



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 2019

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 2019

Sixty-third General Assembly

Second Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, Brendan Maguire

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, may I do an introduction before I table the report?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

THE PREMIER: I'd like to draw the attention of the House to the East Gallery where we're joined today by Gerry Morrison and Tony Smith, both of whom are co-chairs of VOICES, which stands for Victims of Institutional Child Exploitation Society, and members of the Restorative Inquiry Council of Parties. I'd ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House for the work they're doing. (Standing Ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: I'm proud, on behalf of those two gentlemen and all those who participated, to table the second report of the Reflection and Action Task Group to the House of Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, two minutes ago I was proud to table the second report of the Reflection and Action Task Group outlining our government's work to date in supporting the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children's Restorative Inquiry.

The Reflection and Action Task Group consists of members of the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children, Council of Parties, and several deputy ministers. Their role is to advance activities and objectives of the Restorative Inquiry.

We have come to understand the significance of the story of the Home for Colored Children. We have come to understand the important place it has in the African Nova Scotia history and culture. This story is one of institutional and systemic failure to provide care, a failure to meet human needs, and how this failure reflects and contributes to the context of systemic racism.

Mr. Speaker, the complexity of the story of the Home is why the process of the Restorative Inquiry is so important for this province and, I would say, beyond. The central issues identified are interconnected. We have deepened our understanding of these issues, we came together and built the capacity we need to best address them.

The story of the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children is part of our shared history and continues to touch the lives of many former residents, their families, and the African Nova Scotian community across our province. The work of the Restorative Inquiry is an opportunity for us to collaboratively address some of the long-standing issues of African Nova Scotians and work together in dismantling systemic racism, discrimination, and inequity.

Unfortunately, this is still being experienced by many in the African Nova Scotian communities today. One of the most important things we have learned is how significantly our ways of working together can affect those we serve. That's why the way we have traditionally worked does not adequately meet the needs of children and families. It continues the condition and allows the issue of systemic racism to be built within our system.

Mr. Speaker, this must change, and I believe the work that the inquiry is doing has set us on a path to do that. Through our engagement in this process, we have had the opportunity to work in a different way - a way that puts people, and their connections to each other and to the community, at the centre of our process. Continuing to work in this way will help shift our focus from the operations of the system to the needs of the people we serve.

We must all support a cultural shift to create meaningful and lasting change. We all have to work differently to dismantle the structural conditions that have allowed systemic racism to continue. This means taking a more people-centred approach, which will require putting the needs of children, youth, and families at the centre of what we do: of all our work, practices, and policies. Focus on relationships and connections at the individual, institutional, and system levels, and be less adversarial and risk-adverse. We must continue to have difficult conversations about race and discrimination and we must be willing to change.

This work has been challenging. It will continue to be challenging and it will take time. We are on a journey of learning and reflection that is ongoing. Through reflections and dialogue, we are taking steps in the central issues and related issues to systemic racism. For example, program enhancements to support families, building cultural competency to understand and address justice-related issues, expanding the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs, and developing educational strategies for kids in care.

[9:15 a.m.]

Mr. Speaker, as I table this second report today, I want to reaffirm my commitment, and our government's commitment, to working collaboratively to make the changes necessary to put children and families first. We have a responsibility to apply what we have learned to our processes, systems, and interactions as a government, so that we can work with the community and our partners to make a meaningful difference in Nova Scotia's children, youth, and family.

Our work is not over; there is much more work to do. The second report on the reflection of the action task group is another step forward in our journey towards healing and change. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the former residents for their courage, and I want to thank the restorative inquiry and the community for giving us the opportunity to talk about what matters, so together we can build a better tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, before I take my seat, I would like to take a moment to give my condolences to the family and friends of Joan Jones, a lifelong community activist who worked hard to dismantle all forms of racism and injustice. Joan was an active member of the Council of Parties and the Restorative Inquiry, and as a commissioner she shared her wisdom, insight, and analysis based on years of experience working in the community and

with government. She will be missed by many, and we are grateful for her tremendous contributions to our province.

Mr. Speaker, we need to work together to ensure all Nova Scotians are treated with dignity, equality, and respect. This has been the core of the Restorative Inquiry process. Today's report represents our continued commitment in that direction. (Standing Ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by echoing the Premier in his thanks to everyone who has worked on this report - the Reflection and Action Task Group and the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children Restorative Inquiry. Sincerely, thank you.

The work that has gone into this inquiry continues to be challenging and heartbreaking, but it was and remains necessary if we are to find some path to restoration. This is a story of institutional and systemic failure, and that failure reflects and contributes to the context of systemic racism. That is something that still echoes today, Mr. Speaker.

Last week we received the report on street checks and that report speaks to many of the same issues identified in the work of the inquiry. The report and the Premier have highlighted the manner in which the Restorative Inquiry has put people and community at the centre of its process, and the way that that differs from a system-centred approach - the system-centred approach that the report calls "siloes and fragmented."

In this report, we not only get a great description of the negative effects of siloes, but we also see the real and true damage that they can cause. With siloes, you see just enough of what's happening in other siloes to justify what's happening in yours. They let you believe that the small injuries caused by your silo are the only injuries that occur, and quickly, those siloes become echo chambers that reinforce the decision making and leave you to believe that there are no other ways to do that work.

I want to take a few moments to talk about two programs highlighted in this report, the Families Plus program and the Alternative Family Care Program. Both take a slightly different tack in achieving the same goal of keeping children in their family units and connected to their community. Those who were in the House on Wednesday heard members from all Parties speak to the Adoption Information Act and the raw emotions that are involved when children are separated from their families. When you layer in the failings of institutionalized care that are the root causes of the Restorative Inquiry, it becomes very clear how important it is to keep children with their families, being connected to their communities, and to support those families in becoming stable and secure.

I will close, Mr. Speaker, by again echoing the Premier's comments that this report is another step in the many steps that are needed to address the issues of systemic racism,

to build trust, and to be worthy of that trust. The work is just beginning but we remain committed to finding the safer, healthier, and just future of the Restorative Inquiry.

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

GARY BURRILL: I want to thank the former residents of the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children, affected communities, and other partners for sharing their stories in this ongoing and continuing work.

We recognize all this work and these stories as core components of the experience of Black Nova Scotians and as core components of the experience of our province and its history as a whole.

We acknowledge that the history of Black Nova Scotians is a history which includes enslavement and which includes generations of legalized racial discrimination. Our caucus shares the interest of all parties in addressing squarely, head on, completely, systemic racism and discrimination and inequality in all of its forms.

We recognize that inequality and racism are not just about the actions of individuals or single people in isolated contexts, but rather, inequality and racism are about the ways in which context and systems themselves, at a structural level, are unfair.

We completely commit ourselves to having the difficult conversations and to doing the difficult work that is integral to dismantling those systems.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

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

Whereas today, April 5, 2019, the Government of Nova Scotia tables the second report - excuse me for a minute. I apologize for delay, I didn't expect it to affect me this way. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Start again.

RESOLUTION NO. 962

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

Whereas today, April 5, 2019, the Government of Nova Scotia tables the second report of the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children Restorative Inquiry Reflection and Action Task Group; and

Whereas the work of the Restorative Inquiry has given us the opportunity to advance our efforts to work collaboratively, across government and community, to build relationships, to listen, to learn, and to understand in a way that puts children and families first; and

Whereas in order to create meaningful change for Nova Scotians and especially African Nova Scotians, we must continue to address inequity, systemic racism, and discrimination in all our institutions across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly join me in acknowledging the extraordinary work of the former residents, the Restorative Inquiry, and the community, which has allowed us the opportunity to speak and work collaboratively to build a better future for our province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for 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. (Standing Ovation)

The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 963

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

Whereas Logan Boulet's decision to be an organ donor and make his wishes known to his parents just prior to his tragic passing in the Humboldt Broncos bus crash last year inspired many Canadians from across the country to register as donors; and

Whereas more than 4,400 Canadians are waiting for an organ or tissue transplant, and every year hundreds of these patients die waiting, a fact that led our government to

take action and bring forward new legislation that will make our province the first in North America to have presumed consent for organ and tissue donation; and

Whereas Green Shirt Day raises awareness of the importance of organ and tissue donation and encourages all Canadians to honour Logan's legacy by wearing a green shirt on April 7th, which is upcoming;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in showing support for Green Shirt Day, as well as encouraging all Nova Scotians to speak to their loved ones and know their wishes around organ and tissues donation.

Mr. Speaker, before I ask for waiver, I'd also like to acknowledge that in this House yesterday the member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River also raised the issue of Logan and the work going on in Saskatchewan.

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. (Applause)

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 964

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

Whereas tomorrow, April 6th, people around the world will celebrate Tartan Day; and

Whereas Tartan Day provides an opportunity to recognize and connect with Nova Scotia's Scottish heritage and influence; and

Whereas Nova Scotia is recognized internationally for its commitment to honouring and sustaining its Scottish culture;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House recognize tomorrow, April 6, 2019, as Tartan Day and take time to reflect on and celebrate our Scottish 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.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 965

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

Whereas this coming September, the 5th annual Gran Fondo Baie Sainte-Marie mass-start cycling event will be held in the Clare region; and

Whereas this year's event will attract more than 1,000 cycling enthusiasts to take part in a number of races; and

Whereas the Gran Fondo Baie Sainte-Marie was recently named one of the top 20 Gran Fondos in North America in 2019 by Gran Fondo Guide;

Therefore be it resolved that this House recognize the success of the Gran Fondo Baie Sainte-Marie and congratulate the organizers on being named one of the top 20 Gran Fondos in North America.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Gaelic Affairs.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I direct the members' attention to the Speaker's Gallery, where we're joined by four young highland dancers.

