 per cent - whatever that means. But when questioned yesterday, the Premier said that he's never talked about 45 per cent and that the province will reach 50 per cent below 2005 levels at least. I'll table that.

These are very different targets. Can the minister please clarify whether the province's actual emissions-reduction target is the one announced a few months ago or the one the Premier gave yesterday?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. It gives me the great opportunity to thank Nova Scotians for all the work that they are doing to reduce our carbon imprint in the province.

We were very happy to announce last year that the province is reducing the limits from 45 to 50 per cent below the 2005 targets. We hope to do better than that. We're giving ourselves a little bit of leeway by saying 45 to 50 per cent, but certainly we know that Nova Scotians want to do better. We know they are acting. Things are changing all the time, whether people are changing to electrification for cars and more electrification across the province. These are all great messages that they are sharing with government, and so we hope to do much better than the 50 per cent.

LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, there is only one 2030 target that actually puts us on track to net zero emissions by 2050, and that is 50 per cent below 1990 levels, not 2005 levels. That is the target that our Party supports. The minister's target simply won't get us there.

Tomorrow, high school students around Nova Scotia are walking out of class because of government inaction on climate change. They feel it's putting their futures in

jeopardy. Dan Osborne, a Grade 10 student at Amherst Regional High School, said this in the paper today: “We want the government to stand up to big businesses. We want an end to pollution and environmental destruction, whether it comes via single-use plastics or unregulated clearcutting, and we want a plan to bring green jobs to all young Nova Scotians.” I’ll table this.

I’d like to know: What does the minister have to say to these concerned and courageous young students about her government’s inaction on climate change?

MARGARET MILLER: I thank the honourable member again for this question. It also gives me the opportunity to say thank you to all these young people who are looking forward to the future.

I listened to the honourable member’s statement across the aisle this morning, speaking about her daughter and her concern. These young people are the future of our province. We’re going to be looking toward them to help us and to help all Nova Scotians make sure that there is a future for young Nova Scotians and for all Nova Scotians.

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

H&W - BUCHANAN MEM. HOSP.: POINT-OF-CARE TECH. - IMPLEMENT.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Over the past couple of weeks, both in Question Period and emergency debate, I asked the minister about the lab technologist position at Buchanan Memorial Hospital in Neils Harbour.

Much of the discussion centred around point-of-care testing, and the minister finished his remarks by saying that individual front-line workers who admit that they were hesitant and resistant of the new technology, after seeing it implemented in their community hospitals, speak quite positively and encourage others to go into these systems with an open mind. I’ll table that.

But, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Bernie Buffett recently stated, “This is not new technology to Buchanan. We introduced point-of-care testing about six years ago and it floated like a lead balloon it was that burdensome.” I’ll table that as well.

My question to the minister is: Whom should we believe, the minister or a doctor at Buchanan with 34 years of experience?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as the member would know, there are a lot of technological advances that take place between the years. Technology is advancing very rapidly. Point-of-care testing systems would be no different.

In terms of whom to believe, I believe that the front-line health care workers who speak up about their experiences across the province - Neils Harbour, Amherst, Springhill, or anywhere else in the province - we believe them all. We have to take all that information in, and one of the important things that I have to do is assess that information, and we have to make decisions.

Unfortunately, not all front-line health care workers agree on all steps forward, but I stand by the comments that I made. The information I've received is that many of the sites that have recently received point-of-care systems support that technology.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, residents in the north of Smokey area feel like they're being treated as second-class citizens when it comes to health care delivery in their area, and this is just proof.

Ironically, and likely a coincidence, at the same time as I was asking my question, a representative of the Health Authority met with the hospital foundation. They were basically informed that point-of-care testing was a done deal and that the Health Authority would not be having a public meeting, as a result, that had been requested by my office.

[2:45 p.m.]

My question to the minister is this: Since the Health Authority doesn't feel a public meeting is necessary at this time, would the minister please join me in a public meeting north of Smokey to explain to residents what is taking place at their hospital - no following script, just yes or no. (Interruptions)

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

RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for continuing to bring to the floor of the Legislature the concerns of health care providers and community members within his constituency. Again, I assure the member and his constituents that the information being brought forward by those that have worked with this technology, point-of-care testing, have evaluated thoroughly the capacity of this technology to meet the needs of the community hospital. So, as I've noted before, many people have seen these advances and support the implementation of that technology.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TIR - POTHoles: DEPT. RESPONSE - UPDATE

TIM HALMAN: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. My office has received a number of concerns over the last week regarding potholes that have emerged on Highway No. 111, Highway No. 118, and Exit 4N off Highway No. 111. Now, on Monday, a massive pothole damaged several vehicles

in Dartmouth on Highway No. 111. CBC reported that the Halifax Regional Police had to close a lane while repairs could be made, and I'll table that article.

The minister may be aware that I've been in regular contact with TIR in regard to this issue. Some of these potholes are continuing to cause damage to several vehicles. My question is this: What steps are being taken by the department to prevent damage to vehicles given the severity of the potholes emerging this spring?

