



House of Assembly  
Nova Scotia

## DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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### Second Session

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2019

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House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2019**

**Sixty-third General Assembly**

**Second Session**

**1:00 P.M.**

**SPEAKER**

Hon. Kevin Murphy

**DEPUTY SPEAKERS**

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, Brendan Maguire

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, I am going to bring the Speaker's Ruling on the point of privilege, the matter of interference with the judicial selection process.

**SPEAKER'S RULING:**

On Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, the honourable Premier rose on a point of privilege and stated that the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition and the House Leader for that caucus had provided the House with what he described as "misinformation that they should know was not true," during Question Period on the previous day, March 7<sup>th</sup>. He referred to several tabled documents.

The Premier stated that the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Official Opposition House Leader both suggested to the House that the Attorney General and the Justice Minister wrote to the committee to add a name to the list of persons recommended for the position of Chief Judge of the Provincial and Family Courts. At the centre of this is a letter dated July 19, 2018, from the Attorney General to the then Chief Justice of Nova Scotia. The Premier stated, "At no time in any of this documentation did the Attorney General say to add a name to the list."

Before reviewing the letter, I wanted to satisfy myself as to exactly what the two members from the Official Opposition had actually said, so I reviewed the video from both March 7<sup>th</sup> and March 8<sup>th</sup> Question Periods and noted the language used in the framing of their various questions. I noted that they said that the Attorney General had variously “directed,” “instructed,” or “forced” the judicial recruitment committee to add a name to the list.

I have reviewed the letter in question, and I have to confess that I did not see any direction to add a name to a list. The letter referred to the process and criteria for the appointment of Chief Judge and noted that terms of reference stated that the short list would contain a ranking of the candidates in the committee’s order of preference, and this would be accompanied by a précis of each. The letter goes on to request the ranking and one of the candidates’ précis.

I understand how the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Official Opposition House Leader have been characterizing the letter in question in their questions, but the letter does not direct anyone to add a name to the list, which was the point made by the Premier on March 8<sup>th</sup>.

As stated above, in raising this point of privilege, the Premier referred to “misinformation that they should know was not true.” In finding a *prima facie* case of a breach of privilege in a case like this, a Speaker has to consider whether what happened in the case amounted to a member “intentionally misleading the House.” I have the benefit of a lengthy ruling on this exact issue delivered on April 23, 2013, by then Speaker of this House, Gordie Gosse. I will refer to several paragraphs in his ruling. Speaker Gosse said:

“... the elements that need to be established by a committee when it is alleged that a Member is in contempt of the House for deliberately misleading the House. These are found in *O’Brien and Bosc* and are as follows: one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the Member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement, the Member intended to mislead the House. It should be pointed out that I do not have to find any of these elements to have existed, which is how some others have characterized this process, apparently based on a misreading of the reference in *O’Brien and Bosc*. The duty of the Speaker is limited to assessing whether the point presented is arguable on its face at first glance.

*Maingot* says that a Member who is raising a question of privilege is entitled to the benefit of the doubt that he or she has raised an arguable point. *Maingot* says at Page 227:

‘In the final analysis, in areas of doubt, the Speaker asks simply:

Does the act complained of appear at first sight to be a breach of privilege . . . or to put it shortly, has the Member an arguable point? If the Speaker feels any doubt on the question, he should leave it to the House.'

The Speaker's ruling does not extend to deciding whether a breach of privilege has in fact been committed. That is a question that must be decided by the House itself.

I am going to re-state a small portion of a ruling by former Speaker Fraser of the House of Commons, in which he was quoting a ruling of his predecessor, Speaker Jerome, found at page 3975 of *Hansard* for March 21, 1978, where Speaker Jerome quoted from a report of the United Kingdom Select Committee on Parliamentary Privilege. He stated:

' . . . It might be inferred that the test applied by the Speaker in deciding whether to give precedence over the orders of the day to a complaint of a breach of privilege . . . is, Does the act complained of appear to me at first sight to be a breach of privilege? Rigorously applied, it would mean that no complaint of breach of privilege could ever be entertained unless the Speaker was of the opinion that the act or conduct complained of was a breach of privilege . . .

Borderline cases and arguable ones would be excluded automatically because in such cases the Speaker could not say that he was of the opinion that the act or conduct which was the subject of complaint *prima facie* constituted a breach of privilege.

In my submission the question which the Speaker should ask himself . . . should be . . . has the Member an arguable point? If the Speaker feels any doubt on the question, he should . . . leave it to the House.'

In ruling whether a Member has raised a *prima facie* case of privilege the Speaker has to consider, on the evidence presented, whether the facts could amount to breach of privilege or a contempt of the House. In doing this the Speaker will also consider representations from other Members, including the Member who is alleged to have committed the breach or contempt. Speaker Milliken of the House of Commons has said that 'It is this element of deliberately seeking to mislead the House and not the presentation of information subject to differing interpretations that is key.'

In the case I have had presented to me as Speaker, no differing interpretation from that presented by the Leader of the Official Opposition, which presented an argument for intent, was offered to the House for its consideration. A statement by the Member that he or she did not intend to mislead the House will usually end such a matter, but that has not been offered to the House in this matter."

That is the end of the materials I have quoted from Speaker Gosse.



Based on the very simple test Speaker Gosse set out, which you will all recall was similar to the test I explained in my ruling on March 27<sup>th</sup>, the *prima facie* point of privilege appears to me to be arguable.

I am, however, left with a hurdle I have to overcome. Normally in the raising of a point of privilege, the member doing so proposes a resolution referring the matter to a committee. In our House that would be the Internal Affairs Committee. I note, however, that the Premier did not propose a motion when he raised this matter on March 8<sup>th</sup>, so I will ask him to do that in a moment.

If the Leader of the Official Opposition and his House Leader care to retract the allegations they made, then there may not be a need for a resolution, so I will grant them that opportunity before looking to the Premier on the question of a motion.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, thank you for your diligence in investigating the issue. I think the matter at hand is we looked at documentation, there were terms of reference that asked for a list of recommended candidates, accompanied by their précis. The committee responded with a list of candidates who applied, being two, and a list of recommended candidates, being one. It was my interpretation by looking at it that - I had no intent to mislead this House, and I certainly retract any statements that have given the indication that I was.

That was not my intent. I interpreted the information that was before me, and I apologize for any misunderstanding to that end.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, this matter has been on my mind I think because of the delay in the time you've taken - I know you've been considering it. It was on my mind to the point where I actually approached the Clerk of the House on some other matters and I raised this item because it's been on my mind that it has not been decided upon.

I will be happy to retract any comments I've made. I did not have any intention to mislead this House. The intention was to defend the independence of the judiciary. I had no interest at that time, and no interest today, in misleading the House. I would ask that you take that under consideration when making your decision.

THE SPEAKER: As the quotation from Speaker Parker's ruling said, a statement by the member that he or she did not intend to mislead the House will usually end such a matter.

[1:15 p.m.]

The House is bound to accept the word of a member with respect to themselves, and this is set out in *Beauchesne*, on Page 151, which says: “It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted.”

*Beauchesne* goes on to say, “On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.”

In this case, as Leader of the Official Opposition and the House Leader for the Official Opposition has each stated that they did not intend to mislead the House, it is my interpretation of the principle, stated in *Beauchesne*, that the House is bound to accept their words, thereby concluding this matter.

Just before we start the daily routine, the topic for late debate tonight, as submitted by the honourable member for Kings North is:

Therefore be it resolved that the government has failed to provide sufficient resources to the Valley Regional Hospital leading to delayed and cancelled surgeries and procedures.

That will be the late debate tonight at the moment of interruption. (Interruption)

I’ve been notified by the Chief Clerk that I misquoted Speaker Gosse and attributed that quote to Speaker Parker and it was, in fact, Speaker Gosse. My apologies.

We’ll begin the daily routine.

#### **PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS**

#### **PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

#### **TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

#### **STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

#### **GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

**RESOLUTION NO. 922**

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

Whereas investing in education is key to giving youth a head start in life; and

Whereas the Canada Learning Bond is a grant paid by the federal government providing between \$500 and \$2000 to eligible children for their post-secondary education, at no cost to families; and

Whereas DCS has partnered with the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program, Employment and Social Development Canada, Service Canada, the SmartSAVER community project, and Service Nova Scotia, to help Nova Scotian children from low- and modest-income families receive this free money for their post-secondary education through the Canada Learning Bond;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature encourage their constituents to visit the SmartSAVER website at [novascotiaclb.ca](http://novascotiaclb.ca) for more information on how to register for the Canada Learning Bond and to see a schedule for clinics that have been set up throughout the province where families can also go to register for this valuable program.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

HON. TONY INCE: Before I begin, may I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. INCE: I would ask all to look to the East Gallery where I have some delegates from the Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute: Sylvia Parris-Drummond; Gilbert Daye, who is also the son of our former Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Delmore “Buddy” Daye;

John Wedderburn; George Frempong; Tony Colaiacovo; and Thomas Henderson. Please, folks, give them a round of applause. (Applause)

I'd also like acknowledge the teachers who were involved: Kim Cain; Sonya MacKinnon; Terry Sampson; and Ben Sichel.

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

### **RESOLUTION NO. 923**

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

Whereas the Delmore "Buddy" Daye Learning Institute created a resource guide called *Black History Africa, the Caribbean and the Americas*, which explores many things including the continent of Africa, Africa as the birthplace of humanity, and the early African civilizations; and

Whereas the Black history resource guide also examines the resilience of Africans on their march to freedom, African Canadians since the second world war and African Nova Scotians living across the province; and

Whereas when we all acknowledge, learn and understand the truth about our shared African history, we will be able to facilitate positive change for the future of our province;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating the Delmore "Buddy" Daye Learning Institute on their resource guide and recognize the important work the institute does in creating educational change for African Nova Scotians and the community.

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 Communities Culture and Heritage.

**RESOLUTION NO. 924**

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

Whereas the month of April marks National Poetry Month and is a time to promote and bring awareness to the art of poetry; and

Whereas each year poetry month brings together libraries, schools, booksellers, publishers, literary organizations and poets from across the country to celebrate poetry and its important place in Canadian literature; and

Whereas poetry is a powerful art that can change the way we look at the world, while also helping to develop literary skills;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize National Poetry Month and the important role poetry plays in our culture.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill No. 135 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 8 of the Acts of 1992. The Nova Scotia Power Privatization Act, and Chapter 19 of the Acts of 1998. The Nova Scotia Power Reorganization (1998) Act. (Hon. Geoff MacLellan)**

THE SPEAKER: Ordered that the bill be read a second time on a future day.

**NOTICES OF MOTION****STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

**HENNESSEY, DAN - HON. COL.: VIDEO, *TIME TO REMEMBER* - THANKS**

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, Honorary Colonel Dan Hennessey has only been a Royal Canadian Legion member since 2008, but since he joined Branch No. 24 in Bridgewater, he has made quite a splash.

Last week as part of the fourth event of the Evenings @ Government House winter series, his video called Time to Remember was screened. This poignant project is a series of stories of the second world war told by 18 Nova Scotians veterans who lived them.

Dan completed the video project more than nine years ago, and he continues to share it with service groups, community groups, Army, Navy, and Air Cadet Corps, and to the Grade 5 class at Newcombville Elementary School where their Remembrance Day ceremony takes place each year.

This is an important video, and I'm glad Dan was able to show it to the audience at Government House.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**CURRIE, GLEN - LANDMARK EAST: 40<sup>th</sup> ANNIV. - CONGRATS.**

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, in my home community of Wolfville, there's a special place of learning for students with language and learning difficulties. Landmark East School has been changing the lives of Canadian and international students since it was founded in 1979.

While Landmark's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary is an achievement worthy of our recognition, so too is the remarkable contribution of one teacher who has been there from the beginning, Mr. Glen Currie.

Consider just a few of the contributions Mr. Currie has made to Landmark East over and above his teaching: he created a student store on campus, trained teachers in the supervision of students, developed a staff training manual, set up an after-hour team of physical education teachers, and developed a study hall program that is still in place to this day.

This is the gold standard of teaching. I would ask the members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Mr. Glen Currie for his 40 years of excellence and dedication at Landmark East School.

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

**C.B. WEST MIDGET AA HOCKEY: C.B. CUP - CONGRATS.**

KEITH BAIN: I rise today to congratulate the Cape Breton West Midget AA Hockey Team on winning the Midget AA Cape Breton Cup and advancing to Midget AA provincials on the weekend of April 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>.

Cape Breton West has two players from Baddeck, Josh Bennett and Carson Buchanan, as well as Dante Isadore and Keonate Isadore from Wagmatcook on the team.

As well as being part of the winning team, Josh Bennett was awarded Rookie All Star Forward, and Dante Isadore was awarded First Team All Star Forward.

I ask all the members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating the Cape Breton West Midget AA team and wish them every success at the Midget AA Provincials April 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**NAUGLER, VIC: YOUTH LDRSHIP. DEV. - THANKS**

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Vic Naugler from Bridgewater. Vic was presented with a Level 8 YMCA Youth Leadership Development Program certificate - the highest level that can be attained through this program.

Vic attended 124 leadership skills development sessions and volunteered a total of 390 hours. Highlights of his achievement include chairing a youth planning committee, creating and leading a “healthy well-being” session for his peers, participating as a panel member on a forum on youth sharing intimate images and cybersafety, and assisting with writing a Breaking the Silence project. In addition, he participated in a municipal social action project called, The Youth Alcohol Project.

YMCA youth coordinator Kim Whitman-Mansfield says that Vic exemplifies YMCA leadership. He is caring, honest, respectful, responsible, and recognizes the value of giving back to the community.

Vic truly is one of our young leaders of today and a future community leader of tomorrow. I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking Vic Naugler for his volunteer work and commitment to becoming a leader in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

**LEBLANC, ALYSSA: MASTER CHEF CAN. - CONGRATS.**

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: On April 8<sup>th</sup>, CTV will be airing Season 6 of Master Chef Canada. The culinary competition offers 18 home cooks a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to demonstrate their skills and passion as they compete for \$100,000 and the title of Canada's next Master Chef.

Three Nova Scotians have been chosen to compete and one resides in my own constituency of Argyle-Barrington. Alyssa LeBlanc lives in Tusket and worked for the Municipality of Argyle. After an accident that left her unable to work, she directed her energy into cooking and discovered her passion.

Alyssa says her dream is to continue to grow and learn as a cook and to travel and taste food from around the world. She hopes someday to have a cabin-style restaurant where she can serve wild game meat and homegrown produce.

Join me in congratulating Alyssa on being chosen to compete on Master Chef Canada and wish her continued success in the future.

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

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

PATRICIA ARAB: I'd like to have the members' attention towards the East Gallery where we are joined today by an extremely giving, driven, and remarkably talented friend of mine, Elsy Makhlouf. If she could please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

**MAKHLouF, ELSY: ACADEMIC/BUS. ACHIEVEMENTS - CONGRATS.**

PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding young lady who seemingly does it all.

Elsy Makhlouf is a fourth-year public relations student at Mount Saint Vincent University, as well as the founder and CEO of Lively Public Relations and Branding Inc.

Four years ago, Elsy left Lebanon to pursue her academic studies at the Mount. In addition to speaking Arabic, French, and Spanish fluently, Elsy worked hard to learn English. She continues to volunteer her time with several organizations and is actively involved in the Lebanese community.



On top of it all, Elsy is an incredibly talented singer and has performed at many events. While balancing her studies, Elsy works with local businesses to build their brand awareness and community connections. For her first client, she created an advertising strategy and developed print and digital promotional materials.

Her dedication to her work has made her business grow exponentially. Elsy continues to stun me with her ability to balance her studies, her business, her music, and her volunteerism.

[1:30 p.m.]

I ask the members of this House of Assembly to join me in wishing Elsy the best of luck in her next endeavours. I look forward to seeing what's in store for her next.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

### **WALK WITH A DOC: COM. HEALTH INITIATIVE - THANKS**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, Pictou County has become the latest chapter in a worldwide health organization. An internationally-recognized health initiative has been created in Pictou County, and participating is as easy as tying your shoes.

Dr. Brad MacDougall believes that physical activity is the best medicine. MacDougall, together with Active Pictou County, has brought Walk with a Doc to the county.

Walk with a Doc was started in 2005 by a cardiologist in Columbus, Ohio. Since then, approximately 500 chapters have started up worldwide, including three others in Nova Scotia.

Sally O'Neill, Active Pictou County's coordinator, feels the program fits well with their mandate of providing opportunities and reducing the barriers to participation in physical activity. Everyone is welcome to participate in this event.

I would like to have all members of this Legislature join me and thank Dr. Brad MacDougall and Sally O'Neill for providing this opportunity to improve the health of residents in Pictou County.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

### **DOIRON, GENEVIÈVE: LORAN SCHOLAR - CONGRATS.**

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, for the past 30 years, the Loran Scholars Foundation has awarded scholarships to young Canadians. This year the foundation

selected 35 exceptional recipients from a pool of over 5,000 applicants, based on evidence of character, commitment to serving their communities, and leadership potential.

Two young Nova Scotians are among the Loran Scholars this year. I'd like to congratulate Geneviève Doiron, who is enrolled at Charles P. Allen High School in Bedford. Geneviève is treasurer of her student council and sat on the provincial youth council. She is a program volunteer with Special Olympics and started a lunch-hour buddy program for students with special needs. She was a skill-builder at a provincial youth leadership conference and worked as a counsellor at a French-language summer camp. Geneviève is also a long-time soccer player.

Each Loran award is valued at \$100,000 and includes an annual stipend of \$10,000, matching tuition waiver, access to \$10,000 in funding for summer internships, one-on-one mentorship, and annual retreats and Scholar gatherings.

Congratulations to Geneviève on this very impressive award.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**BELLIVEAU, CLAIRE: DAUGHTERS OF THE VOTE - CONGRATS.**

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Claire Belliveau, a Dartmouth East resident. Claire is a strong advocate for young people in politics, and was recently selected by Equal Voice to participate in Daughters of the Vote in Ottawa.

Daughters of the Vote is a phenomenal event designed to engage and encourage young women in politics. Each delegate represents their riding in the House of Commons. Claire was also honoured by the opportunity to serve on the Status of Women Committee.

Claire's hard work and positive feminism are a benefit to everyone around her. The constituents of Dartmouth East are fortunate to have her working part-time in my office.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this House congratulate Claire Belliveau on a job well done.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

**MACDONALD, KENT: ACCOMPS., St. F.X. PRESIDENCY - CONGRATS.**

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, St. F.X. University President Kent MacDonald recently announced that he will be concluding his term as president at the end of July 2019. This will bring to a close his five years of service at one of our province's great universities.

He will leave behind a vibrant institution that has seen tremendous change during his tenure, including the most visible, the construction of the new Mulroney Institute of Government, and also the most impactful, the establishment of the Xaverian Scholarship and Bursary Fund.

Everyone in leadership leaves their mark, and among his many successes, Dr. MacDonald worked toward building stronger community, whether this was on campus celebrating graduation with the same young adults whose hands he had shaken four years earlier on their first day at university, or off campus as he served as a special adviser to the One Nova Scotia Coalition, building community across the province. One thing is certain: he will be missed.

I ask my colleagues in the House to join me in congratulating Dr. Kent MacDonald on his five years at St. F.X. and to wish him the very best in his future endeavours. Hail and health.

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

**GIANNAKOS, JOHN: PRESERVING SACKVILLE HIST. - RECOG.**

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge a local Sackville restaurant owner, John Giannakos. John first became a resident of Sackville at the age of 10. His parents bought a small building and transformed it into a local community favourite, Hellas Restaurant.

In 2013, John began a journey to explore Sackville's history, and as a result, now has accumulated over 40 hours of recorded personal stories from 25 long-time Sackville residents. He's also collected many pictures of the community that show how Sackville has changed and grown over the years. One of John's favourites is the Bomber Canteen, a fuselage of a twin-engine, ex-military Douglas DC-3 that once acted as a canteen, which operated in Sackville in the 1940s. John has begun to put this work together and is hoping to publish soon a collection of works in a new book he is calling *A New Look on the History of Sackville: Personal Recollections*.

I want to take a minute to recognize John and congratulate him on helping to preserve the history of Sackville and keep history in Sackville alive.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Go ahead.