I would ask that they each rise when I call their names: Amelia O'Grady, Ruby Lopez, Sophie Tingley, and Oliveah Walker. These four young dancers graced us with their performance earlier today. (Standing Ovation)

As everyone would have seen earlier, they danced in the lobby as part of our 200th anniversary celebrations and the unveiling of the Legislative tartan.

[9:30 a.m.]

Also in the Speaker's Gallery is Veronica MacIsaac, the designer of that tartan. Veronica, rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 140 - An Act Respecting the House of Assembly Tartan. (Hon. Randy Delorey)

Bill No. 141 - An Act to Amend Chapter 197 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Health Services and Insurance Act, Respecting the Establishment of a School Dental Health Program. (Tammy Martin)

Bill No. 142 - An Act to Amend Chapter 511 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Youth Secretariat Act. (Tim Houston)

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time, I would like to ask for unanimous consent of the House to have Bill No. 140, an Act Respecting the House of Assembly Tartan, to be read a second time.

THE SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 140.

Bill No. 140 - House of Assembly Tartan Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Gaelic Affairs.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 140, an Act Respecting the House of Assembly Tartan, be now read a second time.

As we recognized earlier today, tomorrow, April 6th, will be Tartan Day in the province. It is important to recognize that the tartan is historically a cultural product and belongs to the Scottish Gaels. As part of the effort to break down Gaelic identity in Scotland for a period of history, tartan was forbidden to be worn.

After this period, it became taken over and popularized throughout Scottish society, more broadly, and in more recent times, throughout the world. For many Nova Scotians, however, it represents the origins of their ancestors and speaks to their identity.

Throughout the House of Assembly's history, there have been many members of Scottish descent. To name just a few, James Johnston, Angus L. Macdonald, G.I. Smith, John Buchanan, and Rodney MacDonald, all former Premiers of Nova Scotia. Even today, we have 26 of the current members who identify as having Scottish ancestry. More broadly, in Nova Scotia - according to the 2016 census - 30 per cent of the population identifies as having Scottish ethnicity.

So, the legislative body of Nova Scotia, the House of Assembly, is a centuries-old institution as we all know, having met since October of 1758. This year, we celebrate the bicentennial of this building, Province House.

The Nova Scotia House of Assembly Tartan provides a unique identifying symbol for the House of Assembly, and its colours incorporate some of the important emblems that embody the Assembly: green represents the Legislative Chamber, here where the Assembly meets; red reflects the Red Chamber where the former Legislative Council used to hold session and committees of the House of Assembly currently meet; black is for the Speaker's and the Clerks' robes; gold depicts the mace; white is indicative of the laws passed by this House of Assembly; and tan represents the tan stone exterior on Province House, the building where the Assembly conducts its business.

Mr. Speaker, by introducing the Nova Scotia House of Assembly Tartan Act, I am hoping, we are hoping, to have this tartan recognized as one of the symbols of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I am proud to hear you say the name Inverness because Inverness was named after a community in Scotland, very close to Culloden where in 1846, after some campaigns and after the result of Culloden, the tartan was banned.

I want to thank the members of the House today for wearing a piece of tartan because it is a symbol of recognition by this institution in honour of those who used to wear the tartan, who came before us, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank members for that.

I'd like to thank Ms. MacIsaac who is with us today, for the beautiful design. She does amazing work and she has brought the tartan, I would say, into rooms and places where maybe it has never been before and in ways that are quite elegant.

I also want to thank the young dancers who are with us today for sharing their skills and all their hard work. I want to thank their parents because I know highland dancing takes tremendous commitment and I want to thank them for being with us today and helping to share this moment with us.

Mr. Speaker, the tartan, as I said, was banned after the Battle of Culloden. It was one of many attacks designed to destroy the identity of the Gaels. It is really part of the immigration story for thousands of Nova Scotians, why they came here, to leave a land of oppression.

I can think of a piece of tartan that survived the voyage across that we have in our home in Judique, Mr. Speaker, which was made by one of my ancestors with the natural dyes that would have been available at the time. Of course, today when these tartans can be created, there's more consistency in the dyes, but at that time there was not. It's nice to have an original piece of something that belonged to one's ancestors.

Mr. Speaker, I also think about the importance of the Gaelic language and how the tartan may remind us that the identity of the Gaels also includes their language and the importance of that being in the school and the history being in the schools, so young people have the opportunity to learn about that and learn about their roots.

Just a short word on the language, Mr. Speaker, there are just 18 letters in the Gaelic alphabet. There are a lot of sounds in the Gaelic language but just 18 letters. We must remember that language isn't just words. When you hear expressions in Gaelic, for instance, *tha an t-acras orm*, it means the hunger is on me. It's almost like some kind of a force has come over me that has caused me to feel hunger. It's a totally different way of thinking.

If you try to compare the Gaelic language to other languages, you will see that it's very difficult to see any similarities at all. I got married almost two years ago and one of the observations my wife, Lucy, has made is: Allan, you are forever coming up with these theories and these almost superstitious notions on things. I have to laugh because it is probably noted in something that I don't even fully realize and that's my culture and that's the thinking of my ancestors. That's something I want to keep alive because, while it may provide a few laughs in our home, it's part of who I am. I want to do that in appreciation for my ancestors, the same as I wear this tartan today.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to compare this to other people in the province. I think of the Mi'kmaq language. While I am certainly no authority on it, I know that in Aboriginal languages that sometimes one word can describe five words in the English language. So, it's more than just words, it's a way of thinking.

I'm going to come to a close here in a moment, but I want to say that young people deserve the chance to know who they are and to claim their roots. It's part of their identity, and we know how important that is in a world. If I may compare again, Mr. Speaker, we see the residential schools and what that has done for the Aboriginal people of our country, in a different way. I don't like to make too many comparisons because I know the experiences are different, but at the heart of them the banning of the tartan was part of removal of identity, and the residential schools were a similar method.

We must realize these things are important and let the tartan be a reminder when we wear it here today, Mr. Speaker. I'll close with this - that things can be done which cost very little that can help support people in maintaining their identity. I think of a bill before the House right now, Council on Gaelic Education, which would support Gaelic language and history in the school, and I think it would work hand in hand with what we are acknowledging today with this tartan.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to stand today in my place, Mr. Speaker, and wear this new tartan that was so beautifully created by Ms. MacIsaac. As a very proud Cape Breton girl, we have a Cape Breton tartan of course. I too am of Scottish descent. To think that we're the first Legislature in the country is a very monumental day and deserves celebrating - even though it's causing me severe hot flashes. (Laughter)

You know, growing up, fiddle music was a real part of our lives. My daughter - she was a Celtic dancer for 19 years - and when you hear a good fiddle tune it just reminds you of your heritage, as the member opposite talked about, where you come from, how you came to be, and just the experience that came before you. It's good to remind ourselves and to remind the younger generations of those things and to encourage that they still listen and learn from heritage.

Mr. Speaker, with that I will take my place and be so proud of this Legislature today.

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

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I will not be speaking long, but I just want to say congratulations to the Minister of Gaelic Affairs and to yourself for bringing forward the tartan for the House of Assembly.

As a former Speaker in this House, I take great pride in the symbols and the meaning of what takes place in this building. I would like to tell the crowd that I'm only a second-generation Nova Scotian, my grandparents came from Scotland in 1909, and there is a really close tie between Nova Scotia and Scotland. I'm sure most people know that. Indeed, our Coat of Arms, it reflects the Scottish Coat of Arms; our name in Latin actually means New Scotland; and, of course, Mr. Speaker, our flag is a reflection of the Scottish flag.

So, today is a very, very special day, one in which we should all be very proud, and I feel honoured to be a part of what's taking place. I want to thank the government, yourself, Mr. Speaker, and the minister for moving forward with this beautiful occasion.

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

The honourable Minister of Gaelic Affairs.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their remarks. In my opening remarks I provided a list of some of the historic people of Scottish ancestry, including premiers, and shame on me, Mr. Speaker, for not also including the Honourable Russell MacLellan as well, a former premier of Nova Scotia of Scottish descent.

I think throughout this process, the members who have spoken highlight the cultural connection that not just the tartan, but indeed the value that those of Scottish descent have provided to this House of Assembly throughout the years and, I'm sure, for many years to come, and that's an important part of this.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words I close debate on Bill No. 140. House of Assembly throughout the years and I'm sure for many years to come, and that's an important part of this. With those few words, I close debate on Bill No. 140.

[9:45 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 140. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, again I'd like to seek the indulgence of the House to have unanimous consent to forego the Law Amendments Committee and the Committee of the Whole House and ask for consent to go immediately to third reading of Bill No. 140. As everyone knows, the province would be lost without us Scottish people. (Laughter)

THE SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 140.

