



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2019

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2019

Sixty-third General Assembly

Second Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, Brendan Maguire

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Just before we begin the daily routine, I have a brief message from Hansard to pass along to all members. When we are making introductions, mentioning proper names of guests, or referring to somebody in a resolution, if you could just make sure to table the document that has the proper spelling of those names for the purposes of Hansard. It's been a bit challenging in the last couple of days. Just a nice message from Hansard, a reminder to all of us.

We'll now 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 undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia to ensure that women who require a full or partial breast prosthesis as a result of a growth defect or due to surgery as a result of breast cancer receive full MSI coverage of required breast prosthesis every two years.”

Mr. Speaker, there are 889 signatures affixed on this and I have affixed my own.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

THE PREMIER: I'd like to draw the attention of the House to the East Gallery where joining us today is Kayley Dixon from Dartmouth. Kayley is one of our Provincial Volunteers of the Year 2019. Some of you would also know her from her work around spoken word and many of her volunteer activities.

Today, Kayley will be presenting in a series of events recognizing International Day of the Girl Child at Mount Saint Vincent University later this morning. Kayley, if you would please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1317

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

Whereas we as Nova Scotians are fortunate to have many throughout our province who are committed to making a positive impact in our communities through volunteering and activism; and

Whereas Dartmouth's own Kayley Dixon, a young Nova Scotian, has spent hundreds of hours of her own time volunteering in her community with organizations such as the Take Action Society and Stop the Violence; and

Whereas Kayley goes even further with her own initiatives, be it her spoken word poetry to give voice to those who may have none or her efforts to address food insecurity and period poverty, and she has more than earned her recognition as a 2019 Provincial Volunteer of the Year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me today, on International Day of the Girl Child, in thanking Kayley Dixon for the leadership, dedication, and service she has given to her community and to her province.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

RESOLUTION NO. 1318

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

Whereas the United Nations has marked October 11th as the International Day of the Girl Child to highlight and address the needs and challenges girls face, while promoting girls' empowerment and the fulfillment of their human rights; and

Whereas Nova Scotia believes in ensuring girls have access to opportunities to pursue their educational and career goals in any industry they choose; and

Whereas empowered young girls grow into strong women who make significant contributions to the economy, to the workforce, and to the economic success of our province and our country;

Therefore be it resolved that this House recognize women as leaders at the Department of Finance and Treasury Board on this International Day of the Girl Child.

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 responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would direct the members' attention to the East Gallery where we are joined today by Sarah Dobson, who is a third-year student at the Schulich School of Law, and her friend, Grace Evans, who is a third-year political science student, also at Dalhousie University.

The women leaders in this Chamber may recognize Sarah and Grace, not just because Sarah was a Page but because they're in the process of interviewing current and past women MLAs to publish a book about all women ever elected to the Nova Scotia Legislature.

I would ask my colleagues to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act.

RESOLUTION NO. 1319

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

Whereas over the course of Nova Scotia's rich history, the number of women elected each election to the House of Assembly has increased so that young women can better see themselves reflected in their elected leaders; and

Whereas Sarah Dobson and Grace Evans, students at Dalhousie University, are writing a book about all 50 women who have served as MLAs in the Nova Scotia

Legislature, to hear their stories, and to pass on their wisdom and advice to the next generation of women leaders; and

Whereas upon completion, the proceeds from the book will be used to create a scholarship opportunity for young women in the province who aspire to enter a career in politics;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing Sarah and Grace for taking on this important project, and wish them success as they gather the incredible stories of past and present women MLAs for the benefit of all Nova Scotian women.

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 Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 1320

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

Whereas Nova Scotians deserve an effective and user-friendly Maintenance Enforcement Program, and our program serves over 13,000 families with women comprising over 95 per cent of the recipients; and

Whereas we have made many recent improvements to this program, including launching a new mobile online system, which provides better and more convenient service to our clients, and a new and innovative community outreach pilot project in Cape Breton, which is helping to get more payments into the hands of women and children, including those in Indigenous communities; and

Whereas innovative initiatives like these have helped reduce arrear levels to their lowest amount in over 10 years and are resulting in the collection and payout of \$230,000 each day to Nova Scotia families;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in recognizing the work done by the Maintenance Enforcement Program staff and their partners, who are dedicated to ensuring Nova Scotian women and their families have financial stability.

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

[9:15 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 1321

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

Whereas Nova Scotia continues to be a leader in the promotion of women and girls in sport and recreation, in both government and the private sector; and

Whereas female representation on provincial sport organization boards in Nova Scotia is almost 10 per cent above the national average, and Communities, Culture and Heritage is currently creating a gender equity action plan to support access and opportunities for sport, recreation, and physical activity for all Nova Scotians; and

Whereas highlighting women and girls in sport through events such as the IIHF Women's World Championship, St. Francis Xavier showcasing women's rugby during homecoming, and the Trendsetter Awards hosted by WomenActive-NS encourages young girls to remain active and continues to pave the way for equal opportunities for women and girls in sport and recreation;

Therefore, be it resolved that the House recognize the efforts of both government and the private sector in advancing the participation of women and girls in sport and in championing the continued efforts needed to equalize the playing field.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, permission to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LABI KOUSOULIS: Today in our East Gallery we are joined by Candace Bourgeois, and Catherine Marriott, who are members of the Pathways to Shipbuilding Women Unlimited Class that graduated from NSCC this past May. They were hired as welder and metal fabricator apprentices at Irving Shipyard. I ask them both to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1322

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

Whereas it is important to foster an environment where women feel empowered to enter a career of their choosing; and

Whereas the Pathways to Shipbuilding Women Unlimited program is creating opportunities for young women to launch successful careers in Nova Scotia's shipbuilding industry; and

Whereas, with our partners, this government is supporting a culture change in workplaces to remove barriers for women entering, staying, advancing, and succeeding in their skilled trades;

Therefore, be it resolved that all members of this Legislature congratulate Candace and Catherine on their success and recognize the many organizations across our province that champion diverse and welcoming workplaces.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 1323

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 Raphaela Borgia, Foluke Akinkunmi, and Elina Feili, who identify as first-generation immigrants, are on a mission to share a message of feminism globally; and

Whereas these three young girls have founded G Inspire 360, an Instagram and YouTube account that uses a Girl Talk series to discuss topics that are important to them, spreading their positive message and allowing them the opportunity to share their own experiences relating to stereotypes about their background, gender, and more; and

Whereas by creating change, one video at a time, these girls are inspiring others to open up about their own experiences and assisting to challenge these biases and stereotypes;

Therefore be it resolved that on this International Day of the Girl Child, all members recognize Raphaela, Foluke, and Elina for their remarkable efforts in spreading hope, a message of feminism and acceptance, and overall girl power.

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

THE SPEAKER: There's 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 the Public Service Commission.

RESOLUTION NO. 1324

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

Whereas October 11th is the United Nations International Day of the Girl Child, a youth-led movement fighting for gender justice and youth rights; and

Whereas the government of Nova Scotia is committed to gender equity, diversity, and inclusion in the public service and in our workplaces; and

Whereas over half of Nova Scotia employees are women, and we promote careers in government to girls and young women through events such as Take Our Kids to Work Day and government career fairs;

Therefore, be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly recognize October 11, 2019, as International Day of the Girl Child and encourage girls and young women to choose careers in the Public Service, where they can play a role in shaping important public policy.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

THE SPEAKER: 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: I direct my colleagues' attention to the East Gallery where we have some special guests joining us today.

From the Massage Therapists' Association of Nova Scotia, we have President Amy-Lynne Graves, Sandra Williams, Donna McCready, and Elizabeth Pullin; from the Massage Therapists' and Holistic Practitioners' Association of the Maritimes, we have President Alicia Stacey; from the National Health Practitioners of Canada, we have Susan Allaby, member representative for Atlantic Canada; staff from the Department of Health and Wellness, Cindy Cruikshank and Sarah Savage; and from the Department of Justice, we have Jennifer Morin.

I'd ask each of those individuals to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

Bill No. 193 - Entitled an Act to Protect the Titles of Massage Therapists. (Hon. Randy Delorey)

Bill No. 194 - Entitled an Act to Provide Transparency to Health Authority Expenditures. (Colton LeBlanc)

Bill No. 195 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 122 of the Acts of 1924. An Act Respecting the Union of Certain Churches Therein Named. (Gary Burrill)

Bill No. 196 - Entitled an Act to Ensure the Permanent Closure of the Sackville Landfill. (Brad Johns)

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 Dartmouth East.

INTL. DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD: FREEDOM FROM GENDER INEQUALITY - RECOG.

TIM HALMAN: Today is the International Day of the Girl Child. This is a day of observance established by the United Nations in 2012.

