



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

Published by Order of the Legislature by Hansard Reporting Services and printed by the Queen's Printer.

Available on INTERNET at <http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/>

Second Session

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES:	
Human Res. Comm., Ann. Rpt. (Sept. 2018 - Aug. 2019), B. Maguire	3917
TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS:	
CONSUP - Dev. of Survivor-Centric Sex. Violence Policies/Responses (May 2019), Hon. L. Kousoulis	3918
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 1294, SANES: Attending in Situations of Sexualized Violence - Recog., Hon. R. Delorey	3918
Vote - Affirmative.....	3919
Res. 1295, Sex. Violence Prevention Comm.: Student Safety - Recog., Hon. L. Kousoulis	3919
Vote - Affirmative.....	3920
Res. 1296, Tourism N.S.: Lobster Crawl - Congrats., Hon. G. MacLellan	3920
Vote - Affirmative.....	3921

Res. 1297, Cape Breton: #1 Island - Congrats., Hon. G. MacLellan	3921
Vote - Affirmative.....	3922
Res. 1298, Rodney-Chown, Jennifer/Chown, David: Sara Corning Soc. - Congrats., Hon. L. Metlege Diab.....	3922
Vote - Affirmative.....	3923
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
No. 187, House of Assembly Act, Hon. M. Furey.....	3923
No. 188, Physician Assistants Act, T. Martin	3923
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:	
Duguay, Tim - Org.: Terry Fox Run - Thanks, J. Lohr	3924
Jewish Day of Atonement: Forgiveness - Recog., G. Burrill.....	3924
Fennell, Andrea: Mental Health Advocate - Thanks, B. Maguire	3925
Kent, Ian - Medallist: 2019 Parapan Am Games - Congrats., B. Adams.....	3925
Jewish Com., Germany: Halle Armed Attack - Sympathy, C. Chender	3926
Davidson Eno, Selena: Teaching Excellence Award - Congrats., S. Lohnes-Croft.....	3926
Fougere, Marjorie: Lighting the Way Fundraiser - Thanks, K. Bain	3927
Everyday Heroes: Bhayana Fdn. Awards - Congrats., Susan Leblanc	3927
Chen, Jane - Restaurateur: Chinatown - Congrats., R. DiCostanzo.....	3928
Sobey, Lesley/Richardson, Terry: Special Olympics - Dedication, Hon. P. Dunn.....	3928
Saulnier, Christine: Green New Deal Champ - Congrats., L. Roberts.....	3929
Aidaen Mae Fdn. of Hope: Mental Wellness Support - Thanks, Hon. Z. Churchill	3929
Hoffer, Ken - Pres.: Soc. of Atl. Heroes - Thanks, T. Halman	3930
Fed. NDP Ldr.: CUPE Convention Visit - Thanks, T. Martin	3930
Stockman, Krista - Medallist: Special Olympian - Congrats., Hon. M. Furey.....	3931
Nickerson, Janaya/Nickerson, Herbie: Atl. Trapshooting Champs: Congrats., Colton LeBlanc	3931

Health Care Cuts: Effects on Cdn. Forces - Troubling, C. Chender	3932
Perry, Evelyn: Com. Serv. - Thanks, Hon. K. Regan.....	3932
Cromwell, Elizabeth: Death of - Tribute, K. Masland.....	3933
Respectful Workplace: Employee Support Needed - Recog., A. Paon.....	3934
Hospital Conditions: Crisis of Care - Recog., T. Martin	3934
MacLellan, Daniel - Birthday Wishes, Hon. G. MacLellan	3935
Anne Murray Ctr.: 30 th Anniv. - Congrats., T. Rushton.....	3935
Mueller, Claire and Dieter - Founders: Tatamagouche Oktoberfest - Congrats., Hon. K. Casey.....	3935
McManaman, Jordan: Mental Health Support - Recog., E. Smith-McCrossin.....	3936
Ukeladies de Clare: Sharing Yrs. of Fun - Commend, Hon. G. Wilson	3936
Lamey, Rose: 100 th Birthday - Best Wishes, M. Ryan.....	3937
Norton, Emma: Climate Champion - Thanks, Susan Leblanc	3937
Perrin, Casey: Acad. and Athl. Achievements - Best Wishes, Hon. P. Arab	3938
Knox United Church: Freedom Kitchen - Congrats., S. Craig	3938
100 Women Who Care: \$100K for Charity - Congrats., Hon. M. Miller	3939
Broome, Branford - CPO 2: Peacekeepers' Day - Thanks, B. Adams.....	3939
Unified Basketball Team: 2019 Special Olympics - Congrats., Hon. L. Hines	3940
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:	
No. 765, Prem. - Bay Ferries: Mgmt. Fee - Info. Release, T. Houston.....	3941
No. 766, Prem. - Sports Stadium: Revenue Sources - Position, G. Burrill.....	3943
No. 767, Prem. - PAC Mandate: Accountability - Restore, T. Houston.....	3945
No. 768, Govt. (N.S.): Cuts to Health Care for Forces - Assume Costs, G. Burrill	3946
No. 769, Govt. (N.S.): Vaping Prod. - Fin. Concern, T. Houston.....	3947

No. 770, Govt. (N.S.) - Pop. Increase: Consump. Tax - Disadvantage, A. MacMaster	3948
No. 771, Fin. & Treasury Bd.: Highest Tax Rate - Explain, A. MacMaster	3950
No. 772, Govt. (N.S.): Boat Hbr. Act - Enforce, Susan Leblanc	3951
No. 773, Fin. & Treasury Bd.: Carbon Tax Progs. - Prov. Revenues, M. Ryan.....	3952
No. 774, Fin. & Treasury Bd. - Carbon Tax: Impact Assess. - Conduct, M. Ryan.....	3953
No. 775, TIR - Cobequid Pass: Costs/Liabilities - Update, E. Smith-McCrossin.....	3954
No. 776, Serv. N.S. & Int. Serv. - Newbridge Academy: Renos. - Involve., C. Chender	3955
No. 777, Prem. - N.S. Power: Prov. Rates - Fairness, T. Houston.....	3956
No. 778, Com. Serv. - Child Poverty: N.S. Rates - Reduce, S. Craig	3958
No. 779, H&W: CCA Wage Increase - Consider, T. Halman	3959
No. 780, Fin. & Treasury Bd. - Craft Brewers: RSMA Charges - Address, M. Ryan.....	3960
OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS:	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 173, Education Act and Education (CSAP) Act T. Halman	3961
B. Maguire	3965
C. Chender	3969
B. Adams.....	3972
No. 167, Tobacco Access Act T. Halman	3976
R. DiCostanzo.....	3979
L. Roberts.....	3981
S. Craig	3985
No. 181, Public Utilities Act T. Halman	3989
Hon. M. Miller	3991
Susan Leblanc	3994
E. Smith-McCrossin.....	3997
ADJOURNMENT:	
MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5):	
Govt. (N.S.): Management of Maine Ferry Contract - Failure, T. Houston.....	4000
Susan Leblanc	4003
Hon. Z. Churchill	4005
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Thur., Oct. 10 th at 1:00 p.m.	4009

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3):

Res. 1299, Boudreau, Jessica/Whynot, Brice: Son - Birth Congrats., K. Masland.....	4010
Res. 1300, S. Queens Middle Sch.: Care in Emergency - Recog., K. Masland.....	4010
Res. 1301, Tait, Chris: Stn. 21 Dist. Volun. Fire Dept. - Thanks, Hon. K. Murphy.....	4011
Res. 1302, McCarrol, Neil: Stn. 20 Dist. Volun. Fire Dept. - Thanks, Hon. K. Murphy.....	4011
Res. 1303, Handy, Brennan: Stn. 24 Dist. Volun. Fire Dept. - Thanks, Hon. K. Murphy.....	4012
Res. 1304, David, Izaak: Stn. 23 Dist. Volun. Fire Dept. - Thanks, Hon. K. Murphy.....	4012
Res. 1305, Smith, Jami: Stn. 24 Dist. Volun. Fire Dept. - Thanks, Hon. K. Murphy.....	4013
Res. 1306, Crane, Kyle: Stn. 21 Dist. Volun. Fire Dept. - Thanks, Hon. K. Murphy.....	4013
Res. 1307, Lachance, Luke: Stn. 24 Dist. Volun. Fire Dept. - Thanks, Hon. K. Murphy.....	4014
Res. 1308, Stevens, Mike: Stn. 23 Dist. Volun. Fire Dept. - Thanks, Hon. K. Murphy.....	4014
Res. 1309, Lewis, Neil: Stn. 23 Dist. Volun. Fire Dept. - Thanks, Hon. K. Murphy.....	4015



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2019

Sixty-third General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, Brendan Maguire

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, I am pleased to submit the annual report of the committee for the period from September 2018 to August 2019 of the Sixty-third General Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

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

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I hereby beg leave to table a report entitled *Guidelines and Recommendations for Nova Scotia Universities and the Nova Scotia Community College, Development of Survivor-Centric Sexual Violence Policies and Responses*.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

RANDY DELOREY: I'd like to draw the members' attention to the East Gallery where we have some special guests, and I ask that the guests rise as I introduce them and stay standing until we have the opportunity to provide them a warm welcome.

Susan Wilson is the Provincial Coordinator of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program in the Nova Scotia Health Authority; Shana Vidito, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner coordinator for the Annapolis Valley, South Shore, and Tri County Women's Centre; Jo-Anne Poirier, President and CEO of VON; and Rebecca Druhan, also with the VON. I ask my colleagues to please provide them with a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1294

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

Whereas Nova Scotians who have experienced sexualized violence require specialized emergency care and need to be able to access that care anywhere in the province; and

Whereas Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, often referred to as SANEs, are registered nurses who have advanced training and expertise to provide specialized medical and forensic emergency care that includes supportive care, medical attention, provides information and additional resources, as well as evidence collection; and

Whereas on-site SANE services are expanding across the province and are now available in 13 hospitals and health centres - anyone wishing to access a SANE nurse can call the location nearest to them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or can go to their nearest emergency department;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the importance of the SANE program and the work of our SANE nurses across 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 Labour and Advanced Education.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, in the East Gallery we are joined by co-chairs of the provincial Sexual Violence Prevention Committee: Paula Barry Mercer, Associate Vice President Student Experience at Mount Saint Vincent University; and Ava Czapalay, Associate Deputy Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. We are also joined by Collette Robert, Sexual Violence Prevention Coordinator; Stephanie MacInnis-Langley, Status of Women; Lesley Poirier McLernon, Status of Women; Linda Moxsom-Skinner, Atlantic School of Theology; Clancy McDaniel, who is with StudentsNS; Jordan Roberts, Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response Officer at the University of King's College; Shannon Pringle, Survivor Support Centre at Dalhousie University; Peter Halpin with CONSUP; and Margaret Ann Bruhier, senior policy analyst with the Department of Justice.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1295

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

Whereas students deserve to feel safe on our university and college campuses; and

Whereas sexual violence is a very important issue, and the provincial Sexual Violence Prevention Committee's expertise has been used to develop guidelines and recommendations that will champion a change in the culture and strong survivor-centric sexual violence policies for post-secondary institutions; and

Whereas this government, under the 2019 to 2024 MOU with universities, has committed \$470,000 per year to support the institutions in the development of sexual violence prevention expertise on campus;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize members of the provincial Sexual Violence Prevention Committee, and their important work, to ensure students in our province can learn in environments free from sexual violence.

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 Business.

RESOLUTION NO. 1296

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

Whereas Tourism Nova Scotia is working with businesses, communities, and all levels of government to grow tourism revenues in this province by attracting visitors through ad campaigns and using travel writers and influencers to tell our stories, and by creating unique experiences that inspire travellers to book a Nova Scotia vacation; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Lobster Crawl, organized by the South Shore Tourism Co-operative, is an event that is helping to extend the tourism season by drawing more visitors to the region during the Winter lobster season; and

Whereas Tourism Nova Scotia recently received Destination Canada's Explore Canada Industry Award of Excellence for its media campaign promoting the Nova Scotia Lobster Crawl, as well as an individual nomination for Media Relations Specialist Pamela Wamback, and it was also just announced that Tourism Nova Scotia's World-class Experience EXCELLerator Program is a finalist for the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's 2019 Tourism Innovation Award, the winner of this award to be announced on November 20th in Ottawa;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate Tourism Nova Scotia for the national recognition, for its innovation in marketing and development programs, and for leading the industry to achieve record tourism revenue growth for the past several years.

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 Business.

RESOLUTION NO. 1297

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

Whereas tourism is a huge economic driver in Nova Scotia that employs people in every corner of our province and our entire tourism industry is working hard to create unique experiences and showcase them to an international audience; and

Whereas global travellers have spoken, and Cape Breton Island has been named the Best Island in the Americas in *Condé Nast Traveler's* 2019 Readers' Choice Award (Applause) - everyone in Cape Breton knows this stuff already, guys, you're just catching on to it - which is commonly known as the best of the best of travel and an award voted on by over 600,000 readers worldwide; and

Whereas earlier this year, Cape Breton was also named the number one island destination in Canada and number eight in the world by readers of *Travel + Leisure* magazine;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly congratulate the fantastic operators, businesses, and communities in Cape Breton, the Destination Cape Breton Association, and Tourism Nova Scotia for the international recognition of their exceptional visitor experiences that are drawing travellers from around the world and supporting economic prosperity in our communities.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 1298

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 Sara Corning, a native from Yarmouth County, saved and cared for thousands of Armenian, Greek, and Syrian refugees and orphans between the years of 1919 to 1930; and

Whereas for her work, Ms. Corning received the Silver Cross Medal of the Redeemer from King George II of Greece in 1923, and in 2011, the Armenian Canadian Community established the Sara Corning Centre for Genocide Education in Toronto and named her posthumously as the Outstanding Canadian for 2017; and

Whereas on September 14, 2019 the Sara Corning Society co-hosted the commemoration events in collaboration with the Town of Yarmouth and the Yarmouth County Historical Society including the commissioning and unveiling of a life-sized bronze statue of Sara Corning with two small children on the grounds of the Yarmouth County Museum and Archives;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Jennifer Rodney-Chown and David Chown, co-chairs of the Sara Corning Society for commemorating and preserving the legacy of this outstanding Nova Scotian.

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 on an introduction.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd like to bring the House's attention to the East Gallery where we're joined by a friend of mine who's an active member on the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce doctor recruitment committee, which helped us secure \$75,000 from our government to invest in doctor recruitment locally.

A Community Development officer for the Municipality of the District of Argyle, a great supporter of our fishing industry who helps numerous fishermen with applications to the Atlantic Fisheries Fund and who's also our former candidate for Argyle-Barrington. I'd like the House to join me in welcoming Charlene LeBlanc. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 187 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 1 (1992 Supplement) of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The House of Assembly Act. (Hon. Mark Furey)

Bill No. 188 - Entitled an Act Respecting Physician Assistants. (Tammy Martin)

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 Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

BEN JESSOME: Through the Chair, I would like to introduce Sophia Lindfield, who is sitting in our East Gallery. She is a Grade 11 student from Stillwater Lake, a community that I represent.

A couple of years ago I was knocking on doors and I met her and her family at their family home. A couple of years later she reached out and asked if she could get a little bit more involved and learn a bit about the work that we do here in the House. So, please welcome her. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

DUGUAY, TIM - ORG.: TERRY FOX RUN - THANKS

JOHN LOHR: I rise today to acknowledge the time and commitment Tim Duguay, a Kings North constituent, has put into organizing the Terry Fox events in the Village of Port Williams over the past few years.

To date, over \$750 million has been raised worldwide for cancer research in Terry's name through the annual Terry Fox Run held across Canada and around the world.

In 2017 Port Williams hosted Terry Fox's brother, Fred Fox, during the events and this year Terry Fox's niece Jessie was in attendance for the weekend events. This year's events included the Terry Fox Invitational warm up and celebration on the Saturday morning with timing services provided by Atlantic Chip Sport Timing. The official Terry Fox Run fundraising event occurred on the Sunday.

These events would not be possible without the efforts put forth by Tim Duguay, and I would like to thank him for his continued support of this important fundraiser.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

JEWISH DAY OF ATONEMENT: FORGIVENESS - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: I ask the House to join with me to note that today is the Day of Atonement, observed annually in the Jewish faith. Yom Kippur follows close upon the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah - a celebratory occasion which, in this cycle, marks 5,780 years of history for the Jewish people.

Yom Kippur is a more solemn occasion, centred on serious reflection on one's past misdeeds or moral failings, along with a fervent prayer to the Almighty for forgiveness. In

the words of the Book of Leviticus: On this day he will forgive you, to purify you, that you be cleansed from all your sins before God.

Who cannot identify with this? As we all know, seeking forgiveness is tied to repentance and the Hebrew word is “teshuvah”. A contemporary term might be reconciliation.

There are many customs associated with Yom Kippur. One of the most commanding is the blowing of the shofar, an instrument made of a ram’s horn. It’s penetrating blast calls worshippers to focus. May we all enjoy a sweet year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

FENNELL, ANDREA: MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE - THANKS

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I’d like to take a moment to recognize a special leader within our community. Today I’d like to recognize and highlight the hard work and dedication of Andrea Fennell. Not only is Andrea an outstanding mom, but she is also a tireless advocate for mental health.

Andrea is on the Healthy Minds Around the Loop Association of Spryfield, an association that works with the local community to advocate for and bring mental health resources to the ground level for people who need it the most.

Andrea also heads up a monthly Walk and Talk at Long Lake Provincial Park. Every month she invites a guest and people from the community to join her for a talk on their personal experiences with mental health and then go for a walk in the park. It is a beautiful way to lift the stigma around mental health.

Thank you, Andrea, for all you do. You truly are passionate about mental health, and you’re making our community a better place.

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

KENT, IAN - MEDALLIST: 2019 PARAPAN AM GAMES - CONGRATS.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate constituent Ian Kent of Eastern Passage, along with two other athletes, for representing Canada at the 2019 Parapan Am Games. The Games were held from August 23rd - September 1st in Lima, Peru.

Ian Kent of Eastern Passage is not new to the Parapan Am Games. He won medals in 2007, 2011, and 2015. This year, Ian achieved his 1000th win in table tennis as he earned a bronze medal at the Parapan Am Games.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating Ian Kent for all of his hard work and dedication to the sport of table tennis and for representing Canada so well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

JEWISH COM., GERMANY: HALLE ARMED ATTACK - SYMPATHY

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my sympathies to the German people and the German-Jewish community impacted today by an armed attack in Halle. Our thoughts are with Jewish communities around the world, who are gathered today to mark Yom Kippur.

Our synagogues, mosques, churches, and temples should be places of safety. Anti-Semitism, racism, and violence have no place in our communities.

I will continue to stand with those who work hard to advance and celebrate diversity and to build inclusive spaces, and I know my colleagues in this Chamber will join me in that effort.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**DAVIDSON ENO, SELENA:
TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD - CONGRATS.**

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Selena Davidson Eno, an educator at Bayview Community School, who received the Physical and Health Education National Award for Teaching Excellence in Physical Education. This award honours Canadian teachers who provide outstanding teaching performance at elementary, middle, or secondary levels, who have an exceptional ability to motivate students to participate in a lifetime of physical activity, and who further physical education in Canada.

Anyone who knows Ms. Davidson Eno is well aware of her passion for physical education. She spends countless hours coaching and organizing extracurricular sporting events for students of all ages.

Ms. Davidson Eno was presented with this award at the 2019 Physical and Health Education National Conference that was held in Montreal this past May.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Ms. Davidson Eno.

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

FOUGERE, MARJORIE: LIGHTING THE WAY FUNDRAISER - THANKS

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, Marjorie Fougere of Baddeck and her volunteer team bring light in many ways through their volunteering. One of Marjorie's hats is as the chair of the Golf, Lighting the Way charity golf tournament in support of the Victoria County Memorial Hospital Charitable Foundation.

On August 23rd, over a hundred golfers took part in the tournament held at the Bell Bay Golf Club, followed by a dinner reception for golfers and sponsors at the Inverary Resort. Marjorie and her team not only achieved the project cost of \$24,000, they surpassed it by raising \$43,500. The great success led the foundation to make a commitment to raise a \$250,000 for the hospital foundation.

I rise today to give a special thanks to Marjorie, her team, the golfers, and their supporters.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Thank you. Today in the House, in the gallery opposite, we have joining us Raksha Bhayana. Raksha is the CEO and co-founder of the Bhayana Family Foundation. She's visiting us from Thornhill, Ontario, and she's here in Halifax this week to celebrate the United Way Halifax - Bhayana Family Foundation Awards, which were presented on Monday at the Halifax Central Library.

I ask the members of the House to give Raksha a warm welcome and thank her for her generosity in honouring the workers in our social not-for-profit sector. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

EVERYDAY HEROES: BHAYANA FDN. AWARDS - CONGRATS.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the everyday heroes of our Nova Scotia communities, those who work in front-line jobs in the social not-for-profit sector, and to thank them for the contribution they make through their commitment, leadership, and creativity.

On Monday, seven of these individuals were honoured by United Way Halifax and the Bhayana Family Foundation with an award that recognizes the extraordinary contributions they make in cities all across the country. Each person received a plaque and \$1,000 for their dedication, innovation, leadership, teamwork, and partnership.

Congratulations and thanks go to Kevin Little from the Public Good Society, Corey Wright from the John Howard Society, Bonnie Hill from Supportive Housing for Young Mothers, Jessie Dale from the Mobile Food Market, Kari Plaggenborg from Club Inclusion, Bev Cadham from the Canadian Mental Health Association, and Dave Green from Family SOS. Special thanks goes to Raksha Bhayana and her family's foundation for recognizing the important and often unsung work of the everyday heroes of our not-for-profit sector.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

CHEN, JANE - RESTAURATEUR: CHINATOWN - CONGRATS.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate a local business owner in Clayton Park West who has done an amazing job at carrying on a legacy that precedes her by four decades. Jane Chen is the owner of Chinatown on the Bedford Highway and has been for the past 11 years. The restaurant moved its location down the road last April to take over the building that was once used by Feed Nova Scotia.

The original Chinatown was opened in 1971 by another Chinese Canadian family. Chinatown has hosted countless dignitaries and important events in the Chinese community.

