HANSARD 19-47



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS:	
TIR: Repairs to Egypt Rd., Margaree Valley - Immed. Assessment Requested,	
A. MacMaster	3521
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 1216, Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters - Recog.,	
The Premier (by Hon. C. Casey)	3522
Vote - Affirmative	
Res. 1217, Climate Change Rally: Student Engagement - Thanks,	
Hon. Z. Churchill	3523
Vote - Affirmative	3523
Res. 1218, Climate Change Rally: Raising Awareness - Thanks,	
Hon. G. Wilson	3523
Vote - Affirmative	3524
Res. 1219, Medic Monday: Dedication to Nova Scotians - Thanks,	
Hon. R. Delorey	3524
Vote - Affirmative	

Res. 1220, Ntl. Coaches Wk.: Contrib. to Lives of Athletes - Thanks,	
Hon. L. Glavine	3525
Vote - Affirmative	3526
Res. 1221, Arthritis Awareness Mo.: Advocacy, Quality of Life - Congrats.,	
Hon. R. Delorey	3526
Vote - Affirmative	3527
Res. 1222, Kids Help Phone: Support, Post-Secondary Students - Recog.,	
Hon. L. Kousoulis	3527
Vote - Affirmative	3528
Res. 1223, British Home Child Day: 150 th Anniv., Contrib. to N.S Recog.,	
Hon. L. Metlege Diab	3528
Vote - Affirmative	3529
Res. 1224, Parsons, George: Landscaping Innovation, Amherst - Recog.,	
Hon. T. Ince	3529
Vote - Affirmative	3530
Res. 1225, Climate Change Day of Action: N.S. Ldrship Recog.,	
Hon. D. Mombourquette	3530
Vote - Affirmative	3531
Res. 1226, Ecological Forestry - Recog.,	
Hon. I. Rankin	3531
Vote - Affirmative	3532
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
No. 160, Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act,	
Hon. K. Colwell	3532
No. 161, Declaration of Climate Emergency Act,	
G. Burrill	3532
No. 162, Education Act and Education (CSAP) Act,	
G. Burrill	3532
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:	
Ripley, Dwayne: New Bus., Curly's Sports - Congrats.,	
E. Smith-McCrossin	3532
Climate Change: Effect on Lakes - Recog.,	
C. Chender	3532
Climate Change: Govt. Commitment - Recog.,	
B. Jessome	3533
Queens Co. Girls Choir: U.S. Performance - Congrats.,	
K. Masland	3534
Climate Change: Goal-setting - Challenges,	
L. Roberts	3534
SolarHomes Prog.: Continued Growth - Recog.,	
H. MacKay	3534
La Boulangerie Aucoin: 60th Anniv Congrats.,	
A. MacMaster	3535

N.S. Youth: Teaching Adults - Listen, Respond,	
Susan Leblanc	3535
C&D Site, Harrietsfield: Rehabilitation Proceeding - Thanks,	
B. Maguire	3536
GoodLife Fitness: Com. Serv. During Hurricane Dorian - Thanks,	
B. Adams	3536
Flooding in C.B.: Investment in Climate Change Preparations - Increase,	
T. Martin	
Climate Change: Collaboration in N.S Recog.,	
S. Lohnes-Croft	3537
Stevens, Emma: Indigenous Advocacy - Best Wishes,	
K. Bain	3538
Anthony, Sylvia: Com. Serv Thanks,	
Susan Leblanc	3538
Cycling: Infrastructure Investment - Recog.,	
R. DiCostanzo	3538
Wadden, Mable: Senate 150 th Anniv. Medal - Congrats.,	
B. Comer	3539
Climate Change: Coal Reliance Reduction - Recog.,	
Hon. M. Miller	3539
Khoury, Roy - Restaurateur: New Bus Congrats.,	
S. Craig	3540
Lions Club, St. Peter's & Area: Com. Serv Thanks,	
A. Paon	3540
Walsh, Zach - Medallist: World-class Skills - Congrats.,	
K. Irving	3541
MacArthur, Frank: Golden Retriever Events - Commend,	
Hon. P. Dunn.	3541
Boswell, June: Death of - Tribute,	
Hon. K. Regan	3542
Climate Change: Youth, Democratic Engagement - Recog.,	
T. Halman	3542
Jennings, Riley: X-Ceptional Award - Commend,	3342
Hon. K. Casey	35/13
George, Stephanie: Educ. Research Award - Congrats.,	
L. Harrison	25/12
	3343
White, Sara: Supporting Lacrosse in N.S Congrats.,	2511
Hon. L. Glavine	3344
N.S. Industry Leaders: Relocalizing Economies - Recog.,	2515
L. Roberts	3343
Chedabucto Green Team: Adopt-A-Highway Prog Recog.,	2515
Hon. L. Hines	3345
Home Oxygen Services Prog.: Needs Strengthening - Recog.,	2546
J. Lohr	3346
Lady Ball: Ovarian Cancer Fundraising - Recog.,	2516
Hon. L. Metlege Diab	3546

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:	
No. 672, Gov't. (N.S.) - A. Cameron Case: Legal Counsel - Cost,	
T. Houston	3547
No. 673, Gov't. (N.S.): Emissions Targets - Legislate,	
G. Burrill	3549
No. 674, Gov't. (N.S.) - FOIPOP Appeals: Resources - Commit,	
T. Houston	3551
No. 675, Bus Climate Change: Jobs at Risk - Analysis,	
C. Chender	3552
No. 676, Fin. & Treasury Bd.: Crane Removal - Cost Envelope,	
M. Ryan	3554
No. 677, H&W - Home Oxygen Serv.: Emergency Supplies - Provision,	
J. Lohr	3555
No. 678, EMO: Communication - Improvement Ensure,	
T. Halman	3556
No. 679, EMO: Management Plan - Responsibility Ensure,	
A. MacMaster	3557
No. 680, EMO - Climate Change: Flood Risks - Analysis,	
L. Roberts	3558
No. 681, Mun. Affairs - Emerg. Mgmt. Plans: Up to Date - Confirm,	
E. Smith-McCrossin	3559
No. 682, Agric GHG Reduction: Charcoal Research - Comment,	
K. Bain	3560
No. 683, H&W - Patient Medical Records: Affordability - Update,	
K. MacFarlane	3561
No. 684, Com. Serv IA Recipients: Health Travel Costs - Recognize,	
Hon. P. Dunn.	3563
No. 685, Mun. Affairs - Hurricane Dorian: Comm. Blackout - Concern,	
A. Paon	3564
No. 686, H&W - Roseway ER: Ongoing Closures - Address,	
K. Masland	
No. 687, La FANE: Le rapport sur les frontières électorales - Discussion néce	essaire,
Colton LeBlanc	
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Tue., Oct. 1st at 1:00 p.m.	3567



HALIFAX, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 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 now begin with the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition. The operative clause reads as follows:

"We, the concerned citizens of the Margaree's [sic], Cape Breton, are requesting that Department of Transportation & Infrastructure Renewal, make an immediate assessment, and repairs to Egypt Road, Margaree Valley."

This petition has 90 signatures, and I have affixed my own as per the Rules of this House.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1216

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Orange Shirt Day began in 2013 in recognition of residential school survivor Phyllis Jack Webstad's experience as a 6-year-old child arriving at residential school for the first time and having her new orange shirt taken away from her; and

Whereas wearing an orange shirt and promoting the slogan "Every Child Matters" is an affirmation of our commitment to raise awareness of the residential school experience and come together in the spirit of reconciliation and hope for generations to come; and

Whereas Orange Shirt Day is held annually on September 30th, a day chosen to reflect the time of year in which Indigenous children across Canada were taken from their homes to residential schools;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly and all Nova Scotians join students from across the province in recognizing Orange Shirt Day on September 30th.

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 Education and Early Childhood Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1217

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

Whereas the impacts of climate change are creating a global emergency; and

Whereas today, students throughout Nova Scotia and beyond are participating in a walkout to bring attention to climate change; and

Whereas these students are showing that young people are engaged and motivated to play their part in ensuring a healthy and safe future for our planet and for all people;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature join me in thanking our students for their leadership on this important issue and for being inspirations to us all.

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 Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1218

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

Whereas Climate Action Week has prompted millions of people around the world to draw attention to this urgent global crisis; and

Whereas its effects, including droughts and floods, stronger storms, milder Winters, and long Summer heatwaves, are already being felt here in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Nova Scotians have worked hard to increase renewable energy, reduce emissions, and prepare for the impact of climate change, but there is still much more to do;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House thank all those who came here today to remind us of the urgency of this issue, and promise to do our part to fight climate change.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

RANDY DELOREY: Thank you. I would like to draw my colleagues' attention to the East Gallery where we have some special guests. I ask the guests to please rise as I introduce them so they can be recognized by the House.

Nizam Farah, who is a primary care paramedic; Luke Slysz, who is an advanced care paramedic; Sarah Boudreau, who is an advanced care paramedic and part of the extended care paramedic program - Sarah is joined by her daughter, Sophie; and we also have Savannah Rahey, primary care paramedic. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1219

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

Whereas every day paramedics work on the front lines of the health care system, directly providing care and comfort to Nova Scotians in need; and

Whereas across the country, and certainly in Nova Scotia, the paramedic profession continues to be at the forefront of innovation; and

Whereas September 30th, Medic Monday, is a time to thank Nova Scotia's highly skilled and dedicated paramedics who respond to Nova Scotians in the time of their greatest need:

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House thank the more than 1,200 paramedics for their dedication and service to communities in every corner of the province.