Mr. Speaker, we must acknowledge that there is worldwide gender inequality in areas such as legal rights, forced child marriage, violence against women, medical care, and access to education. We must continue to raise awareness of issues facing girls at home and internationally.

Today I reflect upon my daughters and the world I hope for them - free of discrimination and gender inequality.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

INTL. DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD: NDP CANDIDATES, DIVERSITY - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, on the International Day of the Girl Child, I would like to acknowledge the work of our colleagues in the federal New Democratic Party. The slate of candidates running as New Democrats in this election is the most diverse of any Party: 49 per cent are women, 24 per cent are racialized, 12 per cent identify as LGBTQ+, 8 per cent are Indigenous, 12 per cent are youth, and 5 per cent are living with disabilities. Girls across the country can look to the candidates we have put forward as inspirations for their own bright futures.

In an interview, Manitoba NDP MLA Nahanni Fontaine called the Legislature a “profoundly white male space.” Our caucus is committed to changing that situation, which has been accepted for far too long.

Along with our colleagues in this House, we are holding space for all girls. We are fighting for all girls. We look forward to the day when they take their seats beside us.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: We have with us in the East Gallery the most delightful, inspiring young girl. Her name is Riley Cogswell. With her we have her mother, Erin, and her father, Andrew, and I’m told Glen and Beth, her grandparents, as well. Please give them a big welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

COGSWELL, RILEY: GREEN TEAM - COMMEND

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, on the International Day of the Girl Child, I would like to recognize Riley Cogswell, a wonderful Grade 6 student at Park West School. I first had the pleasure of meeting Riley at a school litter cleanup last Spring, where she and her friends demonstrated their passion for the environment.

Riley is a member of the Green Team at her school, where she and her fellow peers clean up garbage on school grounds every day and meet once a week to discuss their

progress and vote on the volunteer of the week. Riley also volunteered as our Litter Patrol at our annual barbeque this July, where she encouraged people to sort garbage and gave a short speech on how everyone can help make an impact towards this great cause in our community. At the end of the barbeque, there was not one piece of garbage, all thanks to Riley.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Riley for her outstanding work and volunteerism at such a young age. I'm truly inspired by her and her passion to make our community better. She has so many wonderful ideas, and I know she will go far in her life. I am thrilled to have an opportunity to work with her on our Litter Prevention Committee. She is our youngest member.

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

SCOTT, ROB - ARTIST: SANCTIONED PRINTS - CONGRATS.

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, it may take a while, but some people have found a way to combine doing something they love with a successful career. I speak in particular of Rob Scott, a Greenfield resident who, as a talented artist, found himself creating sports drawings of celebrities like Sidney Crosby and Michael Jordan, but was having production time and purchase fees eating up his profit.

For a while Scott made a living with unique landscaping art, but this was not where his heart lay. Refusing to give up on his passion, Scott has redefined his style, finally securing an arrangement that allows him to create sanctioned prints of NHL and MLB players without the huge expense of purchasing signatures.

I'd like to wish Rob Scott the best in this new phase of his talented career.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

INTL. DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD: NURTURING DAUGHTERS - RECOG.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, from the first quickening that expectant mothers feel to let us know that our baby girls will soon be arriving in our lives, from the first time we held them in our arms and those tiny fingers grasped ours and our eyes met for the first time, and from the first time our daughters nuzzled for mother's milk, that magical bond was there. We have God's most precious gift, and now it's our responsibility to prepare them for the world.

Our female children - our girls - learn by example, and it's our duty to show them the way. They learn compassion, caring, and responsibility. They learn independence and that hard work brings its own rewards. Even more, they learn that the world is waiting for

them and that there is nothing they cannot accomplish - to be a mom, a nurse, a teacher, or how about an astronaut, physicist or the Premier of Nova Scotia.

On this day, October 11, 2019, there are no barriers. Let's all celebrate on this International Day of the Girl Child.

[9:30 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

SHAG HBR. UFO FEST.: MINT, COMMEM. COIN - THANKS

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, on October 4, 1967, something extraterrestrial crashed off Shag Harbour. The sight of a glowing, orange sphere slipping beneath the surface of the shore, without a sound, leaving behind a strange orange foam hasn't been forgotten by the community.

In honour of the Shag Harbour UFO incident, the Royal Canadian Mint has issued a glow in the dark coin that captures that eerie scene from more than 50 years ago. The coin was 95 per cent sold out on the day it was announced, on October 1st. Luckily there were still some available at this past weekend's Shag Harbour UFO Festival, but the 4,000 coins have since sold out.

I want to thank the Mint for recognizing this important event and congratulate everyone who was able to get their hands on what is sure to be a local collector's item.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

RECLAIMING PWR. AND PLACE: PROTECTING WOMEN'S RTS. - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning on the International Day of the Girl Child to reflect on what this means for us here in Canada. A very crucial part of that Canadian context is the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls inquiry, which released its final report earlier this year.

The report is titled *Reclaiming Power and Place* and it highlights a path for families, survivors and all Canadians as we find a way through a deadly combination of patriarchy and colonialism.

It speaks about the right to culture and how attacks on Indigenous culture are the backdrop for violence that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA people experience today. It speaks about the right to health and how colonial violence has impacted the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health of Indigenous people. It speaks about the right to security and the almost constant threat that Indigenous women, girls and

2SLGBTQIA people live with, and it speaks about the right to justice and the crucial disconnections between Indigenous people and the justice system.

Here in this House we need to always be reflecting on how we act to protect these rights today and every day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

INTL. DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD: DAUGHTERS - INSPIRING PARENTS

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, on this International Day of the Girl Child I would like to recognize two very important girls in my life. Rufina Bridget Maguire and Isla Rose Maguire, both named after my mother-in-law and my mom; they are my two baby girls. Rufina and Isla have helped me become a better person. They have opened my eyes to see the world through their eyes, and they have made me turn my gaze inward and work on my own flaws to become a better human being.

I woke up this morning as I do every morning, with Isla snuggled into me, saying that she likes to “steal my warmth” and Rufina, not much of a snuggler, lays about two feet away from me and just puts her foot against my foot so that she knows I am there. Rena and I remind them every single day that the world is theirs and they can be whatever they want.

I hope we all do whatever we can to leave a better world for them, especially at this moment in time when we have a global debate around climate change, and we have such turmoil going on worldwide.

Mr. Speaker, I love my babies with all my heart and soul, and they are more important to me than anything I do here or anywhere else.

One last thing, Isla turns three tomorrow, so I love you baby girl and you might just get your LOL doll.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

BROWN, AMELIA: SERV. TO QUEENS MANOR - THANKS

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I take special pride in the amazing youth who live in my constituency. Today I am pleased to recognize Amelia Brown, a special young lady with an exceptionally large heart. For the past two years, Amelia has volunteered at Queens Manor in Liverpool. She compassionately engages with the residents, joining them on their outings and participating with them in their activities.

An accomplished musician, on many occasions she brings out her guitar and mandolin, filling the manor with music and the residents' faces with smiles.

Amelia graduated from Liverpool Regional High School in June and is now studying recreation management at Dalhousie University.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to applaud Amelia's love for her community and her commitment to the residents of Queens Manor and I wish her much success as she follows her dreams.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

INTL. DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD: RAISING DAUGHTERS - PROGRESS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, on the International Day of the Girl Child I would like to pay tribute to my girls, Ana Audrey Maclellan and Molly Agnes Maclellan. They are both eight years old, but Ana is older by one minute.

Molly says her passion is dancing. Ana also loves to dance and both of them are talented artists, voracious readers, and also excel at torturing their younger brother Samuel. Not a day goes by that my work in this Chamber is not informed by my love for them.

Mr. Speaker, we are raising our girls to be independent, kind, funny and generous - so far, so good.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

SAFE SPACES MAKE GREAT WORKPLACES - ONLINE COURSE - COMMEND

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, this government takes the issue of sexual harassment very seriously. In partnership with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, we developed a free online tool to prevent and address sexual harassment in the workplace.

The Safe Spaces Make Great Workplaces course will make sure that people who are facing sexual harassment at work know who to contact and how to address the issue. Our government is committed to making sure everybody feels safe and respected at work. We believe that sexual harassment is totally unacceptable and has no place in our province.

It is my hope that my granddaughters will never have to face sexual harassment in the workplace. I invite all of my fellow members to applaud the work that we are doing on this important file.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

RUSHTON, DARRELL: GOOD HOUSING STEWARDSHIP - RECOG.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, Darrell Rushton, a retired Sobeys executive, businessman, and entrepreneur from New Glasgow is a great example of someone who experienced a very successful career. Rushton's standards and values were high. He realized a successful career takes time, commitment, and patience.