I know that Chinatown has always supported the local community on numerous occasions, including their most successful annual fundraiser for thyroid cancer research, in collaboration with the QEII Foundation.

As part of their grand opening in April, they donated one dollar from each bill for a period of three months, to the same cause.

Mr. Speaker, would this House of Assembly join me in applauding Jane Chen on her countless milestones and success as a restaurant owner.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**SOBEY, LESLEY/RICHARDSON, TERRY:
SPECIAL OLYMPICS - DEDICATION**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Legislature today to recognize two Pictou Centre constituents, Lesley Sobe and Terry Richardson. Special Olympics nominated Sobe and Richardson to receive two incredible awards in Toronto in November. Lesley will be presented with the Jim Thompson Award, which is given to an operational volunteer who has made a significant contribution to the Special Olympics movements locally, provincially, and nationally. Terry will receive the Harry "Red" Foster

Award, which is presented to the individual who best exemplifies the spirit, philosophy, and goals of the Special Olympics movement.

I would ask all members of this Legislature to join me and thank Lesley Sobey and Terry Richardson for their years of dedication and commitment to the Special Olympics movement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SAULNIER, CHRISTINE: GREEN NEW DEAL CHAMP - CONGRATS.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I wish to extend warm congratulations to Christine Saulnier, the candidate for the New Democratic Party in the federal riding of Halifax, on being recognized as a Green New Deal champion by the Our Time campaign.

Our Time is a movement of young Canadians who are organizing to push for just, swift and progressive action to address the climate crisis. They are researching their options, writing letters to the editor, attending and organizing debates, and making plans to vote for a Green New Deal.

Across Canada they have endorsed just 35 champions, candidates nominated through a grassroots process who they judge to be bold leaders, willing to take risks and work across Party lines to tackle the climate emergency. Christine Saulnier now joins the NDP candidate in Dartmouth-Cole Harbour, Emma Norton, as the only two Green New Deal champions in Nova Scotia. I wish her well in the upcoming election.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

AIDAEN MAE FDN. OF HOPE: MENTAL WELLNESS SUPPORT - THANKS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: The Aidaen Mae Foundation of Hope is a non-profit organization in Yarmouth whose mission is to provide a supportive, safe, and non-judgmental environment where youth can receive support and guidance and navigate mental health and wellness. The foundation also provides peer support for parents so they can better navigate mental health supports for their children, ensuring a healthier quality of life for families.

The Aidaen Mae Foundation of Hope was established by Kelly and Scott Mitchell after the sudden and tragic loss of their daughter Aidaen. Aidaen was a remarkable young woman and an active student, athlete and volunteer. She was a dear friend of many and a beloved and cherished daughter and granddaughter. Her smile and spirit were a beacon of light to many and she is missed terribly by all who had the privilege of knowing her.

I ask the members of this House to join me in thanking Kelly and Scott Mitchell who during their unimaginable grief established the Aidaen Mae Foundation of Hope so they might help others. Our community is truly a better place because of people like them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

HOFFER, KEN - PRES.: SOC. OF ATL. HEROES - THANKS

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dartmouth East resident Ken Hoffer. Ken served 35 years in the Royal Canadian Navy and continues to do great work after his service. He is the current president of the Society of Atlantic Heroes. This foundation provides housing and support to members of the Canadian Armed Forces and first responders who are facing emotional challenges and dealing with PTSD.

Ken also volunteers for the Veteran Trainers to Eradicate the Use of Child Soldiers, a program that teaches veterans about the use of children in war. The program gives veterans the skills to help with the transition to civilian life.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Ken Hoffer for his service and all that he has done to better the lives of veterans in our community. I ask all members of the House to recognize his outstanding service to Canada.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

FED. NDP LDR.: CUPE CONVENTION VISIT - THANKS

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, this morning the federal NDP leader, Jagmeet Singh, attended the National Convention of the Canadian Union of Public Employees. Mr. Singh was greeted by over 3,000 cheering local union activists from across the country.

As a member of CUPE, I am so glad that my union has worked hand-in-hand with the NDP to advance workers' rights and to create cherished social programs like public health care and public pensions - and we are also working together to fight for new universal programs like child care. Together, the NDP and the labour movement have made real progress toward fairness for the working class in this country.

I want to take a moment to thank the federal leader for taking time to visit the CUPE convention and for boldly articulating his vision of a fair and just Canada. I also want to thank the over 700,000 CUPE members from coast to coast who deliver the services Canadians rely on every day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

STOCKMAN, KRISTA - MEDALLIST: SPECIAL OLYMPIAN - CONGRATS.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Krista and Jim Stockman of Wileville, Lunenburg County, who represented Canada at the Special Olympic World Games held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in March of this year.

Krista, who is a member of Special Olympics Lunenburg Queens, had an incredible showing, capturing silver in Level 4 individual stroke play in golf and 4th overall in the world. Jim, her dad, was her coach. It was an incredible finish, considering that Krista has only been playing the sport for two years. Her dad, who has played little golf himself, says, “my biggest task was to learn the rules for all situations. I had a few sleepless nights.”

It was an amazing, awesome trip of a lifetime, according to Jim. Krista loved the theme parks and the extreme sand dune ride, and she enjoyed trading as many pins as possible with people she met from many countries.

Krista and Jim are preparing for the 2021 National Games in Alberta. Congratulations to Krista and Jim Stockman on this exceptional achievement and thank you for proudly representing Nova Scotia and Canada on the world stage.

THE SPEAKER: Just before we go on to the next member’s statement, it was brought to my attention by a trusty Clerk that I had forgotten to mention the topic of late debate for this evening at the moment of interruption, as submitted by the honourable member for Pictou West, the Leader of the Official Opposition. The topic is:

Therefore be it resolved that the Liberal government has failed to properly manage the Nova Scotia to Maine Ferry contract, causing the loss of the 2019 sailing season, creating hardship for tourism operators, and costing the province \$19.9 million.

The topic of late debate at the end of business today.

The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

**NICKERSON, JANAYA/NICKERSON, HERBIE:
ATL. TRAPSHOOTING CHAMPS: CONGRATS.**

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Janaya Nickerson, the first lady shooter to win the trapshooting handicap title at this year’s Atlantic Amateur Trapshooting Association Championships held in Newfoundland and Labrador on the Labour Day weekend.

Janaya and her dad, Herbie, both from Cape Sable Island in Shelburne County, came home with hardware. Herbie claimed the sub veteran doubles and handicap trophies.

In handicap competition, the shooter can be anywhere from 19 to 27 yards away from the trap house that releases the clay pigeons.

The father-daughter duo often compete throughout Nova Scotia and beyond at other competitions. They won't have to travel far next year for the ATA Championships, as they will be held in Yarmouth.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Janaya and her father Herbie for their recent wins at the Atlantic ATA Championships.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

HEALTH CARE CUTS: EFFECTS ON CDN. FORCES - TROUBLING

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, for over 40 years, the Dartmouth General Hospital has provided health care to people in Dartmouth and the surrounding areas, including the many military service people who live in our communities.

I, like many Canadians, was troubled to learn the federal Liberal government has cut funding to hospitals for the care provided to people serving in the Canadian Forces.

The federal government decision almost certainly will exacerbate the already stretched-beyond-capacity status of our health care generally and our hospitals specifically. One regional hospital located near a base in Ontario estimates this change could cost them \$3.4 million. I hope all members of this House will join the NDP caucus in opposing these cuts and ensure the many Nova Scotians who serve in the Canadian Forces get the health care they need.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

PERRY, EVELYN: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, Evelyn Perry is a dedicated volunteer for a number of organizations in our community. Evelyn is a regular volunteer with Meals on Wheels. She's also deeply involved in her church. If there's a Summer bible camp, Evelyn will be there volunteering in the kitchen. She has organized craft groups as well as special teas. She's a Eucharistic minister and a training member of the Altar Guild. She organizes the church's yearly garage sale.

Evelyn helps coordinate receptions after funerals and other church events. She has taught Sunday school and served as its superintendent. She's a member of the Mother's Union at Beacon House which helps teens in crisis, and she participates in worship at a seniors' facility.

I'd like to thank Evelyn Perry for her service to all of these organizations and for her service to her fellow citizens of Bedford. She makes a real difference in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

CROMWELL, ELIZABETH: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, on October 2nd Nova Scotians and Canadians were saddened by the loss of Elizabeth Cromwell. Elizabeth had a long career with the Children's Aid Society. A true visionary, she felt passionately, worked tirelessly and believed unfailingly. The founding president of the Black Loyalist Heritage Society, she remained on its board until her passing. She was vital in the establishment of the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre in Birchtown and was called the centre's matriarch and heartbeat. She also sat on the board of the Black Cultural Society of Nova Scotia.

In 2017 Elizabeth was appointed to the Order of Canada for her contributions to preserving Black heritage and education in Nova Scotia. She was also honoured with the Order of Nova Scotia, the Canada 125 Medal, Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Medal, and honorary degrees from Mount Saint Vincent University and Dalhousie University.

Elizabeth will be remembered for a life of vision, hard work, compassion and love. We hold her loved ones in our thoughts and may we all aspire to live our lives such as she lived.

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

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

ALANA PAON: I would like to bring the House's attention to the West Gallery where I have two of my assistants who I would ask to stand up. I have Cassandra David who is my assistant in Cape Breton-Richmond who I want to thank very much for rolling with the punches here, especially in the last few weeks. I also want to mention that Cassandra is about to become the commanding officer for the 235 Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps in Arichat, which is a huge responsibility. I congratulate her on that posting.

I'd also like to introduce my assistant Mr. Charles Bosdet who is a former business process troubleshooter and legal journalist, which has come in very handy. I appreciate both their input into my office in the last little while and ask the members to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE: EMPLOYEE SUPPORT NEEDED - RECOG.

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, the government of Nova Scotia has committed to a healthy, safe and supportive workplace and is committed to providing a work environment that values diversity and where all persons are treated with respect and dignity. We all know that this basic value is not always in place at every workplace. That is why in Nova Scotia we have the Respectful Workplace Policy which provides the right to all employees to work in an environment free from harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination.

A Respectful Workplace Policy has the intention of promoting employee involvement in resolving situations, but, as we know, some employees feel helpless and feel that asking for help is a sign of weakness, or worse yet, when they ask, they are denied.

In a time of education and awareness campaigns on assault, harassment and anti-bullying we need to do better. We need to support those who speak up for themselves and never permit their voices to be silenced.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

HOSPITAL CONDITIONS: CRISIS OF CARE - RECOG.

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, last night a national TV crew was interviewing staff and patients at the emergency department in Truro. The segment being filmed was focused on the health care crisis in Nova Scotia and the extent to which the federal Parties are offering solutions. In all my years working in the health care system, I cannot recall a single time that a television crew has been allowed into a working hospital to document the conditions, but I believe the crisis in Nova Scotia has reached a point where all bets are off.

Doctors and nurses alike were talking to the journalists about the conditions they are providing care in because they feel they have no choice but to draw public attention to this situation. One of the nurses said: We don't come to work hoping that we're going to make people wait eight hours, we do our best, but we're faced with conditions that we just can't deal with.

Mr. Speaker, the crisis in our health care system is real and must be addressed by this government because without action, things are only going to continue to get worse.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay.

MACLELLAN, DANIEL - BIRTHDAY WISHES

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Buster Boy, Jumper Boy, Skater Boy, Yankees Boy, Fortnight Boy, and Magoo - just some of the nicknames for today's birthday boy. Daniel Geoffrey MacLellan turned six years old today. Of course, he is paying attention and working really hard in Ms. Oliver's Grade One class at St. Anne's Elementary as we speak. He will celebrate today with his big sister Gorja and cousins Adair and Liam. I am sure they will be bouncing off the walls this evening after they muck a chocolate cake. Good luck to their mom and Aunt Tanya when they are putting them to bed.

I want to wish Daniel a happy birthday - love you, Magoo. Mr. Speaker, I think I can speak for all of us when I say they are the rough times when you're in Halifax, being in the Legislature doing important work, you miss a lot of big things. To Daniel and all of our families, we miss you when we are here. We love you. Happy birthday, bud.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

ANNE MURRAY CTR.: 30th ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, how can I follow that? I rise today to acknowledge the Anne Murray Centre's 30th anniversary on July 28th. The Anne Murray Centre has had over 500,000 visitors since it opened in July 1989. It is now the longest-operating centre dedicated to Canadian music artists in this country.

Anne met her VIP fans from throughout the world during her annual Meet and Greet Luncheon at the Community Centre, to which I graciously accepted the invite. Please join me in congratulating the Anne Murray Centre on their continued success and community commitment.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

**MUELLER, CLAIRE AND DIETER - FOUNDERS:
TATAMAGOUCHE OKTOBERFEST - CONGRATS.**

HON. KAREN CASEY: The first Oktoberfest in Tatamagouche, Colchester North, was held in 1980, upstairs at the North Shore Recreation Centre. It was hosted by Claire and Dieter Mueller with about 85 people in attendance. A German couple dressed in full Bavarian dress moved from table to table, playing their accordions. It was so popular that as people left they wanted to buy tickets for the following year.

The next year, attendance grew to 129 people. Mr. Speaker, German music, German food and traditional costumes give this festival an authentic feel and have led to its success. In 1983 the Muellers and three other people formed the North Shore Bavarian Society and

Oktoberfest has continued to grow and it has become a major yearly event at the North Shore. This year approximately 3,000 people attended - quite a grow from the original 85.

The North Shore Bavarian Society has donated to projects such as the purchase of a new stage and storage container at the rec centre; \$5,000 to the enhancement of the Tatamagouche Regional Academy; and \$4,000 to the Tatamagouche Road Train. The Society also awards bursaries annually to high school graduates, totalling \$2,000.

This year, on the 40th anniversary of Oktoberfest, our congratulations go to Claire and Dieter Mueller for founding the Oktoberfest celebrations, sharing their German heritage, and bringing entertainment and pleasure to so many people.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MCMANAMAN, JORDAN: MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Jordan McManaman of Amherst. He helped to raise \$1,400 in memory of his friend Christopher Baxter. The money will go towards Mental Health and Addictions. He achieved this by holding a skateboard competition to honour his friend, who was one of the founders of the Amherst Skate Park.

Jordan wanted to add some light to a tragic moment. This money will go towards helping mental health programs, as well as to assist its clients.

Jordan has shown great care and generosity towards the community as he wishes to help those struggling. The pain of the loss of life caused by mental illness is felt every day by Christopher's parents, Tammy and Peter, by their family and friends. We must to more to ensure help is there to those in need.

Mr. Speaker, please join me today in thanking Jordan for his kindness in his work to assist others in the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

UKELADIES DE CLARE: SHARING YRS. OF FUN - COMMEND

HON. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, as many other Nova Scotians, I love living in a small Nova Scotian town. What may surprise people from urban areas is the type of activities available to the residents of our rural communities. For example, nine years ago, Doris Theriault of Meteghan Centre saw a group playing ukuleles at the Nova Scotia Tattoo and decided to form such a group in Clare.

Named Les Ukeladies de Clare, this group is now 28 members and a waiting list of people wanting to join. They tend to be retired women, some who have never had a chance to learn to play music when they were young. Over the years, while learning and playing together, the women have formed close friendships within the group.

The Ukeladies meet once a week to practice and usually perform somewhere in the community a couple of times a month. They often play at the local benefits and have performed for the residents of the Villa Acadienne.

Nine years later the group continues to play music because one person thought it would be fun to form a ukulele group in our area, and I'd like to thank Doris for that work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

LAMEY, ROSE: 100th BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, July 27, 2019, was an important occasion in North Sydney. That date marked the 100th birthday of a true fixture of our community, Ms. Rose Lamey.

Rose celebrated her special day in the way that she loves the most - at home surrounded by friends, family, and neighbours. Our community is so lucky to have Rose in our lives, knowing that you will never be greeted with anything other than a smile. Nothing makes her happier than sitting down to have a long chat.

More communities could use people like Rose Lamey, and I'm glad I'm able to formally wish her the happiest 100th birthday.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

NORTON, EMMA: CLIMATE CHAMPION - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to talk about the exceptional New Democratic Party candidate running to be the next Member of Parliament for my community of Dartmouth-Cole Harbour.

Emma Norton is a listener and a fighter. She has made her career in energy efficiency. She has helped bring people's energy bills down through her work on retrofitting homes and buildings in Nova Scotia and advocating for policy change in Ottawa. Her work has allowed her a real understanding of the seriousness of the climate crisis and the real solutions that can address it. She has an understanding of the housing crisis in Dartmouth and across the country and an understanding of the particular health needs of people in Dartmouth.

Emma is a climate champion. She's been endorsed by Our Time, a coalition of young people across Canada who are making sure climate action and a green new deal are at the forefront of the upcoming federal election. Emma and the NDP candidate in Halifax, Christine Saulnier, are the only Nova Scotian candidates to be endorsed by Our Time.

I wish Emma all the best in the campaign, and I look forward to working alongside her as she takes her seat in the House of Commons.

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

PERRIN, CASEY: ACAD. AND ATHL. ACHIEVEMENTS - BEST WISHES

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an incredible individual who recently received a Bachelor of Arts and Non-Profit Leadership Certificate at Mount Saint Vincent's Spring convocation, Casey Perrin. Not only did Casey maintain a 3.93 GPA, she was also the valedictorian of her graduating class.

In 2011, Casey graduated from Nova Scotia Community College with a Certificate in Office Administration and around that same time, she was involved in an ATV accident that left her paralyzed. As Casey wanted to continue with her university career, she chose the Mount because of its reputation as a safe, comfortable, and supportive learning environment.

In addition to her academic achievements, Casey is known in Nova Scotia and Canada for her success in global wheelchair athletics. She travelled all over the world to compete and most recently brought home a bronze medal in the Canada Summer Games of 2017.

I could go on but close in stating what an inspiration she is to all of us who have the pleasure of knowing her. I ask the members of this House to join me in wishing Casey the best of luck in all her future endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

KNOX UNITED CHURCH: FREEDOM KITCHEN - CONGRATS.

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the volunteers at Knox United Church in Lower Sackville for recognizing the need to provide free meals to the less fortunate in the community by way of the Freedom Kitchen.

Freedom Kitchen is an eight-month pilot project which began this past Monday, October 7th under the direction of Caroline Gallop and Rainie Murphy, co-chairs of the food truck project. A truck donated by the Salvation Army is set up at Acadia Park by the

Sackville Library in Lower Sackville from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. to hand out free meals to those in need.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in wishing the organizers the best of luck as they continue their preparations of this worthwhile project, and thanking them for making efforts to improve the lives of others in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

100 WOMEN WHO CARE: \$100K FOR CHARITY - CONGRATS.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: We're all aware of the impact that organizations such as 100 Men Who Give a Damn or the 100 Women Who Care have on local charitable organizations. It is invaluable.

In Hants East, the local chapter of 100 Women Who Care hit a major milestone at the last meeting. They have helped raise over \$100,000 for charities in the surrounding area. These funds have gone for many things, for example: programming with the East Hants Family Resource Centre; nutritious food options at the various food banks in our area; mental health initiatives; housing upgrades for low income residents; and last but not least, hospice care in East Hants.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the important role that these organizations, such as 100 Women Who Care, have in our communities. I ask that members of this House join me in congratulating them on hitting this great milestone and thank them for their continued efforts to better the lives of the people in our communities.

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

BROOME, BRANFORD - CPO 2: PEACEKEEPERS' DAY - THANKS

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to Branford Broome, Chief Petty Officer 2nd class, veteran of the Royal Canadian Navy, for his dedication in coordinating Halifax Regional Municipality's annual National Peacekeepers' Day event in Dartmouth once again. The World Peace Pavilion located at the Dartmouth Ferry Terminal Park, was the perfect location for this special event.

In 2008, Canada named August 9th as National Peacekeepers' Day. The day was chosen in memory of nine passengers and crew who were killed while travelling aboard a United Nations aircraft during a peacekeeping mission in the Middle East. The aircraft was shot down August 9th, 1974, and was the largest single-day loss during a peacekeeping mission.

I ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in thanking Branford Broome and all veterans and current military personnel for all that they do to keep us safe.

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

UNIFIED BASKETBALL TEAM: 2019 SPECIAL OLYMPICS - CONGRATS.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the Chedabucto Education Centre/Guysborough Academy unified basketball team that proudly represented us at the 2019 Special Olympics Ontario Invitational Youth Games.

Our wonderful athletes were off in far-flung Ontario competing at the University of Toronto Goldring Centre for High Performance Sport, where they demonstrated their exceptional sportsmanship and athletic abilities. Competing in the three-on-three unified basketball event, the Chedabucto Education Centre/Guysborough Academy team brought a fierce competitive spirit to all their games and by all accounts, were impressive on the court.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate these hardworking athletes for their perseverance and dedication to the game. They represented us well, made us proud, and were the best ambassadors of our fine province.

[2:00 p.m.]

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

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, whereas I, as a member of the House of Assembly, achieved barrier-free compliance as of June 12, 2018 . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Is this a Notice of Motion? I'd like to remind the member that the agenda item, Notices of Motion, has passed. It would require the unanimous consent of the House to revert to Notices of Motion.

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I did send you notification. It says right here in the Rules and Forms of Procedure that a member can bring up a matter arising out of either Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers, in respect of which he has given a notice of his intention, or basically on any other matter for which I give you a notification. I sent you an email about an hour before we sat in this Chamber at 1:00 p.m.

THE SPEAKER: For a Notice of Motion. That agenda item has passed for today's daily routine. If the member wishes to bring that up tomorrow under Notices of Motion, you're more than welcome. The opportunity has closed for today.

ALANA PAON: Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: We will add three minutes to the end of Question Period.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - BAY FERRIES: MGMT. FEE - INFO. RELEASE

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, representatives of the PC caucus will be back in court tomorrow in an effort to discover the management fee that the province is paying for a ferry that's not even running. The management fee is somewhere embedded in the \$11.4 million that's being shuffled over to the operator in respect of the service that's not operating.

The former Privacy Commissioner stated that the government should share this information, but the government has refused.

The Premier has the ability to save a lot of time, effort, and money if he would simply comply with the directive of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and release the management fee. He could do it today.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Will the Premier finally release the management fee, the amount of the guaranteed profit his government is paying to the operator for a ferry that's not even running, in the form of the management fee?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to ensure that we grow the rural economy across this province. We know the ferry is part of that. The honourable member is taking the private sector to court.