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. 1220

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

Whereas September 21st to September 29th marks National Coaches Week, which is an opportunity to thank our coaches from across the country and celebrate the important impact they have on the lives of the athletes they coach; and

Whereas Nova Scotia is home to over 10,500 extremely influential coaches on community and professional levels, many of whom put in hundreds of volunteer hours with the goal of helping our athletes achieve their dreams; and

Whereas over 6,000 NCCP coaching courses and modules were delivered in Nova Scotia last year and our government invests \$1.3 million annually in supporting provincial sport organizations, as we know a robust sports sector improves the quality of life of Nova Scotians and provides social and economic benefits to all communities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly thank the hard-working coaches across our province who make a lasting difference in the lives of our athletes.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

RANDY DELOREY: Thank you. I'll direct my colleagues' attention again to the East Gallery. I would like to introduce Jone Mitchell, the Executive Director for the Atlantic Region of the Arthritis Society. Please give her the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1221

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

Whereas one in four Nova Scotians lives with the painful impacts of arthritis; and

Whereas the Arthritis Society promotes public awareness and help to those living with arthritis and supports research to find a cure for this debilitating disease; and

Whereas September is Arthritis Awareness Month, a time to focus on ways to improve the quality of life for Nova Scotians living with arthritis;

Therefore, be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating the Arthritis Society for their advocacy and support for Nova Scotians living with arthritis.

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 Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, in the East Gallery we are joined today by two special guests. We have Kathy Hay, President and CEO of Kids Help Phone, and Dawn Boylan, currently Senior Manager of Community Investment at Bell Aliant and a founding partner of Kids Help Phone.

Kathy strives to provide a safe and trusted place for young people in their moment of crisis and need. Good2Talk post-secondary student helpline is one of the four key mental health tools that Labour and Advanced Education funds that provide services and access points into mental health care on our campuses.

It is delivered by Kids Help Phone, and Good2Talk is a free, confidential helpline providing professional counselling information and referrals for mental health, addictions and well-being to post-secondary students in Nova Scotia, 24 hours a day, every day of the year. I'd like to ask Kathy and Dawn to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 1222

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

Whereas it is important that post-secondary students have access to mental health services and supports; and

Whereas Kids Help Phone is recognized as a pioneer in e-mental heath and virtual care and is dedicated to amplifying the voice of young people, opening doors, and creating an environment where women are encouraged to grow, succeed, and feel comfortable to pursue any career they so choose, contributing to an inclusive and resilient province; and

Whereas by calling Good2Talk, Nova Scotia students can receive support from professional counsellors on a wide range of stresses and concerns that can impact their mental health, well-being and success during post-secondary studies.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature acknowledge the hard work of our mental health professionals and their commitment to fostering and understanding a supportive environment for youth.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 1223

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

Whereas 2019 commemorates 150 years since the first British Home Children were brought to Canada; and

Whereas between 1869 and 1948, over 120,000 British Home Children, some as young as four years old, were brought from England to the Dominion of Canada to work as indentured labourers or domestic servants, enduring separation from family, hardship and uncertainty of their future and many of these migrant child workers who came to Nova Scotia grew up, settled here, and with strong tenacity they and their descendants have contributed greatly to the growth and prosperity of our Province of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly will recognize this important milestone by being lit on the evening of September 28th and participating in the Canadawide Beacons of Light program;

Therefore be it resolved that in recognition of these British Home Children and the many Nova Scotians who proudly carry this ancestry, that September 28, 2019, be declared British Home Child Day by the government of Nova Scotia.

I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 1224

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

Whereas George Frederick Parsons who was born on July 25, 1847, in Amherst, had the gift for producing beautiful grounds, lawns, landscapes, and engineered structures, starting at an early age; and

Whereas Mr. Parsons spent his lifetime building various structures in Amherst which included carving headstones in the first town cemetery, repairing the stone reservoir and dam, constructing Dickey Park, Currie Park, Victoria Square, and producing the first snow fences along the Intercolonial Railway of Canada; and

Whereas Mr. Parsons was appointed to the role as the first street superintendent of Amherst where he built multiple streets, homes, and structures that are still present in the town today;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly join me in recognizing the life of George Frederick Parsons and acknowledging the fundamental role he played in building the Town of Amherst.

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 Energy and Mines.

RESOLUTION NO. 1225

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

Whereas climate change is an urgent and global issue that threatens our environment, our economy, and our province's future well-being and prosperity; and

Whereas Nova Scotia has become a North American leader in fighting climate change by reducing emissions more than 30 per cent below 2005 levels, meeting the federal emissions reduction target 13 years early, and tripling the amount of renewable electricity in our system; and

Whereas we will continue to build on those successes by investing almost \$120 million over the next four years on solar programs, energy efficiency projects, clean transportation options, and other ideas that will reduce emissions and create green jobs across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the Legislature recognize September 26, 2019, as a day of action on climate change and commit to working together with all Nova Scotians to reach our climate change goals.

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 member for Yarmouth on an introduction.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to bring the attention of the members of the House to the West Gallery where seated there is one of my dearest friends from Yarmouth and my favourite Tory from Yarmouth, Joyce Nickerson, who is celebrating her 87th birthday today.

I hope the House can join me in welcoming her and wishing her a happy birthday. (Standing Ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Lands and Forestry.

RESOLUTION NO. 1226

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

Whereas climate change and biodiversity loss pose an existential threat that affects us all; and

Whereas Nova Scotia's forests play a vital role in how carbon is sequestered in our atmosphere; and

Whereas Nova Scotia is adopting ecological forestry to better manage our forests with long-term environmental objectives at the forefront;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly work together across Party lines to move our province forward to address climate change and the global emergency that it is.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 160 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 25 of the Acts of 1996. The Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act. (Hon. Keith Colwell)

Bill No. 161 - Entitled an Act Respecting a Declaration of Climate Emergency. (Gary Burrill)

Bill No. 162 - Entitled an Act to Amend Schedule A of Chapter 1 of the Acts of 2018. The Education Act, and Chapter 1 of the Acts of 1995-96. The Education (CSAP) Act. (Gary Burrill)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RIPLEY, DWAYNE: NEW BUS., CURLY'S SPORTS - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate one of Cumberland North's newest entrepreneurs. Dwayne Ripley has opened a new business in Amherst called Curly's Sports & Supplements in Dayle's Grand Market. Dwayne was able to start his own business this summer with help from local CBDC programs.

Dwayne has taken his passions and put them into a business that he can both enjoy and work hard at. Dwayne has a drive to succeed and has put hard work into reaching this point.

I would like to welcome Curly's Sports & Supplements as one of our new local businesses and wish Dwayne Ripley great success as he begins and grows his business.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLIMATE CHANGE: EFFECT ON LAKES - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, today, as hundreds of thousands of people around the world take to the streets, I rise to draw attention to the ways in which the impacts of climate change are already being felt in my constituency of Dartmouth South.

Dartmouth has long been known as the City of Lakes, and even 20 years after amalgamation, that is firmly how we see ourselves. But our lakes are under threat: rapid weed growth, harmful blue-green algae blooms, phosphorus loading, and invasive species are some of the many challenges facing Dartmouth. Some of these are exacerbated by human and industrial activities, but they are turbocharged by climate change.

While some of the impacts of global warming can seem abstract to those of us lucky enough not to be affected yet, the impacts on our lakes have a profound effect on our community: swimming beaches in low-income communities closed, hundreds of children unable to experience the natural gems of their own community, and profound risks to the world-class paddling competitions that take place on our lakes every summer.

I'd like to recognize the many individuals and groups working to mitigate these impacts and plan for the future, and to reaffirm my own commitment to save our lakes.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE: GOVT. COMMITMENT - RECOG.

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly join the voices of my colleagues and recognize that climate change affects every single person in our province, especially our youth. Polling consistently shows that young people place climate change among their top issues. The science behind this issue is settled. The time for climate denial is over. The time for action is now.

I'm happy to be part of a government that is committed to combat climate change and fight for future generations. When we look back at our time in government, I hope that our commitment to climate change is among the things we are remembered for.

[9:30 a.m.]

Under the leadership of our government, Nova Scotia is projected to have 40 per cent of its energy from renewable sources by next year. This is an increase of nearly 20 per cent since 2013 and represents the largest increase in renewables in the history of our great province.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to making progress on this important file with all members and people across our province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

QUEENS CO. GIRLS CHOIR: U.S. PERFORMANCE - CONGRATS.

KIM MASLAND: The Queens County Girls Choir is entering its 18th season under the direction of Kristopher Snarby and it would be an understatement to say that they have met with much success.

Last May, after successfully completing challenging auditions, 19 very talented young women travelled with their director, accompanist Alison Williams, and selected chaperones to Walt Disney World in Florida.

