



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS:	
Govt. (N.S.): New W. Bedford Sch. - Early Fr. Immersion Requested, Hon. K. Regan.....	4017
Govt. (N.S.): Assistive Equip. for ALS - Fin. Support Requested, Susan Leblanc	4018
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 1310, Atl. Trades Bus. Seal Prog.: All Indigenous/All Journeypersons - Congrats., The Premier	4019
Vote - Affirmative.....	4019
Res. 1311, World Mental Health Day: Impact of Suicide - Recog., Hon. R. Delorey	4020
Vote - Affirmative.....	4020
Res. 1312, World Mental Health Day: SchoolsPlus Support - Recog., Hon. Z. Churchill	4021
Vote - Affirmative.....	4022

Res. 1313, <i>Seeking Home</i> : Chinese Comm. Milestones - Recog., Hon. L. Metlege Diab	4022
Vote - Affirmative.....	4023
Res. 1314, Customer Serv. Wk.: Pub. Serv. - Thanks, Hon. P. Arab	4023
Vote - Affirmative.....	4024
Res. 1315, Intl. Day of the Girl: Unscripted, Unstoppable - Recog., Hon. K. Regan.....	4024
Vote - Affirmative.....	4025
Res. 1316, Surette, Allister: Award, Ordre des francophones d'Amérique - Congrats., Hon. L. Metlege Diab.....	4025
Vote - Affirmative.....	4026
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
No. 189, House of Assembly Act, Hon. M. Furey.....	4026
No. 190, Health Authorities Act, T. Martin	4027
No. 191, Candidacy of Municipal Councillors for Other Elected Offices, Hon. C. Porter	4027
No. 192, Municipal Elections Act, Hon. C. Porter	4027
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:	
Hfx. Wanderers: Successful Season - Congrats., T. Houston.....	4027
World Mental Health Day: Link to Safe, Affordable Housing - Recog., L. Roberts.....	4028
Tri-Co. Mental Health Ctr.: Grand Opening - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	4028
World Mental Health Day: Care of Others - Recog., J. Lohr	4029
World Mental Health Day: Community-based Orgs. - Need Support, T. Martin	4029
Coady Intl. Instit.: 60 Yrs. Building a Better World - Congrats., Hon. R. Delorey	4030
Crawford, Kim - Physician: Honorary Membership Award - Congrats., K. Masland.....	4030
Dartmouth Ferry Crew: Overboard Rescue - Thanks, C. Chender	4031
Bagnell, Hughie: Facilitating Mental Wellness - Recog., Hon. L. Glavine.....	4032
U15 Albions Baseball Team: Atl. Champs - Congrats., Hon. P. Dunn.....	4032
World Mental Health Day: LGBTQ2+-inclusive Care - Recog., Susan Leblanc	4033
World Mental Health Day - SchoolsPlus Province-wide Access, Hon. L. Kousoulis.....	4033

Boss, Gordon H.: Death of - Tribute, T. Rushton.....	4034
World Mental Health Day: Citadel SchoolsPlus Team - Thanks, Hon. L. Metlege Diab	4034
Fraser, Caitlyn - Dentist: Vital Award - Congrats., K. Bain	4035
e-Mental Health Serv.: New Ways of Access - Recog., B. Horne.....	4035
Champniss, Michelle: Jazz Fest., Sackville - Congrats., S. Craig	4035
Laing House: Youth Mental Health Support - Recog., H. MacKay.....	4036
Mental Health: Pub. Sch. Outreach - Recog., Suzanne Lohnes-Croft	4036
Art of Rebellion: Tattoo Artists - Welcome, E. Smith-McCrossin.....	4037
Phoenix Youth: Support in Mulgrave Park - Recog., L. Roberts.....	4037
E. Passage Youth Ctr.: Phys. and Mental Wellness - Recog., Hon. T. Ince	4038
After Warranty Automotive: 25 Yrs. in Bus. - Congrats., B. Johns.....	4038
Davignon, Gabe: N.S. Ntl. Basketball Team: Congrats., Hon. I. Rankin.....	4038
LeBlanc, Matt/Dugas, Kathleen: Carnival. Comm. Fundraising - Thanks, B. Adams.....	4039
Supporting Workplace Health - Reflection, A. Paon.....	4039
DiLiberatore, Angela - Teacher: Combat Bullying - Recog., Hon. P. Arab	4040
Donkin Brass Band: 100 th Anniv. - Congrats., B. Comer	4040
John Martin Jr. High: 1000+ Food Drive - Thanks, Susan Leblanc	4041
Billard, Andrew - Multi-medallist: Intl. Regatta - Congrats., B. Jessome.....	4041
Mojarkish, Khaled - Restaurateur: Stn. 1 Lebanese Kitchen - Welcome, T. Halman	4042
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:	
No. 781, Prem. - One Person One Record: Technology - Modernize, T. Houston.....	4043
No. 782, Prem. - Hurricane Dorian: Crane Compens. - Double Standard, G. Burrill.....	4045
No. 783, H&W - 811 Serv.: Consultant's Rpt. - Table, B. Adams.....	4046

No. 784, H&W - C.B. Reg. Hosp.: Surgery Cancellations - Reason, T. Martin	4047
No. 785, Prem. - Military Health Care: Fed. Funding Cut - Impact, T. Houston.....	4049
No. 786, EECD - Pre-Primary: Inadequate Roll-out - Explain, T. Halman	4050
No. 787, EECD - Pre-Primary: Inclusion Training - Expand, T. Halman	4052
No. 788, EECD - ECES: Unappreciated and Underpaid - Action, T. Halman	4053
No.789, EECD - Behavioural Supports: Current Approach - Agree, B. Comer	4055
No. 790, TIR - QEII Redev.: RFP - Secrecy, Susan Leblanc	4056
No. 791, EECD: Grad. Rate - Math Literacy, T. Halman	4057
No. 792, EECD - HRCE: Student Busing - Details, T. Halman	4058
No. 793, EECD: School Supplies - Responsibility, T. Halman	4060
No. 794, EECD: School Libraries - Standards, E. Smith-McCrossin.....	4061
No. 795, Bus. - Scotch Lake Rd. (C.B.): Internet/Cell Serv. - Improve, K. Bain	4062
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 180, Fatality Investigations Act	
Hon. M. Furey.....	4064
K. Masland.....	4068
C. Chender	4069
B. Adams.....	4070
S. Craig	4071
Hon. M. Furey.....	4073
Vote - Affirmative.....	4075
No. 187, House of Assembly Act	
Hon. M. Furey.....	4075
K. Masland.....	4076
C. Chender	4076
Hon. M. Furey.....	4077
Vote - Affirmative.....	4077
HOUSE RESOLVED INTO CWH ON BILLS AT 3:46 P.M.	4078
HOUSE RECONVENED AT 4:03 P.M.....	4078
CWH REPORTS.....	4078
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Fri., Oct. 11 th at 9:00 a.m.....	4079



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause reads as follows:

“Therefore Be It Resolved that we, the parents and general residents of West Bedford, Kingswood, and surrounding communities are asking the Halifax Regional Centre for Education, the Honorable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and the Government of the Province of Nova Scotia to invest in our community by ensuring that the new school scheduled to be built in West Bedford be an Early French Immersion Elementary School.”

Mr. Speaker, there are 149 signatures affixed to this petition, and I have affixed my own.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition which has the operative clause:

“We the undersigned residents of Nova Scotia endorse annual funding in the amount of \$140,000 to support the purchase of mobility, breathing, and other types of assistive equipment for people living with ALS and the related costs of running an equipment loan program (staffing, warehousing, delivery, maintenance, insuring, etc.).”

Mr. Speaker, there are 2,530 signatures on this, and I have affixed my own, in accordance with the rules.

THE SPEAKER: I’ll take that petition under advisement and have a chance to review the wording. I’m not quite sure on the wording.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): May I do an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

THE PREMIER: Joining us in the East Gallery, from Membertou, are Karen Kabatay-MacLean and Ryan Gould. They are both members of the first all-Indigenous, all-journeypersons graduating class from the Atlantic Trades Business Seal Program.

Karen is a certified Red Seal cook and executive sous-chef with 17 years of culinary experience - I’m sure you’re much better at doing it than I am at pronouncing it. Ryan is a certified Red Seal plumber. He started his own business, Rusty Pipes Plumbing and Heating, this past May.

Also in attendance with them is Donna MacGillivray and Dale Crawford, who are joining them on behalf of the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency. I'd ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

You who are in the trades - if you decide you want to change careers, you can always become the Premier.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1310

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

Whereas the first all-Indigenous and all-journeypersons cohort graduated from the Atlantic Trades Business Seal Program on September 28th; and

Whereas this program is helping many Atlantic Canadian journeypersons advance their careers by preparing them for managerial roles, starting their own business, or advancing businesses they already own; and

Whereas the magnitude of talent in this cohort is nothing short of impressive, and the contribution to a strong and inclusive workforce will impact communities for years to come;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House join me in congratulating Karen Kabatay-MacLean, Ryan Gould, Austin Christmas, Sheridan Gould, Edward Johnson, Paul Adams, Jr., and Michael Isadore on their accomplishments and wish them much success.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

RANDY DELOREY: In our East Gallery, joining us are Darrell Johnston and Jill Chappell from the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia. If they could rise, and I invite my colleagues to please provide them a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1311

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

Whereas today, October 10, 2019, is World Mental Health Day, a time for us to unite in our efforts to improve the mental health of people around the world; and

Whereas this year's theme is centred around suicide prevention, to raise awareness of the scale of suicide globally and the role each of us play to help prevent it; and

Whereas suicide is a serious and complex public health issue that is the result of biological, psychological, social, cultural, and environmental factors;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the impact of suicide on hundreds of Nova Scotian families each year and commit to help eliminate the stigma of mental illness.

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.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Joining us in the East Gallery today are representatives of our SchoolsPlus program. As I mention your name, please stand. We have Robert Bartlett, school-based mental health social worker at Duncan MacMillan High and Musquodoboit Rural High; Maura Donovan, SchoolsPlus leader, Halifax Regional Centre for Education; Lynn MacKenzie, human outreach worker at Island View family of schools; Emily Forrest, community outreach worker, Dartmouth High family of schools; Karen Spurr, community outreach worker, Prince Andrew family of schools; Emma Pringle Boutilier, assistant leader, Auburn Drive, the Eastern Shore family of schools; and Tara Crowe, community outreach worker, Prince Andrew family of schools.

Would the members of the House join me in welcoming these important staff people in our education system. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1312

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

Whereas students and families across Nova Scotia access mental health services and other supports through SchoolsPlus; and

Whereas SchoolsPlus is now available province-wide as of this September; and

Whereas today, Thursday, October 10th, is World Mental Health Day, which raises awareness, and this year focuses on suicide prevention;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize the work being done by teachers, SchoolsPlus mental health clinicians and staff, and also recognize the important role schools, their partners, and families play in supporting mental health 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 and Acadian Affairs.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LENA METLEGE DIAB: Joining us today in the East Gallery are leaders, members, and representatives of our province's Chinese community representing academic, cultural, business, and athletic organizations. I'm going to read their names and ask each one of our guests to rise and remain standing until I call all the names.

Wilber Huang, Chinese Society of Nova Scotia; Eric Yeung, Chinese Benevolent Association of Nova Scotia; Jinyu Sheng, Halifax Chinese Language School; Edward Leung, Saint Mary's University Chinese Student Association; Jing Zhang, Nova Scotia Chinese Culture and Art Club; Hung Wang, Atlantic Canada Ping Pong Association; Gen Lou Sun; Joyce Liu; Miki Qian; Fan Ding; Jinbo Chen; Johnny Yang; Fred Fong; Yiqing Zhang; Tianshu Guan. Huanying - meaning "welcome" in Chinese.

I ask all members of the House of Assembly to please give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

[1:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 1313

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 Nova Scotia is a diverse and multicultural province of which the Chinese community is an important and vibrant part; and

Whereas this Sunday, October 13th, the Halifax Chinese Community will debut the *Seeking Home* dance drama at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China as well as the 49th anniversary of the establishment of Canada-China diplomatic relations; and

Whereas as Minister of Immigration, I have had the pleasure to join the Chinese community in celebrating many traditional milestones and cultural events in Nova Scotia,

such as the successful inaugural Chinese Festival, the Chinese New Year festivities, birthdays, business openings, artistic performances, and so many more;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the contributions that Nova Scotia's Chinese community have made to the province's economic development, post-secondary institutions, and social and cultural fabric, and wish them continued success throughout the generations to come.