Yesterday he stood outside of this House suggesting the Premier should not be travelling to China so we can continue to grow the exports that we see have been going through the roof. I want to see members of that caucus stand on wharves across this province, talking about the price of lobster and the fact that we continue to grow an export market, to stand by that leader, or are they going to stand by the fishermen in their communities?

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I think they're going to stand by common sense that says anyone that invests \$20 million for zero return - not one tourist - they understand that's not right.

Yesterday, there was discussion in this House about rebuilding health care infrastructure in the province, but like the ferry contract, the Premier doesn't want to share with Nova Scotians the Deloitte report that outlines why his choice is the best choice. The Premier is asking Nova Scotians - he says, just trust me, I'll sign a good deal.

We know where that lands. We're looking at \$2 billion on new health care, 30 years of payments in trust. That's a lot to ask.

If the Premier is so confident that he's on the right track with the redevelopment plan, why won't he be more transparent about the process?

THE PREMIER: In a by-election, in Argyle-Barrington, he told the people of that community that he was with the ferry, and now he's taking the company to court. He told the people in rural Nova Scotia that he supported (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: He told those in Cape Breton that he was in favour of trading. Yesterday he speaks out against it.

The reality of it is that he has no plan. His only plan is to say one thing in one community and something else in another. But one thing is certain: he's continuing to attack the economy of this province. It has never been stronger, and we're going to continue to grow it.

TIM HOUSTON: One thing is for certain: four times the Premier has called by-elections, and four times the people have spoken loud and clear. He doesn't have the courage to call the fifth one. He doesn't have the courage to call the fifth one because he knows how Nova Scotians feel about his record. This Premier won't let us fully . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind the honourable member that he's calling into question the character and courage of another member, which is unparliamentary.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier won't let us fully examine the deal he's made with Bay Ferries. The Premier doesn't want to share why he's decided to pursue the P3 model with respect to the QEII redevelopment. On numerous occasions, his government has refused to put forward a cost envelope around the liability that his government has assumed with respect to the collapsed crane. When will this government start to learn the lesson to be transparent with Nova Scotians?

Will the Premier at least tell us why he won't share with Nova Scotians his estimate of the cost of the crane removal?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, would the honourable member be consistent? Is he with us when it comes to the investment into health care infrastructure because in Cape Breton he actually told the community he was with us. Is he against us today? I think the members who ran for him deserve to know where he stands. Is he with those communities that are getting the infrastructure investment? Is he or not? Is he with those rural communities that have record exports in seafood? He stands against it.

The reality of it is, he says one thing one day and one thing another. That's not leadership; that's a weathervane.

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

PREM. - SPORTS STADIUM: REVENUE SOURCES - POSITION

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, a private consortium has asked the government to contribute \$120 million over 30 years toward the cost of a sports stadium in Shannon Park. Last week, the Premier said that he would not be looking at the general revenue of the province as a source for such a project, but that other sources of revenue could be looked at.

One suggestion that has been made by the promoters of this project is a tax on accommodations and car rentals. Yesterday, the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia said: "The indiscriminate suggestion that we should increase tax on all visitors using accommodation and car rentals to fund a private sector venture is completely inappropriate."

I want to ask: Is it still the Premier's position that he's willing to consider these kinds of revenue sources to provide \$120 million for a privately owned sports stadium?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the member raises a very important question. I said to him earlier that there's a proposal, and Halifax Regional Council is now looking at it. He highlighted part of that proposal, where the proponent talked about potential sources of revenue. We've made no commitment.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada data showed that in 2017, in the federal riding that Shannon Park is part of, the number of children living below the poverty line was 3,920. Now, between 2015 and 2017, our province was the only province in Canada where child poverty actually got worse.

I want to ask the Premier: How could his government possibly give any consideration to the thought that a football stadium is a higher priority than 3,920 low-income kids?

THE PREMIER: The reality of it is, through many community services we continue to make investments in those families that require support through income assistance. He would know the unemployment rate in this province has never been lower since they have been recording. It means job opportunities that we're seeing created. We're seeing many young people move back to find opportunities for themselves in this province, growing our economy. Our population is at an all-time high, and it is getting younger; this is the first time since 1964 that the average age in this province has gone down. Those are all positive signs of a growing economy.

He does highlight that we have more work to do, and that's why the minister is doing the transformation around income assistance. We're continuing to make sure we provide good economic opportunities and good jobs to the private sector to help grow. That's why these exports matter; it is revenue coming back to grow opportunities.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, allow me to bring a word from the world of economic reality. While this private consortium is asking the government for \$120 million, all kinds of families in Dartmouth are struggling for their housing - 3,057 households in the federal riding that Shannon Park is part of, today, are paying more than 50 per cent of all the money they take in towards their rent.

In our view, 3,057 households struggling to keep a roof over their head is a much higher priority than \$120 million for a private sports stadium. What about this is not obvious to the Premier?

THE PREMIER: It's why we continue to make investments in housing. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has just signed with the national government a new housing strategy over the next 10 years. The honourable member would know the budgets he has been voting against have rent supplements in them. I committed to him that I would look at whether or not those should be adjusted. Those are to ensure that we provide opportunities.

He is highlighting the fact, with the growth that is happening, the economic boom in Nova Scotia that has been taking place, it has put pressure on some of the housing opportunities in terms of affordability. That's why we're looking at new options and new opportunities to ensure that we're responding to the needs of those individuals.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - PAC MANDATE: ACCOUNTABILITY - RESTORE

TIM HOUSTON: The ferry, the QEII rebuild, the crane - I could go on - are just three examples that should be examined by the Public Accounts Committee were it there, and should be there again. But they can't be examined because this government neutered the ability of the Public Accounts Committee about a year ago. They have removed an important instrument of accountability, an important check on the government because it became an inconvenience for them to talk about and defend their decisions.

My question for the Premier is: Does he understand that by restricting the Public Accounts Committee, he has placed his own political peril with actual financial peril of the province?

THE PREMIER: Once again, the honourable member is saying one thing today and something else later. He tells us we should listen to the Auditor General. It's the Auditor General's recommendations that talk about the Public Accounts Committee. We instituted a Health Committee that deals with the large (Interruption) which they voted against. Which is it? Once again, he says one thing one day and then something else when he thinks it's okay for him politically.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, there's a simple solution to this. If the Premier was confident in the decisions he was making, he would be transparent with Nova Scotians. If the Premier was confident in the decisions he was making, he would restore the Public Accounts Committee to its rightful status. He would bring back weekly meetings. He would bring back the wide-ranging scope that members had to review topics. The Premier would let the Legislature examine these issues. He would let us review and give Nova Scotians some idea as to what he was doing. He could even bring the Public Accounts Committee back, and he could let the Environment Minister keep his seat in Cabinet. It's okay with us.

Will the Premier commit today to restoring the full mandate of the Public Accounts Committee?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition is asking me to overrule the Auditor General. That is absolutely ridiculous; that's what happens when Tories are in power. The fact of the matter is, that was the Auditor General's recommendation. The Auditor General said they should be reviewing his reports, and we continue to do so. But when I tell you (Interruptions)

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

[2:15 p.m.]

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's recommendations were put forward, that's what they do. But on top of that, we've put a Health Committee, the only Party, the only government in the history of this province to do so. By the way, we televise it on top of that. So will the other committees in this province be televised. How more open and transparent can you be? Listen to the Auditor General and then let Nova Scotians view their TV to see it.

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

GOVT. (N.S.): CUTS TO HEALTH CARE FOR FORCES - ASSUME COSTS

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, we learned yesterday that the federal government has cut reimbursements for military service members' health care. Now, these cuts could leave local hospitals - like the Dartmouth General, which serves an awful lot of service people - short millions of dollars annually. The quality of care provided to service people and the quality of care provided to everybody will be compromised if our hospitals are left short of funds.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier confirm that the province has agreed to take on these additional costs, costs that are the federal government's responsibility?

THE PREMIER: No, Mr. Speaker, I cannot confirm that. I can confirm that last night the federal minister said that no facility, no province will be worse off.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, this isn't the first time that health care funding arrangements between our provincial and our federal Liberal governments have put Nova Scotia in a bad position. In 2017 the Premier broke from the rest of the provinces to take a wholly inadequate health funding deal from Prime Minister Trudeau, a deal which is costing us \$1 billion over a 10-year period.

Mr. Speaker, is the Premier a Liberal first and a Nova Scotian second, when it comes to our relationship with Ottawa funding health care?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. It would be important for the honourable member to recognize that there's a 3 per cent increase escalator in that health contract that he is referring to. He would also recognize, if he was paying attention to the national campaign, there are a number of Parties recommending the same issue that went forward. That was investment in mental health. As well, dealing with and making sure that people will be able to age in place. Those are all important things that I know the honourable member cares about.

The reality of it is, Mr. Speaker, my job is to defend the interests of all Nova Scotians, not just those who voted for me or those against me. It's why I continue to grow jobs in rural Nova Scotia, it's why I continue to travel, it's why I continue to make sure that the unemployment rate goes down in this province and the population goes up.

I don't just go look for Liberals for those jobs, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, even in those by-elections I didn't win, we're still going to represent the interests of those people and go to China and ensure that we continue to export their product.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

GOVT. (N.S.): VAPING PROD. - FIN. CONCERN

TIM HOUSTON: I'd like to refer the House to a letter that the Minister of Health and Wellness tabled last week. The letter was written by the Minister of Finance on behalf of the NSLC and was to the federal Minister of Health. The letter acknowledges global concerns over the negative health impacts of vaping, but the concern raised by the minister seems primarily focused on the financial impact to the province. The minister doesn't want to be left with products and inventory that Health Canada may subsequently ban. That was the focus of the letter, they want to make sure that if they bought it that they could then resell it.

My question for the Premier is: Are his government's concerns regarding cannabis vaping products really focused only on the financial impact to the province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member at every opportunity stretches any instance of what might be happening here. The reality of it is, we asked the federal government what is Health Canada going to authorize? It is up to Health Canada to determine which products go on the marketplace.

I've said many times in this House since we began, that does not mean those products will be sold in the province. This has nothing to do with what the honourable member is making a long leap towards. This has everything to do with ensuring that we are protecting the health of our province, of the kids of this province, and at the same time making sure we're following the rules of Health Canada.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'll retable the letter and maybe the Premier will take a look. The letter very clearly says, "As the NSLC will be purchasing these extract products from Health Canada licensed producers, I urge you and your staff at Health Canada to provide immediate clarity on the legal sale of safe cannabis products for vaping." It says they are buying them, they don't want to get stuck with them in inventory.

The intent is very clear. Read the letter.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

TIM HOUSTON: The FDA has stated - amid the 1,000 reports of lung injuries associated with vaping products – “we’re strengthening our message to the public . . . that they should not use vaping products containing tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).” This is a very strong statement.

The government’s statement is very strong as well - they’re buying the products - they just don’t want to get stuck with them. My question for the Premier is: Will the Premier tell Nova Scotians today whether it is his intention or not to sell cannabis vaping products at the NSLC?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member read a part of that letter. He answers his own question. We’re asking Health Canada to verify which products - it’s nothing to do with them. (Interruption)

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

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member has quoted from a letter and then had to retract it. Mind you, I don’t know of a member on this side of the House that had to follow those footsteps. I just want to remind the honourable member, make sure when he’s reading the letter he understands the full impact and intent of what we’ve said.

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, the minister responsible for this product, has very clearly said we want Health Canada to outline it - that does not mean we are purchasing that product - we need to know what Health Canada’s rules are around that product.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

GOVT. (N.S) - POP. INCREASE: CONSUMP. TAX - DISADVANTAGE

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I’ll tell you one thing the leader of our Party has not done and that’s disrespect the independence of the judiciary.

One of the greatest factors in boosting the economy is growing the population. The Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, started by the Progressive Conservative Government in 2005, has helped to do this. In fact, we recently saw that vision for our province reach our highest population ever.

However, newly settled Nova Scotians soon discover taxes are higher here than other parts of the country. Many recall the 25 per cent increase in provincial sales tax by the NDP at a time when the federal Conservative Government had given Nova Scotians a

break by lowering the GST from 7 per cent to 5 per cent. That increases the cost of living for many Nova Scotian families by \$500 to \$1,000.

When everyone west of Atlantic Canada is paying less in consumption tax, why hasn't this government acknowledged that this is a disadvantage to increasing our population?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the honourable member is going with this question. The reality is our population is at an all-time high. The fact of the matter is, unemployment is at an all-time low. We're getting younger, we're seeing not only new Canadians, new Nova Scotians come to our province, we're seeing people repatriate back home. This is a growing province, our fourth consecutive balanced budget. Let me be clear, the last thing this government needs to do is take financial lessons from any Conservative government.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, it wasn't so long ago that the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board over there was part of the Progressive Conservative government that was balancing budgets. So I will direct my question to her. Where I'm going with this is: Has our population reached its potential?

This is clearly an issue; consumption taxes are an issue in this province. When you put it into the context of somebody new to Canada, many come with little, but many also come with a lot; very few come with the things they need to live, like a couch, a car, a fridge and so on. These are things that people need to buy and they're paying more consumption tax when they're buying those goods.

My question for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is: Does the minister have any plan to return Nova Scotians the HST relief most Canadians received back in 2008, when the federal government did reduce the GST?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to be on this side of the House and recognize not only the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board but the Minister of Municipal Affairs who recognized that Party was headed in the wrong direction - this province couldn't afford to continue to go with a Conservative Party - and joined with a group of like-minded Nova Scotians who delivered our fourth balanced budget, are growing our population, reducing unemployment, and providing hope for a generation of young Nova Scotians so they can live and work right here.

On top of that, they recognize they can compete in the global marketplace, unlike the leader of the Conservative Party, who believes we should all hide and isolate in our own hometowns.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

FIN. & TREASURY BD.: HIGHEST TAX RATE - EXPLAIN

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to see what the Premier had to say back when the NDP were increasing the provincial sales tax. I bet you he wasn't in favour of it back then, but he's in favour of it today now that the money is going into the pockets of his government. This remains an issue. This remains an issue.

I want to move on to another question for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. A simple solution to boosting the economy is investments: investments in jobs, research, industry and technology. But government investment is only a temporary measure. It can move the needle, but business can struggle and fail when support disappears.

What Nova Scotia needs as much as job creation is wealth creation. Among other things, a barrier to wealth creation is the fact that we have the highest tax bracket in the country for income tax, outside of Quebec.

Can the minister explain why Nova Scotia has and needs to have the highest top tax rate outside of Quebec for what she just described recently to me as having a conservative - a small "c" conservative - Premier?

THE PREMIER: I can't believe she called me small. (Laughter)

HON. KAREN CASEY: To the question of taxation and the economy, we've made it very clear in our budgets that we have introduced - as the Premier has already said. Four consecutive balanced budgets. We are working on the fifth consecutive balanced budget.

I can tell you that in those budgets there were measures to support small business. There were measures there for the basic personal exemption.

We will do what we can afford to do and still maintain a balance that allows us to make sure that we provide services and supports in health and education, community services, and other unexpected needs like frost freeze and like the crane.

ALLAN MACMASTER: We here in the Progressive Conservative caucus aren't just interested in balancing budgets. We are interested in ensuring taxpayers are getting good value for their dollar. It's not just the top earners who need to accumulate wealth. It's hard-working Nova Scotians at each of the five income tax brackets.

Cost of living increases in wages and salaries should allow Nova Scotians to keep pace with things where prices are increasing with inflation, but this government's income tax rates are not indexed for inflation. As their wages get higher without any regard for the person needing to earn more money to pay for the same things the next year that are more

expensive, that little bit extra is not there for them, because their tax rates are not indexed. That money - I'm going to move to my question.

Can the minister state how much Nova Scotians would save in taxes? How much personal wealth would stay in individuals' pockets if the province were to index our tax rates?

KAREN CASEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say that, in addition to what the member has spoken about, all Nova Scotians are hard workers. I want to commend them for the work they do every day.

We recognize that there are different wage levels, different patterns of wage, and different opportunities for Nova Scotians. We want to make sure that we have within our revenue the dollars that we need to make sure that those hard-working Nova Scotians do have the services and supports that they deserve and that their taxes will help to pay for.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

GOVT. (N.S.): BOAT HBR. ACT - ENFORCE

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Last week I marched with over 300 people at Pictou Landing in hope that Boat Harbour will close on schedule. There were many young people at the march, marching for clean water and the future of their community. One of the youths, 16-year-old Shyanna Denny, addressed the crowd. She said, "We're trying to build trust and reconciliation. But we won't if they don't meet the deadline."

Chief Andrea Paul, among many others, has expressed deep unease over the Premier's recent responses to the situation. We are now only 114 days until the deadline, with no certainty from the Premier. Will the Premier explain how he will ensure that the Boat Harbour Act is enforced?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, there is a piece of legislation before the House. There is a date in it. There is nothing that I have seen before that that date will be changing.

One of the things I know is that the members of Pictou Landing are grateful that they have a government that actually is committed to cleaning up Boat Harbour, unlike previous governments.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, over and over again the Premier has deferred to the regulatory processes in the Boat Harbour legislation when asked to explain what Pictou County and Pictou Landing First Nation can expect to happen after January 31, 2020.

He says we have to follow the regulatory process and that the law is the law, but the laws are only good if they are enforced by the people in charge. The fact remains that the power to close Boat Harbour rests with the Premier.

I will ask again for the Premier to please explain how he will ensure that the Boat Harbour Act will be enforced.

THE PREMIER: As the honourable member will know, that bill was passed by all members of this House, not just the Premier.

[2:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FIN. & TREASURY BD.: CARBON TAX PROGS. - PROV. REVENUES

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

The environment has obviously been a focus this House session. Between new legislation, protests in the streets, and conversations around the federal election, climate change is a daily issue.

The federal government imposed its carbon tax on provinces, and although Nova Scotia's system is different, we are not exempt from opening our wallets. While this government likes to talk about all the hard work Nova Scotians have already done, it's asking them to pay up again because the feds say so.

My question is: How much revenue has been collected to date through Nova Scotia's carbon tax programs?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member would know that there's a cap-and-trade system inside of the Province of Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotians made a commitment decades ago to ensure that they continue to green-up this province. We're leading the country when it comes to GHG reduction. We're leading the country when it comes to waste diversion.

We wanted to make sure as a government that those ratepayers and those taxpayers were respected and got credit for what they had already achieved by doing the work. That's why our system protects the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians.

MURRAY RYAN: The Parliamentary Budget Officer has stated that Canada is not on pace to meet the Paris Agreement goals, and I have this report I'd like to table.

The provincial carbon tax at 0.9 cents per litre on fuel may seem small, but it represents so much more. It represents a policy that has made so many compromises with itself, it is ineffective. Nova Scotians have seen rising gas prices for more than a decade and have adjusted their behaviour accordingly, but at some point you simply cannot reduce further consumption.

At 0.9 cents per litre, the carbon tax isn't going to affect behaviour; it will only affect cost. My question is: Will the minister acknowledge that the carbon tax is a poorly conceived measure that simply takes money out of the pockets of everyday Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: As I said in my first question, we have a cap-and-trade system here, not a carbon tax. That is what's happening next door in other provinces. I want to remind the honourable member this government worked very hard to ensure that the work that Nova Scotians have been doing for the last decade or more has been recognized by the national government.

That's why we have a cap-and-trade system that is the Nova Scotia solution to our challenges. We know there's more work to do. We're going to continue to green-up our economy, and we'll look for the opportunities.

He would also know that there's a Green Fund, and that money would be put in to create opportunities within the green economy. We continue to work with Nova Scotians on their own domestic carbon footprint to help reduce and green-up their own properties.

THE SPEAKER: On a new question, the honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FIN. & TREASURY BD. - CARBON TAX: IMPACT ASSESS. - CONDUCT

MURRAY RYAN: A follow-up question to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

The carbon tax is making life more expensive for Canadians, and Nova Scotians are no exception. The impact of the carbon tax and the made-in-Nova Scotia cap-and-trade system is not limited to higher prices at the pump, but higher prices on everything.

In a province that already has such a high cost of living, folks with the least room to move in their budgets are getting hit the hardest. Seniors on a fixed income and low-income families are being asked to pay more for food as the costs of industry trickle down.

My question for the minister is: Has the department conducted a comprehensive impact assessment of the effects of the carbon tax on food prices in Nova Scotia?

HON. KAREN CASEY: As has been stated here by the Premier, I hope the member understands there is no carbon tax in Nova Scotia.

MURRAY RYAN: Part of the reason food costs are under increasing stress is that carbon tax increases the cost of transported food from other provinces. Unfortunately, the higher the price they pay at the pump, the higher the price we pay to feed our families.

Producing more food locally has the potential to offset these increased food prices, but we continue to lag in the area of encouraging local support. My question is: Where is the government's response to the rising prices of food due to the carbon tax?

KAREN CASEY: The member does talk about local food production, and we certainly work very hard with our fishers and our farmers to make sure that they can grow the quality and quantity of their products. We want to make sure that we have local produce that local people can buy locally.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

TIR - COBEQUID PASS: COSTS/LIABILITIES - UPDATE

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal for an update on the tax that is being charged on all traffic going through Cumberland and Colchester through the Cobequid Pass. Under the leadership of Progressive Conservative Leader John Hamm, we were on track to have the road, known as the Cobequid Pass, paid off in 2019. I'll table this document, the financial documents from 2016 that say the forecasted repayment of all costs and liabilities related to the facility is in 2019.

The Highway 104 Western Alignment Act clearly states the tolls are to be removed once the costs and liabilities are paid. My question to the minister is: Can he update this House when the costs and liabilities are expected to be paid and the tolls to be removed on the Cobequid Pass?

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, the analysis continues with regard to the position we're in in terms of retiring the bonds associated with the Cobequid Pass. We stick to our commitment that we will be removing the tolls from Nova Scotia motorists down the road.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I would like to ask the minister: What is the definition of 'down the road'? It would be nice to know what the timeline is.

I represent the citizens of Cumberland North, and I can tell you they are tired of paying this extra tax that no one else in the province has to pay; truckers, fishermen, people

in the forestry industry do not have to pay this tax to take their product to market, like the people in Cumberland North.