On May 17th they delivered an incredible performance on the world stage, wowing their audience. In addition to their official performance at Disney, the ladies also sang for bystanders in the airport and at 40,000 feet when their airline crew put on a special request. They definitely made memories that will last a lifetime.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating the choir on yet another impressive achievement and wish them continued success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

CLIMATE CHANGE: GOAL-SETTING - CHALLENGES

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, it is no exaggeration to say that the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act looms large in Nova Scotia politics. The legislation which was brought forward by Progressive Conservative Environment and Labour Minister Mark Parent, and shaped by his then-Deputy Minister Bill Lahey, set Nova Scotia down a path to reduced greenhouse gas emissions and progress on other environmental fronts. The NDP followed that path, introducing the COMFIT program that allowed communities to benefit from the development of renewable energy.

When I was elected, Nova Scotia had already met most of the goals that were set under the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act and now two years late, with evidence of such need for ambition and for bravery to confront the climate crisis, consultation on new EGSPA goals are happening only online, and only for a short time.

This is a time for stretch goals, for challenging ourselves, and I look forward to real evidence that this government is ready to do that.

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

SOLARHOMES PROG.: CONTINUED GROWTH - RECOG.

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians are embracing solar energy. Homeowners are taking greater control over their energy future while reducing carbon

emissions. In the past year alone, 500 Nova Scotians have installed solar panels at their homes. Some of this progress is thanks to our SolarHomes Program administered by Efficiency Nova Scotia, incentivising the generation of solar energy in our province.

When we started this program just a few years ago, our province was home to only 13 solar panel installers; as of this year, that number has grown to 57, representing hundreds of jobs - clean, green jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to growing clean energy in our province, allowing people to save money on their electricity bills while helping fight climate change.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

LA BOULANGERIE AUCOIN: 60TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, congratulations to La Boulangerie Aucoin Bakery of Petit Étang for over 60 years of successful business. Also known as Aucoin Bakery, they have become a staple on the tables of families across Inverness County.

Alex and Annie Blanche Aucoin started their family business in 1959. It took courage and commitment, but it continues to reward their family to this day. How wonderful it is to make a meaningful product people can enjoy each day.

May we in this Legislature acknowledge the Aucoin family and all of their staff, past and present, for their success and contribution to our Nova Scotian economy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

N.S. YOUTH: TEACHING ADULTS - LISTEN, RESPOND

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, the late, great poet Mary Oliver once wrote in an essay, "Teach the children. We don't matter so much, but the children do." While I love this sentiment, I think that lately - and today in particular - it is the children who are teaching us.

Yesterday when debating the climate crisis, I became emotional. This happened because I am fearful. I feel a profound anxiety for the future or our planet, this province, our children, and my own two young children.

Today, as we are all aware, the youth are taking to the streets of Kjipuktuk and around the world for the strike for climate justice. Their voices have been loud, their actions inspiring and their demands clear. But it is us, and not the youth, who have to change the laws. We have the knowledge, we have the ability, we have the tools to combat this climate

crisis but we need to have the will and we need to stop prioritizing profits over people and the planet.

So, today I stand here, on what will no doubt be an historic day in the fight against climate change, in solidarity with the young strikers. I will join them, including my own children, in the street and I will continue to use my voice in this House to fight for their future and the future of our planet.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

C&D SITE, HARRIETSFIELD: REHABILITATION PROCEEDING - THANKS

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, we only get one climate, only one environment, and only one planet Earth. As humans, we have the privilege of being stewards of this planet. Finally, all Parties, all communities, all countries are acknowledging this global crisis.

Locally, the people of Harrietsfield are keenly aware of the importance of the local environment on their communities, their friends and their families. After well over a decade, multiple governments and parties, they finally got the news they so desperately fought for. The vacant C&D site in their community will be cleaned and brought back to its near-original green state.

Thank you to Marlene Brown, Melissa King, and the entire community that fought for the environment because they know first-hand the importance of fresh clean air, water, and soil has to their physical and mental health.

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

GOODLIFE FITNESS: COM. SERV. DURING HURRICANE DORIAN - THANKS

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and show appreciation to the GoodLife Fitness center in our community for their kind and generous act. GoodLife graciously opened the doors to all of their facilities in Nova Scotia to those in need of shower facilities including soap, shampoo, conditioners, blow-dryers, and towels. The centres also invited Nova Scotians to use the electrical outlets at GoodLife to charge their electronic devices.

Hurricane Dorian hit Nova Scotia hard September 7th, 2019, leaving many thousands of families without power and basic amenities for, in some cases, days. Kind gestures like this from business owners in our communities do not go unnoticed.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking GoodLife Fitness centers around the province for opening their doors to our communities in such a time of need.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

FLOODING IN C.B.: INVESTMENT IN CLIMATE CHANGE PREPARATIONS - INCREASE

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, almost three years ago on Thanksgiving Day in 2016, Cape Breton experienced significant flooding due to heavy rains. The flooding damaged hundreds of people's homes and destroyed property. Many people experienced hardship.

This is part of the impact of growing climate uncertainty as weather patterns change and storms become more intense. Rising sea levels leading to coastal erosion in our communities and the impact of Hurricane Dorian has caused further damage. There is much to be done to mitigate the efforts of climate change in Cape Breton and to protect people's homes from extreme weather.

Mr. Speaker, people in Cape Breton need our government to take climate change seriously and we need real investment to help our island prepare and adapt to a change in climate.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

CLIMATE CHANGE: COLLABORATION IN N.S. - RECOG.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, over the next four years our government is investing \$120 million into projects that reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. When it comes to climate change, talk is cheap. Real action is needed to combat this issue.

We need to transform the way we live our lives. We need to drive differently, heat our homes differently, produce our energy differently, just to name a few. Climate action should be a priority of all Parties in this House. We have seen a tax on the carbon price, but remediation comes at a cost. Climate action is worth the price, Mr. Speaker.

Let us all collaborate - not just by our talk - but by our actions. Let us be the changemakers. Mr. Speaker, I hope this House continues to pursue the policies that will ensure a habitable planet for not just my children and grandchildren, but all children and grandchildren.

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

STEVENS, EMMA: INDIGENOUS ADVOCACY - BEST WISHES

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and thank Eskasoni's own Emma Stevens on her highly successful rendition in Mi'kmaq of The Beatles' song "Blackbird."

Her rendition was recognized by The Beatles front man Paul McCartney, who was quoted as saying: There's an incredible version done by a Canadian girl in her native language, it's really cool.

On May 27th, Emma took to the stage in front of the UN-Habitat Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya, to raise awareness about the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, where she honoured the women and girls by singing the Mi'kmaq Honour Song.

Although she's already a star - not only in her home of Eskasoni but beyond - the future has a lot in store for this young lady and I ask the members of the Legislature to join me in wishing her every future success. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

ANTHONY, SYLVIA: COM. SERV. - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish an enthusiastic Happy 80th Birthday to Sylvia Anthony. It's difficult to name a community organization in Dartmouth North that Sylvia Anthony has not run or is currently running. Sylvia is involved in a number of initiatives aimed at improving the lives of people living in North End Dartmouth, such as Between the Bridges and the Farrell Benevolent Society.

She organizes monthly Neighborhood Watch meetings and she's active in fundraising for the Holy Trinity Emmanuel Church's Christmas Hamper Program. She highlights all of the great things happening in the area through her role as the president of the North Dartmouth *Echo*, our community newspaper.

Sylvia is at the heart of Dartmouth North and so on behalf of the community, I want to thank her for all she has done, and continues to do, and wish her well on this very special day. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

CYCLING: INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to building and improving cycling infrastructure. Cycling leads to less pollution and less congestion,

making Halifax and other cities and towns in our province more sustainable and more liveable.

Our province, in tandem with the federal and municipal governments, made a \$25 million investment into cycling infrastructure in Halifax. Bikeways built with this money will make cycling a more accessible and safer way to get around Halifax, helping address traffic and pollution at the same time.

It's important to note the health benefits that come with increased physical activity. This new infrastructure may well save our health care system millions of dollars by incentivizing people to cycle instead of using their cars.

I am hoping to be the first MLA to cycle to the Legislature once this bikeway is built. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of this government that is committed to expanding options when it comes to getting around Halifax.

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

WADDEN, MABLE: SENATE 150TH ANNIV. MEDAL - CONGRATS.

BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mabel Wadden of Catalone who was recently awarded a Senate 150th Anniversary Medal. Mabel was presented with this medal from Cape Breton Regional Municipality Mayor, Cecil Clarke, and Senator Michael MacDonald at the Catalone Recreation Centre.

This medal is awarded to Canadians actively involved in their communities, who through hard work, dedication and volunteerism, make their communities and hometowns better places to visit, live and grow up. Mabel Wadden met these criteria overwhelmingly.

There are not many events that happen in Catalone, Louisbourg and all surrounding areas that Mabel Wadden is not actively involved in. She is one in a million with a heart of gold.

I stand here today to thank and congratulate Mabel Wadden for all her hard work and look forward to many more years of her wonderful smile that greets everyone who meets her. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

CLIMATE CHANGE: COAL RELIANCE REDUCTION - RECOG.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, as a former Minister of Environment, climate change has always been a priority for me, especially after hearing the Minister of

Environment for Nunavut talk about the disappearance of permafrost and the resulting crumbling of their town buildings.

That's why this government has been aggressively reducing our reliance on coal. Coal may have a rich history in our province - and we all know it contributes greatly to climate change. For decades, our province has relied mostly on coal and just a decade ago, 80 per cent of our electricity was generated by burning coal.