HON. LLOYD HINES: I do thank the member opposite for the question. Our people sprang into action on Monday evening. They worked overnight filling the potholes. There's a whole program in place now on the highly-graded travelled areas to capture that. There is a challenge because, as the House might know, the hot patch plants are not open yet. They're not opening until the first week in April and, in the meantime, we're using cold patch. We're on to that, I can tell you, you can assure your constituents that we're spending a lot of time fixing those holes.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, if someone takes a drive down to the Highway No. 111 or Highway No. 118, it looks like some of these potholes have been hit by scud missiles. So, the fact of the matter is we all know, everyone in this House knows, when vehicles are damaged on provincial roads due to their poor maintenance it is often the province that foots the cost.

I'm sure every member of this House has experienced potholes are a recurring problem each Spring. I'm certainly hearing from my constituents in Dartmouth East that they find this year's roads particularly difficult to manage. So, my question is this: Looking forward, what preventative measures can be implanted to ensure road quality can be maintained so as to mitigate further vehicle damage?

LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members in the House and the people of Nova Scotia that this is a problem that we do take seriously. It's not going to be sluffed off as seasonal, "It happens every year, we should be used to it."

We are actually undertaking a scan to see where the best technology exists in the world to figure out how we can better address the issue of potholes across our system. Part of the process we feel is embedded in the system that we have for repairing it. We feel that there are better solutions out there, and we're looking for them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of TIR and, in fact, I feel like I'm participating in a Monty Python skit with this exchange about the Hantsport aboiteau because the letter that the minister tabled a few minutes ago, or earlier in Question Period, was simply a thank-you letter for someone for tabling the petition. The petition

actually asked for an aboiteau, I believe and, in fact, we don't have an aboiteau. So, my question for the minister is: Will the minister admit to the people of Hantsport . . .

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

THE SPEAKER: The House will now recess for a few minutes while it resolves itself into the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

[2:50 p.m. The House recessed.]

[2:59 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Brendan Maguire in the Chair.]

[3:55 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened with Deputy Speaker Brendan Maguire in the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole House on Bills has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 84 - Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary Appreciation Act.

Bill No. 90 - Boxing Authority Act.

Bill No. 91 - Nova Scotia Museum Act.

Bill No. 92 - Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

Bill No. 95 - Emergency "911" Act.

Bill No. 97 - Credit Union Act.

Bill No. 99 - Assessment Act.

Bill No. 101 - Tourist Accommodations Registration Act.

The Chairman has been instructed to recommend these bills without amendments to the favourable consideration of the House.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 109.

Bill No. 109 - Pension Benefits Act.

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

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today and move that Bill No. 109 be now read a second time.

This bill, through the amendments, will update the Pension Benefits Act. We value the security that workplace defined benefit pension plans provide and we want them to continue so that Nova Scotians have peace of mind in their retirement years. There are over 130 defined benefit pensions registered under the Act and that includes over 90,000 Nova Scotians who belong to those plans.

This Act, Mr. Speaker, does not apply to the Nova Scotia Teachers' Pension Plan, the Public Servants Superannuation Plan, or the Members' Retirement Allowance for MLAs. These plans are all governed by separate legislation.

The changes we are making reflect input and feedback from employees, from employers, and from other interested parties. Through the consultation in 2017 Nova Scotians told us that some pension plans have struggled to remain solvent under the existing system; employers told us they wanted greater flexibility and stability; and employees told us that they were most concerned about the protection of their benefits.

The changes in this Act are in response to both. The amendments offer employers greater flexibility in managing defined benefit plans so that they can continue to offer them

to their employees. They will improve the stability of the plans in many organizations, including private sector companies, municipalities, and universities.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, the changes to the Act will introduce reserve accounts, remove limits on the use of letters of credit, allow for the discharge of liability for annuity buyouts, improve the language regarding deemed trust provisions, and clarify that information provided to the Superintendent of Pensions may not be disclosed except as permitted by the Pension Benefits Act.

The administrative changes will be effective when the bill passes. The remaining legislative changes are expected to be proclaimed and effective in the Fall of 2019, following the development of the supporting regulations.

We will continue, Mr. Speaker, to work to ensure that pensions are well managed, appropriate, and fair to all Nova Scotians. I look forward to comments from members of the Opposition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, all these pension details are quite boring, until it is time to collect your pension and then they become very important. I know people's eyes often glaze over when they are talking, hearing about these things, but they are very important. I can think of no case that affected me, representing the constituency of Inverness, more so than when the NewPage pensioners - what is now Port Hawkesbury Paper - faced a loss of upwards of 40 per cent of their pension, and it was one of these style pensions, a defined benefit pension. Whenever these changes are brought before the Legislature, we know they are important and that they matter to people.

Mr. Speaker, before I forget, I would like the minister, if she can at an opportunity that comes soon, to table the plans that this does impact. I think it impacts about 132 plans. If it's possible, it would be nice to see the names of those plans, the organizations that are offering them, just for our interest.