I would like to table another document, the financial statements from 2018 that say that now, under the Liberal Government, under your government, the forecasted repayment date of all costs and liabilities has now changed to 2026. Why is that? Today the Premier stated that he is Premier for all citizens of Nova Scotia, not just the Liberal-held areas.

When will this government put their money where their mouth is and remove this unfair tax to the citizens of Cumberland North?

LLOYD HINES: I thank the member opposite for the question. I'd like to point out the fact that the twinning of that highway and the twinning of all the highways involved in Nova Scotia saves lives. There is an alternate route available to everybody who travels through Cumberland County that there is no toll on. I have tabled information in the House previously that shows it is actually saving money for the commercial traveller and for the motoring public to take the tolled highway.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

SERV. N.S. & INT. SERV. - NEWBRIDGE ACADEMY: RENOS. - INVOLVE.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

At the end of September, we learned that the government would be spending \$28.5 million to buy and renovate the former Newbridge Academy site in Dartmouth and turn it into a school for the le Conseil scolaire acadien provincial.

Part of the deal the government made with the Newbridge building owner, Donald MacDonald, was that his company, DORA Construction, would be given a \$10 million contract to complete renovations on the building. Was the minister's department involved in the tender for the \$10 million in renovations for Newbridge Academy?

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: That particular procurement was not a procurement, it was a real estate transaction, so it fell under Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: That particular procurement was not a procurement.

Mr. Speaker, we fully recognize the need to make investments to address increasing enrolment within the CSAP. However, we have concerns about the lack of transparency in decision making for this investment which was not included in the five-year school capital plan, which we have been pointed to over and over.

The government's Procurement website clearly states that for projects \$100,000 and over for construction, departments must work with Procurement to conduct a competitive process. Can the minister explain how a \$10 million untendered construction contract complies with the government's procurement policy?

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I couldn't be any prouder than the acquisition of that particular facility in the interests of the CSAP and the children of Nova Scotia. It illustrates the nimbleness of our government to be able to respond to opportunities that displace millions and millions of dollars' worth of future costs and gives a wonderful facility to the children of this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - N.S. POWER: PROV. RATES - FAIRNESS

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Back in 2013, when the Premier wasn't promising a doctor for every single Nova Scotian, he had another promise: break the monopoly. The Premier has managed to wrestle the power-rate beast down to where Nova Scotians are paying only the third highest in Canada. I can table the Natural Resources Canada data that shows us as the third highest in Canada.

This Fall we're looking at a further increase; it could be 2 per cent. In a province where fewer than one-half of the people are receiving a pay increase, the cost of living keeps going up and up.

My question for the Premier: Is it fair that Nova Scotians have the third-highest power rates in Canada?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. He highlights the fact that our government has stabilized energy prices in the Province of Nova Scotia. He would recognize that the last time the Progressive Conservatives were in power, power rates escalated beyond 30 per cent, and the NDP were closer to 40 per cent.

The reality is energy prices are stable in this province. We're seeing growth in the economy. We're seeing new opportunities. More young people are seeing a future for themselves here. We're seeing business investments (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: We're seeing business investments in this province. All of the outlooks - this province is doing better than most Canadian provinces in economic growth, and we're going to continue to make sure that we provide opportunities.

It's why we continue to travel to make sure that we export our product, so that we can continue to bring that money back here to grow jobs in this community with the private sector. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is against anyone doing anything outside of our province.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party has more faith in our products than to think that there's only one country in the world. The world is a lot bigger than just China.

In the Premier's list, he left off a few other accomplishments that he might be proud of: the highest HST rate in Canada - maybe he's happy about that; the second-highest income tax rates in Canada; the third-highest power rates. One, two, three - all attributed to the Premier.

For all of the talk of balanced budgets, employment rates, and seafood sales, average Nova Scotians are falling behind the rest of Canada in buying power and wealth. In the area that truly matters - how much money they have left in their pocket at the end of the day - Nova Scotians are struggling. The Premier doesn't realize it, but everyone on this side of the House does.

I'd like to ask the Premier: How does the Premier feel about Nova Scotians having the highest cost of living in the country?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is we're seeing economic outlooks by independent analysts that see Nova Scotia leading the region. We're seeing wage growth inside our province. People are making decisions based with their wallets. They're coming back to live here. We have seen an increase in our population. We've seen more people repatriated back inside of Canada. The cohort between 18 and 34 is growing. The age of this province is going down.

The honourable member has to admit (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: He always has to be negative. He has attacked hard-working Nova Scotians. When we go to China, it's the private sector that joins us; when we go to the EU, it is the private sector that joins us; and when we go into the United States, it is the private sector that joins us.

We are growing good economic opportunities and good jobs in the economy. The honourable member is opposed to us exporting out of this province. It's simply a recipe for failure. The Tories have tried it before, and it hasn't worked.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

COM. SERV. - CHILD POVERTY: N.S. RATES - REDUCE

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Community Services. Over this past Spring, a coalition of 19 groups banded together to pressure the government regarding its approach to child poverty. The coalition believed that the government's approach ought to be replaced with measures to reduce rising poverty.

As a reminder to those here, Statistics Canada figures show this - and I'll table it - that's more than one in five children living in poverty. Hearing today that, given the continued comments about investing in and emphasis on the Nova Scotia economy by this government, will the minister tell us why Nova Scotia was alone in seeing child poverty rates rise?

[2:45 p.m.]

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. When those Statistics Canada stats did come out, we thought they did not make sense. Quite frankly, the federal government has been making massive, massive investments in Nova Scotian children; in 2017-18 it was nearly \$600 million. The numbers didn't make sense to us. That's why we've gone back to Statistics Canada and asked them to do a deep dive around this because it doesn't make sense to us and, in my next answer, I'll be happy to outline the steps we are taking to reduce poverty among Nova Scotians.

STEVE CRAIG: Thank you for that response, Minister, and you will get the opportunity. As sad and disheartening as those statistics that I just mentioned are, the situation is even worse relative to other provinces. Nova Scotia was the only province in the entire country that saw these child poverty rates increase in those recent surveys.

The government has had six years to make an impact on those numbers, six years to improve the outcomes for the neediest of our children but the poverty rate is just getting worse and worse. Will the minister clarify as to what additional steps have been taken to help fight these child poverty rates within our province since the last session?

KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. As I had indicated, we have gone back to Statistics Canada because we do believe there's an error in that sample. It does not make sense.

I would point out that it does not include the investments that we make in our clients that are not an exchange of money. Things like the free bus pass, for example. It doesn't include things like the Building Vibrant Communities Grant that helps communities deal with issues like food insecurity. I would note for this House that the most recent calls for Building Vibrant Communities went out on October 1st, if they have organizations in their communities that would like to participate in this.

I would point we've made a number of investments since those particular statistics came out including doubling the Poverty Reduction Credit and, of course, we're going to have the standard household rate coming in in January of this year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

H&W: CCA WAGE INCREASE - CONSIDER

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Individuals who work in caregiving professions are sometimes among the lowest paid. The hours required are long and the work is usually physically demanding. Professions like continuing care workers are becoming more and more necessary as the population of our province continues to age. The CCA bursary program was reinstated but CCA wages haven't increased, leaving people to feel unmotivated at times to join the profession and fill the labour shortage.

My question to the minister is this: Has the government considered raising the base wage for CCAs as a way to fill the labour shortage?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for his question. Indeed, we as a government share, and I personally share, the recognition of the important work that CCAs and other health care providers provide to the citizens of Nova Scotia each and every day. The member would know that last year we had brought together an expert panel of advisors to look at the long-term care sector. Much of the advice and recommendations they made focus in on workforce planning and acknowledging the challenges and some aspects of recruitment and training for CCAs.

We've started already on a number of those recommendations. The bursary is one. Recently we made some changes to the eligibility criteria, that actually perform the work, which will help us with international licensed practical nurses and other practitioners to come in. We're taking a number of steps and we're committed to doing even more.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my supplementary to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Another profession that involves important work that can be both emotionally and physically demanding is Early Childhood Education. ECEs care for our children at a very important stage of their development and just like our CCAs their wages are low.

ECEs are another profession in our province where people are crying out for help because we need so many more people working in the field and the government isn't able to fill that need. We know the rushed implementation of the pre-Primary program only further strained the staffing issues with early childhood educators.

My question for the minister is this: As the population continues to grow and ECEs are more and more in demand, has the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development started discussions to increase the floor wage for early childhood educators?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: In fact, our government has already done that in our previous mandate. We almost doubled the subsidy to the regulate the child care sector, \$26 million of which was to subsidize those businesses and not-for-profits to increase their wages for early childhood educators. We have seen the average wage for ECEs in Nova Scotia, as a result of that investment, move from around \$12 an hour, which was among the lowest in the country, to around \$18 an hour, which brings us at or above the national average in most cases.

Furthermore, because we value the work of ECEs so much and recognize that only one in four Nova Scotians are accessing their services, we have brought in pre-Primary. We have created 500 jobs in that space. We're training more people. It has never been a better time to be an ECE in Nova Scotia, and we're looking forward to graduating another 200 this year from our NSCC campus.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FIN. & TREASURY BD. - CRAFT BREWERS: RSMA CHARGES - ADDRESS

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. We can agree that the craft beer industry is one of the highlights of the local economy over the last number of years. It has grown from just a handful of players to number 50 brewers from one end of the province to the other.

However, the retail sales markup allocations still disproportionately impact craft brewers despite changes to the application. In fact, the Maritime Beer Accord allows brewers, including major players like Labatt's, to produce beer outside the province and sell it here without paying the RSMA charged to craft brewers within the province - and I would like to table this report.

My question to the minister: Why do craft brewers still have to pay the RSMA to the NSLC for sales of their product within the province when larger established brewers can simply get around it?

HON. KAREN CASEY: I do want to say to all of those craft brewers, congratulations on growing the industry. We certainly have seen a lot of growth in that industry.

To the member's question in particular, we continue to have conversations with the craft brewers about the RSMA, and we recognize that we need to support the small craft brewers in this province.

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister: What steps will the minister take to level the playing field, so that out-of-province brewers pay the same markup fee that Nova Scotia brewers are forced to pay?

KAREN CASEY: I will repeat my first comment to the first question about what we are doing. We continue to work with the craft brewers. We meet with them regularly. We know. We are listening to what they have to say. We will respond because - I will repeat - we want to support the craft brew industry in this province.

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

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes, on an introduction.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I draw the members' attention to the West Gallery, where we are joined this afternoon by a former colleague of some people in this Legislature - a colleague to a few of us for a number of years. I would like to ask Ronnie Chisholm to stand up and be recognized. (Applause)

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 173.

Bill No. 173 - Education Act and Education (CSAP) Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise and speak on a very important piece of legislation that is before our House, before our Legislature, Bill No. 173, an Act to amend the Education Act and the CSAP Act with respect to our public school policy for Grades 7 to 9, dealing with the content of the outcomes in our healthy living courses in junior high school.

We deal in this Chamber with very important pieces of legislation. I know for many members of this Chamber, as parents and grandparents, certain pieces of legislation are of

the utmost importance. This piece of legislation brought forth by the member for Pictou West is a very important piece of legislation that I hope this government and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development take time to examine. The bill is asking the government to bring forth curriculum on human trafficking.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as a former teacher in Dartmouth, this is something that I am all too familiar with - hearing stories in the hallways in the school that I taught at in Dartmouth, hearing stories in the classroom. We are talking about a frightening subject that is all too real for a great many young women, for a great many Nova Scotians.

We need to have the curriculum in our school connected to what is happening in society. I think we would all agree for those of us in this House who are parents, we want our kids exposed to material that helps them understand the world around them. That's what this bill is asking.

This bill is asking to update the curriculum for what, unfortunately, is happening within our province, within our country. Let's not mince our words, Mr. Speaker; when we talk about human trafficking, we're talking about modern-day slavery. I believe that former U.S. President Barack Obama referred to it as such.

Mr. Speaker, we need to speak plainly because this is something that is around our children. This is something that our children, in terms of what they are taught in school, need to be exposed to. We all know that the purpose of education at its core is to equip our students with the knowledge and the skills to navigate in this world, to be able to have the skills to identify the dangers that may be around them.

I have a daughter in Grade 6, and she attends a local high school in Dartmouth; there are so many kids in her elementary school that they've put the Grade 6 up at the high school. Already I can tell, essentially after a month and a half, she is aware of things that you wouldn't think a typical Grade 6 student is aware of.

The world crashes down on our kids very quickly, so for government it is critical that curriculum is constantly modified. The purpose of this bill is about prevention - to allow our young Nova Scotians to be able to identify the signs of human trafficking. That comes back to the purpose of education, to make sure our kids have the knowledge, the wisdom, the skills to identify the dangers that exist in this world. This bill, Mr. Speaker, is talking about empowering our youth so that they are fully cognizant and fully aware of the horrible actions that are taking place.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware of this issue in many respects as a teacher, knowing that some of my former students, that this was a world they were surrounded in. This is frightening, this is horrific. We have an opportunity to begin a process perhaps of getting information into our classrooms - specifically from Grades 7 to 9 - to make sure our kids are fully informed of the horrors of human trafficking.

Make no mistake, traffickers are master manipulators. In order to counter that among our youth, our youth need to know the warning signs of some of these master manipulators.

In terms of content of what should go into a course like this, Mr. Speaker, allow me as a former teacher, to give some thoughts on that. I hope the government takes this within advisement, that first and foremost, as these individuals are master manipulators, I think our youth need to be aware that many of them try to pose as their boyfriend or girlfriend or lover. The level of betrayal that exists there is, I can only imagine, unbelievable; these master manipulators look to gift, to give jewelry and cellphones, to provide computers, clothing, and pets.

[3:00 p.m.]

I think we have to expose our youth to what a healthy relationship looks like. Here we have to expose our students to and engage in conversations of what manipulation looks like. In many respects we see these manipulators talking about a better lifestyle, specifically, in many cases, for these young ladies.

In some cases they provide alcohol and they provide drugs. They pose as apparently providing emotional stability, love, and companionship. All these things, I believe, have to be discussed within our classrooms.

The goal here, by talking about such things, is to reduce the vulnerability of our children to these master manipulators so that they understand the red flags to look for are things they have to avoid. We have to remember that the purpose of this bill is for our students to learn how to identify these master manipulators. In some cases they are also providing rides and they are providing housing and shelter.

These are open conversations that need to happen in our classrooms. I don't doubt that, informally, some of our teachers throughout Nova Scotia are talking about these things. However, what we are saying is that it needs to be mandated, there has to be a structure, there has to be clear outcomes with targets that teachers know have to be covered within the curriculum.

We know these master manipulators pose as a confidante, they pose as a trusted adult, a friend, and a peer. Our young people need to be able ask questions and push through these manipulative tactics that many of them employ. In some cases we know - we are hearing that they are brainwashing our youth with romantic ideas and using other victims to seek out and recruit potential future victims. We know from the research that's been done that peer to peer recruiting is happening.

All of this, all of this - these conversations need to happen in our classrooms in a structured way. Let us not forget they are meant to prevent the occurrences of human trafficking.

This is an uncomfortable subject and I hope a lot of us in this room are feeling uncomfortable because it is something that we all have a responsibility to take care of, to deal with. Certainly, from an education point of view, the most common approach we can take at the moment is to have clear outcomes mandated so that our teachers are given some structure.

We know that these master manipulators are paying for personal grooming. We know that they are hosting parties for youth. We know that often the way they manipulate and maintain control is through threats of violence and through isolation from friends and family.

Again, this is frightening - absolutely frightening - to think that this is happening to many of our young people here in Nova Scotia. We know that the trafficking is happening online and it's happening in the hallways of our schools. It's happening at places of work and it's happening in the home.

A holistic approach to dealing with this within the education system - the time is now. I believe the government and the minister have an opportunity to take the initiative, to show the leadership, to have a structure within Grades 7 to 9 to ensure that there are formal, structured conversations taking place within our classrooms.

Again, as we all know, systems must constantly be reviewed. They must constantly be updated. This is a matter of critical importance to the safety, health and well-being of our young Nova Scotians.

I encourage the government not to delay. Begin the process of curriculum developments. Begin the process of consultation. Begin the process of meeting with those with lived experience through this horror, so that we are able to mitigate and reduce the incidences of human trafficking.

One of the most eye-opening experiences I had was a few weeks ago when I attended a human-trafficking conference at Saint Mary's University to hear the accounts of the survivors of human trafficking. It was a very powerful moment.

Mr. Speaker, many of us in this Chamber are parents. Many of us in this Chamber are grandparents. We all know that there are terrible things happening out there. I know we all want a curriculum that is preventive, a curriculum that equips our students with the skills and the knowledge to be able to navigate the good things in life, but also, in this instance, the horrible realities that are out there.

I believe this reality that exists can be combatted and defeated on a number of levels. This is one approach - to embed a curriculum in our public school system that focuses on those things that I've outlined, that could compose the content of those outcomes.

Of course, whenever we bring in new material, we need to ensure that our public school teachers are equipped with the necessary resources and the necessary professional developments to maximize those learning outcomes for our students.

I believe the bill before this House is definitely worthy of this government's consideration. I believe that the minister and this government have an opportunity to really make a positive step forward in combatting modern-day slavery essentially, to consult with those who have survived the horrors of human trafficking.

I encourage the government to show leadership on this issue. I believe, in many respects - and I can tell that others believe this as well - that this is a non-partisan issue. What we're talking about is the well-being and safety of our children. I believe all of us want the material that is taught in our schools to address the realities that are out there in society.

I encourage the government to pass this bill. I hope this government will do that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I appreciate the words from the member for Dartmouth East.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know where to start on this. There's a lot to say. Some of the statistics around human trafficking are painful to read, and they are painful to look at. Any individual who is a victim of human trafficking - one victim is too many. I can tell you - I think most people associate some of this stuff - let me start by saying I want to identify some of the wonderful organizations.

I have the great pleasure to have the main YWCA office in my community. People like Mia, who has been an outstanding advocate for women's rights. She has fought hard and continues to fight hard, not only against human traffickers but also to give the proper resources and a safe landing spot for those who have experienced this horrific crime and experienced things that no one in this Chamber could probably imagine.

I also think of people like Linda Wilson, who has dedicated her life. She now is the executive director of Shelter Nova Scotia but before that she was the executive director of HomeBridge Youth Society, and Phoenix House, and before that she worked at Adsum House. The conversations we've had over the last 30 years of my life with her are troubling.

As someone who spent 30 years working in that field, one of the things she has told me is that there is a target on kids in group homes, on kids living in care.

These disgusting human beings come forward and prey on these young girls and boys will hang outside of these group homes and they will hang outside of foster homes and around schools to try to show these children that they care, that somebody cares for them. They will buy them clothes, food. Outside of the material things, they'll show them love, which a lot of these individuals feel they're missing. They'll show them what they think is dignity and respect just to lure them in.

A lot of times the first thing they will do is, once they've lured them in, remove them from their friends, communities, any support groups or individuals they may have they can lean on. They take them to places like Toronto, Montreal, and other parts of the country, where they're alone and the only persons they can truly rely on - or they feel they can rely on - are these individuals have lured them into a life of misery.

I had a close friend whom I worked with years ago. This gentleman was - I'm not going to get into names, it was in the media years ago - a very, very big, intimidating person. He was 6'10", played in the NBA for a little while, probably one of the nicest people you'll ever meet but he was a very, very big human being. He had a daughter. He had a very good life. Then his daughter went missing. She was lured into human trafficking, she was shipped off to Toronto and - the only reason I tell this story is that it was public and, like I said, I don't want to get into names.

He was very public about his story. He actually sent a plea out to the public to help. Thankfully, that story ended as well as it possibly could. I don't mean that the story was positive. I mean his daughter was returned home. She experienced a lot of trauma. They had the resources and the means to do whatever they could to try to help her out, but a lot of those stories don't end that way. A lot of those stories go on for months, years and decades. Those young girls become women and they're horribly abused over that time. She was one of the lucky ones able to escape within a month or so.

But we're hearing more and more stories. I think part of it, for me personally, growing up the way I did, I knew young girls were involved, young girls were forced into this, young girls unfortunately didn't escape the life, and some girls did escape the life. I knew some young boys and some young men who were also victims. Some of them escaped and unfortunately some of them didn't; some of them took their lives, some of them went on to have very serious drug addictions. The impact that it has had on their life - some of them ended up in the federal and provincial justice system.

These things ruin lives and - I use the term loosely - people lure these youth in to these positions, I think, and this is my own personal opinion, are lower than anything there is on earth. They're preying on vulnerabilities. I've talked to law enforcement agents and people are forced into this. It is changing. It's changing because of technology. We have

all these means of social media. I think I read just recently about a case where social media was used. They used the pictures on Instagram and Facebook of young people with expensive items, and they essentially lured them in that way.

[3:15 p.m.]

But one of the things that I've learned talking to children is that it's also through video games. They're using these video games, their online chat rooms, and these strangers are approaching them. So the way the technology is moving, it's extremely hard for parents to stay in touch with this, but we have to have these conversations.

I have children. I have a six-year-old son, a four-year-old daughter, and a soon to be, on Friday, three-year-old daughter. This bill recommends this conversation start in Grade 7 and Grade 9. I would argue that this conversation needs to start immediately.

I've had conversations with my three-year-old daughter: it is her body, no one is ever to touch it. I've had this conversation with my four-year-old daughter and my six-year-old son. I also have conversations with all of them on how they are to treat other human beings and what they are to do when others are treating their friends, or even strangers, inappropriately.

So, while I appreciate the content of the bill - I really do - I think this conversation has to start much earlier. It's not always easy. I was uncomfortable when my partner Rena first said we need to have a conversation about our children's bodies with them, and sex and sexual orientation, and the differences that people have, whether it's cultural or religious; she wanted to have that conversation almost immediately. I have to admit, I was a bit uncomfortable because I didn't know, at the time, how to explain the human body and sex to a two-year-old.

Now, we had that conversation; I feel that my children are better off for that conversation. Like I said, it's not always easy. I feel like I'm a pretty progressive person when it comes to those topics, but even for myself, when my partner Rena suggested it to me, I was a little taken aback and I didn't know how to have this conversation.