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, in the gallery opposite, I would like to bring the members' attention to a guest we have, Ronald Crowther, who is a Cape Breton-Northside native. He is a long-term care worker at Harbourstone Enhanced Care facility. He is a proud CUPE member. He is one of the founding members of Capers 4 Healthcare, and he was our candidate in the 2017 election. We welcome Ron to the House and I ask that the members give him a warm response. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

**LAKE ECHO LIONESSE CLUB: 40<sup>th</sup> CHARTER - CONGRATS.**

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the Lake Echo Lioness Club, which was chartered in 1979 by a group of women dedicated to serving others in the community. The Lake Echo Lioness Club is a volunteer service organization that supports charities, such as the local food bank, Terry Fox, and individuals in need. The club responds wherever and whenever there is a need in the community. The Lake Echo Lioness Club will be celebrating the occasion of its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary on May 4, 2019.

I want to recognize and congratulate the Lake Echo Lioness Club for their dedication and ongoing efforts to make their community a place for all residents.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**BLENKHORN, WAYNE: VOLUN. OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.**

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, Port Williams Volunteer of the Year Wayne Blenkhorn is the chairperson of the Port Williams Remembrance Day Observance Committee. Wayne was inspired to form this committee 13 years ago due to his 34 years of service in the Canadian Armed Forces, which included one tour in the Middle East as a peacekeeper. This committee is a collaborative effort between village staff, veterans, and volunteer groups, and Wayne has been guiding the annual service over the years and it has been growing in recognition and attendance.

Please join me in recognizing Wayne Blenkhorn as Port Williams Volunteer of the Year and for his dedication to his community and our veterans.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

**RECIPIENTS: VOLUN. OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.**

GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, volunteers choose the kind of community they want to live in to make it better for everyone. Today, I rise to recognize three Provincial Volunteer Award recipients.

Roger Outhouse of the Municipality of Digby has volunteered with such groups as the Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre, the Islands Historical Society, and is a founding member of Digby's Tourism Association. He is passionate about preserving the area's beauty and works with various trail groups.

Lonnie McNeill of Clare volunteers for the Clare Special Olympics, from sitting on the board and planning fundraisers, to coaching curling and bocci. His continued involvement is fuelled by the inspiration he gets from the athletes. He also volunteers at the local golf club, the Gran Fondo, and his church.

Ron Van Tassel of Digby sits on the board of Admiral Digby Library and Historical Society and the Digby Pines Golf Club. He guides at the museum and is the golf club's treasurer. A former town councillor and school board member, he continues to be involved with many groups and is always ready to help out.

I stand today to thank them for all their volunteer work and their commitment to our community.

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

#### **RICHARDSON, CARLY & PAYTON: HOSP. DONATION - COMMEND**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge two special young ladies: seven-year-old Carly Richardson and her five-year-old sister, Payton Richardson, from Coxheath. These two sisters are now frequently making donations to the Cape Breton Regional Hospital Foundation. Recently, they brought bags of blankets to donate to the patients in palliative care at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital. Their mom, Courtney Richardson, says her daughters wanted to help following the recent death of their grandfather, who spent time in palliative care in a Halifax hospital.

I stand today to proudly thank Carly and Payton Richardson, as well as their parents, for making such kind gestures. This is what makes we Capers so proud of our youth. Great job, girls.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

#### **PALMER, CINDI: VOLUN. AWARD - TRIBUTE**

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, on Monday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, I had the honour of attending the Provincial Volunteer Awards where Cyndi Palmer of Berwick was posthumously recognized for her remarkable and incomparable volunteer efforts.

When you think of the word "community," Cyndi Palmer comes to mind. Her volunteer resumé is extensive and includes the following titles: past president and a

member of the Berwick Volunteer Fire Department Ladies' Auxiliary; past-president and a member of the Berwick School Band Parent Association; past-president of the Berwick Gala Days Committee; and she was also a 4-H leader. Cyndi also dedicated her time to volunteering at the Annapolis Valley Catholic churches. Due to her displayed passion for community development, enhancing the lives of others, Cyndi has inspired many people to follow in her footsteps and give back to their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I request all members of the House join me in thanking Cyndi Palmer for her incredible service and dedication to her volunteer work which has inevitably impacted many lives and made her community an even better place.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

**HUSKILSON, JENNIE: VOLUN. OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.**

KIM MASLAND: The Municipality of Shelburne has chosen Jennie Huskilson as its Provincial Volunteer this year.

In January 2016, Jenny suffered a loss like no other when her beautiful daughter, Carmen Faith, passed away at the age of five, after having spent much of her too-short life in hospital.

Jennie made the decision to turn this loss into something positive. She is at the forefront of the family's Pay it Forward in Memory of Carmen Faith Huskilson initiative, which encourages others to give back with random acts of kindness, donations, and fundraisers. Jennie also sits on the boards of the Roseway Hospital and the Shelburne County Memorial Arena Association.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in commending Jennie for all her work and congratulating her on this well-deserved recognition.

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

**GAMMON, ALANA: FOUNDING MOTHERS AWARD - CONGRATS.**

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Alana Gammon of Sheet Harbour. She is the first annual recipient of the newly founded LEA Place Women's Resource Centre's Founding Mothers Award. The award was created to honour the women who, over three decades ago, developed the organization that has grown to LEA Place Women's Resource Centre, an organization that provides guidance to women of all ages in the greater Sheet Harbour area.

Alana Gammon was nominated by Joanne Lambert who described Alana as the go-to person for volunteering. She has a great heart, never complains, and never looks for recognition for the many projects of which she selflessly contributed. Alana is an active member of the Lions Club, she manages the Eastern Shore Lifestyle Centre Society, and participated in many other local communities dedicated to community improvement and preservation.

Mr. Speaker, I commend and congratulate the LEA Place Women's Resource Centre for establishing this wonderful new award, and Alana Gammon for her continued efforts toward the enhancement of the community of Sheet Harbour.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

**MACLEAN, ADENA:  
CLIFFORD ST. YOUTH CTR. INTL. DONATION - CONGRATS.**

EDDIE ORRELL: I rise today to recognize the Clifford Street Youth Centre for partnering with a Dominican youth centre.

Adena MacLean, an outreach worker at Clifford Street, was taking a Caribbean vacation with her husband, and the kids at the youth centre wanted to know about the place she was visiting in the Dominican. The Northside children wanted to send school supplies, candy, and other items to the children in Puerto Plata. Adena found a youth centre and met with staff and children - communication and relationship between the two youth groups has been blossoming.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Adena for opening this door and allowing this international relationship to germinate.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

**BEYDOUN, FATIMA: DAUGHTERS OF THE VOTE - CONGRATS.**

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, today 11 young women from Nova Scotia are in Ottawa, taking their seats in Parliament as part of Equal Voice Canada's Daughters of the Vote initiative.

Representing the federal riding of Halifax is Fatima Beydoun of Armdale. Fatima is a second-year student at Dalhousie University where she studies Environment, Sustainability and Society, International Development, and French.

Fatima's activism and community involvement is vast. She sits on the Student Union Council, serves as the chair of Advocacy for the Black, Indigenous, People of Colour Caucus at Dalhousie.

She is a strong and passionate voice for environmental, social and racial justice, both at home and abroad, having long been active with Amnesty International.

In March her peers at Dal confirmed her as DSU's incoming Board of Governor's representative. I know Fatima will make a big contribution to today's Daughters of the Vote proceedings, and I want to wish her and all participants great success. Thank you.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**LEBLANC, SOPHIA: ACT OF HEROISM AWARD - COMMEND**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to recognize Sophia LeBlanc from Amherst. Sophia is only seven years old and back in November she helped her family when they suffered a terrible car crash. She was brave enough to go and seek help while her mother and siblings were still in the vehicle.

Sophia was presented with the Act of Heroism Award from the RCMP on January 16<sup>th</sup>. This young girl was able to stay calm and brave during such a time of distress. This allowed her to find the help that her family needed and aided in their safety.

To be so brave at a young age is rare. Please join me today in thanking this young woman for her courage.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

**OTMAR, ADAM: PLANT-BASED CAFÉ - CONGRATS.**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize Adam Otmar, a resident of Hubley. A graduate from Sir John A. Macdonald High School, Adam excelled academically throughout high school while concurrently participating in the most elite hockey and soccer teams.

Adam was selected as one of six outstanding students from Atlantic Canada to pursue a commerce degree at Queen's University through the D&R Sobey Atlantic Scholarship. The scholarship annually awards \$75,000 over the course of four years of study. Successful candidates are selected for their scholarship based on academic ability, creative and original thinking, involvement in school and community activities, and leadership qualities.

Upon his return to Nova Scotia, Adam purchased an antique fire truck, affectionately known as Frankie the Fire Truck, from an online government auction in Ontario. Over the past few months Adam has been working to convert the truck into



Halifax's first 100 per cent plant-based café. Adam is planning on opening the doors to the café this Spring. So, if you're around keep an eye out for Frankie, she's pretty hard to miss.

I ask the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Adam for his entrepreneurial spirit and for choosing to stay in Nova Scotia to build a successful business.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

**THERIAULT, GLENN: CAREER ADVANCEMENT - CONGRATS.**

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Glenn Theriault on his new position as business development officer for the Church of the Nazarene, Canada Atlantic District. Glenn will be in charge of operations and administration of Big Lake Camp as well as developing projects across that district that will support both the local churches and the district.

Glenn is a graduate of Saint Mary's University and has also completed further business, financial and operational training through CSI Investment Funds of Canada, Harvard Mentorship program and programs at Vancouver Community College. His career has placed him at different levels of management over the last 25 years.

Please join me in congratulating Mr. Glenn Theriault on his new direction and career path, which will find him great success.

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

**DENYES, SCOTT - MEDALLIST:  
SPECIAL OLYMPICS, CAN. GAMES - CONGRATS.**

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give congratulations to Beaver Bank's Scott-Robert Denyes. Scott skated to a silver medal performance at the Special Olympics in Singles, Level 3 Free Program at the Canadian Games in Red Deer, Alberta.

Scott's hard work and training paid off when he performed to the song *Tears from Heaven* by Eric Clapton, his grandmother's favourite song. Scott dedicated his performance to his grandmother who supported and encouraged him through his early years and passed recently from cancer. The pink in his competition outfit and the pink ribbon on the front represented her fight with breast cancer.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Scott on his well-earned silver medal and wish him all the best in future competitions.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Queens-Shelburne.

**STEWART-SMITH, CRYSTAL: OUTREACH REC. - THANKS**

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Crystal Stewart-Smith, one of the amazing recreation programmers at Queens Manor in Liverpool, who is doing wonderful work with patients at Queens General Hospital as part of the outreach recreation service.

Twice a week Crystal provides patients with the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities specific to their needs and preferences. These activities include darts, washer toss, socializing, and listening to music.

Funded by the Queens General Hospital Foundation, the outreach recreation service is thriving and is a definite benefit to the patients at the hospital.

I applaud and thank Crystal for her compassion, commitment and tireless work at the manor, the hospital and in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

**ALL-BLACK VOLUN. FIRE DEPT.: COM. SERV. - HONOUR**

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the Upper Hammonds Plains all-Black volunteer fire department, established in 1966, which was Canada's first all-Black volunteer fire department.

In 1970, the volunteers constructed Fire Station #51 after the land was donated by local resident Elizabeth Mantley. The firefighters served as an integral part of the community, not only serving in emergency services but also helping to raise funds for various cultural events for the African Nova Scotian community. Their ranks included Gina Jones-Wilson, the first Black woman in Nova Scotia to achieve a Level 1 firefighting certification.

Despite the closure of Station #51 in 2013 to form the Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency Service, it still stands as the only all-Black volunteer fire department celebrated in Canada.

I would like all members of the House of Assembly to join me in honouring this team of diligent volunteers and honouring them for all of their contributions to the Hammonds Plains and broader African Nova Scotian community.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish Ms. Gina Jones-Wilson a happy retirement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

**RYAN, MURRAY - SUPR. CT. JUSTICE: 100<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES**

EDDIE ORRELL: I rise today to congratulate retired Supreme Court Justice Murray Ryan on his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

One of nine children, he attended St. Francis Xavier University and played centre on the varsity hockey team, winning the Maritime Championship in 1944. He served during the war in the Navy, and afterwards, he obtained his law degree at Dalhousie. After opening his firm, Murray became a County Court Judge, and later a Supreme Court Justice, before retiring at the age of 75. Murray has always been active in his community.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Judge Ryan for his years of service. To share his secret for a long life, he says to remain active and have a positive attitude.

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

**STEVENS, CHAD - SKIP: FIREFIGHTERS CURLING - CONGRATS.**

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Skip Chad Stevens, who once again led his Chester volunteer firefighters curling team to first place in the Nova Scotia firefighters competition.

Skip Stevens - with lead Dave Richardson, second Daniel Jessome, third Dennis Stevens, and director Mike Hennessey - then took his foursome to the 2019 Canadian Firefighters Curling Championship in Kelowna, B.C. Team Nova Scotia won eight of their 10 matches and brought home the bronze medal.

Over the years, the Chester firefighters curling team has brought home many provincial and national medals. They won silver at the nationals in Regina and bronze in 2009 in Charlottetown. In fact, it was Skip Stevens who gave Nova Scotia its first Canadian firefighters gold curling title after defeating Saskatchewan in 2016.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the Assembly to congratulate Team Stevens on their firefighters curling championship gold medal and the Canadian national bronze medal and wish them well in their future competitions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**GOULD, DAN/COISH, GLADYS: CONSTIT. ASSISTS. - THANKS**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to take a moment to thank two very important people in my life and in our community: my constituency assistants Dan Gould and Gladys Coish.

Together they work with compassion, patience, empathy, and kindness with citizens who seek help through my MLA office. Dan works full-time and recently lost his mother very unexpectedly. Despite this very difficult time in his life, he continues to serve our community and my office in helping others. Gladys works part-time and sees her father every day in long-term care, spends time helping him every day, yet makes a commitment to help me and local area citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very grateful for both of them and wanted to take an opportunity to share this with you and others here in this House.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

TAMMY MARTIN: In the gallery opposite, I would like to welcome to the House some very important members of our community in Nova Scotia who provide care through EHS and look after us every day: Chad Drover, a paramedic in HRM; Brie MacIsaac, the PR officer for IUOE Local 727; and Michael Nickerson, the president of IUOE Local 727.

Welcome to the House, and thank you for everything that you do for us and all Nova Scotians every day. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**SELIG, GREG: VOLUN. OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.**

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Greg Selig of New Germany who is the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg's Provincial Volunteer of the Year.

Greg, a retired teacher of New Germany Rural High, spearheaded numerous extracurricular activities at the school while teaching. He also was an original committee member that fundraised and built the New Germany and Area Medical Centre, and on the committee that organized the centre's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration this past September.

Greg is highly involved in the New Germany Area Promotion Society, organizes the lighting of the community Christmas tree, and started the New Germany Garden Club. He established the New Germany Health and Wellness Expo and the New Germany Farmers' Market.

He has spent several years on the boards of Rosedale Nursing Home and the Lunenburg County Sexual Health Centre. Greg has established a variety of community

groups and volunteered with so many organizations throughout the area that a minute is not long enough to include it all in a member's statement.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and the members of this House of Assembly please join me in congratulating Greg on his Provincial Volunteer Award and thank him for his numerous contributions to the New Germany area.

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

**HANSON, DANNIE: LIFETIME ACH. AWARD - TRIBUTE**

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to acknowledge the late Dannie Hanson on receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 21<sup>st</sup> Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture Minister's Conference held recently in Halifax. Dannie was the longtime Louisbourg Seafoods vice-president of sustainability. He passed away suddenly last summer, and Dannie's brother, Walter, accepted the award on Dannie's behalf.

As his company bio suggested, Dannie handled community development and strategic planning and worked with the federal, provincial, and municipal governments on behalf of Louisbourg Seafoods. Dannie's passing has left a large void that can never be filled according to Jim Kennedy, who is the owner of Louisbourg Seafoods. As many friends are saying, Dannie was the biggest promoter of Cape Breton, and he will be sadly missed.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to also say that Dannie Hanson was a friend of mine and he is sorely missed by myself and his many friends and family.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

**PIERCE, GRAHAM: COM. VOLUN. - COMMEND**

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, on Adult Learners' Week I would like to recognize a man from my riding who is helping others to succeed in Clayton Park West.

Graham Pierce is an outstanding volunteer who gives his time to multiple organizations. He has tutored at the Keshen Goodman Library for the last six years and has many roles at the library. He works with the English Language Learning Program (ELL) for those who may be new to the English language, and the Adult Literacy Program for those wishing to obtain their GED.

Graham volunteers at the QEII Hospital as a lobby guide and as a volunteer ambassador. He also delivers meals to those in Clayton Park West and beyond with the Meals on Wheels Program. Graham enjoys helping people and says that in order to be part of a great community everyone must take on the responsibility of making it great.

Mr. Speaker, would this House of Assembly join me in applauding Graham for his countless hours of volunteer work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**COOK, DARRYL: SOVEREIGN'S MEDAL - CONGRATS.**

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Darryl Cook of Bridgewater. Darryl was presented with the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers on October 25, 2018, at a ceremony held at Government House in Halifax.

The Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, Nova Scotia's Lieutenant Governor presented the medal on behalf of the Queen and all Nova Scotians. This medal honours exceptional Canadian volunteers who have made a significant and continued contribution to their community.

Darryl served 20 years in the Canadian Volunteer Income Tax Program. After serving the RCMP for 38 years, he volunteered 23 years in the RCMP Veterans' Association and is a member of the Bridgewater Branch 24 Royal Canadian Legion for 17 years. He is currently the Zone 13 Commander of the Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia Nunavut Command.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in recognizing the volunteer service, dedication and commitment that Darryl Cook has given his community.

[2:00 p.m.]

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**PREM. - PARAMEDICS: WORKING/NO CONTRACT - ACCEPTABLE?**

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, paramedics have been working without a contract now for four years. Paramedics want to hear that they'll finally be treated with respect and given the priority that they deserve.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Does the Premier think it's acceptable for paramedics to be asked to go to work every day under some of the most stressful conditions possible without a contract for four years?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): No, I do not believe it's acceptable that any of our contracts are lapsed by that length of time. One of the things that has become chronic here in Nova Scotia is contracts that are lapsed for a number of years before we actually get to a second contract.

It would be my hope that we could come to an agreement with paramedics. I want to express my great appreciation for the work they do; we want to express that in being able to negotiate a contract with them that reflects their desires and the province's ability to pay. At the same time, I also want to make sure that other contracts that are running out in this province need to get to the bargaining table so that we can find a resolution as quickly as possible.

TIM HOUSTON: Four years, Mr. Speaker. This government's been in place for six years. Four years without a contract, and today health care professionals of all varieties were gathered outside in the inclement weather we had today. They were gathered outside this House to express their frustration with the state of health care in this province. They shared their stories and experiences for situations that they encounter at work and how difficult it can be for them at work.

When we've raised some of these issues, the minister yesterday said we focus too much on the problems and we should focus on the good news stories. We'd love to do that, but the issue is that the system is breaking down on so many levels.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Does the Premier think that it's just health care professionals and Opposition members being too negative and that we all just need an attitude shift to improve health care in the province?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I indeed thank all those health care providers across the province who, day in and day out, respond to the needs of our families to ensure that when people enter the health care system, they talk about the great service they are receiving, the world class service they are receiving, from our health care providers.

I understand the frustration that would be felt by paramedics around a contract that has been not solved for four years - we'll continue to work to find a resolution to that. It in no way reflects our belief in what they're doing and the hard work they're doing. I believe if they look at this budget, there's a number of investments in it to continue to make sure we deal with some of the issues that they have talked about.

They are part of the solution, as the honourable member would know. They are working in some of our CECs across the province today. We also believe it's with their insight and expertise that we'll be able to deal with the off-load times in our community and we look forward to solving those problems with them.

TIM HOUSTON: It's time for action on some of these issues. Health care professionals are worried, they're concerned. Nova Scotians are worried and concerned - and I heard from a family this week. A gentleman drove his mother from CBRM up to Halifax for an 11:30 a.m. appointment, was on the bridge at 10:00 a.m., and got a phone call that the appointment was cancelled because the machine was broken. Mr. Speaker, an \$11 billion budget before this House and yet the health care system is literally breaking down in so many different areas.