His successful venture of creating several apartment buildings in New Glasgow is an example of his unique entrepreneurial skills. He ensured that all of his buildings were peaceful, quiet, safe, as well as hazard-free. Individuals renting one of his properties held Mr. Rushton in high esteem. They would often say that their landlord always had an open line of communication with his tenants, provided prompt property maintenance, and maintained meticulous properties.

His track record is a role model for this type of business and is definitely one to observe and emulate.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

89.3 K-ROCK: 11TH ANN. FOOD DRIVE - CONGRATS.

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, local radio provides an invaluable public service for our communities. They entertain, inform, educate, and increase public dialogue on important issues. The staff at 89.3 K-Rock in New Minas go even further by supporting the local community through many generous charitable activities.

The 11th Annual 89.3 K-Rock Food Drive took place from September 16 - 21. In total, \$24,680 and 7,600 pounds of non-perishable food was collected. Over the past 11 years, local community businesses and residents have donated over \$100,000 and 140,000 pounds of food to this worthwhile cause.

I invite all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Mel Sampson, Darrin Harvey and their colleagues at K-Rock for their community spirit, enthusiastic energy, and ongoing support of Annapolis Valley families.

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

**INTL. DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD:
FEMALES IN THE FAMILY - CELEBRATE**

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate International Day of the Girl Child, a day recognized by the United Nations to highlight and address the needs and

challenges faced by girls, while promoting their empowerment and the fulfilment of their human rights.

In Nova Scotia, girls are reaching great heights in science, academics, and so much more. Nova Scotian girls are setting a high standard. It's important to remember that while girls here achieve greatness, girls in other parts of the world continue to fight for basic human rights.

I want to give a special virtual hug to my three granddaughters, Michaela, Ainsley, and Aurora Adams; my daughters-in-law, Tina, Colleen, and Andrea Adams, Tenika Lavoie, and Elise Sanderson; my two special aunts, Barbara MacKenzie and Shirley Hutchinson, who were my leaders when I was a child; and a special thank you to my sister, Marilyn Boutilier, who has been taking wonderful care of my wonderful mother who is 90 years old, but she's still a young girl at heart.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SAMPSON, JULIA/FISHER, WILLA: CLIMATE ACTION - INSPIRING

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, on this International Day of the Girl, I would like to celebrate the work of two young leaders in climate action here in K'jipuktuk, Julia Sampson and Willa Fisher. These young activists are students at Citadel High School and are two of the organizers of the local strikes and actions to bring attention to the need for climate action. They have been inspired by another amazing young woman, Greta Thunberg.

I first encountered Julia's amazing voice and leadership at last Spring's climate strike. At that time, I was inspired by her ability to galvanize her peers, take to the streets and call out politicians of all levels on their inaction.

Since that first strike, Julia, Willa, and several other young people have continued to lead actions - most recently, of course, the week of climate action that culminated in 10,000 people taking to the streets to call for immediate steps to limit our earth's warming to 1.5 degrees. The work that they are doing is working. People are paying attention and demanding more from their politicians.

Mr. Speaker, as the mother of a much younger activist, I'm grateful that my daughter has people like Julia and Willa to look up to. They're showing her that she can use her strong voice to express her fears, her hopes and dreams, and her demands that people that hold power listen to her.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

HARPER, MADELINE: YOUTH VOLUN. OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: On this International Day of the Girl Child, I'd like to congratulate Madeline Harper on receiving the 2019 Bedford Youth Volunteer of the Year award.

Madeline is one of the longest-serving and most dedicated youth volunteers in Bedford district Girl Guides. She began volunteering in a Spark unit when she was only in Grade 4. She moved on more recently to assist with a Brownie unit, helping to plan and run meetings and sharing her wealth of knowledge to new Guiders.

Madeline is also active in Girl Guides at the district level, where she helps at meetings, events, and camps. She has served as a patrol leader at the provincial camp for a group of Guides aged 9 to 11. She's a Grade 11 honour student at Charles P. Allen High School, where she's an accomplished singer and lends her talents to the school choir and musical. She's a member of the Halifax Regional Arts Bedford Voices choir, as well as one of the youngest members of the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo adult choir.

Madeline is also a member of the Bedford Beavers swim team and is also a swim official. She volunteered with the HRM Youth Leadership program as a junior leader for several summers. She's a deeply impressive young woman and I want to thank her for all her efforts and congratulate her on being named Bedford's Youth Volunteer of the Year for 2019.

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

DAUPHINEE, LARRY: SKI CAPE SMOKEY PURCHASE - CONGRATS.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, many locals and others throughout the province remember what the opening of Ski Cape Smokey in Ingonish did in the 1970s. Businesses were booming, people were coming to the area, and school children had the opportunity to learn to ski.

Over the almost 50 years since then, the hill has faced many challenges and threatened closures, but thanks to Councillor Larry Dauphinee, his tremendous volunteers and many others before them, the hill remained open in hopes that someday someone would take it over. This year their wish came true as the province sold the property to Cape Smokey Holding, led by president Joseph Balaz.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in wishing Cape Smokey Holding all the best as they further enhance the facilities and offerings in beautiful Ingonish.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

CARMAN, MEADOW: HUMANITARIAN OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.

HON. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Meadow Carman of Barton, the Canadian Sport School Hockey League's Female Humanitarian of the Year.

Meadow, who currently attends the Pursuit of Excellence Hockey Academy in Kelowna, is a remarkable young woman and an accomplished hockey player and student. Raised by parents stressing the importance of having an impact on her community, she has volunteered as a camp counsellor with the 4-H and ME to WE, and recently she travelled to Mexico with her school to help families build homes.

Meadow also tries to initiate change around her, as when she was encouraged by her Academy classmates to join a basketball team for kids from a nearby school. She hoped this would start bridging the divide between students from the two schools.

One man she crossed paths with in an airport may claim that she has had the biggest impact on his life. When both were rushing to catch a flight, he collapsed next to her. Meadow immediately started compressions until help arrived. Meadow has always approached every day with a positive attitude, but this incident has given this young woman a greater appreciation of life.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

GIANNAKOS, JOHN: HELLAS HOSPITALITY POST-DORIAN - RECOG.

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize John Giannakos, owner and operator of Hellas Family Restaurant on Sackville Drive in Lower Sackville.

Numerous residents in Sackville, Beaver Bank, and Lucasville felt the effects of Hurricane Dorian, which made landfall on Saturday, September 7th, and as a result, they lost power to their homes and businesses. On Sunday, the following day, John Giannakos graciously opened Hellas Family Restaurant and invited the community to come to his restaurant to enjoy a warm meal.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me and take this opportunity to thank John Giannakos for his kindness and caring in providing the residents of these communities a complimentary meal at his restaurant. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

[9:45 a.m.]

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

INTL. DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD: GIRLFORCE - SUPPORT

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, today, October 11th, is United Nations International Day of the Girl Child with the 2019 theme “GirlForce: Unscripted and Unstoppable” to increase awareness of gender equality faced by girls worldwide.

Many girls living in predominantly marginalized communities across Nova Scotia still experience racism and exclusion, struggle academically, and leave school with less than they need to succeed. Our government is committed to ensuring all girls and young women be given equal opportunities and supports needed so they can grow up and be the best that they can be.

I ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in recognizing October 11, 2019, as the International Day of the Girl Child and stand up for the human rights of girls living across our province, Canada, and the world.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**ST. THOS. MORE KofC: WHEELCHAIR RAMP
CONSTRUCTION - THANKS**

TIM HALMAN: I rise today to acknowledge how Council 13987 of the Knights of Columbus, at St. Thomas More Church, stepped up during a time of need. One of their members, Brother Dan MacDonald, suffered a terrible setback. When their family’s calls for assistance were left unanswered, the Knights of Columbus decided to immediately send contributions and assist in building a new wheelchair ramp for Mr. MacDonald’s house. The Knights of Columbus promptly found a contractor and oversaw operations until completion.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Knights of Columbus at St. Thomas More Parish for their remarkable work and thank all those who volunteer their time to helping fellow Nova Scotians.

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

LAPIERRE, HOLLY: ATHL. OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIRLS - THANKS

BEN JESSOME: Today on International Day of the Girl Child, I would like to recognize the group of volunteers and coordinators, including Ms. Holly LaPierre, who

hosted the Baseball Canada 16U Girls Invitational Championships this Summer. The championships were played in Bedford and Sackville.

I had the opportunity to do some volunteering and see the girls play and enjoy some company of their fans. It was really just a great event for Nova Scotia, and a great event for all the girls who had the opportunity to participate.

Given today's significance, I think it's appropriate that we recognize not only athletic opportunities that are provided to young girls, but all opportunities should continue to build and continue to evolve so that every opportunity can be afforded to the next generation of our women.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

LEWIS, ANNE MARIE: GLOOSCAP OUTDOOR CLASSROOM - COMMEND

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Anne Marie Lewis, a parent and teacher at Glooscap Elementary School in Canning. Anne Marie had the vision of an outdoor classroom, a space that would give children opportunities to forge stronger connections to our natural environment. On September 27th, I was pleased to attend the grand opening ceremony of the Glooscap Elementary outdoor classroom.