Under the leadership of this government, that rate has dropped to 30 per cent. This massive shift represents thousands of new, clean energy jobs and millions of tons in reduced carbon dioxide emissions.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to our government continuing its current direction as they diligently strive to promote clean and sustainable alternatives to coal-based energy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

KHOURY, ROY - RESTAURATEUR: NEW BUS. - CONGRATS.

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Roy Khoury for his outstanding accomplishments. Since coming to Canada from Syria in the early 1990s, he has opened five restaurants in the Halifax area. His latest is the Shawarma King restaurant located in Lower Sackville.

Mr. Khoury cooks his Middle Eastern cuisine just as he did back in Syria, ensuring that his customers enjoy a distinctive Syrian taste. Because most of his customers are Canadians, Mr. Khoury has spent a lot of time explaining how he prepares his menu and providing samples to his customers. This has proven to be a positive experience for both his customers and his business.

I would like to ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating Mr. Roy Khoury and his staff for their achievement and wish them continued success in the future. Thank you.

[9:45 a.m.]

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

LIONS CLUB, ST. PETER'S & AREA: COM. SERV. - THANKS

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker I rise today to pay tribute and celebrate the achievements of the St. Peter's and Area Lions Club, a respected organization in Richmond County. On Saturday, September 21, 2019, I was honoured to accept an invitation to speak at the club's 50th Anniversary Dinner and Awards Night at St. Peter's.

Mr. Speaker, the Lions Club has tirelessly supported local individuals and organizations in our area. The club, made up of local men and women, identifies needs in the community and provides support. They constructed the community's recreation grounds; they have built a world-class marina and community hall in the Bras d'Or Lakes; they provide student bursaries; partner with local organizations and schools; and assist with program development and leadership initiatives. They also provide opportunities to residents to experience educational and culturally rich performances in the arts.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of this House to join me in extending our congratulations and appreciation to the St. Peter's and Area Lions Club for their years of dedicated service to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

WALSH, ZACH - MEDALLIST: WORLD-CLASS SKILLS - CONGRATS.

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, recently I had the privilege of highlighting, to the members of this House, the achievements of a young local tradesman from Cambridge.

Zach Walsh, an apprentice who won gold in 2017 and 2018 as part of Team Nova Scotia's Refrigeration and AC Team at the Skills Canada Nationals now has excelled on the world stage. This year Zach was named as one of thirty-two members to the WorldSkills Team Canada.

WorldSkills is the largest vocational education and skills excellence event in the world, which was held this August, in Kazan, Russia. His skills in his trade were tested against the best students and apprentices from around the world, and for his remarkable talents he was awarded the Medallion of Excellence.

I invite all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Zach Walsh on dedicating himself to his trade, developing his skills to the highest level, and now being recognized internationally in the winning of the Medallion of Excellence at the WorldSkills Competition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MACARTHUR, FRANK: GOLDEN RETRIEVER EVENTS - COMMEND

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise today and offer my sincere congratulations to Frank MacArthur, President of the Pictou County Kennel Club, President of the Maritime Golden Retriever Club, and the Atlantic Director of the National Golden Retriever Club.

The Pictou County Kennel Club hosted the Golden Retriever National and Maritime Golden Retriever Regionals at the Sobeys Indoor Sports Complex in Stellarton, along with the Pictou County All Breed Dog Show between September 5-8, 2019. MacArthur said they had dog owners from all across Canada as well as participants from the U.S who took part in this event. This is the first time the national event was held in Stellarton and there were approximately 240 dogs that took part throughout the weekend.

I want to commend Frank MacArthur for his outstanding working commitment to the showcasing of the good-natured, energetic, and photogenic golden retrievers.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

BOSWELL, JUNE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, in May, long-time Bedford resident June Boswell received a volunteer award for her many contributions to the Fort Sackville Foundation which operates our local historical museum, Scott Manor House. It was a well-deserved honour. June had served in many capacities, everything from the finance committee to directing the production of a video on the Halifax Explosion.

But the truth is that June volunteered for so many organizations in so many ways for so long that I will not be able to do her justice here today. June was a founding member of the Nova Scotia Gambia Association and was their treasurer - she managed the Halifax office for 25 years; at Bedford United Church she served as an elder, a member of the education and outreach committees, and was an all-round good person - she saw stuff that needed to be done and she did it; and she began donating blood in 1956 and made 135 donations in all.

Just a few weeks after she received this latest award, June passed away. It was a very quick illness and so many did not get the chance to convey to her in what high esteem we held her. I'm going to miss her. She leaves a big hole to fill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

CLIMATE CHANGE: YOUTH, DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT - RECOG.

TIM HALMAN: I rise today to recognize the students and young Nova Scotians who will be participating in the climate strike today. Yesterday, this Legislature had an emergency debate on climate change. Many great points were made, especially the message that we must act with a sense of urgency.

Mr. Speaker, over the years members of this House have raised their concerns regarding youth engagement in politics and public policy. I believe we are about to witness

youth political engagement at its finest and will be a protest that will be remembered in the history books.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to recognize that climate change is the number one concern for young Nova Scotians and to commend our students for their participation in a democratic process.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

JENNINGS, RILEY: X-CEPTIONAL AWARD - COMMEND

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, each year St. Francis Xavier University presents an X-Ceptional award, which recognizes individuals who go above and beyond to contribute in a positive manner to St. F.X. athletics.

Riley Jennings from Debert, Colchester North, a fourth-year human kinetics student and thrower with the St. F.X. track and field team, received this prestigious award for his many contributions to the university. He was involved with the Motor Activities with X program, volunteering weekly with individuals with disabilities. He participated in the autism learn to skate/swim program, was a St. F.X. Fit 4 Life/Fit 4 Tots volunteer, coached throwing to local high school athletes with the Antigonish Track Club, was a facilitator with the Antigonish Multisport program, and assisted with the design of the inclusive sledge hockey program at St. F.X.

Jennings also took part in Harvest for Hunger, the Safe Halloween program and the men's march for violence against women. Riley Jennings is to be commended for his athletic achievements and for his generosity in giving his time, knowledge, and skills to others. Well done, Riley.

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

GEORGE, STEPHANIE: EDUC. RESEARCH AWARD - CONGRATS.

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, it is more important today than it has ever been for teachers to keep abreast of issues and events that impact positively and negatively on the lives and well-being of the students.

It is with great appreciation that I recognize the contribution of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union for its ongoing assistance to education research for teachers. For 16 years, an annual fund of \$3,500 has been available with no individual award exceeding \$450.

I wish to congratulate Stephanie George of Colchester-East Hants on her Education Research Award certificate for "It's a Girl Thing in Nova Scotia Schools: Shining from the

Inside Out," and for her commitment to taking her professional development above and beyond requirements.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

WHITE, SARA: SUPPORTING LACROSSE IN N.S. - CONGRATS.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to give praise to an individual who was recognized during the 2019 Support4Sport Awards. This individual was identified for her volunteer work and dedication to ensuring Canada's youth get to partake in our national sport.

Sara White is the President of the Valley Thunder Lacrosse Association. Sara has played a key role in running Try-It clinics and initiating the Scotia Minor Lacrosse League. This organization allows athletes in the Annapolis Valley, Truro, Pictou, and Cape Breton the chance to play the sport they love. She is a key volunteer and organizer of the annual Apple Cup, now in its sixth year. Sara is constantly promoting lacrosse in her community and she adores helping others.

Mr. Speaker, I request that all members of this House join me in applauding Sara White for her incredible service and devotion to her volunteer work, which has allowed many young athletes to find their love for sport.

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

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I stood in the House and talked about the youth-led climate strike in March that is happening today. Additionally, yesterday we held our emergency debate in regard to climate change and today many members from all Parties in this House have risen to express their concerns in regard to climate change.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to request that with the unanimous consent of members of this House, that the business of the House be recessed if we are still here when the student march arrives at Province House today, so that those members who would like to attend outside and show our support for the climate crisis would be able to do so.

THE SPEAKER: I'd like to remind the honourable member that the members' statements section of the agenda is not to be used to request any action of the House. If you want to bring that up, we'll ask you to do that at the conclusion of members' statements.

BRAD JOHNS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and Mr. Premier.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

N.S. INDUSTRY LEADERS: RELOCALIZING ECONOMIES - RECOG.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, we often hear in this House about Nova Scotia's accomplishments in export sales, be it tourism or fish, but in an era of climate change, many thinkers and leaders are urging us to think of ways to re-localize our economy in order to build resilience.

In that vein, I congratulate the farmers across the province who are persevering despite climate uncertainty; the parents and organizers and activists who are working to bring local food into schools for lunch programs on the South Shore and in the Valley; municipalities showing leadership by developing local energy utilities; and social enterprises that are finding ways to spread the economic benefit through procurement and innovative product development.

I urge our government to work with all of those leaders to balance our championing of exports with a recognition that we need to build resilience through import replacement as well.

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

CHEDABUCTO GREEN TEAM: ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY PROG. - RECOG.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of a local environmental group, the Chedabucto Green Team, who participated in the Great Nova Scotia Pick-Me-Up, the 13th annual provincial Adopt-A-Highway day earlier this year.