People need to understand that this government gets it; that this government understands the issues and understands the depths of the crisis we're facing. I know this government has been very reluctant to acknowledge the state of health care in this province.

I'd just like to ask the Premier: Does the Premier have any more evidence, even based on the rally today, that health care in this province is in a severe state of crisis?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want him to know that we hear some of the challenges from our own constituents that are being faced in the health care system; we also hear from them many of the positive experiences they have. We know many of them are having challenges around primary care and as we solve that issue in one part of our province, it appears in another. It's happening in my own constituency, as it happens.

I think in order to have an informed debate, one that is respectful of all the challenges associated - that somehow the line that a machine broke at 10:30 and the Minister of Health and Wellness of the government should understand and be able to anticipate the machine breaking - in actual fact we've continued to make investments (Interruption). Mr. Speaker, I listened to the question and I think it's important that the people in our gallery get a chance to hear the Premier talk about health care.

The fact of the matter is, that is a very poor example. That is a very poor example, there are real challenges. The men and women who are in the gallery talk about the off-load times. That's what we're trying to solve. I think reasonable Nova Scotians would not blame the government for a machine breaking down when it's repaired and up and running again. We've made investments in health care infrastructure, but there are challenges, and we want to work with those who have a constructive solution to those challenges.

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

#### **PREM. - YARMOUTH MLA: CONDUCT COMPLAINTS - RESPOND**

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we became aware of two allegations of aggressive and inappropriate conduct by the member for Yarmouth against former members of the House. In the emails to you, Mr. Speaker, both these experiences, both



complainants made reference to the Premier's having been made aware of what had taken place.

The Premier has spoken just now to media about how he does not feel that he had been, in fact, made aware of this. The source of the statement that he had been made aware of these complaints at the time is Maureen MacDonald, the former Leader of our Party, the former Minister of Finance, and former Minister of Health and Wellness.

Is the Premier alleging that Maureen MacDonald and the two complainants in this situation are not providing accurate representations of the truth?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I am in no way reflecting and making comment on what those members said. What I am very clearly telling the honourable member is at no time, at no time, has anyone spoken to me about a physical contact between any of my members of my caucus or anyone else in this Chamber. I have been spoken to about the enthusiasm of some of our members but at no time . . . (Interruption) Let me be clear, at no time has anyone contacted me about a physical altercation with any of my members.

I want to tell the honourable member I took this issue very seriously. Tuesday morning, first thing I asked my executive assistant who has been with me since 2008 to ensure and look for any communications between the two former members and their two Leaders - it was also the former Premier as well as the Interim Leader at that time when these allegations were being made - look for any information in my office and in my constituency office. At the same time I went to the person who works in my office who has handled correspondence since 2012 to identify any issues associated with that.

There has been no communication issue around this particular issue and at no time has anyone come to me around an issue of physical altercation with any of my members. If they had, let me be clear - that member would know, this caucus would know, and indeed Nova Scotians would know.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, last week when a motion was put to refer allegations of aggressive and inappropriate conduct against the member for Yarmouth, to put these allegations to the House Committee on Internal Affairs, the Liberals used their majority to vote that referral down. In our view, that decision lacked wisdom and we opposed it but the decision to block the reference to the House committee seems even less prudent today in light of yesterday's allegations.

In light of new information brought forward yesterday by former members of the House, will the Premier now support a reference to the Internal Affairs Committee of these allegations of inappropriate conduct against the member for Yarmouth?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The member for Yarmouth, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development continued to talk about his passion when it comes to defending his constituents and expressing himself. I fully support the minister. At no time has anyone brought to me any issue or allegation of physical contact with any members of our team. At no time would I stand for that, so let me be clear about this. At no time has anyone brought that to me. The issue was brought before the House last week, it was voted on, and we're looking forward to continuing to govern this province.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I want to register my disappointment at reading reports of the statement issued by the Premier's Office in response to yesterday's allegations. In that Premier's Office statement, the member for Yarmouth states his view that, in contrast with his more elevated approach, "Of late, some members of the Opposition are more interested in coordinated personal attacks." I will table that.

Mr. Speaker, this is a statement in which the Premier's Office and the member for Yarmouth are diminishing the complainants in this case. Now surely, if there's one thing that is known about responding in a responsible way to allegations of inappropriate or aggressive conduct, it is that diminishing complainants is never a path that anyone should follow.

Will the Premier apologize for diminishing those who, yesterday, came forward with their experiences?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for raising the question. As I said to his second question, Mr. Speaker, when this issue was brought to my attention on Monday night, the emails that were forwarded not only to me, to him, but to the Leader of the Official Opposition and we were copied on an email that was sent to you. I took this issue very seriously, Mr. Speaker.

At no time had anybody contacted me directly about a contact of any of my members when it comes to physical contact. But I took it a step further. I continued to make sure that I went through the entire record from those former two members as well as the two Leaders that were currently leading the party at the time, to find out if there had been any information sent to me.

Mr. Speaker, there was no information there and I continued to go even further, to go into my own constituency office email to identify whether or not something had been brought to my attention. There was no information there.

I am going to continue to make sure that we listen to what the honourable member says. I'm not questioning whether they had an experience; what I am telling you is, nobody, nobody brought a physical contact of any of my colleagues to my attention.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

### **H&W - PREGNANCY SUPPORTS: CUTS - EXPLAIN**

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. In 2015, in-person prenatal classes were ended and replaced with an online course. That online course has since been cut, making Nova Scotia the only province in Atlantic Canada that doesn't offer some form of universal prenatal education, as explained in the CBC article that I will table.

Mr. Speaker, if you pair that with the ongoing issues regarding midwives in the province, lack of doctors, lack of nurses, it's making it quite difficult to have a baby in Nova Scotia.

My question for the minister: What supports are being offered to pregnant women to help prepare for the birth of their children?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear to the member that the work that the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK do when evaluating programs and services that they offer, that they do that on an ongoing basis as has already been publicly communicated by the health authorities.

They've reviewed the programs that were in place previously. They felt that the resources and the investments to have the best health outcomes was to provide targeted supports, particularly enhancing those supports, for those most vulnerable.

I want to also assure the member and all Nova Scotians that there are still opportunities if Nova Scotians have questions or need supports. Our public health professionals and our public health and wellness department can provide information, advice and help navigate to resources to support those with prenatal needs.

KARLA MACFARLANE: It makes it very challenging for those individuals that don't have any doctors. If you do have a doctor, we're hearing from Doctors Nova Scotia that they're having to tell these individuals, go Google it. Yet, how often do we all go into our doctor's offices and they say, don't Google that, that will just get you paranoid and worked up.

So, you know, the minister is quoted as saying that the decision to cut the online class wasn't based on cost; but it's hard to understand what else it could be based on. Again, Doctors Nova Scotia reaffirms that cutting the program was the wrong choice.

When you're expecting a baby, your mind is going in a thousand directions a mile a minute, trying to prepare. This government has eliminated any resource that would have helped ease even a small amount of that stress.

My question is: Will the minister tell this House where he expects pregnant women to turn for prenatal education?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. As the member noted, with respect to changes in the delivery of supports for prenatal information and support services, the Nova Scotia Health Authority may review.

[2:15 p.m.]

When I say that it wasn't about the money or the cost of the program, Mr. Speaker, what I mean is that they were looking to ensure that the investments they make to support prenatal care were directed at programs and services that they believed were going to provide the best outcomes for Nova Scotians. They have made changes. They continue to invest. There's no change to the budget for providing support and services, but they have redirected the target of those supports and services to other areas to achieve better outcomes for Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

#### **COM. SERV. - ADOPTION RECORDS: POLICY CHANGE - CONSULT.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Services. Nova Scotia is now the only province in Canada with closed adoption records. The Adoption Council of Canada believes that sealed adoption records perpetuate secrecy and shame within adoption. For years, the minister has spoken firmly against calls from advocates to move toward a system of open adoption records in the province. However, a few weeks ago, the minister said in a radio interview that her department would begin consultations on this issue.

Does the minister think it was appropriate to announce this policy change for the first time in a morning interview rather than speaking directly to stakeholders?

HON. KELLY REGAN: In fact, the radio interview was prompted by a letter that I sent to a stakeholder on this particular issue.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'm glad to hear that answer. Adopted individuals and birth parents should not have different rights based on the province in which they live. Our caucus supports open adoption records within a framework of safeguards developed in consultation with stakeholders and advocacy organizations like those implemented in other provinces.

Will the minister tell us when meaningful consultation with stakeholders and advocacy organizations will take place and when legislation to open adoption records in Nova Scotia will be tabled?

KELLY REGAN: This process will be led by a subject matter expert. There will be a discussion paper released so that people who are contacting us and people we are talking to will be able to understand the difference between various adoption systems.

I do want to correct one thing the honourable member has said. She has said that we have a closed adoption system. It is not entirely closed. Similarly, other adoption systems are not entirely open because, in every case, there is some form of a veto, just so the honourable member understands that - number one.

Number two, I would also note that we expect consultations to take place later this year with legislation to follow.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

### **LAE - ACADIA UNIVERSITY: EXTRA FUNDING - REASONS**

EDDIE ORRELL: My question is to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. Since 2017, the minister has taken heat for his government's explanations around a series of extra payments to universities. In 2017, the minister explained that additional funding to Acadia was issued because the school was negatively impacted by the 2008 funding formula, and I'll table that.

This week, we learned that that wasn't the only reason. According to a consultant's report, additional funding was required because of significant debt and a pension plan left under water by the recession.

My question to the minister is: When the extra funding came to light in 2017, why did he place most of the blame on a previous government's funding formula instead of explaining the actual factors?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, what I explained was the actual factor. The underlying reason Acadia took on debt was because they didn't have enough money because their funding was cut. If their funding wasn't cut, they wouldn't have taken on so much debt and then been drowned by interest payments.

EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, in this article I just tabled, it says just the opposite. Every time these extra payments to universities come up, I feel like the story changes a little bit. If payments were made without full public disclosure, it's because the funding formula was bad. If the funding formula wasn't bad, it's because the institution worked really hard to turn things around and deserves a break. If some universities received a break but others didn't, that's just because they all have different challenges. Forgive me if I struggle to believe the minister this time.

If any provincial universities were facing a fiscal position similar to that of Acadia 10 years ago, would we ever know?

LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, at no time did I lie, as the member is insinuating. What I did do is, I said . . . (Interruptions)

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

LABI KOUSOULIS: I'll carry on when the heckling stops, Mr. Speaker.

As I have said, our universities have faced challenges with funding. It goes back to the MOU, it goes to the 10 per cent cut the New Democratic Party imposed on them. What we have done in the four universities that have received extra funding - we did go in; we had a forensic audit done by a third party in every instance. We actually looked at ways the universities could save money.

Many of the universities took very difficult steps. Many of them did not fill positions that had been vacant; many of the universities sold assets. Mr. Speaker, when we felt that everything had been exhausted by the universities, we topped them up, which I think is wonderful because it shows how much we value the universities while 10 of our universities, as well as our colleges in the province, because they are an economic driver, they help employ our youth and they educate our youth.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

### **LAE - UNIVERSITIES: MOU CONSULTATIONS - CONDUCT**

EDDIE ORRELL: I must say, Mr. Speaker, I'm offended to believe that the minister has just called me something I know, in my heart of hearts, that I have never done in my life in this House.

As the minister would be well aware, the current memorandum of understanding between the province and the universities is just about to expire. Over the last few years I've met with plenty of students concerned about the affordability of universities in the province. Many are going to be paying for their degrees for years or even decades to come. Considering how much they are on the hook for a lot of them, they feel they should have more money, more say in how these MOUs are formed.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: What specific consultation did his department conduct in preparation for the upcoming MOU with universities?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: I'd like to thank the member for the question. It highlights the say that students do have, which is quite significant in this province. Our

department meets with student representatives from every university, as well as student groups four times a year, as a department. I, myself, meet with them as well.

Mr. Speaker, our students are actually represented on the board of governors of all the universities across the province, so they have a say right at the table. We have an MOU that we are working on with universities. To me it is also a concern about affordability for our students. That's why in this budget I brought forward, through the budget process and it had full support of our government, to actually make our Nova Scotia student loans fully forgivable upon graduation. For low-income Nova Scotians this means, essentially, they have not only free tuition, but even a little bit more money than free tuition. I think that's fantastic.

EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the last MOU was intended to help maintain a quality, accessible, and sustainable university sector. I can table that article.

This has not been experienced in most universities over the life of this government. Nearly half of the province's degree-granting institutions have been in such dire shape that they needed emergency bailouts just to maintain services and avoid liquidating their reserves. This is usually after they have increased the tuition as much as possible and cut anywhere they can.

My question to the minister is: As the financial picture for many of the province's universities declined over the last MOU, how will the minister's approach to funding differ this time around?

LABI KOUSOULIS: In an MOU, as we roll it out with our universities, it's even across all universities. What the member is pointing out is that four universities received extra funding. That is because those four universities were in a unique situation. What that reflects is our government's support of our universities, our recognition of the important work they do.

Mr. Speaker, they do excellent work. Every one of them is important and that's why we continue to support them not only in funding outside the MOUs, such as the instances the member brings up, but we have supported capital infrastructure, we have supported them with building new buildings. As we have capacity in this government, we'll continue to do so, because the universities are a huge economic driver in the province. They are one of the primary reasons why our youth are remaining in Nova Scotia, whereas previously they were leaving.

In this government we truly, truly value our universities, our relationships with them, as well as the students.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

**LAE - STUDENT DEBT: FORGIVENESS ELIGIBILITY - CONSULTATIONS**

EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, if those universities were as valuable as he says, as the minister says, they would all be treated equally. We would be open and transparent on everything they got, and we'd know just what is going on with our universities and then the students would get the quality education they deserve.

When I talk to post-secondary students, one of the complaints I hear over and over is that not enough is being done to help those in real need. This government has made some good-faith steps, I have to admit, like forgiving the provincial student debt, to address that disparity. But that's only a small fraction of the pressures on our students, Mr. Speaker. It makes me wonder if the minister is actually hearing students, or is he simply just listening to them?

My question to the minister is: Which groups or individuals were consulted in the course of lifting the eligibility threshold for the province's student debt forgiveness?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: In the Fall, I had meetings with both Students Nova Scotia and CFS. Also, every time I visit a campus, I arrange to meet with the president of the student union.

The member brings up a very important point, which is affordability of our universities. That's why in the Province of Nova Scotia, every Nova Scotian going to university receives a \$1,283 bursary. That's why in the Province of Nova Scotia, when you get a student loan, which is \$6,800, 40 per cent of it upfront is a bursary, and the rest is carried on a loan. That's why in this budget, a student in an undergrad program will have up to five years forgiven of that Nova Scotia student loan upon graduation. We do want our students to finish, get their degrees, move on into the workforce, and have a wonderful career.

EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the big problem is that students have to take on jobs in order to provide for themselves while they're in university.

Five years is a great idea. Not every student can complete that degree in five years because of the debt they're facing and the pressures on them to live in this city or other cities in this province. Low-income students can scrimp and save and hold multiple jobs and do as much as they can to make ends meet while they're in university, but often, it's not enough. Not having to pay their student loan tomorrow doesn't put money in their pocket today when they need it. I'm sure the minister agrees that it serves no one if our graduates can't afford a foothold or if they have been forced to leave the province.

My question is: In this year's budget, did the minister consider introducing some upfront grants to significantly reduce the burden on low-income students attending our Nova Scotia universities?



LABI KOUSOULIS: We actually did that in last year's budget. We moved the weekly maximum amount of a student loan from \$180 to \$200, which moved it up to the \$6,800.

What we have done in this year's budget, which is the enhancement, is we made student loans forgivable. For clarity, for anyone who has a student who comes into their office, if the student takes longer than the five years to graduate, and they have loans for six years, perhaps, what we will do is forgive their five largest loan years. It's not that if the student doesn't graduate in five years, they are not eligible for loan forgiveness. They are, and their five largest years will be forgiven.

The program is designed to reward the student for graduating. In the instances the students do not graduate, they still receive 40 per cent of all the money up front as a bursary, which is non-repayable.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

#### **H&W - PRENATAL SERV.: CANCELLATION - CREDIBILITY LOSS**

TAMMY MARTIN: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. We have asked both the minister and the Premier about the cancellation of prenatal classes several times. The Premier himself said that he would look into why the in-person classes were cancelled. This morning, we learned that senior staff with the NSHA were instructing bureaucrats to be careful about how they communicated the final cancellation of online classes with the public, noting that, "there was high political attention and negative media attention to discontinuing universal prenatal classes." I'll table that.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister agree that his decision to cancel universal prenatal services in Nova Scotia has resulted in some loss of public health credibility?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Clarification of the member's statement there: this was not my decision. I believe the language used by the member in her question was something along the lines of explaining your decision to do this. Mr. Speaker, this program change wasn't my decision.

As I responded earlier today, the Health Authorities are responsible for the operation and the delivery of health care programs and services on the front line. They review all programs throughout our health care system. This would be one of them, one that they have reviewed and determined that the resources and the investment and the delivery will have better outcomes when they target people with higher needs based upon the utilization of the program that was previously in place.

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, doctors in Nova Scotia are worried that new parents are getting less reliable information because we no longer offer that information

publicly. We know that prenatal classes help new parents build confidence and connect with support networks that serve them long after their delivery.

Without prenatal classes, Dr. Natasha Deshwal has nowhere to send her patients but Google. According to Dr. Deshwal, “People are sometimes just not even bothering to get the information just because . . . it’s too much work. And if you are going to go online, you have to sift through to kind of figure out what’s really valid and what’s not valid.” What a way to find out prenatal information.

Mr. Speaker, the majority of other provinces offer prenatal education in person. Does the minister think this decision to cancel all public prenatal support will support maternal and infant health?

[2:30 p.m.]

RANDY DELOREY: Again, I want to make a factual clarification of the statement made by the member in her question. There are still prenatal supports and programs within the Province of Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker.

What they’ve done, as I’ve explained, is a particular program, an online course program offering, the Health Authority, as part of their overall review of prenatal programming supports that they offer, looked at the investment made in that program, the utilization, how many people were accessing and making use of that service, to determine what kind of a positive impact it could be having. They compared it to investing in other areas, particularly targeting more intense and available services for higher risk prenatal programs, Mr. Speaker.

So, they’ve rearranged the way they deliver prenatal supports. That’s what’s happened. It has not been a cut of all programs and supports. It has been a realignment to have better outcomes.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

#### **LAE - SEX. VIOLENCE PREV. COMM.: RECOMMENDATIONS - FUNDING**

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. Universities in this province continue to struggle with sexual violence on campus. The minister’s department is continuing to work with the provincial Sexual Violence Prevention Committee to implement recommendations from the Changing the culture of acceptance report, which is great.

However, for the 2019-20 budget year, the minister’s department sought out \$525,000 in funding to help advance its work on these recommendations, which is great

too. My question for the minister: Can he actually confirm that these funds were secured and, if not, what impact will it have on the implementation process?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. The funds are secured, and the funds will actually be put in the MOU and they will be there annually for the universities.

This is a very important subject matter. Even one sexual assault on campus is one too many and that is why we have brought together this committee to look at what can be done to greatly reduce sexual violence on campuses and our government is fully supportive of that objective. Mr. Speaker, that's why we've put a lot of emphasis on this and that's why it's going to be in the MOU, and the funding will be there annually for the universities.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for confirming that. That's good news. Part of the challenge, however, around continued sexual violence on campuses is there simply are not enough resources to go around.

Students will tell you that it's not enough to try to react to instances of sexual violence, that it actually takes a cultural shift, and sustained proactive efforts from all of us. Prevention measures and measures to support survivors are equally important. Students Nova Scotia has proposed a specialized sexual violence resource fund for universities that would go a long way to equipping institutions and students with the tools and strategies they need.

So, keeping in mind that a culture of consent requires actions as well as words, has the minister considered implementing a sexual violence resource fund for all post-secondary institutions?

LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct that we do need a culture shift and that's what the report that was put together directly spoke about, was changing the culture on our university campuses. That culture goes beyond our university campuses, it goes to our education system, to our youth, talking to them, making sure they understand consent, both our sons and our daughters.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of what we've done with the universities, we're all working collaboratively together. The funding is available for all of them. The universities with less resources are piggy-backing off the universities with more resources and as they work together, we are working towards improving the outcomes of having a reduction of sexual violence on campus and whatever resources are there now, if we identify that more are needed, we're more than willing to talk to our universities and bring that forward as well because this is something that has to change.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**LAE: ON-CAMPUS SEX. VIOLENCE - STATS.**

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. The government has decided, in my opinion, that it necessarily doesn't want to legislate on-campus sexual violence policies, and that's unfortunate. Instead, they believe an MOU with each university and college is sufficient to protect students, even if it becomes a patchwork solution.

I'll remind you, that's what it is right now. It's different at all these universities and colleges. There's no consistency.

After a few years of these MOUs having been in place, hopefully we are starting to see some real progress in the fight against on-campus sexual violence, but we do continue to read stories daily.

My question for the minister: Can he speak to or table the latest stats his department has for on-campus sexual violence?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, one of the stats I can speak to, which was most troubling, is that 90 per cent of victims do not come forward. They feel ashamed; they feel like they were not listened to - and that's what we're trying to do with our culture shift. When we have victims, we do want them to come forward.

We are changing the culture on campuses, which means learning about consent; it means that when you are a victim, come forward. Because this behaviour is unacceptable, and we need to support our victims. (Interruption)

Mr. Speaker, I listened very politely to the members as they asked me questions, I wish they'd give me the same benefit as I am trying to answer them.

This is a very serious issue and it's one that our government takes seriously. The reason that this is all new is because we put it in the last MOU. It had never been there.

Mr. Speaker, there is a framework and the framework is about changing the culture on campuses. All the universities are following that framework.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, we are all concerned, that's why we're asking the questions here today. Again, you cannot improve what you do not measure. There's no way to know if the action plan is working if you don't have statistics. The minister must know this, we all know this. If he is serious about addressing the issue, he would be looking for regular updates on the progress of his plan.

My concern is that he doesn't have stats, he doesn't have a baseline, and he doesn't have any targets. Sexual violence, especially acquaintance sexual violence, is under-

reported. That means what statistical data we can get becomes even more important, or we just continue contributing to the stigma, which I want to stop.

Can the minister please share what his department's process is for collecting and analyzing on-campus sexual violence?

LABI KOUSOULIS: The framework does have measures in place. I do not want to misspeak to the measures, but what I am more than willing to do is have my department sit down with the MLA for Pictou West and actually go through every part of that framework as well as what the measures are for the universities.

Mr. Speaker, I have said this many times, our government takes this issue very seriously. That is why we were the first government that brought in funding for this; that's why we put it in the MOU; and that's why the funding now in the upcoming MOU will be there for this matter. The culture on our campuses has to change, society has to change.

Our government is fully supporting all the universities, as well as the victims, to come out, to come forward because this is not acceptable on our campuses or in our society.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

#### **LAE: GTO PRGM. - ONE YR. DATA**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. The Graduate to Opportunity program was introduced by this government with a stated aim of employing post-secondary graduates. I believe we all agree with this goal. However, all goals need measurements.

I'd like to ask the minister if his department is collecting data on the number of GTO hires that are still in those jobs after one year?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we track our hires after one year, after two years. I am more than happy to bring the updated list to the House.

As well as Graduate to Opportunity, we also launched Innovate to Opportunity, which targets the master and Ph.D. level grads. It is a great program which allows us to give an incentive to our business community to hire a new graduate.

I believe it is one of the key reasons why, for the last three years, more youth have stayed in the province than left; which is the first time that we've even had one year of positive net youth migration into the province since the late 1980s.

PAT DUNN: I thank the minister for that answer. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure he'd agree that it's important to ensure these programs are also seeing plenty of up-take or availability

outside HRM. It's particularly important to focus on GTO's impact in rural areas, smaller cities, and towns so that those graduates don't have to leave their communities to find work.

My question to the minister: With that in mind, can the minister provide a regional breakdown of GTO hires across this province?

LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, we do have it broken down regionally. I'll be more than happy to share that most up-to-date data and specific data with the member.

Again, for all the members in the House, with this program, we should be talking to all the businesses in our community. I touted this program from day one. Anyone I talk to, I tell them about it because, if you hire a youth, you're going to have the government subsidize a substantial portion of their salary over two years. That is to help that organization to take a chance on a new hire and to also invest in that youth and give them the training. What we also find is that, once that youth has one or two years of experience, getting the next job is that much easier as well. It makes them employable and it helps their career and shoots them on a great path.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

#### **BUS.: EDIBLE CANNABIS PROD. - BUS. PLAN**

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Business. A new wave of cannabis legalization is coming this year in October when cannabis edibles become legal. The edibles market represents a new range of opportunities and risks which the government must plan for. However, the budget tabled in this House does not include any anticipated government revenue from edible cannabis. I'll remind the House it's in October.

I'm concerned that the government is going to sit on their hands, as they did in the lead-up to the initial round of legalization, allowing the black market to continue to flourish and leaving the public with more questions than answers about edibles.

Will the minister table the government's business plan for edible cannabis products?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, we continue with our discussions around edible cannabis. The points that my colleague brings out are valid points, valid questions. That is part of the work that we're doing now, and when we've made our final decisions and are able to share that, we'll certainly communicate that publicly.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, with respect, this is a Business question. There are Justice implications, but this is about how the government runs its business.

Since 2016, the government has known that cannabis legalization was going to be a reality. The government decided that this was going to be their business, but as we have seen over the past year, they didn't do the work to prepare the province for the opportunities or the risks of legalization. Limited retail locations and limited supply have allowed the black market to flourish.

CBD oil is well known to be one of the most popular cannabis products, in part because it's non-impairing. It's readily available through black-market sources, and yet the NSLC has been out of stock more often than it has been in stock. Mona Scott of Truro reported in media that because she could never find it - she said she went to her outlet 10 times asking - she now orders it online from the United States.

What is the minister doing to ensure that Nova Scotians can start relying on the NSLC to stock the products they expect and are currently forced to buy illegally?

THE SPEAKER: I just want to remind the honourable member that it's the prerogative of the government to determine who answers the questions. Thank you for pointing that out.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker. I don't dismiss the points and questions that my colleague is asking. This is a discussion that is holistic across government and takes in multiple departments. I am the lead, and with respect, would respond to any of the questions that my colleague would present.

Specific to supply, supply is, as we know, a federal issue. Every province and territory is challenged by the producers to provide the level of product that they had committed to. We continue to work with all those stakeholders to ensure that, as this market moves forward, there will be the appropriate supply available.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

### **JUSTICE - APPT. OF JUDGES: REVIEW - CONFIRM**

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, a question for the Minister of Justice. We have raised questions in the Legislature about the appointment of judges. Some of those questions have come into question, but I do want to ask the minister. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, in AllNovaScotia, the minister was quoted as saying, "We are in the process of doing a review; a jurisdictional scan of what happens across the country specific to this particular committee and its role." I would table that, but we cannot print from AllNovaScotia.

My question for the minister: Can the minister confirm that he is reviewing the process, given the concerns raised by the judicial community?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, we are presently reviewing the process. When that is finalized, we'll communicate it.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, that is good to hear. I'm glad to hear that. Can the minister confirm that in the future if he does convene a committee to provide him with a recommendation to make a judicial appointment, that he will accept that recommendation?

MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, my colleague would know that the legislation clearly articulates that it is government's decision to make in those circumstances. We certainly value and appreciate the advice of the committee and the recommendations and advice they advance.

[2:45 p.m.]

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

#### **H&W - LONG-TERM CARE: PLACEMENT CRITERIA - CLARIFY**

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. I was recently in touch with a constituent who relayed to me the situation with his 91-year-old mother. She had been living in Truro but after a fall, medical complications were detected, and general confusion was evident, and the decision was made for her to enter long-term care. With no spots available in Truro, she agreed to move beyond the 100-kilometre radius around Truro. Fortunately, she was placed in a home in Amherst but that presents some challenges for her only immediate family, who live in Baddeck.

My question to the minister is: When a patient agrees to expand their preferred location for long-term care, what factors go into determining the location of best fit?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, there are some variations in the circumstances. For example, in situations where the placement is of an urgent nature based upon the needs of the resident, that would be an influencing factor. So ensuring the resident is placed to ensure they are getting the care they need would be a driver, then it would be finding the first available location that meets those care needs. That is the driving factor first and foremost in those types of urgent situations.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, there is more to the story because on the morning of March 19, while still at the hospital in Truro, the 91-year-old in question was informed she would be placed in Amherst. Around noon, she was told she'd be placed in Pictou and that's where she was transported later that evening. Two days later on the morning of March 21<sup>st</sup> she was then transferred to Amherst. As I mentioned earlier, the lady started in a confused state and now wakes up every day unsure of where she is.



My question to the minister is: Is the minister aware of other situations like this and can he speak to anything within the placement system that might have caused this error?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of this situation nor as an example the member laid out to the floor. As the member would know if he has more details, I think we all are hesitant, particularly when coming to health care-related concerns of constituents, not to lay out too much personal information on the floor of the legislature. As the member would know, if he has more details, he can pass on either to me directly and we can look into the circumstances, both to understand obviously so we can bring improvements to the system if necessary.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

**H&W - ADVOCATE (CUMBERLAND CO.):  
NURSE PRACTITIONER NEED - RESPOND**

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, my beautiful community of Advocate along the Fundy Shore has been with and without a nurse practitioner on several occasions in recent history. I do know that the Nova Scotia Health Authority does have advertisements out for a nurse practitioner, and I'll table that. The travel distance from Advocate to the regional hospital is about one hour and 15 minutes to an hour and a half. My question to the minister is: Can he assist Nova Scotia Health Authority on making it a priority to fill this rather than just waiting for an applicant?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, certainly recruitment of our health care professionals, particularly primary health care professionals, nurse practitioners, and physicians, has been and continues to be a priority for the government and our partners at the Nova Scotia Health Authority. I want to assure the member that the priority for the health authority is, in fact, recruiting health professionals to all these communities. They do engage in recruitment initiative and . . .

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

**OPPOSITION BUSINESS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. During Question Period, the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education claimed that the member for Northside-Westmount was insinuating that he, the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, was lying in his responses to questions.

That may be what the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education feels, but that minister should retract his comment as it suggests that the member for Northside-Westmount said that he was lying, when no charge of such a serious nature was ever made.

Surely, Mr. Speaker, if we can have a conscience that touches us to extend an apology on this side of the House, the same can be done from the other side.

THE SPEAKER: I will take the point of order under advisement and get back to the House.

The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I thought I was going to get a little break there, but I guess not.

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

#### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 107

#### **Bill No. 107 - House of Assembly Act.**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TIM HALMAN: I rise this afternoon to speak on Bill No. 107, a very important bill, I believe, that has been put forward to this Legislature that I think can really help all of us address some of the issues that we are seeing with this government in relation to transparency and accountability.

When you think about it, the very notion of transparency is fundamental in any organization of leadership in any government. It is the notion that the things we do - the daily operations of government - are open and accessible to the people in which we have privilege, all 51 of us, of serving each and every day as MLAs.

Transparency, certainly within the last 30 or 40 years, has been a growing component of the expectation that I believe residents of provinces and citizens of countries have of elected officials.

Many of the MLAs in this Chamber would be aware that since the 1970s, whether it's in Canada's federal Parliament or provincial Legislatures, we have seen within the

Chambers, whether it's the House of Commons in Ottawa or here at Province House, our proceedings that are accessible and open to the public via television. Certainly that, I believe, has raised a level of awareness of issues that are debated in legislative Chambers and brought forward to the public at the public's awareness.

This bill very much gets to the heart of that matter that all of us, I think, need to constantly look at the manner in which we are accessible to the people - a manner in which our proceedings are open.

Bill No. 107, as stated, provides that all meetings by the Standing Committees of the House of Assembly be televised by Legislative TV, unless mandated to be in camera, which certainly I can see.

I think we would all agree to the value, at times, of in-camera meetings, but certainly regarding the day-to-day business of government, in terms of its operations, it is critical that we go even further in opening up transparency when it comes to the legislative process. Committees certainly are a fundamental part of the legislative process. This is where, at a committee, we can really get into the details of an issue; where we can really hear from the stakeholders.

Just the other day I had the opportunity of filling in at Law Amendments with the Biodiversity Act under consideration. Certainly, you saw many stakeholders come forward with concerns that consultation had not taken place. This is very fundamental that the public witnesses these consultations, these discussions. This is critical to the democratic process.

We know that committees are fundamental; they are a key component of our legislative process. It allows elected officials to ask questions to key stakeholders. They allow individuals vested in an issue, vested in a bill, to have their say on that perspective.

Oftentimes, I have noticed in my short time in this Legislature, when bills are presented by government, sometimes details have been missed, and those details have been revealed at committees. Why not open that up? Why not open that up to the public so that they can be a part of that process? Certainly, we know that committees help clarify legislation, and they are a great avenue for us to listen clearly to stakeholders and to listen to government civil servants who come forward to these committees and add their take on proposed legislation and a discussion, of course, of the path forward.

Just as our Legislature is televised, I believe all the committees should be televised. Mr. Speaker, I believe that would add an extra layer to the political literacy that may be required out there. I believe it is a fair statement to say that not every resident of the province is aware of how important committees are to the legislative process, the counterbalance that it is to this Chamber. I believe it would help in raising the political awareness and discourse within our province.

Mr. Speaker, as I used to tell my students, when opportunity knocks, open the door. In many respects, the bill put forward by the Official Opposition is an opportunity for government to renew its commitment to transparency and accountability, which, I say respectfully, I find at times this government struggles with. This could be seen as an opportunity by the government to renew its desire and say, yes, we want to be transparent. Yes of course, we want to be accountable. Yes of course, we want to let Province House and all aspects of our proceedings be open to the people of Nova Scotia to ensure that they have every opportunity, that we have maximized every opportunity for them, to be a part of this fundamental legislative process.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I would be remiss not to state my concern with what has happened to a committee that has been televised. I have been very clear with the members on that committee that the narrowing of the scope of that committee - I find that problematic. Now we are focused on Auditor General reports, when I have been very clear that I feel we need to focus on many different topics. The mandate of the Public Accounts Committee is to focus on public spending and the execution of public administration, and yes, of course, to look at the Auditor General's reports, striking a balance between those three fundamental functions of that committee. Of course, Mr. Speaker, to see the scope, the time this committee can meet, to be narrowed down to once a month, I believe does not serve the public's interest.

This bill provides an opportunity. It provides an opportunity for government to renew its commitment to transparency and accountability. Let's not be afraid to open up these committees for the public to view. It would be an opportunity to show many in the public just how important committees are. Certainly when I was teaching political science, if I go back to some of the lessons I designed to explain our legislative process, I didn't always focus too much on the committees. Now that I'm an elected official, I certainly have a greater appreciation for that. Having a greater appreciation for the committees in our legislative process, I would want the public to understand that.

Mr. Speaker, I have wondered, if we opened up the committees more to television, in all fairness, would the Opposition be treated a bit differently? With what has transpired with Public Accounts, one cannot help but feel at times that Opposition opinions are pushed aside. I know we all desire more collaborative politics, a more collaborative approach. Any of us in this Chamber, when we speak to our constituents, we hear that time and time again. I think a lot of residents are tired of the adversarial nature of politics.

[3:00 p.m.]

Of course, if you look at the makeup of this Chamber, that's what it facilitates, an adversarial discussion. Whereas, at the committee stage, this could be an opportunity, in many respects - if televised, transparent, and open to the public - to allow for a renewal of that attempt to be collaborative.

Mr. Speaker, in the last provincial election, we witnessed a voter turnout, if I recall, of 53 per cent. That is very troubling. The first time I voted, I was 18 years old. I was living in Montreal and attending Concordia University. The first time I voted was on October 30, 1995, and there was 98 per cent voter turnout in the Quebec referendum. That was a moment where I realized, wow, a society can be truly engaged in an issue.

I'm not suggesting televising committees is the be-all solution to raising political awareness, getting more people involved in the political process. But I don't believe it can hurt. The more we open up Province House and all its aspects to the public, it can only be in the public good.

Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility, all of us in our responsibilities as MLAs, to try to engage our constituents in the political process. We need to start thinking, as elected officials, how we can further engage those. Since I have such a new appreciation for the committee stage in our legislative process, I and our caucus here in the Official Opposition, would like to see this opened up more to the public so that they have an opportunity to witness stakeholders coming forward, discussing bills in depth. This would certainly be in the public's interest.

Let's not forget that transparency involves, in many respects, all of us working together. The public wants to see that. I believe, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 107 is one of those opportunities where all three political Parties in this Chamber can work together.

I don't believe it would require too much work to facilitate this. I believe the expenditure that would be associated with this change would be in the public's interests; to televise those committees that are not televised at the moment, with the end goal, of course, of trying to raise political awareness, of trying to get more people engaged in the political process. We have to actively do that.

As a former history teacher, I always used to tell my students, democracy always collapsed not because of external threats but because of apathy. It is because of apathy. It is on all of us in civil society - whether an elected official, a teacher, a lawyer, we need to get to work.

Mr. Speaker, this is a small, humble step to say we can open up this Chamber even more and do our part as elected officials at this level. I know we do it in our constituencies, at our local schools, and so forth when we go to talk to students. We can do this in our own way, here at Province House, by televising the Standing Committees of the House of Assembly.

In closing, let's not forget the key importance of the committees in our legislative process. It's a process that I've certainly gained a greater appreciation for. I've learned in my time in politics that people want government more accessible. I think all of us in this

Chamber have dealt with constituents and their frustration at not knowing what is happening in the process, not knowing what the next steps are.

Certainly, televising the committees is an opportunity for us to signal to Nova Scotians that Province House, the government, the Opposition, are more open to ensuring that people have an opportunity to see the functioning of government.

Let us not forget that the end goal of this bill is to make sure that Nova Scotians have access to the proceedings. Let us not forget that the end goal of this bill is to ensure that we encourage our fellow citizens to feel part of the legislative process.

For many people, I've discovered that politics is something they see that happens on social media. Politics is something they see happening on television. I believe in the last 30 or 40 years we have opened this up, but there are still further steps that need to be taken, and passing Bill No. 107 would provide an opportunity for all the meetings of our standing committees of this great House to be televised by Legislative Television.

Mr. Speaker, I think this bill is in the public's interest, and it is definitely worthy of the consideration of this government.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

GORDON WILSON: Just to start off, I do want to thank the member for Dartmouth East for bringing this forward in his comments and remarks. I do agree with a lot of the things he said. Certainly, committees play a very important role in our legislative process.

I'd like to start by reading. I think it's important for everybody out there who is watching on TV to understand what the bill is. It's an amendment to the Statute and it's just simply adding after Section 35, at 35A, "All meetings of the standing committees of the House must be televised by Legislative Television unless held in camera."

Clause 2 of that is, "The money required for the purpose of this Act must be paid out of money appropriated for that purpose by the Legislature."

I'm not quite sure what the second phrase means, but I would like to speak down the road here just a little bit about the money side because I didn't hear anything from the member opposite on what costing was going to be around this.

I've been very privileged, I think in some sense, but sometimes you wonder if you are also punished, as for six years, since I've been in the Legislature, I've sat on every committee we have. I think I have chaired almost every one of them. It has been a real experience, to say the very least.

I would be the first one to say that yes, there are areas we need to improve. In my years that I've had, through my experience, any suggestions I have brought to this House have, for my reasons and in my heart, been areas to improve. I know that sometimes they are not perceived as that, but I think the endgame will show out how we bring things forward and what they mean. The proof is always in the pudding.

Hopefully a lot of the things we've been doing in our committees is to make them more accessible and to make them more productive. I always look at the saying that our time is very short, not only on this world but in the day that we have. Quality over quantity always prevails, I think.

The role of the committees, as the member stated, is to educate. I think the biggest thing they are there for is to educate us, as MLAs, to give us a better, fulsome picture of exactly what the issues are. It gives us an opportunity to question. People who come before committees are under oath. We probably receive our biggest education sitting on committees. It's like going to school every day. In doing that, it allows us the opportunity to make good, wholesome decisions. When we sit on these committees, we need to always keep that in mind.

