



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2019

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2019

Sixty-third General Assembly

Second Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, Brendan Maguire

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, I would like to wish everybody a happy Friday.

We'll now begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as the Attorney General, I hereby beg leave to table Amendments to Nova Scotia's Civil Procedure Rules, Rule 59A. The revisions were made in accordance with the Judicature Act by a majority of the Judges of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court on December 14, 2018.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as the Attorney General of Nova Scotia, I hereby beg leave to table the Office of the Public Trustee Annual Report for the year ending March 31, 2018.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 837

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 Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia held their annual Sea Farmers Conference from January 23-25, 2019; and

Whereas the Sea Farmers Conference welcomed delegates from Nova Scotia, Atlantic Canada, across North America, and as far away as Europe - the 2019 conference was a huge success and welcomed the largest number of attendees to date; and

Whereas this annual conference highlights and celebrates the growth of the aquaculture industry in Nova Scotia, as well as offers information workshops and resources to attendees;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia on another successful Sea Farmers Conference.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 838

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

Whereas over the next several days Nova Scotia representatives will meet one-on-one with doctors in London, Birmingham, Manchester, and Edinburgh to discuss immigration and employment options; and

Whereas the physician immigration stream is an innovative approach that makes it easier and faster for doctors to move here and practise in our communities, helping us meet growing demands across the province; and

Whereas as the Minister of Immigration, I am pleased that since launching the physician immigration stream last February, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Wellness, 25 doctors have been recruited to live and work in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly continue to join me in welcoming and supporting doctors who choose to immigrate to the province to live and work in our communities.

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 Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to make an introduction before my resolution.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MARK FUREY: I draw your attention to the East Gallery where we're joined today by several individuals who've demonstrated their commitment to removing barriers and advancing accessibility.

Here with us today are Lori Rhyno with Sobeys; Derek Gillis, Tim Callanan, and Casey Bellemore of CarShare Atlantic; and Lisa Bugden and Annie Valentina with Neptune Theatre. I'd also like to acknowledge Cynthia Carroll and Jenny Tyler with Autism Nova Scotia, and Frank O'Sullivan and Betty MacDonald with the Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians. Of course, a familiar face in the Legislature, Executive Director of the Accessibility Directorate, Mr. Gerry Post.

I'd ask my colleagues to give them a warm welcome to the House. The individuals and organizations they represent, along with many others across the province, have been instrumental in advancing accessibility in our province. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 839

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

Whereas accessibility is a shared goal, one that is being achieved through genuine collaboration and efforts by many in our community, private sector, and government; and

Whereas the commendable examples include CarShare Atlantic which recently launched Canada's first accessible car share service, Sobeys which now offers sensory-friendly shopping, Neptune Theatre which offers both sensory-friendly and ASL performances, and the community of Inverness which, thanks to the installation of wide ramps, special mats that lead to the water's edge, beach-friendly wheelchairs and floating chairs, is enabling persons with mobility challenges the opportunity to enjoy the beach up close and even get back into the ocean; and

Whereas numerous initiatives like these are changing our province for the better, improving accessibility for people with disabilities, and helping us to achieve our goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030;

Therefore be it resolved that we all join together in acknowledging the tremendous work and commitment of so many in helping to create a more accessible province and encourage others to take action in removing barriers for persons with disabilities in all aspects of life.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

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

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

BARBARA ADAMS: I would like to draw everyone's attention to the West Gallery and I'll ask the people I introduce to stand, please. I would like to introduce Mary Ann Fiander of Parent Finders Nova Scotia and her husband Clarence. I'd also like to introduce Mike Slayter, adoption advocate, and Shirley Saywood. I'd like to thank everybody. (Applause)

Bill No. 117 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 3 of the Acts of 1996. The Adoption Information Act. (Barbara Adams)

Bill No. 118 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 1 of the Acts of 1994-95. The Environment Act. (Lisa Roberts)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MARK FUREY: I'd like to draw your attention to the East Gallery where we have with us today some very special guests from the construction industry. These individuals represent their industry and are here for the introduction of legislation that I'll table in just a few moments. I believe this legislation will support people working in the construction sector and, in turn, strengthen the economic well-being of the province.

I would ask them to stand as I call their names. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce Duncan Williams and Tom Skinner of the Construction Association of Nova Scotia,

Heather Cruickshanks of Merit Nova Scotia, Calum MacLeod of the Nova Scotia Construction Labour Relations Association, and Trent Soholt from the Nova Scotia Construction Sector Council. I'd ask my colleagues in the House to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

Bill No. 119 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 277 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Builders' Lien Act. (Hon. Mark Furey)

Bill No. 120 - Entitled an Act to Support Local Action on Climate Change. (Lisa Roberts)

THE SPEAKER: 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: I'd like to introduce a few guests in the East Gallery who are with us this morning from our nursing colleges. I'd ask them to rise when I call their names. Sue Smith, the transition executive director and registrar of the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia and CEO and registrar of the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia; Theresa MacDonald, the board vice-chair of the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia, and Charmaine McPherson, the council president of the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia.

They are here for this morning's bill briefing on the legislation I am about to table and I request that my colleagues give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

Bill No. 121 - Entitled an Act Respecting the Regulation of Nursing. (Hon. Randy Delorey)

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

LAVOIE, JOHN - CPL.: 30TH BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, today I am especially proud to rise to honour a former Eastern Passage resident, John Lavoie. John is a Canadian Armed Forces Air Force personnel who was stationed in Comox with his Air Force wife Janika this summer.

Immediately after his posting, he was sent to Kuwait for four months on his first peacekeeping mission. He just received the General Service Medal for his Kuwait expedition.

Since he was a little boy, Corporal John has been keeping the peace, whether it was at home, at school, or on the sports teams he participated in. He is recognized in his workplace in the military for his ability to unite.

I am especially happy to honour him today as it is his 30th birthday. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join me today in wishing my son, John Lavoie, a very happy 30th birthday.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

CHRISTCHURCH INCIDENT - REMEMBRANCE/SUPPORT

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words on the horrific news that I woke up to this morning on the radio. The massacre in Christchurch really brought tears to my eyes this morning, as a minority, living as a minority, grew up in Iraq and feeling the sense of what they are feeling right now in Christchurch.

My condolences go to the families and to all the Muslim community in Christchurch, New Zealand, and I would like to ask for a moment of silence on their behalf. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: We'd like to have a moment of silence to remember those victims of the events in New Zealand last night.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MARITIME EXPRESS CIDER CO.: NEW BUS. - BEST WISHES

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, Jimi Doidge recently opened a new business in Kentville, the Maritime Express Cider Co. Nestled in the historic Cornwallis Inn, this business produces a top-notch product from local apples.

Jimmy grew up in Ontario, moved to the Valley with his wife in 2016, and they instantly fell in love with the area. He co-owns the business with Scott Hearn. Their future plans include making hopped, spiced, sparkling and ice ciders, as well as eventually pressing his own apples.

I ask all members of this House to join me in wishing Jimi and Scott all the best in their new business.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

RUSSELL, JO-MARIE: CONDOLENCES - TRIBUTE

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I rise for just a moment to bring some remarks about last evening.

I had the great honour to attend a celebration of life for the late Ron Russell who was a long-time member of this Legislature. I believe there are three members currently who still serve in this House who had the honour of serving while Mr. Russell was here - 28 years he spent and I think eight wins, maybe more.

He was well known throughout our constituency and that showed last night by the number of folks from home who actually attended as well, which was very nice to see, as Ron hasn't lived there for the last few years. As you would know, I also had the great opportunity to present Jo-Marie with a boxed flag that flew yesterday at half mast outside of this Legislature. So, she was quite overwhelmed with that and on behalf of all the great folks that I have the honour of representing in Hants West for the last 13 years, we want to pass on our sincere condolences to Jo-Marie and her family.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

MACINTYRE, JONAH/MILLET, TAYLOR: WATER RESCUE - THANKS

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate 13-year-old Jonah MacIntyre and 11-year-old Taylor Millet for their help rescuing Susan Atkinson and her dog when they fell through an icy river in Oxford, Nova Scotia.

While the boys were out shovelling driveways on that cold January day, they heard cries for help. The boys ran down to the riverbank and found a distraught woman and her dog struggling in the icy waters. The boys couldn't reach her, but soon a neighbour came with a rope which they all used to pull Ms. Atkinson and her dog to safety up on the bank.

Please join me in congratulating and thanking Jonah MacIntyre and Taylor Millet for their quick, brave actions that saved this lady and her dog from the icy waters that day.

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

**MACINTYRE, MARY - SISTER OF CHARITY:
100TH BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES**

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, today is a very special milestone for a kind and remarkable someone in my community. On March 15, 1919 - 100 years ago today - Sister Mary MacIntyre was born. The oldest of four girls, Sister Mary attended school in Glace Bay. She entered the Sisters of Charity in Halifax in 1936 and was professed in 1939.

As an educator, Sister Mary cared deeply about her students. As a principal, she was a source of encouragement, open to new ideas, and even in her time welcomed all new innovations. Sister shared her wisdom and concern with new teachers, who often confided their difficulties in her.

Sister Mary still possesses an independent spirit and a great dry sense of humour. According to her friends, she's incomparable.

I ask the members of this House of Assembly to join me in wishing Sister Mary a very wonderful 100th birthday. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

D&E'S SMOKED MEATS: NEW VENTURE - BEST WISHES

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to congratulate Dan Corbett and Elizabeth Soloway on their new business, just on the outskirts of Amherst: D&E's Smoked Meats.

I'm very proud to report that they use local meat sourced in Cumberland County and are providing healthy options for busy families. Dan has a history of type 2 diabetes and Elizabeth is a nurse, and they wanted to help cater to people who were busy but conscious of the meals they ate.

Small businesses are a strong and important part of Cumberland County's economy, and it's encouraging to see more businesses open. I wish Dan and Elizabeth the best on their new venture and hope they will achieve great success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

ACADIA ENTREPRENEURSHIP CTR.: 30TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, rural economies are driven by entrepreneurs. For 30 years, the Acadia Entrepreneurship Centre on the campus of Acadia University has provided support to these entrepreneurs and their businesses. The centre includes the Rural Innovation Centre, which incubates start-up companies and supports them through

business advisory services, programming, network events, and physical space, and connects them to the resources and amenities of Acadia University.

The AEC also creates and delivers extracurricular programs for students from elementary school to post-secondary, and provides opportunities on campus for students to express their entrepreneurial spirit. The centre serves all of western Nova Scotia and is a partner with government in managing LaunchBox.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Executive Director Findlay MacRae and all the staff at the Acadia Entrepreneurship Centre on their 30th anniversary, and thank them for their important work in keeping rural communities vibrant by supporting rural businesses and entrepreneurs.

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

MARRYATT/HAYNE FAM.: MEMORIAL TOY DRIVE - THANKS

ALANA PAON: I rise today to commend the Marryatt and Hayne family of Arichat for turning their grief upon the death of a much-beloved son and brother into an act of charitable giving. Jason Marryatt passed away on August 20, 2017, at the age of 21, after a lengthy battle with Ewing sarcoma.

Jason's mother, Carol Hayne; his sister, Laura Marryatt; and his brother, David Marryatt, held a toy drive in Fall 2018, collecting six large bins of toys that were donated to children at the IWK Health Centre.

I would like to thank Jason's family for their heartfelt generosity and for contributing to young patients and their families seeking medical treatment at the IWK.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LIVING SHORELINES: CLIMATE CHANGE - OPPORTUNITY

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I am continuing with my resolution to speak about climate change.

On this Friday, when high school students across Nova Scotia, and indeed across the world, are marching and striking to demand our action and their right to a future on a livable planet, I will briefly point to just one opportunity that's particularly relevant in Nova Scotia, with our vast coastline.

Living shorelines, which include restored marshes, are effective at both mitigating coastal erosion and sequestering carbon, as many new scientific studies show. A number of organizations, municipalities, and small businesses have been pioneering this work of

installing living shorelines in Nova Scotia. I look forward to that work expanding with more support from the province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

BERRY, BRANDY: BOSS OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce celebrated our local business community at its 2018 Business Awards, and Boss of the Year was awarded to Brandy Berry.

Brandy Berry manages Coles bookstore in Yarmouth. Brandy is an art and book lover and can always be found cheerfully helping shoppers find the perfect book or gift. Brandy's enthusiasm and helpfulness have endeared her to her staff and customers alike.

I ask this House to join me in congratulating Yarmouth's Brandy Berry on winning the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce's Boss of the Year Award and wish her continued success. I'll see her in Coles soon enough.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

NORTHSIDE CHRISTMAS DADDIES VOLUNS. - SALUTE

EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the Northside Christmas Daddies. During the past nine years, a group ranging from amateurs to seasoned pros in the entertainment world have gathered for five weekends at Dooley's in North Sydney to entertain the community or allow them to sing or perform with the house band. Last year over \$8,000 was raised by Master of Ceremonies Bob MacDonald.

Dooley's steps up by providing pool, food, deals, and many other contests. The aim of this group of volunteers is to work with the community, thinking of others, and helping kids at Christmas.

I'd like to take this opportunity to salute these volunteers for making a huge difference in our community.

[9:30 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction; not in the gallery, but in the House.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I would like to introduce a legislative staff member, for whom I'll be reading my member's statement. A constituent, a wonderful young lady with a lot of ambitions and volunteerism and has done so many things. I will be reading the member's statement to tell you about this wonderful young lady who is serving as a Page for the second term.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

THOMAS, DIVYA: PICS 4 PASSION - CONGRATS.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I would like to recognize a young woman from my riding who's changing the way we look at mental health. Divya Thomas is a Dalhousie second year political science student, but she has many passions including helping those struggling mentally.

She works with Pics 4 Passion, a newly-founded organization created by Hannah Jackson which presents positive image for mental health and sheds light on stigma, false ideas, and brings awareness by sparking conversation on the issue. The group held an inaugural event in January and raised over \$500 for the IWK Mental Health Foundation.

Divya also works as a Page in our Legislature, is a part of the Dalhousie Senate, and a member of Black, Indigenous People of Colour Caucus.

Would this House of Assembly please applaud Divya Thomas on the remarkable work she is doing in the realm of mental health. (Applause) (Standing Ovation)

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

KENNEDY, JIM: MIN.'S EXCELLENCE AWARD - CONGRATS.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise here to today to acknowledge Jim Kennedy of Louisbourg Seafoods, in honour of Jim's service and dedication to the growth and advancement of Nova Scotia's seafood industry. Jim received the Minister's Award of Excellence recently at the 21st Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture Conference.

In 1984, Jim established Louisbourg Seafoods in Louisbourg, with a focus on hard work and making the most of the fishery resources that our rural communities rely upon. Since that time, Jim has built some of the most diversified seafood companies in the province, employing more than 500 people in and throughout rural Cape Breton and eastern Nova Scotia.