Litter can be a real problem along the highways, which can detract from the beauty of our communities and the wonderful natural environment that surrounds us here in Nova Scotia. Local community efforts to clean up our roadsides make a difference for all of us.

Most notably, during the Guysborough cleanup, volunteers filled over 30 bags of garbage in two hours, making a significant impact in the fight to reduce litter and improve the look of our roadsides.

I'd like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication shown by the Chedabucto Green Team and the efforts of those participating in the Adopt-A-Highway Program for doing their part to protect the environment and keep our province green.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, in the West Gallery is my constituent April Keddy, a remarkable lady with a very rare life-threatening genetic illness, which only two others in Canada have. She is a survivor and a fighter and has already outlived her doctors' expectations.

Due to her condition, she has only 22-per-cent lung capacity, and during the extended power outage due to Hurricane Dorian, she was at grave risk of running out of oxygen. She's here today to speak to the need for a better Home Oxygen Services Program.

I ask April to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

HOME OXYGEN SERVICES PROG.: NEEDS STRENGTHENING - RECOG.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, hundreds of Nova Scotians, for various health reasons, are on home oxygen. This helps reduce the burden on our health care system, as they would otherwise be in hospitals, plus it has the added benefit of keeping them home.

However, events like Hurricane Dorian expose problems with the Home Oxygen Services Program. The program was never designed to accept patients with oxygen-litre flows over 5 litres per minute, and now there are some on more than 10 litres per minute. It was also never designed to sustain patients for more than 12 hours of backup standby oxygen.

During the power outage due to Dorian, many went without power for five to eight days. Simply put, the Home Oxygen Services Program needs to be strengthened to reflect current usage needs and power-outage realities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

LADY BALL: OVARIAN CANCER FUNDRAISING - RECOG.

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening I had the distinct pleasure of once again joining the annual Lady Ball here in Halifax.

For members who may be unfamiliar, the Lady Ball celebrates women of all ages, backgrounds, sizes, occupations, and walks of life in the face of ovarian cancer. The event is the signature fundraiser for Ovarian Cancer Canada, allowing them to further their advocacy for more research into the condition and support for those who face it.

In Canada, 2,800 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer each year, but only 2.1 per cent of cancer-related donations are directed toward ovarian cancer. This is why we

need to have Lady Balls to raise awareness and tell the stories of people and families affected by the disease.

I want to recognize all those who walked the runway in support of ovarian cancer, as well as their escorts, who are "here for her," including our colleagues the members for Annapolis, Bedford, Clayton Park West, Hammonds Plains-Lucasville, and Cumberland North, as well as Halifax MP Andy Fillmore.

Thank you to Emilie Chiasson, regional director for Ovarian Cancer Canada, and thank you to everybody.

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

[10:00 a.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

GOV'T. (N.S.) - A. CAMERON CASE: LEGAL COUNSEL - COST

TIM HOUSTON: This past summer, the PC caucus made a request for information under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The information we were seeking was very specific, how much is the Province of Nova Scotia paying to outside legal counsel in relation to the Alex Cameron case?

Mr. Speaker, every word of the FOIPOP response was redacted. Every single word. The excuse was that the cost of legal advice was privileged information. Again, we weren't asking for the content of the advice, just the cost.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Would the Premier explain to Nova Scotians why they are not entitled to know how this government is spending their money?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to tell him that I don't deal with FOIPOP, quite frankly. They would go through the normal process we have within the department.

Typically what would happen - has happened before - when we've sought legal advice, as the court proceeding was ongoing the information is not sent out. Thereafter, it is communicated to Nova Scotians - the entire cost associated with all of the legal

challenges that may be before the courts on behalf of the province. I will certainly endeavour to ask that question.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Premier's response. It is Right to Know Week, and it's a time when we talk about what information our government shares and what information it chooses not to share.

Under the FOIPOP process, our office has the right to appeal the decision of the government to redact every single word, and we did appeal it. When we did, our office was told that the review officers are currently conducting reviews on appeals from two and a half years ago, and it might be some time before our appeal could actually be actioned - a two and a half year backlog to access information this government has chosen to hide.

Does the Premier think that the backlog of two and a half years fulfills the public's right to know?

THE PREMIER: I thank the honourable member for the question. What he left out of the question in his preamble was the fact that FOIPOPs coming into this government are, at a record level, going out in 30 days. Over 80 per cent of the FOIPOPs that come into the province are back out in 30 days. That is leading any government in the history of this province. We're going to continue to improve that to ensure that it goes out.

Some of the backlogs are a number of complicated FOIPOPs that come into departments that are dealing with a whole host of things, and they'll continue to do it when the appeals come through. I assure the honourable member that as soon as that department can get to his appeal, it will do so.

TIM HOUSTON: Due respect, Mr. Speaker, there's not much complicated in "how much did you spend?" It's a very simple question.

These reviews that are submitted to the FOIPOP office shouldn't take more than 90 days, yet the former Privacy Commissioner has warned that the backlog is continuing to grow. The two and a half years are probably going to grow under the path we're on now.

The laws that protect the government information are already robust. By delaying the appeals process, government becomes more and more secretive and more and more evasive. Really, what the process does is allow this government to hide information and then let it sit for years before anyone can have their appeal heard.

Does the Premier acknowledge that delaying the FOIPOP appeal process for years is just equivalent to ignoring the initial request?

THE PREMIER: What I don't agree with is the honourable member's preamble. He's suggesting that FOIPOP should take 90 days. We believe they should take 30. That's

why over 80 per cent are going out the door in 30 days. Nova Scotians deserve the right to know.

It's a glimpse into what the Tories believe when it comes to open government. They want to continue to hide more, and they're only in Opposition. Imagine what would happen if they ever got on this side of the House.

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

GOV'T. (N.S.): EMISSIONS TARGETS - LEGISLATE

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier speaks repeatedly about how we're on track to surpass federal greenhouse gas emissions targets, but what he doesn't say is that these federal targets are identical to the targets set by Stephen Harper, which are recognized globally as being so inadequate that they would put the world on track for the catastrophe of warming of at least 3 degrees. This is not anything to particularly crow about.

All of the celebratory statements from the government about its progress, all the congratulatory rhetoric about how far we've come, and all the proclamations about the desire to work together - none of this amounts to much without the legislated targets to back it up. So, on this day of the historic climate strike, I want to ask the Premier if he will commit to legislating emissions targets that are consistent with containing global warming within 1.5 degrees?

THE SPEAKER: Just before we go to the Premier, I would like to remind all members that the use of electronic devices during Question Period is strictly prohibited.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think the honourable member should take a moment and celebrate Nova Scotians who achieved that target today - the targets that were set out for 2030 - we've achieved those targets today. Nova Scotians, because of their commitment to ensuring that we do more than our part to clean up the environment, will more than exceed that target by 2030.

We're not stopping. We're going to continue to make sure that we green the energy environment of this province. We continue to retrofit houses to reduce the carbon footprint of individual Nova Scotians on the environment side; we're going to continue to lead the country when it comes to waste diversion.

As the honourable members would have known yesterday, we set aside a Coastal Protection Act, the first of its kind in this country. Those are all positive steps moving in the right direction. I want to tell the honourable member, the Minister of Environment will have more to say on the ambitious path we set out with Nova Scotians in the coming weeks.

GARY BURRILL: Relatedly, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier about renewables. I am with the Premier in taking pride in the fact that we are on track to meet the target of 40 per cent renewables by 2020 but I also hope that he is with me in recognizing that even after we meet this target, still the majority of our energy will be coming from burning fossil fuels.

A recent report from Gardner Pinfold and the Ecology Action Centre submits that a target of 90 per cent renewables by 2030 is what is required for our share of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees.

On such an historic climate action day in our province, will the Premier of the province commit to bringing forward renewable energy targets that are consistent with containing global warming within 1.5 degrees?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As I said, the Minister of Environment will have more to say on an ambitious program that we'll set for Nova Scotians when it comes to continuing on our path. The honourable member is certainly right when it comes to the energy mix in our province; we'll continue to make sure we green up the energy market.

I want to tell the honourable member that I hope he will continue to support the vision that we have around ensuring that we have a more robust transmission system in Atlantic Canada, so that we can continue to make available to Nova Scotians more hydroelectricity from Newfoundland and Labrador. The opportunity to buy hydro out of Quebec would be a positive step to continue to allow us to move off the fossil fuels.

Quite frankly, I believe we're going to harness the Bay of Fundy. We need to make investments in that infrastructure. We need to make investments in our infrastructure to move that energy around so that Nova Scotians can avail themselves of that energy. And we can sell the excess to the global marketplace to bring that much needed capital back in to continue to green up this province.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, very shortly, there are going to be hundreds - more likely, thousands - of people, young and old and in between, marching for their future right outside our legislative doors. Young people have been striking on Fridays for months in order to have their voices heard. They, along with legions of scientists, activists and experts, are hungry to share what they have to say, if only they could get a government to effectively listen.

On this day, when so many climate voices are going to be raised, can the Premier explain how he decided that three little questions in an online form, over only 30 days, would be in his view an adequate consultation to gather the wealth and depth of input that's required to create a strong and sound update to Nova Scotia's environmental goals and sustainable prosperity legislation.