In listening to the comments - I didn't know exactly what we were going to be talking about here, so I looked at three different areas that I thought I might have to touch on. I believe that all three of them are pertinent.

Is this simply about televising? I think it's more than that. Is this about changes that we've made in the committees and challenging why we made those changes? I think some of it is about that. Or is it about transparency? Transparency is where I would like to speak, and I do believe that the member opposite did too. It's a very valid point that we need to make sure that we are doing things that are responsible for the citizens of our fair province, in giving them the best information that we can.

I'll also make the point that I'm not in favour of this bill; I have issues with it. Some of the issues, I guess really right up front I'd like to say is that I'm a little bit concerned that there wasn't any due diligence done. It's a little bit reckless to bring a bill before us, speak on it, and really not even talk about what the costs are to be to the taxpayers to do it. It would be important for us to know if this is \$100,000, is this \$200,000?

I know that we have learned through the expanding of our Health Committee, we've had a bit of an education on exactly what kind of an impact this has on the Speaker's Office. I'd like to note a letter that was sent to the Speaker and the response the Speaker had back to our member for Pictou East, and there was response back to a letter of February 22, 2019. In that the Speaker had said that he is taking it under consideration, and I don't know if there's been further correspondence to that. I don't want to undermine the Speaker's decision, but I think we would all like to influence it, maybe, with our comments here today.

It is something that is officially out there for a response from the Speaker. Jurisdictionally, it's interesting. I didn't hear an awful lot on it jurisdictionally, but I would like to just show some research that we did quickly. It's all over the board, I guess, but I certainly will say that we're not at the bottom of the pack at any means.

In Alberta, all committees are currently televised, streamed, and archived, so there's a good standing basis for one province that is doing it that way; in British Columbia, the audio of committees is broadcast - video is limited to some specific locations in some other committees that they have there, so it's not quite the same in British Columbia; in Manitoba, committee briefings are not broadcast; in New Brunswick, video is not available for all the committees - they do some of them, I believe, depending on timing; in Newfoundland and Labrador, there doesn't seem to be any video broadcasting of any of the committees; in Ontario, committee meetings are streamed live when available, and again it just depends on when the committee is sitting and when they're not; in Saskatchewan, for some of them they are; in Prince Edward Island, I believe videos are available for not all of them, but some of them - and I'll table this for the members also if they'd like to go through it; and lastly, in Quebec, it says most meetings air live or on delayed broadcast, so they're very similar to Alberta.

I will table that for the House to have. So that's a bit of a jurisdictional scan on where things are.

Some other avenues I think are important for us to really always realize also when you're talking about getting the message out is that the media is extremely well-informed. The media is given notes, the editors are also sent out. There's a big role that's played there and I think a lot of Nova Scotians go to the media for their news. It is the easiest source to go into. I know certain people like my mum, although she does like to watch on TV and that, but mainly if she wants to find out where and what is going on in the world, it would be through that avenue. Although most recently I must say on a personal note, it's been more of a challenge for her to read the paper, but that's not for this discussion today.

The media plays a big part of it. We have Hansard available for every word that's spoken in this House and in these committees. Surprisingly enough, there's even Hansard kept for in-camera, which really still I cannot understand that one. Hansard is a very, very detailed document that can be searched to find out every particular word that's been said and we can't underestimate how powerful that is. I know it's not something that a lot of people even are aware of, but it's just another way that the general public can access information.

Social media, I hadn't even thought of that one until the member opposite had mentioned it; actually, I shouldn't say, I did the other day when I was just thinking about some other things to put down for notes. I err on the side of caution when you talk about social media as a way for us to get an informed piece of information out there. I think a lot of us have lost a lot of faith in social media as being an accurate source.



[3:15 p.m.]

I think a lot of us have lost a lot of faith in how that might work, although I must say, livestreaming is something we have done in the past. I believe we've done livestreaming on social media in the Red Room, we've done that for certain circumstances and that has worked very well but I'd be cautious on any other avenues that would be there.

A few of the comments that were made, I just want to also talk about. There were three points that were made by the member for Dartmouth East. One, he mentioned the Committee on Law Amendments in relationship to being televised. The fact of the matter is, the Committee on Law Amendments is out there in a video format, it's on YouTube – this will be a public service announcement for that. Anybody that wants to check out any Committee on Law Amendments meeting that has gone on, this is something we've brought in, it wasn't there when we originally were elected in government in 2013 and I'm very proud of the fact.

As a matter of fact, every now and then I will go to the Province of Nova Scotia Legislature YouTube site and you can pull up any of the Committee on Law Amendments meetings and discussions that went on there. That's something he had mentioned, and I just want to correct the fact that the Law Amendments Committee meetings are publicly available in a video format.

The discussion about narrowing the scope in Public Accounts Committee; quickly, I don't see it as narrowing the scope. I see what we've done in the Committee on Law Amendments is the ability to focus on what the scope of Public Accounts is, and that is the Auditor General's Reports. We've gone from 20 per cent, to hopefully 100 per cent, of his reports coming in and I appreciate that.

Voter engagement is another comment that I commend him for saying that because that's a concern of mine also. The numbers we've had in turnouts is not acceptable. I think we need to think of outside the box ways to have better voter engagement. There are places that have their elections on Sundays – I'm not going to suggest that's our government position. But we have to think of different ways we can bring more voters into the foray to make decisions on who represents them.

To close, I just want to make a few comments on what really I think this is about. This is about transparency, there's no question about it. I'm very proud, and I've made that statement very clearly on the record before and I'll make that statement again, what we've done for transparency as this government, has led any other government that successfully is coming behind us. We have done many things that don't even get mentioned and I'm going to mention them.

We've made hundreds of data sets available to the public through Open Data Portal. That was done February 5, 2006, and I have the CBC report on that and I will table that.

We've joined the world of open data; we had some very positive comments on that at the time. Open data is about making government data available to anyone to use and reuse for any purpose and it's driven by the belief that government data belongs to the people. Bill Wilson, CEO of MindSea, said companies such as his that design apps will be able to use the information to make decisions. I'll table that document.

Harvest Plan Map Viewer was launched April 18, 2016, to allow - and again in this world where we're discussing important things in our forest industry, the first government ever to have the harvest data maps available as a public viewer - for our citizens to be able to understand exactly what is going on in the forest industry. I'll table that.

Our provincial-county facility wait times to nursing homes; residential care facilities wait times, have been added to the Health and Wellness website.

We're now posting senior officials' expenses online.

We are now posting eligible FOIPOP applications online. I want to note that we've received more FOIPOP requests than any other government, and 80 per cent of those have been responded within 30 days. That's transparency.

We have developed a Fisheries and Aquaculture online mapping tool with information about existing and potential aquaculture sites in the province - first time ever - transparency. We have added a Health Committee, which is fully televised. Again, 50 per cent of the topics that were coming to the Public Accounts Committee were health related. We have created a new committee specifically to deal with that, and I commend our government for doing that. Lastly, we have a Premier who stands up, when he goes out to public meetings, not with a hand-scripted message of what he wants to say - when he goes to the Chamber of Commerce, he goes to the Chamber of Commerce with an open mind and open floor and opens it up to questions directly from the floor and directly answers every one of those questions.

These are the kinds of things that government does, not only through the leadership of its Premier but through all these policy things that we have changed and all these new additional things that we have put out there for the general public to see. If this isn't about transparency, I don't know what more we can be doing other than going off the end, I tell you.

**THE SPEAKER:** The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

**CLAUDIA CHENDER:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Clare-Digby asks: What more could the government do to help with transparency? That is a timely question. If he would like us to table a list, I could do that. It will take me so long to prepare that list that it might be a few days.

In the meantime, to this bill, I want to say that - first, I would like to correct the record on a few things that were just said. Number one, I want to note that our caucus also brought forward a bill that amended the Accessibility Act calling specifically for the Law Amendments Committee to be more accessible, and to be more accessible for all bills, not just those related to disability issues.

I have to say that unless some change happened with no announcement and no communication, my understanding is that the Department of Justice is paying to televise the Law Amendments Committee meetings where Justice bills are being considered. I commend them for that leadership, and I think it's very connected to the Accessibility Directorate and the work of Gerry Post. I have not been informed, including in a response to my letter directly to you, Mr. Speaker, that there has been any further expansion of televising. If I'm wrong on that, I will applaud and be happy to hear about it, but that is my current understanding.

When greater accessibility was provided in the Law Amendments Committee process around the Accessibility Act, and there was advocacy when that Act was coming through to ensure that all parties impacted by that Act could at least witness the proceedings of that committee, it dramatically improved the government's final bill. They had tons and tons of people come forward and speak about how that bill was going to impact them. Something that I have never seen happened, which is that the government sent the bill back to the department. Then something else actually happened which is amazing, and we ended up with an Accessibility Directorate, which ironically, is now paying to televise some of the Law Amendments Committee meetings. You see, it is imperative that these committees be as transparent as possible.

Since then, we have made several motions at the Law Amendments Committee calling for proceedings to be broadcast. As I mentioned, in our bill that we have brought forward, we would go further. While televising is good, I think the goal is accessibility. To that end, we would add CART services to make sure that these proceedings are, in fact, accessible to all Nova Scotians.

As New Democratic Party House Leader, I wrote to you, Mr. Speaker, to advocate for this greater transparency and accessibility in our committee work. On February 12<sup>th</sup>, I contacted you, Mr. Speaker, in particular around the curtailing of the Public Accounts Committee meetings, specifically mentioning the excuse put forward - or I should say "rationale," to be kind - by the member for Clare-Digby for the changes to that Public Accounts Committee, and that rationale, Mr. Speaker, was cost, which I think we heard again today in this Chamber.

I will quote the member for Clare-Digby from my letter, but it can be found in the proceedings of that committee that day: "As the Speaker has mentioned to us, there are consequences of televising, those are financial and we aim to find a balance and be cognizant of that. Again we are the first to have a Health Committee and we have also

agreed to televise that,” I think we heard echoes of this today, “which I think is an excellent thing to do but we need to understand that that creates pressures, and we need to find a balance.”

Mr. Speaker, with respect, I don’t think that the televising of committees of this House would imperil the government’s balanced budget. I don’t think that the televising or greater accessibility of the proceedings of this House would be a political issue. In fact, quite the opposite. Given the concerns that we have about low voter turnout, which the member for Dartmouth East referenced, we need to be doing as much as we can to engage people with our political work and this is one way of doing that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member for Clare-Digby contends that the sole purpose of the committee is so that as members of this House, we can acquaint ourselves with the facts that are brought forward in those committees and that that can lead to better legislating. Well, with respect, on this side of the House we’re not given any opportunity to have any impact on legislation at all, or very little at least, as long as I’ve been here, but further, that’s not the entire truth. In particular, the Law Amendments Committee exists in order to be accessible, it exists in order to allow people to come forward and to give us a different lens of experience about the bills we are discussing.

Mr. Speaker, you may be familiar with the commonly used slogan in the disability community and in other communities: Nothing about us without us. As legislators, at this moment in history, that is so important, that the bills that we consider as a Chamber of mostly homogenous people with a mostly similar set of circumstances, that we take every opportunity to hear the voices of Nova Scotians who can tell us about how the bills that we are considering are going to impact their lives.

Back to Law Amendments Committee, Mr. Speaker, Law Amendments Committee is special. Given what we’ve seen with the Public Accounts Committee, which the member for Clare-Digby says that he has improved, and I agree with him, time will tell if that’s the case, but I strongly disagree with the premise. The denial of access to this committee, to Law Amendments Committee, that we saw around changes to the Education Act, that we saw around changes to the Film Tax Credit. You know, I want to say on the record that televising and accessibility may be the least of our worries. Law Amendments Committee is one of the last spaces that has not been, how do I say it in a parliamentary way, messed with by this majority Liberal Government that likes to steamroll through their legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the other point I want to make around committees and around televising committees is that right now, we say that those committees are open for everyone to attend, but they happen in Halifax, they happen during the day, and they often happen with very little notice, particularly Law Amendments Committee. The reality is that even Nova Scotians who don’t have mobility issues or other disability issues, just may not be able to get here. If you live a considerable drive from where we are now where we find ourselves in Province House, the constituencies that most of the members of this Chamber

represent, that's a big thing. You'd have to take a day off work, you have to have access to a vehicle, you have to get yourself here.

[3:30 p.m.]

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, again I'll disagree with the member for Clare-Digby, I believe that those committees exist so all Nova Scotians can better understand our legislation as it moves through the process of becoming law. The more that that's the case, the better opportunity that we will have to pass good legislation and as much as I might have differences with many members of this House, I believe that we are all here to pass good legislation. We have our own pre-existing ideas of what that good legislation looks like, but I also would give every member the benefit of the doubt that upon hearing directly from parties who will be impacted by that legislation, that those views could change. Those views could shift, Mr. Speaker.

I think that not to allow people to come and listen and acquaint themselves and, in some cases, present and speak and to be able to give that opportunity to all Nova Scotians is a real loss.

Mr. Speaker, I won't belabour the point. I won't talk until I have one second left. I will close by saying that I think the time has long since come when the work of this House should be accessible to the people of Nova Scotia; this is the people's House. The work we do here, the work that we do in committee we do on behalf of all Nova Scotians. We do it on behalf of our constituents and every single one of our constituents should have the opportunity to and should be encouraged to follow and participate in those proceedings.

With reservations we support the bill put forward our colleague, but we think it doesn't go quite far enough. We believe that we need to have completely accessible committee meetings throughout this House.

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

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill No. 107, which is An Act to Amend Chapter 1 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the House of Assembly Act Respecting Committees. To clarify it again, what we are asking here, and obviously it's a bill put forth by our caucus, we are asking that in this bill that all meetings of the Standing Committees of the House of Assembly must be televised by Legislative Television, unless held in-camera.

Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things I want to say here - well, probably more than a couple, knowing myself, but several things I want to say here today. The first thing that pops to mind, especially after hearing commentaries by the member for Clare-Digby - and I thank him for his commentaries and his viewpoints he put forward on this - one thing that jumped out at me is basically his word "reckless." That there is something reckless in

us putting forward a bill without taking into full consideration what the costs are going to be associated in what we are asking for - televising all standing committees in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's anything reckless in trying to look at making what happens in the work of this House more accessible to the people who live in the Province of Nova Scotia. The honourable member here for Dartmouth South, the House Leader from the NDP caucus, mentioned that it's important that those people who live in this province - and I come from a constituency that takes me almost four hours to drive home - that it be accessible to all people in this province.

I sometimes think that we are sitting in this House that we live in a bubble a little bit when we're here - maybe it's a vacuum, I'm not sure which one is a better descriptor. The reality is that many people who live in the rural parts of our province have never visited or actually barely ever get to Halifax. They have work lives, they have things to do, they have children to take care of, they have responsibilities. For a lot of people, it's also expensive to travel to Halifax to take in just one day of House proceedings.

When I ask constituents to come if I have a bill that I'm putting forward or the caucus is putting a bill forward that's relevant to them, or if there's a matter that I'm speaking to the House about with relevance to my community - if I am blessed to have someone from the constituency of Cape Breton-Richmond who makes their way all the way to this House, I'm extremely grateful because I know what it takes to take a day off, as well as to drive almost eight hours, return trip, to get back and forth here. It's a huge commitment for a constituent to be able to do that, for the sheer fact that our business is done in a chamber that exists in Halifax makes it not accessible to everyone in the province.

I would hope that we would try to do everything we can - as members representing all corners of our province - to try and make what happens in this House as accessible as possible to everyone equally within the Province of Nova Scotia.

This year, we had some wonderful events we hosted here in this Chamber. We had a re-enactment a bit earlier on at the beginning of the year because this year is the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Province House. What an extraordinary thing. I think it was February 11<sup>th</sup> that this beautiful House was actually opened for the first time, and we should all be very proud that this is the oldest legislative House in all of Canada. It's an extraordinary structure, it's beautiful, and it's a piece of historical architecture within the province.

However, with that said, when it opened up its doors for the first time - before that, the business of the House was being done in several different locations - back in 1819 when it was first opened up, Lord Dalhousie said at that time, and I'm going to read this quote that he said referring to the structure, "It stands, and will stand, I hope, to the latest posterity, a proud record of the Public Spirit, at this period of our History."

Now, that was 200 years ago, and a lot has changed, obviously, in the last 200 years. It is important to hold fast to traditions that are very important to this House. Hansard, for a very long time - it started off that people would actually handwrite things in books and scribe things by hand. We've moved past that now to having audio. Some of the aspects within this House are now televised, as is happening at this moment. When we ask special permission, we can have televised meetings within the Red Chamber.

For those people who don't know and are listening right now, we have this as the main Chamber and we have the Red Room on the other side where we do sub-supply. We have other events that happen plus Law Amendments and other committee meetings happen there, as well. We also have a committee room across the road in One Government House where Hansard is already set up, audio is already set up.

So, when the member for Clare-Digby says that it seems like we are being a bit reckless in putting forward a bill where we have to do our due diligence, from his perspective, regarding the costs associated in doing so, I would argue that many aspects of what really needs to be done here have likely already been put into place.

I don't know that the costs are actually going to be that great, but I would hope that somewhere within our budget for this year, we could actually find, on this 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this incredible building and of our fine tradition actually taking root physically in this particular spot, that we could find a bit of money to be able to make accessible all of the good work that happens in this House.

My argument to that, and it's coming to mind right now, that the true spirit of transparency in this House and our goal should be that the work of this House - we should remember that the work of this House belongs to the people of this province. It does not belong to only those of us who have the privilege to be able to sit in this Chamber, in this chair. I may have this seat, but the only reason I have a seat in this Legislature is because of those people who have put their trust in me to be able to come here. They voted me in, and they have entrusted me to come here and to reflect what it is that they need, their values, their hopes for the future. They are looking to me to be their voice within this Chamber, a place that is referred to as the people's House.

If this is the people's House - and I know there are a lot of folks who are not living in Nova Scotia any longer, they may be living out in Alberta or in other places - I know that one aspect that they love to do is when they have a moment is be able to check in on what's happening at home. In fact, when I post my small clips from Legislative TV, I'm always astounded at how many people who let me know that they've watched these clips are not even still in Nova Scotia. Some people are enjoying finding out what's going on from another province.

As much as we may think that Legislative TV is not popular, and there may be voter apathy out there across the province - was it 53 per cent overall voter turnout - well, I can

tell you, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps I live in a very special situation at home in Cape Breton-Richmond, but I'm very proud to say that we were just shy of 80 per cent voter turnout in Cape Breton-Richmond. I can tell you that when I went to every single door, I was blessed enough to meet someone who was at home. I never asked anyone to vote for me as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party. I just asked them to get out to vote.

So in a very little, minor way, I hope that I was able to actually encourage and be a small part of that amazing, amazing voter turnout in my constituency. (Interruption) I'm not mentioning anything about that. Sorry, it was just a recommendation by a colleague of mine. I'm very proud of that voter turnout.

I have about five minutes left here, and I want to talk about going back to the modernization of the way that we do business in this House. I hear sighs from across the room, so I'm hoping that I'm not boring you too much by going on here for an extra five minutes.

You know what, we all have to do renovations to our homes every once in a while. Every once in a while, if you're going to maintain things, if you're going to maintain your house properly, you have to put a new roof on, you have to do some renos. You have to put in some capital investment. We're asking for a bit of an investment here in order to be able to actually modernize this House - again, the people's House.

I think part of that renovation process would be extremely valuable to be able to have as much information as possible available to all Nova Scotians, and even, like I was saying before, to people beyond the borders of this province. As far as that modernization process, I'd like to talk actually a bit about how this Chamber is set up. It was astounding to me when I found this out.

Perhaps all members here know, but maybe not everybody at home knows, that we're actually set up physically in this House to be adversarial. I'm not an adversarial person by nature - I love consensus building. I love it when everybody can leave from a meeting and feel like they got a little bit of something to take with them, that they feel like they've won something a bit by leaving. Everybody can go home feeling that they've actually gained something through the process. I think we tend to have a better outcome.