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 Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1314

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

Whereas October 7th to 11th is Customer Service Week, an international celebration of the people who serve and support our customers on a daily basis; and

Whereas the team at the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services works hard every day across our province to provide quality service to our clients, both internal and external to government; and

Whereas they often go above and beyond what is expected to provide exceptional service to citizens and businesses of Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House thank our hard-working public servants for their continued commitment to service excellence.

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 Community Services.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker may I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

KELLY REGAN: Joining us in the gallery today, in recognition of International Day of the Girl - which I realize is tomorrow, so I'm jumping the gun a bit - are two young women from Halifax who are here with their families. I'll ask them to please rise as I call out their name.

Karlee Clark has been an active youth in the community and often helps with the Mulgrave Park Caring and Learning Centre's annual Park Day Celebration. Alysha Johnson has been a part of Mulgrave Park Caring and Learning Centre for a number of years. She has been instrumental in assisting girls in the centre's programs and she has also worked to enhance and add vibrancy to her community through initiatives such as Beautification Day.

I'd ask the members of the House to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1315

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

Whereas October 11th is International Day of the Girl, a time to celebrate the accomplishments of inspirational girls from across the province and to talk about issues concerning gender equality facing girls and young women; and

Whereas this year's United Nation's theme is GirlForce: Unscripted and Unstoppable, recognizing that girls can be powerful agents of change and nothing should keep them from reaching their potential within their communities; and

Whereas Karlee Clark and Alysha Johnson are young women from Halifax who exemplify what it means to be role models in the community and are well on their way to becoming community leaders;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly recognize International Day of the Girl and continue to encourage girls and young women to amplify their voices toward leading and fostering a world that is relevant to them and future generations.

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 Acadian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 1316

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Monsieur le Président, à une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante :

Attendu que le 9 octobre 2019 se tenait à Québec la 41^e cérémonie de remise des insignes de l'Ordre des francophones d'Amérique; et

Attendu que cette distinction est décernée annuellement depuis 1978 par le Conseil supérieur de la langue française pour souligner l'attachement de personnes et d'organisations à la langue et à la culture françaises en Amérique; et

Attendu que M. Allister Surette, ancien membre de cette Assemblée législative et actuel recteur et vice-chancelier de l'Université Sainte-Anne, a reçu cette distinction pour son apport à l'épanouissement et à la vitalité de la communauté acadienne et francophone de la Nouvelle-Écosse, pour son rôle d'ambassadeur de l'Acadie sur les plans national et international, et pour sa contribution au rayonnement de la langue française dans la francophone;

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les membres de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi pour féliciter M. Surette pour cette distinction et applaudir son engagement de longue

date envers l'épanouissement et la vitalité de la communauté acadienne et francophone de notre province.

Monsieur le Président, je demande l'adoption de cette résolution sans préavis et sans débat.

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

Whereas on October 9, 2019, yesterday, the 41st ceremony of the Ordre des francophones d'Amérique was held in Quebec City; and

Whereas this distinction has been awarded annually since 1978 by the Conseil supérieur de la langue française to highlight the commitment of individuals and organizations to the French language and culture in the Americas; and

Whereas Mr. Allister Surrette, a former member of this Legislative Assembly and the current rector and vice chancellor of Université Sainte-Anne, received this distinction for his contribution to the development and vitality of the Acadian and francophone community of Nova Scotia for his role as an ambassador for Acadia nationally and internationally, and for his contribution to the promotion of the French language throughout the Francophonie;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Mr. Surrette on this distinction and applaud his long-standing commitment to the development and vitality of the Acadian and francophone community of our 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.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 189 - 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. 190 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 32 of the Acts of 2014. The Health Authorities Act, Respecting Assistance to the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing. (Tammy Martin)

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

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

TAMMY MARTIN: I rise today to draw your attention the gallery opposite to welcome Tom Nickerson and his sister Shirley Burris. Tom is one of more than 58,000 people who are deaf or hard of hearing in Nova Scotia. In 2018 he ended up at the emergency room and was not able to get access to the interpretation services he needed to get medical care.

Tom has been working to draw attention to this unacceptable shortcoming in our health care system, and I am so pleased he has been able to join us here today. I would ask that members show him a sign of welcome. (Applause)

Bill No. 191 - Entitled an Act Respecting the Candidacy of Municipal Councillors for Other Elected Offices. (Hon. Chuck Porter)

Bill No. 192 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 300 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Municipal Elections Act. (Hon. Chuck Porter)

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 Pictou East.

HFX. WANDERERS: SUCCESSFUL SEASON - CONGRATS.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Halifax Wanderers FC on their inaugural season. Last night the Wanderers earned a 1-1 draw against Pacific in the final game of their first Canadian Premier League season.

James Covey and the Privateers 1882 started pushing for a professional soccer team in Halifax, and the group have added great spirit to the Wanderers' home games. I've attended many games myself, and I can attest to the exciting atmosphere they provide.

The team drew more than 100,000 fans across its very successful season, drawing people from the United Kingdom and the United States who came with the purpose of watching professional soccer in Halifax. The city of Halifax was a great partner in helping to develop a field and facility that is now capable of holding international level competition. The team and the fans have also had a tremendous positive impact on businesses in the area and local vendors.

I'd like the House to join me in congratulating owner Derek Martin, his staff, coaches, and players on a great season, and in wishing them more success in the years to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY:
LINK TO SAFE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING - RECOG.**

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on World Mental Health Day to recognize the important and tangible link between mental health and access to safe, affordable, and adequate housing. Recently Mind, the U.K.'s top mental health charity, found that 79 per cent - nearly four in five people - said that a housing situation had made their mental health worse or caused a mental health problem.

In Nova Scotia there are 23,645 households that spend more than 50 per cent of their income on rent and utilities. I will ask the members of this House to take a moment to reflect on the stress, anxiety, and toll on one's mental health created by living in such a precarious situation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

TRI-CO. MENTAL HEALTH CTR.: GRAND OPENING - CONGRATS.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, today marks the grand opening of the Tri-County Mental Health and Wellness Centre in Yarmouth. This will be a drop-in centre for people who feel that they need additional mental health support. The centre will also provide programming, education, stigma reduction, suicide prevention awareness, and one-on-one peer coaching.

I'd like to congratulate Tri-County Mental Health and Wellness founder Brenda Martin-Hurlburt and her team of volunteers on this important, crucial initiative, and thank

them for dedicating their time, energy, and compassion to the mental health and wellness of our community.

[1:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY: CARE OF OTHERS - RECOG.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize World Mental Health Day.

Every one of us has mental health, and unfortunately every one of us will be impacted by mental illness at some point. Whether it is a battle we fight ourselves, or a battle fought by someone we care about, it is never easy. You never know what is going on in someone's life, so on World Mental Health Day, remind yourself to treat others with kindness and to check in on your loved ones.

I hope we can all be a listening ear for someone in need and work together to ensure proper services are available for those brave enough to seek them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

**WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY:
COMMUNITY-BASED ORGS. - NEED SUPPORT**

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, access to mental health care and supports is a huge issue everywhere in the province, but especially dire in my community. The posted wait time at industrial Cape Breton clinics for adult mental health services is now 245 days. According to the target, people should be seen within 28 days.

We continue to lose many of the professionals who deliver mental health and psychiatric care. In 2017, of the eight psychiatry students who graduated from Dal Medical School, only one chose to practise in rural Nova Scotia. Psychology and psychiatry positions are going vacant for years at a time, and those vacancies have serious consequences.

We need a province-wide strategy and adequate funding for community-based mental health organizations. We have been waiting for a renewed mental health strategy since 2016, but we have seen nothing from this government.

I hope people remember this week and every week that words are not enough when it comes to supporting people with mental health problems. We need action.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I direct the members' attention to the East Gallery where we have joining us Jamal Mohammed from Ghana, Simone Savio Makumbi Sentamu from Uganda, Juliana Chioma Anosike from Nigeria, Alhassan Shani from Ghana, Julia Thembeni Mdzikwa from South Africa, Yussif Abu Manan from Ghana, Caroline Joan Oyella from Uganda, Ana Paula Gouveia Valdiones from Brazil, and Elsa Muttathu from India. If there's anyone else I missed, please rise. These individuals are all St. F.X.'s Coady international student participants. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

**COADY INTL. INSTIT.:
60 YRS. BUILDING A BETTER WORLD - CONGRATS.**

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, the Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish has been offering education programming for emerging and established community leaders from around the world since 1959.

The Coady programs work to develop the skills and knowledge of participants who then take their new learning back to their homes. Through this approach, the institute supports the building of resilient communities, strengthens inclusive economies, and promotes accountable democracies. This is done through the mobilization of community change leaders on a local and global level.

The guests that we have just welcomed here today are taking a course on citizen engagement, advocacy, and accountability. They are exploring ways to engage citizens in deepening democratic practice and in promoting transparency, accountability, and participation in governance systems and structure.

Mr. Speaker, the Coady Institute is one of Nova Scotia's best-kept secrets. I invite the members present to join me not only in welcoming our guests but also in congratulating Coady International Institute on its 60 years of building a better world.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

**CRAWFORD, KIM - PHYSICIAN:
HONORARY MEMBERSHIP AWARD - CONGRATS.**

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the achievements of Dr. Kim Crawford, who has practised internal medicine on the South Shore of Nova Scotia for 34 years and has earned a reputation of excellence and high standards.

Above and beyond this, he has become an invaluable mentor for general practitioners; taken on several leadership roles, including Chief of Medicine and Chief of Staff; and held key positions with national medical associations. At the Doctors Nova Scotia conference in June of this year, Dr. Crawford was recognized by the Canadian Medical Association with the Honorary Membership Award.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and pleasure to congratulate Dr. Crawford on this well-deserved recognition, and I thank him for his years of service and care to residents and medical professionals in this province.

THE SPEAKER: Just before we move on to the next Member's Statement I want to bring clarity to the petition that was tabled earlier by the honourable member for Dartmouth North. Although the prayer in and of itself does not contain a specific ask of government, it is asking the residents undersigned "endorse" the annual funding. It's not technically an ask but in the title of the petition, which does appear on every page, it does provide some clarity that they are asking for the government's support for this initiative.

On that basis I will accept the petition, but a reminder to all those members who are working with community groups that it is always good to check with the Clerk's Office to make sure that the petitions are worded correctly.

So, on that basis, the petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

DARTMOUTH FERRY CREW: OVERBOARD RESCUE - THANKS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise in recognition of the swift, skilled, efficient actions of the crew members on the Dartmouth ferry yesterday, whose fast action and response to a passenger falling overboard resulted in the rescue of that individual.

The Dartmouth ferry is a point of pride for many Dartmouth residents who daily enjoy the opportunity to be on the harbour for the cost of a bus fare. Thousands of people ride the ferry every day, and each day our safety is in the hands of the ferry crews.

Yesterday, the crew of the *Vincent Coleman* admirably showed their ability to act calmly and effectively in an emergency. We thank them and all first responders who respond to the call when someone is in need.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

BAGNELL, HUGHIE: FACILITATING MENTAL WELLNESS - RECOG.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, today on World Mental Health Day, we must recognize how important it is to continue the conversation on mental health and wellness throughout the entire year. Often there are individuals in our community who champion this message, whether this be an important act of checking on their neighbours or becoming an advocate. These caring individuals help us to ensure this topic is always top of mind.

With very personal family connections to suicide, Hughie Bagnell founded the group, One Team for Mental Health, which leads the annual Bell Let's Talk Family Fun, Walk/Run get-together which continues to grow in participation. Each year after the fitness portion of the event is completed, participants stay and talk to one another, facilitating very powerful and necessary discussions in our community.

Hughie also writes an annual column on suicide to raise further awareness and understanding and in hopes of potentially assisting others who have lost a loved one.

Mr. Speaker, this is only scratching the surface of the work Hughie Bagnell has done, and continues to do, in our province. I would ask that all members of the House join me in recognizing Hughie for his efforts and, furthermore, I would ask that we all continue to talk and raise awareness around mental health and wellness.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

U15 ALBIONS BASEBALL TEAM: ATL. CHAMPS - CONGRATS.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Legislature today to recognize the U15 Stellarton Albions baseball team, 2019 Atlantic Baseball Champions.

This young group of athletes secured a 5-0 record at the Atlantic Championships held in Newfoundland and Labrador. Teamwork, sportsmanship, dedication, and guidance from the coaching staff played a huge part in the team's success.

Congratulations to coaches Erik Fraser, Jason Mackinnon, bat boy Max MacKinnon, players Chase Roberts, Riley Farrell, Alex Cathcart, J.D. MacKenzie, Andrew Fraser, Mike Law, Joseph Mason, Cam MacKinnon, Blaise MacDonald, Zachary MacInnis, Cameron Young, and Lucas Canning.