The outdoor classroom has a large, timberframe shade structure with benches, paths, stumps, tire mounds, and many trees, shrubs, and plants. There are plans to add to these features. Many parents, students, teachers, and community members and groups were involved in creating this space.

Each class has adopted a tree that they will be responsible for taking care of over the years. This outdoor classroom was a fantastic idea and valuable addition to one of our local schools and communities.

I applaud Anne Marie Lewis for her time and commitment to raising awareness about the need to protect our environment, giving our local children tangible ways to learn by making her vision a reality.

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

PAID/VOLUN. FIREFIGHTERS: EDUCATION AND SERVICE - THANKS

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, during Fire Prevention Week I want to recognize and thank all the dedicated full-time and volunteer firefighters, including my son Kevin and my nephew Neil, who provide tireless support to our communities.

In the constituency of Chester-St. Margaret's, we are fortunate to have eight dedicated fire stations. We all know that firefighting is critically important, but I think we can all agree that fire prevention is better.

Personally, I was pleased to join the united volunteer fire departments of the Municipality of Chester last weekend at a very successful fire prevention exhibit. Our firefighters save lives through public education, as well as their bravery during emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, during this Fire Prevention Week, I invite the members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing and thanking all the men and women serving in our fire stations who keep us safe.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

WHITE, LANDEN: CDN. KART RACING CHAMP - CONGRATS.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to acknowledge Landen White, a 14-year-old constituent of Cumberland South, from Joggins.

On August 18th Landen won the Briggs Junior Lite Canadian kart racing championship at Canadian Tire Motorsport Park in Bowmanville, Ontario. Landen is very new to this sport, as he has only been riding for about three months and competed against other racers that had been racing for several years all over North America.

Please join me in congratulating Landen for his national championship success and wish him continued success in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SHARED BIKING PATHWAY: GOOD MUNIC. PLANNING - THANKS

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I rode my bicycle downtown this morning for the first time this session, and for the first time in a long time. It was my first experience of the new shared pathway along Barrington Street which, in fact, extends all the way to downtown and a slightly awkward exit near the Hollis Street bike lane. This morning nobody was parked in the Hollis Street bike lane, so I had a smooth ride to the office, which I enjoyed very much.

I want to appreciate the municipal politicians, planners, engineers, and workers who contributed to this expansion of good cycling infrastructure between my constituency and downtown. I especially want to acknowledge that for this project to happen, community members, activists, volunteers with the Halifax Cycling Coalition, and individuals had to push.

As evidence mounts that we need more change, more quickly to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions emitted through transportation, I hope we can all join with our constituents to push.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Whitney Pier.

JACOBS, BELLE: FIRST FEMALE, WILDCATS HOCKEY - COMMEND

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, on this International Day of the Girl Child, I just want to bring to the attention of the House an incredible story that is taking place in Sydney.

A Grade 12 student, Belle Jacobs, tried out for the Sydney Academy boy's hockey team and she made the roster. So, for the first time in the over-100-year history of the Sydney Academy hockey team, a female will play on the team. It is also the first time in the history of the Cape Breton High School Hockey League that a girl will play.

On behalf of all of us in the Legislature, I'd like to congratulate Belle on her amazing accomplishment in being the first female to play hockey in the high school league in Cape Breton.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

BEIJING DEC.: GOAL, ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today is International Day of the Girl Child. In 1995, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted. This declaration is an inspiring platform for the world over, including Canada.

One such goal included in the declaration is the empowerment and advancement of women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief, thus contributing to the moral, ethical, spiritual, and intellectual needs of women and men, individually or in community with others, and thereby guaranteeing them the possibility of realizing their fullest potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations.

Mr. Speaker, may we each strive to empower the advancement of girls and women in our own families and in our own communities, province, and country.

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

INTL. DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD: ROLE MODELLING - RECOG.

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, today is International Day of the Girl Child, and it is especially incumbent upon us to be mindful that girls will one day grow up to be women with either a healthy sense of self or, unfortunately, some with a broken spirit because of influences and pressures unique to girls.

I rise today to acknowledge this strength and power that a young girl can be provided by offering guidance through effective role modelling, providing opportunities to build leadership skills, through nurturing positive relationships and experiences, and with one other thing that I hope we are all blessed with, which is something very basic, and that is love.

It is imperative that we are all positive role models by leading by example for our young girls, showing them that it is okay to stand up for what you believe in, to be true to yourself, and to lead with compassion and conviction.

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

**WESLEY, GLORIA - RECIPIENT: HONORARY DEGREE,
MSVU - CONGRATS.**

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of a former long-term resident of Guysborough County, Gloria Ann Wesley. Gloria is an educator, author, and community leader, who recently received an honorary degree from Mount Saint Vincent University.

A well-loved teacher in the former Strait Regional School Board, Gloria spent years educating youth and developing the leaders of the future and working in Student Services, focused on social studies and race relations.

In 1975, Gloria became the first published African Nova Scotian poet when she released *To My Someday Child*. She has won and been nominated for many awards for her works, and her novel *Chasing Freedom* is listed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as a Grade 9 and African Nova Scotian Studies resource.

Throughout her life Gloria worked in African Nova Scotian communities to create employment opportunities and develop programs and youth clubs, such as the Upper Tracadie Crusaders. She has also served on the board of the Black Cultural Centre of Nova Scotia, the Black Loyalist Society, and the Black Educators Association.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to applaud Gloria for her years as an educator, her commitment to community, talented writing, and dedication to share African Nova Scotian history.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HOBEEK, MARK - S/SGT.: NEW CHIEF OF POLICE - BEST WISHES

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the Town of Stellarton has announced the hiring of a new Chief of Police Services. The town is pleased to have a veteran police officer taking over the reins of enforcement in their area.

Mark Hobeck, a former member of the Halifax Regional Police, with 31 years of service, began his new duties as of September 30th. Hobeck has been the recipient of numerous awards during his career, formally recognized for years of dedicated involvement through departmental awards and commendations.

The Stellarton Police Service provides 24/7 police service to more than 4,200 residents. The force consists of 10 officers, in addition to term officers, and dispatch for 17 fire departments across Pictou County.

The community is delighted to have an experienced officer joining the Stellarton Police Force.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

BUCHANAN, JOHN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to former Nova Scotia Premier, and Senator, John Buchanan.

I recall first meeting Senator Buchanan in 1985 when I was a Page in this House of Assembly and he was the Premier. Since that time, I've had the opportunity to speak with him at many community events and, most recently, at Christmas celebrations at Melville Heights in Armdale.

He always reminded me that we both had so much common. We both come from and have large families, we are both lawyers and like to find ways to resolve disputes and promote justice, but he always had to remind me that the one thing we didn't share was our political perspectives.

Today we, as a community, will gather to celebrate his life and extend our condolences to his wife, Mavis, five children, and an entire community.

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

THIBAUT, GUY PAUL: ALBUM, *THE ROAD BETWEEN* - CONGRATS.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to Cole Harbour musician Guy Paul Thibault. Guy has a new album out, called *The Road Between*. It was released on March 1, 2019.

Ian Lewer of Eastern Passage, Nova Scotia, was grateful for the opportunity to play bass for one of the new album's songs. The album's genre touches on a bit of folk, classic rock, and lots in between. It has been 17 years since Guy Paul has produced a solo album, so we were very excited.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in recognizing Guy Paul Thibault for his new album and Ian Lewer for being part of it. We wish all of them success in the future, as they deserve this, as their new album and future musical endeavours take off.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

**INTL. DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD:
SUPPORTIVE FAMILY WOMEN - RECOG.**

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today, being International Day of the Girl Child, to recognize five ladies in my life who have a direct impact daily, one of whom I have been married to for more years than I can remember, who does her best to keep me on track, and four daughters, as many of you may know, who also do their best to keep me on track and support me.

I wish them the very best in the years ahead, and all the young ladies, and not just today, Mr. Speaker, it being International Day of the Girl Child - in my house it is Day of the Girl 365 days a year.

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

NIESTEN, ROSA AND HENK: CAR RACING - CONGRATS.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, a lot of married couples like to start new hobbies just to get out of the house. Henk and Rosa Niesten, the former owners of Henk's Family Farm in Millville, go to the racetrack, not to watch but to race their cars.

This couple - Henk at 80, and Rosa at 79 - travel across Atlantic Canada to participate, with each having their own car. They are no strangers to the winner's circle.

When asked when they plan to retire, they both laugh and agree that it won't be happening any time soon.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Rosa and Henk on their success and wish them well as they "keep the pedal to the metal."