I stand today to congratulate and thank Jim Kennedy for his determination and leadership as an industry builder of the seafood industry of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

WHITMAN, MAURA - VOCALIST: CHARITABLE CONCERT - BEST WISHES

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about an amazing and talented young lady from Herring Cove.

Maura Whitman is an 18-year-old singer/songwriter who has been recording her original music since the age of 13. She is also a dedicated volunteer with Ovarian Cancer Canada, Halifax Chapter, and the Children's Wish Foundation of Canada.

Maura has successfully published several songs and has a strong YouTube following. She also recently opened for Serena Ryder at Casino Nova Scotia.

This extremely talented musician will be holding a concert at the Halifax Grammar School on March 28th with all proceeds being donated to those two charities. Her goal is to sell out the 200-seat venue which will raise approximately \$1,500.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the House to join me in wishing Maura continued success with her music and future endeavours.

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

LEE, COADY: SLED DOG RACING - GOOD LUCK

LARRY HARRISON: Recently 11 local huskies placed fifth in the Canadian Challenge sled dog race in northern Saskatchewan, along with their musher Upper Stewiacke resident, Coady Lee.

In February, Coady and his huskies raced across more than 500 kilometers from Elk Ridge to La Ronge in 78 hours and three minutes.

Although competing in the 12-dog category, he started the race with 11 dogs, but had to drop six at the start due to poor trail conditions.

Content with their fifth-place finish, Coady and his canine crew are moving on to the Percy DeWolfe Memorial Mail Race on March 21st in the Yukon. This race will take more than 300 kilometres, from Dawson City across the border to Eagle, Alaska.

Congratulations to Coady Lee and his huskies and good luck in next week's race.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

O'TOOLE, EVAN: ATHL. OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.

HON. MARK FUREY: Bridgewater athlete Evan O'Toole was named the 2018 major male athlete of the year by Baseball Nova Scotia. At nationals, Evan was instrumental in bringing a bronze medal back to Nova Scotia for the first time since 1995. According to the award citation, Evan pitched what will go down as one of the top performances in Nova Scotia history during the quarter final battle with Quebec, allowing only two hits and striking out nine in an historic Nova Scotia victory.

Evan was also the most dominant pitcher on Team Atlantic at the T12 National Amateur Showcase Tournament held in Toronto last September. These performances earned Evan an invite to the Baseball Canada junior national team selection camp this past October.

Evan currently plays for the Vauxhall Academy of Baseball Jets in Alberta and he has accepted an NCAA athletic scholarship to attend Iowa Western College, a division one college in Iowa, in the Fall of 2019.

I ask members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating Evan for his outstanding performance in the sport of baseball.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

N. QUEENS TRAILBLAZERS: WOODLAND ACTIVITIES - CONGRATS.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the North Queens Trailblazers, a group of 18 middle-school-age boys and girls who have worked on a primarily outdoor-based program in the Fall of 2018. Hosted on land owned locally by Georgie Uhlman, they participated in woodland activities, outdoor skills, and team building, including the construction of woodland shelters, which were competitively judged.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the North Queens Trailblazers and their leaders Jennifer Fancy and Jan Waterman, for their enthusiasm, respect for the forests and willingness to learn new skills, working together in teams, all valuable life lessons for rural life living.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

SCHMEISSER, TRICIA: LIFE-SAVING EFFORT - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I'd like to congratulate a Bedford resident on a recent act of heroism. Mr. Speaker, Trisha Schmeisser is a teacher at Basinview Drive Community School. Late last year, her husband Kyle played hockey, and arrived home complaining of

indigestion. Shortly thereafter, he began complaining of pain in his chest and arm and then he collapsed.

Trisha leapt into action, calling 911 and administering CPR. Paramedics have indicated it is likely that Kyle would not have survived were it not for her efforts.

Earlier this week Trisha was honoured in a ceremony at Basinview Drive Community Drive School. I would like to congratulate her on quick action and presence of mind in a difficult situation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

ARSENAULT, DANIEL: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, it is hard to feel inspired and motivated on a constant basis. We know that leaving is easier said than done.

Kenny and Lynn Arsenault stated their son was their strength and earth angel. Eighteen-year old Daniel Arsenault passed away unexpectedly on Friday, December 7th ; an unspeakable loss. It was heart wrenching for the family and the community.

He lived with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy throughout most of his life. Everyone in Pictou County knew Daniel. He was an extraordinary, amazing, and bubbly individual. He became the poster boy for the muscular dystrophy campaigns, helping to fight against the illness that would ultimately claim his life. He touched the hearts of everyone he met and leaves us all with the memory of the brightest smile you could ever imagine.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

RICHARDSON, WENDY: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an important member of the Greenwood community, Wendy Richardson. Born in Sydney, Wendy later moved to Greenwood where many were greeted by her exemplary service, warm smile at the local jewelry store.

In her off time, Wendy has dedicated her life to giving back, having organized many local men's curling bonspiels, tournaments and events at the Greenwood Golf and Country Club, while advocating for its successful continuation. She currently volunteers at the Kingston Legion in any way she can.

Wendy's selfless heart and love for helping others has once again demonstrated by her nine-year commitment to hosting a breakfast every December at her house, where she requested donations for Chrysalis House, from attendees. What started as a small group of

friends, saw 46 people attended last year, which resulted in a truck, van, and several cars filled with donations.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the House to join me in recognizing Wendy Richardson for her admirable dedication and service to not only her town of Greenwood, but also the Valley community at large.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

BROWN, MATTHEW - MEDALLIST: CAN. WINTER GAMES - COMMEND

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Matthew Brown, a hard-working and talented student athlete from Dartmouth East. Matthew is a member of Dartmouth Titans and attends École Secondaire du Carrefour.

This past February, Matthew was part of Team Nova Scotia and travelled to Red Deer, Alberta, to compete in the 2019 Canada Winter Games. Matthew competed on the Men's Artistic Gymnastics Team where he and his teammates won Nova Scotia's first medal at the Canada Games.

It's not easy to be a successful student athlete; they have to balance study and training to achieve excellence. I commend Matthew Brown for being so determined, and thank him for being such a great role model, especially to an aspiring young gymnast by the name of Ella Halman.

I ask all members of the House to recognize Matthew for his performance and achievements at the 2019 Canada Games.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLEAN FDN.: YOUTH INTERNSHIPS IN GREEN SECTOR - THANKS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week my caucus introduced a Green Jobs Plan to start moving Nova Scotia towards a sustainable and forward-looking economy. This is the type of plan that would enhance and support work that's happening in our province already.

The Clean Foundation, located on Portland Street in Dartmouth, is a non-profit, independent voice for sustainability whose youth engagement and clean leadership program is working to keep and retain young people in Nova Scotia and get them working with government agencies and businesses that are committed to low-carbon growth and are champions of sustainability.

This could be internships in battery storage development, solar and other renewable programs on a small or large scale, or energy efficiency programs for homeowners. Honestly, Mr. Speaker, as we know the jobs and opportunities in the green sector keep multiplying. The internships for youth between the ages of 15 and 30 are a springboard for future career development and building a sustainable province.

I want to ask the House to join me in acknowledging and thanking all the folks at Clean Foundation for the vital work they are doing for Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

MUS. OF THE NIGHT: PRODUCTION, *HAIRSPRAY* - CONGRATS.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, Music of the Night is an annual Antigonish community production that started over two decades ago as a fundraiser for the Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School band program.

Over the years, the group has staged 17 musicals, providing opportunities for budding musicians, actors and dancers that they otherwise would not have had. The productions have had a reputation for being quite polished by community theatre standards, and this year was the biggest production to date - over 84 performers young and old alike took to the stage to sing and dance in *Hairspray*. Add in the people involved in the pit band, stage crew, set design, construction, management, props, costumes, advertising, plus the band parent volunteers, and you are well in excess of 100 volunteers who put in a lot of time and effort to making the show.

It played to sell-out crowds over three weekends and travelled to Port Hawkesbury and Guysborough. With an ensemble of this size, there are too many people to mention by name, but I do want to congratulate musical director Brent Bannerman, long-time band leader and teacher in Antigonish - Brent has been the musical director for all 17 Music of the Night productions. Also, Jenn Priddle returned to her seventh turn as director; Helen Bannerman was this year's producer, stage manager and head of props; and Liliona Quarmyne, as choreographer.

Mr. Speaker, anyone lucky enough to see the show would have seen the polish and professionalism that these four individuals and their teams brought to the project.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

BECK, ALLIE: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate Allie Beck of Pictou who, after 21 years of dedicated, friendly service, will be retiring from his employment with the Town of Pictou in April.

Allie has been a well-known Pictonian with his yellow vest and bucket in hand. You could always find Allie with a smile on his face, scouring the streets of Pictou to pick up trash - Allie is part of the proud in Pictou-proud. While working for the town, Allie has walked many miles and has assisted many with the return of lost of items and even lost money. After his daily work you can often see Allie either on the bench at the Scotland Inn, in front of Sharon's Place restaurant, or at the post office chatting with friends and visitors alike. I wish Allie a very restful and peaceful retirement.

[9:45 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

SMITH, SHAQUILLE: COM. DEV. - RECOG.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Shaquille Smith of North Preston who received his business degree from Acadia University in 2016 and now works at Colour, a digital marketing agency that manages business accounts and develops their media plans.

He is an active community member serving on the board of directors of Business is Jammin (BI) and Veith House. He is responsible for securing \$300,000 in funding through provincial grants, HRM, and local McDonald's and other sources for a new full-sized basketball court in the community.

I want to recognize and congratulate Shaquille Smith for his tireless efforts on community development through sports and educational programs for youth in the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

YOUNG, FARON: WOOD CARVING - CONGRATS.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Faron Young, from Springhill, on his great love of wood carving and sharing his craft with others interested in carving in his community, including Michelle Herrett, Jordyn Tannahill, Daniel Miller, and Daniel's daughter 10-year-old Ava Godfrey.

Faron began carving boats and clocks before moving on to birds. Two decades ago Faron made a shift to Santa Clauses and wooden spirits, which have made him very popular within the community. He not only carved a large wooden spirit from a tree stump on his property but has carved wooden spirits at the golf course and in front of the Anne Murray Centre in Springhill.

Please join me in congratulating Faron Young on his outstanding gift of carving and for giving of his time to share his knowledge and his trade with others.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

BENEDICT, ANITA: TOWN CRIER COMP. - CONGRATS.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Anita Benedict became the Town Crier for East Hants in September of 2013, a position she very much enjoys. She is the only female Town Crier in Nova Scotia and she would like to see more young women follow her lead.

On September 22, 2018, the Nova Scotia Guild of Town Criers held their 2018 provincial competition in Maitland in conjunction with the Maitland Launch Festival. The theme of this competition was Women in the Age of Sail and hosted by the CHArt Society and the East Hants Town Crier, Anita Benedict.

As host, Anita could not compete, but she provided the benchmark cry for the competition. There were nine competing criers and a non-competing guest crier, our friend Will Brewer of Olde Halifax. New Glasgow's James Stewart finished first with his cry and Windsor's Lloyd Smith was named the best dressed. Anita was given the ambassador award, honouring her commitment to the craft of crying.

I ask all members of this House to congratulate Anita for her dedication to her craft. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

RADSTORM: SUPPORTIVE ART SPACE - RECOG.

LISA ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to recognize the unique contribution of a grassroots art space in Halifax Needham. Radstorm is a collectively run, volunteer-driven, not-for-profit arts hub newly located at 2177 Gottingen Street.

Radstorm provides resources, space, and equipment to support the creation of independent media, music, and education, providing a platform and tools, especially to those marginalized and equity seeking people. As an all-ages dry venue that is physically accessible and pay-as-you-can, Radstorm provides a truly unique community space.

They are currently engaged in a capital campaign to purchase their location, and I wish them well as they work towards securing a long-term home from which to continue their important work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

CLARE CHESS CLUB: REVIVAL - COMMEND

GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, in 1991, a group of men from Clare area decided to start a chess club. Many years later, five of the original 10 members decided it was time to revive the chess club. Last December they met for the first time in a long time at the library of Université Sainte-Anne. They were joined by members of the chess clubs from Annapolis Royal and Weymouth, as well as students from the university.

The revival of this club is part of a recent trend of new chess clubs forming in rural Nova Scotia. The sport has the capability to bring together people from different cultures, different generations, and different backgrounds, all passionate for the game. The interest in the game is also not limited by borders - the game is presently played in over 185 countries.

The benefits for children are well documented and may help the not-so-young keep their minds sharp. Such clubs and new activities add to our communities and the lives of our residents. I commend the efforts of the old members of the Clare chess club in giving the club a second go.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

GEORGE, BENJAMIN: BIRTHDAY DONATION - THANKS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Benjamin George. Benjamin asked for donations to the local animal shelter instead of receiving gifts for his birthday this year. It is so encouraging to see young people who are outward focused and who know that there are others who are in greater need than themselves.

Benjamin can help the shelter with items that will be given to the animals and the staff to help maintain the shelter. The LA Animal Shelter is an independent, non-profit organization and can continue through people who have hearts like Benjamin's. Today, I would like to thank Benjamin for his kindness and generosity toward his community.

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

MACINTOSH, JENNIFER: TOP LDR. IN SAAS - CONGRATS.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in recognition of Jennifer MacIntosh of Port Shoreham, Guysborough County. She is a 2018 recipient of the prestigious Top Women Leaders in SaaS (Software as a Service) Award. The international award is given to 50 of the top 3,500 nominees who have proven excellence in integrity, drive, company culture, and company growth.

Jennifer's executive role in the technology sector consists of sharing her expertise by visiting customers and attending industry events across the globe. When not travelling, she is researching industry trends, analyzing data to create trends, and helping to ensure her company avoids groupthink, which can be quite damaging to productivity. Jennifer's advice to organizations for avoiding this problem is to support women in technology, pay people equally, and build a diverse workplace. It has proven that doing so gets better results by more accurately reflecting the customer base and ensuring a wider range of experience. I invite the House to join me in congratulating Jennifer MacIntosh on her impressive accomplishments and well-deserved recognition.

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

CORNELL, DONALD: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the lifelong contributions made to Richmond county by Mr. Donald Cornell who passed away on January 29, 2019, at the age of 84. Don served in the Royal Canadian Navy for 10 years and worked in the pulp and paper industry in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland for 25 years. Don was a respected businessman, community leader, former president of InRich, and the original founding charter president of the Louisdale Lions Club. Last year, Don was celebrated as an active member for 50 years. Don worked diligently to lobby the provincial government to transfer to the Lions Club the land upon which their club sits. Although he was not able to see the land transfer come to fruition, he would be thrilled to know that the transfer is finally complete.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

CONRAD, TANYA & LAWRENCE: SON - BIRTH CONGRATS.