The Albions completed their successful season with a 27-4 record, winning their last 16 consecutive games. Once again congratulations, they are riding the wave of success.

THE SPEAKER: I would like to add to that Member's Statement that that team, in fact, beat my son's Dartmouth Arrows Bantam U15 team on their way to winning that crown, so congratulations to the Stellarton Albions.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY:
LGBTQ2+-INCLUSIVE CARE - RECOG.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, on this World Mental Health Day I would like to draw attention to the importance of ensuring mental health services are available for trans and non-binary people.

A recent report funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada highlights the experiences of more than 500 LGBTQ2+ youth across Canada. Many participants spoke about negative experiences with health and social services in particular, due to service providers unable to provide LGBTQ2+-inclusive care.

Timely access to appropriate and inclusive services related to gender transition is critical. People going through a gender transition often face stigma, discrimination and loss of support networks, which can lead to depression and poor mental health. We have to make sure that these services are available and accessible to all members of our community, when and where they need them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

**WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY -
SCHOOLSPLUS PROVINCE-WIDE ACCESS**

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard to make mental health services accessible to students and has made inclusive education supports a clear priority. Students and families and schools need access to mental health services and supports no matter where they live. SchoolsPlus makes resources easier to access for students and families across the province by coordinating and collaborating on supports and services in one place.

Prior to SchoolsPlus, students may have faced uncertainty in terms of who to ask or where to go in order to access services; SchoolsPlus changes that. Mr. Speaker, 45 new schools were added to this innovative program in the last month alone. As of now, 372 schools have access to this program either directly or through a hub.

Today I had the privilege of announcing with my colleague, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, that SchoolsPlus is now accessible to all students and families province wide. We have invested a total of \$11.8 million to expand staff and maintain SchoolsPlus sites across the province so more students and families can access this service.

I'm happy to see our government bring forward innovative ideas like SchoolsPlus that brings communities together to better the lives of Nova Scotia students and families and I'm excited to see how this program evolves over the coming years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

BOSS, GORDON H.: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today and acknowledge the life of the late Gordon H. Boss, who at the age of 91 passed at his beloved home in Maccan. Gordon lived his entire 91 years within sight of the Maccan River where he was a long time owner of the Maccan Garage, selling fuel and Studebaker cars.

After selling his garage in 1974, Gordon embraced his other passion of serving as the Maccan River's unofficial borekeeper creating and distributing the detailed schedule of the bore times, carefully prepared on his 1940s Remington typewriter. Gordon would meet any visitors coming to the bore and talk and explain the phenomenon. Gordon was awarded several tourism awards including the 1996 Gold Hospitality Award and the 2013 Central Nova Tourism Association Ambassador Award.

I thank you and ask you to join me in honouring his memory and the legacy of Gordon H. Boss, the Maccan's borekeeper.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY: CITADEL SCHOOLSPLUS TEAM - THANKS

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize World Mental Health Day and to raise awareness that we all have a role to play, both in taking action and combatting stigma surrounding mental health issues. This morning, I joined my colleagues at Citadel High School to highlight the expansion of the SchoolsPlus program to help increase access to mental health supports.

I'm so pleased that SchoolsPlus is now available to all students and families province wide. SchoolsPlus helps children, youth and families connect to a range of programs by working with school staff and other partners. In addition, mental health services supports include mentoring, after school programs, homework support and parenting support.

We know that schools serve as community hubs and youth in particular need better access to mental health care as they navigate the challenges of home and school life. I want to thank Citadel High Principal Joe Morrison and students for the warm welcome today and extend our appreciation to the dedicated SchoolsPlus teams.

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

FRASER, CAITLYN - DENTIST: VITAL AWARD - CONGRATS.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to pass along congratulations to Dr. Caitlin Fraser of Westmount Dental Clinic and Eskasoni Dental Clinic, who has been nominated for the Vital Award through NextGen Cape Breton. Award recipients will be honoured for their talent, drive and achievements for making Cape Breton a better place to live, work and play.

Dr. Fraser employs over 20 professionals in her dental clinic in Westmount and made a significant investment from her own pocket to expand and bring the dental clinic to the Eskasoni area, along with the help of the Eskasoni Community Health Clinic, filling a major need in the community.

I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Caitlin on her new venture and wish her every success in the future.

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

E-MENTAL HEALTH SERV.: NEW WAYS OF ACCESS - RECOG.

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, the internet is changing the way we deliver health care. Our government is harnessing this technology to offer innovative services to those in need of help. Our suite of e-mental health services offers numerous online health services to students currently enrolled in university. This ensures that the access to mental health services doesn't end at high school graduation. We are committed to offering these services to Nova Scotians of all ages including university students.

I am proud to see that the government continues to innovate when it comes to delivering health care. It is easy to be cynical and expect problems to be fixed with the flick of a switch, but the reality is these programs and systems are complex and require reform and retooling in the digital age.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

CHAMPNISS, MICHELLE: JAZZ FEST., SACKVILLE - CONGRATS.

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the organizers of the Halifax Jazz Festival.

The Halifax Jazz Festival is the largest summer festival in Atlantic Canada, and it is a great way to bring people together. Understanding, though, that a lot of people are not able to travel to Halifax to take in the festival, Michelle Champniss, Executive Director of the Sackville Business Association, teamed up with the Halifax Jazz Festival and the Acadia Recreation Club Society to bring the festival to Lower Sackville's Acadia Park. The festival took place on July 13, 2019, to the delight of many.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me to take this opportunity to congratulate the organizers of the Halifax Jazz Festival, the Sackville Business Association, and the Acadia Recreation Club Society, who helped to bring the Sackville portion of the festival to our Lower Sackville community.

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

LAING HOUSE: YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT - RECOG.

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, organizations like Laing House contribute greatly to our communities. Laing House is a drop-in centre for youth aged 16 to 29 living with mental health challenges.

This government is committed to funding such organizations that help those dealing with mental health issues. Mental health challenges are every bit as serious and deserving of our attention as physical conditions. We need investments in prevention and mitigation when it comes to mental health, and I'm proud to be part of a government that is doing exactly that.

Mr. Speaker, our government has increased funding to Laing House in order to help them expand their vital services into the community of Yarmouth. Youth dealing with mental health challenges will now have greater access to more resources in the Yarmouth area. This government is making the needed investments in mental health care and I'm happy to play a role in the progress of this file.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MENTAL HEALTH: PUB. SCH. OUTREACH - RECOG.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, youth mental health services in public schools are a great tool to combat mental illness. Too often mental illness is not taken as seriously as a physical illness.

For children and youth, mental health needs are often overlooked. That's why this government is aiming to change the conversation around mental health and provide resources to those in need, especially young people.

Our education system is now offering youth mental health outreach in 79 schools. That outreach led to 15,000 visits with young Nova Scotians since October of 2018. Mr. Speaker, I hope to continue to see our government make investments into mental health and wellness, especially among young people.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ART OF REBELLION: TATTOO ARTISTS - WELCOME

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I love welcoming new entrepreneurs and businesses to Cumberland North, and today I'd like to welcome Larry Kovacevic and Maxine Pye to Amherst as they opened the Art of Rebellion Tattoo Studio this recent summer.

Larry and Maxine moved from Ontario to open their new business. They bring expertise in their art and they may have even convinced me to get my first tattoo. It's exciting to see the couple venture into Cumberland County, joining many other new businesses.

I would like to wish them success as they build their clientele and continue to add culture to our area. I'd like to thank Larry and Maxine for choosing Cumberland County as their new home as they work hard in their new place.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

PHOENIX YOUTH: SUPPORT IN MULGRAVE PARK - RECOG.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, as we approach Thanksgiving weekend, I want to recognize and thank residents of Mulgrave Park for their ongoing commitment to building community and particularly to supporting youth.

Tonight, the Phoenix Youth and Community Centre will host its annual Thanksgiving dinner for upwards of 90 guests. Community members will prepare the turkeys, ham, and all the fixings for the event.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Sabrina Hum, Florence "Mrs." Munroe, Michelle West, Elaine Williams, Olympia Sparks, Marcus James, and Janice James. Their support is truly invaluable.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Portland Valley.

E. PASSAGE YOUTH CTR.: PHYS. AND MENTAL WELLNESS - RECOG.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, the community of Eastern Passage has benefited greatly from our recent investments in the Youth Health Centre.

In the first year of operations, 405 youth came and accessed the vital services offered at this new facility. This centre emphasizes the diversity of conditions that youth may be dealing with. Many traditional youth services focus only on physical health. Our government has made a commitment to emphasizing the role that mental health plays in our overall health.

Mr. Speaker, our investments in health care are paying off. The government sees the issues facing the province when it comes to health care and we are working hard day and night to fix them.

I wish to applaud the work of all involved in the Eastern Passage Youth Health Centre. We are tremendously thankful for the long hours and loving care they deliver to the community.

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

AFTER WARRANTY AUTOMOTIVE: 25 YRS. IN BUS. - CONGRATS.

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge After Warranty Automotive Repair Shop, a business in Middle Sackville that is celebrating 25 years in the community.

After Warranty Automotive Repair Shop specializes in automotive services, including vehicle maintenance and repair. They serve close to 300 vehicles a month, and they continue to be one of the longest-running automotive repair shops in Middle Sackville. I hope they continue business for many years to come.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank After Warranty Automotive Repair Shop for its 25 years of continuing service to the people of Middle and Upper Sackville, and congratulate their owner, my friend, Joe Hue and their seven employees on all the great work that they have been able to do over the last 25 years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

DAVIGNON, GABE: N.S. NTL. BASKETBALL TEAM: CONGRATS.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker I would like to recognize Gabe Davignon, a resident of Whites Lake. Gabe had been chosen to represent the U15 Nova Scotia basketball team at the nationals this summer.

Basketball Nova Scotia runs a high-performance program for athletes between the ages of 14 and 17. This program provides an opportunity for the coaches to identify the best basketball players in our province. The program also provides the opportunity for participants to play, compete, and represent Nova Scotia at the provincial, Atlantic, and national levels.

Players selected for the provincial team train through the Spring and Summer months and attend tournaments to prepare for the national championships. The national championships provide the stage for athletes to display their talents to top-tier coaches and scouts from the NCAA , U Sports, and CCAA.

I ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating Gabe for his achievement of earning a spot on the Nova Scotia National Basketball team and wish him continued success for his hard work and positive attitude.

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

**LEBLANC, MATT/DUGAS, KATHLEEN:
CARNIVAL. COMM. FUNDRAISING - THANKS**

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to constituents Mathieu LeBlanc and Kathleen Dugas for a beautiful wooden craft bench donated as a raffle prize, with the proceeds going to the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Summer Carnival Committee. Selling tickets for the bench quickly turned into a family event, including their two small children.

Matt and Kathleen were very pleased to hand over a donation of just under \$1,000 to the Carnival Committee - and they already have ideas for next year's donation and fundraiser.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking Kathleen Dugas, Mathieu LeBlanc, and their family for their dedication in giving back to their community and inspiring others to do the same.

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

SUPPORTING WORKPLACE HEALTH - REFLECTION

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, as we acknowledge World Mental Health Day, I look to those who struggle with anxiety, depression, personality disorders, and any other condition that might relate to their mental well-being as a result of harassment or bullying.

World Mental Health Day is recognized every year with the goal of raising awareness for mental health issues around the world. In Nova Scotia, we look to the

supports and resources available to those struggling with mental health issues, whether it be access to trained health professionals, community-based organizations and programs, or supportive workplace environments which are safe, respectful, and positive.

I ask all government departments, all members of this House, and all Nova Scotians to ask themselves: Have I done my part in educating myself about and reflecting on the impact my words and my actions have on others, and how this affects their mental well-being.

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

DILIBERATORE, ANGELA - TEACHER: COMBAT BULLYING - RECOG.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding teacher in my community who constantly encourages her students to be aware and take action against bullying.

Last year at Burton Ettinger Elementary, Angela DiLiberatore had the idea to get her Grade 3-4 class to write, perform, and produce a video that explored bullying and what it means to be a bystander.

As part of the project, students stood in front of the camera and talked about the effects of bullying. In the video, students were encouraged to be an upstander and give tips on what to do when they witness or experience bullying.

Some of these tips included: be confident in yourself; be nice to people and they will be nice to you; and don't leave people out. Mr. Speaker, I think that this is a valuable lesson that all students and adults should learn, especially today, on World Mental Health Day.

I ask that the members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Angela for her continued support for her students in their fight against bullying.