Part of it is that while those children are children, I don't think we give them enough credit for the way they think, and the ability to make their own decisions. So when we have conversations with our children, these conversations are not based in fairy tales. We like to have factual conversations, and sometimes they're very difficult conversations, especially with my four-year-old. She likes to challenge us on everything, and she likes to talk about everything, and she's very open and honest.

Yes, we need to have these conversations, but they have to start at home. I spoke to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development about this. I asked him about the possibility of this - what do we do in our schools? There has been a program in place

for 15 years where they're working with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, but we realize that life changes, that facts change. We need to adjust to the way our youth live now, and how these predators - these disgusting human beings - are trying to attract our children.

The minister did tell me that they are very, very open to having a conversation, and in fact invited stakeholders to come in and have a conversation about this and figure out how to move forward. We need to make sure that when we do this, we do it right.

I would almost guess that some people around here didn't know that predators are using video games to lure kids in. I didn't know that until my son started playing a video game and he had headphones on and the next thing I know, I walked in and he was talking to someone and it was some 30-year-old guy from Minnesota. My son was five years old. Luckily, the conversation didn't go anywhere, but that's how open we are now. That's how open we are as a society.

When I was younger, what I was told was stay away from that van - it was always the van. Stay away from clowns and strangers and things like that. Poor clowns. Stay away from strangers because you don't know.

We were taught that we were safe in our homes, but we're not. Kids aren't. You have your cellphone. You're always connected. You have social media.

I do hope that this is the start - and I think it is - of a bigger discussion that we do have consultation with all the stakeholders, that we do have consultation with Adsum House, and that we do have consultation with the YWCA. We talk to the experts on the ground, not just in HRM but in Cape Breton and on the South Shore. We talk to our teachers and see what they're capable of taking on.

We make sure that our children are protected. We make sure that our children know that their body is their body and no one else's, and that if they are approached, there are safe places to go. Like I say to Oliver, Rufina, and Isla - at any point, come to Mommy or come to Daddy. We're not going to get mad. We need to have these conversations. If you're not comfortable with coming to Mommy or Daddy, go to Amme or Mimi. Go to your aunt or uncle.

That's a big part of this - we need to make sure that our children feel safe, but that they also feel safe to talk to people and approach people.

With that, I appreciate the conversation and I look forward to the member for Dartmouth South's response.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I thank my colleagues for their comments and for bringing this bill in. We in the NDP caucus recognize the danger posed by human trafficking and sexual exploitation. I think those challenges have been enumerated pretty clearly so far in this conversation. To put some numbers to it, we know that there were 63 incidents reported in the last seven years, and 58 of those were from Halifax. Certainly, as urban MLAs, we are acutely and particularly aware of this issue.

We need to educate ourselves, without question, about what these risks are. The member for Halifax Atlantic was talking about video games. I think I have now given up calling myself young, with some sadness, and I'm not. I have no idea what the universe that my children are facing is now or will be, so I certainly think that it's incumbent upon all of us to keep our ear to the ground and to be as knowledgeable as possible about the risks facing youth, particularly vulnerable youth.

Dialogue on this issue is needed. We won't get anywhere if we don't talk about it, and certainly in that vein curriculum is important. I would suggest, and it probably won't come as a surprise to anyone, that as a government where we can be most useful in this conversation is by addressing the factors that make people vulnerable to human trafficking.

It's not to take anything away from this bill but, as we've heard, we know that traffickers specifically target poor and marginalized communities. We know, as the member for Halifax Atlantic mentioned and I've had those same conversations with folks at the YWCA, traffickers target children living in group homes, children who are socially isolated, and children who are poor. So those are the conditions that we as legislators, I would suggest, have to attend to in order to think about how we can reduce that vulnerability index of people.

So, as we have been talking about this session, and forever, that includes things like affordable housing, that includes situations like child poverty, that includes food insecurity. It's really important, these aren't abstract issues. The idea of not being able to buy food means you have to find the food somewhere, and you have to find a way to pay for the food. These are exactly the kinds of entreaties that can lead children down an awful path, and, of course, not just children.

Racism and colonialism also contribute to the marginalization of people, particularly the Indigenous populations. Nova Scotians who experience racism face systemic barriers. And again these ongoing roadblocks, these ongoing challenges, challenges which often include access to credit, access to the ability to pay for basic needs, puts these communities at a higher risk of being trafficked.

In that vein I would suggest addressing systems and practices like street checks, other persistent structural disadvantages in justice, education, health and other areas, some of which we recently discussed that are enumerated in the DPAD Report, *Count Us In*. All

of those suggestions, all of those goals that the government has committed itself to, laudably I would suggest, are directly related to this issue.

We need to create the conditions for people to be self-reliant, to be resilient, and to not find themselves in desperate and vulnerable situations that open them up to these kinds of situations.

Similarly, I would say that persistent gender inequality also increases this vulnerability. We still have gender-based disparity of opportunity and income. With that are all the structural barriers that women in this Chamber, for as long as we've been in this Chamber and elsewhere before that, have been talking about. We are paid less for equal work - not in here, luckily. We continue to be disproportionately responsible for unpaid work, I would suggest, probably some of us in here. I think the logical conclusion of that in many cases is there is still a gender binary and a gender expectation of submissiveness. This is why women are trafficked more than men. I would say that proactively addressing some of these issues, again, can reduce vulnerability and build resilience.

In short, human trafficking and sexual exploitation thrive in communities where large numbers of individuals are socially and economically marginalized and don't have access to the supports and services that they need. Progressive, adequately funded health and social services, a well-rounded public education system that supports social justice and actively challenges colonialism, racism, sexism - all the systems of oppression - are key in addressing these issues.

I thought it was really interesting what the member for Halifax Atlantic said when he was talking about educating his children at such a young age about these issues that we often think of as taboo.

I think a lot of us when we were kids may never even have had the talk with our parents because our parents couldn't deal with having the talk. Now, I think as parents, hopefully we're all a little bit more enlightened than that. The talk now is about so much more; we're not just talking about human sexuality, we're talking about all of the perils that are not just presented by the guy in the van, who was also the guy that I was taught to be afraid of as a child, but maybe by the guy on the other end of the video screen.

I think we all have to find our way through this together, certainly. I think particularly those folks in the public service working in education, in health care, in justice, need to attend to these situations. I would suggest that when we look at the victims of human trafficking, their profiles would not suggest that they have high social indicators of health, social cohesion, income, and so I think these are the things we need to attend to.

We need to attend to it on both sides of the scale. We need to educate our children and - I think back to this Act - yes, sure, it should be a part of the curriculum but more

importantly it should just be a part of the conversation, and so I think we need to find ways of understanding what that conversation looks like.

As a parent, as an MLA, I confess that I don't know exactly what that conversation looks like. I mean, I think it looks like, for me and for our caucus, attending to those folks on the front lines who really understand these issues and who can give a clear sense of the causalities and how they unroll. The member for Dartmouth East talked about hearing from people first-hand, and the member for Halifax Atlantic and I have also had an opportunity to talk to the YWCA. I would echo support for those folks working on the front lines of this.

The YWCA is sort of the penultimate example in our community. Charlene Gagnon, who lives in Dartmouth, runs their anti-trafficking initiatives. They have a Safe Spaces Program. To my prior point, the YWCA's Safe Spaces Program: the first thing they initiated in that program was emergency housing because they acknowledge that one of the, if not the primary, concerns of people attempting to flee human trafficking is that they don't have a safe place to live. That's not just an issue for people who are being trafficked, that's an issue for all kinds of Nova Scotians. But in this case in particular, the Safe Spaces Program, which provides emergency housing, is an excellent and important program.

I know the YWCA in particular employs lots of people who have been in these situations themselves, have been in communities where these situations occur, have the understanding, the skill and the trauma-informed approaches to really be connecting with people. To that end, on the radio this morning was an educator talking about this bill and one of the points she made, which I thought was really interesting, was: it's important to talk about it, and I need to talk about this with my students, but I know there are other teachers who pinch hit for me who don't know how to talk about this and who don't want to talk about this because they can't, they don't know how.

I would suggest that if this kind of initiative were to go forward, hand in hand should be professional development. I think we've talked at other times in this Chamber about the need for more trauma-informed knowledge among our educators, and that's not through any fault of our educators. But, again, I think with the ever-rapidly evolving and sometimes scary-ways world that we live in, there is a need for teachers to be equipped to handle all kinds of things that we never thought teachers needed to handle before. So, I would suggest that kind of education would be an offering that we could make to our educators.

In closing, in terms of this bill, as I said at the outset, I think we do need dialogue and I think this bill captures some of that. In particular I would say that any situation of exploitation depends upon secrecy and some degree of misinformation in order to be successful. So the degree to which we can eliminate that secrecy, to which we can provide robust, clear, helpful, compassionate, trauma-informed information to young people - 100 per cent we're behind it, but as I've said, I think we also need to do so much more.

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

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, 800-565-7421. Is there anybody here who doesn't know what that number stands for besides the young ones back here who might not? We all know that that is a tourism number. I would like us to learn a new number: 844-333-2211. I'm going to say it again: 844-333-2211. That is the new human trafficking hotline. I mention that to draw everyone's attention to how pervasive the issue is that we are talking about today, for Bill No. 173 that the member from Pictou West introduced to amend the Education Act to deal with human trafficking.

We have sort of missed a point in this conversation so far. We are talking about big business in the province of Nova Scotia. It's an underground business, but it's big business. The estimates are that one pimp or owner can make up to \$300,000 a year from one girl or boy.

We are talking not about the illegal sale of cigarettes - and every time I see an ad on TV about how bad the illegal sale of cigarettes is, I am wondering how come I have never seen an ad on the illegal sale of little girls in this province. We are talking about deviant sexual behaviour perpetrated on our children and grandchildren by people they know.

I was very disappointed that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, at whom this bill was aimed hadn't commented. I have to say, frankly, we're very disappointed that neither the government nor the member for Dartmouth South indicated support for this bill. (Interruption)

Well, I'm going to stand corrected. It sounds like we are all in support of the bill and therefore it should move forward and possibly pass this session of the Legislature. That would be great. I didn't actually hear those words, though, so if that's the case I withdraw that concern.

One of the things that we've done is we have turned a blind eye as a society and things that wouldn't be considered conceivable three decades ago are now completely normal. I forget the year it was when you were allowed to show a bathroom in a sitcom - it wasn't that long ago.

I know when I took my son to Memorial University, his welcome kit was two condoms and some lubricant. I didn't even bother saying anything except, you're not going to need that because you have a girlfriend. But it was a co-ed dorm. As we were going out to tour the university, a girl walked by in a bath towel on her way to the shower. Can you imagine that 30 years ago?

So, are we really surprised that there is a demand for the purchase of little girls for sex or little boys for sex? Are we really surprised? The member for Inverness has brought

up to this Legislature before that pornography is available to anyone who has internet access, cellphone.

I know when we first got internet, we set it up in the living room so I could supervise what my kids were looking at. My son was doing a project on dynamite, so, he typed in the search engine, "dynamite". Well, you know what popped up, advertisements for pornography.

We've turned a blind eye to all of the things that are contributing to human trafficking. I appreciate the comments from the other members. We have seen the consultation. We saw and celebrated today this government announcing the release of the report by the Provincial Sexual Violence Prevention Committee - amazing work - lots of people consulted. We have the report. We know what they are saying. We want to take action. We want to do something different than what's currently going on because Nova Scotia is the leader in where people go to find girls and boys to traffic. We are the leader. It's not an industry we want to be the leader in. We're not winning when we come to this issue.

So, what did this government's own committee come up with in terms of three recommendations? The 10 recommendations wanted to reflect primary prevention initiatives. Prevention, how do you prevent this? Well you have to even acknowledge that it's in existence. And the children in our schools, some of them are going to grow up to be human traffickers; perhaps not by choice, but somebody, at some point, makes the decision that this is how I'm going to earn my living.

The document that was produced by the Provincial Sexual Violence Prevention Committee is targeting university students. Well by the time you've reached university, two-thirds of all women have been sexually molested or raped. So, we don't want to wait until university.

We also applaud the member who talked about talking to your children. I have four boys. It was my responsibility - and those children's parents - to talk to them about what this looks like. But not everybody has parents who are willing to do that. Not everybody comes from a home where they're even aware that it's a situation that exists. Some of these kids are coming from a home where it's the parent who's actually the one selling their children for sex.

We also know when you look at the report by the Halifax Regional Police - if you're not aware of this report it is an amazing report on Canadian human trafficking - it tells you exactly what to do; how to recognize it; who is trafficked; how they groom you. It talks about the myths around it.

One myth is that it's going on in another country. It's not, it's going on in my community and in yours. They're going to our junior highs, they're grooming these children.

There's another myth that it's happening out on the street. It's not. It's happening at bars, it's happening in homes, it's happening in hotel rooms, it's happening just down the street.

There's another myth put out by the Halifax Regional Police that says the victim can "just leave," this is their choice. No, it's not their choice. No one child grows up and says, I'm going to be a prostitute, that's a good idea. And nobody starts out thinking, this is a good business opportunity. But at some point these children are groomed to enter into the trade. They're not getting groomed in university - by then it's too late.

[3:45 p.m.]

According to a national review called *An Assessment of Sex Trafficking*, put out by the Global Justice Associates in May 2013, a task force on the trafficking of women and girls in Canada, the average age is 13, which is exactly why this legislation was designed to hit junior high school. Do we want our teachers having to have this discussion? No, but if we can't be sure their parents are going to do it, if we can't be sure that the justice system is going to have people come forward to report it, when are we going to take action and how are we going to?

The document put out by Halifax Regional Police, you could start with this as a template for what the schools could introduce. It's extremely well written.

One of the other problems we have is that if somebody knows that it's happening, there's no confidence in reporting it because in far too many cases it's someone you know. So we're not having total strangers grab you off the street and take you to Toronto. This is a boyfriend who dated you, who bought you things, who fed you, who clothed you, who housed you; or it could be just a friend of a friend you met at a party. Not everybody who is trafficked comes from a vulnerable population.

We need to make sure that children understand what grooming looks like, and not just for human trafficking. Pedophilia in general has a whole grooming process - this isn't something that happens overnight. This is a pervasive, insidious, sexual deviance of people preferring to have sex with children and others for money. As Barack Obama and others have called it, it's a form of slavery.

One of the other comments made by the member for Dartmouth South is that we have to address all of the things that predispose somebody to being groomed and victimized and why they wouldn't walk out after somebody had butt out cigarettes in their skin or set their hair on fire or broken their toes because they didn't bring home enough money.

Addressing all those issues is going to take years and decades. We need to take action now, not 5 or 10 or 20 years from now, because the trade is growing in this province and we are leading in it and it is big business.

One of the statistics that is really sad because, as a football watcher, one of the things in the report said that during a national football game the number of online ads for the sale of sex goes from 30 ads per day to 250 ads per day. We are turning a blind eye to the fact that a whole lot of people are making a whole lot of money by exploiting and selling the bodies of our little girls and little boys.

Yes, there are certainly adults who are trafficked but many of them were groomed and targeted at a very young age. We need to send a message to every child - we can't just count on some parents doing some of the right things. The people in this Legislature would admit they are not sure of all the ways to deal with this. Well, if we're not sure, then who is sure?

We have to have a standard set of guidelines and a standard set of instructions that parents can count on. We've got a great anti-smoking strategy. We have Mothers Against Drunk Driving to talk about drinking and driving. Why isn't the sale of human flesh as important, if not more important?

We have to teach every boy and every girl - because human traffickers are women, as well - we have to teach every one of them, at the age that they're most vulnerable, that bodies are not a commodity to be bought and sold. Hopefully, if we can get the reporting and conviction rate up in this province, that will go a long way to doing that. I don't know when the last time was that any of us saw that somebody who solicited sex from a minor was prosecuted, convicted, and sent to jail for any reasonable period of time. I haven't seen that.

I'll end this by saying we have reports. We have the government's own report that we celebrated today, calling us to reflect on primary prevention initiatives, which is what we're talking about today. It talks about reducing victim blaming, which is what we're talking about today. It talks about changing the culture in which sexual violence exists, to prevent its occurrence at the university campus.

But Mr. Speaker, the people who are being targeted and abused and burnt and murdered and kidnapped and entrapped and manipulated are 10- to 14-year-olds, which is exactly who this bill was targeted to help. I will encourage all members of the Legislature to bring this forward to help us pass it into legislation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 167.

Bill No. 167 - Tobacco Access Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on Bill No. 167. We're now going to discuss another topic that is having a huge impact on the health of our students in Nova Scotia, and in some respects, on the operations of our schools.

One of the ways in which I find out what's going on in different parts of our province is actually at the soccer field. My daughter plays soccer, and you get a chance to speak to a lot of other parents from many different professions. One of my daughter's teammates' father is a high school principal, and he has told me that vaping is a major problem in our school system. Too many of our students, too many of our youth, are vaping.

This has proliferated. It has grown by leaps and bounds for a great many years. I think back to eight or nine years ago, when I first started to notice vaping as a problem within our hallways and outside of our schools. It seems now that it has become a chronic issue in terms of the health of our students, in terms of the operations of our schools. A former colleague of mine indicated, Mr. Speaker, that if you go out to what schools sometimes refer to as the smoking pit - if you have 20 students out there, 16 or 17 of them are vaping, and maybe two or three are with cigarettes.

Make no mistake - as most in this Chamber are aware, it is a growing problem, a growing epidemic. Obviously we're all aware of the issues that have been brought to the forefront in the United States as it relates to the situations with vaping.

We know that Nova Scotia is ranked the highest for youth vaping. Let's think about that. Many of us are fully aware of the nature of the teen years, how at that stage of development, it is normal and it is natural to push boundaries, to test your limitations. Many of those behaviours that in some respects are normal and natural to the teenage years are manifesting themselves in this dangerous behaviour.

Like anything else, when we know our youth or our kids are doing something that is counterproductive to their health and well-being and development, as adults, we have a responsibility to put up a resistance. I remember years ago mentoring a student teacher - the way that student teacher was teaching, he didn't put up any resistance to the students. I remember telling that student teacher that challenge is nature's way of strengthening a person.

What this bill is attempting to do, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to vaping is to put up a resistance. There has to be a resistance because we know that there are enormous health implications that come from vaping. We know that 49 per cent of Nova Scotia students in Grades 10 to 12 reported using an e-cigarette at least once; we know in Nova Scotia, 20.9 per cent of youth in Grades 7 to 12 have used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days in comparison

to the Canadian average of 10 per cent. That data alone tells us that we need to take a comprehensive approach in resisting and pushing back at the trends that we're seeing in vaping.

Make no mistake, I believe a grown person can make decisions themselves, but I also believe that in school the resistance that we put up to certain behaviours has to be modified. Here's an example, once again, where we can modify information that's being dispersed and disseminated to our students.

We know that the data suggests that a high percentage of those youth who vape did not previously smoke, so we know that this is a major problem. We know it's not being used as a cessation tool among our youth anyhow. As a reformed smoker, I know the challenges that go with trying to quit. I must've quit 50 times before I was finally able to tackle the addiction to nicotine. I smoked for almost 15 years from the age of 14 to the age of 29, and I'm glad I quit. It was a challenge.

I recognize that there are different cessation tools that are used. However let's be clear - for our youth, this is not a cessation tool. We now know this is often becoming a major problem in terms of the health and development of our young Nova Scotians. It only makes sense to treat vaping the same way we treat cigarettes. Let me say that again: It only makes sense that we treat vaping the same way we treat cigarettes.

For those of you in this House who are aware of the history of health organizations throughout the Western world in the '50s and '60s clearly stating the health dangers of smoking, we look back and wonder, well, what was our - in my case, my grandparents' - generation thinking at the time? This was a time in the '50s and '60s when menthol cigarettes were being advertised as alleviating the symptoms of the common cold. We look back and say how silly that was to believe that. I believe that years from now, we'll look back and we'll have those same attitudes: what were we thinking?

The bill that's before the House is comprehensive. It's holistic. It takes an approach that puts up as much resistance as possible to specifically deter especially our young Nova Scotians from taking up a habit that will have enormous health consequences. We live in a province where the urgency to promote a healthy lifestyle is critical. We know that; we see the amount of expenditures in our health care system.

We've known for decades, going back to the Kirby report in the 1970s, how critical preventative health care is. Here's an example of preventative health care - of getting information out, especially to our young Nova Scotians, of the dangers of this. Of course, the nature of the teen years, as I said, we know that they're going to test boundaries, but we have a responsibility to maximize the resistance and remind our young Nova Scotians and our students of the dangers of vaping.

According to the Lung Association, we know children and youth are highly susceptible to the negative effects of nicotine. We know that nicotine has a huge impact on the development of the brain. Neuroscience now tells us, especially for males, the frontal lobe is not fully developed until the age of 25. We know that nicotine can affect memory, learning and attention, and permanently lower impulse control.

[4:00 p.m.]

We live in a more health conscious society. We live in a society now that is trying to promote those healthy lifestyles, and this is a bill that is in line with those values. We need to promote that preventive health care. It's critical. In many respects within our schools this is in line with that preventive health care and promoting healthier outcomes.

We know health groups from the Lung Association to the Canadian Cancer Society have issued warnings respecting the use of vaping. I believe we need to listen to those warnings. I don't share this very often, but when I was 17, I lost my mom. My mom died of cancer because of smoking. Many in this House, I'm sure, have had situations like that in their families, where they've lost a loved one because of the impact smoking has as a carcinogen.

This bill is another example where government can show leadership and take a comprehensive approach, maximizing the resistance and challenging our young people not to vape. We have a responsibility as adults, as legislators, when we know behaviours are occurring within our society, we have a responsibility - I know all of us know deep down to our core - to challenge, especially when we know that there's a better way.

I believe we should adhere to the advice of the Lung Association and the Canadian Cancer Society. It's my understanding that the topic of vaping will be coming up at the Health Committee. That's good news. It's good to see a topic at the committee that is so relevant, not only to the health and well-being of our young Nova Scotians but to all Nova Scotians. I hope the members of that committee have a good, meaningful dialogue and are able to get some information from the Canadian Cancer Society and other witnesses that are there.