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my constituents, Tanya and Lawrence Conrad, on the birth of their fourth child, an adorable baby boy who they proudly named Cole Michael Lawrence Conrad born this past Monday on March 11th. Cole is definitely getting lots of attention not only from his parents and his beautiful three older sisters, but the entire community expressed their congratulations by sending flowers, balloons, and lovely messages. The proud parents have ensured they kept the entire community well informed of the arrival via Facebook. I, as the MLA for Halifax Armdale, would like to congratulate the Conrad family and wish Cole a very happy, healthy life. I also want to take the opportunity to wish all Nova Scotians and, in particular, the Charitable Irish Society of Halifax great celebrations this weekend of the 2019 Festival of St. Patrick.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

BUNGALOW COFFEE: TRAVELLING VENTURE - CONGRATS.

EDDIE ORRELL: I rise today to congratulate Steve and Heather Smith on their new business venture, Bungalow Coffee. Steve has tried coffee around the world while he served in the Navy and started to roast and grind his own coffee in Coxheath. He began to sell his beans and coffee at the local farmers' market and things exploded. He constantly sells out. Steve and Heather now have a vintage camper trailer and, after modifications, Bungalow Coffee is now on the road. Heather provides the homemade treats to complement their coffee. I'd like to take this opportunity to wish Steve and Heather continued success as they take their coffee on the road.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

DALLOUL, HADEEL: UNDERSTANDING THE HIJAB - THANKS

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I'd like to recognize Hadeel Dalloul, a resident of Beechville and teacher at Westmount Elementary School. February 1st marks World Hijab Day, an annual event that was founded by Nazma Khan in 2013 and recognized in 140 countries. The event is designed to encourage women of all religions and backgrounds to experience wearing the hijab or headscarf for a day to help mitigate the discomfort non-Muslims have at the experience. On February 1st, Hadeel celebrated this event and shared with her students and colleagues the reason why Muslim women wear the hijab, the beautiful meaning behind it, and assisted her students and other teachers at the school to experience first-hand wearing a hijab.

I ask the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in thanking Hadeel for sharing and celebrating this important aspect of her culture and for helping to bring understanding and tolerance to cultural diversity by educating and creating a better understanding of the hijab and why Muslim women choose to wear it.

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

**HOMEVILLE WOMEN'S INSTIT.:
HEAD COVERINGS FOR CANCER - CONGRATS.**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the Homeville Women's Institute as they continue to contribute their time to all their surrounding communities. This women's group recently donated their time to make free head coverings for women with cancer.

One of their members, Judy MacLeod, passed away recently from cancer, which initiated this kind gesture. Her memory is living on through a donation of 250 head coverings made with love by the Homeville Women's Institute.

Judy's friend and neighbour, Yvonne Kennedy, approached the group with the idea and the head coverings are now provided for free to women going through cancer treatment.

Mr. Speaker, I stand today to congratulate these amazing ladies for their generous, thoughtful and loving gesture, which makes our beautiful island a great place to live.

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

SOBEYS/AUTISM N.S.: SENSORY-FRIENDLY SHOPPING - THANKS

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to spotlight Sobeys introduction of sensory-friendly shopping time. In partnership with Autism Nova Scotia, all Sobeys stores in Nova Scotia will host sensory-friendly shopping for one hour every other Sunday. To create a calm and quiet experience there will be reduction in lighting, no public announcements, no scanning, no cart collection, and the duty manager will be at the front door for assistance.

Mr. Speaker, the Sobeys and Autism Nova Scotia project will help improve the experience of those with sensory challenges and make grocery shopping a more credible experience. Thank you, Sobeys, for bringing this support to Fall River, as well as to many other communities in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

QUEENS DAYCARE ASSOC.: LOCATION SECURED - CONGRATS.

KIM MASLAND: When the region of Queens Municipality declared the former Mount Pleasant School as surplus, the building's tenants were faced with the daunting task of finding new homes. One of these tenants was the Queens Daycare Association. Members of the association formulated a proposal to acquire ownership of the building. Their proposal was accepted by the region's council, enabling the group to remain in the building, which is, indeed, an ideal location.

I have visited this wonderful facility and had the pleasure of meeting the staff and volunteers who make it possible for the daycare to continue operation. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Queens Daycare Association and the Region of Queens on finding a way to preserve this essential infrastructure for working parents in the community.

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

ST. MARGUERITE BOURGEOYS: LENTEN PANCAKE SUPPER - THANKS

BEN JESSOME: Thank you kindly, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to quickly note the parish and volunteers at St. Marguerite Bourgeoys in Upper Tantallon. I know that many parishes throughout our communities celebrate the commencement of Lent with a pancake supper. St. Nicholas Anglican did one. Vernon's Thunderbird Diner did one.

I'd just like to note, I attended the one at St. Marguerite Bourgeoys, which is my home parish. The Confirmation class for this year was a group of servers who facilitated the evening. I'd like to thank all the volunteers in the kitchen and the parish community for putting on their annual pancake supper.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

PICTOU ADVOCATE: 125TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish and congratulate the hardworking and talented staff at the *Pictou Advocate*, which is celebrating its 125th year of publication. Without their tireless efforts throughout the years, our community could not have been home to this newspaper for five generations.

John D. MacDonald began *The Pictou Advocate* with a second-hand press in 1893. Since that year the paper has been providing the latest news and opinion from the people of Pictou West and beyond. Each week, without fail, *The Pictou Advocate* has been our community voice throughout both negative and positive times.

I am thankful for the tremendous service the paper provides and am most positive it will continue to be a staple in our community for many more decades to come.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much for those member statements. We'll now move on to Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers.

[10:00 a.m.]

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - LOBBYISTS' REGISTRY: RULES - OPENNESS

TIM HOUSTON: Yesterday in the House I asked the Premier a series of questions about the Lobbyists' Registry and the Premier made a great fuss about having been cleared

by the RCMP. Personally, I think the Premier's Office should never be investigated by the RCMP, that should be the standard.

My question for the Premier is: Does the Premier really believe that Nova Scotians having to discover who he met with, and then asking the RCMP for an investigation, is the best way for Nova Scotians to learn who the Premier is being lobbied by?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Just for clarification, the Premier's Office was never investigated by the RCMP. If the honourable member actually followed it instead of looking for a political point, he would recognize they were looking at former Prime Minister Chrétien, not the Premier's Office of Nova Scotia.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier can split hairs all he wants but we know that the RCMP investigated and the Premier met with them. That's not good process.

Nova Scotians need a process that works. In response to many questions, the Premier has indicated that we can't have more scrutiny in the form of a Lobbyists' Registry because of the need for secrecy in getting deals done. The Premier has hinted that if there is even the minimum level of scrutiny, there would be no way this province could negotiate with anyone.

Mr. Speaker, I feel much stronger about the opportunities for this province, than to say something like that. There is a process the feds use. The feds are open to a little bit of scrutiny; the Premier's Office should be as well.

I'd like to ask the Premier: What gets discussed in those meetings that the Premier feels couldn't be discussed if he was working under the same rules as the federal government?

THE PREMIER: In his preamble the honourable member said the Premier is splitting hairs. Let me be frank, the Premier is being truthful, stating the facts as they exist. It may not matter to the honourable member when he stands in his place to be accurate and factual, but it actually matters to me.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier had to meet with the RCMP over a meeting that he conducted. It is entertaining to hear the Premier speak of himself in the third party, but we know that third person.

The Premier often says that the lobbyist rules are working. They may be working for the Premier, but they are not working for any Nova Scotian who is trying to find out a basic level of information.

Government should not be afraid to operate in the open. The Premier says he's worried about being scooped by other provinces, but really, if we are the best place for a deal to happen, then we are the best place for a deal to happen.

Does the Premier feel that Nova Scotia needs to have weak lobbying rules in order to be competitive?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As he would know, our population is at an all-time high; more young Nova Scotians are choosing to live in this province and stay here. We're seeing an amount of investments from global companies.

I want to tell you, yesterday 80 young Nova Scotians, 80 Grade 8 students in Nova Scotia, were grateful for the fact that I took a meeting with IBM, that I made sure that Nova Scotia was the only Canadian jurisdiction that IBM invested in, to provide them with not only a good education next year, but a job six years from now in this province.

You are right, I did not want to be scooped by Ontario or Quebec, I wanted to make sure that it happened in our province. That's why we're leading the country and we'll continue to do so.

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

PREM. - ER DEPTS.: PATIENT FLOW - CRISIS ADDRESS

GARY BURRILL: The night before last, nurses at the QEII emergency department were calling on the hospital to declare a state of alert that is usually reserved for incidents where there are mass casualties. At one point over the night, there were ninety-nine patients in the department with just three doctors on rotation, and three fewer RNs than required.

By 4:00 a.m. yesterday morning, forty-two patients had left the emergency department without being seen by a doctor.

Mr. Speaker, when is the Premier going to see the need to open new nursing home beds, get alternate level of care patients into the facilities where they need to go, take the pressure off hospitals, and restore some sanity to patient flow?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Yesterday he would know, through the Health Committee, that we're very proud of the fact that we are the first government in the history of our province to actually put the health community together - that was televised so Nova Scotians could watch, from one end of the province to the other. EHS recognized and came in and talked about some of the challenges. They also recognized that the Minister of Health and Wellness sent a directive

that they believe they'll see some substantive changes in the coming months that will improve the very thing he's talking about - patient flow.

I also want to say to the honourable member, we're doubling long-term care beds in New Waterford and in Northside. The very initiatives that we're talking about, that the honourable member is opposed to . . . (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: It's Friday morning - everyone is pretty excited in here.

The fact of the matter is, we'll continue to make sure that we provide long-term care beds and I look forward to the honourable member's support as we continue to do that, and at the same time the investments that we make in home care, which is providing more options for people to stay at home. I look forward to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board tabling her budget on March 26th so we can actually make sure that we continue to make those improvements.

GARY BURRILL: The Premier speaks about what was learned from the Health Committee meeting yesterday. One of the things learned there was that the number of the five busiest hospitals in Nova Scotia that are today meeting the 20-minute ambulance off-load standard is exactly zero.

We also know that the alternate level of care patients in Nova Scotia - those waiting in hospital for placement in a nursing home - are doing so in our province six times longer than is the average for alternate level of care placement in any other province in the country - and I will table the source of that startling statistic.

Will the Premier acknowledge, as medical professionals across the province are daily acknowledging, that a big part of the present patient flow crisis is being caused by how many people are being stuck for so long waiting in hospital to get into a nursing home?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, he refers to the meeting yesterday. I want to remind the honourable member that we're the first Party in the history of this province to actually put a Health Committee together. He would also know, if he was listening to that committee, that the off-load issue that he's referring to . . . (Interruptions) The member for Northside-Westmount will get a chance to stand up if the Leader lets him.

The fact of the matter is that if he was listening to that committee yesterday, it was said that this issue has been around since 2006-07. We recognize this is a serious issue. The minister went forward and put together the Health Committee. He would also know, if he was listening yesterday, that even the union said yesterday that they are cautiously optimistic about the direction that went forward.

I would hope the honourable member, as he stands here in his place - and I hear the member for Cape Breton Centre is yelling at me. I listened to her Leader speak and I would respect if she would give me an opportunity to actually answer the question.

The fact of the matter is that she stood in her place, and so has her Leader, complaining about long-term care beds. We're doubling those in her community. I wish she would stand up and support it, like health care providers will.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, who we are listening to in this part of the House are the front-line health care providers who are providing all the emphasis about the existence of the crisis in the province - some of whom speak about how the night before last at the QEII emergency department there were seven critically ill patients, each of whom required one-on-one nursing, but there were only four RNs available on duty. They speak about how people worked straight through their 12-hour shifts all night without breaks and without food as they tried to bring some coherent shape to the crisis in the emergency department.

The NSHA has been relying on nurses working overtime to staff our hospitals, but filling shifts has become difficult since the Health Authority became more restrictive about paying nurses overtime rates for extra shifts. I want to ask the Premier: Why doesn't the NSHA simply hire the nurses that are needed, instead of subjecting the ones that we have to these untenable working conditions and chiseling them out of their overtime while they're at it?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that anyone in the health care profession, including the nurses who work overtime, get paid overtime. The fact of the matter is . . . (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: The fact of the matter is, if you work overtime in the health care system, you are paid for that overtime. The issue the honourable member brings to the floor of the Legislature is an important issue. It's why the Minister of Health and Wellness continues to make sure that we continue to invest in nurse practitioners, continue to invest in our colleges - particularly around providing more nurses in the province. It's why we continue to hire our graduates and continue to deal with the very issue he was talking about.

We recognize that there is more work to do. I look forward to continuing to work with the Minister of Health and Wellness and all of our partners to ensure that we make sure we have the right complement of health care providers in all of our communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

PREM.: C.B. OPHTHALMOLOGISTS - SHORTAGE

EDDIE ORRELL: I guess the Premier wants questions today, so I'll ask my question of the Premier instead of the Minister of Health and Wellness.

As I noted earlier this week, the exodus of ophthalmologists from Cape Breton is hitting a fevered pitch. I'm hearing now from constituents who require ongoing glaucoma treatment and are getting very anxious. They can't afford or are unable to travel to Halifax for follow-ups with an ophthalmologist, and they aren't covered if they need to see their local optometrist for treatment. The situation is worsening very quickly, and his government doesn't have any answers.

My question to the Premier is: How confident is he that their government will be able to recruit enough ophthalmologists to Cape Breton to keep glaucoma patients from paying out of pocket or leaving the island for treatment?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm very confident. I'm more confident in the fact that we can do that than the honourable member is in his own Leader. If he wanted to stand up in his place, go ahead. I'm very confident. The Minister of Health and Wellness will work with all of our partners to deliver health care not only on Cape Breton island but across our communities.

EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, that's all fine and good, but my understanding is that the minister's department has had a letter sitting on his desk for four years with respect to this situation - four years. It shouldn't be a surprise to this government - or are they just waking up to the fact that there's a crisis in health care? It's well past time for the Premier and the minister to take some decisive action instead of blaming retirements on a crisis situation. This letter allows optometrists and ophthalmologists to work together to help ease the pain and burden on people with glaucoma.

My question to the Premier is: Will he commit to having his government react to this letter in a timely manner so that people in Cape Breton can receive the glaucoma treatment they need and deserve?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'll be happy to look at that letter and respond to it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MUN. AFFS. - CLIMATE CHANGE: MUN. FUNDING - COMMIT

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The IPCC report says we need more ambitious action on climate change from every level of government. Here in Nova Scotia, municipalities have been doing their best

to be leaders on climate change. Bridgewater is a great example. But municipal leaders say they need more support from the province.

The federal government has made millions of dollars available to municipalities for action on climate change, but many of them don't even have the resources to get the applications done. Opportunity is passing us by when we need action now.

Can the minister tell us that the upcoming budget will include significant dedicated funds so that our municipalities can generate more clean energy, create green jobs, and reduce carbon emissions?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, we realize across this province and right across the world about climate change. We're seeing the effects of those through the changing weather patterns, the intense storms, and the sea-level rise.

Our Departments of Municipal Affairs, Environment, and Energy and Mines have been working together with our municipal partners right across this province to better understand the impacts of this and to identify strategies that we can adapt and help make changes as we need to.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, the minister's answer is disappointing, especially today, when high school students across the province are joining others around the world to protest the lack of government action on climate change.