Bill No. 140 - House of Assembly Tartan Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Gaelic Affairs.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 140 now be read a third time and do pass.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 140. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction, please?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

KARLA MACFARLANE: I would like to draw the attention of the members to the West Gallery. We are gathered here today with a group of wonderful individuals. I can't remember everyone's name, but I had a lovely lobster dinner with them last night. These individuals are from all over North America.

In particular, I want to introduce a very dear friend of mine and I'd like her to stand, please. Patty Heighton is the youngest president in North America for the International Association of Rebekah Assemblies. I am so honoured and proud of her for this accomplishment, and I just want to thank all the members for being here today, coming to our beautiful province; I know that you will be embraced with amazing hospitality.

Thank you so much for coming and being here today, so if we could give them a warm applause for being here. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LENA METLEGE DIAB: With us today in the East Gallery are two of my constituents, and I'll ask them to stand when I say their names. Noelle David, a registered pharmacist and passionate advocate for healthier living, and her spouse and partner

Alexander Zhuikov. Alex is a senior web developer and an invaluable technical resource for Noelle and her clinic's web presence. I ask all members of the House of Assembly to please give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

**DAVID, NOELLE - PHARMACIST:
FX VITALITY & FUNC. MED. - COMMEND**

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, this week, MLAs joined with representatives of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia and discussed the vital role pharmacists play in our health. I would like to take the opportunity to highlight the work of Armdale pharmacist Noelle David.

Many know Noelle as the friendly face behind the counter at Mike's No Frills pharmacy in Spryfield, but she is also the founder and clinic director of Fx Vitality and Functional Medicine Canada. Through her practice, Noelle helps her patients achieve optimal wellness in all areas, taking a whole person approach. She spent over eight years researching and undertaking continuous training with the Institute for Functional Medicine to better treat patients through that unique lens.

Noelle is also one of the few practitioners in Canada trained in the Bredesen Protocol for Cognitive Decline and focuses her work on addressing root causes of conditions, not just symptoms. Please join me in commending Noelle for her commitment to the health of Nova Scotians.

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

SEASIDE ELEM. CH.: WELCOMING VISITING STUDENTS - THANKS

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring special recognition to Seaside Elementary School in Eastern Passage for graciously welcoming 10 students from China. The students are all in Grade 5 and aged 10 and 11. These eager students will be here with host families from Eastern Passage for the next 10 weeks.

They arrived on Tuesday, March 26, 2019, and had their first day of school on Thursday, March 28th. All the students have knowledge of the English language and they hope to gain a great cultural experience and build on their English-language skills.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking all of those at Seaside Elementary School for opening their doors and their hearts to these wonderful students, the host families for opening their homes, and to the students from China for choosing us to broaden their experiences and knowledge here in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'd like to draw the members' attention to the gallery opposite where we have Meaghan Stanton and her parents. Meaghan is a Girl Guide and an all-round awesome person from Dartmouth South. Please give her the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

STANTON, MEAGHAN: SHARE THE WARMTH - CONGRATS.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the huge heart and clear leadership qualities demonstrated by a young community member of Dartmouth, Meaghan Stanton.

Meaghan worked with the First Dartmouth Sparks to earn their Take Action badge, which is earned by recognizing a problem and taking steps to solve it. Together they made 24 fleece hats and placed them around downtown Dartmouth for those in need.

Meaghan decided to continue this project on her own and created a new project called Share the Warmth. She collected hats, scarves, mittens, and gloves, and distributed them around downtown Dartmouth in high-traffic areas for people to take as needed. Meaghan has placed nearly 20 more hats and replenished them several times this past winter.

Please join me in congratulating and thanking this young leader for her efforts to serve the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

**CHEBUCTO FAM. CTR., HOME OF THE GUARDIAN ANGEL:
COM. SERV. - THANKS**

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to recognize an outstanding organization in the Spryfield community: the Chebucto Family Centre, Home of the Guardian Angel.

I'd like to recognize the staff for all their hard work and their dedication to our community: Tara Billard, Andrea Townsend, Erin Fair, Whitney Cruikshank, Nicole

Clarke, Sharelyn Stone, Krista Greencorn, Haley Heist, Sabah Randell, Jane Hall, Ginny Hennigar, Erinn Baillie, Taylor Gear, Stevie Fort, and Tammy Turple.

They provide a community kitchen, breast-feeding support, family wellness programs, life skills, personal development workshops, and so much more. Thank you to all the staff and volunteers who make our community a better place.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MACDONALD, KEN: VOLUN. OF THE YR. - THANKS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, congratulations to Ken MacDonald for receiving the Town of Trenton Volunteer of the Year award. Ken, a Trenton resident has been very generous with his time during the past several years. He has been very involved in a variety of community sports, and his work and involvement on the executive committee for Trenton FunFest has kept him busy all year round.

Volunteers are worth their weight in gold. Communities would have a very difficult time if volunteers didn't come forward to assist. They share their time and talents without any compensation. I would like to take this opportunity to extend a personal thanks to Ken MacDonald for the impact that his time and efforts have had.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'd like to draw the members' attention to the gallery opposite where we have with us today Kayley Dixon, a Grade 12 student at Dartmouth High. She is an amazing trail-blazer, full of energy, and you will hear more in a moment.

Please join me in welcoming Kayley to the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DIXON, KAYLEY: VOLUN. OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Kayley Dixon on being honoured with a Provincial Volunteer Award this past Monday. Kayley is a Grade 12 student at Dartmouth High and a resident of Dartmouth North. She is aware, intelligent, kind, and generous. She is one of the busiest people I know, and it is because she cares so much for others.

She is a member of the Take Action Society, and last year she organized a graduation celebration for the Grade 9 students at John Martin Junior High. Currently she is organizing a community Easter egg hunt to take place in one of our local parks.

She is an ambassador for the Nova Scotia International Student Program, where she welcomes international students and offers them peer support and guidance.

She created Project Care for which she collected toiletries and donations and put together care packages to offer to street-involved people. The list of her generous acts goes on.

Kayley is a very talented artist and the video of her poem, *A Touch of Sexual Assault*, has over 60 million views on YouTube and she has performed at the annual Walk Against Violence, at the Stop the Violence, Spread the Love March, and at many other community events.

I ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating Kayley and in thanking her for her incredible contributions to Dartmouth North.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

FAULKNER, BRIANNA: CONSTIT. ASSIST. - THANKS

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Brianna Faulkner. Brianna is the constituent assistant for Dartmouth East. Every day, Brianna works extremely hard for the residents I have the privilege of representing. Brianna is extremely smart, professional, helpful, and courteous to anyone who calls or walks through the door at the Dartmouth East office.

Mr. Speaker, as all MLAs know, we would not be able to effectively do our jobs as elected officials without the commitment, dedication, expertise, and devotion to helping others from our constituent assistants. They are the front line of our offices and provide many important services to our constituents. While we are at the House of Assembly, constituent assistants are often performing double duties, so I want to thank Brianna for going above and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all member of the House to recognize the outstanding work of Brianna in Dartmouth East and to also recognize the outstanding work being done by all our constituent assistants throughout Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

MACNEIL, KELSEA - PRES.: CBU ALUM. ASSOC. - WELCOME

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to add my voice to those at CBU welcoming Kelsea MacNeil as the new president of the Cape Breton University Alumni Association. Kelsea is a native New Waterford girl.

Kelsea, who is also the Director of Communication and Stakeholder Relations for Membertou Development Corporation, said upon taking the position, CBU makes us a stronger community. I couldn't agree more. It's a beacon of optimism, hope, and energy in Cape Breton, and having women leaders like Kelsea only reinforces that.

Joining Kelsea on the association, and serving as vice-president, is Port Morien native and micro-brewery cider owner Jill McPherson.

Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt the association is in great hands as these two young, accomplished women take the helm. Women are making waves in Cape Breton and I, for one, am inspired by them all. I welcome and congratulate Kelsea and Jill in their new positions and wish them a very successful tenure.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

RIVERPORT FIRE DEPT.: WILDLIFE RESCUE - RECOG.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, members of the Riverport and District Fire Department took advantage of an opportunity for ice-rescue training when two deer fell through the ice in the LaHave River a few weeks ago. I rise today to commend the Riverport and District Fire Department and Chief Craig Cook for their efforts and success in ensuring the deer returned safely to land.

One of the deer was rescued by firefighter Glenn Freeman, who dressed in the specialized gear to protect against the frigid harbour temperatures. Glenn pushed his way through the ice that was too thin to walk on. He secured the young doe with a strap and guided her back to land while the other deer that morning rescued itself by climbing out of the water and off the ice on its own.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and the members of this House of Assembly please join me in recognizing the Riverport Fire Department on their successful rescue.

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

ANGUS PAUL MEM. TOURN. - TRIBUTE

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, in 2016 Angus Paul, a young student, passed away suddenly due to health complications. Still feeling the loss and missing his presence

today, the students and staff of South Colchester Academy chose to honour his memory by hosting a tournament this past January.

Knowing that basketball was his favourite sport, the SCA girls' basketball team hosted the tournament using the Mi'kmaw term for Let's Remember our Brother Angus Paul for its title.

It is heartwarming to know that the spirit, determination, sportsmanship, and dedication Angus Paul always demonstrated was honoured appropriately through this tournament. I'm certain it brought great comfort to his family and peers.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LISA ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Joining us in the East Gallery are some 20 students and their teacher Charles Follini, from Halifax Independent School, which is in my constituency. I wonder if they could rise and if the members would join me in giving them the warm welcome of the House.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much for those Member Statements. We'll now await the hour of 10:00 for the start of Question Period.