In this Chamber, on its own - and I know it's based on tradition, and it's an important tradition, but it's based on a tradition when I wouldn't have been able to sit in this House because I'm a woman. It's based on a tradition of men sitting in this House. It's actually based on the tradition of having the Opposition and the government being two sword-lengths away from one another in the way things are set up. That in itself, when we think about it, is perhaps not in keeping with the spirit of the way we should be doing business any longer.



I understand, again, that tradition is extremely important, but I had the very good fortune of visiting Nunavut in the Fall with some of my colleagues here in the House and across Canada. I was in Iqaluit, and in Iqaluit the Legislature is set up in an extraordinary way. It's one of only two places that has - where I guess they don't play Party politics, where we do everywhere else. They have a system where all members sit as independents.

[3:45 p.m.]

Now, I'm not suggesting that that should be the case here, but what I loved about my visit there is the way that they have the Legislature set up. They have it set up so that you feel welcome walking in. It's not a them-and-us type of situation. Everybody can actually face one another; nobody has their back to anybody else. Behind in the back row of where members sit, it's actually encouraged for the children to come and be present as well as the elders and the community. It's an extraordinary thing to see in a place that has a little bit more of a modern system of the way that business is done, and how they're set up, which I think makes a really big difference in the end in the way that, overall, you feel when you're doing business within that particular structure.

I'm going to end this with only a couple of seconds left, Mr. Speaker. Again, the spirit of true transparency, as far as I'm concerned, is to make sure the work of this House belongs to the people of this province, so this is my moment to speak up in asking us to open up the process as much as we can so the people in this province can have access. They can come out to vote with having as much information to be able to make the correct decisions before they put their X on that ballot next time around.

**THE SPEAKER:** The honourable member for Kings South.

**KEITH IRVING:** Mr. Speaker, I was not going to speak to this bill, but in listening to the conversation that we've been having with respect to televising the committee meetings, I thought it might be important to connect something else to the discussion. I'm not arguing the points that have been made on either side of this argument and the issues of transparency and connecting with the citizens of Nova Scotia. I think those are all valid.

I do think we need to remember one element of the cameras that has been noted by many in many Legislatures, and I was just reading an article by a retired MP, Jay Hill I believe was his name, on the effect of cameras to decorum in Parliament. I have seen that in action and I think we've all seen how decorum changes when cameras are turned on. I notice the difference in the Health Committee, as a standing committee began functioning quite differently than our standing committees that aren't televised.

When the cameras are on, there's a certain amount of performance and we talk about the theatre of the House. We also talk, and we all agree, that what happens inside the House and our interactions between each other in front of the cameras is very different than when we leave and go through those doors and we interact with people differently. Many

have commented that is because of the cameras: the heckling, the excessive drama, the over-the-top language.

We also talk and reflect in this House at times in which we hear from school teachers who are embarrassed to bring their students to oversee what goes on in this House. Again, it's worth reflecting that when cameras are turned on, sometimes we are not at the best as legislators.

I just wanted to raise those points for all of us to think about. Whether we televise, or we don't televise, I think we need to think about our decorum, how we treat each other, the language that we use in the House. We're here to debate the issues for Nova Scotians and we're here to work in respect of each other. I just believe that when we give consideration to issues like putting more television cameras around us, that we give some thought to maybe we need to improve our decorum before asking for more airtime. It's something to consider.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I guess I do have about a minute and a half left. I could say something, why not? I know that just on the members' comments about televising, I think what we want, and someday the government members if they're in the Opposition may want this: they want to know that what we want right now is for the public to be able to see things. The government should never be afraid to be transparent.

I know when I was sitting on the Public Accounts Committee, I certainly had my say on this one day, to the chagrin of the Liberal members of the committee because they had a majority on the committee. But they had no power over me that day because I was chairing the committee. I don't think power should be used to subvert transparency, and I think any government that wants to believe in democracy should not be taking actions to subvert transparency. They should welcome it.

The member for Cape Breton-Richmond made some very good points, that as time goes on things change in here. At least they should evolve over time. We live in a day where people are connected, they want to see what their government is doing; they want to see other people's opinion of it. They don't want to see possibly their own opinions getting squelched or squashed down by a government that doesn't want transparency.

I'll dispense with that bill and I will call our next bill for second reading.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 117.

**Bill No. 117 - Adoption Information Act.**

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

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud today to speak on Bill No. 117, the Adoption Information Act. There is very little legislation we will discuss and debate in this Legislature that will have more impact on the emotions of Nova Scotians, one that addresses the health and well-being of our children. We want to acknowledge up front that this legislation will open up very old wounds for many in this province.

As parents, we all know that we would do anything to protect our children from any potential harm and that there is nothing that terrifies us more than the thought of someone or something or some legislation that might in fact do that.

For those who took great comfort in sealed adoption records, we have heard how worried some of them are, how worried some adopted children are, and how worried some birth parents are, about what this might mean for them. The movement to have greater access to adoption information has been led by advocates across this province who have been pushing for this for decades.

We recognize that even just the discussion of this issue triggers very powerful positive, as well as negative, emotions. There are people from all races and religions who have very different emotions when this issue is raised. We want to let everyone know that we respect all of their thoughts, concerns, and emotions.

Our intent is to kick the door open wider and to bring this issue into the light, so we can all sit down at the table and discuss it together.

When I introduced this legislation two and a half weeks ago in the Legislature, it was in response for my role as the Critic for Community Services. I had raised this in the Legislature in the past, and at the time the Minister of Community Services had indicated the government wasn't willing to look at it at that time.

About a week after I introduced this legislation, the minister indicated, I believe on a radio station, that her government was now willing to do so. I know that she's worked in this portfolio for many years and has a lot of information - two years - that I don't have access to, but I am counting on her as well as the NDP to pull together our collective knowledge to help bring this forward.

This legislation is intended to solve three problems that we have in Nova Scotia. The first is to improve access to identifying information for adopted children and birth parents, as well as adoptive parents who are trying to help their children.

We want to address the fact there has been insufficient staffing in the Department of Community Services for the current searches that are going on right now. We do not have completely closed adoptions; there is a process that you can take to search for information, but it can be up to two or three years; the information isn't computerized; and sometimes there is quite a delay in getting the information that people urgently require.

What is considered one of the most important requests is to improve access to medical history so that adopted children have access to information that the rest of us take for granted. We also want to help end the heartache that adopted children feel from not knowing who they are and where they came from.

I want to take this time to acknowledge the fact that adoptive parents who took on the amazing task - although they would call it a labour of love - to take a child into their home who they did not give birth to, is one of the most extraordinary things that we as Canadians provide our children. We want to acknowledge that they would do anything to protect their children.

However, the access to information about medical history is, again, something that the rest of us take for granted. We are open to hearing about any amendments that either the government or Opposition Parties have about the legislation that we introduced. I have been hearing from stakeholders who, once they read the legislation, had all sorts of recommendations that we are more than happy to hear. These are strong advocates who are familiar with a lot of the information that has been presented in other jurisdictions across this country.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia and P.E.I. are currently the only two provinces in Canada who have not moved to change their legislation to provide greater access to adoption information. As far back as two decades ago, British Columbia solved this problem and figured out how to work with stakeholders, implement the legislation, and make it work. There were certainly learning opportunities along the way. The majority of all the other provinces in Canada have also figured out how to work this into their legislation and into their community services process.

What most of the provinces have done, with the exception of two, is provided what is called a retrospective veto. That means that before the legislative date that is established once legislation is passed, adopted children as well as birth parents have the right to a written veto that prohibits the release of identifying information. The majority of provinces do not offer that moving forward. They offer what's called a contact preference. What that means moving forward is that with any adoptions that occur after the legislation date is enacted, the only opportunity people will have is to issue a contact preference, which can be: I want no contact; I want non-identifying contact; or I want you to feel free to come by my house for Sunday dinner and I'll welcome you with open arms.

These provinces have been doing this for a number of years. Again, the veto is retrospective. Moving forward, only identifying the contact preference is available.

Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador, however, are the two provinces that have gone partway in allowing greater access to adoption information. These two provinces have enacted the same veto going backwards, but moving forward, they also allow a veto. Practically, what this means is that everyone will have a discussion early on, which is the main point of all of this. Those in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador who do not want to be contacted, who do not want contact information and identifying information released, will still have the right to do so.

Again, these legislations are all different across the provinces, so I can't guarantee I've interpreted everything 100 per cent correctly, but to the best of my knowledge from speaking with all of the other provinces, these are the essential features.

Mr. Speaker, what we heard from the stakeholders who have contacted us - and I will acknowledge upfront that mostly the people who do contact are the ones pushing for legislation, not ones who want to leave it alone. The reason for the legislation that we have put forward, matching Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador, is that it allows for the veto going backwards as well as still protecting the rights of adopted children and birth parents who still want their privacy moving forward.

The reasons for why we haven't moved forward on this issue are not important. What deserves our attention now is that we, all of us in this House, can rely on the expertise and experience of all of the other provinces. The only province that has not made a movement forward in the Legislature is P.E.I., but they did commission an expert report that has not yet been released, and they too have already communicated with as many stakeholders as possible. I'm assuming that they are probably working on legislation themselves. So, we can rely on the expertise of all the other provinces because they do have a lot of great information to share and I am confident that our government will reach out to them as well.

[4:00 p.m.]

Two decades ago the British Columbia government figured it out and everybody else after that across this province has also figured it out. Every one of their departments knows some of the challenges about unwanted reunions, somebody who showed up on the doorstep because they got information that someone may not have been aware that it was going to be released.

One of the recommendations that came from every single province and territory I spoke with, the one they didn't feel they all did sufficiently was that they didn't do what they would have considered as good a job as they could, letting everybody know that this was coming - and I see the minister nodding so I know she is well aware of this as well. I

would hate for any single person to have someone show up at an event, at a house, without warning, and say I am here, I am a relative.

What they said is that there needs to be a huge amount of time, money, and effort put towards ensuring that everyone who could possibly be affected by this knows well in advance. I believe the majority of provinces used about a year to give notice to people to put in their veto, to put in their contact information and their preference for future contact.

Mr. Speaker, my family came over from Europe, from Scotland, Ireland, England, and France in 1747. I have hundreds of relatives surrounding me in this province alone. I know I can look into their faces and look back in history to know where I came from, what my medical history was, and what the challenges are that I might face in the future because of my personal genetic makeup. I can't overemphasize how important that is to the people who are driving this movement.

Mr. Speaker, on a personal note, two of my nephews are adopted. It was an adoption through a church, so they were given certain information and my brother and family were chosen by them, so they have a lot of information that they would not have had, had they been born and adopted in this province.

I also have several cousins who are adopted, and several friends. I know from their experiences in searching for information, some of them found out through Google searches and online searches, others found out through friends and family. I do know that for those circumstances where the reunion with a family member did not go well that as hard as that was, it was harder on them all those years not knowing who they came from and where they came from and whether there were other relatives out there.

I also had friends who found out through [ancestry.ca](http://ancestry.ca) that in fact they had siblings they did not know they had and found out by accident that way.

Mr. Speaker, our world has changed a great deal since the legislation was enacted. We now have the Internet, we now have social media, we now have genetic testing that can be done. In order to keep pace with all those changes we need to review our legislation and work together to try to bring about the very best changes in our province that we can come up with.

Mr. Speaker, I know that all the advocates both for and against changing this legislation are willing to speak to all parties. I know that as a health professional I have said this before, your health history is always relevant. It is one of the first things that we, as health professionals, ask someone, what is your family genetic makeup because it will influence you for the rest of your life.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end by saying that it is a very personal thing we are discussing here today. I look forward to hearing the comments from all the other members

of the Legislature who are going to speak to this today. I want to once again acknowledge the efforts of all adoptive parents in this province who have taken children into their homes and given them the love and care and attention they needed. I want to thank all the birth parents who, through gut-wrenching emotions, decided that they needed their child to be raised in as loving a home as possible and they made the sacrifice to give their child to someone else who could provide what they, at the moment they made the decision, didn't feel they could.

I am asking all members of the Legislature to consider this legislation or consider moving forward with some type of legislation in the future. Again, I look forward to hearing all the comments of the other members.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank my honourable colleague for tabling this bill. I want to assure her that I was actually working on the issue and my announcement was not prompted by her bill. I actually do really appreciate having it here as part of the conversation.

I also want to thank people who have been reaching out to the honourable member, to the NDP, to me, to tell their adoption story. I think we all have those. I'll speak to that a little further on. But not just adoptees who have reached out but, as the honourable member said, birth parents, adoptive parents. I'd also like to thank our child welfare workers because they are a big part of this particular issue.

Just to give a little context to further inform the conversation, 83 adoptions occurred in our last fiscal year. In 2017-18 there were 103 requests for records by an adoptive child, 15 by a birth parent, just to give you some context around that.

In the last five years we haven't seen any significant increasing or decreasing trend in requests for information from adopted children or birth parents. I just wanted to provide a little bit of context there.

The other thing, there has been a lot of talk around open adoption and closed adoptions. What we have been indicating is that the Adoption Information Act takes a balanced approach by allowing government to share some identifying information when both parties agree to do so. Then adoptees or birth parents can receive non-identifying information, which includes medical information, physical description, interests, and levels of education, through adoption disclosure services staff. That does not require consent from either party. So, it's not a totally closed situation.

Other provinces have moved to further open their adoption records and, as the honourable member has indicated, every province has some form of veto in there. What I will say is that since the Adoption Information Act was passed I would say that the attitudes

to adoptions have changed significantly. The other day I was engaged in a guilty pleasure, I was watching one of those wedding shows, and I noticed that couple after couple had a child or two children or three children and then they were getting married. Back in the day, not being married was a huge deal. I think society has changed a lot in that regard. It is not considered a big sin to have a child out of wedlock. Once upon a time it was, and a lot of people gave up their children back then.

There are a lot of different views on adoption and there are many different experiences. We have adopted children out there who do not know they are adopted. We have some parents, birth parents, who do not want to be found and they have very good reasons why they do not want to be found because, in fact, the birth of that child was a traumatic experience for them, or as the result of a traumatic experience. There are other people who were forced to give up children. There are all kinds of experiences.

The current bill and what I expect we will end up with is a bill that flips the onus, compared to what it is now. Right now, we assume that we do not have permission, and like the bill on organ donation that was tabled earlier this week, I guess yesterday, it flips that consent around.

I thought I would just go back and give folks a little bit of historical context. In the 1990s, there was a ministerial advisory board that advised the minister on such issues. It indicated that there was quite a bit of support for further opening records. In the 2000s, the PC Party introduced a bill. It went through this House, from what I have been told by members who were there. It was abandoned after or during the Law Amendments Committee when it became clear that there were a lot of people who were against what this bill planned to do. We want to avoid that experience, and that's why I have indicated that we will have robust consultation, and I will speak more about consultation in a bit. Anyway, I talked about the bill in the early 2000s that was abandoned because it became very clear that it was not what the government of the day expected the response to be.

In 2007, there was a case in Ontario, *Cheskes v. Ontario*. Ontario had planned to open up and not provide veto in any way. Before 2005, records in Ontario were confidential. In 2005, Ontario introduced legislation to retroactively open adoption records. Three people brought an application to the Ontario Superior Court asking that the amended legislation be declared unconstitutional, and the court found in their favour. Then Ontario had to subsequently introduce legislation that would allow a veto so adopted adults and birth parents could register a disclosure veto to prevent the disclosure of their information if the adoption order was made prior to September 1, 2008. That's a piece of case law that has sort of influenced what provinces have subsequently done.

One of the things I will say is that we plan to hire a subject matter expert to oversee this process, someone who has great experience in this particular area. There will be a discussion paper prepared so that people understand what the issues are, what the



experiences have been in other provinces, et cetera. After that, we will have a robust consultation.

Now most of the provinces, or many of the provinces, I should say, that have further opened their adoption records have conducted public consultations about adoption disclosure. Most of those public consultations included a mix of open public sessions, mail and email submissions, and internet surveys. Many of them included a discussion paper with questions. Just recent examples, more in our neck of the woods - P.E.I. heard from 145 people in total, and 44 people attended five public sessions. P.E.I. also provided individuals with the opportunity to request a private session meeting with one of the advisory group members. New Brunswick received more than 500 written or online submissions, and 171 people attended eight public sessions. I just wanted to give you a little context on that.

We all have an adoption story, or we might have several adoption stories. There are a number of people in my family who are adopted, and sometimes we have discovered that we had relatives we didn't know who just kind of showed up one day for one reason or another, depending on which province they were from, and we found out that we had new relatives. I have previously disclosed in this House that two of my children are adopted, which always makes people kind of go, what? Because they really look like me. They were my birth children. I was widowed at 30. When I remarried several years later, in order for my husband to adopt them, I also had to adopt them.

There are certain members of this House who, every time I tell that story, look at me like, really? Are you sure? Yes, I'm sure. But the thing is, if only my husband had adopted them, then they would have been his children only. That's why I had to adopt my own children but it's one those little quirks of the law that the Clerks here will appreciate, the lawyers in the House will shake their head at, and all that stuff.

[4:15 p.m.]

As the honourable member noted, there are people who are finding family members through ancestry.com and those other kits that are floating about. When I was hearing about that, I was thinking so these adoption records are not as private as I think people think these days.

I've heard from so many people with so many stories about connecting with half siblings they didn't know, with connecting with a parent when that parent really can't recognize them. I want to assure the House and I want to assure the honourable members that I was listening to what I was hearing. But I also know that there were women in particular who gave children up under very difficult circumstances and wanted to make sure that they would not be forced into having contact with them.

For that reason, we are moving down this process. I anticipate being able to move this along. I'm so pleased to see the honourable member supporting a move in this particular direction. I have been asked a couple of times in radio interviews about birth homes here and if we were not doing this because there were birth homes, and I think about the Butterbox Baby or the Ideal Maternity Home - it has never been mentioned in any briefing I have ever been to. I just wanted to share that with the House because I think there are some people who think there is something going on there and it's not that.

Last year, I said that we had a lot going on at DCS - I was not kidding. I did say that once we were further along in transformation, it was something that we could turn our mind to and I meant that - I did take that seriously. I will just say that I don't think I saw it in the bill and I may have missed it but, as the honourable member noted, most jurisdictions will give a lead time before proclamation so that we have the opportunity to actually advertise and let people know your information will be out there unless you provide a veto.

Not long ago, I saw P.E.I.'s in the paper - they are definitely moving down this path because we want to avoid unintended consequences. We don't want to cause further pain to people who have had a difficult time already.

At the same time, we fully acknowledge that people want to know where they come from and sometimes it's because they want to know about their medical history, but sometimes they just want to know who they are. They want to look at somebody's face and say that's where I got that nose from. I will just say that I don't see that in this particular bill. I would be very concerned if we were to move to something without that. I think it's very important that we need to be able to make sure that anyone who is doing this. And, in fact, any time jurisdictions have implemented changes of this type, every jurisdiction launched information campaigns so people knew what was coming, what to expect, that kind of thing.

When Ontario looked at adoption services transactional data between 2009 and 2013, requests for information spiked in 2009 and then dropped by more than 50 per cent by 2011. So there might be a big influx at the time when things start moving, you might see a big influx at that point. Seventy-nine per cent of the requests for information at that time came from adult-adopted children. Request for disclosure vetoes spiked between 2008 and 2010, which is understandable because that was the period following that particular court case, and requests for no-contact disclosures were higher for natural parents than for adult adopted children. I just wanted to share that information with the House.

I am so pleased that we have the opportunity to talk about this today. Further to the question that was asked of me in the House today, I didn't want people to have to wait any longer to know that we are planning to move in this direction. That is why I answered the letter from an adoption advocate - it was posted online, and I believe Information Morning saw it online and I was requested to do an interview from there.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I am also very pleased to speak on Bill No. 117.

I've heard a lot of great things in the debate so far and I just want to acknowledge some of them and affirm some of them, but I also don't want to repeat everything that has already been said, so I think I will just stick with a couple of other points.

First, I'd like to thank the member from Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage for bringing this piece of legislation forward. I really appreciate her heartfelt and respectful comments in speaking about the bill and acknowledging that this is a very difficult piece of legislation - and will be for many people.

The idea of a birth parent having to make the decision to give a child up for adoption is something that I just can't imagine the pain and difficulty that comes with that. I can't even express it with real words, but it is also, as the member said, a great sacrifice. I also think about the pain of families who are wishing for a child and so that pain and sacrifice that one person goes through is the delight and absolute joy of another - and that tension is so difficult to deal with.