We need to be making serious specific investments now. The Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities has an ask on his desk that would go a long way to supporting local action on climate change. They are asking for just \$63,000 from the province to help fund a staff position focused on sustainability, and that staff person would ensure that municipalities outside the Halifax area can access federal money.

Will the minister, at the very least, commit to funding that position to help Nova Scotia municipalities take action on climate change?

CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for her question. We already offer a number of programs that municipalities can access. We have examples - flood-risk infrastructure programs, the federal program that is a natural disaster mitigation program. We continue to work on those.

I'm always open to having conversations with our partners about how we can do better around climate change. It's something that this government continues to work on.

[10:15 a.m.]

She mentioned the upcoming budget - we're quite looking forward to that and further improving jobs in the economy and the great things we're doing in the Province of Nova Scotia.

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

AGRIC. - FROST LOST PROG.: DELAYED RESP. - EXPLAIN

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, on February 25th, the Minister of Agriculture announced a \$16.7 million frost lost program. The announcement comes over eight months after a devastating frost that cost the agriculture sector over \$34 million. This program's deadline is today, March 15th, which provides just over three weeks for applicants to gather the information needed to complete an application. Many have said that they've only found out about this last week.

Why did it take eight months for the minister to respond to the needs of the agriculture sector when he knew about this problem and the losses they suffered last year?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: It's a very important question and, indeed, it took a long time for the industry and for our staff to evaluate the proper damage that was done by the severe frost and freeze and was a very short window to apply. We've had a lot of applications and we're working with them. As far as the notifications been, we notified the Federation of Agriculture. They notified all their members. We notified all the farming communities, so someone who only found out last week either didn't read their e-mails or didn't watch what was going on.

ALANA PAON: Perhaps many of those farmers haven't read their e-mails because there's not enough cellular coverage and Internet coverage in rural Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker.

A FOIPOP obtained by our caucus reveals that the minister was briefed on the extent of the loses as early as June 6th. Briefings were received regularly from Perennia Innovation Centre from June onward. However, the minister waited until the 11th hour of this fiscal year to announce a program that could have alleviated significant burden on applicants eight months ago.

We hear anecdotal information that there is a large number of applicants, many requiring additional information. Will the frost-loss program be extended for applicants who - through no fault of their own - have submitted applications that are incomplete, require clarification, or are struggling to meet a last-minute announcement deadline.

KEITH COLWELL: Any application that's in the process, complete or not complete, will be completed. As long as we have that information by the end of the year, they will fit into the program as long as they qualify.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

TIR - RAINBOW BRIDGE (HWY 102): TENDER AWARD - DATE

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. On December 8th, 2017, the Rainbow Bridge on Highway No. 102 in Nappan was closed when two main chord members failed and the bridge began to sag. Shortly after that, it was determined that the bridge was no longer sound enough to carry traffic. Last summer, the span was removed.

Tenders closed this past Wednesday, March 13th, for a new structure. My question for the minister is: I know it was only two days ago, but can the minister inform this House of when that tender may be awarded?

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased for the member to bring this matter forward. We are moving with intent on that major bridge replacement and we would expect that that will be awarded before the end of this current month.

TORY RUSHTON: The tender states the contract must be completed by October 31st to avoid penalty. Residents who travel this area from Springhill to Amherst or vice versa have had to wait 15 months. It's been a major inconvenience and the regional hospital is on the other side of that bridge from my constituency.

My question is to the minister: Can we expect work to continue this summer to have this bridge replaced, and will the minister come with me to cut the ribbon and name that bridge as what the community called for - the Roger Bacon Bridge?

LLOYD HINES: I would be more than happy to accompany the member and will take that recommendation under consideration.

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

H&W: STRAIT RICHMOND SHORTAGES - ADDRESS

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, the Strait Richmond Hospital is in dire straits when it comes to coverage in the emergency department. ER closures are skyrocketing in my area. We have no ER physician listed on the NSHA job site online and that's for the Strait Richmond Hospital and for St. Anne Community and Nursing Care Centre. Instead, we're borrowing local doctors from other parts of Cape Breton and the mainland and, with shortages everywhere, there are often none to be found. For my attempts to get answers

from the NSHA on how they intend to bridge this gap in a sustainable way, I have received no concrete action plan

Mr. Speaker, if local doctors are not willing to take these shifts and there are none in the bank to borrow from elsewhere, what does the minister expect my constituents to do for emergency care?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: As the members of the Legislature would know, emergency care delivery is something we take very seriously. This is an area that we, along with our partners - the Nova Scotia Health Authority, as well as the EHS system - have been working diligently on evaluating and coming up with processes to improve the situation.

The steps we're taking, Mr. Speaker include investing in recruitment initiatives, locum coverage to bring in temporary physicians to cover those shifts. We've seen many shifts covered across the province since we've made changes to these programs in the Fall.

We'll continue to listen to front-line health care workers to make changes going forward.

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, the strategy that the Health Authority is pursuing to shore up emergency medicine in my area is not sustainable. It's not working. The NSHA's own recruitment criteria for family physicians lists emergency medicine as an optional service. So not only are we facing a shortage of emergency medicine physicians, but those we're calling on to urgently fill the gap don't necessarily need to be emergency medicine specialists.

Will the minister please look into the clear deficiency in the way that the NSHA plans to recruit and retain emergency physicians at the Strait Richmond Hospital and at St. Anne?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, the member noted exactly what the NSHA's recruitment initiative is, as we've talked about since my time in office: focus on recruiting primary care physicians to communities across the province. That work is part of strengthening our access to primary care, which helps keep people out of emergency departments when the primary care needs are being met. That has been a focus of the NSHA and of this government.

For the last four months, we have seen fewer Nova Scotians registering as needing access to a primary care physician. That is showing that the initiatives we have been putting in place are working.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

ENVIRON. - SIPEKNE'KATIK APPEAL: ALTON GAS PROJECT - DELAY

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment. On Tuesday this government told the Supreme Court that it has, and I quote, "no position" on whether the police should be directed to remove the Sipekne'katik water protectors from their Treaty Truck House where they are protesting the Alton Gas project. I'll table that.

It is disappointing to see our government try to wash its hands of a situation that it is responsible for creating. We have been waiting a year for the minister to issue her decision on the Sipekne'katik appeal of the project's approval.

Why is the minister allowing work on the project to proceed and create conflict while we wait for her decision?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: I thank the honourable member for this question. Certainly we have been involved with the Alton Gas project. We have a valid environmental assessment that has gone forward. They also have an industrial approval with terms and conditions on their approval. Our staff monitor that approval.

The issue with Sipekne'katik and the Alton Gas site is an issue between a private landowner and law enforcement. It's not something that the department needs to be involved with.

SUSAN LEBLANC: The minister had the option of putting a pause on the project until the appeal process is resolved, but she did not. She is allowing the work to continue even though the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia directed her two years ago to make a decision on the appeal.

When a First Nation appeals a project approval but the government allows that project to move forward anyway, I'd say that that flies in the face of reconciliation.

Will the minister acknowledge that by failing to make a decision on the appeal and allowing the work to continue, she is increasing the tensions between Alton Gas and Mi'kmaq water protectors?

MARGARET MILLER: I thank you for that. I am well aware that there is still an appeal that can come forward. That decision is not ready to be made yet. When I feel confident that we have all the information we need and I can make that decision, I will.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

**MUN. AFFAIRS - PORT HOOD ISLAND WHARF:
PROV. FUNDING - CONFIRM**

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. It was almost a couple of weeks ago that I looked at a copy of the *Inverness Oran*. On the cover I read that the municipality was offering \$750,000, I think it was, for the repair and reconstruction of a wharf on Port Hood Island. In the story they indicated that the municipality had made their contribution and they were waiting to hear from the province and the federal government that would suggest that an application had been made to the province.

Can the minister confirm if the municipality actually applied for provincial infrastructure funding on behalf of Port Hood Island residents and others who use that wharf?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: The application or the issue that the member has raised I'm not familiar with, so I can't confirm at this moment, but I'm not familiar and don't recall ever seeing any such application.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Thank you. I wonder if the minister can confirm if individuals or community organizations can apply for this type of funding from his department or if the program is only open to municipalities that may apply on behalf of their residents.

CHUCK PORTER: The application process is generally driven by municipalities that set their priorities, regardless of what they may be.

Specific to wharves, just for the honourable member's and others' information, I don't believe there is a program specific to wharves that currently exists at this time. There may be in the future, but I don't believe there is anything currently available.

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

EECD - RURAL SCH. FACILITIES: MAINT. CHECKS - ENSURE

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

The Halifax Regional Centre for Education is the public-school district responsible for all the elementary, junior high, and senior high schools located in the Halifax Regional Municipality. In December a constituent called the HRCE to report an issue located near the Upper Musquodoboit Consolidated Elementary School. The response was: We have the school in Middle Musquodoboit, but not one in Upper Musquodoboit - is that the one you are referring to? Anyway, it was a surprise response.

My question for the minister is: Are inventory controls regularly reviewed and updated and are the new hires required to learn about the inventory that their department is responsible for?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

LARRY HARRISON: Oh, that was quick. Now the issue itself is not that important. There was runoff water from a ditching failure at the school and it was fixed pretty quickly. I'm just concerned rural facilities are not given the same attention, I guess, as some others.

Now that the schools are the direct responsibility of the department, can the minister tell the House what preventative measures and procedures are in place to ensure that maintenance checks are being conducted on a regular basis?

ZACH CHURCHILL: There are ongoing maintenance checks and there is ongoing cataloguing of maintenance needs and major capital needs. Each year, the regions will compile an operational list of their biggest capital and maintenance priorities and submit that list to the department for consideration. Our ability to respond to those pressures are based on our financial capacity to do so. We do our very best with the money we have to tackle the greatest and most significant needs in the system, each and every year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

PREM. - HWY 104 TOLLS: REMOVAL IN 2019 - HONOUR

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, in 1995 the Highway No. 104 Western Alignment Act was established. It is an Act to provide for financing, construction, and operation of the western alignment of Highway No. 104, otherwise known as the Cobequid Pass.

In the act it states in Section 13.2, "Tolls shall cease to be imposed or collected in respect of the Western Alignment when all costs and liabilities relating thereto . . . have been paid."

In honour of the late Honourable Ron Russell, laid to rest this week, I'd like to table a document dated December 18, 2003, signed by late Mr. Russell that states: Excess cash is to be used to reduce the corporation debt by pre-payment of the bonds.

Because of the Hamm Government, the debt and liabilities are scheduled to be paid off in full in 2019. My question to the Premier is: Will he honour the Highway No. 104 Western Alignment Act and honour the great people of Colchester and Cumberland Counties and remove the tolls in 2019?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this issue has been raised in the House a number of times. We continue to work with our partners to ensure we continue that piece of highway.

I am looking forward to the new P3 highway that is going be the rest of Highway No. 104 that's dealing with the Barney's River portion that's going to be an important part.

Like every decision, we as a government will continue to review them and we will, by all means, tell not only her but all those in Cumberland and Colchester counties, and all Nova Scotians who travel those highways, if and when those tolls are to be removed.

[10:30 a.m.]

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, we would like the Premier to honour the Act which states that the tolls should cease and be removed once the debt is paid. According to the financial documents - which I'll table - the debt and liabilities are scheduled to be paid off in 2019.

I would like the Premier to give his word and do this, and I'm asking if he is willing to give his word today to the people of Colchester and Cumberland Counties to remove the tolls this year.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to reviewing the document she laid, which I've seen many times. I want to tell her we'll continue to follow this process. We'll continue to do what is in the best interest of the motoring public in the Province of Nova Scotia. Any decision that we make will be about how we continue to invest, and I'm sure she'll be happy to recognize when the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board stands up on Tuesday the 26th, we've delivered our fourth balanced budget with the investments that we continue to make. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal stood up yesterday and talked about the major investments we're making in highways and I want to assure the honourable member that Cumberland and Colchester Counties will be an important part as we continue to make those investments.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

FISH. & AQUA. - COOKE AQUA.: COFFIN ISLAND - CONCERNS

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Residents in Queens-Shelburne continue to have concerns about the operations of Cooke Aquaculture. On February the 28th, truckloads of fish were removed from the Coffin Island site in Liverpool. On March 14th at 8:41 p.m. Cooke Aquaculture sent an email stating their staff are removing deceased salmon this week from the site in Liverpool - and I'll table that.

I'd like to ask the minister: When was his department notified of the latest fish kill at the Coffin Island site?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: We're aware of that situation and we continue to investigate it, and our vets were on site recently.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question was: When was the department made aware of that fish kill?

This isn't the first time Cooke Aquaculture has experienced significant mortality events in Queens-Shelburne. Cooke Aquaculture has now made applications for two new sites in our beautiful Liverpool Bay and an expansion of the Coffin Island site. Many constituents are concerned, even though the minister talks of greater transparency in the process.

Now that the application has been made, and the department will conduct its technical review, will the minister commit to releasing all of that information to residents of Queens-Shelburne?

KEITH COLWELL: Thank you very much for the question. We have a complete regulatory process in place around aquaculture sites. It's very rigid now. The companies have reporting responsibilities, which they did do to the community this time. This mortality is not a kill, it's a mortality - a weather event - and we're investigating that.

As far as information around the applications are concerned, there's a whole process around that. That will go to an independent review panel to review all that information. It's the responsibility of the company to make sure that information is provided, and the community will have a chance to have input at that point.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

BUS.: GREEN JOBS - STRATEGY

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Business. Nova Scotia needs green jobs. We need a plan to get a clean economy. Tens, if not hundreds of thousands of students will be marching at noon today to demand that, but I don't see any evidence that this government has a plan.

For six years, our employment growth has been sluggish compared to the rest of the country; our incomes are stagnant while prices are going up; outside of Halifax, we're losing jobs - almost 9,000 of them since 2013; oil and gas jobs have disappeared since 2012 - and while there may be a few small booms left in the industry, the outlooks say it's mostly a bust. Nova Scotia needs a plan - a green jobs plan.

Can the minister tell this House why he has no comprehensive strategy to create the thousands of good, green jobs we need here in Nova Scotia?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. It certainly is part of the mix, part of the conversations around green jobs. The new economy is built on renewable energies, the infrastructure, and the systems that will be required to sustain that infrastructure. There have been 1,400 jobs associated with the green economy thus far across the province which we'll certainly see grow exponentially over the next number of years, because it has to.

Nova Scotia is going to be a leader. We're a leader in the reduction of GHGs. We're going to be a leader in the green economy as well, doing it smart, prudently and making sure that we're hiring people and we're providing energy that's in the best interest of the province.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer, but with respect, being part of the mix is not enough. This government has had six years to make a real impact, but we have not made significant progress on the major challenges facing Nova Scotians.

I'm sure the minister will argue that there isn't a silver bullet to create good jobs, vitalize rural communities, cut emissions, and make our communities cleaner and healthier. But there actually is. It's major public investment with a clear strategy and a triple bottom line return on investment that is democratic and invites participation from all over the province.