THE PREMIER: There has been an ongoing consultation, as he would know. The legislation that would have gone through the government that he was part of has, together with it, a committee that is overseeing this program. We're going to continue to engage Nova Scotians. We've heard young people.

Yesterday, we had an emergency debate in this House. I asked the honourable member and members of this House to provide us with suggestions. I didn't hear any. I'm waiting. I'm open to hear what they want to say, what they see as a future path and how we renew this program to move forward.

This is not something that just belongs to the government of Nova Scotia this particular day; it is something that belongs to all of us. I am looking forward to the young people who will show up here today and I am looking forward to the suggestions that I hope the Opposition will provide to the minister and to our government.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

GOV'T. (N.S.) - FOIPOP APPEALS: RESOURCES - COMMIT

TIM HOUSTON: The Premier takes great pride in his target of turning FOIPOP requests around in 30 days. The reality is that when a response to a FOIPOP request is a piece of paper where every single word is redacted, you should set a target of responding in 30 minutes because we know that an adequate response is not coming. What we're talking about is the appeal process. To hold this government accountable, the appeal should be processed in a timely amount of time.

According to the former Privacy Commissioner, her office received 562 appeals in 2018-19 - 562 appeals. To put that another way, that's 562 times this government refused to share information that citizens thought they were entitled to know.

Of the 562 appeals, 479 were resolved, which means the backlog continues to grow. This is a simple, brute force problem - more resources, more resolutions to hold the government accountable.

Will this Premier be willing to be held accountable to delivering meaningful responses and commit to providing the resources necessary to clear the backlog of the FOIPOP appeals?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. This is not something that should be cavalierly thrown around the House or the floor for political reasons. The honourable member suggests that everything should come out in 30 minutes. I believe that we want Nova Scotians to know the information required, but they also want to know that the information they provide to government is protected when it needs to be protected - and that takes time.

We allow those hard-working public servants who are doing that job on behalf of all Nova Scotians and departments across the province to continue to do that work, and I want to remind the honourable member we continue to move the target, that the FOIPOPs coming into our government are getting out in 30 days.

TIM HOUSTON: I'd love to have a discussion about this ability to keep private information private. We all know how they've done on that score, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that the responses to the FOIPOPs are not meaningful, they are not providing the information they should be - they are hiding information from Nova Scotians.

In 2018-19, there were 1,985 FOIPOP requests. That means - if you think that 562 were appealed, one in four times meaningful information is not being provided to Nova Scotians. It's being hidden from Nova Scotians and the people who are appealing have no sense of when their appeals will be resolved. It's going to be years for certain.

Does the Premier understand that the delays in the appeal process make it appear as though this government - his government - is deliberately working to avoid transparency, intentionally hiding information from taxpayers?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it is quite the opposite. We have an open data portal - the first government to do that. I want to remind the honourable member it was this government that put our expenses online, and there are those who continue to say that is opening up government to Nova Scotians to scrutinize what we do.

I want to remind the honourable member that we continue to have over 82 per cent of the FOIPOPs that come into our government out in 30 days. That is an all-time high in this province. This is not a government that is avoiding putting information out. We are doing it faster than any government has done in the history of this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

BUS. - CLIMATE CHANGE: JOBS AT RISK - ANALYSIS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Business. We know that the fallout from the climate crisis will have wide and far-reaching impacts on both our environment and our economy if the opportunity is not seized to get ahead of the crisis.

For example, we know that the agricultural industry, the fishery, and the wine industry together represent over \$1 billion of economic activity. They are all threatened by droughts, floods, changing weather patterns, warming ocean temperatures, and extreme weather events, some of which we heard about from our colleagues yesterday.

Can the minister please describe what analysis his department has done on the number of jobs that are at risk due to climate change?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I think it is fair to say that the Department of Business doesn't entertain that type of analysis. This is a challenge for everyone - for all departments, for all members of this House, and for the private sector as much as it is for the Department of Environment or Lands and Forestry, national governments, and provincial governments.

[10:15 a.m.]

At the end of the day, climate changes are affecting our economy in a major way. The industries that the member had mentioned are certainly feeling that with respect to the weather patterns and the things that we're seeing, so obviously we are acting. That's why we've become national leaders in the fight to reduce GHG emissions. That's why today is such an important conversation.

We're like-minded as the Premier, our government, and all members of this House. We're committed to doing our job and our role in fighting climate change. We'll make sure that we protect the economy and, of course, always protect the environment.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Business should be taking a leadership role in this file. Our caucus has described many times the incredible economic and environmental opportunity, should this government take leadership to transform the economy.

Contrary to the Premier's assertion that we haven't offered constructive advice, we have repeatedly pointed out that thousands of jobs are available through energy efficiency and retrofitting programs, some of which this government is participating in, but we could be doing so much more.

Renewable energy sectors and other green industries should be at the forefront. Can the minister please describe what analysis his department has done on how many jobs can be created through transformation to a green economy?

GEOFF MACLELLAN: That's exactly what we're doing and that's what we'll continue to do. There is no doubt about it and it's no secret to the private sector - those traditional industries that were responsible for CO₂ emissions, those that are participating in fossil fuels, and those that have a large negative environmental footprint.

The Department of Lands and Forestry and the Department of Energy ministers have laid out that that economy is not emerging, it's not on the horizon - it's here. I think that over the course of our mandate, what we have in terms of environmental investment,

but also in the job creations around the green economy and what exists - we are doing that, and we'll continue to do that.

We're all very proud of our record. That's why we are taking a very serious tack around protecting the environment but also protecting jobs, so that we have Nova Scotians staying home, returning home, being here, and participating in the new economy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FIN. & TREASURY BD.: CRANE REMOVAL - COST ENVELOPE

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Probably the image that will forever be closely associated with Hurricane Dorian is the collapse of the crane on South Park Street. The province has stepped in to ensure that the site can be secured and the crane can be removed. I accept and agree that moving swiftly to ensure the safety of persons and property was the right course of action. My concern now is the potential fallout.

My question to the minister is: At the time the decision was made to assume liability for the crane, was a potential cost envelope ever discussed? If so, what was the ballpark range that was presented?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Welcome and thank you. To your question, the question was raised - it has been asked ever since the hurricane - and that was the dangerous situation that was created with the toppled crane. Immediately, we needed to look at how to protect people and property. That was our number one priority. When we declared that as a localized state of emergency, that was exactly what that was to do.

We recognize that there will be costs related to that, but we did not want the costs to hold us back from protecting our people in Nova Scotia.

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, last week the minister presented updated finances for the province. A \$33 million surplus has been trimmed back to \$30 million. I don't know what the costs might be for removing the collapsed crane, but when I think of worst-case scenario, where everything that can go wrong does go wrong, where everything is at the higher end of the estimate, and maybe even more, it's not hard to get to that \$30 million.

Is the minister concerned that the costs of the province's assumed liability could jeopardize the current surplus?

KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, we have balanced the budget in this province for four consecutive years. We have been able to do that through good fiscal management. We've been able to do that by living within our means and if there is an unexpected cost that comes our way, like the frost freeze when we were not expecting that, that was not in

the budget, but we were able to go back to our budget and make some revisions to make sure those frost freeze costs were covered so that our farmers and our fishermen - farmers in particular - were not hurt unduly by that. We will continue to do that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

H&W - HOME OXYGEN SERV.: EMERGENCY SUPPLIES - PROVISION

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Earlier today I welcomed April Keddy, a constituent of mine. In the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, April was at home without power for five days and she almost ran out of oxygen supply. The Home Oxygen Services Program only provides for an E tank supply backup for emergencies. The E tank is a three-foot-tall aluminium tank that weighs eight pounds. If used continuously, it will run out of oxygen in five to six hours; it is a small tank.

My question is: What does the minister have to say to people like April who are forced to use oxygen tanks that do not have enough emergency supply?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for bringing the question and concern to the floor. I believe that during the events of a few weeks ago, of Hurricane Dorian, the EMO services throughout the province did step up and respond, and the partners with our municipal leaders and the EMO office for the province.

In the area of health care, the question of oxygen is an item that did come to my attention so it is something we are looking into to find out what, if any, changes need to be made going forward to ensure that patients do have an adequate, safe supply, or a mechanism or means to replenish a supply in such an emergency in the future.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. The fact is also that there are many small companies in Nova Scotia that provide this lifesaving service, and they do their very best under the terms of the contract they have with this government which limits the amount of oxygen they can supply. In fact, they go above and beyond the contract.

Prior to Hurricane Dorian, all emergency management officials suggested that each resident in the province prepare for a 72-hour emergency supply kit.

My question to the minister is: If residents are required to have a 72-hour emergency supply, why does the province not provide a 72-hour emergency supply of oxygen to those requiring it? Will this be addressed in the new contracts scheduled to take effect in December of this year?