Currently, we have 8,000 adoptees in Nova Scotia and we want to make sure that any legislation that comes through would obviously apply to those people, but the one thing I want to say about this is that as the member pointed out, people are finding ways of finding out where they come from and who they come from - ancestry.com, Facebook, all kinds of social media platforms. The thing I want to say is that the troubling part of that is that when people are forced to go through those avenues to find out information - if a blocking of a reunion is the case, or the reunion is not what they hoped for, there is no place for them to get support around that.

We've heard that currently if one goes through the province, there is a two-year wait list to get a worker assigned to one's case and that there is very little support for people in that situation.

As this goes forward, and I'm very pleased it's going forward in some way, if and when adoption records are opened up, that some resources are put into the Department of Community Services so that people who do get reunited or have those experiences - good or bad or positive or negative - will have social workers they can be attached to who will help them through the process, or help them through the process of just receiving information. That will require funding and resources and maybe not forever - maybe it's just until the backlog of people go through the system. But it will require an investment and I hope that the government will make a proper investment in that as this legislation goes through.

We know that we are the only province without an open system right now and we know that it has taken a long time for the department and the government to come to a position of engaging with stakeholders and advocacy organizations, so I just want to say that I am very pleased that the minister is doing this now. I understand that it has taken a while, but let's look to the future, and I want to say I hope that this does happen in a timely fashion and in the ways that the minister pointed out: with robust consultation; with online submissions or letter submissions; with an online survey; with in-person meetings; and of course, providing people the opportunity to have one-on-one meetings where they can remain anonymous. I look forward to legislation coming.

At the minimum, I feel that adoptees have a right to know about their medical history and their cultural heritage. I understand that at this point in time, people can obtain some of that information, but we also know that that information is static at where an adoption took place.

A mom might give up a baby and she doesn't know really any of the medical history of her family. She doesn't know yet that her father will develop heart disease and his father also had heart disease, and so maybe heart disease is going to run through this family. She might give up a baby and then two years later develop a mental illness or a mental illness presents itself. Without constantly updating adoption records, which I guess could happen, the best way to actually know the real and true medical history is to be able to contact somebody in real life and ask what's going on now. That's really important.

The other part of it is the cultural or even the ethnic heritage of somebody. There might be some limited information and maybe someone has a clue because they have visible signs of being of a certain ethnic heritage, but very often that also might not be the case. I think of people who, for instance, might have access to status as a First Nations person, and the rights and privileges that comes with that status. This is very important. Imagine not having access to something that you might - besides the status, I'm talking about the actual cultural connection and connection to one's indigenous community, for instance.

I also want to address a little bit of what the minister said about the shame and secrecy about adoption. We know that the Adoption Council of Canada believes that sealed adoption records perpetuate secrecy and shame when, in fact, we know that really there's nothing to be ashamed of. Our society has changed a little bit.

We've advanced in some cases and what the minister said is true, that very often, and I believe my own Leader has observed this in times - I hope it's okay to say this - that very often, we see now couples getting married with their children in the wedding party. It's a lovely thing that children can be a part of that, in fact. I think that shame and secrecy, in general, needs to walk out the door; we don't need you anymore. This is another reason why we need to make these changes, and soon.

We, along with the Adoption Council of Canada, recognize that while adopted adults and birth parents have an unqualified right to identifying information about family members, that they also do have a right to privacy. As a result, the ACC supports the use of a contact preference form. On this form, an adopted adult or birth parent may indicate his or her preference for reunion. I believe this does protect the privacy of individuals, so I think that this is a good direction to go in.

Finally, I guess I'll just close by saying it is time for Nova Scotia to get in line with the rest of the country. I really look forward to the consultations beginning in a timely manner and legislation coming forward, hopefully by the Fall session. That's all I will say and thank you for allowing me to speak on this.

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

KEITH BAIN: I feel quite outnumbered. Three ladies spoke, but I'm brave and I'll try my best anyway. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to briefly speak in support of Bill No. 117, the Adoption Information Act. I congratulate and commend the member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage for bringing it forward.

[4:30 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, both in 1982 and 1985, my wife and I were truly blessed as we adopted our two sons. We had the most tremendous child care worker who looked after the process with both our sons, so much so that on November 29, 1982, we adopted our first son. Three years later our second son came to us, magically on November 29<sup>th</sup>. Now we know that this child care worker had something to do with that and to this day, almost 37 years later, the four of us call it our anniversary.

Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about some people not telling their children they are adopted. I shared with our caucus and with the people who helped us form this bill the story that our two sons, as young as they were able to understand, were told they were adopted. The story is that my oldest son - he was probably seven or eight years old - someone came to him and said, "My goodness, Justin, you look like your father," to which Justin, a seven- or eight-year-old, replied, "Well that's funny, because I'm adopted."

They do pick up your mannerisms and everything else. If you saw Justin today, he did take after his father: he is short and fat.

Mr. Speaker, on a more serious note, at that time when we adopted our boys the adoptive parents received a fair amount of information on both their birth mother and father. A fair amount. But issues like health history, or even access to it, were not disclosed. There are many times people who have been adopted would like to know more of where they came from. They could inquire about health issues that could be hereditary in the families, so they could have themselves checked out as well. I feel that this bill provides

that opportunity, and it is an opportunity for both the adopted child and the birth parents, and the opportunity to say yes or to say no.

There are times that it all depends on the makeup of the individual that you are raising. Never once, to my wife and I, have our boys said, "I'd like to know more about my birth mother," because they are family. They don't have our blood, but we are their parents. We have to take that into consideration as well.

It would be good to know that, when the time comes, that they might want to get some information about their birth parents or the grandparents, their grandparents through birth, that that opportunity is there. But at the same time, you are respecting their privacy that if the birth parents wanted to contact them that they could say yes or no and vice versa.

I think the bill brings us back into more modern times, as far as adoption information goes. If passed, I know it will allow for the sharing of more information and strengthens the veto side, too, if that is the wish of the people involved.

With those few words, I'll take my seat. I ask the government to give this bill very serious consideration.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I actually wasn't going to stand up and speak on this, but I wanted to just get a few words in. I wanted to correct a few things and give my own experience being part of the system most of my life until I was 21 years old. I would like to say that this is something some of us have brought forward to the minister. It's something that I know she's very passionate about.

First of all, to the member for Victoria-The Lakes, I want to say thank you and a heartfelt hug afterwards because I think it means a lot to be a foster parent and to adopt a child. From my own personal experiences, I probably had about 30 foster brothers and sisters growing up, and each one of us has our own unique issues. When you take on a child at a later point in life, you are essentially trying to undo all the harm that was done to them before they were in your hands. It's not an easy task, and I appreciate and have that much more respect for you and your wife, who I have met a few times, for doing that. I personally think that if you have the means to be a foster parent or to adopt, you should.

I also think it's very complicated. This whole thing around adoption and open records is much more complicated than just saying it should be open. I agree that there should be a lot more transparency, and talking to the minister, she knows how I feel about this. I think the children and the parents, there has to be a way for us to get our information much easier.

I heard both Parties say that it takes two years to get your information. I can tell you matter-of-factly that it does not take two years for everybody. It took me a couple of months to get my information. I was not in the system at the time. I was an adult when I applied for my information. I was never adopted, but as a foster child, I have access to my records. It took about a month and a half for me to get my information, and Community Services and the social worker from the Dartmouth office were actually very helpful along the way. They had offered me help in trying to explain some of the stuff that I may not have been able to fully understand and also to cope with some of the issues.

At that time, like I said, I was no longer a ward of the court. I was an adult. That was quite a while ago, but I can say from my own personal experiences and people that I know who have applied for their records in the past, no one has ever said to me that it takes two years. Maybe it is taking some people two years, but I'm just telling you from my own personal experience. I actually went through the system. I actually went and applied for my records. I actually got my records, and it did not take anywhere near two years.

I don't know how many children and adults are applying for their information now. I don't think that most people, to be quite honest with you, are aware that they can get their information. I was told that I could get my information by a lady who was one of my counsellors at Phoenix House at the time who has gone on to be the godmother of my children. Linda Wilson is her name. She now runs Metro Turning Point. She had informed me, if you want your information, you can apply for it. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't think there was a charge either. I think it was free to get. I don't know if there is or is not now, but at the time there wasn't a charge.

It's a very personal thing. Every single year I get together with the foster parents association. I speak at some of their events. To me it's less about being a politician, and it's more about thanking them for everything they do.

People are very divided on this. I know where I stand. The minister knows where I stand. I think everybody here knows where I stand when it comes to access to information. I personally think we should be able to get our information. I have made that clear to the minister, but also, I have made it clear that it's not an easy thing. There are children out there and there are parents out there who don't want that information to be out. It's not as simple as just passing a piece of legislation. There has to be a lot of consultation.

I don't know if it was a dream - correct me if I'm wrong - but I think we kind of went down this road one time on a bill. I was contacted by both sides, and both sides made a very good explanation on why they didn't want this to happen.

I appreciate the member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage bringing this forward. It's something that's near and dear to my heart. But I think we all talk about consultation, we all talk about stakeholders. Every single time there is a bill, that's what we talk about. This really needs a lot of consultation, because - to be perfectly clear to everyone in this

House - this could hurt and help people. There are individuals out there who do not want their information. There are people out there who do want their information.

As a foster child, I kind of fall under a different thing, but the minister and I had a conversation about this. I was in Burnside. I think my wife and I were there picking out lamps, and I got a call from the minister on a Sunday - she was eating a beet salad, which is absolutely disgusting, but that's what she told me - and we had a conversation about this.

There are so many different layers to this, so I said, myself, for example, I was never adopted, but if I was adopted, my parents aren't from Canada. My parents were not born in Canada. I personally was not born in Canada. My sister was born in Canada, my brother was born in England, my other brother was born in Ireland, my other brother was born in Canada, and I was born in England. So then, where do I go if I was adopted? Where do I get my information? How do I get my information? Now we're dealing with different jurisdictions, different countries. How does DCS get in contact with both of my, I'll say in air quotes, "parents"? My biological parents have passed away, so what does that mean for me if I was adopted? How do I get that information? If they were alive, one was living in Ireland and one was living in England. They were separated.

There's so much to work through on this, and I want to make sure that - there are a lot of bills that have gone through this House, and I think a lot of times, maybe we don't pay attention to every single little detail. But I think this is one of those ones where we really need to pay attention to the details because I've personally heard from associations and from parents who have said, if this opens up my information, I will no longer foster, I will no longer adopt. I've heard that from people.

So then it becomes, for me, whose rights are more important? Is it the child who is now an adult or is it the parents who are taking these children? I know where I stand on this. I've heard people say that it's a difficult thing to give up your child, and I agree, it is a difficult thing to give up your child.

I am probably going to get in trouble for saying this, but I don't care, because I've been through the system. I feel that the moment my parents gave me up, they lost their rights to me. They lost their rights to be able to dictate my future from there on in. So if I need my information, that's where I stand on that.

With this bill, I don't want to see the back and forth. I don't want to see the fighting and the argument and the stuff in the media about all this. What I want is a bill where we all stand down and we all do what's right, and we don't put our own personal face or brand or whatever on this. This has to be done right.

We're going to go into Law Amendments Committee, if and when this bill comes forward - and the minister is saying that once the consultation is done, we're going to go into Law Amendments Committee. Anyone in this room, don't think this is going to be an



easy bill. There are going to be people sitting in there who are going to hate every single one of us who says yes, and there are going to be people that if you say no, they're going to hate you too, and they're going to be very upset. This is a very emotional issue and people are going to be very upset about this.

So then it becomes, what do we do? (Interruption) Pardon me? Right, and I'd appreciate if I could finish on the floor without being interrupted on this one.

Like the member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River said, we will deal with this, but we need to be prepared that there are going to be people on all sides of this. I hope that we'll be able to come forward with a bill that will reflect and protect the children, but at the same time make sure that we are not turning off potential parents for adoption.

I myself have three children who I absolutely love and adore, and we do plan on adopting. There is a difference. I don't have that personal experience. I have the experience from the other side, and the member for Victoria-The Lakes has the experience from adopting.

[4:45 p.m.]

There is a difference in adoption when it comes to ages. One of the biggest issues we face in this province when it comes to adoption is that everybody wants a baby, everybody wants the young child. Nobody wants a 14-year-old, nobody wants a 12-year-old, no one wants a 10-year-old, no one wants a 6-year-old. What ends up happening is that those children go their entire life feeling unwanted, feeling unloved. A lot of time the moment they are living in and the future is dictated by the actions that happened to them when they were young.

The question for me is not just about open records. The question to me is, how do we encourage more adoption? How do we encourage people to not just adopt the cute, cuddly babies because everybody wants their own - and I understand it. I mean it would be extremely difficult to deal with a 14-year-old who has been sexually molested for the last five years and having to have that individual in your house, with your children, and not knowing how to deal with those things, or a 9-year-old who spent the last two years being beaten, or a 7-year-old who hasn't been feed properly for the last three years. They get learned behaviours, they have expectations.

I don't talk a lot about my past experience, but I tell people when people ask me what it was like to live in care, I said I made the first adult decision in my life when I was five years old and that decision changed my path for the rest of my life. I was living in a comfortable foster family at the time, in Lake Charlotte. They were in the military and they sat my sister and I down at the table and said we need to have a discussion with you. Sure,

what is it? I thought it was like, are you going to eat Fruit Loops, or whatever it is, for breakfast?

I could tell right away on Lillian's face that it was a serious conversation. She had said to me, we are moving. Brian has been relocated and we have to move to Ontario, so you and your sister have an option - you can stay with us, you'll live a good life, you'll have a stable background and you'll never have to worry, but you'll never see your brothers and your sister again. The chances are that you won't see them until you are 40, 50, who knows, but you'll forget about them - because at the time being in foster care, we got four supervised visits a year. Four times a year a social worker would show up, get my sister and me, we'd go over to Dartmouth to the Dartmouth Community Service and we would sit in a room and play with each other while individuals sat off in the corner taking notes.

Or, you leave us - and she said you are five years old, I am going to be blunt with you. Your sister is nine, you are five - no one is taking you, you are too old, so you'll bounce around for foster care. If you are lucky, you'll stay in one for a while, but you'll have an opportunity to get to know your brothers and sisters.

Obviously, the choice that was made - my sister looked at me, I was five, and she said, I am not making this choice, you make the choice. The choice was simple, I want to know my family. I've kind of gone back and forth on that, you can't choose your family, but that day I could have.

I know I am kind of getting a little bit off topic and I apologize, Mr. Speaker. To the member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage, this is something that I think we all can agree with, that needs to happen. Once again, we have to do this right, we have to do consultation, and I think we can all agree with this.

The one thing I will ask, with 50 seconds left, and I'll repeat it again - this is going to be something that is going to spark a lot of emotions. People in this House and people who come to Law Amendments, I ask that we all act with the best interests in mind and not try to push out Party politics or partisan talking points. I think we all can do this because I've seen us all do it.

I do want to say again that I appreciate the member for Victoria-The Lakes for what he has done. I didn't know that, and I thank the member for bringing this forward.

**THE SPEAKER:** The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

**ALLAN MACMASTER:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member opposite for his remarks and for everyone's remarks today. It's certainly a very sensitive issue and I know we certainly had our discussions about it but I won't get into that because that's caucus confidentiality. But we had a lot of conversations about it and we came together in the end with this bill. We were comfortable with it because I know that there are people

who are waiting years for information that is really so important to the very core of their being. We're sensitive to that and we're sensitive of the need to make some changes for people, for everyone involved so that everyone's interests are protected.

That concludes Opposition Business for today and I will turn it back over to the Government House Leader.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, my thanks to everyone. That concludes the business for today and I move that the House do now rise to sit again tomorrow, Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

After the daily routine and Question Period, we will resolve in the Committee of the Whole House on Supply. Following that, we will move to second readings on Bill No. 133 and Bill No. 135 and, with time permitting, we will move to third readings for Bill No. 92, Bill No. 103, Bill No. 105, Bill No. 109, and Bill No. 112.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to adjourn to rise again tomorrow at the prescribed hour of 1:00 p.m., Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup>.

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

The motion is carried.

The House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, at 1:00 p.m.

We have now reached the moment of interruption. The topic for late debate, as submitted by the honourable member for Kings North, is:

“Therefore be it resolved that the government has failed to provide sufficient resources to the Valley Regional Hospital leading to delayed and cancelled surgeries and procedures.”

## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

### **VALLEY REG. HOSP.: INSUFFICIENT RESOURCES - CAUSING DELAYS**

JOHN LOHR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it's an honour to rise and speak for a few minutes in defence of Valley Regional Hospital.

Before I start talking about the issues currently at Valley Regional Hospital, I want to let this House and the world know how proud the residents of the Annapolis Valley are of Valley Regional Hospital. We believe we have one of the outstanding hospitals in the province and the staff there do incredibly good work. We've always had a very, very good complement of different types of specialists.

The sentiment in the Valley is that it goes back to the head of the hospital, Peter Mosher, who ran it with an iron fist and, when something needed to be done, he got it done and his legacy lives on in the excellence of Valley Regional Hospital. The staff at Valley Regional Hospital are incredible. They do incredible work and they go above and beyond all the time.

The other day when we did the volunteer of the year awards, I was thinking as I was hearing that about our staff at Valley Regional Hospital, if we could give awards for the service they do, I think they would earn awards all the time. However, your medical history is shrouded in secrecy. That's yours. It's a very private thing, your medical history and I think it doesn't get talked about. I probably shouldn't even say this, but I know of a person recently in my area who went in and was in and out in three days with very significant surgery. Very successful. This is going on all the time.

So, saying that, how is the government failing Valley Regional? Before I go onto that subject, I do want to say too, that it enjoys enormous support in our area. The hospital foundation has terrific support, does terrific work. I'm a founding member of the 100 Men Who Give a Damn Annapolis Valley and it was a year and a half ago that we had the Valley Regional Hospital Foundation present. We helped fund a tool to do prostate surgery that is unique in the province.

People from Halifax go to Valley Regional for prostate surgery. We were very pleased to help fund that. When the then-director Gerry MacIsaac gave us the description of what this tool would do, she said the current surgery was like coring an apple and this would turn it into day surgery from a three- or four-day stay. All of us men were sitting there squirming hearing that, and she had us. We voted for that. It's now there and that's just one example.

The problems at Valley Regional are related, I believe, not to the work of the professionals there, the staff there. I believe it is fundamentally a management issue. That is the failure to have anticipated the growth in demand for the services. This has been documented and is well known. I think it was talked about in 2004 and in 2008 that there would be more OR space needed, that there would be more beds needed, and more staff. In fact, I believe right now we are 32 non-physician positions open at Valley Regional right now, according to the Nova Scotia Health Authority website.

There are 36 positions open in the Western region, and I believe we're two anesthesiologists short; I think we have one coming in July. But it's the shortage in these

staff positions, plus the shortage of space, which means that the demand for the services that is there in the Valley - they're just bursting at the seams.

It is also what you could call a cascading effect, I believe. There's a shortage of long-term care beds and there's a certain number of people in Valley Regional who would otherwise be in a long-term care bed. I know probably every single MLA here has, on occasion, received a constituent who was shocked to have received a bill for part of the cost of that long-term stay.

It's just an indication of the fact that there are people there who would otherwise be put into long-term care, who are taking a certain number of spaces. Which means that when surgeries are booked, if there's not a bed to put the person in post-op, there's no space and the surgery gets cancelled. So it's a cascading effect and it affects the ER, too. What we see is that there is a need to have more ERs. Reportedly, there's three more ERs needed. There's more staff needed.

It's simply because - in fact, the population of the Valley probably hasn't grown, it probably grew about 1 per cent a year, it has only marginally grown. But, in fact, we've all gotten older - we all need more health care as we get older, that's a reality. So that has put increased demand on every part of the service there. What we see in that, is that it's incredibly difficult for the staff to operate in that environment. I had a doctor tell me, John, in the ER, we are practicing unsafe medicine every day. In other words, the ER's overcrowded by times and this has been reported, too.

These are management things and there's a need to be able to look at the numbers, crunch the numbers and say we need more ER space, we need more OR space, we need more beds. Investments can be made, and I spoke briefly yesterday in the House about other investments being made by this government.