That's what a green jobs plan is, but since this government doesn't have one, I'd like to know: Can the minister tell us when we will see a comprehensive green jobs plan or will we let Nova Scotians continue to fall behind as the world economy moves on without us?

GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I would respectfully disagree. I think we are leaders. We're leaders in the development of the green sector. I think that to the member's point, everything that we do in terms of government investment - the green economy renewables, how we grow the new age of energy is part of the mix. Every investment is connected to the new direction that we're heading.

We're creating jobs with a \$700 million capital plan. We're building a leading broadband program that exists nowhere else, which will provide access for rural Nova Scotians to participate in the new green economy.

Unemployment is at an all-time low, where we are now, and of course, we're going to continue to make good decisions, make smart investments, continue to support the tourism sector, and the list keeps going, but I've got to sit down.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

H&W - PHARMACARE FORMULARY: GENERICS - RISK

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. All members of this Legislature deal from time to time with issues surrounding the Pharmacare formulary. I have visits from constituents that were impacted upon turning 65 and having medications substituted to fall in line with the formulary.

Recently we experienced a case where an individual finally found meds to bring his diabetes under control. His physician was pleased, but this individual turned 65 and this medication is not on the formulary.

The question to the minister is: Does the minister recognize that switching prescriptions like this isn't just an inconvenience, it is often risky?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this question to the floor on behalf of his constituent. I don't have specific details, but certainly we can connect on a specific case if he has one. In generalities, how our Pharmacare Program works, it does have a formulary that covers prescription drugs.

As far as clinical concerns, when it comes to most pharmaceutical drugs, there are generic versions. They are essentially the same drugs, but at a much cheaper rate. Those are often what are given preference on our formulary, to ensure that we can provide more coverage to more Nova Scotians at an affordable rate, while providing and meeting the same clinical requirements for patients.

PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my office is aware of the special exceptions process, and my constituent followed it. Nevertheless, it took almost a full year before his needs were recognized and his medications were covered. During this year period, however, he paid the money from his pocket to remain on this medication. Not everyone has that option.

My question to the minister: We are aware of the extraordinary costs involved with this Pharmacare Program, however, in situations like this, how does the minister justify short-term savings against the risk posed by the substitute medications?

RANDY DELOREY: As the member noted, the Pharmacare Program does provide for consideration for pharmaceutical coverage that is clinically necessary that may not fall under our standard formulary. That process does exist to take into account situations like the member has highlighted.

In general terms, Mr. Speaker, we do have a formulary providing coverage for Nova Scotians with a number of different Pharmacare Programs, including the Seniors'

Pharmacare Program and the Family Pharmacare Program that Nova Scotians are eligible to apply for and receive drug coverage.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

ENERGY & MINES: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE - INVOLVEMENT

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I'll ask my first question to the Minister of Energy and Mines. I think we all put more of an emphasis on doing the green thing than we have in the past. We tend to make more efficient decisions, from recycling cans and bottles to driving cars with better gas mileage.

Some in my community have been asking how government makes decisions about greening of new infrastructure. As government plans and executes new construction in our communities, how does the minister's department get involved to ensure that these new buildings have all the green technologies that we can afford?

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'd like to thank the member for the question and some conversations we'd had of late in projects in his constituency. We have a number of programs we offer through the department to support Nova Scotians that employ hundreds of Nova Scotians around the province.

Specific to his request, the program we offer is the Low Carbon Communities Program. This is an opportunity for communities across the province to apply for projects, whether it is for infrastructure or whether it is for connecting communities or it's with our Mi'kmaq communities with solar projects. This is really the fund we use to support those projects.

If there is a project coming forward that the member or any member of the House wants to talk about, we are happy to do it.

CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: I'll switch over to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, but I do want to thank the Minister of Energy and Mines for that answer.

We are getting a new school in the community of Wedgeport and, of course, I want to thank the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for that. I've got a lot of questions lately about the greening of École Wedgeport and I've forwarded a number of these requests to the minister, so I'll ask.

I don't know which minister, you guys can decide what you want to do there. How will the minister's department be aiding the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development with the green initiatives for the École Wedgeport project?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Once the site selection process is completed, the community will be engaged in that process in a number of ways. We will head to a design consultation phase where the community can provide input to the design and the framing of the tender for the build. Part of that will be green, it will have green components as part of that competitive bidding process. That will be something we do evaluate, take into consideration, when we eventually provide you the award for that tender.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments. All it took to get a school in Wedgeport finally was a Liberal government, and I appreciate him recognizing that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

EECD - PICTOU W.: PRE-PRIMARY PROG. - IMPLEMENT

KARLA MACFARLANE: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Pictou West is one of the very few constituencies in the Province of Nova Scotia that has been overlooked with regard to the pre-Primary program. I've stated before in this Chamber that the rollout of this program was rushed and unfair.

It has been sold as a universal program, but not every child in Nova Scotia is getting the same start to their education, unfortunately. Mr. Speaker, you are four years old only once. So, if you are not offered the program when you are four, then you are falling behind the other four-year-olds in the province.

My question to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is: When will he be implementing a pre-Primary program in Pictou West?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I am continually amazed by the Progressive Conservative position on pre-Primary. First, the Party votes against it. The Leader of the Official Opposition said that if his Party was in government that there would not be a pre-Primary program. The members opposite continually attack the program, say it's rushed, that we're moving too quickly. Then in another breath, Mr. Speaker, they ask us to move even quicker.

[10:45 a.m.]

The application and rollout of pre-Primary has been year over year. We have been ambitious. We have utilized the EDI information. It's been needs based. The communities that have child care deserts, where we know the needs of the students are high - we go into those communities first. We're at about half coverage right now, about 50 per cent, and over the course of our mandate, we will reach 100 per cent access to every single student and family in this province.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, we were never against the program. We were against the fact. . .(Interruption) No, we were against the fact that not every child was going to have the opportunity to start the program at the same time. I like your program.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Pictou West has the floor.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Starting Blocks Day Care & Preschool in Pictou West has been operating for 25 years, employing six full-time teachers. Their facility currently meets the requirements for the pre-Primary program, unlike many of the actual schools that it's been introduced in. I'm aware of pilot programs happening at daycare facilities. I actually wrote the minister requesting a visit, to come to Pictou and have a look at the Starting Blocks Day Care & Preschool facility. I will table that letter, but I have not received a response.

I would like to ask the minister if he will confirm today in the House that he will make arrangements to come to Pictou. I know he has stood up my colleagues for Pictou Centre and Pictou East, but I'm hoping that he will come to Pictou and have a visit at the Starting Blocks Day Care & Preschool with me to determine if this is a good location.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the record is very clear on the members opposite. It's recorded in this House. Their votes, their comments on pre-Primary, and the comments of Leader of the Official Opposition, saying that if he was in government, there would not be a pre-Primary program, are a matter of the public record and not to be debated in this House.

What I will tell the member is, despite the lack of ambition. . .(Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has the floor.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Despite the lack of ambition that the Progressive Conservatives have for four-year-olds, for young people in this province, which I think is indicative of the lack of ambition for this province, we will move forward and make sure that every single four-year-old has access to this program - including four-year-olds of Pictou County, despite what the position of those members has been.

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

TIR - SYD. RIVER-MIRA-LOUISBOURG: ROAD CONDITIONS - ADDRESS

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, heading into a long weekend, I can't imagine why everybody is so testy.

THE SPEAKER: Are you sure your seatmate doesn't have a question?

ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. I would like to start off first by thanking the minister for a tender that was issued earlier this week for some roads in my constituency. I've heard back from a number of people who are going to be affected by those tenders, and they're quite pleased about it being called. (Applause) But I've also heard from a number of other residents on other roads who are wondering when their turn is going to come.

I'm just wondering if the minister would give some consideration to the Front Lake Road, Caribou Marsh Road, the Morrison Road, and the Birch Grove Road. Those are roads that are being impacted by poor road conditions, and I would even be willing to take the minister on another drive, if that would help.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. Any time I get to visit the beautiful riding that he represents, I really enjoy it. I spent some time there.

I appreciate his kind comments about the 15 kilometres of paving that are in tender for that particular riding - one of the largest, lengthy, longest paving projects that we have for this year.

In terms of the list of roads that he has suggested, those are all good candidates, as are many good-candidate roads across the province. We have a very scientific process for determining where the money is spent. I am absolutely shocked that he has not mentioned the New Boston Road.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. 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, would you please call the order of business, Public Bills for Third Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 84.

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

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

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I now move that Bill No. 84, the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary Appreciation Act, now be read a third time and do pass.

Nova Scotians who volunteer for the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary are being recognized for their valuable support for marine search and rescue operations. The auxiliary provides valuable support for the commercial fishery year-round and for pleasure craft in the summer.

Nova Scotians appreciate the selfless contributions made by search and rescue volunteers on land and on the sea. This well-deserved recognition will help to retain and recruit volunteer members of this valuable service in their communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Again, I just want to stand in my place. I know it took a number of years to get to this place to be able to pass this bill. I'm glad that the Liberal Government has finally realized that these tremendous women and men, who selflessly go out and protect those on the water are going to be recognized.

Again, this side of the government, the PC caucus, supports this bill and we're looking forward to it being implemented as soon as possible.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to voice the NDP caucus' support for this bill. I thank the member for Pictou West for bringing it forward originally in this House and to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board for bringing it to its completion here today. As I have said before in this House, Dartmouth South has a long history of Coast Guard activity and Coast Guard families and now the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

I think anything we can do to support those folks who keep us safe and continue to fill vital roles, we are all for, so we support that bill. With those few words I will take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker. I now move that Bill No. 90 . . .

THE SPEAKER: No, we're still on Bill No. 84. You are excited for March break.

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

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you to my colleague here for giving me time to speak. I do want to close debate on Bill No. 84.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 84. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 90.

Bill No. 90 - Boxing Authority Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, it truly is Friday morning. I now move that Bill No. 90 be read a third time and do pass.

This bill is really to modernize the Boxing Authority Act. Combat sports, of course, have become part of what they now govern. It really brings our Boxing Authority Act in line with Canadian standards, especially as it applies to the medical issues around boxing and combat sports.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 90. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 91.

Bill No. 91 - Nova Scotia Museum Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I move that Bill No. 91 be read a third time and do pass.

Of course, the Museum Act had not been updated for about 30 years and this gives an opportunity for a new governance model, also opportunities for fundraising, and really a revitalization of our museum system. I think this legislation will start to move us in that direction.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'm just going to quickly say a couple of words about this bill. I understand it is mostly a housekeeping bill as well. I wanted to briefly talk about the importance of museums once again to our culture here in Nova Scotia, to the people, for education purposes, for learning about the people who live and began this province and who then came to this province and the people who are making things in this province.

I also do want to reiterate my comment from second reading, which is that in England all national museums are free of charge. I think that if we can improve access as much as possible to all of our cultural institutions, including museums, art galleries, theatre, anything that is artistic, I think we should move in that direction.

I just want to put that on the record and hope that we can move towards that.

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

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I thank my colleague opposite for her comments on this bill and I now move that we close debate on Bill No. 91.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 91. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 95.

Bill No. 95 - Emergency “911” Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: I now move that Bill No. 95 be read a third and final time and do pass.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, as we’ve shared in previous discussions on this bill, we do support the amendment to the Emergency “911” Act. However, we do want to make sure that it’s on the record that we believe the minister should be looking at the fund. If there is excess money, the first steps should really be to change the fees, to lower the fees so they are adjusted to match the actual costs of the 911 service.

We don’t support the government building a slush fund on the backs of the taxpayers of this province. We are making a suggestion that the \$8 million slush fund that has been accumulated be used for ensuring that all Nova Scotians do actually have access to a 911 service; in particular, cellphone coverage. Every cellphone in the province is paying 43 cents a month for 911 service, yet depending on where you are in the province, especially across rural Nova Scotia, some cellphones are not able to access the 911 service.

With those comments, I’ll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, just to briefly comment, certainly the 911 service and system is very important, and we need to ensure that it is working well across the province. I welcome the government’s attention to it because we know that in an era of greater climate extremes, more frequent, and more extreme weather events, we will be needing to respond well to emergencies, unfortunately, more frequently. So I think it is very important that the government be paying attention to EMO, to 911, to all of the human infrastructure as well as the systems and relationships that enable us to respond in this small province.

[11:00 a.m.]

I just want to briefly comment on the use of my colleague’s term “slush fund.” What we are talking about are government revenues, and government revenues are a part of government. When we pay taxes, we contribute to government revenues. We use those revenues to provide the services that we cannot provide for ourselves as individuals.

Certainly, through the Auditor General, through the Budget Estimates process, we want to ensure that those revenues are being spent well, but I think it's a dangerous slope to go down when we start referring to government revenues as a slush fund.

I don't think anybody is dipping into that slush fund for any purpose that is nefarious. Perhaps it's a source of revenues that we can look at reinvesting? Yes, absolutely, but let's call it what it is, which are revenues, and ensure that we are working together to make the best investment with those funds that are available to us.

THE SPEAKER: Just for the record, the term, "slush fund" is an unparliamentary term, but also the context of the use of any term is up to the discretion of the Speaker, and I did not interpret there to be any undue context around the use. Just for purposes of clarity.

The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: I find it interesting when I listen to my colleagues from the NDP when they are here defending the Liberals - I find that difficult to believe in this particular case.

Mr. Speaker, I think what we in the Official Opposition tend to believe in this issue is that the funds that are received through a tax on those individuals who have a phone - a cellphone or a landline phone - that charge, which was originally intended to be used only for the 911 system, for the money required to operate that system - we find out now that, of course, because of the proliferation of cellphones, many more people are paying this small tax. It's not a very big tax, but we are taking in hundreds of thousands of dollars a year that are not being put into the 911 system. It is a 911 system tax or surcharge, whatever we want to call it.

It goes into a fund at this point. It has been sitting there for a bit of time. I don't know the exact amount of time that it has been accruing, but it has been there for some time. We want to make sure that those dollars are used to either improve the 911 system or support the expansion of the 911 system.

I think it would be very unfortunate to see that the charge either stays the same and the dollars go to a bunch of different things that the minister feels are important when they are not necessarily 911-related.

If they are emergency-related, well, maybe, because they do have some kind of tie-in to the 911 system, but if they end up going to what should be a - what was the original program called? I forget now - the Emergency Services Provider Fund. If it becomes the Emergency Services Provider Fund, I think that's not the correct way to do it.

I think we need to create a real Emergency Services Provider Fund, fund it correctly, and take the 911 charges and use them appropriately on the expansion and

maintenance of that system, and not create what my colleague talked about of just a fund where the minister has full discretion or the government has full discretion to spend it in whichever way that it feels.

If we use the wrong word in this one it is because of previous Liberal funds that were used at their own discretion for different reasons. If it's an unparliamentary word, I will stay away from that word, but we all know what it is called when snow and ice get a little watery.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: I'll make a couple of quick comments in closing, Mr. Speaker. First, thank you to all of the members who have commented on this bill; I appreciate that.