Mr. Speaker, I know this style of plan. They really depend on good trends. I think that this is an issue that's not just affecting people in this province. It's affecting people all over the world. I think of the car companies, the big three automakers in North America, and about how their pensions suffered because you had competition coming in from the Asian markets in the 1980s, sales started going down, automation came in, and those factors contributed to less need for employees in those car plants. You had pension plans where many people retired, drawing money out of the plans, and you had fewer people now working in those companies contributing to the plans and depleting the funds in those plans.

A lot of those things are really out of the control of the companies and the pensioners, but they have to be recognized. I think that's the impetus for this bill to come

before the Legislature, to try to recognize that some of these challenges are inherent and to try to keep this style of pension plan available.

[4:00 p.m.]

People love these kinds of pensions. They don't have to figure out what all the details are, and if a pension is registered in this province, they should be able to trust that the Superintendent of Pensions is safeguarding their pensions and ensuring that the rules are being followed and that decisions aren't getting made that are maybe against the interests of pensioners.

Unfortunately, I believe we saw that in the NewPage pension issue. We saw plan members being asked to vote on their pensions to give early retirements. I don't think a lot of members realized that by offering the early retirements - the company was all for it because it didn't matter to them - it was just transferring more risk to the pensioners and to the employees. We soon found out a few months later that the company was not going to be sticking around anyway. They were going out of business.

I go back to what I said when I started my speech: these details are boring until they matter. It should have been explained to those pensioners what the ramifications of that were. You had that happening, then you had the stock market dropping, and also the trend of fewer workers at NewPage making paper. Combine all those things together and all of a sudden you have a plan that is depleted and the company's going out of business.

I shouldn't be going on too much about this, Mr. Speaker, but I could. I'm probably boring everybody to death. But I recall at the time, the plan was going to be wound up because that's what the rules stated. I immediately thought, if you wind this plan up now, it's like you've invested in a bunch of stocks and you're going to sell when they're at their low point. I introduced a bill that said, "No, don't wind this up now. Give it a chance to keep going so that maybe in time the markets will recover, and the workers probably won't get 40 per cent of what they've lost back, but maybe they'll get some of it back over time." The government, of course, voted it down, because they never pass Opposition bills - this was the previous-previous government we're speaking about, not this government - but then they brought in their own bill to essentially do the same thing.

These things matter, and one thing I would like to highlight is that if changes are going to be made, I think it's very important that people understand. They know the security they have with a defined-benefit plan, but if we're fundamentally changing the way these plans operate and the benefits that might be paid out at the end, I think it's important that people understand that, that they don't think that they still have a defined benefit plan in the traditional sense of the word. I think that's important, and I would raise that as a caution for the government passing this bill not to let people think that everything is okay and everything is going to stay the same.

I did read the discussion paper that was background for this bill, and it seemed a bit encrypted to me. It was very short, with a lot of technical terms that most people wouldn't really understand. Sometimes when we see reports from government, there are glossaries of terms that would help people understand what's being discussed. It's interesting, you do see from the report where people stand on the matter and sometimes people aren't - and I think I'll leave it at the example I gave earlier. In the case of NewPage, they didn't care when some of the changes were being made to the plan because it wasn't affecting them. It was, in fact, removing their risk and removing the obligation to the pensioners.

Another item at the time, and I want to mention this, Mr. Speaker. One of the other reasons why that plan took a hit is because they changed the solvency to allow it to go from 5 to 10 per cent so the company didn't have to bring the plan back to within 5 per cent of solvency in that year, whatever the year was they were in. They were given a wider berth and more time to basically make up the shortfall that was in the plan. The workers liked that because it meant they were paying less in, but the joke, maybe this is not the best way to say it but, unfortunately, that wasn't a good thing for them because it also meant the company didn't have to put in. They could put less money into the plan in that year. It was something that everybody wanted at the time and I guess we can't be too critical because who could have predicted the company would be out of business so soon thereafter. But there's no question.

Where you stand depends on where you sit, if I may quote the late Cyril Reddy and there are different interests on this issue. I know that many employers are trying to be responsible and give their employees a good pension but there are instances, like the case I just described, where sometimes the interests don't align.

Some of the things from the discussion paper I'll just make note for the record. There was discussion of, you know, an idea to have a guarantee fund, but to have a guarantee fund there's going to be a price attached to that. Somebody is going to have to pay for that. It might be the pensioners themselves, to pay an extra premium to have their defined benefit pension guaranteed or maybe there's some expectation that the government would come in and backstop it. Unfortunately, when we see things that could happen with the Sears pension, it's too late and people look to government and say, "Well, you can't let these people take such a hit on their pensions." But if the rules are set up properly, people should know where their pension stands at any given point in time and it shouldn't be a surprise to them. Changes should be made all along the way before they become such a big problem as they became for people who were affected by that plan.

Another bill that I introduced here a number of years ago would require defined benefit plans to disclose to their pensioners each year, to their plan members, the state of the plan, so that they would understand the state it's in. If there was going to be a change made, explain it. Don't send people some legalese document of 15 pages they're never going to read or understand, and I don't mean to insult anybody. Most people that get something like that, it would take tremendous patience and great effort for anybody, no

matter what their educational background, to understand those kinds of documents. So, the bill was to put it in plain English, if you will, what any changes that there were happening that year would mean for a plan member, a future pensioner.