I don't believe vaping is harmless. As a former teacher, I've seen the growth of this behaviour in our public schools. I've seen students test the boundaries with vaping. We do, of course, recognize the nature, I guess, as I've said, of the teen years. They are going to test boundaries. But we need to put up as much resistance as possible. We know that we have a responsibility to challenge our youth, to promote that healthy lifestyle. In many respects we know a healthy body leads to a healthy mind; a healthy mind leads to a healthy body. Part of the key mandate of any education system is to promote those key outcomes.

Too many of our youth are vaping. It's harmful. This bill takes a comprehensive approach; it takes an approach that is attempting to ban the flavours, to have an education

component that will get information out, especially to our young Nova Scotians, about the dangers of this. My oldest daughter, who is in Grade 6, told me that they've already talked about the dangers of this in class. I commend her teacher and other teachers in this province who are talking about the dangers of vaping. This is a chronic issue among our youth. The stories I've been told anecdotally by my former students have led me to believe that it is necessary to come forward with a piece of legislation such as this.

It's an opportunity for government to show leadership. It's an opportunity for governments to really get a handle on this problem that exists within Nova Scotia, that is clearly manifesting itself in our public school systems.

Many in this Chamber are parents, and I know we all want our kids to be subjected to messages that promote a healthy lifestyle. We are all united by our desire to have our young Nova Scotians have behaviours that will lead to a healthy, happy lifestyle.

Mr. Speaker, vaping is harmful. Too many of our youth vape. I ask humbly that this government consider this bill because I believe it could have a positive impact, not only for young Nova Scotians but for all Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill No. 167, the amendments to the Tobacco Access Act. As with the member for Dartmouth East who just spoke to this bill, I want to say that our government is deeply concerned about the health risks associated with vaping. The fact that vaping is on the rise in Nova Scotia, particularly among our youth, is especially troubling.

Mr. Speaker, when I was growing up in Iraq, smoking was considered a social activity that my parents would engage in on occasions when they entertained guests. It was normal to see our marble cigarette box on the living room table, beside our candy and chocolates. That was the norm when I grew up.

Then came the tragic death of my uncle, from lung cancer, when I was just starting university in England. My uncle was a heavy smoker, and I witnessed the painful death and the decline of his health; that really struck me. I started to think about what smoking is, but it was still not as commonly related that smoking was the only cause of lung cancer at that time.

I'm grateful that my other members of my family, none of them are smokers - nor my in-laws - so my kids grew up without having second-hand smoke in our households. Tobacco causes about 30 per cent of cancer deaths and approximately 85 per cent of lung cancer deaths. That's a very high number.

I just want to give a little history on tobacco. Tobacco was first discovered in the Americas and it was introduced to Europe in the 16th century. So, we started it here. But it was not until the 1950s that British researchers demonstrated a clear relationship between smoking and cancer.

Mr. Speaker, now I want to compare the history of e-cigarettes, which is a much shorter history. In 2003, an American inventor patented a non-tobacco cigarette that was smokeless. The invention was free of nicotine but had produced a vapour that had a flavour that was designed to replace the smoke of tobacco. That's where it started, that this was a safe thing; it was just a vapour, it wasn't meant to have nicotine.

I believe the tobacco companies saw this as a great opportunity to use this new invention and started offering e-cigarettes with nicotine. These companies use the disguise that it was something that was helping smokers quit, and it actually offered nicotine, this very harmful product, in a more modern format. The e-cigarettes are rechargeable, very attractive to our youth.

There is a real misconception that vaping and e-cigarettes are a safe alternative to traditional cigarettes, especially among our youth. I wonder how many of our youths' parents think that it is safer than cigarettes.

The Canadian Cancer Society has made it clear that vaping has the same cancer-causing effects as traditional cigarettes. Our youth in Nova Scotia are engaging in vaping at alarming levels. The number of users in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador are higher than anywhere else in this country. Last week I attended an event for MLAs, hosted by the Canadian Cancer Society. What was different about that event was - it was very informative, but it was the fact that they invited about eight to ten high school students from Millwood High School.

The students spoke so eloquently about the marketing methods and how easy it is for these students to obtain e-cigarettes. The increase of sales for the e-cigarettes is not just within the - it's also targeted by marketing by these companies. Their decision to vape is really related to the fact that these companies are making it look cool and very attractive.

Actually, I posted yesterday on Facebook about the event that the Cancer Society had for the MLAs, and I put two pictures, side by side - this is something they showed us that evening - of how these tobacco companies used attractive young women smoking a cigarette and how the same thing is happening today. They are using the young lady just to make it look cool and attractive, and this is the same marketing method that tobacco companies use.

We are repeating the same thing, Mr. Speaker. The photo from the 1970s and the photo from now are exactly the same, just different outfits and different styles. They used the same tactics to attract our youth.

To me, it is so painful to have seen those two pictures and I put it on Facebook. Hopefully, it will trigger what it triggered to me: that is, those companies are so smart - or so conniving, I should say - in their marketing.

I also had an opportunity to speak with a few international students lately who indicate to me that they were introduced to vaping only after they moved to Nova Scotia. These are young people who are university age, not even high school, and I actually challenged them to try to quit. They told me it is not addictive, it's much easier, and this is how it was sold to them.

Through text I connect with them and both of them have replied to me how hard it has been for them to quit vaping. They gave me information on what the percentage is and how they started with a small percentage of nicotine in their vapour and how it increased over time, and the whole thing is in the last year or so. It is very addictive, and the youth and the adults are not aware of the risks involved in vaping.

In 2015, our government was the first jurisdiction in the world to ban the sale of flavoured tobacco and they are treating e-cigarettes in the same way as they treated tobacco products.

Our government is looking at a number of options on how to reduce youth and adult vaping, including regulating e-liquids, flavours, and licensing for sellers of vaping devices and e-liquids.

The Tobacco Access Act and other legislation currently provides levers that we can use. We need to be evidence-based in the decision making to ensure we make effective and enforceable changes. As you know, there is no single action that is the best treatment. We are also working with our federal partners to address the issue, as well as consulting with the public and different organizations, including the Cancer Society.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end by saying that we agree that this is an issue of common concern. Our government is working on consulting, and we want to get this right.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

[4:15 p.m.]

LISA ROBERTS: Thank you for this opportunity to address a very important issue, and thank you to my colleagues in the Official Opposition for bringing forward a bill with haste to address something that has happened quickly. I think one of the things that I'm struck by is how quickly disruption - in this case with the nicotine marketing, the way an addictive product is being sold and disseminated - how quickly that has happened.

I feel like it is very important that we respond quickly. Yet as my colleague from the government side has just said, it's also important to get it right. I think it's very important that we're talking about this. I don't think, respectfully, that the bill that the Progressive Conservative caucus has brought forward has gotten it right, but I'm glad that we're having this conversation, and I look forward to sharing some of my thoughts on what effective regulations of youth vaping might include.

Of course, this is an issue of concern to many school administrators, public health experts, and parents. One of the most basic functions of government is to protect public health. Without government we would not have vaccinations, we would not have sewage and water treatment systems, and we would not have health inspections at food processing facilities and restaurants. All of these have limited disease and kept more of us safer.

Youth vaping and anyone who is using vaping not as a way to stop smoking or to ingest less nicotine are actually new challenges to public health. My colleague for Cape Breton Centre and I met with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Robert Strang, in the Spring, when I first became aware of this issue.

I became aware of this issue because of a play date that my son had where I ended up sort of standing on the side of an outdoor area with another couple of parents. They talked about how kids are coming over from the neighbourhood junior high school and using the same space to vape. Honestly at that moment, I had no idea. It came onto my radar very abruptly and made me realize that the challenges of parenting are going to evolve as my children get older, and I had better pay attention.

Dr. Robert Strang and medical health officers from across Canada issued a statement together in April 2019 about the alarming number of youth who are picking up this addictive habit. They wrote that they find the trend very troubling, especially as so many of them are non-smokers.

This is what I think is particularly alarming about vaping. These devices were brought on to the market with a story that it was about tobacco cessation, about smoking cessation. Yet, what we know is that amongst young people this is actually the introduction, the beginning of what could be a lifelong and certainly very damaging addiction to nicotine.

In Nova Scotia more than 20 per cent, almost 21 per cent, of youth in Grades 7 to 9 have used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days, in comparison to the Canadian average of 10 per cent, at the time that survey was done. Almost 37 per cent of all students in Grades 7 to 12 report having tried an e-cigarette as opposed to about 23 per cent of Canadian students in the same grades. At the high school level, 49 per cent of Nova Scotians, almost one in two, reported using an e-cigarette at least once.

I remember being a kid in the 1970s, when one of my chores would be to empty the ashtrays around our house. I remember travelling in a smoke-filled airplane. I remember

my parents smoking a little bit, but I remember my grandparents quitting smoking - not once, but so many times over the years before they were finally able to quit.

It took public education. It took regulations on advertising and packaging and taxation measures to drive down smoking rates in Canada. Now those medical health officers are warning us that a new generation of youth addicted to nicotine may lead to a resurgence in smoking or create new public health problems, reversing decades of progress. Those decades of progress were hard won.

Vaping devices are so different from cigarettes, and I too would applaud the articulateness and the bravery of those students from Millwood High School who spoke with MLAs who attended the event organized by the Canadian Cancer Society just last week. They described how the odor of vaping doesn't stay on you, how it's possible to be even in the back of a classroom or to take a brief bathroom break and return to the classroom and not in any way alert a teacher to the fact that a student has vaped.

So many of the devices are also designed to be almost collectable: different colours, different shapes, small like a USB drive. Again, according to those medical officers of health, a single nicotine pod can expose a user to the same amount of nicotine as an entire pack of cigarettes.

Parents and all adults involved with youth can help by talking with children and teens about the risks of vaping and the potential long-term health impacts, but there's no question that education is not enough. We who attended that event organized by the Canadian Cancer Society were all warned and alerted to this by Todd Leader, who said at the end: education must follow regulation. It must follow policy, accompany policy. It isn't a substitute for policy.

In my constituency electronic newsletter - I put out a newsletter once a month - I wrote in the August edition about what I had learned about vaping and what the medical officers of health were warning people of.

I do look forward to the development of some robust policy in legislation, but while there are some things in this particular bill that we agree with, like a mandatory public education program on the risks associated with vaping, there are also provisions that cause us concern.

First, I'm concerned with the plan to ban the sale of flavoured e-cigarettes and flavoured e-cigarette liquid because this, in all likelihood, would result in a black market. This is precisely the situation that has created the conditions that have given rise to the distribution of counterfeit THC vaping products that have caused serious illness and in some cases death in various jurisdictions, including in the United States - quite high-profile cases recently.

When there is a demand for a product that carries high risks, it is incumbent on us to take a harm-reduction approach rather than a moralizing one. We aren't going to destroy the demand for flavoured e-cigarettes by banning them. In the words of David Hammond, a University of Waterloo professor who studies vaping as part of his research on chronic diseases, "We can't wish them away . . ."

A ban on the sale of flavoured e-liquids, as is proposed in this legislation, will push people who already use these products - and there are thousands of them in Nova Scotia - outside the legal market. Products sold outside the legal market will not be tested, regulated, or required to meet manufacturing standards. To me, this moves in the opposite direction of where we're trying to go, which is to prevent people from getting sick.

More concerning to me is that this legislation designates the use of tobacco and tobacco products by people under 19 as a criminal offence. I do not believe that criminalizing the individuals who use these products will accomplish anything, other than saddling those young people with a mark on their record. If this law is passed, the number of young people with summary convictions would skyrocket. Given what we know from our experience with street checks and the fact that African Nova Scotians are seven times more likely than white Nova Scotians to be street checked by police, I can imagine that African Nova Scotian youth would be disproportionately affected if this bill were to become law.

On top of the perhaps unconsidered secondary consequences of the legislation, groups like the Lung Association have said that fines for users are not consistent . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, there's a little bit of chatter in here. I'd ask that all members keep it down, please.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: The Canadian Lung Association has said that fines for users are not consistent with the harm reduction approach that we need to take on this issue. Frankly, I'm surprised that the legislation proposed does not follow the recommendation of the Canadian Cancer Society. They had a couple of really clear first steps, or clear directions, where they were asking us as legislatures to go.

First of all, prohibit the sale of all tobacco and e-cigarette products to individuals under the age of 21. According to the Cancer Society, most smokers began by age 19, and tobacco companies have even admitted in their own internal documents that getting kids hooked in their early years is their strategy for long-term profitability.

This legislation could be acting in ways or proposing measures to make a difference to youth vaping rates. It could be banning the sale of vaping products at most retail locations, requiring that stores specializing in e-cigarette products check IDs at the door,

and it could be looking at raising the age at which you are legally allowed to purchase those products to 21. It could prohibit vaping supply stores from setting up shop within three kilometres of high schools and junior highs. These are the kinds of solutions that we need. We don't need to be criminalizing our kids and driving people into the black market who already use these products to help them stay off cigarettes.

I will just finally say that I do hope the government will not pass this legislation but will put a fire under the public health resources that you have, under the resources that the government through the public service has access to, to develop effective legislation. I was struck when I received a very thick letter from Imperial Tobacco about vaping just shortly after I became aware of this issue at all, and then more recently received another very thick letter from Juul, which is one of the major manufacturers of vaping devices, which I believe is owned by Philip Morris Tobacco.

There is no question that this is a public health threat with a great deal of corporate profit riding on it. I think it is incumbent on the government - with the access that it has to the resources of the public service - to respond as swiftly and with the best research and with a harm reduction approach, in a way that will protect our children.

In the meantime, it is incumbent on the rest of us to speak about the threat and to urge the government to act and to talk about this danger with our constituents.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

[4:30 p.m.]

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and talk to Bill No. 167. This PC caucus is introducing legislation to start this process towards protecting our children. It's our children who are going to grow up and look like each and every one of us in this Legislature, so it is also to protect the future adults, future grandparents.

My father was born in 1928 and he started smoking at around 12. He passed away about 10 years ago and through that journey of trying to quit he had a stroke due to smoking; he lost a leg due to smoking; he was in Camp Hill Hospital for the last few years of his life and even then he went back to smoking.

Smoking nicotine is extremely addictive - make no bones about that. I look at vaping as a gateway to nicotine and tobacco, just another form of delivering it. As the debate was going on - and I thank all members for their comments - being new here and the first time I've spoken to a bill, there are a couple of things that crossed my mind. From business: don't be struck down by analysis, causing paralysis; and Voltaire is said to have said: perfect is the enemy of good. I don't know what perfect legislation is, but I think that legislation will lead to development of the regulations and to me that's where perfect regulations will tackle good legislation.

Let's talk about consistency with alcohol and cannabis and the age limits and the way they're treated. For years there has been a fine for consuming alcohol underage and, since the Cannabis Control Act came in about a year or so ago, there are consequences for possession under 19. For tobacco and vaping the laws have focused on prohibiting the sale of those products to those under 19, but it has not tackled the possession issue. This bill does look at tackling just that. We're hopeful that it would add and be a deterrent to youth.

When it comes to talking about flavour, I'm old enough to remember when it comes to cost and flavour, my father getting up early in the morning. I would know he was up because all you would hear was the hacking and coughing; it would go on and on and on. When cigarettes in the 1960s became so expensive, he bought this rolling machine to create cigarettes. Then of course, he had to have his razor blade to cut the cigarettes - I see a number of members nodding, you remember that as well.

Nicotine is extremely addictive. Back in late 1900s, early 2000s there was a lot of advocacy done, a lot of research and looking at youth and smoking. I was a member of the national board of the Canadian Cancer Society and we took great pride in advocacy and working with governments to reduce those things that entice young people to smoke. There are many, many pressures on our youth, peer pressure being one of them, to be cool and in that groove with your mates, to be able to have that cigarette and share it - and to not only share it, but if you have it and nobody else has it you can give it to somebody.

We're seeing now the culture in vaping that it's cool - it's very cool. You can have this device that looks like a brick or you can have this device that looks like a thumb drive. It's easy to do yet the components, the fluid, the fuel that is there is uncontrolled. Nicotine levels of 3 milligrams, 6 milligrams, 10 milligrams, higher, and in a single hit you might absorb more nicotine than you would in two, three, four packs of cigarettes.

It's a Trojan Horse. It's being introduced by those who have the tobacco industry, and I have seen the way society has gone. Our people and their health are affected. So, how do I keep my business going? Well, I have a substitute product. And what better substitute product to have than one that is not regulated to the extent that my current product is? So, let's get that in there.

What the Canadian Cancer Society and others have found is that about 45,000 people a year in Canada die from the impacts of tobacco - from the impacts of tobacco, nicotine. About 30 per cent of those are cancer related. You have mouth cancer. You have throat cancer. You have lung cancer. You have all kinds of respiratory illnesses that impact people's health. We're seeing that now, recently, in North America, when we had thought about these products coming in as cessation tools - and I'll get to that in a second - what we've found is that people are taking them and becoming addicted - an unintended consequence or result of having a product that would help people cease becoming ill later on and reduce their dependence on nicotine.

So, when we're looking at this, we need to be able to look at what attracts people to these products. Certainly, I talked briefly about the new cool iPhone-like vaping product, about the thumb drive. Talk about the flavours. Well, how can you get something that tastes so good? It's enticing. As a youth, you're allowed to go and have cherry-flavoured whatever it is, cranberry, blueberry crush, all of these flavours that are attracting our youth. It's one of those things that, in a marketing sense - hey, if it tastes good, if we could make tomatoes taste better than they do now, I'll tell you, we would have a market out there waiting for us. But if we have a product that is going to go ahead, take people, and move them toward nicotine and tobacco, and protect our market and our product, then why not? Well, that's what's happening. That's what's happening right now.

In the study brought forward by the Canadian Cancer Society, which was published in the *British Medical Journal*, they said that we have an increase of about 45 per cent in the use of e-cigarettes in youth in the years 2017-18 and 2018-19, for the previous two years. I have to tell you, as a member of the Canadian Cancer Society, we were priding ourselves in the work that we did for smoking cessation, the prevention of smoking, the advocacy that was done with the federal government and here that removed the flavoured tobaccos, removed flavoured cigarillos and cigarettes. Why? Because we wanted to reduce that enticement to smoking. That we did.

Previous to the introduction of e-cigarettes and vaping, the youth decline in rates continued with advocacy and increases in regulations around packaging, around advertising, around access, around so many other things that made it easy for youth to get these cigarettes. When you look at that, you say, okay, take away all those regulations, all those things, and leave it alone, the decline was there. It was happening. But now we introduce something else, an e-cigarette and vaping. And now we've seen the incline start, where people are becoming addicted, and they're becoming addicted in great numbers, so much so that we've started to see an increase in the use of tobacco. Once you do this, then you can go and you can buy tobacco, and the likelihood of you buying tobacco is much greater if you've used one of these products.

Let's go back to the age of 19 for a second. A number of years ago, the age limit for consuming alcohol changed from 21 down to 19. Why did we do that? But it was consistent. I can tell you, because both of my parents have passed away, that I was in Grade 11 at Dartmouth High School, and we would get dropped off the school bus, go to the Lamplighter Pub and we were drinking way under the age of 21, and even under the age of 19. So, there's no perfect regulation that's going to stop youth from doing this. There is no perfect regulation or legislation, I have to say.

We need to remove a number of factors that will help our youth. Nicotine addiction is extremely bad, and it has been around for a long time and that's what we're fighting. To have access to that is something that we can help mitigate. Yes, there will be other people who will provide it, there will be other people who will be able to say, do you know what,

hey, let me try that, especially if their peers have huge access to it. We need to be able to address that.

I just want to give you one more thing.. We talk about parents doing the right thing sometimes, or guardians, but it's not always possible. We don't all know what our kids do; we don't know what our grandkids do.

I can tell you one short story before I close. My daughter, 39 years ago was in Grade 7, just starting junior high school and I caught her with a pack of cigarettes: Where did you get those? Well all the kids had them, Dad, and I got them at this particular store.

They were out in the open and the proprietor absolutely provided the youth around there with the cigarettes. I called the RCMP and I said my name is Steve Craig, my daughter has cigarettes that she obtained from this particular proprietor at the store and I am going to go down there and address it. So, they met me there; I didn't get a chance to address it.

So, what can you do? How can you help your youth be safe? You need some assistance, and as parents and guardians we need assistance, we need assistance to help our youth, our future adults, the people who will sit in this House of Assembly. So, if perfect is not good enough, I hope that whatever comes forward in the next little while is.

I need to be able to look at my family members, my community members, and say you know what, we try to help you as best we can. You have to make the decisions, granted. However, if we're making a drug like nicotine so readily available and attractive to our youth, I think we are doing a disservice to everyone, especially our youth.

We certainly would not tell our youth to go out and pick up a needle, an illegal drug. Nicotine is legal - we would not do that. We would not advocate for any illegal drugs.

So, I don't know where we're going to go with this. I suspect we're not going to be able to come to a conclusion, a resolution that this side of the House, that the PC caucus will be able to talk about at the Law Amendments Committee. But certainly one thing will happen - when this does come up, we will certainly work with whoever brings up the legislation. Again, perfect is not the goal. The goal is to help our youth and our future adults and, in doing so, we've done our job, I think.

Mr. Speaker, with that I'll conclude. Thank you very much, thank you members for your attention. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 181.

Bill No. 181 - Public Utilities Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to rise to speak on a bill that I brought forward yesterday to this House - Bill No. 181, an Act to Amend Chapter 380 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, the Public Utilities Act, Respecting Charitable Housing.

Mr. Speaker, I think all of us in our constituencies, have individuals and organizations that we have enormous pride in. An organization that I have enormous pride in is a group called Affirmative Ventures. Affirmative Ventures is a not-for-profit supportive housing organization that offers supports to those dealing with mental health issues. It provides housing, and it provides employment.

[4:45 p.m.]

As an MLA, I have had an opportunity to honour the great work being done by the staff at Affirmative Ventures and by the board of directors. I have had an opportunity to visit this supportive housing unit that we have in East Dartmouth, located on Main Street. It's wonderful to see the supports that are offered there, the dignity that people are able to live with there at Affirmative Ventures, and the mental health supports that are offered.

In many respects, and I say this as a point of pride, it is a template that we can emulate and model throughout Nova Scotia. We know there is a major housing issue in metro. We know that there's a housing issue in Nova Scotia. There are examples, however, where great things are being done. Affirmative Ventures has plans to expand its operations on Main Street in Dartmouth, which is wonderful.