[10:00 a.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

PREM. - CODE OF ETHICS: BILL NO. 88 (2011) - REINTRODUCE

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Back in 2011, as Leader of the Official Opposition, the Premier tabled Bill No. 88. That bill was entitled, an Act to Establish a Code of Ethics for Members of the House of Assembly. It envisioned a standard of conduct that all elected representatives would follow. It aimed to ensure that members maintain “. . . the highest in public-service ethics and preserve the integrity and dignity of the House of Assembly.”

Does the Premier have any intention to reintroduce this bill?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I thank the honourable member for her question. Yesterday, and a number of times, I've heard members of this House talk about the bill that is actually introducing a new harassment policy that falls under your direction, Mr. Speaker, and I think reflects the very issue that I was referring to in the bill the honourable member has tabled.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I know very well, and just as recently as the other day went over the terms of the harassment policy and was actually very proud to participate in developing it.

One of the activities the policy prohibits is behaviour that could reasonably demean, belittle, distress, or humiliate another member. Just yesterday, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development admitted that his behaviour, and I will table, "can be confrontational."

I'd like to know: What action is the Premier going to take to ensure that his minister no longer acts in a way that demeans or belittles another member of this House of Assembly?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The minister spoke openly to media and to all members of the House about his actions. To reflect on that, part of that conversation was relayed to me - I was informed and someone told me that there was physical contact. At no time has anyone told that to me.

I want to assure the honourable member that I continue - not only for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development but all members of our caucus - to say to all members of this House that tone matters.

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

PREM. - PHARMACARE: UNIVERSAL PROG. - SUPPORT

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier a couple or three questions this morning about Medicare. First, about medication. Canada, as we know, is the only country with universal health care to not have a national pharmacare program. This week, the federal NDP has introduced a universal pharmacare plan which will save families, even those that have benefits, \$500 a year and save companies \$600 a year.

I want to address a simple question to the Premier: Does he support a universal pharmacare program for the people of Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, all Canadian premiers have supported a national pharmacare program. I fully expect to become part of the federal election. I know the current federal government has announced in their budget a catastrophic drug coverage.

We all know constituents and members of our own communities who, through no fault of their own, if they are ill, they get caught sometimes with an exorbitant bill that is just impossible for them to pay. This legislation will deal with that, at the same time ensuring that we as a country enjoy the buying power that we can and ensuring that we make sure that all Canadians have access to medication.

GARY BURRILL: A second Medicare question, Mr. Speaker, and this one is about dentistry and the mouth and teeth. We know that our private, for-profit dentistry system puts a real burden on public health care because people often go to their doctor for tooth-related pain. According to a recent study in Ontario, the cost to taxpayers there is \$38 million a year on this front.

If dental care were covered under MSI in Nova Scotia, we wouldn't have as many people in our province as we do today whose health, confidence, and lives are seriously undermined by tooth problems that they do not have the money to have seen to.

I want to ask the Premier another simple question: Does he support extending MSI to cover dental care for the people of our province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. We will continue to support low-income families and to ensure that no child should be disadvantaged by the socio-economic circumstances they are born into, whether it comes to pre-Primary or the very issue that the honourable member is referring to when it comes to dental care.

We will continue to work with our partners to ensure that every Nova Scotian can have access to the appropriate dental care.

GARY BURRILL: Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask about mental health. No one can truthfully say that we don't have a two-tiered mental health care system in Nova Scotia, because we do. If you have money or benefits, you can be seen on a one-on-one basis this week, maybe even today at one of the private mental health services which are popping up all over Nova Scotia. But if you haven't got benefits or other insurance, or the financial means, you face long waits and there's no guarantee that there will even be a one-on-one counselling relationship for you.

I want to ask the Premier: Does he recognize that we have a two-tiered mental health care system in Nova Scotia, one for people who have the means to pay and another one for those who don't?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank him for raising these very important issues that are facing Nova Scotian families today. The issue around mental health has been one that we as a government take very seriously. We continue to make investments in

clinicians. Also, we continue to make investments in the wraparound services we're providing in our education system now, enhancing the SchoolsPlus program.

One of the things that our expert panel, led by Dr. Stan Kutcher and Starr Dobson recommended to us, that whatever decisions we make, they need to be evidence-based. The honourable member raises the issue of timely access, we know there is more work to do. It's why we continue to make investments to ensure that we hire those clinicians and at the same time, looking at early identification of mental health issues, because we know our greatest success of ensuring and putting that individual back to good health is by making sure that we do detect it early.

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

PREM. - CODE OF ETHICS: BILL NO. 88 (2011) - RE-EXAMINE

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. In his Code of Ethics Act, the Premier believed that a member should be publicly reprimanded if they behaved in a manner that was undeserving of this House. He went so far as to say the member should be suspended for a certain amount of time. Now, he can't even be bothered to look into this type of behaviour and dismissed this harassing behaviour as "exuberance."

Does the Premier believe his Code of Ethics is something that sounds good until you are the one that has to implement it, or would he now be willing to re-examine this issue in light of new allegations, evidence that supports the assertions of the member for Pictou East?

THE PREMIER: Again, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. She would know there is a policy in place that falls under you, Mr. Speaker. She would also know that the issues she is referring to were addressed to you; I was cc'd on them. She would also know, as I've said many times since this issue was brought to my attention on Monday night, I continued to look through my records to ensure if there had been any correspondence with me between the two individuals who raised this issue, who are now ex-members of this House, or their Leaders at the time.

Mr. Speaker, I found none, not only in the Premier's Office, but not in my constituency office and, again, each time I have had the opportunity to stand up I have said, at no time did anyone bring to my attention a physical altercation.

BARBARA ADAMS: With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, the minister was indicating he was willing to have this issue go to an investigation, but the Premier and his government used their majority to vote that opportunity down.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's bill had also called for the creation of an office of ethics and conflict of interest commissioner. This commissioner would be empowered to

investigate ethical complaints and recommend reprimands. The commissioner's reports would be public, and the recommendations ruled upon by the House of Assembly, not the Premier, not the Executive Council, and not the Cabinet. If this sounds familiar, it's because the Premier used to say the same things about the Privacy Commissioner.

My question to the Premier is: What changed between 2011 and 2019 that made the Premier abandon his high-minded plan for ethics and accountability for his government?

THE PREMIER: Again, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As I said a few minutes ago, there is a policy in place now that was actually brought in under our government, in co-operation with both Opposition Parties. We will continue with that policy and it will continue to be administered by you, Mr. Speaker, not by the Premier, contrary to the comments made by the honourable member - it is under your jurisdiction.

I am very proud of my record of how I conduct myself not only on this side of the House, but when I had the privilege to sit on that side of House. I will continue to work with my colleagues to make sure that everyone understands that tone matters, and it's important that as we express ourselves in this House, we do so in a way that is respectful.

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

LAE: LOAN FORGIVENESS: VULNERABLE STUDENTS - SUPPORT

LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. Tuition fees in Nova Scotia are the fastest rising in the country at an average of \$8,500 last year, almost \$2,000 higher than the national average. This year's budget does nothing to address the crisis of rising tuition fees. So, while the Loan Forgiveness Program will help some students once they graduate, it fails to cover students who are the most vulnerable, who often don't finish their degrees within the time period.

Why hasn't the minister insisted on more support for the most vulnerable post-secondary students in our province?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, our budget does address the most vulnerable students in Nova Scotia. What we've done since we've been elected - we made Nova Scotia student loans interest free; then we turned around, we increased the bursary amount of any Nova Scotia student loan to 40 per cent; then what we did is we turned around and we made Nova Scotia loans forgivable above the federal threshold; and this year the budget goes a step further and makes a Nova Scotia student loan up to five years fully forgivable upon graduation.

The most vulnerable people in our society not only receive the \$1,283 bursary when they enter university, they receive \$6,800, which is 40 per cent forgivable on the day they receive it and 100 per cent forgivable on the day they graduate. Thank you.

LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, that's all well and good, but for an additional \$3 million investment this government could actually convert all student loans to upfront needs-based grants. This is what student are asking for. This could have a tremendous impact on post-secondary attainment for our province, while reducing the burden of debt for students who cannot complete five straight years of full-time study due to certain circumstances.

Given that the number-one barrier students actually face to attaining post-secondary education is funding their tuition at the beginning of their degree, does the minister really believe that he's on the right track here?

LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I believe we are 100 per cent on the right track because what we have seen in the data is that we actually have more students completing their degrees.

I am very fortunate to have five universities in my riding. When I was elected, I was not the minister of this portfolio, but I met with all the institutions. One of the challenges that one of the presidents told me they have is that students come to university and, after a year or two, they leave. It's a challenge not only for the institution, but the students; although they gain a lot of useful experience, they don't finish their degrees. They don't have that marketing ability of actually being able to put it on their resumé and be more marketable in the job market.