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

[10:00 a.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

PREM. - SOUTH PARK ST. CRANE: LIABILITY COST - PROVIDE

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question to the Premier. I would like to begin by revisiting - for the third consecutive Friday - this government's decision to voluntarily assume liability for the South Park Street crane.

We asked, on September 27th and October 4th - I'll table that - what the cost might be in case something goes wrong with the crane removal. We know 11 buildings are at risk because residents of those 11 buildings have to leave this Thanksgiving weekend - an unfortunate time for them.

My question for the Premier or any of the four ministers involved is: Why can't the government provide a cost for the potential liability arising from this crane cleanup?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As he would know of the complexity of this site, the crane was owned by an operator that was leased to a developer. The crane collapsed on another developer's property. We have a number of existing buildings around it. It became pretty clear that this had been something that the crane operator or the engineering firms had not dealt with before. All of them were very nervous about being on that site, and we wanted to make sure that crane comes down as quickly as possible for public safety.

There are a number of steps that we've taken. One is that we had to do an ultrasound to the building prior to any work happening. The work is ongoing. The crane is now strapped to that building. My understanding is that it will start coming down this weekend, weather permitting. Then we'll do another ultrasound to ensure that any damage that had happened, didn't happen during the removal of the crane. Then we will go after insurance companies to ensure that we recoup the money that is required.

ALLAN MACMASTER: It's good to at least hear that the government may go after the insurance companies for that money because I think everyone agrees on safety, but the people who may have to pay for it - which could be the taxpayer if something goes wrong - deserve an estimate of the cost.

The questions that comes to my mind are: Why is the government afraid to share that information? Why the fear of being transparent? I think it looks weak, and I think it doesn't build trust for Nova Scotians when their governments are faced with these situations.

Another example is the ferry and an update on the 2019 season. The minister's response on October 1st was that we're going to have a statement on what the season looks like next week. Well, we're at the end of that week and there is no statement. My question is: Why has the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal not delivered the statement he has promised?

THE PREMIER: I'm not sure where the honourable member is going with the question. The reality of it is that this became about public safety when it came to the crane. We continue to make sure that we bring down that facility in a safe manner for the people who are on that site and those who are surrounding it. There has been constant communication to make sure that the crane comes down. It became the responsibility of the government to ensure public safety. That's what we will do. Because of the good fiscal management, we will be able to manage this file.

I want to remind the honourable member that we continue to make that investment in the Yarmouth ferry. We will continue to make that because we believe in that ferry service and we know the impact when it's not running. The honourable member should know that as his Party continues to undermine that service, they're undermining small businesses across this province.

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

PREM.: FEDERAL NDP PLATFORM - AGREE

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, it's a great joy for me to be going door to door in the federal campaign, talking to people about the NDP platform and what it could mean for our province.

Take housing - thousands of people are unable to stay in the places where they live. Thousands more are being pushed out of their neighbourhoods by the escalating process that's happening with house prices. The NDP's federal platform calls for 500,000 units of affordable housing to be built. That will be 13,000 new units on the market here in Nova Scotia.

I want to ask the Premier: Does he agree with me that 13,000 new, affordable housing units would be a wonderful thing for us here in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. He would know that prior to the federal election campaign, the minister responsible for housing signed an agreement with the national government for about \$400 million to make those investments in affordable housing across our province.

We're going to continue to work with communities that are impacted. He is sitting on an issue that is very important. With the growth that has happened in this city, it has put pressure on affordable housing rents. That's why we brought in rent subsidies. We know there is more work to do. In collaboration with the city, we will continue to provide options to ensure that we have affordable housing.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, all across our province there are many, many homes where there are empty medication containers sitting on dressers and in the middle of kitchen tables, and on the counter because people are waiting until they can afford to fill their prescriptions. We know this is very negative for the health care system because people who don't fill their prescriptions are much more likely to end up in the hospital.

The NDP's federal plan is not for a study or a commission or a pilot project; it's to bring in universal Pharmacare by the end of 2020. Does the Premier agree with me that we would be in a much better position in the health care crisis if, 15 months from now, we had universal Pharmacare in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we have supported a national Pharmacare Program from the very beginning. We believe that would be a positive step.

The detail in the plan that the honourable member is talking about is important, just as it is with all national Pharmacare plans being presented by federal Parties. The detail surrounding the implementation of that is important.

We have clearly said, as a government and as a province, that we're more than willing to participate and look at what a national Pharmacare looks like in Canada.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, the highest cell and internet prices in all Canada, of all provinces, are paid here by our people in Nova Scotia. We pay the most for coverage that is subpar outside of the cities. The federal NDP's plan is to bring in a price cap on cellphones to see that cellphone prices can't exceed the global average.

Does the Premier agree with me that people in Nova Scotia would have money to spend on an awful lot of other things if we weren't being nailed so badly on cellphone and internet charges?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question; he's highlighting an important message. I think that the concept needs to be carefully thought out. He is absolutely right - in some parts of our province and in our country, large cities have great access to internet and great access to cellphone coverage.

This requires a tremendous amount of capital in other parts of our province and the country to make those investments. Continuing to cap prevents that growth and investment in other parts. What's missing from that is: Who's going to pay the difference? Who's going to pay that, and how much public money is required to make that happen?

That's why we've continued over this period of time to set aside \$200 million for internet and cellphone service. It's why the Minister of Municipal Affairs continues to work with the 911 fund to make sure we can use that to make sure we provide cellular service. But there's an important piece missing when people just talk about cost - who is paying the bill at the end of the day?

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

H&W: 811 REPORT - RELEASE

ALLAN MACMASTER: A question for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Yesterday we asked a question about the 811 report that Health and Wellness officials referred to at this week's Health Committee meeting on that very topic. We've looked for the report - we've checked the government website, the Department of Health and Wellness website, the Health Authority website, press releases, and Twitter feeds.

Why does the minister allow his officials to discuss the report, but not reveal it?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, the report has been made available when it was requested. This was a report that was brought together. We were looking to assess the work as part of our ongoing operations.

I think this is what Nova Scotians would expect us to do - when we have a system that's up and running, we look for opportunities to continuously improve the system. One of the important steps in that is to assess it. We've done that work. We've taken information from that, and we continue to pursue these opportunities.

When asked for the information, Mr. Speaker, we made it available.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I don't know who he made it available to. It's nowhere in the government's communications.

This was a Liberal topic that they put before the Health Committee. Officials spoke like the report was complete, but as the self-proclaimed most transparent government in

the history of the province, they didn't dare release the report in advance of the committee meeting because they were afraid it might generate questions - and I'm just going to table these.

We've seen the Premier say, brag, about his transparency many times. The Premier and his Cabinet can do better; they can make the best information available before a committee of the Legislature meets. My question: Why won't the minister table the 811 report here in the Legislature?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I believe there have been requests for the report. It was made available to the media (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness has the floor.

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I saw a note come across my desk. It's my understanding that it's made available to the NDP caucus, that they've requested the report. The information is there and available, Mr. Speaker. Again, there's absolutely nothing that we've been hiding. I don't have a copy of the report with me to table.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MUN. AFFAIRS - AFFORDABLE HOUSING: NUMBER OF UNITS - TABLE

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As he would be aware, people in this province are facing an unprecedented housing crunch. It's not just here in Halifax. We're actually hearing from businesses on the South Shore that can't fill positions, not because they can't find workers but because the workers can't find a place to live.

In the federal riding of South Shore-St. Margaret's, 17 per cent of households spend more than 50 per cent of their income on rent and utilities. That's 1,200 families. There simply isn't enough affordable housing in this province.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister please table how many new housing units will result from the three-year action plan under the bilateral housing agreement?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for that question, and an important question it is. We know that right across this province - certainly not just in any one location, but throughout all municipal areas - affordable housing has been a discussion for some years.

That's why we are pleased to have signed the national housing agreement a couple of months back. This will invest many hundreds of millions of dollars in this province,

whereby we will work with our partners, whether they be non-profits, co-ops, or the private sector, to further develop the affordable housing market.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear the minister reference a number of new units that will be created. When questioned about the housing crisis in this province, the government constantly references either rent supplements, which don't work in a low-vacancy environment, or the bilateral housing agreement.

It is good news that the agreement has finally been signed, but the fact is that the first three years of the plan will result in very few new affordable housing units. The bulk of the money will go to repairs and renovations. While we certainly need to fix existing affordable housing units, I'm left to wonder why this situation has been left for so long that there are three years and tens of millions of dollars of repairs left that we need to do.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister please table how many social housing units are currently vacant because they're not fit to live in?