They have a proven track record. Since 2007, they have provided supportive housing, affordable housing, often to our most vulnerable in society. I have seen those success stories of people being able to live independent lives, being able to live with dignity, being able to live within community. I have to say, I have noticed that for those who are living in that supportive housing unit, the cycle of poverty has been broken. For those of you who aren't aware of the great success of this not-for-profit supportive housing, I encourage you to visit. I encourage the minister responsible for housing, if he has an opportunity, to visit Affirmative Ventures. I would like to extend that invitation. I know the board of directors would love to have a visit so that they can show you their vision and their operations.

Bill No. 181 is very much a bill requesting government to analyze the Public Utilities Act through the lens of potentially waiving fees or reducing fees for not-for-profit supportive housing. It's a very specific ask in the bill. We all acknowledge in this House that yes, there are major housing issues. There are things that can be done now to help clear the obstacles, clear the regulatory red tape. I know this is the government that set up the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness to reduce red tape for entrepreneurs and to reduce red tape for organizations that are wishing to expand.

For those who are battling mental health issues, who are dealing with mental health issues, we know that this organization has a proven track record, a record going back to 2007. Affirmative Ventures provides housing supports and opportunities for employment. We have often spoke about the wraparound model. This is something they are doing now, designed by Dr. Norman Greenberg. It is a template and a model that I believe can be emulated throughout the province.

Of course, its mandate as an organization is to help those with disabilities achieve socio-economic independence. Plain and simple, with the supports that are offered through this not-for-profit housing unit, the cycle of poverty has been broken. It's remarkable to witness. I believe it's an organization that government needs to promote. It's an example that I think can be emulated throughout the province.

We know that one is able to achieve dignity and independence by living in community, by having those supports. Affirmative Ventures takes a comprehensive approach to end that cycle of poverty. The programming they offer is simply amazing.

The nature of this bill is asking the minister responsible for the Public Utilities Act to have a look at that Act. Have a look at it. What obstacles can be removed? Can we waive fees? Can we reduce fees as not-for-profit organizations expand? When Affirmative Ventures opened in 2007, the hook-up fee to Halifax Water was minimal in terms of the project going ahead. Now it's increased by 1,000 per cent.

I believe that this is an example where government can give that discretion to the regulator to waive or reduce fees. We need to support organizations like Affirmative Ventures who wish to expand their facilities. They are on the ground dealing with the housing issues now. It's another opportunity for government to show leadership. They're already providing the supports and they want to expand more housing units within Dartmouth to help our fellow residents.

Affirmative Ventures is currently in development of expanding their Main Street operations, and they expect to break ground in a few months. The genesis of this bill comes from consultations with their board of directors. When I asked them what government could do to help facilitate the expansion of this, they said that this is an opportunity for government to look at the obstacles within existing bills to affordable, supportive housing.

I believe a problem has been identified. I believe the government has an opportunity to offer a solution. I ask that the minister responsible for the Public Utilities Act meet with the board of directors to discuss this. Obviously, if the government passed this bill, I think this would be a great signal to Nova Scotians that there are things we can do to remove the red tape and to remove the obstacles to expanding affordable, supportive housing.

Again, Affirmative Ventures has been on Main Street since 2007. It has a 12-year track record of providing supportive housing. We know that the cost of hooking up a new

building has increased by 1,000 per cent for permit fees; 70 per cent of that is related to water costs. Why not lower or waive the fees for affordable, not-for-profit, supportive housing?

The bill isn't saying you must, but the bill is requesting the regulator to make those professional judgments, to give that flexibility. I've attempted to try to go through the formal channels, only to be told the way forward is to request that the government have a look at the Public Utilities Act. That, I think, is a good start for the government: review the Public Utilities Act through this lens. There is a great stakeholder out there waiting for you to be consulted with. I think this could be a very good step for the future of affordable, not-for-profit, supportive housing in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Occasionally, an Opposition bill comes forward to the House that has merit. As a government, we also know that finding affordable housing can be a challenge, especially with the prevalence of Airbnbs in the area.

The member for Dartmouth East has brought forward a bill that I'm ready to speak to. It is an Act to Amend Chapter 380 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Public Utilities Act, Respecting Charitable Housing. He has asked the government to show leadership on this. Bill No. 181 has been introduced and speaks of allowing regulated public utilities to charge lesser amounts for services performed in respect of charitable housing. I'm going to demonstrate how we already are showing leadership.

The government has already taken a number of steps to encourage community housing, including investing in home efficiency programs and looking at other initiatives around the community to lower costs through improvements resulting in energy efficiency. Those programs are funded through the government's General Revenue Fund.

The proposed Bill No. 181 has unintended consequences, and that is something that our Party has been very conscious of. We actually meet as a group before any legislation even gets to this House and discuss all the bills going forward to see if there are any unintended consequences that any of us can pick up before they go any further, and this is one where this bill would have done better with that.

First, the regulation of the utility rates undertaken by the independent Utility and Review Board is required to ensure cost recovery. These costs are recovered across all taxpayers.

Regulated utility costs are not funded by government through its General Revenue Fund, so lowering the rates among some ratepayers, such as is proposed in this bill, would mean that remaining taxpayers would have to face increases in utility costs. That would give us a two-tier system as far as utility costs go. This would increase utility costs to low-

income ratepayers who do not live in charitable housing, and ratepayers on fixed incomes such as seniors who also do not live in charitable housing.

Lowering the rates among some ratepayers, such as is proposed in this bill, would mean that the remaining ratepayers would have to face increases in utility costs.

Second, the administration of the proposed amendment has not been adequately considered. The definition of the services is very broad, and a new regulation would be needed for each charitable entity to be considered eligible. This is why the government has adopted the approach of programs to support community housing and avoids the negative consequences that Bill No. 181 would lead to.

More broadly, the government has already provided tax relief for low- and middle-income Nova Scotians. Since 2018, more than 500,000 Nova Scotians have benefited from an increase in the basic personal amount, the spousal amount, and the amount for an eligible dependant by \$3,000, from \$8,481 to \$11,481. That is concretely helping all Nova Scotians. This increase represents a 35 per cent enhancement.

The age amount credit for seniors has also increased by 35.4 per cent, from \$4,141 to \$5,606. These credit amounts have not been changed since 2011. An additional 63,000 tax filers no longer pay taxes. As for the government showing initiative, I think we can really highlight some of these, and thank you for the opportunity to do that.

Under the affordable housing, the province has created more affordable housing options for Nova Scotians by investing \$197.1 million as part of a federal-provincial agreement to strengthen housing programs. That's a lot of money. In total, more than \$394 million will go to affordable housing over 10 years. Government has invested close to \$212 million in housing over the past three years. That is an investment in Nova Scotians.

The three-year action plan is the first of three required under the 10-year Canada-Nova Scotia Housing Agreement. Nearly 3,000 Nova Scotian households in need will have access to more affordable housing options. The province is planning to invest approximately \$70 million to support provincial priorities in 2,500 more households in the province. Of the provincial cost-match funding of \$44 million, \$17.6 million represents new funding, and \$26.4 million is existing funding to support the continuation of current programs.

Trends impacting housing needs are population growth, low vacancy rates, increased rental rates, and access to affordable rental options outside of HRM. The first three years of the action plan will support over 2,000 existing housing units preserved, 250 public housing units repaired, and 300 community housing units repaired or redeveloped. That's a lot of people getting support.

[5:00 p.m.]

Over 1,300 low-income homeowners benefited from repair and adaptation programs. I know this is something that we've promoted in our office when we have seniors come into our homes and they want to be able to stay in their homes. They don't want to go to a nursing home, they don't want to go to other types of housing, they don't want to leave their homes, but they need help. We have government programs in place that allow them to do that.

A lady called me a few weeks ago and she had no water - no water all Summer. I can't imagine when the power goes out and we don't have any water for four hours, that's a hardship sometimes, but she had gone the whole Summer carrying her water. When Housing went into her home to have a look, she also didn't have any kitchen cupboards, she didn't have other things in her home. The Housing Authority went in, they're actually going to bring her house up to standard besides repairing her water issues. That now has been done.

Over 200 affordable rental housing units are made available through rehabilitation or new construction - 40 new affordable units in community housing sectors, 65 new rental units made available through the transformation fund. There are 200 expiring rent supplements that will continue and 230 new supplements will be created. That's something that I found when I was campaigning last time.

I went into an apartment building and almost all the residents in that building were senior ladies. They were mostly widows living on their own, they were living on one pension, struggling and paying a large part of their pensions to the rent. It was a fairly nice place to live and they wanted to be able to stay there but they had concerns. We were able to put them all in touch with Nova Scotia Housing and many of them since have been qualified for rent supplements and that is helping Nova Scotians. We have over 70 urban native units repaired in the first three years and four new units were constructed.

So, for a total we have over 2,300 rent supplements, over 11,000 public housing units, over 1,300 co-op not-for-profit houses. Places like the Elizabeth Fry Society and their well-known transition house or Alice House which we all heard about from our former colleague, it's a residence where women and children receive support after situations of abuse.

The projects being administered by the Nova Scotia Housing fall under categories of GHG mitigation. It's a portion of the green infrastructure fund that I was very happy was part of my role as Minister of Environment to bring that in. We were looking for ways that we could mitigate greenhouse gases and yet help Nova Scotians as well.

The Department of Energy and Mines is the lead department for the GHG stream under ICP. The GHG mitigation investment will focus on three targets, so it's about

emitting sectors in Nova Scotia, the electricity sector, transportation and buildings, and be guided by provincial strategic priorities. The projects being implemented by Housing Nova Scotia are a portion of the projects that the province is advancing as part of the GHG mitigation portion. That is just the start of the program and we know there is more to come.

As part of a 10-year investment, Phase 1 is a \$22 million project that will enable Housing Nova Scotia to accelerate and deepen retrofits to existing public housing stock in 112 buildings across the province, which are anticipated to reduce operating costs for those buildings, improve comfort, and cut greenhouse gas emissions. These are all helping Nova Scotians. The Housing Nova Scotia contribution would be \$11 million over four years; with a federal contribution of \$11 million, and provincial another \$11 million.

Saying all of that, occasionally an Opposition bill does come forward, comes to the floor that has merit. This is not one.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The member has run out of time.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to get up to speak about this bill which I think is actually a pretty good bill, all in all. Occasionally Opposition bills are tabled in this House that have some merit and this possibly could be one of them.

Before I begin my prepared notes, I just want to say that as I was preparing my late debate - hold on, folks, it's coming up - I was struck once again by the self-congratulatory tone of this Liberal government. We are in a crisis, we are in an affordable housing crisis, Mr. Speaker. I know the people in your constituency are facing a terrible crisis; certainly they are in my constituency, and certainly they are all over the province. I have heard from people all over the province who cannot afford a place to live.

You can talk, or one can talk, about rent supplements until one is blue in the face, but if there are not landlords who are going to allow rent supplements to be used in their buildings, if there are simply no units available, then rent supplements do zero good. They are great for the people who have them, but they are not going to do anything.

This government needs to start looking at the actual crisis and actual usable and meaningful solutions to the crisis. One of those things would be to build or renovate more social housing stock and - let's go a little bit further - allow there to be support for the people who live in those units.

Affirmative Ventures, as my colleague has already talked about, is a very good example. It's working very well. I was very happy to go and visit Affirmative Ventures last year to take a look at the units, which are beautiful, and to understand how important it is to have wraparound services for people who are precariously housed. I want to give a

shout-out as well to Affirmative Ventures and to David Harrison, who is working with the group on this next phase of their development.

This legislation recognizes the need to support affordable housing, and I think that lowering utility bills is a good way to do that. I think that this kind of rule should apply to not-for-profit housing widely, including supportive housing and co-op housing. Let's look at all of the different types of housing that could benefit from this.

There are 3,057 households in the federal riding of Dartmouth-Cole Harbour who spend more than 50 per cent of their income on rent and utilities. It's crucial that we work to make sure that there is enough affordable housing available so that every person has access to an affordable and adequate - and that's important, adequate - place to live.

We need to do whatever we can to support organizations like Affirmative Ventures and other not-for-profits or co-ops, and utility costs can be part of that. Of course it is very important to all Nova Scotians that electricity bills are affordable.

Let us talk for a moment about electricity bills. Stable rates are great, but if we are not lowering our bills, it doesn't really make any difference. I want to talk a little bit about energy poverty in general. It's a real issue in Nova Scotia. Energy poverty occurs when people have an unsustainable energy burden and cannot afford to pay their electricity bills. The Canada Energy Regulator describes a household as experiencing energy poverty if it spends more than 10 per cent of its income on utilities. Atlantic Canada has the highest proportion of households experiencing energy poverty across the country: 13 per cent compared to the national average of 8 per cent.

Obviously electricity is absolutely necessary. I believe it should be universally accessible to all people. Everyone needs to be able to turn on their lights, store and prepare their food, and heat their homes. Mr. Speaker, I know you know this - many people make very tough decisions. They have to choose between whether they pay their rent or they pay their power bill or they buy some food or they pay for their medications. We need to be able to support people who have to make these tough decisions and figure out ways of making those decisions less tough.

Income inadequacy is the primary reason, of course, that people are disconnected from their power. They can't afford to pay their bills. They have to make tough decisions. Arrears build up very easily for people who have inadequate incomes, and as I said, many people in the province are forced to make difficult choices.

The people in my office come in with this this issue every day. I've already talked in this House about power cut-off season - thank God that Nova Scotia Power doesn't cut off power in the middle of the Winter, but come the warmer days, people have accumulated arrears throughout the Winter and throughout the year, and there they are, unable to figure out a payment plan, even with advocacy and help. Sometimes it's simply impossible.

Our utilities, all of them, should be governed with the underlying principle that everyone should be able to access them. The ability to access energy efficiency relates to income as well, and I appreciate what my colleague across the floor was talking about with the government's efficiency programs. I've already stood up in this House and talked about how much I appreciate them.

I am going through one of them right now. I'm insulating my home, which I hope will reduce my energy bills, but it's super-expensive to pay for that work up front and, of course, not everyone can do that. I am, in fact, you know, using my line of credit to do it, we don't need to get into that. But anyhow, I'm lucky that I have access to a line of credit.

Upgrading appliances and retrofitting homes can be expensive in spite of the excellent programs that we already have. We need to expand the programs even more. We need to make them totally accessible to people on low incomes and we need to help people lower their electricity bills.

Nova Scotians with low income or fixed incomes are more likely to have higher electricity bills because they're less likely to afford the upfront costs associated with the energy retrofits. We need to be growing, expanding, and adding to the energy efficiency and retrofit programs that are already available. We need to make significant investments in energy efficiency and home retrofit programs. That would mean more money saved for Nova Scotians. And, of course, we know that all of this work would reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

I will remind the House that the current goals this government has in place for reducing greenhouse gas emissions are simply no longer adequate. We need to make sure that in our upcoming legislation that we have stricter and more stringent and totally accomplishable goals in place. That means we need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent below 1990 levels and we need to be at net zero by 2050.

Energy and efficiency are massive untapped sources of possible emissions reductions and they are massive untapped sources of green energy jobs. The new economy is in transforming the economy to green jobs. Mr. Speaker, this government is not showing the leadership we need to make this happen in our province.

The International Energy Association estimates that energy efficiency accounts for 49 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions and the reductions that we need to stay below 2 degrees of global warming - 49 per cent. That is a larger proportion than renewable energy or carbon capture. So, this is where we need to put our attention right now. Energy efficiency is cheaper than all the other options. In Nova Scotia it costs at least six cents to generate a kilowatt hour using the cheapest fossil fuel but efficiency costs just three cents to save a kilowatt hour.

We can reduce the demand on existing grids and the amount of added capacity that we need to build. So, I am going to stop talking about energy efficiency and go back to the bill at hand. We need to support efforts to adequately and affordably house all Nova Scotians, and lowering utility costs to organizations that are already doing that fine work is a really great place to do it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I stand today in support of my colleague from Dartmouth East and encourage all members of this House to support Bill No. 181, an Act to Amend Chapter 380 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Public Utilities Act, Respecting Charitable Housing. This bill is part of offering a solution to remove red tape and barriers that currently exist for builders and contractors and charitable organizations like my colleague spoke of, and possibly remove some of the capital costs that are involved in building affordable housing.

Any opportunity we can take to be innovative and to offer solutions, we must do so for the people of this province. That's our job. Status quo is not acceptable. As I listened to my colleague across the floor, I was thinking of the Ivany report and how the very first recommendation in the Ivany report spoke about true leadership. True leadership is setting aside partisan politics in order to set policy that is for the greater good. We need to do that. We can no longer afford in this province to make decisions based on Party politics. We have to do what is right for the people. We can no longer afford to go with old ways. We need to do what is right. That is why people elected us.

[5:15 p.m.]

Builders in this province want to provide affordable housing. They are faced every year with an increase in their property taxes, an increase on their supplies, and an increase in electricity and energy rates. It is getting more and more difficult for contractors and builders in this province to provide affordable housing. We need to do all we can to support those who are trying to do so, and that involves updating our legislation. That is why we are here: to update our legislation and be innovative.

Under the current government, Nova Scotia continues to be among the worst-performing economies in the country. We continue to pay the highest taxes in the country, and a direct result of that is we have the highest poverty rates in the country. This was brought up during Question Period. Our current approach to reducing poverty and making sure that everyone has a home is not working. We have the highest poverty rates in Canada, especially for children.

Mr. Speaker, 21.6 per cent of Nova Scotia's children live in poverty. Eighteen communities in Nova Scotia have child poverty rates of more than 30 per cent, and 10 of those 18 communities are in Cape Breton. Mr. Speaker, 37.4 per cent of all visible-minority

children are living in poverty in this province. Fighting poverty is not right wing and it's not left wing. It's about doing the right thing.

Many of you know in this House that I'm a registered nurse. I know that housing and lack of housing affects our health. In fact, it's number three in the determinants of health set out by the World Health Organization.

Also, when you think back to your study days back in school, you can think of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there are five levels. The most basic level is physiological, and that includes food, water, and shelter. If someone does not have proper shelter, proper housing, it is considered one of their most basic human needs and will directly negatively impact their health.

We know in this province that those with mental illness are not getting the help that they need, and often - without being seen by a psychiatrist, without getting a proper diagnosis and proper treatment - it leads to worsening mental illness, which often leads to homelessness, family breakdown, and drug addictions.

We see this here in Halifax. When I have the opportunity, I like to walk the streets and talk to those who are struggling and find out their story. Each one of the people who are holding out a cup for us to give them money is someone's son or daughter. They all have their stories. I love to find out more about what got them to where they are today, and they love to talk. They want their story to be heard and they want help. We have the same problem. I find that it is more visible sometimes in the city, but we have the same challenges in rural Nova Scotia. Sometimes it's more, but it's not as visible.

We have a homelessness problem in Cumberland County. One of the amazing workers I work with on a regular basis is Alison Lair, our homelessness coordinator. My staff and I rely on her heavily, as we see many people every week coming into our community - transients who need shelter. Thankfully, I also have a nice community group that are working towards building a shelter in our community - people like Affirmative Ventures. Let's be honest - we all know there are people in each one of our areas who have no shelter and no bed to lie on.

Recently, with Hurricane Dorian, on the Sunday morning a week after, I got a phone call - or actually it was a private message through Facebook - one morning around 7:00, from a man who asked if I knew of anybody who needed food. After I got his phone number, because I really wasn't sure what his message was, he said: Elizabeth, I'm a Nova Scotia Power worker and the company has been feeding us all week, bringing us a lot of food, and now we have almost all the repairs done but yet we have all this food left over this morning and we don't want to throw it in the garbage.

I said I'll be right there, and I came, and I got this food. I drove around our community and found people who were hungry; it was one of the most humbling

experiences. I met a man who is living in a home where there is no running water, there are no toilets, he is addicted to drugs. I had over a hundred breakfast sandwiches from that Nova Scotia Power crew and coffee.

It is very eye-opening, and I encourage every one of us to get out into our communities, go to the areas where people are struggling the most and really get to know how we can help these people. And, one of the ways we can help these people is by ensuring they have shelter and they have home. This bill that my colleague has put forth provides an opportunity for builders and contractors to have some flexibility; if we could introduce this bill.

It's time for us to take the blinders off. It's time for us to see where real change is needed, and I believe we can do that. I know in the PC caucus my colleagues and I, and I'm sure you are the same, we care. We care about the people in this province - in urban Nova Scotia, in rural Nova Scotia - and we want people to get access to the basic cares that they need every day. We want to lift people up out of poverty. We want people to excel.

You know that as a society, we are only as strong as the person who is struggling the most. When we see someone in need, we need to do everything we can to empower and to build that person up. We must remove the barriers for our entrepreneurs and for our community groups, like Affirmative Ventures Association, that are trying to do better and build up our communities and make improvements.

We need to strive to build up every citizen, Mr. Speaker, so they can be the best that they can be and that together we can have a better province to live in for every citizen in this province.

On one final note, I will just encourage and implore everyone to reread the Ivany report, and to take some time to reflect about what real leadership is. Real leadership is not voting along party lines - it's about voting for what is best. I believe that the bill my colleague has put forth today is innovative, it's part of a solution that we can find ways to provide more housing for those in this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, that concludes an insightful day of Opposition member business.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, insightful indeed. I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, Thursday, October 10th 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 on Private and Local Bill No. 183; second reading on Public Bill

No. 180 and 187; and if time permits, Committee of the Whole House on Bills for Bills Nos. 152, 160, 163, 166 and 170.

With that, I move that the House do now rise for today.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to adjourn to meet tomorrow, Thursday, October 10th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We have reached the moment of interruption. The topic as submitted by the honourable member for Pictou West is:

“Therefore be it resolved that the Liberal Government has failed to properly manage the Nova Scotia to Maine ferry contract causing the loss of the 2019 sailing season, creating hardship for tourism operators and costing the province \$19.9 million.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

GOV'T. (N.S.) MANAGEMENT OF MAINE FERRY CONTRACT - FAILURE

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, it's with great disappointment to rise and speak about what has happened with this ferry situation, certainly over the last few years, but definitely in this year where gross mismanagement of the contract of the arrangements has led to the loss of the entire season.