To the honourable member for Argyle-Barrington, with a very definitive way of describing something else, so I too will clarify just a couple of points and definitions - one being it is not a tax. There is a true definition of a tax. It is a fee that is collected. And believe it or not there are legal definitions of both. This is indeed a fee. So, I felt it necessary to certainly clarify that.

This is not about some fund just to be clear. This is very much about things as the honourable member for Halifax Needham has mentioned. This is about what's coming, the climate change issues that we are having. Government is reacting to that. We know we have the ability there. We will look at all things that come in. All members across this House will be looking at how they can look at their constituencies and maybe look at needs that might exist. We're open to all of that, but this will be definitely within the parameters of this piece of legislation as it is indeed laid out.

So, with those few comments, I will move to close debate on Bill No. 95.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 95. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 97.

Bill No. 97 - Credit Union Act.

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

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 97 be now read a third time and do pass.

Credit Unions are full-service financial institutions that operate under the ownership structure of its members. We appreciate their unique contributions to the financial sector.

The purpose of these amendments is to help maintain strong regulation and oversight of credit unions, while strengthening the safety and stability of the system. A regular review and update of this Act is required every seven years to ensure that oversight of the credit union section remains current and relevant. The review identifies changes necessary to update membership rules, improve efficiencies, and align Nova Scotia's legislation with other Atlantic Provinces, and the findings are reflected in this bill. These changes are to modernize and streamline operations and governance.

The bill also responds to legislative changes from the federal government related to oversight of Atlantic Central, a Nova Scotia incorporated company. This will now become a provincial responsibility. We believe that updating the Credit Union Act will encourage the spirit of the financial co-op movement in all communities across this province. We've heard the support for that particular initiative and that movement. We all value and respect the credit unions both in metro and rural parts of the province - and I'm looking forward to hearing any other comments.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, the Credit Union Act is essentially, we understand, a housekeeping bill. The amendments came out of a regular review as well as federal regulations that necessitate this new legislation. We know that managers of the credit unions were consulted; we know that the key changes are small and, for the most part, make a lot of sense, but we also know that this government didn't consult the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for Nova Scotia and she has registered concerns.

So, without going into any of that in detail again, I would just say that it is our position that there may in fact be good reasons not to follow the advice of privacy experts but, at the very least, the members of this House deserve to know what those reasons are, as do the citizens of Nova Scotia. So, while in general I think this Act seems to make sense - it's not offensive - we still have a major reservation based on what we have been told by privacy experts.

So, with those few words, I'll take my seat and, hopefully, look forward to some comments from the minister on why that decision was made.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I was almost not even going to get up to speak, but I just want to say briefly that based on our discussion yesterday in Committee of the Whole House and the comments made there, I have some general comfort with this and the fact that the Information and Privacy Commissioner has not come back after the government claims they have addressed her concern.

Unless we start hearing loudly from somebody, I have comfort with this bill passing because I think it is doing what it intended to do, which is to replace the federal government as the entity that governs how credit unions operate in the province.

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

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. KAREN CASEY: I do want to thank the member for Inverness. The clarification provided yesterday certainly indicated that we contacted the Information and Privacy Commissioner's office, provided that clarification, have not heard anything back from that office, but it did provide the clarity that we believe may have prompted her letter.

Mr. Speaker, I do move that Bill No. 97 pass.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 97. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

Bill No. 99 - Assessment Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I now move that Bill No. 99, the Assessment Act, be read for a third and final time and do pass.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share that we support the amendment to the Assessment Act and we support the changeout of the bed and breakfast definition with the small-scale residential tourist accommodation establishment definition.

We do believe it's important that legislation is changed to reflect the changes within our shared economy. We do have some concerns that the Assessment Act does not actually identify or define the small-scale residential or tourism accommodation establishment with regard to taxation, how many rooms, what is their criteria, and how is it actually defined. We do have concerns about that, but we do support this change.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: I appreciate the honourable member's comments and points on the bill. I want to assure her that that is why we will be out there over the next year, doing in-depth consultation with our municipal partners right across this province. That will be how we identify the number of rooms and other things as we go, and the regulations are created.

Thank you very much for those comments. I do now move to close debate on Bill No. 99.

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

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

Bill No. 101 - Tourist Accommodations Registration Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Business.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 101, the Tourist Accommodations Registration Act, be read for a third time and do pass.

I'm going to quickly take a couple of minutes to comment, out of respect for those on the opposite side who added comments in earlier portions of this discussion around Bill No. 101, the member for Cape Breton-Richmond around consultation, the member for Dartmouth South around enforcement, and the member for Halifax Needham in terms of housing.

I think that with the consultation piece and I think that looking on the face of it that there was one, I think it was two members of the Airbnb sharing economy who were hosts, were part of the working committee. That was true and again looking at that particular committee, it was two individuals who gave their personal perspective. At that working group level, it was across departmental, Airbnb representative, Hotel Association of Nova Scotia, TIANS, et cetera.

I think that wasn't where the Airbnb hosts really had their impact. Obviously, those members and the comments there were valid, but the bigger piece is just the collective consultation I've done sort of personally. Literally hundreds of touch points, of discussions at tourism conferences in my own community of Glace Bay. Everywhere I go when someone says they're an Airbnb host, I dive right into it, not only in terms of their experience but also in terms of what it would take to have that light touch around regulation but not push them out of the market.

[11:15 a.m.]

That really was the balancing point here for us. We want Airbnb to exist because it's going to happen, the shared economy for fixed-roof accommodations, Airbnb, and the other hosts that participate there. We didn't want to come down with heavy-handed regulation that would be a decision point where people would just say look, this is not worth it, the red tape, the extra expense, the extra regulation if it was inspections or such. On the other side, of course, this really was an operation that was unregulated. No registration and no requirement to be registered and licensed under the Tourist Accommodations Act, which is being repealed here.

I've said it many times and I believe it, that this really was the driving force for me getting into this particular bill: the fact that the tourism accommodations providers in this province have shouldered the load for decades and they've built our tourism complement up to a point where we're seeing tremendous success. That's largely a credit to them and the work they've done - the investment, the risk, the blood, sweat, and tears that they put into their operations to keep them afloat. Now, as they get to enjoy some of the fruits of their labour, there's a new mechanism, a new model, a new option for people that really has gone very much unregulated - in fact, absolutely unregulated.

That's the balancing act. With respect to the consultations, every step of the way from all the senior folks who are part of crafting this legislation - including TIANS themselves - everyone understands that Airbnb hosts operate under a certain set of rules

and if we have this for registration, if it's not your principal residence. They're still subject to paying HST if they hit \$30,000 like every other business in the province and, of course, their personal income tax. I think their position is very well represented and my opinion is, when you look at the average take for hosts is \$7,000 required to report that as income, of course, but that's a good lift for people individually - particularly for those in a primary residence and they're operating in places where really was a vacuum in terms of accommodations like Glace Bay.

I said in my second reading remarks, one of the criticisms I heard the first five or six years of my time as MLA was that Glace Bay needs a hotel. We can't host big events without having access for people having somewhere to stay. I don't hear that anymore because the shared economy has covered that gap and picked up that slack. I think that the consultation piece that we did a fair amount formally, but even with the anecdotal stuff, I think that the Airbnb shared economy hosts are well represented.

With respect to enforcement, I think the member for Dartmouth South has said this a number of times and I agree, with respect to how these laws are enforced and how we ensure these operations are safe, that these operations are meeting all occupational health and safety and building code requirements. These are things that are in play already with respect to, and I'll just name a couple: Fire Safety Act, municipal bylaws, national building code, Liquor Control Act, Smoke-Free Places, of course, the insurance requirements that you would need as an individual operator as a commercial entity, are all in place.

With respect to enforcement, I think that these Acts really supersede this operation under both the shared economy and traditional operators; it really is covered. Secondly, I think that one of the things I was asked from the media and the bill briefing for this legislation is why would we expect the people to follow it. This sounds cliché, but because it's the law. When you see the shared economy become entrenched, as it is getting to that point, people will not allow those who choose to go unregistered to not pay their taxes, to operate under the radar. It just won't happen. People will call and, in fact, part of the stimulus for advancing this discussion and making sure the legislation's in place is because the complaints have been steady in terms of people doing this unregulated.

I think that the enforcement piece is there. I do certainly respect the notion that we would put it in regulation, but again, if there's a requirement to do that at a later date. This is really uncharted water and we don't know where it's going to go. This might work perfectly, it might need some tweaks, or we might have to revisit it a few years down the road. That's the open reality of the shared economy now. Every jurisdiction is proud of their Airbnb legislation and their rules and regulations, and you'll find an equal number of people in those respective provinces who complain about it. It really is a work in progress, but I think that we've set the foundation here well.

The final piece, for the member for Halifax Needham - and I'll close with this - there is no doubt that that's a risk and a concern. If you're anything that's impacting the

housing stock, particularly in metro - it's obviously an issue everywhere, but less of a problem in rural places, that there is a bit more capacity and availability for affordable housing, but it's a concern. Not to push this off just to wait and see, but while there is no doubt that it's going to have an impact, it's already here now. The shared economy is here. It's in place. It's having an impact.

From my perspective, what this does is give us the data. We'll know where the pockets are, where the focus is. Obviously, the advocates who are here in metro, in particular for social housing, affordable housing, and more access to that - it will be very clear that the numbers will show what the impact is around this new online platform. I think that it will help us understand it.

I want the member to know that her points are very well taken. They're legitimate. We've got to do a good job to make sure that we're focused and we're understanding what impact this is going to have on affordable housing. That's all the more reason to have regulations and rules so people aren't taking advantage of this.

It's a scary thought to think that people who are living on a fixed income and paying rent and relying on that home to be there for them are being removed in favour of a landlord who wants to put it on Airbnb. It's certainly a troubling thing. It's the nature of the market, I guess, in certain instances. We hope that by doing this and having some of this data, we'll be able to see what the true impact is.

All very well-taken points, ones that were very relevant to our discussions we had over the last number of years. I think that as we move forward, those things will be under consideration. We'll just make sure we keep working on this until we ultimately have it right.

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

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his commentary with regard to some of the points that I brought up yesterday on Bill No. 101. After doing some very quick math yesterday, it came to my attention with regard to fourth-quarter statistics - I was absolutely taken aback at what I read yesterday with regard to shared short-term rental accommodations in this province.

I don't know that we actually have a sector that has ever grown - in the history that I remember in this province - 58 per cent in just one year alone, that the revenues have grown for short-term rentals in this province. So from 2015, we grew from a revenue base of \$1.1 million to going up to \$70.9 million in our economy in 2018, in just three short years. That's an absolutely extraordinary amount of increase in the amount of revenue that has been generated from these short-term rentals.

I think there are many people in this House who know people who are business owners. I'm a business owner myself, I have been a business owner in the past - there are several people in my caucus who are as well. Nova Scotia is and has been built on the spirit of entrepreneurship. I absolutely love seeing this type of thing happening, where you basically have a hole in the marketplace that can't be filled by a traditional business plan - there is basically no sustainable way of being able to put a hotel in Glace Bay, as the member across just mentioned, to be able to have it sustainable in a traditional capacity for accommodation.

You have everyday Nova Scotians, like myself and many other people sitting here, who are finding solutions to be able to accommodate tourism, either in their own homes or in cottages that they own or family homes that have perhaps been left to them.

I know in my particular area alone, there are people who have gone to nursing homes, for example, and their children are left behind to try and figure out how to be able to pay for a parent's home, which will probably eventually be bequeathed to them. But, in the interim, in rural Nova Scotia we want to see those homes being maintained and we want to see them being put to good use. We don't want to see families losing these properties because they can't afford to maintain them.

The sharing economy, short-term rentals, is actually being able to help many rural Nova Scotians to be able to hold on to properties that otherwise they never would be able to do. I feel that hasn't really been talked about and reflected so far in our conversations.

It's wonderful to see that people who have their own private homes and who are hosting travellers coming into their own homes, will not be unduly taxed for that. Of course, everybody is responsible to pay for their income taxes at the end of the day.

My really big concern in this is not those people who are hosting people in their private homes, but those people who have that extra home. Maybe they are having to work away in Alberta, although the economy there is not doing so great either. They are having to work away from home, or the home that their mom and dad has left them is left sitting. I see so many of them across this province and it breaks my heart to see the state of disrepair that so many of these dwellings fall into when someone is not able to pay taxes on them or pay for maintenance costs.

I don't want to see this bill, for lack of a better way to put it, as an Act that, kind of, killed the spirit of the short-term rental market. We don't know what is going to happen for those secondary properties, those cottages, those homes that I've just mentioned. We don't know what will happen when it comes to them being assessed - as either continuing as a residential property, as they are now, or will they start being assessed municipally as commercial properties, because they are not primary residences.

There's a big question mark there as far as where this will go and how people will be taxed, going down the road with their secondary properties that they perhaps put out for short-term rentals.

Now \$7,000 at the end of the day is quite a good chunk of change for most people. That \$7,000 may either be the difference 'make it or break it' on whether or not you can hold on to that second property that you own, or maybe that cottage you have next door.

There's also a question mark on what will happen if you are living a residential property, what will happen if on that piece of land - I'll give myself as an example. I own a farm, I have a lot of acreage. What will happen if because on the same property identification number there are a couple of extra dwellings that you have there that you have traditionally put up for short-term rentals to be able to make ends meet? In rural Nova Scotia we all have to be a little bit dynamic with our thought process in how we're able to generate money sometimes. We're having to wear a lot of different hats.

As much as I know there is a business in the sharing economy, I'd really like for people to leave here today with the understanding that it's not necessarily that this is an underground economy; I feel as though, in a way, we're speaking about sharing economy as if people are doing something untoward.

This is a whole new world as far as how services and businesses operate online. It's the way of the future and I agree that we have to look at legislation to be able to regulate and be able to level the playing field for those traditional tourism accommodation providers that have been here for us, that have been the backbone of the tourism industry in this province. At the same time, I think we have to be very careful moving forward, that we don't put a stranglehold on the future, on what will be the future, on what is the future now and what is an extraordinary opportunity for the average Nova Scotian, just really trying super hard to make ends meet.

[11:30 a.m.]

I've been getting some phone calls and some emails from people who are really upset, that they see this as kind of a tax grab, and I'm really hoping that that's not what this becomes. It's not the \$100 or \$200 registration fee that's really at issue here, but that issue is how taxation on a municipal level for your property is going to change. At issue here is not whether or not Nova Scotians should be paying their federal and provincial income tax.