CHUCK PORTER: As I said, we will continue to work with our partners right across this province to develop. We will be going out with an open and transparent process in the coming weeks around how we will invest with partners right across this province, whether they be the private sector or whether they be not-for-profits. We will continue to do that. We know that there's much work to be done.

The first three years, we'll invest heavily in the current stock that we have, which will allow 17,000 Nova Scotians who have a place to call home today to continue to have that place to call home.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

H&W - AUTISM PROGRAM: WAIT TIMES - COMMENT

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Earlier this week, I spoke to a desperate mother from Barrington in my constituency who fears for the life of her seven-year-old son. She also forwarded to me a letter detailing her son's story, which I will table.

Kayla Atkinson's son, Olsson, is autistic. Olsson's sensory issues and his inability to focus limit him to only eating a few bites each meal. At seven years old, Olsson only weighs 38 pounds. The Atkinson family has been referred to the IWK by Yarmouth's lone pediatrician, and the IWK has provided a six-to-twelve-month wait to be seen. Olsson has waited six months so far.

What advice does the minister have for families like Olsson's?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, we recognize the importance of being there and providing supports for families and individual Nova Scotians with autism spectrum disorder. That's why we continue to make investments and expand new programs.

For example, we've expanded the program - or created a new program - for intensive brief intervention for complex cases. We made that announcement earlier this year along with the investments to learn from that program, as well as the QuickStart Program to complement the EIBI Program.

[10:15 a.m.]

Specifically, though, Mr. Speaker, when the member, as we spoke yesterday - it was the first time he brought the context of this to my attention, providing me the details. I'll investigate with the clinicians, but we do have to work with the clinicians any time that there's a clinical need. That work will certainly help clarify.

COLTON LEBLANC: I thank the minister for his commitment to working on this file.

Kayla Atkinson says Olsson is wasting away before her eyes, but she also feels betrayed by a system and a government that boasts of spending and programming for development disorders but has left her boy behind. Kayla's greatest fear is that her child will simply give up.

I'm sure that Olsson's family isn't the only one in the province experiencing struggles accessing services at the IWK. What will the minister do to improve access to services at the IWK for families like Olsson's?

RANDY DELOREY: We continue to work collaboratively with experts working in the field of Autism Spectrum Disorder. It has been through these engagements - our priority investments - that we've been making new programs, like the BIOS program, intervention for complex cases to help support individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their loved ones in their communities, where they are to provide that support.

It's widely expanded and created a new program called QuickStart, which allows us to complement the EIBI program. It addresses not just individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder; they don't have to wait to be diagnosed specifically with that condition, but others are available. So, we are taking steps. We're taking the advice of frontline experts in this area and we're putting the money behind those programs.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

H&W - ST. MARTHA'S HOSP. (ANTIGONISH): OB SHORTAGE - IMPACT

ALLAN MACMASTER: A question for the Minister of Health and Wellness: 11 doctors have left the regional hospital of Antigonish in a little over a year. That affects people in the surrounding counties. Something is wrong.

The Minister of Health and Wellness must accept at least some responsibility for this. The last obstetrician for expectant moms left in the Summer. People in the region are now left with only a visiting obstetrician.

Mr. Speaker, Antigonish should be more than just a place to visit. It is a great place to live and the hospital should be a great place to work if this minister were providing the support to ensure that. Does the minister realize that the remaining physicians carrying the load from these departures are now feeling the strain from this mismanagement?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Unlike the member opposite, I believe St. Martha's as a hospital continues to be a great place to work. If he would engage with people, they recognize that. In fact, I received an email earlier this week - I don't have a copy with me - from an obstetrician who has expressed interest in coming to situate herself. She has been one of those physicians providing the locum coverage and she recently emailed me to say that she's actually looking at making a permanent position in Antigonish.

While the member opposite may criticize or think that there's something wrong with having people providing locum services - in fact, one of the reasons professional physicians use locum services is actually to establish where they may want to practise. Again, we're seeing people wanting to practise in Antigonish and follow up with that and to date, they continue to receive full coverage at the site today.

ALLAN MACMASTER: That's good news, but I would also say this. This is 11 physicians in a little over a year. If it was 1 or 2, absolutely; but 11 in a little over a year is significant. The minister should be recognizing there's a problem. The more we bring in to replace those that leave, the question becomes for those, are they going to be happy and stay?

The obstetrician who left was also a gynecologist. Women with incontinence, abnormal uterine bleeding, or abnormal pap smears, who had already waited months to be seen by the specialist in Antigonish have now had to be referred elsewhere. They are waiting again.

People can fall through the cracks and the load is heavy on the remaining doctors. I know it's heavy. That is not their fault. They're only working in the system that this government is providing them. Women may experience a delay in cancer diagnosis, and we know how important time is as a factor in beating cancer.

Why isn't the minister protecting women who need these services in our region?

RANDY DELOREY: Of course, we do recognize the importance of providing health care services across the province. We recognize that importance in our primary health care system, in our emergency and our acute care systems. That's why we continue to make investments. We make investments in our primary care support services, like the \$40 million investment in compensation around comprehensive primary care and incentives to attract more Nova Scotians.

Is it working? Yes, it is, Mr. Speaker. There are 12 per cent fewer people waiting for access to a primary care practice in Nova Scotia than there were at this time last year.

We continue to add the specialist residency seats as well as family practice residency seats in Nova Scotia, the only province in the country to do that. We're taking the steps necessary to address the longstanding challenges within our health care sector.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

H&W - ALL SAINTS HOSP. (CUMB. S.): ER SERVICES - ACTION

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Last session I asked the minister about closures at All Saints Springhill Hospital in South Cumberland. The minister's answer was: "As the member would know, when closures do take place it is as a last resort. It is done when the NSHA is unable to fill shifts." I'll table that.

He also went on to explain that's why we have been listening to our front-line health care providers. "We've been changing our incentive programs and compensation because that is what we are being told by physicians." As of last week, the NSHA is still looking for physicians for all these hospitals, whether full-time, part-time or locum.

My question to the minister is: While the incentive program has been initiated, the problem persists. When can the people of Cumberland South expect reliable ER services?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: The member is absolutely correct, the statement and the response that I provided earlier this year continues to stand. As the member would note, the compensation structure and framework are part of a master agreement negotiated with the bargaining agent on behalf of physicians across the province, Doctors Nova Scotia. Those negotiations are ongoing.

I won't get into details around that but, Mr. Speaker, we didn't wait throughout this term in office for the full negotiations. We recognized that in some areas we needed to enhance incentive programs. We took those steps to ensure continuity of services to the best that we can.

Those efforts will continue. We will continue to listen to front-line health care workers, we'll continue to make investments, we'll continue to strengthen health care in this province.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, the incentive program has been there and there's still no assurance that the ERs are going to be open. As of this week, All Saints, for an example, was closed on Tuesday, will be closed all weekend and Wednesday. I still have residents who don't have access to primary health care, lack of clinics, lack of physicians.

When will the minister stop lecturing the members in the Opposition about his non-existent plan for ERs and physician coverage and explain what his plan is going to be for all Nova Scotians?

RANDY DELOREY: Again, the member would know that all members of this Legislature, indeed all Nova Scotians, recognize the importance of their health care and ensuring that the health care services and supports are there for them.

Mr. Speaker, it is a complex system, including primary care, emergency and acute care specialty services. We're taking steps in all these areas to improve, not just in the short term but the long term.

One of the things that's important about that is the medium- and long-term supports include the training of more professionals. Mr. Speaker, we've added additional seats to the Dalhousie Medical School as well as the nurse practitioner program, the only jurisdiction to add to both family physician and specialist residency training seats.

Those are the things that are going to provide the sustainable health care in communities like his and all across this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

H&W: DAL. MED. SCHOOL - ADMISSIONS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Numerous medical students are interested in family and emergency medicine. I am aware of one particular doctor who graduated from a Canadian university, took his family residency and applied last Fall to Dalhousie Medical School to take the one-year specialty training in ER.

This individual is from Nova Scotia and he expressed a desire to return to Nova Scotia but did not receive any response from our medical school. He eventually accepted one year of a specialty training in emergency medicine through the College of Family Physicians of Canada, in another province.

My question to the minister: If two other schools accepted this individual's application, why would our medical school not acknowledge a Nova Scotian's application when we are in need of so many physicians?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as I've noted, the importance of having the training seats and spots available at Dalhousie Medical School here in Nova Scotia is important. The vast majority of the medical seats that we have are filled by Nova Scotia students.

The additional seats that we added, the 4 this year, the additional 12 next year, for a total of 16 new medical seats in the Dalhousie Medical School, are targeted towards Nova Scotia students, plus the additional residency seats, 10 family physicians, and 15 specialists that we've added, these are all things that we recognize are important, as the member highlighted.