There has not been one crossing that brought tourists to Nova Scotia this year. Despite the fact that there has not been one crossing, the taxpayers of this province have paid \$20 million to the operator. The only way that that can be described is as a gross mismanagement of the situation. There's a lot that our tourism industry could do with \$20 million.

It is a situation my colleague from Sackville-Cobequid eloquently summed up - ferry, yes; mismanagement, no. We don't have room in this province for mismanagement, certainly not mismanagement of this scale. Tourism is incredibly important to this province. It's an incredible opportunity for this province.

I think about what has happened to some of the most significant ambassadors for this province. Some of the best promotional material for this province comes from the film

industry. That's also an industry that has been under siege by this government. This government said, look, the subsidies to the film industry of \$25 million is way, way, way too much. We're not doing it, we're cutting that.

Then on the other hand, here we are right now, as a result of their mismanagement, as a result of their lack of vision, as a result of their basic disconnectedness with the business world, in a situation where zero tourists have come to Nova Scotia this year on the ferry.

When we raise questions about the ferry, when we raise questions about the QEII, when we raise questions about the crane, when we raise questions of this government, their lack of confidence shows. Their lack of confidence in their own decisions comes through in a massive attack situation. When we ask questions, we're perceived as negative. They're just questions.

We have been foreseeing this situation with this ferry for four years. The contract was never a good contract. It was never a contract under which Nova Scotia would win. It just wasn't going to happen. Now, sadly, that prophecy is coming true, and Nova Scotians are not winning. They're losing in this situation - 20 million times over just this year.

This government lost sight of the importance of our tourism industry when it turned the page and focused purely on political rhetoric. They lost sight of the fact that what really mattered was investing taxpayer money in growing our tourism industry. They have totally given up on that. They have totally focused on the politics of it. The politics of this situation never supported their rhetoric.

This ferry from Yarmouth to the United States has only ever been successful under PC Governments - only PC Governments. I would put the record of the PC Government in establishing a reliable, sustainable, productive link against any government. It wouldn't even be a fair match against this one.

Would you care to take a guess, Mr. Speaker, how many tourists travelled on the ferry run by the PC Government in 2002? It's not 100,000. It's not 200,000. It's not even 300,000. I think most members of this Chamber would be surprised to realize that 330,000 people travelled on the ferry when the PC Government operated it.

That's not 330,000 times more than the Liberals will deliver this year because anything times zero is still zero, Mr. Speaker. It's a lot, lot more. This government could only dream of having a ferry that's as successful as this government knows can happen. The PC Government knows what's possible. We are well beyond planning to a podium. We are totally focused on getting results for taxpayers.

I could talk about the investments in the ferry over the years under the PC Government in 2006 - a million bucks. That's what was invested in the ferry. In 2009, that was up to \$8.9 million, and we know what happened after 2009.

[5:30 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, a little bit of returning to reality might be in order. The reality is that PC Governments operated ferries that brought hundreds of thousands of people to this province for a fraction of the price. This government has brought zero this year for \$20 million. I don't know a Nova Scotian not sitting in the Liberal caucus who thinks that's a good thing. There's nobody - that's a terrible, terrible situation. Last year might have been their most successful, by their standards from the other years it probably was a success. I don't think they can do much better; they had 41,000 people on the ferry last year.

The price, \$20 million is kind of what they spend. They don't need a result for it. I will put the record of the PC Government against this government any single day of the week. The mismanagement of the contract can only sit at the feet of this government. I know they had a lot of strong words of the NDP's abilities with the contract that the NDP negotiated - I think most people will remember this wonderful image of multiple Liberal cabinet ministers standing on a wharf saying they ripped up that terrible NDP contract and they saved the day with this new wonderful contract that we now, through the fullness of time, know was a wonderful contract that the operator gets paid for doing nothing.

Not only that, not a single person has travelled on this. We know the decisions around the timing to move from Portland. When they moved from Portland to Bar Harbor, they said Portland was never really a good idea anyway; of course we're moving it. Why did you do it in the first place? These are the types of mismanagement. Then they moved to Bar Harbor, the timing of that decision costs us to lose an entire year.

I know the member for Yarmouth says that we had to move, we were essentially kicked out because we were such a bad tenant. That's not true, the customs agency has said we could have stayed another year, but they didn't have the foresight to understand. They didn't actually understand that moving tourists was the most important aspect of this ferry. They believed that trying to undermine political opponents who ask questions is the most important thing. There's a strong, strong disconnect, and the reason for their failure is because they don't understand it's about Nova Scotia.

It's about managing taxpayer money to get the ultimate return. That's what this is about. If any member opposite stands up and says that \$20 million for this season was a good investment, they don't understand how hard Nova Scotians work for their tax money. The fallout with the contracts is evident anywhere but it's only the tip of the iceberg, and their mistakes - no federal money for this. They never asked for federal money when they had their Liberal cousins in the majority government there; they never thought to do that.

They don't have a vessel after this year. The Premier said he is totally confident that they'll have the same vessel next year. We know that the U.S. Navy is retendering it. Any guesses what might happen to the price on that tender when their only customer says we'll pay whatever you want? This is a situation that has been mismanaged from the very beginning by a government that doesn't understand business. No boat for next year, who knows what port we'll try next year because this one's not ready; maybe we'll just try another with \$10 million or \$12 million of taxpayer money.

The real impact and the real shame of this is on Nova Scotians and it's on tourism operators. It's people I speak to from that region who are paying a price for this government's mismanagement. They will find a litany of people to blame, but once they're ready to accept what happened I can hand them the mirror because that's where they should be looking.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't say that I often agree with the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, but every once in a while I agree with certain things he says. One of the things that I agree with is that this ferry file is a bit of a mess. The people who are suffering the most are the people in Yarmouth and the tourism operators who are not having any business after waiting on tenterhooks all summer to see if that boat would ever sail.

The work on this file is a mess. The government has kept information, very important information, about the management of this ferry service secret, and this is something we've been seeing over the last several months on a bunch of different files. The ferry has been kept secret; we don't know about that agreement with the management company. We don't know about the Deloitte report; we can't have access to the Deloitte report, which talks about the reasoning for building P3 hospitals. We can't see RFPs or value-for-money reports on any of the other proposals to build P3 infrastructure in Nova Scotia.

The government uses the excuse that if they offer up the info, or if they offer up the management contract, or if they offer up any of this information, then somehow it will be bad for business for Nova Scotia. In fact, we know from all kinds of other jurisdictions that when this kind of information is released, it doesn't harm business; it doesn't stop companies from bidding on business in Nova Scotia or in the province where they do release the information. It's just a false narrative. It's interesting, in 2012, when the Premier was the Leader of the Liberals, he tabled legislation about this very kind of thing.

I want to read from a newspaper article from when legislation was tabled back in 2012. The Premier said: "Our legislation will let any Nova Scotian demand the details of an economic development assistance package entered into with the province . . . The company and the government will have to give the agreement, its terms, and the company

will have to show how effectively it is meeting the terms and targets set out in the agreement.” I will table that article when I get it off my phone. It’s a fascinating turn of events. How much can change from 2012 to 2019. Somehow, somewhere we’ve lost sight of being able to allow the public to know what the heck is going on.

I will quickly mention the Premier’s comments today in Question Period about the Public Accounts Committee. Well, guess what? The Public Accounts Committee can’t get any answers either. Even with our limited scope now in Public Accounts Committee, we have had the opportunity to have certain deputy ministers come to the committee to talk about some of these projects, and guess what? They won’t answer the questions when they’re witnesses of the committee, so we have a real issue. We can’t really tell what’s going on, what the problems are because no information is being released, and to me that seems to be at the heart of a lot of this.

Since 2015, though, getting back to the actual issue at hand, the current government has had 11 Liberal Members of Parliament in the House of Commons with whom they could lobby, with whom they could work as counterparts, to try to secure federal funding for the ferry in Nova Scotia. To date, with all of those 11 Liberal MPs in the House of Commons, we have not been able to secure federal funding for this international ferry route, which could really help the whole situation.

This Liberal Government and the federal Liberals should have been able to recognize the importance of the ferry to regional economic development. Instead of showing leadership on this file, this government has bungled it. They’ve kept the residents and business owners in Yarmouth on the line all season, promising that the ferry would sail. They’ve disappointed American tourists who were planning to make a trip to Nova Scotia, but they’ve cancelled their trip because no ferry service has been available. I think it is safe to say that the Oxford sinkhole has brought more tourists to Nova Scotia this Summer than the ferry. (Interruptions) Well, it is true.

But seriously - and I don’t want to make light of it because it’s a very serious situation. It’s a very serious situation for the tourism operators and the people of Yarmouth who were depending on that economic impact. They’ve offered no compensation to the people of Yarmouth or those tourism operators for this delay in service. “Delay in service” - it’s funny to just keep calling it a delay, this non-service.

I will reiterate that this government is a government that loves to congratulate itself on its excellent progress on so many files. This government likes to defend itself, but all of this stuff shows just how out of touch this Liberal Government is. The government can’t admit that there is a problem even when there is a problem staring them in the face. This failure to recognize major problems is a recurring issue.

I have to say that I do believe it contributes to the general population’s dissatisfaction with politicians and politics in general. I think when we don’t get any

answers from our governments and our leaders, and we don't get any explanations but what we get is standing ovations and self-congratulatory slaps on the back, people are very disillusioned with politics right now, and it is not for the lack of trying to move the conversation forward from this side of the House.

This government's handling of the ferry issue is not unlike their handling of the health care crisis. For years, despite dangerously overcrowded emergency rooms, seniors looking for long-term care stranded in hospital beds, kids suffering in silence without mental health supports, and everyone struggling to find access to primary care through a family doctor or a nurse practitioner, this government refuses to admit there is a crisis.

This government's handling of the ferry is not unlike their handling of the housing crisis that is gripping Nova Scotia that we've already spoken about today in the House. As people search for housing, they are facing a perfect storm of exploding short-term rental markets, uncontrolled rent increases, and the consequences of a generation of deprivation of our public affordable housing stock.

This Liberal Government has celebrated their totally inadequate response, behaving as if there is no housing crisis at all. The people of Nova Scotia deserve better than a government that pretends there is nothing wrong and refuses to talk about the issues, even if it's their fault. The people of Nova Scotia deserve a government that takes responsibility and takes action.

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

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to stand and discuss this issue that is gravely important to tourism operators across this province and particularly in southwestern Nova Scotia. I want to begin by thanking our Premier and the current Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and the two former Ministers of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal who were stewards on this file and helped us re-establish a lost ferry link that lost this province millions of dollars in revenue.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a tough Summer for Yarmouth, without question, and we're seeing that reflected in the numbers. Yarmouth and Acadian Shores in the previous three years with that ferry running were leading the province in increase in room bookings. We were leading the way, there's about \$70 million attached to the tourism industry, and things were going really well.

This year we ran into some real trouble for three key reasons:

(1) Enhanced border security protocol and expectations on the U.S. side of the border. Anyone who has paid attention to the news and sees what's happening in the U.S. around border security, the direction that is coming from the White House on border

security and what is happening on the southern border, can understand that that is affecting our situation right now with our border;

(2) We had a government shutdown that prevented us from getting through the certification process to build our building, which was unfortunate; and

(3) There was a very real situation in Portland that was creating a long-term concern. Portland wanted to lease half the land back that we were using for parking, for processing customs, and there was no guarantee that we were going to be able to keep that land in the future. Furthermore, we would still have to build a certified border security building, the same as we're doing in Bar Harbor, in Portland.

I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition will blame this on provincial government management, but I have yet to see an argument presented by him to explain what he would do differently or what any government on this side of the border could do differently when faced with these three challenges that have proven to be fairly insurmountable. We haven't heard an alternative plan from that Party.

A big challenge we've had on this ferry issue is the fact that it has been a hot political potato since 2009 when the NDP cut the service. We made it a political issue; we brought it back. The fact that it has remained a political hot potato has resulted in a few negative things for the tourism industry and the service. It is not becoming normalized yet. People aren't accepting the fact that this is a viable service and that it needs to run. I think a big part of that, in recent years, in the last number of years, has been because of the Progressive Conservative position on this ferry service.

[5:45 p.m.]

Even in the years when this was running and doing well and generating economic activity, we had the Party opposite - under its previous Leader and its current Leader - fomenting opposition to this service from one end of the province to the next, undermining market confidence in it, and undermining banking and financing confidence in the tourism sector.

You don't need to take my word for that. The chamber of commerce and the tourism industry actually has said those things publicly themselves, and I will table some of their comments, where they implore the Opposition Party to stop using this critical investment as a political gain.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition has done that by spreading three key pieces of misinformation to the public. One around cost, suggesting this cost is outside of the realm of the historic subsidy - not just to this service, but also it is very much in line with the historic subsidy for our other ferry services that are run by Bay Ferries Limited in Digby and in Pictou. In fact, this ferry service, when you look at the per passenger subsidy,

actually comes in between those two - a little bit less than the Pictou service, a little bit more than Digby.

The Leader of the Official Opposition suggested that when the Progressive Conservative government was operating that ferry service back in the early 2000s, it was doing great, it was doing wonderful. While the Progressive Conservative government was in power then, I will remind the Leader of the Official Opposition that it was Bay Ferries operating that service. The same company that the Leader of the Official Opposition is taking to court; the same company that the Leader of the Official Opposition has vilified, suggesting that they only care about the bottom line and don't care about the economic impact to this province.

The same company that actually, under our contract, for the first time in Nova Scotian history, is servicing that vessel on the Canadian side of the border. It is fueled, it is fed, and there are staff working on this side of the border, and that is the first time that has happened even with the past Marine Atlantic vessel.

The Leader of the Official Opposition has said as recently as last week, that there are no Canadians working for Bay Ferries on the crew of this ferry. That's not true. There are over 40 employees directly employed locally with Bay Ferries, who are working on that boat and who are working to support the services that boat provides.

The third point of misinformation - something we are very proud of is that we are employing Canadians to provide this service and to suggest otherwise is not true. It's an American flag vessel, so there needs to be American crew on that. There was no other vessel on the market to make that run and no other company to provide that run either that we believe would be viable.

The other big point that I believe is misleading to the public is on this issue of transparency. The fact of the matter is, every single dollar spent on this service is made available to the public for public consumption. It is available on our budget documents and it's available to the budget that we vote on. What is kept confidential is the proprietary information around the management fee. The same management fees that you find in home care providers, the VON, in road builders - they have similar management fees.

Our home care, our long-term care facilities, all these companies - many of them, I should say - that provide these services actually do maintain confidentiality around their management fees because that is how they compete for these contracts; we get different doctors, as well. We have never seen one member of the Opposition stand up and attack any one of those organizations for keeping their management fee confidential. It just hasn't happened. It's only been targeted toward this service.

I really do hope that people are paying attention to the words of the Leader of the Official Opposition. It's interesting that he has waited until this moment of vulnerability,

where we are unable to break through some barriers we have on the U.S. side of the border, to say he now supports this ferry service.

A moment of sheer political vulnerability for the government, but a moment of serious financial and economic vulnerability for people in the tourism sector. (Interruption)

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

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, if people doubt what I am saying on this, I believe the intention of the members opposite - not all of them - is to continually undermine this service and to foment opposition to it. They are staking a political flag in the ground on the failure of this service and are hoping that it fails so that they can gain politically.

If you do doubt me, I hope people pay attention to what happens after this debate, because I believe this is for social media consumption. The bombastic speech that was given by the Leader of the Official Opposition will be posted on Facebook and I want tourism operators and supporters of this ferry service to read the comments that his speech has inspired on social media, and you tell me if you think the Leader of the Official Opposition is supportive of this ferry service. I encourage people to do that.

The fact of the matter is, the Leader of the Official Opposition will stand and rail bombastically about how this has been mismanaged from the get-go. Yet he has never offered one solution to the challenges that we faced, including the ones with the U.S. government right now and the situation in Portland. He has never even mentioned an alternative company or another operator that could provide the service, and I don't think he's aware of any. He's also never mentioned a different route that could be run.

If everything about this contract has been mismanaged, perhaps at the very least the Leader of the Official Opposition could stand in his place and say what he would do differently. To suggest that this government is secretive is a big stretch when he attacks this contract and can't even present an alternative vision for it. If he has one, perhaps he should share it, because we'd love to hear it.

I know the Leader of the Official Opposition hasn't taken the words of the tourism industry seriously when they've asked him to tone down the rhetoric on this. I know he hasn't even listened to the former member - who is the most senior member of his caucus - for Argyle-Barrington.

I'll remind the member that when this came up before, the former member for Argyle-Barrington stated, I wish it was completely different. I wish it would go away - speaking about the ferry - I'm trying to make it go away, but I'm one person around a caucus table and I think I can't get there.

I do hope that the new member for Argyle-Barrington has more success than the previous because this is an important issue that affects a lot of people. The people of my community, the people in the tourism industry across this province who know the importance of this service, who experienced the economic benefit over the course of the last three years before this disruption - my message to them is, we believe in you, we believe in the service, and this government will never stop fighting for this ferry service.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the government should just say they're sorry for not providing a service this year.

THE SPEAKER: If there are no other speakers, that concludes late debate for tonight.

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

[The House rose at 5:52 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1299**

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Edna J. Leshan wrote; and

Whereas on July 18, 2019, Jessica Boudreau and Brice Whynot welcomed their son Hudson Daniel Roger Whynot into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jessica and Brice on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 1300

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas Ryleigh Ireland was taken ill with a seizure at school in October 2017 and had stopped breathing; and

Whereas the actions and quick-thinking of the staff enabled everyone to be kept safe; and

Whereas Sonya Cook picked his mother up from work in Bridgewater, Terry Stewart stayed with her at Queens General Hospital, Holly Grant stayed with Ryleigh until the emergency services arrived and Jill Lushener continued to keep in regular contact with his mother;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the staff at the South Queens Middle School for their care and compassion towards Ryleigh as their efforts that day will forever be remembered by the family.

RESOLUTION NO. 1301

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (Eastern Shore)

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

Whereas Chris Tait is a resident of Lake Echo and has been an active volunteer for many initiatives in his community; and

Whereas Chris Tait has been a member of the Station 21 District Volunteer Fire Department for five years, answering the call of duty 24/7;

Whereas volunteer firefighters and other emergency first responders play a vital role in keeping our communities safe.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chris Tait for giving his time and talents for the safety of the area residents who are served by the Station 21 District Volunteer Fire Department.

RESOLUTION NO. 1302

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (Eastern Shore)

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

Whereas Neil McCarrol is a resident of Mineville and has been an active volunteer for many initiatives in his community; and

Whereas Neil McCarrol has been a member of the Station 20 District Volunteer Fire Department for five years, answering the call of duty 24/7;

Whereas volunteer firefighters and other emergency first responders play a vital role in keeping our communities safe.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Neil McCarrol for giving his time and talents for the safety of the area residents who are served by the Station 20 District Volunteer Fire Department.

RESOLUTION NO. 1303

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (Eastern Shore)

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

Whereas Brennan Handy is a long-time resident of Musquodoboit Harbour and has been an active volunteer for many initiatives in his community; and

Whereas Brennan Handy has been a member of the Station 24 District Volunteer Fire Department for five years, answering the call of duty 24/7;

Whereas volunteer firefighters and other emergency first responders play a vital role in keeping our communities safe.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Brennan Handy for giving his time and talents for the safety of the area residents who are served by the Station 24 District Volunteer Fire Department.

RESOLUTION NO. 1304

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (Eastern Shore)

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

Whereas Izaak David is a long-time resident of Conrod Settlement and has been an active volunteer for many initiatives in his community; and

Whereas Izaak David has been a member of the Station 23 District Volunteer Fire Department for five years, answering the call of duty 24/7;

Whereas volunteer firefighters and other emergency first responders play a vital role in keeping our communities safe.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Izaak David for giving his time and talents for the safety of the area residents who are served by the Station 23 District Volunteer Fire Department.

RESOLUTION NO. 1305

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (Eastern Shore)

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

Whereas Jami Smith is a long-time resident of West Petpeswick and has been an active volunteer for many initiatives in his community; and

Whereas Jami Smith has been a member of the Station 24 District Volunteer Fire Department for five years, answering the call of duty 24/7;

Whereas volunteer firefighters and other emergency first responders play a vital role in keeping our communities safe.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Jami Smith for giving her time and talents for the safety of the area residents who are served by the Station 24 District Volunteer Fire Department.

RESOLUTION NO. 1306

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (Eastern Shore)

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

Whereas Kyle Crane is a resident of Lake Echo and has been an active volunteer for many initiatives in his community; and

Whereas Kyle Crane has been a member of the Station 21 District Volunteer Fire Department for five years, answering the call of duty 24/7;

Whereas volunteer firefighters and other emergency first responders play a vital role in keeping our communities safe.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Kyle Crane for giving his time and talents for the safety of the area residents who are served by the Station 21 District Volunteer Fire Department.

RESOLUTION NO. 1307

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (Eastern Shore)

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

Whereas Luke Lachance is a long-time resident of West Petpeswick and has been an active volunteer for many initiatives in his community; and

Whereas Luke Lachance has been a member of the Station 24 District Volunteer Fire Department for fifteen years, answering the call of duty 24/7;

Whereas volunteer firefighters and other emergency first responders play a vital role in keeping our communities safe.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Luke Lachance for giving his time and talents for the safety of the area residents who are served by the Station 24 District Volunteer Fire Department.

RESOLUTION NO. 1308

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (Eastern Shore)

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

Whereas Mike Stevens is a long-time resident of Eastern Shore and has been an active volunteer for many initiatives in his community; and

Whereas Mike Stevens has been a member of the Station 23 District Volunteer Fire Department for twenty years, answering the call of duty 24/7;

Whereas volunteer firefighters and other emergency first responders play a vital role in keeping our communities safe.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Mike Stevens for giving his time and talents for the safety of the area residents who are served by the Station 23 District Volunteer Fire Department.

RESOLUTION NO. 1309

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (Eastern Shore)

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

Whereas Neil Lewis is a resident of Eastern Shore and has been an active volunteer for many initiatives in his community; and

Whereas Neil Lewis has been a member of the Station 23 District Volunteer Fire Department for five years, answering the call of duty 24/7;

Whereas volunteer firefighters and other emergency first responders play a vital role in keeping our communities safe.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Neil Lewis for giving his time and talents for the safety of the area residents who are served by the Station 23 District Volunteer Fire Department.