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

DONKIN BRASS BAND: 100th ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

BRIAN COMER: I rise today to congratulate the Donkin Citizens Brass Band on their recent 100th anniversary.

The band was established in 1919 and since then has been performing free celebratory concerts, such as Remembrance Day services, and playing in nursing homes and community events. The band consists of 15 members, both men and women, between the ages of 29 and 80. Most have reported having deep family connections, up to four

generations, in and around the Donkin area. They also have a list of great accomplishments, including their first radio-broadcasted performance in 1924 and an appearance in the movie *The Bay Boy* in 1984.

I stand here today to thank and congratulate the Donkin Citizens Brass Band and their members on their dedication to their band and their community involvement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

JOHN MARTIN JR. HIGH: 1000+ FOOD DRIVE - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, as Thanksgiving Day approaches, I rise to recognize about 45 Grade 9 students at John Martin Junior High School, who, under the leadership of their teacher, Christine McKenna, created and ran a community-based food drive for people facing food insecurity in our community. The students were required to create a collaboratively designed learning project as part of their citizenship class. Through this project, they identified food security as an issue in Dartmouth North, and they took it on.

They drew up a letter asking for food donations and went door to door in the community. In just two weeks, they collected over 1,000 items of food. They filled two shopping carts, the back of an SUV, and all their backpacks. Then they walked the donations down to Stairs Memorial Church on Hester Street to give the food to the food bank there. Upon their arrival, volunteers at the food bank welcomed the young people and then taught them about how the food bank works.

Mr. Speaker, as Ms. McKenna said, the Grade 9 students took a small initiative and turned it into something much bigger. I want to express my thanks to all these students and congratulate them on their wonderful initiative. I'm grateful for their contribution to our community.

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

**BILLARD, ANDREW - MULTI-MEDALLIST:
INTL. REGATTA - CONGRATS.**

BEN JESSOME: Today, I would like to congratulate Andrew Billard, a 17-year-old from Hammonds Plains, who won four medals at the Olympic Hopes International Regatta, held September 13-15 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

This event has emerged over the past five years as the top international regatta for young paddlers. This year, 835 athletes from 36 nations took part.

Included in Andrew's four medals were gold in both the Under 17 C-1500 metres and C-1 1000 metres. He also won a silver and a bronze in pairs races. Andrew is a Grade 12 student at Charles P. Allen High School and is a paddler with the Maskwa Aquatic Club. He has had a very busy competitive season this year, as he also paddled in the world junior championship in Romania, where he won the B division final. He also has his hopes set on securing an Olympic spot in the future.

I would ask the members of the House of Assembly to please join me in congratulating Andrew on his exceptional results this season and wishing him well in his future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TIM HALMAN: Permission to make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

TIM HALMAN: In the West Gallery, we have Mr. Cole Fauteux. Cole is the outreach coordinator in our Dartmouth East office. Cole, please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House of Assembly. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**MOJARKISH, KHALED - RESTAURATEUR:
STN. 1 LEBANESE KITCHEN - WELCOME**

TIM HALMAN: I rise today to recognize Khaled Mojarkish, a new business owner in Dartmouth East. Station 1 Lebanese Kitchen is run by Syrian refugees and has an interesting backstory.

In Damascus, co-owner Khaled Mojarkish used to eat shawarma made by Ziad Alasadi. Khaled helped bring his friend to Canada and gave him a job in his restaurant. This new business has created jobs for four Syrian men. This is a place where new life in Canada starts.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome Station 1 and their staff to Dartmouth East. I wish Khaled and his team all the best in their business venture. I encourage all members to try the amazing shawarma prepared by Khaled and the staff.

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

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - ONE PERSON ONE RECORD: TECHNOLOGY - MODERNIZE

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, in August, McKesson Canada declined to renew its contract with the province for the MyHealthNS web portal. When the portal was introduced, the Premier exclaimed that it would improve access to doctors and access to care. "It's a win-win for everyone," the Premier said at the time - and I'll table that. Two years later, McKesson has walked away.

The Premier has an odd measuring stick when it comes to measuring "wins" when it comes to health care in this province. He often says we're winning when, in fact, it feels to Nova Scotians that we're losing and falling further behind.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Are Nova Scotians better off now that the MyHealthNS contract has been cancelled?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, what the honourable member is referring to is MyHealthNS, an individual patient portal that allowed you to manage and be able to look at your own records, blood tests, any other tests that were required. You could follow whether or not a specialty appointment had been put together. It would also allow your physician to communicate back directly with you if they chose to do it that way, to identify whether you required an appointment - those types of things.

What the honourable member is referring to, and it's continuing to improve, is One Person One Record, which is on the move to continue to make sure that we modernize the health care delivery in the province of Nova Scotia.

TIM HOUSTON: Just two years in and the MyHealthNS system is toast, I guess. The contract is cancelled, and the Premier refers to modernizing the system with the One Person One Record - of course, he is referring to a One Person One Record system that is now 10 years in the making.

For the benefit of the members, what the Premier is talking about doing with One Person One Record is the equivalent of holding an iPhone in one hand and trying to decide whether to buy a Betamax or a VHS in the other. The technology will be so out of date by the time the Premier gets around to awarding the tenders and getting it - it'll be years away, and it will be completely outdated.

I'd like to ask the Premier: After six years of slogging away on the One Person One Record file, is the Premier ready to hit reset and start again and make sure the technology is modern?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, he is very right about One Person One Record. It was sitting on the desk of former Progressive Conservative ministers and then sat on the New Democratic ministers' desks. The reality is, that's the same thing as when it came to the physical infrastructure across this province. We've made decisions to invest in physical infrastructure, and we will also modernize electronic records across this province to ensure that not only will it serve the needs of patients today, but it will for the next 50 years.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the technology that the Premier is looking at is so far out of date today that it's not even funny.

This is a government that sure loves a winning boondoggle - from the *Bluenose II* to the ferry to the crane. We know that this government doesn't have the capacity to manage an actual project, doesn't understand the value of taxpayer money - one boondoggle after another - and the two-year MyHealthNS boondoggle is just a teaser for what's to come with the path they're on with One Person One Record. We know that this Premier can't get a good deal for Nova Scotians when he tries.

If the province can't manage a web portal like MyHealthNS, how does the Premier ever think he will land on his feet with One Person One Record?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party said no to the Yarmouth ferry everywhere else but in Yarmouth; he says no to the investment we do in health care everywhere but when he's standing in the communities that we're actually investing in; and he continues to say no to every decision we make, but the reality of it is (Interruption)

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

THE PREMIER: The reality of it is, despite what the honourable member says, our population is at an all-time high. Young people are seeing a future for themselves. The economy is growing - opportunity, wages, up in this province. We see the private sector leading - and guess what? The global community is embracing Nova Scotia.

The honourable member wants us to retreat back to our own communities and not go out and export our product. Contrary to the honourable member - he takes companies to court, but we take them on trading missions to grow opportunities for our people.

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

PREM. - HURRICANE DORIAN: CRANE COMPENS. - DOUBLE STANDARD

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier about the government's double standards.

When that crane came down during the hurricane, the government was eager to step in to assume financial responsibility for the corporations involved, despite the fact that those major developers had insurance of their own. But the small businesses who've had to remain closed, despite the fact that they've had to keep paying wages and rent and utilities and so on, haven't heard a word about compensation. All the Premier has suggested to them is to check their own insurance.

Can the Premier understand why people find this a double standard?

THE PREMIER: First of all, let me say to the honourable member that we weren't eager to step in. The reality of it is, the crane operator there required them to get that crane off that building. There were certain issues around indemnifying. That's why we're involved in this - simply because of public safety, to ensure that we get that off.

The reality of it was, we will go back to recoup all that we can through the insurance that is there, but we believed it was in the best interests of public safety to work to try to get this crane off that building.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, here is another instance of this kind of double standard. In Yarmouth, the government paid Bay Ferries \$13 million this year, even though the ferry was out of operation. Meanwhile, the owners of the Lakelawn Motel in Yarmouth speak about how they have had 1,200 reservations cancelled this year because of the absence of the ferry.

Now, there are an awful lot of Lakelawn Motel-type operations in Yarmouth County right now, and the government isn't paying them 13 cents. Isn't it a double standard that Bay Ferries gets something for nothing while tourism operators get nothing whatsoever?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I should highlight to the honourable member that when they cancelled the ferry when they were in government, it was a mistake. That's the reality. What he is highlighting is the importance of that ferry to the tourism sector in southwestern Nova Scotia.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, what I am highlighting is a government that operates with double standards. So much depends on what you are willing to consider. We know the government is willing to consider, for example - the Premier has told us - \$120 million in public revenue for a private stadium proposal, but what isn't being considered, it's been made clear, is a minimum wage that is anywhere close to a living wage, or housing

programs robust enough so we don't have to have 20 per cent of our people paying over 50 per cent of their incomes out in rent, or enough support for young people that we don't have the highest tuition in the country.

I want to ask the Premier: Isn't something wrong here somewhere?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it's why we adjusted the basic personal exemption, so that those who are in the category the honourable member is talking about get a bigger benefit. He would also know we just signed a national housing agreement. We continue to improve the rent situation here in the city. We know there is more work to do.

The honourable member referenced post-secondary education, and it's why we forgive the loans of Nova Scotian students. We continue to make those investments so we can attract and retain young people and make sure that they get the right start in this province. It's why more of them are choosing to stay here now. It's why we've seen the growth of the population between 18 and 34. At the same time as our population is going up, since 1964, this is the first time the median age in this province has gone down. That means more young people are staying and seeing a future for themselves.

But the honourable member is right: we have some more work to do, and we're looking forward to doing it.

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

H&W - 811 SERV.: CONSULTANT'S RPT. - TABLE

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, this week we had representatives from 811 Telehealth in front of the Health Committee to examine the effectiveness and value of the 811 service. This is a service that Nova Scotians can use to speak to a registered nurse for non-emergency conditions, and in some cases, individuals are redirected to the emergency department.

However, it was only yesterday, a day after the committee met, that the Department of Health and Wellness saw fit to release a \$42,000 consultant's report that could have greatly added to our conversation on Tuesday.

I have a simple question for the Minister of Health and Wellness: Why did the Department of Health and Wellness wait until a day after a public televised meeting on the topic, which its government put on the table, to release a report that ironically expressed doubt around the efficacy of the 811 service?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I assure the member opposite that there are many valuable aspects of the 811 service that were highlighted in that report. That includes a clear indication that those people who attend the emergency department after calling 811

and are recommended to attend the emergency department as the appropriate course of care for their health issues actually have a higher level of acuity than the average population that shows up at the emergency department.

It shows that 811 works as a very good service that connects Nova Scotians to a registered nurse who can help triage, provide support, and let them know if it truly is an emergency, to get them to the right care.

BARBARA ADAMS: Well, to use the Premier's word of the day, the reality of it is that this government clearly doesn't want the public to know what was in that report, and I'm not sure the minister knows what was in that report.

I will quote from the report, and I'll table it as well, from CBC News: "Asked whether they would recommend 811 as a 'source of accurate information,' only 48 per cent of the 365 practitioners agreed they would. When it came to doctors, roughly 60 per cent said they would not." Nearly 80 per cent of physicians and 60 per cent of paramedics disagreed that they would recommend this service as an accurate source of information.

I'll ask the minister: Does he agree with what was reported in the news? Is that what the report says? Will the minister table that report so that we can actually have a look at it?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, this was a report used to provide input to the department as we plan what direction, if any changes or future changes, to the 811 system may materialize. That was what we were trying to do, to establish - it's been in place for a number of years - how it was working and operating.

The member opposite is questioning the accuracy of the clinical information advice being provided by registered nurses, because it is registered nurses on the other side of that phone line providing the information to the people who call. I assure you that the clinical information advice being provided is accurate, and I challenge that member for questioning those nurses and their expertise.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

H&W - C.B. REG. HOSP.: SURGERY CANCELLATIONS - REASON

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Today, right now, all elective surgeries at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital are cancelled and all 30 or so patients who are admitted in the ER will remain there, on a stretcher, hoping some day, some time they'll get a bed. There is simply no room to accommodate the need on our Island.

While the hospital is following protocol in cancelling surgeries, the root cause of the cancellation is the fact that there are no beds for surgical patients to recover in. However, funny enough, at the Glace Bay Hospital, 25 beds sit empty.

Does the minister really think this is the best use of our resources?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, we certainly recognize as a government the importance of providing care to Nova Scotians in primary care and community settings; that's why we continue to invest in programs to support the expansion of Pharmacare. That's seen the effectiveness (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The level of interruptions here is getting intolerable. I won't permit any more interruptions. There will be a question and there will be a time to respond.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness has the floor.