One thing students do tell me over and over again is that their biggest issue is actually having job employment. They don't go to university to save \$1,000, \$2,000. They go because they want to start out in a career making \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000 a year. That is the biggest issue and that's what this government is working on.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - MENTAL HEALTH: SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS - TIMELINE

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I've said many times that one of the highlights of this budget is the increased investment in mental health, but we have to get it right, and the last time the provincial government studied suicide was way back between 1995 and 2004. We've lost a lot of lives since then.

It wasn't until 2017 and a recommendation from Dr. Stan Kutcher that another study was commissioned, but the sad reality is the system is failing too many Nova Scotians today. I'm pleased that there's a study ongoing, but I wonder: Can the Premier inform the

House as to how quickly Nova Scotians can expect to see improvements in the mental health system that the people of Nova Scotia so desperately need?

[10:15 a.m.]

THE PREMIER: I appreciate the honourable member raising the question around the panel that Dr. Stan Kutcher and Starr Dobson were part of working out across our province, dealing with health care providers. A number of those recommendations are being implemented now.

One of the things they were very clear about, Mr. Speaker, that needs to be evidence-based, we need to be ensuring that the decisions we make are based with evidence from clinicians. That's why we have them make the recommendations. Part of it was also in this current budget the investments that we'll continue to make in SchoolsPlus in the wrap-around services provided the schools. His commission and all experts really will tell you the work that we do up front in early identification is critical. It is important, it's the best way to get our individual Nova Scotians back to good mental health. But the honourable member raised the question around those who are suffering today, and that work is ongoing.

TIM HOUSTON: This week I received a note from a young gentleman who said he lost two friends to suicide and another one attempted suicide. That's just in the last two weeks. Unfortunately, members of this House know those types of notes aren't uncommon at all. Last weekend I spoke to a father who lost a 27-year-old son to suicide.

These are heartbreaking stories for all of us and I certainly respect the work that Starr Cunningham and the team that the Mental Health Foundation are doing and also community leaders, like Sherry Blinkhorn in Pictou County.

People are stepping up to do what they can, and they need to be supported by government, they need to be supported by investments. We need a strategic framework to make sure we're going forward in the right direction. It's time to learn, and listen to Nova Scotians.

I just wonder if the Premier can be a little clearer on his hope for when we can start to see improvements and what the status is of developing an actual strategic framework that can take us forward and help some of these Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think we're seeing improvements in the system today. That does not mean, though, that there are not families, individuals who are still suffering. That's why we're very pleased when we negotiated with the national government that they do a health care formula. We dedicated funding directly towards mental health. This budget has \$11.7 million dedicated to it.

We know there's continuing work around hiring clinicians, but I want to go back to what I said earlier. It is important that as we continue to support those families that are currently dealing with this issue and those Nova Scotians, that we do not lose sight of the fact that we need to continue to build the foundation of early identification and early supports. It is very clear with all experts that will tell you the sooner we identify mental health issues and provide treatment, the best outcomes are when we do that. That's why this budget reflects those investments, at the same time putting supports in and around trying to deal with and support families who are suffering today.

TIM HOUSTON: The investments are important for sure but to be effective they need to follow an actual plan. I've said before that I believe that addictions and mental health care issues are serious enough and the investment is significant enough that they warrant its own department with its own minister, somebody at the highest levels of government to be responsible and accountable. Until we include the people who use the system, we will never really know the most effective way to solve the issues they are facing.

We must respect the advocacy groups and those Nova Scotians who have input into the system. I just wonder if the Premier will confirm that the process that is ongoing includes an opportunity for public input and focus groups, to really make sure we understand the need, so we can address it properly.

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The issue he has identified around having a separate department around addictions and mental health is actually going on today in British Columbia. It's an idea that I think warrants some consideration.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure him that the issue of mental health and addictions continues to be a priority for the Department of Health and Wellness. We continue to work with our partners and, of course, we continue to reach out and look to families and individuals who are experiencing these challenges or have experienced our system in ways that we can improve it and we'll continue to do so.

I know that even though Dr. Kutcher has been appointed to the Senate, his work around adolescent mental health will continue in our province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

JUSTICE: CANNABIS SOBRIETY TEST - DETAILS

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Over the last week we've all become familiar with the case of Michelle Gray. Ms. Gray is a Nova Scotia woman who was caught in a roadside checkpoint and failed the cannabis sobriety test. Ms. Gray is a medical cannabis user. She had her licence suspended for seven days

and her car impounded. It was later determined that she was not impaired, and the RCMP apologized for its error.

My question is: Does the minister know which test was applied in this case, and how did it give a false result?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, it was not a matter of which test was given. It was a document - an order of suspension - that was submitted with an inappropriate element to that document completed, which indicated a need for a seven-day suspension, when in fact, another element to the document, had it been indicated and captured, would have been a 24-hour suspension.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, Corporal Lisa Croteau of the RCMP is quoted in support of Ms. Gray. She says, "There is no correlation between the level that you're at, the active THC in your body, and impairment." I'll table that, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Gray is considering her options to challenge a law that might be on shaky footing. Even the RCMP aren't sure how to properly apply it. Members on this side of the House have spoken multiple times on how Nova Scotia was not ready for legalized cannabis.

My question is: What does the minister believe is at the root of this mix-up? Is it a shaky law or is it insufficient training?

MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, my colleague would know that administrative sanctions around the privilege to have a driver's licence exist right across the country, both with alcohol and with the consumption of cannabis.

I think it's important to recognize that whether you're a medicinal cannabis user or a recreational cannabis user, we discourage people from driving a motor vehicle. That's just good public safety.

But to my colleague's question, this is not a matter of public policy. We are confident in the policy and the administrative sanctions that form part of this legislation. This was an error in the completion of the order of suspension, nothing more.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

EECD - SPRINGHILL: NEW ELEM. SCH. - LOCATION

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Prior to the by-election last Spring, this government made an announcement that Springhill would finally receive a new elementary school. A new

school has been high on the replacement list of the former Chignecto-Central Regional School Board. Two elementary schools destined to be replaced are in states of disrepair.

My question to the minister is: When will the community of Springhill know where the new school will be located and what the design of that school may look like?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I've seen both of those schools. I know that community has been long waiting for a new facility. I'm very excited for the community that the school is on our five-year capital plan.

We are in the process of finalizing fully our site selection process. That will allow us to do that more efficiently. The community will be involved in that process, as will the municipality.

We will also ensure, on the design element of the school, that the community is involved as well. I know people have some great ideas in Springhill about what is needed in that new facility, and we want to make sure they're included.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister very much for that answer. The last correspondence I received from his office indicated that the selection process has changed. It also stated that the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and his department have done a consult with the municipal entity.

The minister proposed an opening date of 2021, which Springhill very much welcomes. I'll table that letter. Will the minister enlighten this House as to when Springhill can expect to be consulted and when the tender may go out for design and build?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I don't have a timeline right now, but I can tell the member that all the information I received from our officials - both from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development - is indicating that we are on track with our five-year plan. We're working very hard to meet the timelines that we've laid out.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MUN. AFFS. - CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE: AG RECS. - ACTION

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. In his recent follow-up report, the Auditor General expressed concern that government departments have failed to complete some 30 per cent of accepted recommendations after two years. Municipal Affairs is one of several departments singled out by the Auditor General for its poor completion rate.

After two years, why has the Department of Municipal Affairs only completed one of three recommendations on identifying critical infrastructure in the province that is vulnerable in the event of a disaster?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. We continue to work with the Auditor General to keep him updated as to where we are; there have been three of the four we're told, 75 per cent of the way through these recommendations. We continue to work with all of that critical infrastructure.

It is important to the province, obviously, and to our municipal units as we move forward. We will continue to keep this House and the AG updated as we progress through.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I found this finding of the Auditor General particularly worrisome, given the nature of the recommendations. It is called critical infrastructure for a reason. The department's lack of follow-through is currently leaving communities in vulnerable situations in the event of a disaster.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister table a complete list of the identified critical infrastructure in the province and its status?

CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with the AG. As I said, this is of the utmost importance to us as well. We appreciate the recommendations that have come forward and we will continue to work with the AG and keep this House updated, as I said a few moments ago, as we progress through these and as they are completed.

As far as tabling, Mr. Speaker, this is a public document and we'll certainly table all the information as it becomes available to us and as these are completed. I am happy to update the House at any time about this process.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

TIR - KINGS NORTH & SOUTH: POTHOLE REPAIR - STAFFING

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of TIR. Last Spring there was quite a delay before the potholes in both Kings North and Kings South were filled. In fact, it was only really attended to by late July and August. One issue was the need of two crews to fill potholes on the days the weather was good for work.

My question for the minister is: Given that there needs to be adequate staff to fill the potholes in a timely manner, will the minister confirm that two crews will be available for pothole filling this year: one crew for the north, one crew for the south?

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. One can be assured that potholes are non-discriminatory, and they appear in all our ridings. The

member for Kings South has brought this forward, significantly, and we are re-looking at how we can deploy our resources in both Kings North and Kings South, to better address the problem.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the answer and I appreciate the support of the member for Kings South on that too.

Mr. Speaker, a secondary issue is the quality of the asphalt. It simply does not seem to stand up like it used to. A testing program run out of Ontario has identified contaminants in the asphalt called recycled engine oil bottoms, or REOBs, and I will table two articles on that.

The only way to know if these REOBs are present is to test the asphalt as it's being laid. Will the minister commit to testing our asphalt for REOBs, to ensure that we are getting value for our paving dollar?

LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the observations and will certainly pass on the tabled documents to our technical people. But, rest assured, we have a very rigorous testing process for asphalt. It's continually monitored through the process and we're always looking for better ways to spread our paving dollars without affecting the integrity of the asphalt that we're using.

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

H&W - DIALYSIS PROG.: CHANGES - FUNDING ALT.

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. A constituent of mine is a dialysis patient and has been for some time now. Recently he has been told that he had to start paying for his own iron fragment shots and other medications which had always been covered with his treatment.

My question is: Why was the change made to the dialysis program and is there alternative funding available for my constituent?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of a change having been made at the Health Authority for the delivery of those services, but I am happy to get the information from the member opposite to look into it further.

LARRY HARRISON: Thank you, minister, for that. This same patient is currently 13th on a waiting list for the Truro dialysis and has to travel an hour away to Halifax to receive his treatment. Three years ago, there were 38 nurses serving approximately 200 patients in the Truro unit. Now, there are approximately 350 patients for the same number of nurses.

Is something being done to expand or free up space in dialysis units to ensure patients can access their treatments?

[10:30 a.m.]

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, yes, there is. We have embarked upon an expansion of dialysis stations or chairs throughout the province. I believe we are increasing seats by approximately 30 per cent. We've made announcements in a number of communities. These projects are well under way, and we look forward to having those additional seats. The communities where the additional chairs are being added for dialysis treatment were based upon a review that preceded my time in the office, but I'm assured that that review was largely focused on travel times for sites that did not currently have treatment, and some expansion at a few other sites.

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

H&W - VG HOSPITAL: ISOTOPE SHORTAGE - CONFIRM

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness as well.

In February, a long-time resident of Sackville was diagnosed with esophagus cancer, and when he arrived for a specialist test at the VG he was told that the only machine in the province that could properly examine him was broken; he was also told to return in two weeks because the specialist was going on vacation.

Just prior to his arrival back at the VG, he was then told that there were no isotopes to conduct the scan and there would not be any until further in the week. Obviously, his treatment cannot occur until after his scan.

My question is: Is the minister aware of any isotope shortages at the VG or any other provincial medical facilities?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, that's something that I've recently had some inquiries about, so I've reached out to ask for the information through the department and the Health Authority to determine if there exists some challenges securing the volume of isotopes, and the necessary isotopes, to complete the testing in the province. I'm waiting to hear back.

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that there's now a backlog of people ahead of this gentleman who has to wait up to 10 days now. Whenever there's a Nova Scotian who's diagnosed with something like cancer, there's a lot of uncertainty. They want to get in and get treatment as soon as possible. In these cases, I'm sure we can all appreciate that time is of the essence.

Can the minister please explain the department's policy of communicating isotope shortages in the event that they do occur?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. We share the concerns raised by the member and the importance of ensuring we have the appropriate equipment and technology to support our health care professionals to complete the testing and treatment necessary for Nova Scotians, especially those with conditions such as cancer.

That's why in both the QEII redevelopment here in Halifax and the Cape Breton redevelopment in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, we've committed to building new cancer centres, and in the Yarmouth area we've committed to fulfill some recommendations that have been made by the community and the Cancer Care Nova Scotia to enhance services for people in that part of the province as well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

H&W - CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM: OPEN POSITIONS - ACTION

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The crisis response team is a vital piece of mental health services in this province. Someone experiencing a mental health crisis often only has minutes to get the help they need. However, with the crisis response services coordinator and nursing jobs in the South Shore not being filled, I think that it's safe to say that help isn't always available in minutes.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: What action is he taking to ensure these crucial positions are filled as soon as possible?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, indeed crisis response is one of the areas that is important to advance and make improvements on. That's why, though the crisis line, there has been an expansion in recent times of additional staff hired to support the line. I believe we talked about this in Estimates last night and I believe calls are answered within about, on average, a minute time period. They make every effort to do that.

As far as recruitment, those efforts are ongoing and, of course, in our health care system, including mental health clinicians. We are making every effort in all parts of the province to ensure those positions are filled.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, crises services are not available around the clock on the South Shore. Physicians are being faced with patients in crises at the ER, and they are not able to access the support they need because the crisis response line is available only Monday to Fridays, and then only until 3:30 p.m.

A mental health crisis does not happen on a schedule, Mr. Speaker, so the services shouldn't be available on one. Can the minister explain what his plan is to provide more thorough mental health services for the residents of the South Shore?

RANDY DELOREY: One of the investments made this year in our budget is the support of our expansion of the adolescent outreach mental health model of supports we've previously referred to as the expansion of the CaperBase model. Clinically, it's treated as an adolescent outreach. That expansion goes to provide supports within the Western Zone of the province, as well as the Northern Zone, areas that needed additional supports.

We see those supports in communities, delivered through approximately 41 schools through the province in Northern and Western Zones. That's one example of our investment to strengthen mental health supports in her community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

ENVIRON. - DARTMOUTH LAKES: ALGAE GROWTH - CONCERNS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment. The Dartmouth Lakes are a social and economic backbone of our community. In February a group of concerned citizens gathered at the Findlay Community Centre with myself and my colleague for Dartmouth South to discuss the worrying status of our lakes.

Last summer Lake Banook, which plays host to four local paddling clubs and international paddling competitions, was closed for several weeks, more than any other summer, due mainly to algae growth. As our summers get warmer, the residents of Dartmouth are worried this will become a recurring problem.

Can the minister tell me what the department is doing to ensure that invasive algae and weed growth are dealt with in Dartmouth's lakes?

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question again. It is certainly something that was raised in Estimates again yesterday. The main concern with the Department of Environment in our lakes, and we recognize certainly we know I believe there are almost 2,400 lakes in our province. We know with the climate change expanding, we know the temperatures are getting warmer, that algae may be a problem in many of the lakes around our provinces.

Unfortunately, the problem is complex. We need to know where the food supplying that algae is coming from. There can be numerous sources. But the main focus of the Department of Environment is to make sure that the lakes are safe to use. We need to know that there's no bacteria in the water that is going to affect people. That's why our staff does

testing, to make sure the bacterial levels are suffice for swimmers and, if it's not, then the lakes are closed for swimming purposes.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, water protection falls under provincial jurisdiction. In Little Albro Lake, where the invasive lily floating yellow heart has made the lake unusable, residents who have called the minister's department have been redirected to the city. From there, they are redirected back to the province.

They have taken it upon themselves to try and stem the growth of this invasive species, but they are quickly running out of options. Now there are reports that the floating yellow heart has been spotted in neighbouring Big Albro Lake.

Mr. Speaker, if the minister insists on continuing to evade the responsibility of the province to protect our waterways, will she at least commit to providing funding to the HRM necessary to battle this invasive plant and make our lakes usable again?

MARGARET MILLER: I thank the honourable member for that question. Again, the mandate of the Department of Environment is for safety, the lack of bacteria in the lakes. Certainly, we are responding to that in the best way possible.

As for the invasive species, that falls under the direction of the Department of Lands and Forestry. I know there was also conversation yesterday about weeds in the lakes and if we'll look after the weeds in the lakes.

This is a joint responsibility, Mr. Speaker - this doesn't fall just under the Department of Environment. Certainly, the HRM is also responsible for lakes in their areas. Lands and Forestry also has some responsibility, as well as the Department of Environment.

We all take our role very seriously. We realize the importance of lakes to our province. After all, if you are flying above the province, all you see is lakes and you realize the abundance of them.

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

**TIR - CABOT TRAIL/MIDDLE RIVER:
UNFINISHED ROAD WORK - COMMENT**

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

On Saturday past, I had the opportunity to travel a road that is part of the Cabot Trail through Middle River. Last year construction started on a section of the road, but it

was never completed. The same is true for a section of the Cabot Trail, but in the Ingonish area.

I would like to ask the minister: Can he explain any other reason why work that had begun on these roads, but because it was too late in the season, couldn't be finished?

HON. LLOYD HINES: We have a very ambitious program in the province. As I mentioned before, currently in the budget would be a \$300 million commitment to our capital program and deploying that capital takes a lot of work.

Rest assured that those two particular projects will be done as soon as the asphalt plants get open, instead of being done in the late year when it is not good to be laying asphalt. That might actually come in very handy for the section in the Middle River area.

KEITH BAIN: It always seems that much of the work being done in the eastern part of the province is never completed during the same construction season.

Also, on my road tour, the section of the road from where the construction from last year stops, to the Victoria-Inverness county line and beyond, is deplorable. But it's not on the five-year plan. The road is in such bad shape that patching will not solve the problem.

I would like to ask the minister: When can the residents expect to see a tender called to complete this section of road?

LLOYD HINES: I thank the member opposite for the question and I also appreciate his diligence in bringing this matter to me earlier in the week through correspondence.

We immediately put a very focused lens on that situation and there is no doubt that the road is in bad shape; there is no doubt about it. The Spring break up in particular has affected it. As recently as this morning, I've been talking to the district manager, the area manager, and we are formulating a plan to affect the repair.

The last of the work from last year will bring a major construction company on site very shortly, as soon as the asphalt plants open, and we are hoping to be able to use that opportunity to enhance that particular piece.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

WCB: RESPONSE PROCESS BACKLOG - COMMENT

HON. PAT DUNN: My question is for the minister responsible for WCB. In our province, when an injured worker has been declined benefits through the WC process, they can appeal.