RANDY DELOREY: I would certainly recognize when this particular concern was brought to my attention, of the residents who do rely on oxygen in the province and the

impact and concerns they had when they didn't know how long the power might last or their needs. That is why in those very discussions with the firms this is a topic of discussion through that process. We certainly recognize the challenge and that's why we're taking the steps in our discussions with the vendors to address it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

EMO: COMMUNICATION - IMPROVEMENT ENSURE

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Emergency Management Office. I think we were all impressed in the days following Dorian on how our neighbours came together to assist one another. I know in Dartmouth East it was fantastic to see people coming together to help one another clean up their properties and to clear debris for seniors. However, communications following the storm were problematic, erratic, and even non-existent in some areas. This proved to be a major challenge for residents of our community as it was for many Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, would the minister please tell us: What steps are being taken to improve communication to ensure information is effectively transmitted to the public, especially when it pertains to the locations of provincially mandated Red Cross shelters?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: I thank the member for the question. It gives me an opportunity to rise and thank all Nova Scotians, as we've done in this House previously around those who responded early to Hurricane Dorian, the preparedness that went out. Nova Scotians did heed that warning, Nova Scotians checked on their neighbours, their families, their friends throughout.

We realize in all of these events that take place that there will be reviews done following that - debriefs, if you will. Lessons will be learned from each of the events. We will look at this one like we look at all the past ones and look at the areas where we can improve. We will continue to work on those efforts going forward.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, certainly I hope the minister and this government keep Nova Scotians updated as to those reviews. As the minister is aware, in the days following Dorian it left some Nova Scotians wondering where to place the debris from their property, the locations of the municipally operated comfort centres, and what government-run departments were open.

The storm impacted cell towers and residents' ability to call and check in on friends and family, as well as stay up to date on storm-related information. I know in Dartmouth East our ability to convert a provincial shelter to a municipal comfort centre was delayed by a few hours because of poor communication and damage to cell towers. As a result, we were unable to coordinate in a timely manner because of poor lines of communication.

My question is: What is the plan from the department to minimize cell tower disruption when storms like Dorian occur?

CHUCK PORTER: We'll certainly be keeping Nova Scotians updated, as this is part of our progress going forward. As he has referred to, I can tell you that the Premier has had conversations and continues to have conversation with our telecommunications companies. That happened immediately, before the repairs were even complete, right after the storm had passed.

We know there are always challenges in any event. We're certain that those who had communications issues are probably also doing a debrief and learning from experiences that they've had and what things they need to do going forward. We certainly will be involved in having communications with them and all of our partners.

Again, I want to thank all of our partners who do come to the table to make these events not a positive experience, by any means, but one that we are able to get looked after and respond to in a timely fashion. We were quite fortunate in Nova Scotia during this very large storm that there were no injuries or deaths related to this storm.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

EMO: MANAGEMENT PLAN - RESPONSIBILITY ENSURE

ALLAN MACMASTER: For the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, another question about Hurricane Dorian.

With the extended loss of power, we see how important municipal water systems are, and how much homes and businesses and even volunteer fire departments depend on these systems. Sometimes those fire departments are acting as comfort stations.

In Inverness County, Chéticamp was okay. They have a generator for their system. But Mabou ran out of water, and Port Hood, Whycocomagh, and Inverness almost ran out of water. I don't believe an electrical setup is built to accommodate a generator for those systems.

My question for the minister is: Who is responsible to ensure that an emergency management plan is in place to help people in places like Mabou, Port Hood, Whycocomagh, and Inverness?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: I thank the honourable member for that question. It states clearly within the Municipal Government Act that each and every municipality right across this province is responsible to put together an emergency management plan and have a committee struck that helps look after the details surrounding all of those. Coordinators are generally appointed, as we've seen in many places throughout the province.

It doesn't mean each one has to have their own coordinator, but they need a regional plan that works. Most of those are done within the municipality, and they can share coordinators to broaden their neighbouring responsibilities and how those things work around emergencies, whether they be an event like a hurricane or any significant weather event or any event of any kind.

ALLAN MACMASTER: I'd like to ask the minister what he's seeing around the province. Are there other municipal ratepayers getting effective services for the fees and taxes they are paying?

I think my final question would be: What is he seeing around the province, and also what is the province doing, and able to do, to help municipalities who may need some assistance in beefing up their emergency response plans so that citizens are protected and have what they need, especially in times where there are power outages and loss of services, potentially?

CHUCK PORTER: Around the province, I would say that we have a good portion of these municipalities that are doing regionalized plans and local plans to help get them through these sorts of events.

What are we doing? We have a great team at EMO and at the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing who are prepared to go out and work with all municipalities on any number of things, including getting ready for emergencies. Where we've had issues - it'll be part of that review I spoke to earlier on - we will be talking to these municipalities as well to say, how we can help you?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

EMO - CLIMATE CHANGE: FLOOD RISKS - ANALYSIS

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister responsible for the Emergency Management Office.

Communities across Nova Scotia, especially along the coast, are vulnerable to the effects of climate change and will be affected by sea-level rise. Can the minister please describe what mapping and analysis his department is doing to help Nova Scotians prepare for the inevitable flood risks that will accompany rising sea levels?

CHUCK PORTER: For the honourable member, there are a number of things going on. She may recall in this House last Fall we tabled a bill on minimum planning standards. Also, the Coastal Protection Act is a bill before this House.

[10:30 a.m.]

There is a lot of work around the mapping going on. That bill refers to things like setbacks and protection, not to build too close. We will continue to work with the municipalities on just those topics.

Everyone recognizes the issue around climate change. We are certainly hearing a lot about that this week already in early days. We'll hear lots more about that. We believe it is important to Municipal Affairs and will continue to work with each and every municipality out there.

LISA ROBERTS: Recently our caucus submitted a Freedom of Information request asking for any flood risk mapping or analysis of sea level rise or extreme weather in the past year. The response from the department was that we are not entitled to the information requested.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please describe how it is that communities across this province are expected to plan for increased flooding if the government insists on keeping this information secret?

CHUCK PORTER: I am not sure why you would be told you are not entitled to that; this is information that will be complete and that will be public.

I can tell you, as minister, we will ensure that Nova Scotians are aware not only of the good work that is going on, but also the information we are gathering around flood mapping. We are doing that for a reason: to advise Nova Scotians to take the advice that we are providing them, to be prepared, and to do the right thing as we move forward around our planning. We will be happy to share that information when it becomes available.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MUN. AFFAIRS - EMERG. MGMT. PLANS: UP TO DATE - CONFIRM

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: On September 7th, Nova Scotia's municipalities braced for Hurricane Dorian. The Emergency Management Act states that the province has a responsibility to ensure there are emergency management plans in place for every municipality. There are 50 municipalities throughout the province and the legislation, though, does not require for emergency management plans to be kept up to date.

My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs is: Did every municipality - all 50 - have an emergency management plan in place and is the minister confident that those plans were current and up to date?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: As I spoke a few minutes ago, we do have, under the Municipal Government Act, that every municipality - and the legislation is clear - shall have an emergency management plan.

We will be working with each and every municipality - as we do on many other things - going forward to ensure that they have the appropriate plans in place and that they do remain updated. That is a very important piece of how we learn as we go along through each event. There are things that we can change. This document is very much fluid and it should be.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Thank you to the minister and it might be something for the minister to consider putting in place that emergency management plans should be updated either annually or every five years.

Also, in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian we saw 80 per cent or more of all Nova Scotians without power. Nova Scotia crews, our military, our emergency management staff worked tirelessly to have power restored throughout our province. But one issue that citizens came to many of us was concern about the lack of vegetation control and the lack of tree management, which many people believe led to the massive loss of power throughout the province.

My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs is: Can the minister clarify to us who is actually liable and responsible for vegetation control and tree control around power lines?

CHUCK PORTER: I appreciate the question. Again, I want to thank all those who took part; we had many partners at the table who worked around the clock. Our folks from Nova Scotia Power, as she has mentioned, worked for days, for as many hours as they could, getting power restored right across this province.

We do know that at this time of year there is certainly more heavy foliage on the trees. The leaves are out, and it makes it more difficult and challenging to do that job. We will continue to work with all our partners going forward, including Nova Scotia Power, around these issues.

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

AGRIC. - GHG REDUCTION: CHARCOAL RESEARCH - COMMENT

KEITH BAIN: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. New research from the University of Guelph has found charcoal may be key to reducing ammonia pollution and lowering greenhouse gas emissions from crop fertilizers, and I will table that, Mr. Speaker.

The study found that naturally occurring charcoal in soil can effectively soak up harmful greenhouse gases produced by ammonia which is often found in fertilizers and is a natural by-product of decomposition. The release of this nitrous oxide is a by-product of ammonia. It is a large contributing factor to the greenhouse effect and major cause for concern because it has a higher warming potential, meaning that it has a higher capacity for holding heat.

My question to the minister is: Can the minister clarify how new research like this is followed and implemented by the department when it comes to helping improve the modernization and improvement of Nova Scotia's agricultural sector?

KEITH COLWELL: I want to thank the member for that question. Indeed, we are always looking for new, innovative approaches to make our agriculture industry more environmentally friendly and also to improve the practices on the farms so we will take that into consideration.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, the research behind this explained that some farmers already use charcoal as a way to improve certain soil quality where it is nitrogen deficient. Can the minister clarify if some awareness project is or could be in the works that could use the aforementioned idea of charcoal use to promote soil fertility or nitrogen retention in otherwise agriculturally poor soil, as it would simultaneously be used to mitigate greenhouse gases?