As far as the specific case that the member has raised, I am not familiar with the details or the circumstances; I'd have to follow up with Dalhousie Medical School to inquire. If the member has a privacy waiver from the individual involved, I am sure I could have those conversations and get to the bottom of it.

PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, in this example we have a medical specialist from Nova Scotia leaving his position in a major Canadian centre to return home to fill a two-year term position. This move was with the hope of being able to establish a career in his home province. Ironically, at the end of his term, he was told that there was no position available that would allow him to stay in Nova Scotia. He was quickly accepted in another centre outside of this province and has since moved away.

My question to the minister: Can the minister please explain how a system that is in such need of medical professionals can frustrate two Nova Scotians to the point that they move away for employment, and does he agree this suggests a disconnect between the NSHA and his department?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I apologize, I didn't catch if the member referred to what exact area of specialization was being referenced in that specific case. I would assume in a situation where they were advised there wasn't a position available that it would be an area of specialization for which Nova Scotians have a full complement; that would likely be the reason there.

While we have much of our discussion here on the floor of this Legislature and in the public about areas of most demand or need, there are certain specialties and areas that are in high demand, not just in Nova Scotia, but across the country and, indeed, much of the western world, but not all specialties are in that level of need.

We need to spend our resources and focus on filling those vacancies that have the highest need.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

COM. SERV.: INCOME ASSIST. REC. - AFFORD. HOUSING

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Services. Since 2014, the department has spent more than \$10 million on what it is called a transformation of the income assistance program. Based on a request made by our caucus, the department provided us with a table with the number of households receiving income assistance that would be considered to be in core housing need, spending more than 30 per cent of their income on shelter, once the new standard household rate comes into effect.

My question to the minister: Does the minister think it is appropriate that after this transformation, 16,150 households, more than half of the department's income assistance caseload, will still be struggling to afford housing?

HON. KELLY REGAN: As the honourable member knows, the standard household rate, once implemented, will no longer include a housing component, which I recognize is not responsive to her particular question. In this particular case what we do know is that more people will be moving out of core housing needs because of the investments we are making in the standard household rate which, as I've explained to the honourable member before, is more than three times the amount spent annually. The increase will be more than three times any increase that has ever been given to our clients in terms of community services.

SUSAN LEBLANC: The income assistance program supports 29,000 households in Nova Scotia and, like all of us, these families are thinking about the cold months to come and the rising costs of keeping the heat and the lights on.

Energy poverty is defined as spending more than 10 per cent of your income on household energy. After five years of consultants' fees and pilot projects, the transformation unveiled by the Department of Community Services leaves 3,080 households in energy poverty.

My question to the minister: Is the minister satisfied that the standard household rate set by her government leaves so many Nova Scotians out in the cold?

KELLY REGAN: As the honourable member would know, we are expanding our efficiency programs to increase the energy efficiency of our particular housing stock. As the honourable member would know, under Housing Nova Scotia there are renovations taking place to improve the condition of that housing stock.

What the honourable member knows but won't say, Mr. Speaker, is that this is the biggest improvement in the income security of Nova Scotians in years and, in fact, it's a heck of a lot more than the New Democratic Party ever did when they were in office.

[10:30 a.m.]

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

AGRIC. - CRAFT BREW INDUS.: LOCAL PROD. - PERCENTAGE

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. A local hops producer in my constituency has raised concerns over the dwindling demand for locally-grown products for use in the local craft beer industry. It had been hoped that with the growth of the craft brew industry in the province, supplier sales would increase and be more in demand. The opposite is proving to be true as supplies are being imported into our province.

My question is: Can the minister tell me what percentage of ingredients for the craft brew industry are purchased from outside the province and what percentage of hop usage is required to qualify as a made-in-Nova Scotia product?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: That's a very good question. Indeed, I don't have the answer to the question today. I know hops are one thing that we really should grow more of in the province. We've tried to encourage some farmers to get into it.

Unfortunately, it's very difficult to harvest, and that was one of the problems we have with it. I'll endeavour to get that information.

LARRY HARRISON: In contrast to craft beer, suppliers for the wine industry have some protections and safeguards in place. In comparison, there are regulations in place to ensure that some ingredients are locally sourced. Without something similar in place for the craft brew industry, millions of dollars are being spent outside our province.

Will the minister consider a similar approach for the craft beer industry to ensure that there is at least some percentage of locally sourced ingredients?

KEITH COLWELL: I really would like to see all the ingredients from Nova Scotia. The reality is that some of the grains and barleys and one thing and another that they buy, we don't grow in Nova Scotia. Unless we can get a farmer who's very interested in doing small lots of that, it is very difficult.

We are working with the craft brewers and the Craft Brewers Association now to see if we can get more Nova Scotia content. It is all going into our new program where we're going to want more product produced in Nova Scotia for the local market.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

H&W - AMBULANCE SERV.: AVAIL. - ADDRESS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, mothers should never be separated from their newborn child. Recently, Laura Sonier gave birth to her second child, and after having a C-section, her newborn had to be airlifted to the neonatal ICU in the Moncton Hospital. This mother was separated from her newborn child because there was no ambulance available to take her.

After waiting 14 hours and messaging me every hour through Facebook, asking me to help her, the obstetrician gave her clearance for this mom to leave hospital and be driven by car to see and to be with her newborn.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Will the minister look into this problem of ambulances not being available when our people in Cumberland North and throughout the province so desperately need them?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Indeed, that has been a priority of mine within the department and one that I've stressed needs to be a priority with our partners: EHS, the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and the IWK.

One of the predominant themes - not the only one, but a predominant theme - when having the discussion about why there would be challenges with ambulance availability in some communities at some specific points in time - again, recognizing the system is dynamic and shifts around - to be there for priority emergency cases. They are always available, but the ambulance off-load times were one of the primary concerns brought to my attention. It gave direction.

Lots of work has been done. We've seen improvements in less than six months, I believe, or about six months since that work began. We look forward to seeing continued improvements.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: This wasn't an off-load problem. This was a problem that there was no ambulance available. The same night, I had a paramedic private message me to let me know that EHS, the private company Medavie, did not properly staff enough ambulances in our area that same night.

Mothers should not be separated from their newborns, especially when their newborn is in a life-threatening situation. As a mother, I can't imagine anything really more stressful.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know from the Minister of Health and Wellness: What is his government doing to hold Medavie, a private company, responsible for emergency services

in this province, to make sure there are proper emergency services and ambulances available when the people need them most?

RANDY DELOREY: Clearly all members here are in agreement on the importance of ensuring that the emergency system is available and that the ambulances and the qualified paramedics and advanced care paramedics that staff them are available to provide their services.

My point about the off-loads was that by improving the off-load times, there have been hundreds of hours in shifts saved in just the last six months, which means those ambulances that were not waiting at a hospital to transition patients into the care of the hospital were back out in the community providing exactly that same care.

I want to assure the member that the priority in the EHS system is to ensure that ambulances do move around the province to ensure that they are there to respond to emergencies.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MUN. AFFS. & HOUSING - HURRICANE DORIAN: FIN. ASSIST. - ACCESS

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In the wake of Hurricane Dorian last month, some areas in Cape Breton didn't see their power restored for up to a week and the results to residents were hitting their pocketbooks. It's straightforward: no power means spoiled food and lots of it.

One Cape Breton resident stated that she had a freezer and fridge full of food which had to be thrown out to the tune of about \$250. That's a lot of money for most, particularly for a single parent on a low income.

My question for the minister is: With Christmas only a few months away, can the minister speak to any financial assistance my constituents can access to offset the costs of Hurricane Dorian?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Dorian certainly had an effect. I did see power outages in some areas for quite some time, and I want to thank those who worked diligently throughout that storm right across this province and our partners at Nova Scotia Power and others who addressed those issues as quickly as they possibly could.

We know there are concerns around that and we are assessing that damage still to this day. We hope to have something in the near future by way of an assessment and what might be available as we work through this process.

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for that answer. As well, not just residents in this province and in my constituency, but the power outage also affected small-business owners.

Businesses without power for days lost revenue and had to contend with delivery delays, not to mention spoiled perishables and the like. I am sure those on the government side who have owned businesses know what a headache it was on top of all the other stresses of running a business.

I would like to ask the minister: Can the minister tell small business owners in my riding what they can do to help offset these losses?

CHUCK PORTER: I appreciate the question from the honourable member. Again, we are assessing the circumstances, and as we go through these past few weeks, we will continue to do that.

At some point, there potentially will be a program that we may apply through the federal government, which we notified them of, that we may be interested in: the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements program. Assessments are done, claims are filed, and decisions are made at that level.

We have provided some assistance through contributions that have been made, along with Nova Scotia Power, to Feed Nova Scotia, et cetera. That doesn't cover everything, and we know that. There is more work to do. We will continue to look at this and hopefully have more to speak on once assessments are complete.