I questioned some of those. I will question it once again. The fact that we're putting a track in Bridgetown for \$3.6 million with - to my understanding and I stand to be corrected - no community funding. Communities, Culture and Heritage has accepted a five-year maintenance role there and that \$3.6 million would have gone a long way to put another ER in, maybe a few more beds. I think we ought to look at where we're spending our money.

More than that, as managers of this system, this government has to look at what the future needs are and anticipate them. I know that as a farmer when I was farming you're constantly evaluating that, you're trying to decide what will I need next year. If I want to grow more of summer savoury, which was my dilemma, I didn't just need more land; I had the land. I needed another tractor, another man, another kiln. All those things had to be there at the same time and it makes it difficult to grow, but you have to anticipate the needs and put the pieces in place. You need more staff, you need more space, and more beds, all at the same time.

[5:00 p.m.]

I'm not saying it's easy, but it's not the fault of the staff there. It's the responsibility of the management to see the infrastructure is in place, to see that these hospitals can meet the need. I know the system is stressed throughout, I know that the Health budget is approaching 50 per cent of our total budget. I understand that. If we want to meet the needs of the population that we have now, we have to deal with it. We're reaching a crisis point with the whole thing because it's so incredibly difficult for the staff there to deal with this. I'm not sure this is happening in the Valley, but I've heard that nurses have been told they won't get their vacation time, all across the province, because of shortages.

The reality is, I think you could layer this same conversation over most of the other hospitals in the province and look at it. There is nothing new about this, there's no surprise here. I believe six years in I will call upon this government to address these problems and deal with the basic infrastructure problems in there. I know there are things being done in Halifax, but we have a fantastic hospital and we have staff that are reaching the breaking point with frustration because they can't provide the health care that they want to provide.

Even now with the OR backlogs, there's 3,030, it was reported in January and there may still be 3,030 OR backlogs. This is life and death for some people. If you're waiting for a surgery, and you don't get it in time, in some cases it can result in amputation, and this was reported, and it can result in someone losing their life. I believe it is a management issue. This government is responsible for the management of the system, has been there for six years. This is all well understood, these dynamics are well understood and well known. We need more long-term care space, we need more OR space, we need more beds and more staff.

THE SPEAKER: Order. Time has elapsed.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

TAMMY MARTIN: The situation at the Valley Regional Hospital has reached a crisis point. There are so many patients in ALC beds inside the hospital they are having to admit patients to the ER. Admitting patients to the ER has prevented people in need of care from being seen.

On March 7<sup>th</sup> the Valley Regional Hospital ER had 24 patients admitted. That same day there were 80 people designated ALC in the Western Zone of this province. How the Premier and the Minister of Health and Wellness can insist that our emergency room backups are not connected to the lack of nursing home beds and the time it takes to get people adequate home care is beyond me.

In 2018 the average total length of stay for someone awaiting placement from an ALC bed was 77.7 days. There were 706 ALC discharges in the Western zone last year,

more than in any other zone. There were 2,009 cases across our entire health care system. More people are living in hospitals in the Western Zone than anywhere else in this province. Of those 706 people, 333 were waiting for placement in a nursing home, 282 were waiting for home care, and sadly, 91 died.

Last year 91 died just at the Valley Regional Hospital waiting to be transferred somewhere else where their care needs could be met. Those people died waiting to receive the care they needed. They died in beds that could have been helping people recover from surgeries or serious illnesses. They died without the social or recreational opportunities that really matter to people in the last years of their lives. This is unacceptable.

The average days a person awaiting discharge to a nursing home or home care, so that's anyone in an ALC bed, stays in that bed is 60.5 days just in the Western Zone. Madam Speaker, across Canada the average ALC bed stay is just 9.2 days. I would suggest to you that we are severely failing in that department.

We have heard from families and community organizations about the need for more nursing home beds. Families are concerned that their loved ones are being kept in hospitals instead of receiving proper long-term care. More than 20 per cent of all hospital beds were occupied by ALC patients in 2018. When seniors are forced to stay in hospital beds instead of being placed in long-term care, they do not have the same quality of life as they would in a proper nursing home. There are no recreation and programming opportunities in hospitals, and there are limited opportunities for social interaction. Living in a hospital bed is not good for anyone in the long term. The average total length of stay in a Nova Scotia hospital for an ALC patient is more than 100 days. Madam Speaker, this is unacceptable.

This is not just a problem at the Valley. Earlier this month at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital emergency department, they had 24 admitted patients. Strangely enough, there are only 24 beds in the emergency department. As we know, admitted patients are meant to be in patient beds, not in our emergency rooms.

When admitted patients are in emergency room beds, they clog up the system, as we know, preventing people presenting at triage from making it into actual treatment rooms. Just like the overcrowding at the Valley Regional, the overcrowding at the Cape Breton Regional emergency department is directly connected to the shortage of long-term care beds in this province. People are living in the hospital when they should be in nursing homes, which leads to people who should be in in-patient beds staying in the emergency room. Imagine living in an emergency room, Madam Speaker, while those who are seeking care have nowhere to go but the waiting room. Imagine the rest that you would receive in a crazy busy emergency room.

We need nursing home beds open and receiving people to get our hospitals working again. We needed them five years ago, but instead of investing in the care our people needed, this government has spent five years neglecting our community, landing us in the

mess that we are in today. This budget was an opportunity to make real investments in long-term care, but Madam Speaker, they have blown it.

The crisis in our emergency rooms is at a breaking point - I may say beyond a breaking point. The demand at the Valley Regional and many ERs in our province is much more than they can handle. With community ERs often closed, as they always are across this province, people have to rely on hospitals farther away with longer lines. In the CBRM, when Glace Bay, New Waterford, and the Northside are closed, that's another 50,000 people on top of the already 50,000 people that the Regional was built to serve.

We need to know what's going on in our hospitals if we want to fix the problem. We need to have information available so that the public can hold the government of the day accountable. Madam Speaker, we need numbers about Code Critical. We need to track how often our ambulances are backed up and waiting to off-load patients, which is more often than not. We need to know how often our community ERs are being closed. We need to keep track of how many patients are showing up at ERs without family doctors, how many orphaned patients there are in our health care system. We need to know how long patients were waiting in ambulances to be transferred into the care of the hospital. I would remind the members of this Legislature that some people have served a full 12-hour shift with the staff before they have been transferred into the care of a staff member at an emergency room. We need to know many patients are leaving the ER without receiving treatment because that is a disgrace, sending people home without being treated.

If the public could see these numbers at the Valley Regional, perhaps there would be some nursing home beds open. Perhaps the government would take medical staff at that hospital seriously and reduce the amount of time it takes to get someone into home care for more than a week or two, or a day, at most.

Maybe, if we could see the problem in a systemic way, we would have a government willing to admit that there is a crisis right now in our health care system. I want to impress upon this House that we cannot solve the problems that we can't see and we don't admit.

Day after day we recount the stories of Nova Scotians who suffer every day. We hear stories from health care workers who have solutions that are being ignored. We hear stories from families who can't get care for their kids. We hear stories of doctors and nurses who are fed up and can't take working in that environment anymore.

We relay these stories to this government and we get stonewalled. We are told that they can't comment on individual cases. It's not individual cases, Madam Speaker. This is the norm across the province. We are told that these stories aren't representative - I beg to differ - or that they are isolated situations. Again, I beg to differ. We don't believe that that's the case. We hear this each and every day.



I believe that all Nova Scotians deserve a top-notch health care system that meets their needs as patients, workers, and community members.

The Valley Regional Hospital, like the Cape Breton Regional Hospital, is a canary in the coal mine. We ought to heed the warning and take action before it is too late.

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

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Madam Speaker, I am just wondering if I can have the extra two minutes for late debate that were left by the NDP.

THE SPEAKER: No, I'm sorry.

LEO GLAVINE: Anyway, it was worth a try.

I want to thank the member for Kings North for bringing this topic to the floor of the Legislature. I'm an absolute believer that collective impact around discussions, thoughts, and ideas on how to correct problems is very, very important to our process here in the House.

There was one dominant theme that I took whenever I met with specialists here at the IWK or the QEII in terms of their view of Valley Regional and all of - I guess I might as well say it - the regional hospitals across the province, when one of the doctors, the specialists in cardiology, ophthalmology, oncology, whatever - when they called to the QEII to admit a patient, they knew exactly what was coming to their door. They had the highest regard for the staff at Valley Regional.

One of the doctors who did speak out on the most recent issue, Dr. Adam Clarke, is a man I know personally. I have the highest regard for him as a doctor and as a member of our Valley community. I will relate to that a little bit later on.

As a regional hospital, there is work that takes place there which encompasses a huge geographic area of Digby County, Yarmouth County, Argyle, Queens County, and Lunenburg County, and now, because of the integration that we've put into the system, people are coming from other parts of the province for particular procedures that are done at Valley Regional.

One of the areas that has received a lot of attention has been the orthopaedic needs and the wait-list that we've had at Valley for quite some time.

During my time as Health and Wellness Minister, I met with about 35 to 40 doctors from the Valley Regional Hospital system. When I asked them about what they have at the top of their list, even though it wasn't necessarily in their area of specialty, they said, without doubt, we have to move strongly on the orthopaedic demands that we have at

Valley, which is one of five orthopaedic sites in the province. A range of doctors said, do what you can to attack that list.

A number of initiatives there, and in the other four orthopaedic sites, have indeed now finally stabilized that list, which had been growing for many years. It's wonderful to be able to say that Cape Breton Regional, in fact, has reached the national benchmark of being able to get hip and knee replacements within the six-month period.

[5:15 p.m.]

The pre-clinic that has been established in the Valley, again, is receiving great commendation for the better preparation for surgery and therefore the quicker and better outcomes for patients. But with a sixth orthopaedic surgeon added to the team in Kentville, it has increased the number of surgeries and probably has impacted on some of the non-acute surgeries that are required on a pretty regular basis. The overall number is a very high number; about 5,000 surgeries take place at Valley Regional Hospital. Currently there is a wait-list close to 3,000. Now 600 to 700 of those do not require anesthesiologists as part of the team, they can do procedures without.

Also, some of those surgeries are being moved, whether it is to Truro or Amherst, to one of our other regional hospitals and we actually have people from the Valley now who go to Cape Breton Regional for hip and knee replacements, where that is possible for a family to do.

There's a tremendous amount of orthopaedic work, but there's one statistic that really needs to be pointed out that is province-wide: we had about 85 per cent, primarily seniors, who had a fall and required a hip or knee replacement within 48 hours. We all know that's critically important in terms of possible shock and the impact that it would have on a person. We are now in the province up to 96 per cent, which is well above the 88 per cent national statistic at the moment. A lot of that is due to the interventions now that are able to be done at our five sites, but in particular at Valley Regional.

I know that was a huge concern that Dr. Eric Howatt had pointed out when he first began to propose a plan. The orthopaedic plan, by the way, was not put in place by the NSHA; it was put in place by our 21 or 22 orthopaedic surgeons in the province. It is their plan; they are executing it. I think that emergency surgery now will reach 100 per cent of a senior having a fall and getting their surgery within 48 hours. Gradually we will actually be able to get, I think at our five sites, down to a reasonable level.

One of the areas that we also need to really focus on in terms of the demand - I know this winter was a tough winter in terms of cases coming into Valley Regional. We have five of the eight communities in Nova Scotia that have 25 per cent of their population at 65 and over. Five of those towns are in the Annapolis Valley, so we do have a constant high demand. As Dr. Adam Clarke said the shortage of family doctors at the moment is

one of the critical areas because specialists are actually having to do some of that care that would normally be transferred over to a GP.

As the member for Kings North realizes, too, we have had 10 retirements in 12 months. It never happened before in our history, all of them in the high 60s, low 70s in age, at retirement age. Recruitment has started to help us some, just as we will get another anesthesiologist this summer. I'll tell you, that is a national problem and that is what can curtail surgeries on a daily basis, on a monthly basis, and get that wait-list in a whole number of areas way too long. Also, two of the residents that are trained in the Valley Regional with our specialists and GPs, two of them will be remaining this year. The outlook is the area that I certainly see a number of positives that will, I think, help us alleviate some of the stressors that were there.

Now, there was some of the reporting as well that really did not capture the reality that the Valley Regional Hospital was experiencing. I know they have reached out to present to the public that while a first report was put out about the state of what was happening at Valley Regional Hospital, there was certainly a counterpoint and I'd like to table that. It says: Valley patients not in peril while waiting for surgery. It was very, very important to get that message out to all of us as citizens of the Annapolis Valley.

I finish off by saying that the perioperative leaders, nurses, physicians, and other providers who focus on the needs of our patients are working hard every day to resolve the current backlog that is there.

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

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

[The House rose at 5:22 p.m.]

**NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)****RESOLUTION NO. 925**

By: Ben Jessome (Hammonds Plains-Lucasville)

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

Whereas Matt Walsh, a resident of Upper Tantallon, is a hard-working employee of Subway, a dedicated member of Special Olympics, and has been the co-host of the Inspired Gala for the past few years; and

Whereas Matt Walsh is a member of the Inclusion Committee of the NSSSA (Nova Scotia Secondary Students' Association) where he works on the logistics committee helping to plan an Inclusion Conference for high school students; and

Whereas Matt Walsh was chosen to sit on the Education Standard Development Committee that will develop recommendations for standards to make the education system more accessible for students with disabilities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Matt Walsh on being chosen to sit on the Education Standard Development Committee, on his accomplishments to date, and to wish him well in all of his future endeavors.

**RESOLUTION NO. 926**

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (Eastern Shore)

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

Whereas Brandon Power of Musquodoboit Harbour was selected as the only player from Nova Scotia to be on the national U-18 rugby team which traveled to San Diego in December 2018 for a training camp with Canadian and U.S. National Team players; and

Whereas Brandon's Canada Red team played the U.S. Blue team on December 31, 2018, where they tied the game at 20 points each; and

Whereas Brandon is looking forward to starting college next year where he will be pursuing his athletic endeavours and his academic goal of studying human kinetics;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Brandon Power on being the only Nova Scotian to make the Canada U-18 national rugby team and to wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 927**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Ron Crowe from Central Onslow, Colchester North, has been actively involved with the curling community for five decades, both as a competitive curler and as a volunteer; and

Whereas he was one of the original organizers of the Colchester Firefighters Curling League, past-president of the league, he was the national secretary/treasurer of the Canadian Firefighters Curling Association and served as president of the Truro Curling Club; and

Whereas Ron won the Nova Scotia Stick Curling Championship twice, in 2009 and in 2012, won a national bronze medal, and placed in the top-10 nationally in St. Albert's, Alberta in 2018;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ron Crowe for being honoured by the Canadian Firefighters Curling Association as a life member and for being inducted as a life member of the Nova Scotia Firefighters Curling Association.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 928**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas rural Nova Scotians for many years have depended on the members of volunteer fire brigades to keep their families and properties safe from fire; and

Whereas training, fundraising, first aid, recruitment, and public relations are only a few of the many additional responsibilities of the members of a fire brigade; and

Whereas an annual banquet is held as a way to thank these dedicated volunteers and to present special awards for years of service and for outstanding contributions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Adam Boertjes of the Debert Fire Brigade for 5 Years of Service and commend him for his commitment to serving others.

**RESOLUTION NO. 929**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas rural Nova Scotians for many years have depended on the members of volunteer fire brigades to keep their families and properties safe from fire; and

Whereas training, fundraising, first aid, recruitment, and public relations are only a few of the many additional responsibilities of the members of a fire brigade; and

Whereas an annual banquet is held as a way to thank these dedicated volunteers and to present special awards for years of service and for outstanding contributions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Bob Davis of the Debert Fire Brigade for being named Honorary Member and commend him for his commitment to serving others.

**RESOLUTION NO. 930**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas rural Nova Scotians for many years have depended on the members of volunteer fire brigades to keep their families and properties safe from fire; and

Whereas training, fundraising, first aid, recruitment, and public relations are only a few of the many additional responsibilities of the members of a fire brigade; and

Whereas an annual banquet is held as a way to thank these dedicated volunteers and to present special awards for years of service and for outstanding contributions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Brandon Slack of the Debert Fire Brigade for the 2018 Fire Officer of the Year Award and commend him for his commitment to serving others.

**RESOLUTION NO. 931**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas rural Nova Scotians for many years have depended on the members of volunteer fire brigades to keep their families and properties safe from fire; and

Whereas training, fundraising, first aid, recruitment, and public relations are only a few of the many additional responsibilities of the members of a fire brigade; and

Whereas an annual banquet is held as a way to thank these dedicated volunteers and to present special awards for years of service and for outstanding contributions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ed Hingley of the Debert Fire Brigade for being named charter member and commend him for his commitment to serving others.

**RESOLUTION NO. 932**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas rural Nova Scotians for many years have depended on the members of volunteer fire brigades to keep their families and properties safe from fire; and

Whereas training, fundraising, first aid, recruitment, and public relations are only a few of the many additional responsibilities of the members of a fire brigade; and

Whereas an annual banquet is held as a way to thank these dedicated volunteers and to present special awards for years of service and for outstanding contributions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ian Jennings of the Debert Fire Brigade for the 2018 Wendell Barnhill Memorial Most Improved Fire Fighter Award and commend him for his commitment to serving others.

**RESOLUTION NO. 933**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas rural Nova Scotians for many years have depended on the members of volunteer fire brigades to keep their families and properties safe from fire; and

Whereas training, fundraising, first aid, recruitment, and public relations are only a few of the many additional responsibilities of the members of a fire brigade; and

Whereas an annual banquet is held as a way to thank these dedicated volunteers and to present special awards for years of service and for outstanding contributions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kyle Slack of the Debert Fire Brigade for 20 years of service and commend him for his commitment to serving others.

**RESOLUTION NO. 934**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas rural Nova Scotians for many years have depended on the members of volunteer fire brigades to keep their families and properties safe from fire; and

Whereas training, fundraising, first aid, recruitment, and public relations are only a few of the many additional responsibilities of the members of a fire brigade; and

Whereas an annual banquet is held as a way to thank these dedicated volunteers and to present special awards for years of service and for outstanding contributions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Michael Hepburn of the Debert Fire Brigade for the 2018 Fire Fighter of the Year Award and commend him for his commitment to serving others.



**RESOLUTION NO. 935**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas rural Nova Scotians for many years have depended on the members of volunteer fire brigades to keep their families and properties safe from fire; and

Whereas training, fundraising, first aid, recruitment, and public relations are only a few of the many additional responsibilities of the members of a fire brigade; and

Whereas an annual banquet is held as a way to thank these dedicated volunteers and to present special awards for years of service and for outstanding contributions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulates Randy Barnhill of the Debert Fire Brigade for 30 Years of Service and commends him for his commitment to serving others.

**RESOLUTION NO. 936**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas rural Nova Scotians for many years have depended on the members of volunteer fire brigades to keep their families and properties safe from fire; and

Whereas training, fundraising, first aid, recruitment, and public relations are only a few of the many additional responsibilities of the members of a fire brigade; and

Whereas an annual banquet is held as a way to thank these dedicated volunteers and to present special awards for years of service and for outstanding contributions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulates Rob Stone of the Debert Fire Brigade for 25 Years of Service and commends him for his commitment to serving others.

**RESOLUTION NO. 937**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas rural Nova Scotians for many years have depended on the members of volunteer fire brigades to keep their families and properties safe from fire; and

Whereas training, fundraising, first aid, recruitment, and public relations are only a few of the many additional responsibilities of the members of a fire brigade; and

Whereas an annual banquet is held as a way to thank these dedicated volunteers and to present special awards for years of service and for outstanding contributions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulates Royce Totten of the Debert Fire Brigade for being named Charter Member and commends him for his commitment to serving others.

**RESOLUTION NO. 938**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas rural Nova Scotians for many years have depended on the members of volunteer fire brigades to keep their families and properties safe from fire; and

Whereas training, fundraising, first aid, recruitment, and public relations are only a few of the many additional responsibilities of the members of a fire brigade; and

Whereas an annual banquet is held as a way to thank these dedicated volunteers and to present special awards for years of service and for outstanding contributions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulates Ted Totten of the Debert Fire Brigade for being named Charter Member and commends him for his commitment to serving others.