The going concern, this is an interesting one, and I don't think the government actually went with going concern on this bill. It's kind of an intriguing thing and I'm just trying to get my understanding of it myself. I guess if a plan was going to be in the situation where it could wind up it could still keep going but if it couldn't I would think it would kind of defeat the purpose of a defined benefit plan or getting rid of the solvency requirements. So, I'll speak a little more on that later, but I was doing this last night and I perhaps should have written more notes.

The other type of plan that's becoming more common is a targeted benefit plan, which is becoming popular. Our federal finance minister, his family's company is promoting this plan and they're doing quite well with it. I think New Brunswick has gone to that.

I don't mean to say that that might not be a good option, those styles of plans. If those kinds of plans are in place, they might solve something that we see with the teachers' plan right now. Where if changes happen, if there are fewer teachers today than there were many years ago, because right now we have retired teachers receiving better benefits relative to teachers who are going to retire in the future, yet they're in the same plan.

One thing I think about is well, maybe teachers are a bit better paid today, even adjusted for inflation, in relative terms compared to their predecessors. So, maybe they're getting better compensated in terms of their pay each year. But in terms of their pensions, it's quite clear that current teachers are not going to get the same kind of pension, despite them being in the same plan with former teachers who are now retired.

So, a targeted benefit plan would be based on the plan's ability to pay at any given time. It might address a problem. The problem with the teachers' plan is it's gotten bigger and bigger over the years, in its solvency, I think it's down to, I heard it was 75 per cent, but it's above that at the moment, closer to around 80 per cent, I think. Still, a significant shortfall there.

So, Mr. Speaker, I've said plenty and I could say more, but I think I've said plenty. I can appreciate where this bill is coming from and whose interest it's trying to serve. We look forward to hearing from presenters at Law Amendments Committee and I do hope we hear from people whose interests are at play here.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I will keep my comments very brief. I also was pleased to see the documents that my colleague referenced, the consultation

documents. We know that this bill came out of conversations with retirees, plan members, other stakeholders, unions and we were glad to see that co-operation and conversation.

I think that my colleague has ably canvassed everything there is to know about pensions and questions we might be asking. So, I'll save my own rendition for third reading, but in the meantime, I definitely look forward to hearing people come forward at Law Amendments Committee.

Pensions, as we've discussed, are an area, indeed, as my colleague said, that are boring until they're not anymore; until they matter to you, or for all of us, to our constituents. But, they also, there are a lot of players at the table, in discussing these things. We have experts, we have plan members, we have organizations, employers, unions.

So, I really look forward to hearing those voices at Law Amendments Committee and to coming back to this conversation in third reading.

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

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, and to the members opposite, I appreciate the comments. I took some notes and I too look forward to this going to Law Amendments. There certainly was opportunity during the consultation for people's voices to be heard. We believe that the legislation responds to what both employers and employees were asking for; however, there is that other opportunity at Law Amendments Committee and I do hope that those folks who may not have been part of the consultation, or who now are looking at this through a different lens, will take advantage of that opportunity.

With those few words, I do close debate on Bill No. 109.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 109. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 106.

Bill No. 106 - Coastal Protection Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Environment.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome to the House as well my colleague from the Department of Environment, Mr. John Somers, who has been instrumental in doing all the work on this bill. I want to thank him for that.

I'm very pleased to speak today about the Coastal Protection Bill and what it means for Nova Scotians, both today and for future generations. We all know that climate change is not theoretical; it's a reality. It's causing our sea levels to rise increasing the risk of coastal flooding and putting our coastlines at risk.

We must adapt to our changing climate. That's why our government introduced legislation that will protect our coasts. The Coastal Protection Bill will set out clear rules for what we can and can't be done in coastal protection zones. This legislation will help us protect our salt marshes, our dunes, and other coastal features. This means they can continue to shelter birds and other sea life, filter water and help our coastline adapt naturally to the impacts of climate change. It will ensure new development in our coastal protection zones takes climate change into account in the planning stages. I know there are landowners who have existing properties who are now at risk of coastal erosion and who want the government to step in.

The legislation is not about having government move existing buildings. It's not about funding breakwaters or retaining walls. Instead, this legislation deals with future construction and it's meant to prevent today's problems from happening to tomorrow's homes, businesses, and cottages. We can't change the past, but we can ensure that new construction is built in safer places where it's not at a high risk of flooding or coastal erosion.

Last summer we consulted with Nova Scotians through an online survey. As well, we consulted with municipalities, professional organizations, fishers, and others. We held a series of 16 targeted in-person meetings across the province from Yarmouth to Port Hawkesbury. We received 1,306 completed surveys and lots of important, valuable feedback from municipalities and the other groups we spoke with. They told us in no uncertain terms this was an important issue and one worth addressing through legislation. Municipalities want us to make sure we are streamlining the requirements as much as possible and avoiding a quagmire of conflicting legislation.