It's about really, at the end of the day, how much extra money is going to come out of really mostly - and again in the urban core, I know it's a bit different because there are some major housing issues and the way that the rollout is happening for shared accommodation and short-term accommodation. In rural Nova Scotia where half of the population of this province lives, more and more people are having to use their imagination

in how to be able to live in rural Nova Scotia, I'm really hoping that this does not become a stranglehold on this type of free enterprise.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do look forward to seeing what's going to be coming out in the regulations. I would again put forth that the minister and his department please try to make a more formal approach to include these thousands of people across Nova Scotia, both in the urban core and in rural Nova Scotia who are part of this almost \$71 million wave of revenue in the last year. It's important that their voices are heard around this table and it's important that their voices are reflected in the regulations that are going to come forward.

That is going to be reflective on whether or not this new enterprise, this new shared economy, is going to be something that we're going to be able to look at in the history books as, we did that right. I just want us to get it right, and I would just like to be able to see that that spirit that's obviously alive and well in the numbers that I see reflected here in these statistics, let's not thwart that. We have a history, a bit of that in Nova Scotia, of putting a stranglehold on something that's really good.

There's something really good happening in this province right now. Level the playing field; make certain that everybody is reflected in the regulations and the legislation that goes through and let's, you know, help everybody along in truly the spirit of a level playing field.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to both the minister and to the member for Cape Breton-Richmond. I think that there are, as I've said before, a number of distinct and different issues around this topic of Airbnb, depending on where you find yourself in the province. I think that the member for Cape Breton-Richmond canvassed some of the issues around rural communities, around specific property identification numbers but as an urban MLA, I would say that when the sharing economy is genuinely a sharing economy and is embracing that spirit of entrepreneurship, those folks earning \$7,000 a year that the minister referred to, then it's great and it's robust and it's wonderful and, as we've heard, it can be a major economic boost and it can help individuals and families, and that's wonderful.

But, make no mistake, that's not everybody who is involved, and I don't want to say that there are bad actors particularly, but I think it would be a mistake to look at this multi-million dollar, \$70 million whatever it is industry, and not think that it requires some regulation. That is the role of government and I think that there are plenty of case studies particularly in urban areas of cities that have experienced major, major challenges with housing affordability and all kinds of related issues when Airbnb has run rampant because, yes, to the enforcement point, there are lots of regulations. People do in general follow the law because it's the law, but then there are people who exploit the systems that exist, and

this has happened on these platforms and throughout the sharing economy more times than can be counted.

I do think it's important that we keep an eye, and that this government, keep an eye on this huge and, in many ways, exciting economic opportunity that has taken over the province.

In general, I would say we are supportive of this bill. I think my colleague will speak to it.

I would echo the concerns that the member for Halifax Needham and the member for Cape Breton-Richmond have voiced, that homeowners and property owners be involved as the regulations are rolled out. I think that the focus of this bill has been on levelling the playing field with the historic tourism operators and the points on that are well taken. The reality is that this has as much of an impact on communities, as it does on hotel operators and owners. It's important that those community voices be heard as these regulations are contemplated and rolled out. With those few words I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: I welcome this opportunity to speak briefly again. First, I want to acknowledge and thank the Minister of Business for echoing back to me some of the concerns that my constituents brought to the Law Amendments Committee.

I have to say that sometimes we talk about the Law Amendments Committee, or sometimes I feel like what I am hearing is that we consider it an encumbrance, that we have to do this thing that no other jurisdiction across Canada currently does. I am feeling very privileged and very grateful for that space because for my constituents who are actually experiencing the impact of this change in their neighbourhood and change in their economy, it was meaningful. It is meaningful to me that the Minister of Business then actually reflects back to me that those concerns were heard.

What I look forward to now is in the process of consulting other regulations, that we deepen that engagement with more actors. What we do know is that the consultation, the working group, that kind of immediately led to this bill was very focused on tourism.

Tourism is great. I'm an urbanite who also loves going either back home to Newfoundland, or I'm looking forward to spending some more time in Cape Breton this summer. But tourism does also happen in Halifax, and particularly in my neighbourhood and in my colleague's neighbourhood, in Dartmouth South. We are tourist attractions because we have great neighbourhoods with lots of restaurants and lots of diversity and lots of arts and culture.

What's important to recognize is that, in fact, neighbourhoods are made vibrant because people live in them, because they are neighbourhoods, because people have those relationships that are not just born out of a two-week stay, but actually over years of interactions and collaborations. I think we do have to be very sensitive to how we both welcome people into our great urban neighbourhoods and also ensure that they outlast them.

I want to quickly make the point that while there were references to the impact of Airbnb on affordability of housing, I think we have to recognize that housing is actually a spectrum. So yes, I think it's very important that we look to the impact on affordability of the bottom 10 per cent and 20 per cent of income earners; but, in fact the constituents who came to Law Amendments Committee and expressed concerns about affordability and the impact of Airbnb were not in that bottom 20 per cent, they might be at the 60 per cent range.

Still everybody needs to find a home that is affordable for them. If a two-bedroom townhouse in a great, walkable neighbourhood becomes unaffordable for a young family with a first child, then that's a real impact. We have to actually be working to ensure long-term affordability of our neighbourhoods for people across the spectrum.

I also just want to sort of acknowledge that, yes, regulation is the job of government and finding a balance is the job of government and taxation is not strangulation; taxation is how we fund government. Even tourists want us to be able to pay for ambulances and roads and all the services that actually make us a place, a jurisdiction where you want to live or visit.

I noted this week in the *Star* newspaper chain they did an investigation or a bit of a deep dive on non-resident ownership. In fact, Nova Scotia has more non-resident owners than B.C. or Ontario. I think that's another layer on top of this question. We're not just talking about cases where maybe an older generation has downsized or gone into long-term care or is staying with the next generation at the end of their life. We also have cases where people have already sold properties or where historically people have owned second homes in Nova Scotia because we happen to be extremely lucky to live in this beautiful province with a ton of coastline.

How are we actually making the most of that for our residents and for our viability as a province? How are we regulating? How are we taxing? How can we look at, for example, municipally what they've done in Victoria? I think one area of consultation, as the next step gets looked at, is how do we engage our municipalities in regulating the short-term rentals? How do we ensure the province is allowing municipalities some flexibility to respond to local conditions and local concerns?

Also, we can be looking at P.E.I. where there are restrictions on non-resident ownership, or at least we can be looking at how we're taxing non-resident owners, so that

we're actually again able to generate the revenue we need to run our province so that it's a great place for people to live, as well as continuing to be a great place for people to visit.

I see this piece of legislation as very much a first step, not only because it will really be fleshed out through regulations, but also because I think there's many other issues that we can look to across the province to ensure we are striking the right balance of both allowing people to enjoy our province and also making sure that we are, as a provincial jurisdiction, regulating and taxing in a way that allows our long-term viability and resilience.

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

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, if you'll indulge me, I see you are leaving the Chair, I just want to wish all Murphys and all Maguires a very happy, festive and safe St. Patrick's Day weekend.

AN HON. MEMBER: Everybody is Irish on St. Patrick's Day.

HUGH MACKAY: Not the Scots.

Mr. Speaker, we in this government recognize the importance of the tourism industry and the tourism revenues as they serve as export to our provincial economy. The minister expressed here in the House this morning the fact that this industry has been built on the backs of the tourism operators who have put, I think, their blood, sweat, and tears, as well as their investments, their hard-earned dollars, into this.

We have achieved considerable success in this sector, growing our revenues here to \$2.7 billion now, but we still have a way to go to reach the One Nova Scotia target of \$4 billion. To succeed we're going to need our entire sector pulling in the same direction. This legislation provides clarity and direction to the hard-working men and women in our tourism industry. It is taking outdated legislation and regulation and replacing it with modern, 21st century approach to the tourism sector.

It recognizes the importance of existing licence owners and it brings into the fold those operators who are part of the shared economy. It is eliminating the outdated elements of the Tourist Accommodations Act and replacing it with modern and easy-to-use registration. It ensures that all operators, except those of their primary residences, will be required to register. As mentioned by the minister, we're applying a light regulatory touch to existing and new operators, and ensuring a common path forward.

In Nova Scotia, we need more accommodation units, simply said. We need more places for people to stay, so we need to encourage the growth of existing operations and we need to encourage new accommodations supply. Our regulation, our legislation reduces

the regulatory burden on operators. It encourages more operators to get registered and be part of the broader tourism community.

[11:45 a.m.]

As mentioned by the members for beautiful Cape Breton-Richmond, Dartmouth South, and Halifax Needham, there are going to be adjustments in our accommodations sector and I'm particularly interested in supporting our bed and breakfast industry. This weekend, we did hear at Law Amendments Committee from a representative of the Nova Scotia Bed and Breakfast Association, and I want to assure that association that its concerns will be heard and will be considered. We're going to spend the next coming months engaging with stakeholders to make sure, as the member for Cape Breton- Richmond stated, that we get it right.

I live in one of the most beautiful places on earth, Chester-St. Margaret's. In Chester-St. Margaret's we recognize the importance of this industry, and I constantly speak to tourism operators in Chester-St. Margaret's and across Nova Scotia in regard to getting the right balance with common sense. This legislation does that, and I'm proud to add my voice to the support for this legislation continuing to make its way through the House of Assembly.

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

The honourable Minister of Business.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the members again for their comments - very consistent on all sides of the House. It's good to see the member for beautiful Chester-St. Margaret's dial in as well. It's important to have consistent messages around what's got to be looked at, what are the focal points moving forward. I appreciate the comments from the Opposition and from my honourable colleague in our caucus, and we'll continue to make sure we hone in on what has to be adapted, if that's the case. The regulation process will be increasingly important.

With that, again I thank the House and I move to close debate on Bill No. 101.

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

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: We have one final piece of business for today, Mr. Speaker. Would you please call the order of business, Public Bills for Second Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 116.

Bill No. 116 - Biodiversity Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Lands and Forestry.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 116 be now read a second time. It's my pleasure to speak to this bill today, an Act to Provide the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Nova Scotia. The province's new Biodiversity Act will bring with it a level of legislative authority that will strengthen existing efforts to conserve Nova Scotia's wild species, habitats, and ecosystems.

This new legislation will bring forward new tools and mechanisms to help us manage a range of challenges and opportunities facing biodiversity in our province. There is increasingly strong evidence illustrating nature's incalculable importance to so many aspects of our lives, including our health and well-being, food supply, wealth, and security. Wild animals, plants, fungi, and microbes have underpinned human well-being through our entire existence. The incalculable potential future value of benefits we might derive from further discoveries, based on natural diversity, will only be possible so long as ecosystems can continue to sustain the vast range of species that share the world with us.

We talk often about climate change and the existential threat that it very much is. I can speak at length to the initiatives under way by this government, including a cap-and-trade system that was passed that strikes the balance of reducing more greenhouse gas emissions while limiting the impact to Nova Scotian ratepayers, in particular low-income Nova Scotians.

We also continue to lead the country on the demand side of electricity, with 11 per cent reductions in the last decade alone. We see provinces emulating that model across the country now. All this complements some of the work initiatives that former governments have undertaken, such as getting more wind and other clean energy into our electricity grids. Currently, only Prince Edward Island has more wind capacity per capita than this province.

Our government took further steps to introduce cleaner energy into the grid with the recent solar energy program, and in the last six months, this successful program has more than doubled the solar capacity in our grid.

Mitigation to climate change is very important. Adaptation to climate change also is important. In this session, I want to commend the Minister of Environment for bringing in the Coastal Protection Act, which will help us adapt across the province in our coastlines and protect our sand dunes, saltwater marshes, and other important ecosystems.

What I'd like to focus on today, though, is another core planetary boundary that has been passed. National and provincial governments find themselves at a decisive juncture in history. Above and beyond mitigating and adapting to climate change, we need more tools to go on the offence to protect biodiversity. We currently have legislation in Nova Scotia that helps us protect vertebrates through the Wildlife Act, and the Endangered Species Act helps us protect species when they are at risk, but that Act only applies to threatened or endangered species, limiting our options for other species.

Biological diversity is essential to life on Earth. The term "biodiversity" is a concise way to describe the variety of interconnectedness of all life, including all plants, animals, and other organisms; the genes they contain; and the systems and processes that link them.

Disrupting the balance of biodiversity can have dramatic and unpredictable results. A healthy natural biodiversity is one of our most important natural resources. Biodiversity provides many goods and services we take for granted, as well as the raw materials for our resource industries. We must understand, value, and preserve the richness of these assets.

Threats to the province's biodiversity include climate change, but also pollution and waste, invasive alien species, residential and industrial development, agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction, overharvesting of species, and road network and infrastructure development. Over many decades, land ecosystems, freshwater ecosystems, and coastal zones have degraded with serious long-term social, environmental, and economic consequences.

The pressures on our planet and its natural resources and ecosystems were globally recognized at the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. I now will table a report and the relevant executive summaries so the members can view that.

The Canadian Biodiversity Strategy, Canada's response to the Convention on Biological Diversity, was developed to enhance national efforts to conserve biodiversity and achieve sustainable use of biological resources. *Canada's Biodiversity Outcomes Framework and 2020 Goals and Targets* is a critical path for these objectives; it was developed with our federal, provincial, and territorial colleagues here in Nova Scotia. It identifies these outcomes: healthy and diverse ecosystems, viable populations of species, genetic resources and adaptive potential maintained, and sustainable use of biological resources. Canada's 2020 biodiversity goals and targets, which are complementary to the strategy and outcomes framework, provide the basis for measuring and reporting on progress.

There is an inevitable increased demand for energy, land, and water in a world and a province that is now seeing unprecedented population growth and economic growth. This causes planetary change, referred to as the Great Acceleration. Of course, there are benefits to human society, yet we now also understand that there are multiple connections between the overall rise in our health, wealth, food, and security; the unequal distribution of these benefits; and the declining state of earth's natural systems. Indeed, our Indigenous friends have been telling us this for generations.

Nature, underpinned by biodiversity, provides a wealth of services which form the building blocks of modern society, but both nature and biodiversity require more protection so that we can sustainably grow our population and economy. The two should not be mutually exclusive.

Considerable research has been undertaken around the earth in nature's capacity. The concept of planetary boundaries speaks to the limits of earth's systems and our need to stay within these boundaries.

Among these critical systems is biodiversity integrity. An international team of 18 scientists developed a framework identifying nine global priorities relating to human-induced changes to the environment.

Of the nine planetary boundaries, four have been crossed as a result of human activity as reported in 2015. Loss of biosphere integrity, in other words biodiversity and extinction is one of those four, along with climate change, and those two are the core two. The others are land system change and altered biogeochemical cycles.

The millennium ecosystem assessment of 2005 concluded that changes to ecosystems due to human activities were more rapid in the last 50 years than all of human history combined, increasing the risk of abrupt and irreversible changes.

The main drivers of change are the demands for food, water, and natural resources, causing severe biodiversity loss and leading to changes in the ecosystem services. These drivers are either steady, showing no evidence of declining over time, or increasing in intensity.

The current high rates of ecosystem damage and extinction can be slowed by efforts to protect the integrity of living systems, enhancing habitat and improving connectivity between ecosystems, while maintaining the high agriculture productivity that humanity needs. Further research is under way to improve the availability of reliable data for use as the control variables for this boundary.