RANDY DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, the effect of our investments and the work that we've been doing, we've seen the number of people in Nova Scotia registered for a primary care provider from this time last year to this time this year, over the past year, has reduced by 12 per cent. That means 12 per cent fewer Nova Scotians are registered, looking for a primary care provider. The steps we're taking are working; we have more work to do and we're committed to doing that work.

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, the surgeries are cancelled for today. How can the minister stand there and say that they're improving? The surgeries are cancelled for today and all 30 people are sitting or laying on a stretcher in the emergency room. That is not progress.

The redevelopment plan includes 12 new beds in the emergency room and 12 new beds in critical care. But even after considering the new non-acute care beds in North Sydney and New Waterford, we still have a net loss of 18 beds in industrial Cape Breton.

The minister can stand here until he's blue in the face. This is not an improvement for Cape Breton. It may be in five or ten years, but what is the minister doing for these surgeries and patients today?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as the member would know, the Nova Scotia Health Authority manages and operates our hospital facilities throughout the province. They, I assure you, are as concerned as we are in government.

The members opposite, indeed, Nova Scotians that are serviced within the Cape Breton Regional area - I assure you that every effort is being made to identify a process. I know for a fact the deputy minister and I were engaged on this very topic last night. We

continue to engage with the executives within the Nova Scotia Health Authority and their staff to come up with a plan to address the very issue the member has raised.

Work is ongoing, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to seeing the results of those steps, just like the positive results that we are seeing in areas like primary health care that I've highlighted earlier.

[2:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - MILITARY HEALTH CARE: FED. FUNDING CUT - IMPACT

TIM HOUSTON: We have a huge military presence in this province and we're all incredibly proud of the contribution that the military makes to our economy here in Nova Scotia. Yesterday it was announced that the federal Liberal Government has quietly cut reimbursements to hospitals for health care for those serving in the military. I can table that, Mr. Speaker.

Access to medical care for those who have enlisted is a primary concern when they hear they are posted to Nova Scotia. They are very concerned about their ability to access health care in this province and the uncertainty introduced by the Liberal decision is going to have an impact on the health care system in this province that is already in crisis.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Can the Premier tell this House how much the province received from the federal government last year in the form of reimbursement for military personnel medical care? Does he have an idea as to how that will impact the Nova Scotia health budget?

THE PREMIER: I want to remind the honourable member that the Leader of the New Democratic Party raised this issue yesterday. I said to him that this isn't about access, Mr. Speaker. This is about the national government paying the feedback to the provincial government, but access is not impacted by that decision. Those military families are important to all parts of this province and will continue to have access to primary care across the province and to surgeries they require.

He is referring to the investment that the federal government would make back for the Canadian Armed Forces serving in all Canadian provinces and not just this one. We're still looking at what the impact would be but, as I said yesterday to the honourable member when he asked me that question, the Minister of National Defence said no facility would be negatively impacted.

TIM HOUSTON: Actually, the Premier's friend Justin Trudeau admitted yesterday that he didn't know what the effect would be on provincial hospitals. I'd just ask the

Premier if he knows how much we've received from the federal government. He didn't answer because he doesn't know the answer either, because every time this Premier has had an opportunity to stand up to the federal Liberals for health care funding, he has turtled.

He turtled in the 2016 health care accord negotiations. This is a Premier who won't stand up for this province. Every time he has an opportunity to stand up for Nova Scotia, he shrugs his shoulders.

I'd like to ask the Premier if the Premier will commit to standing up for those brave military men and women, to make sure that their health care requirements continue to be funded by the federal government.

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for his question. I want to remind the honourable member that not only when we were dealing with a Conservative Prime Minister and the current Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, what this Premier continues to do and will always do, regardless of what happens, is make sure he defends the interests of Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, I'll make sure I come home with my dignity, quite frankly, in the best interests of Nova Scotians. We continue to improve the health care infrastructure, investing more money in mental health because of the deal we made with the national government. We're investing more money in long-term care with the deal we made with the national government.

The minister will also recognize he signed over a \$400 million investment in affordable housing. We also just signed the largest infrastructure announcement around twinning our 100-Series highways with the national government, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to do so. At the same time, we'll go out in the global community to ensure that we continue to grow the economy of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, there are Conservative premiers across this country who only wish they could grow the economy as well as this Liberal Government of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

EECD - PRE-PRIMARY: INADEQUATE ROLL-OUT - EXPLAIN

TIM HALMAN: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. In 2017, our caucus criticized the government because we thought it was irresponsible to think they could adequately roll out pre-Primary in only three months.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I must apologize because we were wrong. The reality is they couldn't implement it adequately in three years. It's hard to know what's worse, telling parents in late August that the pre-Primary program announced in the Spring would be

delayed until October, or letting parents wait aimlessly for a location to be determined for their child's previously announced pre-Primary class.

My question for the minister is this: Does he feel the situations with the pre-Primary programs at Duc d'Anville and Burton Ettinger schools were handled properly?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Unlike the Progressive Conservatives who opposed pre-Primary and universal early learning for 4-year-olds despite the science on the importance of that early learning for our students - despite the Progressive Conservatives' calls to slow down and stop, we haven't Mr. Speaker.

Our biggest challenge has been actually keeping up with demand, and out of the 80 new sites this year that we brought in, there was one delayed at Duc d'Anville and the reason for that was because there were many more parents who wanted their kids in that program than anticipated. You know what we're doing? We're actually building more space on that school property so we can accommodate the service to more 4-year-olds to help their parents.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, despite this government's practice of drive-by smears, this caucus was opposed (Interruption.)

THE SPEAKER: Order please. Order please. Order please. The honourable member for Dartmouth East will retract that unparliamentary statement.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I retract that statement.

This caucus remains opposed to the mismanagement of the implementation of pre-Primary. In year one of the pre-Primary rollout, everyone knew there would be issues. That's what happens when you rush a program to keep an election promise.

I don't think people expected those problems to be as large as they were, but we hoped they were simply growing pains. Here we are, three years in, and the same problems that plagued this program in year one continue and the patience of parents is being tested.

My question is this: Will the minister commit to ensuring all new pre-Primary sites have an appropriate location secured before they are announced to school communities.

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The reality of it is that caucus is opposed to the Yarmouth ferry, it's opposed to trade, it's opposed to (Interruption)

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

THE PREMIER: They voted against ensuring that every 4-year-old would have access to an evidence-based, play-based program regardless of the socioeconomic circumstances they are born into.

What they want to do is to continue to hold children in this province in poverty when we're giving them an opportunity to grow. That's the reality, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East, on a new question.

EECD - PRE-PRIMARY: INCLUSION TRAINING - EXPAND

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, the reality is this government practises a leap-before-you-look mentality. This is what happens when you invest \$20 million into a vessel that hasn't sailed once this season. Time and time again, whether it's pre-Primary or the Yarmouth ferry, they've shown Nova Scotians that they plan to the podium.

My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. There is no doubt that inclusive education has been, and should remain, a priority in our education system. It's because of that importance that it strikes me as odd that the inclusion training is not mandatory for early childhood educators working in the government-funded pre-Primary program.

My question is this: How can students with diverse needs participate in the universal pre-Primary program if their instructors don't have the inclusion training?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Again, the members opposite are spreading misinformation on our pre-Primary program. Here's the reality of that program, Mr. Speaker.

Nova Scotians want that program. They're benefiting from it. Our biggest challenge has been keeping up with demand. If the member would take time to actually speak with parents whose kids are in that program, they'll get the positive feedback that we're receiving on this side of the House.

There's inclusion training available for ECEs who require that training if they do have a diverse group of needs for their pre-Primary students. We also have additional supports provided through the Regional Centres for Education to give those extra hands in those pre-Primary classes if they're needed, Mr. Speaker.

TIM HALMAN: The reality is, I have consulted with parents, and those parents have indicated to me that the quick implementation of the program left a lot of gaping holes in the programming. The reality is when this was implemented, it wasn't universal.

The program was meant to be available to every 4-year-old in the province. The reality is that those with students with diverse needs have no guarantee that an educator in their pre-Primary program will be properly trained to provide the safety and support that they need.

My question is this, Mr. Speaker: Does the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development believe that inclusion training should be made mandatory for all ECEs.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The reality is that in each of those pre-Primary classrooms, the needs vary from student to student and training is not necessarily required for every one of those ECEs, but the training is made available. Additional resources are made available for those students and those classrooms, if they need it. This program is working to provide an inclusive, play-based learning experience to these kids, and we know it's going to have an impact on their lives in a positive way, particularly for those families that are coming from the lower side of our socio-economic spectrum in the province.

Here is the reality in what's happening in early learning in Nova Scotia. We are bringing in free universal 4-year-old programming. We are hiring 500 ECEs. We're growing the regulated child care sector with the help of our federal counterparts - we are putting money into that. We have more competitive wages than we've ever had for that sector before, and more Nova Scotians are having access to affordable child care and early learning experiences.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East, on a new question.

EECD - ECES: UNAPPRECIATED AND UNDERPAID - ACTION

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that a lot of the problems that we've seen over the last three years could have been avoided if they had taken their time to implement this program like previous programs had been done in the past, like Options and Opportunities and IB.

Mr. Speaker, a report was released in January that stated that early childhood educators in our province were feeling unappreciated and underpaid. With the rush roll out of pre-Primary, ECEs are more in demand than ever in the province, but it is hard to attract people to a career where they are going to be, to quote them, unappreciated and underpaid.

My question to the minister is: Following the media stories of how unhappy some ECEs are, what action is the government taking to make early childhood education an attractive career option in our province?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: That is a really important question. What we've done is invested in the regulated child care sector and ECEs. We've brought their wages from

\$12 an hour, which was the lowest in the country under the previous Progressive Conservative and New Democratic Party governments, to, on average, \$18 an hour, which is at or above the national average.

We've created 500 new jobs for early childhood educators in Nova Scotia and we are creating more training opportunities for early childhood educators in Nova Scotia. For the first time in a long time, there is actually a waiting list of people trying to train in early childhood education. That's an indication to me that early childhood educators and people who want to become early childhood educators see a future in that profession and are excited to be a part of this brand-new landscape for early learning and child care in Nova Scotia.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, this government keeps patting themselves on the back time and time again; I'm surprised they haven't torn a rotator cuff. (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order, please.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TIM HALMAN: The fact of the matter is the labour gaps continue to exist. Private daycares are having their ECEs poached by the pre-Primary program that has the ability to offer higher wages and a more appealing schedule. I know steps have been taken, but clearly not enough has been done.

My question to the minister is: What other initiatives does the government have planned to ensure both private and public child care centres are sufficiently staffed?

ZACH CHURCHILL: That's a very important question. When you create 500 jobs and a new space with higher, more competitive wages, that does create some labour pressures, for sure. We are seeing that some businesses are able to navigate these new waters successfully. We are actually seeing the regular child care sector grow and hire more early childhood educators and that is also adding to the labour pressure, as well. But to help those businesses that are having a difficult time navigating these new waters, we've invested double the money into them. We invest now close to \$70 million a year, \$26 million of which is for competitive wages.

We subsidize wages for early childhood educators in private businesses. We are also creating tons of new training opportunities and bursary programs to diversify that work for us and get more people involved in this really meaningful, wonderful line of work that is finally compensated appropriately in Nova Scotia. Those folks are going to have a great, meaningful career in that line of work.

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

EECD - BEHAVIOURAL SUPPORTS: CURRENT APPROACH - AGREE

BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, since the Cape Breton Regional School Board has been dissolved, there have been funding cuts to all middle school behavioural intervention resource teacher programs, also known as BIRT.

The students under the BIRT program have been placed into a mixed program entitled, Learning Centre and Behaviour Support. This creates a situation where students are in the same class with other students who have different needs and it becomes difficult for teachers to develop appropriate programming for either group.

Teachers want to support their students to the best of their abilities but are finding the situation challenging.

My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is: Does the minister agree with the current approach to student behavioural supports in Cape Breton?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: To clarify the record, in fact, investments in the education system have increased very single year we've been in government. Since the dissolution of the school boards, we've actually seen more funding go into Cape Breton to hire behavioural experts, child and youth care practitioners, school psychologists, speech language pathologists, more guidance counsellors, more TAs, and more autism specialists. And we are understanding that those supports are getting where they need to be; they're being better directed in the system to better meet the needs of our students.

[2:30 p.m.]

To clarify, there are more full-time positions on Cape Breton Island than there have been in a long time as a result of our investments.

BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, multiple teachers have contacted me in the last couple of weeks and relayed to me that the issue often creates a safety risk for the teacher and other students. This approach increases class student-to-teacher ratio including the high-risk students. Teachers are concerned that this issue has become an unmanageable situation. We want inclusive classrooms where all students can thrive, all students and faculty are safe and well-supported.