That has been our goal all along, to ensure these new rules are as easy to understand and follow as possible. We will continue to work with them over the next 12 to 18 months as we develop the regulations that will set out how this legislation will work. Putting the legislation in place is an important step but it's only one of the steps we have taken to address climate change. As we all know, we've heard in this House, Nova Scotia is a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Last Fall we set one of Canada's most ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Our goal is to reduce emissions by 40 to 50 per cent from the 2005 levels by the

year 2030. Nova Scotia successfully introduced a cap-and-trade program that will continue to allow us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while protecting the pocketbooks of all Nova Scotians. Our province continues to support and encourage renewable energy like wind and solar, along with energy efficiency measures, which will help Nova Scotians reduce their energy while saving money.

Nova Scotians care about climate change. They want to know that we're doing more to reduce the impacts and to ensure that we are prepared for what we cannot prevent. I'm proud to say that's exactly what we're doing.

With that, I move second reading of Bill No. 106.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Sackville-Beaver Bank.

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I believe I am on the record as of yesterday, as well as other members of our caucus, saying that we certainly support the environment and recognize global warming and the effects that it has - the rising sea levels, greater issues of flooding, coastal erosion, all these things that are being addressed here today.

We are supportive of most of it. I do have a couple of concerns and questions that maybe the minister could clarify in closing, before it goes to Law Amendments. It was funny, the minister had mentioned that it is setting out clear rules here, but I see that they are not as clear as the minister may think they are, I think.

First of all, I am concerned over the fact that I recognize that this Act actually trumps - I think it is 12 other Acts that currently exist. I'm curious to know how they're going to refer back to this particular Act. There are 12 different ones - agriculture, cemeteries, the Municipal Government Act being one of the more significant ones that are impacted by this. I don't think the MGA actually has regulations at all, yet in the MGA - and it has been left up to the municipalities to look at setbacks. I'm curious to know about how that is going to impact and how those other 12 are going to be amended.

I certainly attest to the need to be progressive in looking to the future and trying to address some of the issues in new construction. I personally can attest to my experiences in regard to properties along Union Street in Bedford. For numerous years when I was on council, we were approached by the councillor from that area, numerous different councillors from that area, asking to look at purchasing that property because of the flooding issues there when they were constructed.

At the same time, I recognize the significant impact this can also have on municipalities, because we're now restricting where they can build and what can happen. For instance, Queen's Marque, I believe, just down the street here, which is a multimillion-dollar development - I don't think it would have happened under this legislation, and thus

the municipality would have been short that income. Those buildings generate millions of dollars in tax revenue from municipalities across the province.

Even in rural areas, we have many areas that are floodplains. I understand how it affects the coastal properties, but my interpretation is that this could also impact floodplains, so areas like Shubenacadie or Millwood - I have Millwood subdivision, which currently is in a floodplain. It was constructed in a floodplain. The province owns significant lands that are left there that have not been developed.

Under this legislation, my understanding is that those properties are not going to be able to be developed - in this case, the developer and the owner being the province. I'm curious to know about that.

I note that although it talks about what the bill wants to achieve, it's kind of vague in saying exactly what areas will be affected. It would be nice to be able to see more mapping done so that we could see what areas are being affected and overlay - while at the same time, I believe it talks about the high-water mark being the distance. My concern there is that that could potentially always be in flux as well, as the water either rises or settles, that high-water mark adjusts and thereby the distance and the setbacks would also adjust. I'm curious about that.

Under the seven principles that were actually there that are highlighted in Section 7, it talks about seven different principles that the Act is aiming to - I'm curious to know whether or not those principles were established through the public consultation process or whether those principles were established by staff in-house.

In addition to that, in regard to the public consultation process, I'm wondering if the minister might address how much of the public consultation process was done by departmental staff versus Ecology Action, and, there was another group. I believe they were out doing some public consultation as well.

I'm curious to know if that was on behalf of the government or in lieu of the government, what kind of public consultation the government actually did as well. Ecology Action Centre and ECE Law were the two that I'm curious about, what role that they had to play.

I certainly commend the work of the Ecology Action Centre. I have been over there numerous times through my municipal career and have seen the good work that they do. At the same time, I know that often their goals are counter to what developers, municipalities, and governments sometimes want. I do feel sometimes we can have that happy medium where we walk the line; but, if we have the fox in charge of the chicken coop, out doing all the consultations, then what we get back may be somewhat slighted. I'm curious about that as well.

I note Section 15 highlights the designate professions. There has to be a designated professional who is qualified to make recommendations in regard to these setbacks and that. I'm not really certain who determines who that person is and what qualifications they have. To me, that's a bit of a red flag as well.

I do know that this is a work in progress. I think that this is significant. It is important. I think it's something that needs to be done and be done right. Having said all that, I also feel that it is being pushed forward somewhat without quite being a finished product. I did note in a CBC article that I read - I don't have it with me - that Mr. Somers from the department did say that it's a work in progress and that it's in flux. It would be nicer to see it a little bit more concrete.