The majority of members in this legislature are familiar with the process: initial application, case worker, hearing officer, WCAT, local offices. The process can literally take years. The injured worker at each level of appeal has 30 days to file the necessary appeal. However, WCB has no time limit on their decision-making.

I would like to ask the minister: Does he feel it is reasonable to have such an incredibly different set of rules for the applicant and the respondent?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: I'd like to inform the member that in instances where an individual does take more than 30 days, WCB does not have that as a hard and fast rule and they will make exceptions to that rule.

PAT DUNN: They certainly haven't made an exception to the rule for Darrell MacKinnon from Pictou County. He's been doing this for about six, seven, eight years.

We presently have an injured worker whose name is familiar to all members of this House. Medical specialists and lawyers during the past several years have provided credible evidence and unwavering support for Mr. MacKinnon's application. He has just, once again, appealed the decision and has been told that the internal appeals division is so backed up that it is unlikely that his appeal will be heard this calendar year. He already has suffered through too many years of appeals.

I'd like to ask the minister: Is he aware of this backlog and the impact that each injured worker feels every day awaiting the decisions from WCB? And, is he willing to assist this Nova Scotian?

LABI KOUSOULIS: I have quarterly meetings with WCB and we have actually addressed this issue of a backlog.

What I can tell the honourable member is that what we have done is identified ways of speeding up the process, not for one Nova Scotian or one individual, but for all of them who are affected by this. WCB is working diligently at moving forward their cases as fast as they can.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

WCB is working diligently at moving forward their cases as fast as they can.

[10:45 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

EECD - AEDs (PUGWASH SCHOOLS): RED TAPE - REMOVE

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Automated external defibrillators, AEDs, save lives. I'd like to ask the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development: Would he be willing to help me remove the red tape and bureaucracy that's preventing AEDs from being installed in both schools in Pugwash?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: These decisions currently remain in the local hands of the principal and administration of schools, but I'm happy to discuss the issue with the member, particularly where she depicted this as a process preventing this from happening. That is a local decision. I'm not sure what the local reasoning is for that, but I'm happy to discuss it with the member.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: A couple years ago, the community health boards in our community raised enough money to have AEDs placed in both the Cyrus Eaton Elementary School as well as the Pugwash District High School. The school board at the time blocked it due to a policy that they wanted to put in place.

Most recently, I had local citizens provide enough money to have AEDs purchased; again, they were told that because of a policy that is not supported, or a policy that the school board or a previous school board wanted to use, can't be used, so red tape is preventing AEDs from being installed that could save lives.

I'm wondering, I have sent correspondence to the minister's office: Would he be willing to help me remove that red tape?

ZACH CHURCHILL: I'm not aware of a policy that would prevent this from happening, but I can definitely take a look to see if that's the case.

The way I understand it is a school can make the decision to have one of these, but then, that requires individuals to be trained and, sometimes, they're not willing to take that step. I'm happy to look at the situation. I do think this is an important issue. We've even seen in this House on occasion when we've had health scares that these things can save lives, so I'm very happy to have a follow-up with the member on this.

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

MUN. AFFS. - RICHMOND CO. COUNCIL: ASSISTANCE - ENSURE

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the County of Richmond dramatically fired its chief administrative officer in a vote that caught the community off guard. The warden is displeased and has openly questioned the future of the governance of Richmond council. It has called into question a number of decisions and behaviours, but

it's important to deal with the facts and not fiction. It's important to have clarity and not supposition.

Is the Minister of Municipal Affairs in any way concerned with the affairs or function of Richmond County Council, and can he please clarify if he feels his office needs to intervene or assist in any way?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: I thank the honourable member for the question and, just like her and I'm sure all members in this House, we all represent areas where we have councils. I'm concerned about all councils in the Province of Nova Scotia.

I want to assure the honourable member that we're always there when we're needed and when we're asked to come in and to assist in any way we can; we certainly have in a variety of municipalities across the province and will continue to do that.

ALANA PAON: As I know the minister can appreciate, because we all have our own constituencies, I'm receiving a number of inquiries concerned about this issue from my constituents. I would like the honourable minister - and thank you for his response just earlier - to just help to basically reassure the constituents in my area that his department is obviously on top of things. Also, could you perhaps confirm if all the financial reporting of the County of Richmond is up to date with the Department of Municipal Affairs? That would be great.

CHUCK PORTER: Again, I thank the member for the question. We are certainly aware of this issue. I think the entire province is if they read the media; there have been some stories out there. She mentioned in her first question, the facts. That is exactly what I go by as minister, and our staff go by, to continue to work on this.

As far as financial reporting, I will say that they are already doing the reporting that we had put into a new piece of regulation, and they're doing a fine job of that, I might say, as well as others. They were early on this.

Things have been coming out and it just so happens, as a follow-up to our discussions yesterday about this issue that the honourable member has been concerned about, I have some documentation that will actually show those financials for her. These are public documents, as well, and they're available to you. I will have them ready for you at the end of QP.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 136.

Bill No. 136 - Financial Measures (2019) Act.

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

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 136, the Financial Measures Act, be now read a second time.

I rise today to speak to the Financial Measures Act, which is the Act that provides legislative authority to implement measures in Budget 2019-20 and other legislative measures, which have financial implications. The bill I'm introducing today makes changes to 10 pieces of legislation, and I will take a moment to outline those changes.

First, Bill No. 136 amends the Chartered Professional Accountants Act to allow for the completion of a merger of accounting bodies that began in 2015. The merger will see Chartered Professional Accountants of Nova Scotia take on the responsibilities of the Public Accountants Board, including the licensing of public accountants. The Department of Finance and Treasury Board has been working with both bodies to finalize the merger, which will come into effect on September 1, 2019.

Second, as a result of this merger, Bill No. 136 will also repeal the Public Accountants Act.

The third change relates to the Companies Act. In December 2017, the federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts agreed to eliminate share warrants and one way to increase corporate transparency and to help prevent misuse of corporations for tax evasion, money laundering, or other criminal activities. Share warrants are not considered transparent by modern accounting standards as they are not registered or tracked, and dividends are paid to whoever presents the physical stock certificate.

As of July 1, 2019, no further share warrants will be issued. Existing share warrants can be converted into stocks and shares until July 1, 2024, after which all share warrants will be eliminated.

Fourth, Bill No. 136 will amend the Corporations Registration Act to support measures to remove interprovincial barriers to trade, as was announced by our Premier in

December 2018. Nova Scotia will join Ontario in waiving extra provincial business registration and renewal fees for businesses formed in another province or territory. Fee for federal and foreign corporations are set at \$274.10 annually. This change will come into effect August 1, 2019.

The fifth and sixth changes relate to the Income Tax Act and the Equity Tax Credit Act. The amendments will phase out the Equity Tax Credit for corporations as we have created the new Innovation Equity Tax Credit. The former Equity Tax Credit will be phased out for corporations and associations on December 31, 2019. The credit will remain in place for community economic development corporations (CEDIFs). It also allows for penalties to be established and regulations if there is a failure to comply with the terms of the tax credit under the Income Tax Act.

The seventh change is to repeal the Health Research Foundation Act. Research Nova Scotia was established in April 2018 to advance world-class research in universities and Nova Scotia Community Colleges. The Health Research Foundation programs and staff transitioned to Research Nova Scotia in March 2019. As a result of that move, the Health Research Foundation Act is no longer required.

Eighth, with support from provincial and federal governments, the Nova Scotia Law Reform Commission is transforming into the Access to Justice Law Reform Institute of Nova Scotia. Bill No. 136 dissolves the Law Reform Commission effective March 31, 2019, transitions the assets to the new entity, and repeals the Law Reform Commission Act.

The ninth change is to the Liquor Control Act to reaffirm and clarify the purpose of the retail mark-up sales allocation or RMSA, which is a proprietary charge paid to the NSLC by craft breweries, distilleries, and wineries where liquor is manufactured.

The last change to Bill No. 136 is the Municipal Grants Act. There has been some confusion between federal equalization, which is a transfer payment made to the province to provide government services, and the province's municipal equalization grant program, which is a grant that the province provides to municipalities. The amendment to this Act will change the name of the municipal equalization program to the "municipal financial capacity grant" for greater clarity.

Budget 2019-20 is our fourth consecutive balanced budget, and it builds on a strong fiscal foundation. Managing finance as well has given us the ability to invest in new and existing program services for Nova Scotians, and the implementation of Bill No. 136, the Financial Measures Act, will establish the measures needed to implement this budget.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, this Financial Measures Act, it's an omnibus bill. There's a number of items in it beyond what we would typically see in the Financial Measures Act.

On first glance, I think a lot of these measures are housekeeping in nature. They may also be very important. I'm not trying to suggest they're not, but we will be watching in Law Amendments Committee to see if anybody comes out of the woodwork and if they have any concerns with the many different aspects of this bill, whether it be the Chartered Professional Accountants Act, the Companies Act, the Corporations Registration Act, or the Equity Tax Credit Act. I think these are definitions in those cases that are being looked at.