Can the minister commit to me today to reinstating the BIRT program in Cape Breton?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the sentiments of the member opposite. We need more inclusive schools and we need more supports to actually provide

that inclusive education. I will remind the member that our government has brought in, this year, 365 net new positions for inclusive education in our education system to do just that.

I will remind the member that the increase in investment that we've put into education - in every single budget since our first mandate, there has been an increase in education investment and the hiring of more people - every single time we've presented our budget to the House, the Progressive Conservatives opposite have voted against those increases in education.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

TIR - QEII REDEV.: RFP - SECRECY

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. The Request for Proposals for the public components of the Cape Breton Regional Hospital redevelopment project was posted earlier this week in accordance with our provincial procurement transparency policy.

However, the RFP for the P3 component of the QEII redevelopment project is still nowhere to be found. When asked to justify their failure to release the RFP to the public, the Deputy Minister of TIR has repeatedly cited the importance of protecting the competitive advantage of both the government and the private bidders.

Will the minister admit that the Liberal Government's secrecy around P3 projects is just about hiding the astronomical profits private companies stand to make?

HON. LLOYD HINES: I thank the member opposite for the question. It's such an honour to be associated with a government that is rebuilding the health infrastructure of this province, all across the province. Take a look at what we're doing in Cape Breton. It is breathtaking, absolutely.

In answer to the question, the answer is no.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Thank you for that robust answer. An RFP is a document that spells out what the government requires from companies when they bid on a particular contract. The notion that transparency under this issue would dissuade bidders is frankly ludicrous.

British Columbia requires that RFPs and associated documents for P3 contracts be posted publicly and the same firms, such as EllisDon, bid on those contracts freely and willingly. This requirement does not appear to prevent them from bidding on lucrative public contracts.

Will the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal please admit that this Liberal Government is simply focused on hiding a potentially enormous public cost?

LLOYD HINES: I thank the member opposite for the question. I would like to congratulate the Third Party for leading the largest P3 project ever seen in the province - a very successful project that we brought to completion after we came in - and which has resulted in a fabulous partnership for Nova Scotia which is producing tourism dollars. We're now on the map in terms of convention facilities and we got lots of help from the other side.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

EECD: GRAD. RATE - MATH LITERACY

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, again my question is for the Minister of Education and Childhood Development. Nova Scotia has seen increasing graduation rates in the last few years. As the minister had previously stated, the former Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development put a lot of focus on graduation rates. The high graduation rates are great so long as the students who are graduating are doing so with a high level of knowledge and skills and have that preparedness for adulthood.

We're hearing from adult learning groups like the Dartmouth Learning Network that some people coming to them in their twenties, for example, don't know their multiplication tables.

My question to the minister is: Would the department be willing to accept a reduced graduation rate in exchange for higher literacy in math requirements for graduation?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, first I want to say how proud I am to have served with the former Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, who invested more dollars in literacy and numeracy support than we've actually ever had in Nova Scotia.

While we've seen improvements in literacy across the province in every single region, we're not seeing the same success in numeracy. That's why the department is still heavily focused on increasing our numeracy levels and ensuring that our teachers have the training they need and professional development opportunities to deliver our curriculum to the best of their ability. I hope to see more success on this front in the future.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, there are so many different measuring sticks on that side of the government - \$20 million invested in a ferry that hasn't sailed, investments in education - and at times we're not seeing the results we need in our high school students.

I'd like to reiterate that I think high graduation rates are a good thing, but it's important that Nova Scotian students graduate only when they have achieved the outcomes in skills that will leave them prepared for whatever step they take next in life.

A Nova Scotia high school diploma has to mean something. Students should only graduate once they have armed themselves with the tools to ensure success in the workforce and college and university.

What I'd like the minister to explain is whether or not the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has compromised the focus on quality of graduates in place of quantity of graduates.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, our investments have actually been directed towards better ensuring that our students are prepared to meet the labour market needs. I was just at the Technology Advantage Program launch this week where we have students from across the province entering into an IT-specific training program where they get credits for NSCC and where they are actually linked to a pathway to the private sector afterward.

We've made investments heavily in the STEAM faculties to make sure that we're better preparing our kids to meet the needs of our labour market.

When it comes to graduation, these decisions are made at the local level by administrators and by teachers, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the member opposite is questioning the integrity of those folks in our system who make these decisions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

EECD - HRCE: STUDENT BUSING - DETAILS

TIM HALMAN: That is the last thing that I am doing. Anyone who has been in the system knows that there has been a decrease in student responsibility in the classroom. The nature of that question was to get a sense of where the department is. I would never question the integrity of our teachers and administrators in this province, and the minister knows that.

Mr. Speaker, parents have been anxiously awaiting news of who the bus provider will be once Stock's contract is cancelled next year. The application process closed on September 27th, and according to the HRCE website, a tender for student transportation services busing has been awarded. I'll table that.

There's information missing, like who the tender was awarded to, how much it will cost, and what date it was awarded on.

My question for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is this: Have the HRCE busing contracts been awarded? If so, who are they awarded to and for how much?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: If you remember the focus of education debate last session, it was all around the crisis in busing. There were a lot of issues in busing. We were having challenges with Stock.

I want the member to reflect on the difference that we're experiencing this year as a result of the action this government has taken and as a result of the really great work that Elwin LeRoux, our regional executive director, and Jacob and their team on busing have done this year to better communicate with parents, better manage routes, and ensure we have a competitive process in place when it comes to re-establishing the busing operator.

I haven't been made aware of that tender being awarded yet, but as soon as we are made aware, that information will be made public.

TIM HALMAN: I'm certainly glad that the minister finally admits that it was a crisis with students being dropped off in areas of Dartmouth, I know, where they didn't know where they were.

Yes, we have seen improvements, but we are still also at the same time seeing many situations where Stock and the HRCE transportation team aren't getting back to people in a timely manner.

Now the HRCE announced that they would be hiring eight people at a cost of \$624,000 to oversee new divided bus zones. It seems like we already had a level of bureaucracy doing that, and at a much lower price tag, but those positions were hastily vaporized by this government. Hiring these eight people is nice, but I'm willing to bet that it isn't providing much solace to the parents of students who have been left behind or late for class because of Stock's inefficiencies.

My question is this: Do parents have a direct line to these eight people, making them serve essentially the same role as elected school boards or is the minister still the direct point of contact for concerned parents?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the challenges we are having with Stock was that they were responsible for the communication to parents, not the former school board members. They were not the ones fielding all the calls and concerns related to operational issues with Stock - Stock's responsibility was that. That responsibility was given to them by the former school board.

What we've done is taken that responsibility back in-house. We've hired people in the HRSC to provide that service and the feedback that we are getting from parents and the

system is so much better than it was last year, and I want to commend our staff for doing such a great job. Stock was failing us last year. That's why we cancelled our contract with them, in line with a contract, and that's why we opened up a tendering process to make sure we have the best operator possible to deliver bus services here in Halifax.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

EECD: SCHOOL SUPPLIES - RESPONSIBILITY

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, in August a social media campaign called #ClearTheLists began. This campaign was teachers going on Amazon, making a public wish list of classroom supplies and putting out a public cry for help in purchasing the products.

Ten years ago, teachers reported spending \$500 to \$700 out of their own pockets to cover supplies for their classrooms. I'm scared to find out how much that has grown in the last decade. I'll admit it feels like we can do better than having our educators resort to social media to keep their classrooms stocked. My question to the minister is this: Who is responsible for ensuring our students have the proper supplies to succeed in class, the teacher, or the government?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, of course, the government and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and our regional centres are responsible for that. To deliver our curriculum to all its specifics - the department and the regions provide all of that funding to our education system and the teachers.

However, there are teachers that have always gone, under every single government, above and beyond what is required of them to make sure their students have either learning materials that they think are important or other materials that they believe are important for the students' well-being.

I want to thank and commend the teachers for doing that because they've always done that, Mr. Speaker. I also want them to know that there's funding available through their administration, and school grants, and funding available now through School Advisory Councils (SACs) that wasn't there before. They can apply for if they believe there's additional funds needed to deliver education in the classrooms.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, there's so much more the government could be doing to support teachers in terms of the supplies that are provided in the classroom. We all know that the pre-Primary program is one of the government's proudest accomplishments. That pride isn't felt universally, of course. Private daycares are facing staffing shortages. The rollout, as we all know, has been less than smooth; it has had a very devastating impact on our daycares.

Even the people who are running the program, the ECEs, have concerns about the program. They've had to resort to Facebook to try to collect all the supplies they need for their classrooms, so even in this government's proudest accomplishment, they've left the frontline workers footing the bill. My question is this: How is government helping pre-Primary ECEs cover the out-of-pocket costs to keep their classrooms stocked with supplies to meet up with the curriculum?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify for the member opposite: the regulated child care sector - those private businesses that are not-for-profit organizations that have been delivering child care in Nova Scotia - is actually growing. There has been 2,000 new spaces opened up, since pre-Primary has come along, in the regulated child care sector. That is directly related to the doubling of investment that this government has made in that sector to expand it, to grow it, from meeting the needs of one in four Nova Scotians to meeting the needs of all Nova Scotians, Mr. Speaker.

We're seeing jobs being created and we're seeing it being more affordable and accessible to families across this province, at the same time that pre-Primary is going. When it comes to staffing and resources to pre-Primary, again, we provide all the funding required to deliver our play-based curriculum and the supplies that are needed. If there's people out there that believe they need additional funding, I'd like to at least know what that funding is for.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

EECD: SCHOOL LIBRARIES - STANDARDS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I, like my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus here, support a strong and vibrant education system. We believe that includes having libraries in our schools. In recent months, I was contacted by local citizens because some of our elementary schools in Cumberland North have lost their libraries due to lack of physical space.

My question to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is: Can the minister clarify if it is standard to have a library in an elementary school here in the province?

[2:45 p.m.]

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I do find it ironic that members opposite would suggest that they support a vibrant, healthy education system when they have voted against every single budget that this government has brought in to increase investment in that very same education system and when they voted against a pre-Primary program that we know is valuable and critical to every single 4-year-old in this province. Also, they voted against supports for literacy that we have invested in in our education system.

When it comes to libraries, the model of that is changing. It has been changing under three consecutive governments back to the Progressive Conservatives. Those decisions were made by school boards at the time.

We're moving from one space for a library to a setting where there's a learning commons in all of our new buildings, where students are able to engage in open dialogue and benefit from higher levels of technology in the middle of the school not just set off in a library room.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I wouldn't mind if the minister could elaborate. Is that going to have a different name than "library"? Will it be consistent with all of the elementary schools?

In preparing for this question, I did a little research. The data shows that an elementary school that doesn't have a teacher librarian in the library has significantly lower achievement on standardized reading tests. I wasn't able to find any data if the school didn't have a library at all. I am concerned, as are our citizens and as are our teachers, that there will no longer be libraries standard in our elementary schools.

Maybe the answer is no. I was going to ask the minister: Would he commit to ensuring that the elementary schools in Cumberland North all have a library?

ZACH CHURCHILL: We will ensure, so long as we're a government, that there will be investment in literacy and learning in our education system. If the member wants to see the new model of our learning commons or learning resource centres, I think she should go check out Bible Hill. She can check out the new Yarmouth Elementary. Any of the new schools being built have these beautiful brand-new learning commons, where oftentimes there is a librarian working there. It will be the same model, I believe, that we'll see in Springhill and every other new school that this government is building in the province.

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

BUS. - SCOTCH LAKE RD. (C.B.): INTERNET/CELL SERV. - IMPROVE

KEITH BAIN: My question is to the Minister of Business. In today's world, access to reliable internet and cellphone service is a necessity, but not many are afforded the opportunity.

The residents of Scotch Lake Road in Cape Breton have been contacting my office concerning poor-quality internet and no cellphone service. This also includes the area of Leitches Creek and Long Island. This has become a matter of safety for families on that particular road and one that affects their quality of life.

My question to the minister is: Can the minister inform the House as to what is being done to improve the services in that area?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I don't have the specific details around the Develop Nova Scotia broadband template or map that they're developing in terms of where towers will be, where the hard-wired fibre op will be built - satellite, wireless, et cetera. After QP, I can get some information just on the specific details and get back to the member.

This is obviously a live question that the Premier and our government have been participating in, not only in terms of the speed at which the broadband program is rolled out but also where we're building towers - what opportunities exist and remain in terms of being able to build cell service into that. My colleague in Municipal Affairs has been very active in that as well. There is a lot of work to do here, but I can follow up with the member.