With that, I'll leave it here. I hope that municipal units and municipalities, councillors from across the province, as well as developers and everybody come out; certainly, people from Ecology Action Centre and people who are concerned about that. I look forward to hearing and seeing and listening to what people have to say during Law Amendments Committee and then coming back here.

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

LENORE ZANN: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill No. 106, the Coastal Protection Act. First of all, I'm glad to see that the purpose of this bill is to protect the province's coast for future generations by preventing development and activity in coastal locations that could get damaged from the rising floods and tides, and which could put residents and buildings at risk from sea level rise, storm surges, and coastal erosion.

It is going to establish clear, province-wide rules, concerning what can and cannot be done along the vulnerable coastlines; it is committed to preserving the dynamic and changing nature of our coast; it acknowledges that sea level rise, coastal flooding, storm surge, and coastal erosion pose significant threats to the safety of future development in our coastal areas; and it establishes a coastal protection zone along the coast based on the ordinary high-water mark, and its exact area will eventually be established in regulations.

I'm glad to see all of this in this Act. However, I am a little concerned that it doesn't deal with existing structures and that permitted activities are also exempt at this point. It doesn't address funding or address existing homes or infrastructure. It's just future oriented. That is a little concerning for me especially given that 70 per cent of Nova Scotia's population lives within 20 kilometres of the coast. As somebody who lives on a floodplain, I know Truro and places like this are extremely vulnerable already.

[4:30 p.m.]

We do support the bill and I am looking forward to hearing any concerns and suggestions at Law Amendments Committee. I think the bill is long overdue and I'm also glad to hear that experts and ecological organizations have been adequately engaged in shaping the bill. I'm not certain if any First Nations communities or leaders have been adequately consulted, but I would like to see them consulted as well. In the broad strokes, Bill No. 106 seems to get it right and I'd say is a much-needed step in the right direction.

As somebody who has had family cottages along the northern shore, we've seen the effects of coastal erosion quite dramatically. My mom and dad had a cottage in Bass River for many years and, as the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board would recognize, when we first had that cottage back in the 1970s, we used to be able to play frisbee out in front of it and have long swaths of area to play on. Bit by bit that all disappeared until it was gone. The outhouse was the last thing that was left with the little painted moon on it, and then that went over the bank, too. Mom and Dad actually moved from there to a place in Seafoam, which is between Pictou and Tatamagouche, and even that one, same thing. We had a big huge wide swath of lawn in front of it where all the kids and grandkids and people played, but now it is right up to their deck.

As somebody who has a cottage in Cape John, which is also between Tatamagouche and Pictou, I've noticed that while my cottage is fine, there are new cottages and homes being built so close to the banks that I think it's insane, really. A lot of these people live in Halifax and maybe they're not aware of what they've just bought, but there are these huge, beautiful properties that are a stone's throw from the edge of the water and I don't think adequate work was done to protect them. You can already see rivulets running down from the grass where they've gotten rid of all the trees. There're no trees between their cottages and the ocean. Really, that's a crying shame because those trees and the roots of the trees hold that soil together and maybe they're not aware. They mow right to the edge of it and already you can see the damage that is being done. It actually affects everybody else, so the people in Cape John are worried about their own properties because of all of this kind of activity that really should not have been allowed.

As somebody who has seen this myself, and I'm sure anybody else who's had places right along the coast has seen it, I'm very concerned about coastal erosion and the surging tides and the rising seas and, so I'm glad to see that this bill is coming forward. I do look forward to hearing what else people have to say in Law Amendments Committee and we'll wait until then for further comments.

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

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say a few words. I think it is a long overdue piece of legislation, but I do have some major concerns about existing properties that are built along the shoreline in my constituency and particularly in the

Village of Port Morien. We have a number of homes that have been located there for years and the houses haven't moved, but the ocean has come closer to them. The people living in them are mostly retirees and it's the most important asset that they own, and it is their home. They're not anxious to leave but I'm just hopeful that while we're considering the future, we look after the past. We look after the people who helped build our province and made it so strong.

In Port Morien, there are a number of homes that people have actually had to leave because of the way erosion has taken place. I know there are probably many other places, Mr. Speaker, throughout the province that have the same issue, but this is one that's close to home that you can notice. I think those who have driven to the community of Port Morien will see and know what I'm talking about. I see the member for Glace Bay acknowledging as he has been there many times as well.

It is a piece of legislation that's needed, but it is also important when we're making legislation that we think about the people who have already been affected by some of this stuff. I'm sure that's what drove us to even think about this type of legislation to begin with. With those few words, I'll take my place.

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

KEITH BAIN: I feel obligated, since we're talking about protection, to bring up the Ingonish ferry breakwater as a prime example of what's happening. This is something that has been brought to the attention of various government departments, and it continues to get worse.

The member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg is right. We have to look at the future, but we also have to deal with the present because it's going to be a lot worse. With those few words, I'll take my place.

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

The honourable Minister of Environment.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: I want to thank the members opposite for their comments, the member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg, Victoria-The Lakes, Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River, and Sackville-Cobequid.

There are so many things that still need to be worked out in this bill certainly, but a lot of these things haven't been discussed and aren't showing up in my remarks. Let me just cover a few of these things.