One thing that did catch my eye was the Law Reform Commission Act. The government stopped funding the Law Reform Commission, as I recall. They had done work for the province that I think was quite valuable, and for the investment in the Law Reform Commission, I think it saved the province a lot of money in many cases. I know we raised that concern when that happened, and there is reference to it here in this bill, to transfer its assets, obligations, and liabilities to the Access to Justice and Law Reform Institute of Nova Scotia. When I saw that, I was reminded of the Law Reform Commission.

Changes to the Liquor Control Act and so on, the Municipal Grants Act, I notice the change in the language here. With respect to equalization, I think this is designed to try to eliminate any possible confusion between federal equalization payments that come to the province, which are quite substantial and one of the largest sources of revenue for the province, and municipal equalization grants, as they were called, which is money distributed based on Nova Scotia Power property in the province. In lieu of property taxes being paid by Nova Scotia Power, there's an equalization grant that is distributed by the province to municipalities around the province, recognizing that if those taxes aren't paid, these funds are to make up for that.

They are two very different forms of equalization. I think the language here, the change, will help so that in the future it might limit any confusion between those two types of equalization. I can understand why the government is putting that forth.

Then there is a Public Accountants Act, and of course the Financial Measures itself, which is the budget, essentially, that we'll be voting on. I certainly had my say on that. I had my full hour on that already, so I'm going to dispense with those comments today. I might offer them again at some point, but I'm not going to offer them today. I'll spare the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board - although I do think she enjoyed at least some of my remarks.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Always.

ALLAN MACMASTER: She says always.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak briefly on this bill. I'm sure my colleague and the minister both look forward to hearing from more folks at Law Amendments Committee who are impacted. I would agree with my colleague in the Official Opposition that this is a thin bill with a lot of content, so we will take some time to digest all of the various things that are contained here.

Certainly it has a theme, and it has a theme that I would say is consistent with the theme of this budget, which is around this notion that we hear of red tape reduction.

[11:00 a.m.]

In downtown Dartmouth, the Premier and the federal minister and the mayor recently had a panel discussion - to which I was not invited, but where I appeared anyway - to discuss red tape reduction, which is great. We've heard it in our committees, the members of this government consistently put forward that topic - it's something they are proud of and I have no quibble with that, Mr. Speaker.

But I would say that it's only half the story. When the government talks about red tape reduction, that red tape reduction relates to companies - here we see it in the Corporation Registration Act, we see in other areas. But, Mr. Speaker, I would contend that red tape reduction ought not be limited to the part of the budget which I think I am right in saying is not the majority of the budget items, that relate to corporations and corporate stimulus. What we don't see is red tape reduction in all the aspects of this government that relate to social services and to the many important programs this government offers for the citizens of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, we're making things easier for business, but we don't seem to be making them easier for people. We're not cutting the red tape for people who need income assistance. Everyone in this Chamber will know through their constituency offices, the headaches involved in receiving income assistance and maintaining a decent life while receiving those benefits in the myriad forms, and visits that are required by folks who often don't have transportation, may not have the appropriate education, and don't get a whole lot of help.

We don't see that red tape reduction with the WCB, Mr. Speaker, as we heard this morning in Question Period. We don't see it for people facing health issues and complex emergency care requirements, people who are presenting to emergency rooms to be told that their particular issue can't be dealt with there. And, we don't see it for vulnerable parts of this province and vulnerable constituencies of this province that require specialized supports.

Just for a moment to single out the autism community, this government actually has a number of supports that they offer for people who need extra respite care and services as a result of a diagnosis of ASD or other similar diagnoses. What I hear over and over again, Mr. Speaker, is that they don't know how to find those services. No one tells them that those services are available. That is red tape. That's red tape - we have services that are hard to access, that are difficult to find, and even if you can find them, are exceedingly complex and burdensome to apply for.

Even here in our own Assembly, Mr. Speaker, as we discussed recently, we haven't somehow found the funding required to make the proceedings of the committees of this House accessible to the people of Nova Scotia. I contend that that's red tape - that to access the proceedings of the people's House is the right of the people of Nova Scotia, yet we make that exceedingly difficult.

As the member for Clare-Digby pointed out, we have a YouTube channel. It is partially populated with one of our committees - and that's a great start. But all of our committees should be available to everyone in the province, Mr. Speaker. They should be available on the Web, they should have CART services and they should be able - we want to encourage people to understand what goes on here.

Mr. Speaker, we'll have more to say on the Financial Measures (2019) Bill after hearing from Law Amendments, after third reading. I think the changes being made and the red tape being reduced only tells part of the story.

So, with those few comments I'll take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I now close debate on Second Reading of Bill No. 136.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 136. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 139.

Bill No. 139 - Income Tax Act.

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

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 139, amendments to the Income Tax Act, now be read a second time.

I'm pleased to speak to these amendments that will support new and growing businesses. This government values the contributions that small- and-medium-sized businesses are making to Nova Scotia's economy. These enterprises are innovation leaders that are creating jobs and strengthening the economy.

As announced in the budget, we are expanding the Innovation Equity Tax Credit to allow for corporate investors to participate and to further support young growing innovation companies. Corporations will be able to invest a minimum of \$50,000 and a maximum of \$500,000 each year to receive a 15 per cent tax credit. By making these amendments, corporate investors will have the incentive to be actively involved in making direct equity investments in Nova Scotia's small businesses.

The province's business communities also asked for the creation of a venture capital tax credit as another way of providing needed investments for our companies. The new venture capital tax credit will be offered at the rate of 15 per cent. Investors will be able to pool resources with others while relying on professional management to select their investment portfolios.

Qualified venture capital businesses will be able to receive capital investment under the venture capital tax credit. The businesses must be developing or implementing new technologies or applying existing technologies to create new products, services, and processes. These changes will leverage funding streams, so entrepreneurs and companies have more support to drive their growth to create jobs, and to be more competitive and succeed. We encourage investors to continue investing to stimulate growth and jobs in both small and-medium-sized businesses in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we'll be supporting these measures and this bill, but I want to issue a word of caution. I think these investments are not for everyone. I would hope that it's very strongly communicated to Nova Scotians when they're going to make these investments that they can be risky.

I remember when I worked in the industry, you could see that many is the person who took a bath - and I use the expression that was used - on tax advantage investments. Sometimes they can work out, but there's a reason why these incentives are put in place; these investments can be risky. Nova Scotians should understand that before they make the

investment because, while it may be attractive to get a break on your taxes, if you end up losing the investment and you have to hold the investment for seven or eight years, it's really not suitable for somebody who may have limited savings or somebody who may be saving for the purposes of their retirement. I want to highlight that caution.

The interest of the government to try to encourage people to invest in Nova Scotia companies that are doing things that are innovative is important. If there are people out there who are willing to take that risk, and for whom that risk is suitable, having this downside protection is a good thing.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, we, too, are cautiously optimistic about this bill. We're happy to see the government supporting small and-medium-sized businesses. They are the backbone of our economy and I think anything that makes it easier for those businesses in those categories to raise capital is a good thing.

I take my colleague's caution into account, as well, but also trust that people can determine how to manage their money. It is a good warning, certainly, but we do know that there are individuals who are looking to support and stimulate the local economy, and this is one way that makes it easier to do so.

We look forward to hearing from anyone at Law Amendments Committee, and thank the government for introducing this bill.

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

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you to the members opposite, Mr. Speaker - in particular the words of caution from the member from Inverness, who understands investments very well. I think it is very important that we protect our investors, our Nova Scotians, who may be investing.

Part of the strategy we would have there is to make sure that the communication and the information is made readily available so people can make wise decisions. It is their decision, but we need to give them all the information we can, so I appreciate that comment - the caution of the risk. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 139. Would all those in favour of the motion, please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

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

[11:11 a.m. The House recessed.]

[11:26 a.m. The House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply with Deputy Speaker Suzanne Lohnes-Croft in the Chair.]

[3:34 p.m. CW on Supply rose and the House reconvened with Deputy Speaker Suzanne Lohnes-Croft in the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Chair of the Committee of the Whole on Supply reports:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole on Supply has met and made considerable progress and begs leave to sit again.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: This concludes the government's business for today. I move that the House do now rise to sit again on Monday, April 8th, between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.

I would also note that the Law Amendments Committee will sit on Monday at 11:00 a.m.

Business for Monday will include the daily routine, followed by the Committee of the Whole on Supply and, with time permitting, we will move into third reading for Bill Nos. 92, 103, 105, 109, and 112. Also, with time permitting, we will cover the Committee of the Whole House for Bill Nos. 106 and 116.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do rise to meet again on Monday, April 8th, between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until 4:00 p.m. on Monday, April 8th.

[The House rose at 3:38 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 966**

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas one of the Jewels in Nova Scotia's crown lands is the Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area (21,250 acres) of forest barrens, wetlands, rivers and lakes and within these lands lies The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail, offering more than 30 kms of backcountry hiking; and

Whereas The Trail has been identified as one of Canada's finest and has enjoyed unanticipated high levels of use, creating the need for monitoring public education and remediation in heavily impacted areas; and

Whereas The Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization (WRWEO) and St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association (SMBSA) have implemented a program under the leadership of Mike Lancaster;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Mike Lancaster for recruiting, training and managing over 30 volunteers for maintaining the integrity of The Bluff Trail in accord with the values of the protected wilderness and for his care to one of the province's distinguished natural resources.