KEITH BAIN: Last December, I wrote the minister concerning this matter. The lack of services is negatively impacting the lives of workers, volunteers, homeowners, and families within each community.

In recent correspondence, one resident stated that when her son was two, he took a seizure. She called 911 for an ambulance. The ambulance had difficulty finding her home and went to two other houses instead of hers, which delayed the actual response time.

My question to the minister is: Will the minister commit to improving both internet and cellphone service to the residents of Scotch Lake, Leitches Creek, and Long Island?

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers has expired. The minister will get back to you after QP.

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education on an introduction.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, in the East Gallery today we are joined by my favourite constituent who has had a remarkable political career, bringing unprecedented dollars into the Halifax area, former Halifax MP Mary Clancy. Please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Environment on an introduction.

HON. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring attention to the East Gallery, to the Warden for the Municipality of Digby, the past-president of UNSM. He sits on the PVSC, is a great advocate for libraries, and is also a compatriot of mine in our doctor retention stakeholder group. I welcome Jimmy MacAlpine, Warden MacAlpine, to the House. (Applause)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 180.

Bill No. 180 - Fatality Investigations Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 180, an Act to Amend Chapter 31 of the Acts of 2001, the Fatality Investigations Act, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to speak to amendments to the Fatality Investigations Act, amendments that will help save lives. These changes will establish two important death review committees, one to focus on domestic violence and another on the deaths of children in the care or custody of the province. The changes also allow us to establish other focus death review committees, as required.

Mr. Speaker, death review committees are not a new approach. They exist and have proven beneficial in several other provinces and territories. Death review committees allow for timely and thorough review of unexpected deaths by experts both within and outside government. These expert committees serve two important roles. The first is to provide a thorough review of the circumstances surrounding a death, what happened, how and why; and the second is to consider those circumstances more broadly and ask the difficult questions: What could we have done better and how do we prevent these deaths from happening in the future?

Mr. Speaker, my department has worked closely with our colleagues at Community Services, Health and Wellness, Education and Early Childhood Development, and the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women to bring this legislation forward.

We all have a role to play in ensuring the health and safety of Nova Scotians most impacted by this bill. You've heard me say before that one death due to domestic violence or intimate partner violence or one unexpected death of a child in the province's care or custody is one too many. The more we can learn from these tragic situations, the better

equipped we are to prevent them in the first place. That is why we are taking the action to create death review committees in Nova Scotia.

To be clear, these committees do not replace fatality inquiries. They do not replace the work of the Chief Medical Examiner and his team. They do not replace the investigations conducted by our team at the Department of Justice or the teams at Health and Wellness, the Health Authorities, Community Services, and Education and Early Childhood Development when someone in their care dies unexpectedly. Death review committees give us another tool in our toolbox. They give us an opportunity to learn from unfortunate tragedies and to focus on what we can do to make our system better, more responsive, more proactive and preventive.

Mr. Speaker, the learnings and recommendations brought forward by these committees will be used. All Nova Scotians must have confidence that their privacy will be respected by the experts on the committee; in fact, we have a legal obligation to protect their privacy.

Mr. Speaker, we will work with our partners, stakeholders, and committee members to ensure we strike a balance between protecting the privacy of victims and families while bringing forth new insights, new learnings, and recommendations that will help future tragedy.

Mr. Speaker, over the summer I had the privilege of meeting with survivors of domestic violence in first-voice meetings. They shared with me and with each other, in small group settings, the intimate details of their relationships and their lives, private and sensitive information about themselves and their children, and the violence that they have experienced at the hands of their intimate partners. Hearing these personal stories was a privilege, not a right. They trusted me to hold in confidence what they shared, and they trusted me to take what I heard, what we collectively learned, and bring it to my workplace so that no other woman, no other child, no other person ever has to live that experience.

Mr. Speaker, I'm privileged to have a job where I have the ability to create real, meaningful, and lasting change. I cannot do this alone, nor can our department or our colleagues in government. My role is to put laws and policies in place to prevent domestic violence, deaths from domestic violence, and deaths of children in the care or custody of the province will only be successful if, collectively as a society, we work together.

That's the principle behind this bill and our overarching goal when it comes to creating death review committees - to bring experts together from within and outside of government to review cases with an eye to what we can all do better. This work is not possible without a great deal of confidentiality and trust. We must respect that. I know I speak for all my colleagues in this Legislature when I say we want to do everything we can to prevent tragic deaths. We want to hear from the experts about how we can improve our system. We're asking them to come together to do a very difficult job which will benefit

every Nova Scotian, to look closely at the circumstances in the wake of a tragedy and tell us how we can make our system better to protect some of our most vulnerable citizens.

The learnings from these committees will be shared. Sharing the information with those who have the authority and the ability to effect change is critical. My colleagues at the Department of Justice are working with our partners in government and in the community on a plan for sharing the committee's work with the public. These are important discussions to have in the context of protecting personal privacy and health information but also in the context of accountability. The work of our death review committees must and will drive change in this province, necessary change, change that will improve outcomes and ultimately save lives.

There was also a suggestion yesterday that too much detail about these committees is being left to regulations. This is a robust bill, but I would like to provide some clarity on this point. The legislation introduced yesterday does the following tasks.

It establishes both a domestic violence death review committee and the child death review committee, to be chaired by the Chief Medical Examiner. It specifies both the mandate and the scope of the committees.

It allows me as Minister of Justice to establish other death review committees in consultation with the Chief Medical Examiner, and these can be standing committees like the two I have discussed, or they can be ad hoc committees.

The legislation also provides regulation-making authority to the minister in relation to death review committees.

The bill also allows the effective functioning of death review committees by providing a medical examiner or investigator the authority to investigate the facts and circumstances relating to a death when requested to do so by the committee.

The bill provides authority for participating public bodies and agencies to share personal information and personal health information as part of a death review. That is presently prohibited.

It protects confidentiality to ensure that there can be an open and free exchange of information amongst participants. That is presently prohibited.

It protects participants from having death review information and records used against them in legal proceedings, from being asked to appear as a witness in a legal proceeding, and from being asked to produce death review records for a legal proceeding.

The regulations will set out some of the finer points of how the committees will operate, their terms of reference, and details such as who sits on the committees, for how

long, how often they meet, and how they will report their findings and recommendations to government.

I want to be clear. I listen to what my colleagues in this House are saying when we're debating bills. I have listened to their input. I have listened to their ideas. I appreciate and value both. I'm always open to hearing the ideas of my colleagues opposite, and I'm especially interested in hearing their ideas if it means we can prevent unnecessary and tragic deaths in this province into the future.

[3:00 p.m.]

We've listened when Nova Scotia's ombudsman recommended the creation of the Child Death Review Committee. I'll be listening when this bill proceeds to the Committee on Law Amendments, when we'll have a chance to hear directly from Nova Scotians. They too have a voice in this process and their ideas, too, hold value. These are not formalities. The debate on the floor of this House is important, specifically on this topic. The comments that come forward at the Committee on Law Amendments are equally important.

The legislative process will help inform us as we finalize the regulations. We want to hear directly from our partners and stakeholders so their voices can be heard in this process as well. They see the importance and the value of these committees. Dr. Amy Ornstein is a great example. She is the medical director of the Suspected Trauma and Abuse Response Team at the IWK. Here's what she had to say:

"The ability to have experts come together to review the circumstances of an unexpected death has been hugely impactful in other jurisdictions. We must take the time to learn everything we can from these tragic occurrences to try and create a safer and brighter future for the children and youth of Nova Scotia."

The purpose of the amendments to the Fatality Investigations Act is simple. It's about prevention. As the saying goes, when we know better, we do better. We want to do better, better for victims of domestic violence, better for survivors of domestic violence, better for children who die unexpectedly in our care or custody, better for the families and communities who feel these tragedies the most.

I look forward to hearing from my colleagues in the House, from our partners and stakeholders and from all Nova Scotians who wish to participate in the democratic process as it relates to this bill. With those comments, I look forward to comments from my colleagues.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Queens-Shelburne.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak for a few minutes on Bill No. 180 - An Act to Amend Chapter 31 of the Acts of 2001, the Fatality Investigations Act.

This bill is filled with hope. Hope that we can do better as a province by bringing together a group of experts to collaborate and examine deaths as a result of domestic violence, unexpected deaths of children 19 and under in the care and custody of the province, and trends in the deaths of our young people 25 and under.

Domestic violence deaths are alarming and they're very challenging for families, often with more questions than answers. I read the words of the Minister of Justice when he announced this bill, where he stated, "One intimate partner death, or death of a child in our care or custody is one too many." I agree with the minister. I am sure he has been impacted time and time again in his former role as an RCMP officer and now as the Minister of Justice.

I know during my very short time of working with the RCMP as a senior safety coordinator, I was shaken to my very core by the cases of domestic violence that were happening in my community. During my time there, I discovered every level of elder abuse that exists, in just a short year. It was shocking and it's hard for me to put into words the impact those cases had on me.

The Child Death Review Committee is an extremely important piece of this legislation. It is important to note that this was a recommendation of the ombudsman. Suicide in our youth is at an alarming rate in our province. Opioid usage is in all of our communities. Last year there were 60 confirmed or possible/probable opioid-related deaths in Nova Scotia. Mr. Speaker, one death is too many.

We need to understand why this is happening and we need fulsome reviews. We owe the people we represent the dignity and hope that we can do better. The work of these committees will identify systemic issues, problems, gaps and shortcomings in each case and make the appropriate recommendations concerning prevention.

In closing, I will again say I understand and appreciate the minister's passion and heart in the intent of this bill. Our caucus supports a decision to create these two death committees, but we would like to see more defined in legislation and less to be crafted in regulation.

We do need to do more, but we also need transparency and openness so we can all learn. This will help the next generations to continue to find solutions to critical issues of our time. We owe that to Nova Scotians.

With those few comments, I thank the minister and his department for the work that they have done on this very important bill. I do agree with the minister that this will allow us to do better. I look forward to what Nova Scotians have to say at Law Amendments.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the minister and to my colleague for their comments. As my colleague has stated, I think that to the minister's point of knowing better leading to doing better, this is certainly a positive step.

Along with those folks in this House who have served as first responders and have encountered first-hand some of the terrible situations that may lead to the establishment of an investigation under one of these committees, we all also know that the Minister of Community Services acts as the custodian for children in care. I know that any minister in that position would want to get to the bottom of the issue of the death of a youth in care.

We are particularly pleased in this proposed legislation to see the inclusion of trend analysis. I think anywhere we can get more data, that leads to more understanding and gives us a better opportunity to address the issues contemplated by the establishment of these committees.

In particular, with both of these committees, we know that there are systemic issues and biases involved in these types of tragedies, especially in the case of intimate-partner violence. It's essential that we identify where the systemic failures are. I am hopeful that in conducting trend analysis - in looking at the data in this way - we will have the ability to better do that, and then hopefully that will be a very useful tool for the entire Department of Justice to work from.

To that end, as I think the minister indicated in his opening comments, we are somewhat concerned about the lack of transparency and accountability in these committees. Of course, we completely understand that the situations contemplated, which would come before these committees, are very sensitive, and that the rights of privacy of the families and people involved are paramount, without question.

But that being said, given the current wording of the bill, as I understand it, we may not ever know what recommendations come from that committee and whether or not those recommendations are acted upon. I'm sure that the hard-working staff in the department have decided that that's the compromise that needs to be made, but it does worry us somewhat.

To that end, while we are pleased to see the establishment of the Child Death Review Committee, we in the NDP caucus - in particular, my colleague for Dartmouth North - have been advocating vociferously and for quite some time for a child and youth advocate. It is our position that the establishment of this committee does not remove the

need for such an office. The office of a child and youth advocate, if properly constituted, would in fact conduct independent reviews of this kind and would also make recommendations.

It's somewhat concerning, to my point of accountability and transparency. Again, we're happy that this decision has been made, but it does leave a lingering question about whether this is a more efficient and inexpensive route to the very important issue that's been identified than the child and youth advocate office in this particular instance. It's because of those types of lingering questions that we continue to push for more robust boards and committees that are ever more accessible to the public and as binding as possible on the government that they serve because we simply don't know, without information, whether these committees, as contemplated in this legislation or other committees that have been constituted, are being properly relied upon, whether their recommendations are being followed, and how they are being made use of.

So, with those few comments, I will say that we do support the spirit of this bill and we do applaud the establishment of these committees. We do wish that they went a bit further and we very much look forward to the comments of presenters at Law Amendments.

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

BARBARA ADAMS: I am pleased to speak today on Bill No. 180. I just want to start out by saying that, of course, our Party is in support of this bill and the intent of the bill because anybody who has been a victim of domestic violence or any child who has suffered deserves to have answers to what has happened to them.