The consultation, on that question, was all done by the department. The 13,006 respondents were all done by the department as was the in-person consultation.

As for the Ecology Action Centre and ECE Law, they are stakeholders and having their input is part of that consultation process. We were absolutely listening to what they had to say and possibly could have taken some of those recommendations in hand.

How this will impact municipalities, we're going to be dealing with a lot of this in the regulation over the next 18 months. We'll certainly be consulting some more on the regulations. Municipalities are quite aware. Many of them already have regulations in place on setbacks that are already probably going to exceed what will become the final number. We don't have that final number yet, but that certainly will be laid out in the regulations.

How it impacts tidal properties, it certainly will. You mentioned the Shubenacadie area. That's part of my constituency and where I grew up. It's going to make sure that homes aren't built on areas that we know are going to flood. We have seen major flooding in Shubenacadie, and we want to make sure that when people are building there, it isn't going to simply be about the municipality, for monetary purposes or whatever, giving a building permit knowing that there could be real risk of flooding in the future. This is about flooding and erosion, of course, and making sure that that is handled.

We discussed a little about site professionals. We have some areas of the province that are not subject to erosion and possibly have elevations already in place. Those people will have the opportunity to hire a site professional who will be able to evaluate their property and give them an exemption from the regulations.

To speak about the fisheries, any kind of business that needs the coastal properties, say it's a fish plant or it's a fisher that needs to have his wharf and have access to the ocean, those all would be exempt as well from the program.

We have to give the municipalities 12 months' notice before anything goes into effect, so they'll have lots of time to make some changes and see to the impacts.

The existing structures and the buildings in elevations, as to that point, any existing structures already there won't be impacted by this. We know that these are all private landowners.

This legislation will not come with a pool of money. It won't have anything in place that's going to be able to subsidize people for moving their homes. This is about the future. But we're also looking at maybe a person has a coastal cottage and wants to convert that to a home, that certainly isn't going to be allowed because you are doing exactly the opposite thing of what the intent of the bill is.

Small renovations can be done, things like a deck or adding a little sunroom or something like that, minor ones that still have the same intent of that facility would be allowed, but not for major renovations.

First Nations consultations, certainly they have been asked to comment on the bill. I think they approached all the bands in the province, so they have been part of the consultation process.

I believe that covers all the questions I heard, and with that I move to close second reading of Bill No. 106.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 106. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 112.

Bill No. 112 - Education Act.

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

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 112 be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, we are bringing in these amendments to the Education Act in response to what everyone in this Chamber can agree was an alarming amount of serious criminal charges that were laid in our education system this year involving acts as serious as luring, possession of child pornography, sexual assault, and assault. The objective of these changes is to increase our ability to protect our students and ensure they are being taught in a safe environment. We are doing that by providing legislative authority to enact four key tactical procedures to better screen our staff, gather information on the people who are in front of our children who are entrusted with their care.

Those four key tactics that this legislation will allow us to pursue, one is recurring criminal record checks. The current system only requires one initial criminal record check before entry into employment in the education system. We will be changing that to ensure there are reoccurring criminal record checks every five years. The initial criminal record check will be at the cost of the employee, as is currently the case; the subsequent ones, we will be covering the cost of those.

The second objective this will help us achieve, Mr. Speaker, is annual declarations. If there is a conviction in between the five years of criminal record checks, an employee will be required to disclose a conviction if that were to be the case.

We will also be mandating the immediate disclosure of a charge in the event that that happens with one of our employees.

The fourth tactic that this will allow us to implement is achieving a consistency when it comes to the criminal record checking and screening of those who are volunteering in our education system, Mr. Speaker.

These changes will help us gather information on every single person in the system, pertinent information on every single person in the system who has direct point of contact with our students. We will be moving from the fractured system of the board governance structure into our integrated structure. We will also be ensuring that there is consistent application of these new policies and regulations.

While this is first and foremost about protecting students, Mr. Speaker, this is also about protecting the integrity of a valued, critical, and distinguished profession, a number of professions in our education system. As politicians know all too well, if there is one of us who acts in a way that is unbecoming of our office, many others get painted with the same brush. This also happens for other professions. If we are better at identifying bad actors or potential risks in the system, this will also help us ensure that the public confidence and integrity of the professions in our education system are protected as well.

[4:45 p.m.]

This has been endorsed by the teachers union. We have not heard opposition from any of the other employee unions in our education system. We will be implementing regulations that will allow us to move forward in the intended ways, as I've discussed. We will be working with the representatives of those employee groups as we do that.

Student safety is a fundamental duty that any minister, any government, has when it comes to the governing and managing and operating of our education system. These changes will help us enhance our ability to protect students who are entrusted into our care.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise to offer a few comments on Bill No. 112, An Act to Amend Schedule A of Chapter 1 of the Acts of 2018, the Education Act, Respecting Student Protection. Bill No. 112 is an important piece of legislation. Actually, any legislation that involves our children, our most vulnerable population, is so important.