KEITH COLWELL: Again I want to thank the member for that important question and say that we are looking all the time at ways to reduce greenhouse gases on farms. Indeed, this may be another solution to that problem. If it is, we will investigate it. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

H&W - PATIENT MEDICAL RECORDS: AFFORDABILITY - UPDATE

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. In 2016 I asked the then-Minister of Health and Wellness why my constituents need to pay up to \$200 to a company in Ontario for their own medical records. At the time, the minister stated it was an area that his department was working on with Doctors Nova Scotia and the College of Physicians and Surgeons. He agreed there were too many Nova Scotians who could not afford to retrieve their medical records.

Mr. Speaker, that was over three years ago and I'm sad to say that still today, as I stand here, my constituents are still forced to pay out-of-pocket for their medical records. I will table the minister's remarks from back in 2016.

My question is: What progress has been made in the last three years so that my constituents can obtain their medical records for free?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, the province certainly recognizes the importance of individual patients having access to their medical records. That's why patients or Nova Scotian citizens who want to access or need to access their medical records that are available and under the control of the province or provincial entity like the Nova Scotia Health Authority, can obtain those medical records for free.

Mr. Speaker, the challenge is in the primary care sector where physicians who are not employees of the government and operate as independent practitioners have their own operations. Their regulatory college does set parameters and governance around the records retention policies for the physicians and professionals in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things we are doing is expanding and continuing our investments around MyHealthNS because we think Nova Scotians should have access to their records, not just when a physician retires or they change physicians, but indeed for everyday health care purposes.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, progress has not been made because we're seeing in the media that there are constituents all across this province who still have to pay for their records. I think things are difficult enough in our health care system that Nova Scotians should not have to pay for their own medical history, especially when they don't even have a doctor.

Maybe I shouldn't be too optimistic and since the same promise was made two or three years ago about medical records, I think that we can't depend on electronic medical records coming forward. As we know, OPOR is not being very successful moving forward.

Will the minister ensure that those constituents who are out-of-pocket for access to their own medical records will be reimbursed by the department?

RANDY DELOREY: Again, the importance of access to medical information is and continues to be an important priority for Nova Scotians, for health care professionals and indeed this government.

That is why we established in 2018 an incentive program to support primary health care providers to transition and upgrade their office EMR - electronic medical records - systems. That is to modernize and standardize about 75 per cent or 80 percent of primary care providers that are using the same platform, Mr. Speaker - which makes it easier then for us to integrate with our platform, MyHealthNS, which allows patients on the front line to get access to that information in real time.

That's the path we are moving forward on, so they'll have access not just when they transition from primary care providers but in real time, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

COM. SERV. - IA RECIPIENTS: HEALTH TRAVEL COSTS - RECOGNIZE

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Services. It has become common these days to see residents of Pictou Centre and surrounding area who are required to leave the area to receive primary care. It has long been the norm to travel to Halifax to see a specialist, but it is not usually the case when visiting a family doctor.

Unfortunately local family physicians are now few and far between. If you are the recipient of income assistance, you can receive a small travel expense to see a specialist, but not for a family doctor.

My question to the minister is: Does the minister recognize the extra burden placed on income assistance recipients and others, due to the continuing shortage of family doctors?

HON. KELLY REGAN: I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. I would suggest that in a situation where a constituent of his is not able to access a family doctor within their own area and has to travel elsewhere for that particular care, that they contact their caseworker and explain the situation.

One of our initiatives at DCS is "Start with yes to accommodate folks who" need additional assistance. So I would urge him to ask his constituents to do that.

PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my constituent has gone to the local department, and our office has, and to no avail so far.

Mr. Speaker, with no fix on the horizon for our present situation with respect to doctor shortages, this challenge persists for recipients of income assistance. We are talking about access to basic primary care and it speaks to the ripple effect of the health care crisis where care is not accessible. People of limited income are left to stretch what dollars they have, just to see a family doctor when one is not available near to them.

My question to the minister is: Will the minister commit today to reviewing this travel policy and consider a travel allowance to assist income assistance recipients who must travel outside their county to see a family doctor?

KELLY REGAN: We want to make sure that all Nova Scotians have access to the health care they need and that they are able to actually get there. What I would suggest is

that the honourable member have a chat with me after this House and we'll see what we can do around this particular issue.

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

MUN. AFFAIRS - HURRICANE DORIAN: COMM. BLACKOUT - CONCERN

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. In the days after Hurricane Dorian, I drove around my constituency checking on residents at risk, comfort centres, nursing homes, first responders, and workers involved with the cleanup effort. I saw our Armed Forces land on our doorstep in Cape Breton and I thank everyone who came forward during the aftermath to assist the people who I serve.

I was concerned by the storm but just as concerned by the communication blackout that happened in the aftermath. In Cape Breton-Richmond where in many places cellphone coverage is non-existent every day, suddenly constituents found themselves without land lines, without power, without Internet and without cellphone coverage. Even the local radio station went down.

Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Municipal Affairs, responsible for EMO, please tell us what are the province's and municipalities' responsibilities to ensure proper maintenance is being done to our critical communication and electrical infrastructure.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. As we spoke a few minutes ago, Hurricane Dorian certainly did a lot of damage around the province. The Premier has spoken to our telecommunications folks and continues to work with them. Part of our debrief will also take in lessons learned as we move forward under reviews and a plan. As we always do, we are continually planning for the next event. This will certainly play a role in that.

ALANA PAON: Throughout Cape Breton-Richmond, it is painfully obvious that maintenance has been insufficient to trim trees away from phone lines and electrical lines. With increasing incidents of high winds and hurricanes in our province, I would like to ask the minister: Who is ultimately responsible to ensure reliable operation of critical and electrical communications infrastructure in this province?

CHUCK PORTER: Those who own those services would certainly have some responsibility - no question about that. We would expect that they would do the appropriate work. We'll continue to work with them like we do all of our partners. Going forward, those will be things from the lessons learned that we look at and ask how we do better. We know that from every event, we can learn something, and we can always improve.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

[10:45 a.m.]

H&W - ROSEWAY ER: ONGOING CLOSURES - ADDRESS

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Sadly for the people of Shelburne, ER closures have become the norm. I have constituents calling my office daily, worried about how they will access emergency services when needed.

In September of last year, I asked the minister for his plan to address the constant closures of the ER at Roseway. The minister stated that the Health Authority continues to work on recruitment and access services required for the ER units, and where it concerns the emergency department at Roseway, it is too soon to say. I'll table that document.

A year has passed, and the people of Shelburne County need to know: What is the minister's plan to stop the closures at the Roseway ER?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as indicated previously, the fact is that we all recognize and appreciate the concerns of Nova Scotians who are in communities where emergency department closures are occurring too often.

I want to assure the member opposite and all Nova Scotians that steps are being taken. That's why we have taken steps like expanding and enhancing incentives. We have covered, I believe, the equivalent of over 500 shifts in emergency department closures because of incentives like this.

We have added to our medical training programs at Dalhousie Medical School and the residency program. Just today, our clerkship program, which has previously been announced, takes off in Cape Breton.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, since June 1, 2019, the Roseway has been closed 784 hours. That's 32 days. The two nearest regional hospitals are in Yarmouth and Bridgewater. Both are 100 kilometres away, and Queens General Hospital is easily a 40-minute drive from different places in Shelburne.

There is amazing care being provided at all of these hospitals, however Shelburne County deserves to have ER doors open when they need it most. My question is: Does the minister believe that the people of Shelburne County are receiving adequate ER services?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated in my previous response, of course we on this side - and I believe the members opposite - recognize the concerns that Nova Scotians have. That's why we continue to work and invest in new recruitment and incentive programs. That's why we continue to work with our partners to improve our emergency health services.

Programs like the clerkship program, which is taking off today, provide opportunities for medical students to get exposure to rural practice environments. Research shows that that has a higher probably of them choosing to practise there when they complete their training. We know that having more people train as residents - they're more likely to stay and set up practice in this province. That is why we added 25 residency positions to Dalhousie Medical School, which are ongoing. That's the type of stuff that we're doing to try to address the underlying fundamental issues for communities like Shelburne and all across the province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

LA FANE: LE RAPPORT SUR LES FRONTIÈRES ÉLECTORALES - DISCUSSION NÉCESSAIRE

COLTON LEBLANC: La Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse a demandé en mai 2019 de rencontrer les trois caucus provinciaux pour discuter leur préoccupation à l'égard du rapport final de la commission sur les frontières électorales. La FANE a rencontré notre caucus ainsi que celui des néo-démocrates. Cependant, après avoir demandé le caucus libéral à trois reprises, et je déposerai les demandes, la FANE n'a pas été accordé l'occasion de rencontrer le caucus libéral ou même la ministre.

Quand est-ce que la ministre prendra le temps pour rencontrer la FANE, le porteparole principal de la population acadienne et francophone de la Nouvelle-Écosse?

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Félicitations au nouveau membre. Comme ministre des Affaires acadiennes et de la Francophonie, je suis très contente de vous répondre à cette question . . .

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. I move that the House now rise to meet again on Tuesday, October 1, 2019, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Following the daily routine and Question Period, business will include second reading of Bill No. 152 - the Plastic Bags Reduction Act; Bill No. 160 - An Act to Amend the Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act; and with time permitting we will move to Address in Reply.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to adjourn, to meet Tuesday, October 1st between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The House now stands adjourned until Tuesday, October $1^{\rm st}$ at $1:00~\rm p.m.$

[The House rose at 10:51 a.m.]