At this stage, I will just raise a couple of questions for the minister. There are other committees in other provinces that have already done this. I am wondering where the minister stands on what those committees have found in the past.

One of the ones that I wanted to draw the members' attention to is the Death Review Panel. It released its recommendations on reducing youth suicide - and this was an August 16, 2019, report - and I will table that in a minute. According to the report, the panel identified three key recommendations to reduce child and youth suicide deaths and to improve public safety: one, to adopt a mental well-being strategy as part of a social, emotional learning for students; two, to identify and distribute provincial best practice youth mental health guidelines; and three, was to expand youth mental health services.

According to the Nova Scotia Health Authority's own statistics, last year there were 1,400 fewer mental health visits last year than the year before. So, without knowing for sure, and without being too pessimistic, what I've seen in my years in this Legislature is that we have a lot of reports and we have even more committees who make hundreds and hundreds of recommendations to the government. Then the government picks a few that

they like, puts a few resources into individual cases, and offers a few grants for communities.

But like other members have said, this isn't a binding committee - they are not able to compel the government to do anything. So although this bill will set up a committee, there is going to be no obligation on the government to listen to what the committee recommends.

The other comment I want to make is that these two committees need to be - clause three allows the establishment of other death review committees. I am personally encouraging this government to set up a suicide review committee because, as I've mentioned before, there were seven suicides in my constituency alone. I don't know how many there were around the province, but I don't think you need to be under 25 before we look into that.

I would encourage this government to consider amending its own legislation or to consider an amendment to the legislation, next week, to automatically add a third committee that would look into the suicide deaths of Nova Scotians in this province.

Again, I'll look forward to other members' comments, as well as those from the public through Law Amendments Committee.

[3:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

STEVE CRAIG: I rise today to support Bill No. 180. I believe this is a significant step in providing citizen oversight and recommendations to the departments that are responsible, especially for those of children and youth in care of the province.

Today is World Mental Health Day and the member before me talked about suicide rates. There are about 1,000 children in care under the province which is supposed to be and is to act as a wise and conscientious parent to those who are very vulnerable. We know that a number of youths who are in the care and custody of the government come from troubled backgrounds. I know the Speaker has, and I too, have experience in that area.

We need to be able to support our youth. This talks about an examination of the facts and the circumstances after the fact with the view of preventing something in the future. It also talks about making recommendations to the minister responsible for it, whether it is the Health and Wellness Minister, the Community Services Minister, whoever.

I may have missed it, but I don't know if there's a requirement to publicly release the information. The minister mentioned that the report goes to the government. I'm very

much looking forward to hearing from a number of our citizens at Law Amendments Committee on what they think about that, and how broadly shared the learnings of the recommendations ought to be forthcoming from these types of death review committees.

Sometimes we find that youth, in particular looking at youth under 19, have circumstances beyond their control. I know I was talking with a young fellow just the other week who is in care - who I will not name, and I won't tell you where - but he had no other family. The person was incarcerated for no other reason than there was nobody to take care of this individual. So, as a caring and conscientious parent, what types of supports do we provide? What type of recommendations might we see come from the recommendations in the godawful circumstance that it would lead to a death - unplanned death, but yet preventable death.

It's important that we know and have that feedback to the ministers responsible for this, that they, through the bureaucracy, take action to correct situations which may be beyond, and likely are way beyond, the individuals, the members, who are providing care to those in the care and custody of the government.

What we need to do is to take this extremely seriously, which I know the minister does, and all ministers do on the government side of the House, and we on this side of the House do.

We need to be able to take these circumstances and be able to analyze them and look at what led to a particular instance and also, to extend that to these particular incidents - was there something that could have been done, ought to have been done, should have been done to intervene - and not only intervene, but in a positive way, to make the life of our youth better in some way, and often in very unsavoury conditions.

I know that we talk about youth and where they have been. We know that we hear a lot about a missing youth - it goes through the police services - and the question is, why is that youth missing? Why are we looking for them? What were the circumstances that caused the youth to move on to some place else?

God forbid that it should happen, that there is something in that information that comes from a review committee that points to something that the government, or the government contractor - and I'll use that phrase because I've heard it in the House before - that it's really not the government's issue, it's the contracted-out services issue. That to me is not correct, it's always "the buck stops here." That's the way I say it.

Mr. Speaker, I absolutely support this bill. I am absolutely looking forward to contributing at Law Amendments Committee. Hopefully too the people who are impacted and living in some of these circumstances now are also given the opportunity to come and speak before the Committee on Law Amendments. This too will impact their daily lives and also the circumstances in which they live.

THE SPEAKER: I just want to remind members that terms like “godawful” I think are teetering on unparliamentary.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues opposite for their comments and input. I know on these subjects we all share the same objective and priorities to make Nova Scotia a safer place and, quite frankly, to save lives into the future.

I do want to touch on a couple of points that my colleagues have referenced because I think it’s important to explain the reasons for the bill as it has been presented. I think the comment my colleague from Sackville-Cobequid offered in his opening statement around a significant step, I believe this is just that, in that the opportunity to explore and to investigate and learn from these tragedies did not previously exist in the format we’re proposing. I too believe that is a significant step in building an understanding based on the data and information that has preceded us to this state.

The Chief Medical Examiner talks about reviews of past incidents and the need to establish a baseline and how valuable that information will be in the committee’s ability to go forward and measure the work of these committees. Our hope into the future is that domestic homicides and death of a child in custody are significantly reduced and, if one could ever hope, eliminated.

The point that each speaker, I think, has alluded to in one way or another is around transparency and accountability. I think it’s important to understand the challenges that we face now in sharing an exchange of information and where we would like to get in order to have the subject matter experts - internal and external of government - be willing participants, able to share the information that they are privy to but presently prevented from sharing.

Whether we like it or not, through no voluntary or intentional effort on anyone’s part, we have established silos. We’re unable to share and exchange information that will serve another purpose, to find solutions in an effort to mitigate and reduce and eliminate these types of tragedies. Some have used the word secrecy. There’s no motive or objective to be secret in the process. Why would I advance such important committees if I thought or felt that the work we’re doing was not beneficial to those involved, quite frankly, to those who have been victimized by these circumstances?

The whole concept of the committee structure is to break down those barriers, to allow us to exchange information, and to ensure that information is protected. In the absence of putting protections around that information, we risk the ability and the willingness of those subject matter experts to come to the table to participate and share the

information that they are privy to. I can tell you from 32 years in policing and working with multiple agencies over many years, there has always been a desire to exchange and share information because we all see the commonalities in victimization. We're all dealing with the same individuals who've been impacted by those circumstances they face in society.

We've always been prevented from formally sharing that information because none of us would ever be protected from civil action or challenge by others.

What we have established, and the intent of this legislation, is to give those willing participants, those subject matter experts who can contribute to this discussion, the protection and the comfort they need to have open dialogue and open discussions and not fear that their efforts will ultimately result in some other form of action against them or draw them into a criminal court process.

I want to be very careful when I speak, and I ask my colleagues to think of it in that lens, that this is about bringing people to the table. We have to create a safe space for them to be able to have those discussions and, quite frankly, do that work.

In response to both my colleagues for Queens-Shelburne and for Dartmouth South, I absolutely value and appreciate your experiences and familiarity with the subject matter. I appreciate the optimism and positivity that you each have shared in your comments. I think that is significant and valuable to the discourse and discussion that will continue through Law Amendments Committee and into the public domain.

I think there's a huge opportunity here to reach out to the people you know in our communities who are involved in these circumstances, who find themselves impacted by these circumstances, and seek their input and guidance.

I know that those relationships exist, and I know that that will be an important part of the work we do, not only through the democratic process of moving the bill through the processes of this House but following the legislation's success here in this House and into the future, so that we can all speak in a way that contributes to the objective.

I don't have to say to anyone in this House that the violence and the incidents we hear of on a too-frequent basis around domestic violence - the need of every one of us in this House to put politics aside and think of public policy and public work that will benefit each and every Nova Scotian whom we are so fortunate to represent in this Legislature.

With those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I close debate on Bill No. 180.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 180. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 187.

Bill No. 187 - House of Assembly Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 187, an Act to Amend Chapter 1 (1992 Supplement) of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the House of Assembly Act, be now read a second time.

I am pleased to stand today to speak to amendments to the House of Assembly Act. These changes redraw the province's electoral map, including reinstating the ridings of Argyle, Clare, Richmond, and Preston.

These changes reflect the work of the independent 2018-19 Electoral Boundaries Commission. The Electoral Boundaries Commission has an important job to do, and they are charged with doing it independent of government. I want to thank the chair and members of the commission for their work and submission of their final report.

They were tasked with balancing effective representation for all Nova Scotians, bearing in mind voter parity. Mr. Speaker, these amendments are in response to a direct recommendation from the Electoral Boundaries Commission - a recommendation they developed after extensive consultation with Nova Scotians.

[3:30 p.m.]

These changes will also see the introduction of digital boundaries for electoral ridings. Digitizing boundaries is yet another way in which we are bringing Nova Scotia into the 21st century and ensuring government services are accessible and responsive to the needs of Nova Scotians.

In closing, I want to thank the commission for their work, the Nova Scotians who participated in the exhaustive and thorough consultation, and the all-Party committee of the Legislature who were originally and initially involved in this process.

With those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to comments from my colleagues.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker I am happy to rise and speak briefly on Bill No. 187, an Act to Amend Chapter 1 (1992 Supplement) of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the House of Assembly Act.

Our caucus respects the extensive work of the Chair, Colin Dodds, and the members of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. We accept the independent Electoral Boundaries Commission report of April 2019 in its entirety.

The government has brought forth this bill, and we are glad to see that the independent commission's work is being respected. We look forward to hearing from Nova Scotians at the Law Amendments Committee.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to stand and address these amendments to the House of Assembly Act. To start, we are glad to see the move from metes and bounds to digital boundaries. I have to confess that I, myself, know the definition of neither mete nor bound, so it is helpful for all of us, as well as everyone in Nova Scotia, to see a map that clearly shows what those boundaries are.

We recognize the need for effective and fair representation of all Nova Scotians. We respect the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission that the minister referenced.

One note I would make is that, while we are very glad to see the inclusion of a district for Preston, it is a bit of a misnomer to refer to it as a protected area because it doesn't fall outside of the plus or minus 25 per cent threshold. In fact, it is within that. We're just noting that while there are many smaller ridings that are exceptional ridings - and I know that there are different ways of defining "exceptional riding" - the Preston riding does, in fact, have the requisite number of electors to not fall into that special category.

The one thing we would say about this bill at this point, aside from the metes and bounds, is that there are other issues that were raised briefly by the commission but in a more robust way by the Keefe commission, towards effective electoral representation. The report came out in 2018 around the more systemic factors that could ensure more fair representation, talking about how we engage communities, how we increase voter turnout, and issues around electoral reform and proportional representation.

I think if we're looking at the issue of fair electoral representation in a holistic way, there are a number of things that need attending to. Certainly this is some of them, but the Electoral Boundaries Commission, in their own report, mentioned electoral reform. I think it is something that is worth investigating moving forward.

I suspect we will hear a great deal at the Law Amendments Committee. I look forward to those presentations. There was robust public consultation by the commission. I was pleased to attend a couple of those sessions. I know many of my colleagues did. I'm sure there are still Nova Scotians who would like to have their say around what is contained in this bill, and we look forward to hearing those comments at the Law Amendments Committee.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: I want to acknowledge and recognize the comments of my colleagues, their openness to the contents of the bill, and the support that they have extended, understanding that there may be some points that continue to necessitate future work. That work continues.

With those few comments, I rise to close debate on Bill No. 187.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 187. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Government Motions.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

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

The motion is carried.

The House will now take a short recess while it resolves itself into a Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

[3:46 p.m. The House resolved into a CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Suzanne Lohnes-Croft in the Chair.]

[4:03 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened. Deputy Speaker Brendan Maguire resumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole House on Bills has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 152 - Plastic Bags Reduction Act.

Bill No. 160 - Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act.

Bill No. 163 - Wilderness Areas Protection Act.

Bill No. 166 - Denturists Act.

Bill No. 170 - Public Highways Act.

and the Chairman has been instructed to recommend these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, without amendments.

THE SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Ordered that these bills be read a third time on a future date.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government business for today. I know the Opposition is disappointed.

I move that the House will now rise, to meet again tomorrow, Friday, October 11, 2019, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Business will include, after the Daily Routine and QP, second reading of Bill Nos. 189, 191 and 192.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on October 11th, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 4:05 p.m.]