Nova Scotia's public education system employs approximately 20,000 teaching and non-teaching staff and supports more than 120,000 students. Last November, after repeated incidents, the minister stated that he favoured changing rules to make schools safer for students, and I welcome that. One victim is too many.

Yesterday, we saw the minister's response with new legislation that affects teachers and non-teaching staff who work with our students throughout this province. This legislation is creating new criteria for teachers and educational supports in our public school system. Student safety and protection will be strengthened with these amendments.

The minister has mentioned the four specific changes to the Act which will include mandatory criminal record checks for regional centres and CSAP employees on a regular and ongoing basis during their employment. All employees will be required to sign a declaration each school year indicating that they have not been convicted of a criminal offence, and all employees will be required to immediately report to their employers if they have been charged or convicted of a criminal offence.

Additional amendments to pre-employment checks, including the vulnerable sector check and child abuse registry, will be required. The legislation also follows for regulations that will set out record check requirements for individuals such as volunteers.

Our caucus does have a few questions concerning this bill, but I want to be very clear that they are not with the intent of this legislation. Those questions are surrounding the collection and storage of private information.

We know the FOIPOP commissioner was not consulted on this piece of legislation and I ask the question, why? Why was the Information and Privacy Commissioner not consulted? Where will this collected documentation be stored - in a file folder of an employee or electronic record? Who will have access to this private information? Who will be the caretakers of this information? Will the criminal record, child abuse registry, and vulnerable sector checks be protected from outside breaches?

Sadly, we know that this government does not have the full trust of Nova Scotians because of past privacy breaches, so we need to make sure we get this right. Not only students need protection. People's personal information needs to be protected also. Nowhere in this legislation can I find how this sensitive personal information will be stored or released. I look forward to hearing from the minister on those questions.

The other matter that comes to mind is, what happens when centres for education and the CSAP find someone whose checks do not meet the expectations or requirements of a position? Will there be exemptions to this policy, and if so, what will they be? What will the government's role be in dealing with implicated workers?

With those short remarks and questions, I will close by saying that I do agree with the minister's comments that he's made inside and outside the Chamber, that we need to ensure that we're providing a safe, inclusive learning environment for students across this province while protecting the integrity of the education profession. I'll add to that: every one of us in this House owe it to our children that we are doing everything in our power to keep them safe.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for bringing forth this piece of legislation and I look forward to hearing from presenters at Law Amendments Committee.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Again, I think I will reserve most of my remarks on this bill for third reading. I agree with all of my colleagues in this House that student safety is paramount. I think, in general, we don't have a big issue with this bill.

I would echo again, the concerns I somehow find myself raising in all different venues today: As far as we know, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner was not consulted on this bill. This bill will greatly increase the number of personal records that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is going to be handling. It's not clear, as my colleagues have pointed out, how those records will be handled. Of course, I have every reason to believe the government will take seriously the protection of people's individual privacy, but we do have expertise available to us in this Chamber about how to do that. Again, the fact that that office has not been consulted and that we don't have clarity at this juncture about how those records will be protected, is of some concern.

For the rest of the bill, our understanding as the minister spoke, is that he has consulted the unions and the employees and made general efforts to ensure everybody is on side with this. I think regular reporting is fine and in accord with how lots of other public institutions work. I think when we look more specifically at the charges that have been laid and the challenges we have, you know, there are also probably some systemic ways that we can get at these challenges, but certainly this is one step in the right direction.

With those few comments I will look forward to presentations at Law Amendments and to the hopeful consultation of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and I will take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the comments of the members opposite. The members have asked some pertinent and important questions in relation to the implementation of the bill.

In relation to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, while the Information and Privacy Commissioner's office was not directly engaged in consultation in the drafting of this, the previous recommendations of the Information and Privacy Commissioner were fully considered and informed the drafting of this bill. In terms of the protection of private information, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act will still apply in all regards to the collection of this information. So, the members opposite can be assured that that Act will be applicable in this situation. The individuals collecting this will be subject to the law of this province in relation to this.

The member from Queens-Shelburne asked about the implementation in the event that one of our employees has either had a charge or a conviction. I want to make sure the House understands that every single situation will be treated as an individual situation. Of course, all charges are not of great concern to the department or to the employer. The only initial action that will be taken if there is a charge or conviction that is disclosed, is a meeting to discuss the nature of the charges.

Obviously, if the charges are of a nature that are deeply concerning to the ability for that or those individuals to do their duties, that bring into question their ability to put the safety of children first, obviously that is something that would be a red flag. We'd instigate an investigation and that can lead up to any disciplinary action, including termination, depending on the appropriateness and relevance of the charge or situation at hand. These situations will be treated individually and with the utmost care and due diligence.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words I move to close Second Reading on Bill No. 112.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 112. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: That concludes the government's business for today, Mr. Speaker. I move that the House now rise to sit again tomorrow, the Ides of March, Friday, March 15th between the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Business will include, following the daily routine and QP of course, Second Reading on Bill No. 116

and, time permitting, we will cover Third Readings on Bills No. 84, 90, 91, 92, 95, 97, 99, and 101.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now rise, to meet again on March 15th, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 4:56 p.m.]