This Act will provide an integrated, overarching framework that supports stewardship, conservation, and sustainable use of biodiversity in the province. Provisions

in the legislation include partnering with biodiversity experts that includes traditional knowledge.

In Nova Scotia, some efforts have been made to manage this decline. We have EGSPA that came into force in 2007, creating important goals and important foundations as we grow the green economy in particular.

We also have the parks and protected plan which sets aside nature reserves, wilderness areas, and provincial park systems.

Our government achieved the protection of the biodiversity goal under EGSPA of legally protecting at least 12 per cent of Nova Scotia's land mass. This was surpassed in 2015 and we are now well on our way to our updated goal of 13 per cent protected land. (Applause)

We are committed to achieving this goal. In November, we designated two more wilderness areas and a nature reserve, including Wentworth Valley. This brings us to 12.5 per cent.

Nova Scotia has made great progress through the creation of provincial, federal, and municipal parks, wilderness areas, and nature reserves. This Act will permit biodiversity management zones that will complement the role of protected areas in conserving nature.

As pressures that threaten to degrade natural areas continue to increase, even greater effort is required to protect our land and water through a variety of needs. In Nova Scotia, the majority of land is privately owned.

A shift to focus to looking at some private land is part of our planned application to the federal government in partnership with Mi'kmaq, Nova Scotia Nature Trust, Nature Conservancy of Canada, and Ducks Unlimited Canada. This work will help Nova Scotia assist Canada to reach its national Target 1 of 17 per cent land production.

Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, may I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Sure, go ahead.

IAIN RANKIN: Seated in the East Gallery we have joining us Chief Rod Googoo - if you want to rise - from Whycomag, and we also have Chief Terrance Paul from Membertou. (Applause)

We have an important announcement today, together, at 1:00 p.m. which is a partnership with the province and our Mi'kmaq friends.

Mr. Speaker, with two key global policy processes under way, the setting of the new post-2020 targets for the convention on biological diversity and the sustainable development goals, there is currently a unique window of opportunity to reverse the trend of biodiversity loss.

[12:00 noon]

Lessons can be learned from progress towards addressing other critical global issues, like climate change and everyone - governments, business, finance, research, civil society and individuals - all have a role to play.

Mr. Speaker, the Biodiversity Act creates a basis for managing threats to ecosystems and it will help to better protect our wild species and ecosystems against invasive species. The bill also provides us with new regulatory powers to better conserve biodiversity and to make sustainable use of it. It compliments the province's Wildlife Act and Endangered Species Act, and other existing legislation, which are effective but don't address certain gaps that need to be bridged.

The Biodiversity Bill also provides for and enable a tool kit for biodiversity management that will hold a number of important tools to help protect biodiversity. It includes an emergency measure that will do a few important things: allowing government to issue a biodiversity protection order to prevent the import, selling or distribution of an invasive species not yet listed in regulation; and help prevent the destruction or disturbance of a rare ecosystem or habitat.

Addressing the issue of invasive species is crucial because it's an issue that comes with a cost not just to the health of our ecosystems but to the financial health of our province. This bill will help curtail those costs to aquaculture, agriculture and forestry sectors.

Another tool in the tool kit that is in this bill will be the authority to create a new biodiversity management zone. This will allow for the management of an area that over land, or a set period of time, to support conservation or sustainable use of biodiversity values. For example, conditions may be put in place to protect a native ecology of a certain area, such as certain bird species, while activities like tourism and camping may continue.

Under the management provided by a biodiversity management zone, sustainable use of biodiversity through commercial harvest of wild leeks or edible mushroom, for example, could be permitted.

To complete the tool kit, regulations supporting this new Biodiversity Act will be developed through consultations with the Mi'kmaq, conservation partners and all Nova Scotians.

This is an exciting new initiative that will bring greater protections to wild species' habitat and ecosystems in our province.

I thank the members of the Provincial Biodiversity Council for their advice. The council provided useful expertise and has helped greatly in crafting new legislation. We expect the council will continue to play an active role as we move forward with finalizing all parts to support the new Biodiversity Act.

Mr. Speaker, I heard strong support for our bill from several key players in biodiversity. Dr. Kate Sherren, of Dalhousie University and a Biodiversity Council member, spoke yesterday during the bill briefing. She said the priority is to address current issues where there are gaps and to have a tool kit ready when they are needed. As she said, biodiversity is an engine of the ecosystem. We don't know what we'll be up against and we will need legislation to manage it.

I was also pleased with comments from Craig Smith of the Nature Conservancy of Canada who highlighted that this province will be the first in our country to regulate biodiversity. Mr. Smith expressed that he's happy that Nova Scotia will be set up to address threats to biodiversity, including invasive species and the authority to issue emergency orders.

Ray Plourde of the Ecology Action Centre is supportive and recognizes that this is an important step and the bill will lead to more engagement with practitioners. Mr. Plourde noted a number of positives, including the ability for the Minister of Lands and Forestry to make decisions in areas not protected, and not wait until spaces are endangered to take action. He also acknowledges that we have other important legislation to protect wildlife in the ecosystem but not an overarching, holistic approach to conserve and recognize this Act as a step in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear about where the Biodiversity Act applies. It will apply to all wildlife and all lands. Only the proposed biodiversity management zones require consent of a private landowner, not other actions authorized under this bill.

Before I close my remarks, I'd like to reinforce why all Nova Scotians care about biodiversity and table additional reports that are relevant to this legislation that our government has introduced.

I have, *How Canadians Value Nature: A Strategic Conceptual Review of Literature and Research*, prepared for Environment Canada; *Valuation of Ecological Goods and Services in Canada's Natural Resources Sector*, and the *2012 Canadian Nature Survey*.

With those few comments, I look forward to the comments of my colleagues and the public in Law Amendments Committee.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Cumberland South.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to stand and just give a brief few remarks here on Friday to Bill No. 116, and thank the minister for his comments and explanation to this House of what the first act, I understand, in Canada for biodiversity and also like to thank the minister for recognizing that part of my beautiful constituency, the Wentworth Valley.

Our initial read through the presented act is it is the first of its kind in Canada, so, let's do it right. Let's get off on the right step. We believe this is the right step forward and we are looking forward to hearing the comments of many Nova Scotians coming to Law Amendments Committee if they rightfully do so. But the biggest thing that we want to emphasize is we did read through this, our first reading, is this is the first act in Canada. So, let's do it right as a province.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: We, in the New Democratic Party caucus, also welcome this initiative and welcome this legislation.

I'm struck that in even some of the minister's opening remarks, I heard echoes of some of the comments of Bill Lahey in the Lahey report on forestry. I guess I really welcome the opportunity to see how all of these files indeed are interconnected and how we need to be responding to the demands of industry and to the demands of biodiversity in a way that is integrated and taking all the factors into account.

Our current patchwork of regulation has meant animals don't get the attention that they need even when they're already deemed to be at risk and this is something that the Auditor General recognized fairly recently in an audit on the species-at-risk protection and plans. Habitats have been sliced up and degraded and we don't have all the tools we need to stop the spread of invasive species. I think that the creation of biodiversity management zones, biodiversity protection orders, and new mandate and powers for enforcement officers are all much-needed steps.

I recognize that as seems to be often the case with legislation, at least in my time in this House, a lot of what this will actually look like is left to regulations, which is always a little bit worrying. But given the engagement and at this point the welcome to this legislation from both the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Ecology Action Centre, I think we're confident this bill is a step in the right direction.

So we'll be paying close attention to what happens next and expecting the government to live up to its promise to really include non-profit organizations, organizations with an interest in wildlife and land protection in developing of the regulations so we can be sure to get it right.

I do recognize or, I guess, want to comment that in some ways the government's approach on these issues is not always consistent. Currently, the government is being taken to court for failing to uphold the Endangered Species Act, so if Nova Scotians are uncertain about the government's intentions, there is some cause for that.

Also, while I certainly welcome the protection that was announced late last year in the Wentworth Valley, there are some almost 100 other sites that have been ready to be protected, but have had the work done on them and, as I understand it, are just waiting for Order in Council. Some almost 100 other sites that are ready to have protection. I know some people who worked on developing that plan are people who are intimately aware of those sites and their specialness, who are wondering why they haven't actually been afforded protection as planned or what the delay is.

Also, I think that the contradiction in this government's stance that is most problematic to me is the advocacy that we've seen from the Premier, in particular, for oil and gas drilling to be allowed in marine protected areas and allowing deep sea exploration to go ahead without a capping stack close enough.

Some of these actions, in my view and our view, fly in the face of the spirit of the Biodiversity Act. While we certainly support this Act as a step in the right direction, we also will be continuing to watch for progress on all of those other and very much interconnected, files to see if the government is committed to moving aggressively in the right direction.

With those comments, I'll take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Lands and Forestry.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I move to close debate on Bill No. 116.

Just a few comments to respond to the comments opposite. I do hear similar criticism when bills are brought in that some of it's left to regulations. For this bill, again, it's an overarching piece that sets the framework. We're committed to continuing to work with those stakeholders that we have been to develop the regulations, and working very close with the Mi'kmaq as well to ensure that their concepts are identified throughout the process. That will continue.

Just comments on our support: I won't dive into another portfolio in terms of oil and gas, but this government really believes in a balanced approach in terms of how we grow the economy. The green economy is absolutely important and will be continuing to be a growth segment for our province. We also acknowledge that in the province and the country, a big part of its economy is developing natural resources so really, different

legislation and being a good regulator means that we're doing that in a sustainable manner as we transition to a cleaner economy.

We will continue to believe that the economy and the environment go together; we don't have to sacrifice one or the other. We will continue to move and grow the economy as best we can to create good jobs. There're plenty examples of that across the province, like CarbonCure, and I can go on about a number of other clean-tech companies. It's really booming, particularly here in HRM. I just want to add those comments and where we see it and that I look forward to hearing from Nova Scotians as we move forward to the Law Amendments.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading on Bill No. 116. 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 business for today. I appreciate the bill coverage in the Third Readings today and the work of our colleagues on all sides of the House. It's been an interesting run up to this March Break week and I appreciate the respect and deference and the great debate that we've had here in the Legislature.

I move that the House do now rise to sit again on Tuesday, March 26th from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. With that being the provincial budget day, that will be part of the agenda. In terms of second and third readings, we'll figure it out as we get closer, but the order paper will reflect what's remaining, and we'll talk about the business when we return back on the 26th.

With that, I wish everyone a safe March Break home in the constituencies, and all the best with their families and friends. I look forward to seeing everyone back here for Budget Day on the 26th.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Tuesday, March 26th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried. We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 12:15 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 840**

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Dianna Rievaj is a busy mom of three young children and the founder of the Highlander Law Group, a law firm that embraces and emulates the qualities that exemplify Scottish Highlanders' best characteristics of a strong work ethic, loyalty, and determination to succeed; and

Whereas Dianna is the chair of both the Student Advisory Committee and the Playground Committee at St. Margaret's Bay Elementary School; and

Whereas the committee's work to install an innovative new nature-based playground that will incorporate more diverse play elements, with the added benefit of being inclusive in nature;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Dianna for her contributions, which enhance the community economically, and for supporting our youth to provide inclusive amenities in our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 841

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas on October 24, 2018, Canada Post issued a stamp marking the 100th anniversary of the First World War ending on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month; and

Whereas Larry and Kelly Burke, proprietors of Burke and Burke, submitted a design from their marketing company for the stamp that was selected over all the other submissions; and

Whereas stamps recognizing momentous events in Canada's history are significant cultural landmarks and mark significant events in the activities of Canada's philatelic community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing Larry and Kelly Burke for their professional awards and national recognition.

RESOLUTION NO. 842

By: Hon. Keith Colwell (Preston-Dartmouth)

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

Whereas Mr. Dakelle Brooks of East Preston, son of Maleetia Brooks and grandson of Kevin Brooks and Linda Clayton Brooks, won a full scholarship (Basketball) to the University of Prince Edward Island in 2017 to study for a Bachelor of Arts; and

Whereas he started his basketball career with the East Preston Pacers and went on to play on the Auburn Drive High School team; and

Whereas he received excellent coaching all throughout his career that enabled him to attain a key role on the UPEI team;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Mr. Dakelle Brooks on his many achievements and wish him continued success in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 843

By: Hon. Keith Colwell (Preston-Dartmouth)

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

Whereas Mr. Jace Colley of East Preston, son of William and Leslie Colley, has been named Atlantic Collegiate Athletic Association rookie of the year and All-Canadian last season; and

Whereas he played on Auburn High School's junior varsity team and now is a top-rated 6'7" wing player on the Holland College Hurricanes basketball team; and

Whereas he has received offers from Chicago State and Binghamton universities in the United States and has been contacted by a number of division one schools;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Mr. Jace Colley on his many achievements and wish him continued success in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 844

By: John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas the Valley Community Learning Association began in Kings County in 1989 as the Kings County Learning Association and is celebrating its 30th year as a non-profit organization that helps adults achieve their personal learning goals; and

Whereas Valley Community Learning Association has evolved into an organization that provides a forum for learners, community groups, instructors, tutors, publicly funded agencies, and businesses to enhance the literacy levels of our fellow community members and new immigrants in both Kings and Annapolis counties; and

Whereas Valley Community Learning Association members and volunteers work to raise awareness and understanding of the many literacy issues facing members of our community and work with individuals and groups to provide educational programs, advocacy and information to those seeking our assistance;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me congratulating The Valley Community Learning Association on 30 years of improving the lives of thousands of people in our Annapolis Valley Community through its many and varied programs and services.

RESOLUTION NO. 845

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas I congratulate this year's 'Curl for Cancer' event held in Liverpool, where eight teams raised just short of \$6,000; and

Whereas two of the junior curlers, Calley Conrad and Kolby Thompson, worked hard to get pledges and raised the amazing sum of \$1,552 between them;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate event co-ordinator Meghan MacAdams and all those who participated in the event, which raised the money for the Canadian Cancer Society for lung cancer research.

RESOLUTION NO. 846

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas in December teaching and support staff along with administrators at three schools in South Queens made it their mission to help many families struggling; and

Whereas in the days leading up to Christmas break approximately \$5,000 was raised by staff members, which enabled some of their students to have the Christmas they deserved;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend and thank staff members of Dr. J.C. Wickwire Academy, South Queens Middle School and Liverpool Regional High School for their generosity, caring and for going above and beyond for their students.

RESOLUTION NO. 847

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas I thank all those who gave their time for the benefit of the Queens County Food Bank on December 15, 2018 when we invited the community in Queens to cram an RCMP cruiser with food donations; and

Whereas I thank the Liverpool Superstore, Tim Hortons, the Queens County Community Choir, Liverpool Privateer Hockey Players and staff, Constable Duffney, Dick Henneberry, Peal the Elf, Al Steele, Annette Burke, Wendy and Rob James and Kawsie Paul and all the community who donated food and money;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank the community for generously donating 1,063 pounds of food and \$1,084 in cash and gifts cards to the Queens County Food Bank.