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

COM. SERV.: CHILD POVERTY RATES (C.B.) - ADDRESS

BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague raised earlier this week, child poverty rates remain a major problem, holding back families and livelihoods here in Nova Scotia.

According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, there are 10 communities in Cape Breton with child poverty rates higher than 30 per cent, and I'd like to table that document.

I feel it is very unacceptable and puts those communities at very high risk of falling into a cycle of poverty from which they are increasingly unable to escape.

My question for the Minister of Community Services is: What evidence-based interventions is the government employing to ensure the rates of child poverty in Cape Breton will decrease substantially in the coming years?

HON. KELLY REGAN: We want all Nova Scotians to be able to live in a way that is dignified. I do want to let the honourable member know is that we are increasing the standard household rate, which will be coming in January. As I've previously indicated, when annualized, it will be three times the biggest increase that we've ever given to income assistance.

There are some other things that we are doing, as well. One of the things that the Premier directed me to do was to stop counting the income from maintenance that mothers get from maintenance enforcement as income. So now what has happened is that about 1,500 families in this province are now receiving an average of over \$300 more per month because of the way we treat income. That's just one of the things. I'd be happy to share more in my next answer.

BRIAN COMER: My next question is actually to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. Many of the children facing dangerous levels of poverty face conditions just as bad when they reach the working age. In 2018, Statistics Canada reported an unemployment rate of 5.9 per cent in Halifax; in Cape Breton that same unemployment rate is 15.1 per cent, so two and a half times the difference.

I feel that this is unacceptable, and my constituents feel that this is an unacceptable disparity. How does the government intend to bring the unemployment rate in Cape Breton down to a figure that is more in line with that of Halifax?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. I would like the member to know that in Cape Breton we do have employment centres which the residents of Cape Breton can go to. The employment centres help with job attachment. As well, we've seen great success in all our universities, and UCB is one of them, where we have sandboxes. What is so great about sandboxes is that our youth are actually learning entrepreneurial skills, and as they apply those skills, they are actually creating jobs, creating wealth, and hiring people.

As well, in Cape Breton we've seen improvements in the unemployment rate, and although I do agree that the 15 per cent is too high, we'll keep working towards improving that rate, as we have with the rest of the province.

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

COM. SERV.: CHILD POVERTY RATES (C.B.) - ADDRESS

ALANA PAON: As we head into this Thanksgiving weekend, I would like to ask the members here to ask themselves if they are going to go without a Thanksgiving dinner this weekend.

In January 2019, the Deputy Minister of Community Services admitted in a CBC article that something appeared to be going wrong in the trend to overcome child poverty, meaning that the rates were going up.

In 2015, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives reported that Cape Breton's two electoral districts - Sydney-Victoria and Cape Breton-Canso - landed in the first and in the third place for the highest child poverty rates in our province. Nova Scotia has the highest child poverty rate in all of Atlantic Canada and we're third in the country.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister: What kind of comprehensive review has been done since that statement was made by the deputy minister? What has she done to investigate and mitigate the known rise in child poverty rates, especially on Cape Breton Island?

HON. KELLY REGAN: As I indicated yesterday, when Statistics Canada came back with those particular numbers, we were actually surprised, quite frankly, because the numbers flew in the face of what we knew to be true, which was that the federal government had been making extensive investments in Nova Scotia, all across the province, with their Canada Child Benefit.

I know the average household receiving this is getting over \$5,000. I wish I had the exact numbers at my fingertips, because I did have them at one point, about the Cape Breton ridings. What I can tell the honourable member is that \$600 million came to Nova Scotia in the form of the Canada Child Benefit there. It's a federal program. I'm happy to continue speaking about what we are doing, but I did want to make the point that that's a significant investment in the youth of Nova Scotia.

ALANA PAON: There may have been \$600 million from the federal government, but for whatever reason, that is not making a dent in the problem. The community organizations in Cape Breton have always stepped forward, and it's now time for this government to step up and find out what is going wrong here. Food for children in Cape Breton, in Richmond County, it is branched out. It's feeding children healthy snacks in schools and it's sending kids home with backpacks of food for the weekend.

Our food banks struggle to keep their shelves stocked because the need is so great. I urge us all this weekend to think about how many children will be hungry this weekend while we are all enjoying our Thanksgiving dinners.

I'd like to know if the minister - I'm going to change my trajectory here. I'd like to ask the minister to join me in a challenge this weekend. I'd like her to go without food for two days so that she can feel at the very pit of her stomach what it's like for a child to go hungry. Will the minister commit to that?

KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that across Nova Scotia, 94 per cent of our schools have school breakfast programs, and that is an improvement. We have a number of programs that we offer.

We have just announced our Building Vibrant Communities Grant program which will allow community organizations to do community gardens, to look at a number of programs that ... a number of issues that we see where poverty is ... that are central to poverty; things like transportation, youth transitions, and things like that.

But most of all, for this honourable member whom I greatly respect, to suggest that I don't know what it's like to be hungry, she has no knowledge of my background.

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

MUN. AFFAIRS - HOME REPAIR GRANTS: WAIT-LIST SIZE - COMMENT

BARBARA ADAMS: On August 22, 2019, I reached out to Housing Nova Scotia regarding a home repair grant for one of the seniors in my constituency. Housing Nova Scotia responded by an e-mail, and I will table that.

Their response was sad, indicating that there was a current wait-list of over a year. Furthermore, the application needed to be mailed in, which is acceptable for those who have the ability to do that, but it would have been much more convenient for this senior to do so online. However, for those without internet access, that wouldn't be an option. We need rural internet to provide that option for all communities.

Can the minister tell me how many people got a home repair grant last year and how many people are still on the wait-list?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: I appreciate the question. I don't have the number at my fingertips of how many grants went out. I do know that there were many and I will endeavour to provide that number to the honourable member.

BARBARA ADAMS: Daily living activities that are intuitive and routine for all of us are extremely challenging and life-changing for frail seniors, especially for those living alone. Every year, about 33 per cent of all seniors are going to have a fall.

One of the technologies that helps to notify emergency services workers and family members if there is a fall is a fall sensor. There are a number of them available in the community and there is a grant program available to help low-income seniors, but the grant is only useful for a very small number of people because the income threshold is so low. To my knowledge, that income threshold has not been changed in a number of years.

My question is for the minister responsible for this: How many seniors are on the wait-list for receiving one of these fall sensor buttons, and how many of those would be eligible if the threshold was increased by about \$4,000 or \$5,000 a year?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I believe that is a program that falls under the health purview. I don't have, at my fingertips, the specific answers to the member's question that she has raised; they are very specific about a very specific program.

What I can assure the member is that we continue to evaluate our programs and make investments. The work that gets done throughout the year to evaluate programs and make decisions come forward through the budget process. We identify where we can invest money and support programs like that - programs like the Caregiver Benefit that supports people at home. The investments that we've made for home care supports - broadly - were significant investments to the tune of tens of millions of dollars over the past number of years.

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

H&W - COBEQUID PHYSIO: ADD THERAPISTS - COMMIT

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, on October 1st, I shared with the minister that the physio department at the Cobequid Community Health Centre has the largest wait-list for this service in the province. In addition, the department was not able to assess or treat patients within the assigned category of periods.

The minister responded about the orthopaedic strategy and the investments that were made last year in the area of health care to expand clinics for patient benefits. As a result, Cobequid did receive an additional two physiotherapists at that time, but there is still a significant wait-list.

My question to the minister again is: Will he commit to adding additional therapists to Cobequid to address the long wait-list of residents of Sackville, Beaver Bank, and surrounding areas?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for the question. I appreciate the acknowledgement of the investments that we've been making in the area of physiotherapy and out-patient therapy to support Nova Scotians in need - not just in his community, but in many communities throughout the province. We've made those investments to help support Nova Scotians.

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

[TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I know it's not part of the regular order of business but with the consent of the House I'll table the 811 report that was inquired about earlier today.

THE SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, that concludes government business for today. I move that the House now rise to meet again on Tuesday, October 15, 2019, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Following the daily routine and Question Period, business will include second reading of Bills Nos. 189, 191, 192, and 193 and, with time permitting, third reading of Bills Nos. 152, 160, 163, 166, and 170.

I'd also like to advise the members of the Law Amendments Committee and the general public that the Law Amendments Committee will be meeting on Tuesday, October 15th at 6:00 p.m. It will be considering Bills Nos. 169, 175, 177, 180, and 187.

Before I take my seat, Mr. Speaker, I want to wish all members of this House and all Nova Scotians a very happy Thanksgiving. Please enjoy the precious time with your families and also the bounty of our hardworking farmers and producers.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to adjourn, to rise, to sit again Tuesday, October 15th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

The House is adjourned until Tuesday, October 15th, at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 10:52 a.m.]