



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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

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

Second Session

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2019

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2019

Sixty-third General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, Brendan Maguire

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, the topic for late debate this evening at the moment of interruption, as submitted by the Leader of the New Democratic Party is:

Therefore be it resolved that the Liberal Government has profoundly disrespected the people of Pictou Landing First Nation, mill workers, forestry workers, fishers, tourism operators, and others by its negligent handling of the situation at Northern Pulp and its failure to affirm that the January 31, 2020, deadline for Boat Harbour will be honoured.

That is the late debate this evening at the moment of interruption.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 169 - Expropriation Act.

Bill No. 175 - Marine Renewable-energy Act.

Bill No. 177 - Public Utilities Act.

Bill No. 180 - Fatality Investigations Act.

Bill No. 187 - House of Assembly Act.

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, each without amendment.

THE SPEAKER: Ordered that these bills be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1337

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

Whereas today, Wednesday, October 16th, is WE Day Atlantic, which celebrates young people making a difference in their local and global communities; and

Whereas teachers and students from across Nova Scotia are taking part in the event because of their hard work and passion about enacting positive change; and

Whereas young people in our province embody the ME to WE philosophy and inspire their peers and all of us;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize WE Day Atlantic and also recognize the impact these students have made on their communities and thank Craig and Marc Kielburger and their WE team for the impact they've had on the lives of countless young people across the globe.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

KELLY REGAN: Joining us in the gallery today in recognition of World Food Day, which is today, are key members of the Mobile Food Market, an innovative program that brings more affordable fresh food directly to communities across HRM. I would ask them to stand as I call out their names.

Julia Kemp is with us today. She is a manager at the Mobile Food Market, which works with community groups, organizations, and leaders to address food issues in communities. Her goal with the market is to help people in communities who may experience challenges with accessing healthy food. This includes older Nova Scotians, those with mobility issues, people living on lower incomes, and those with limited access to transportation.

Joining Ms. Kemp today is Dave Rideout, who is the President and CEO of MetroWorks, which is the home for the Mobile Food Market program. MetroWorks dedicates its time to helping thousands of people overcome obstacles and realize their employment and educational goals through community-led programming and supports. They're committed to helping people overcome barriers and gain the confidence and skills needed to get ahead in life. I would ask my colleagues to give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1338

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

Whereas on October 16th, communities around the world will mark World Food Day to increase awareness of world hunger and poverty and to inspire solutions for world change; and

Whereas here in Nova Scotia, we're continuing to reduce poverty and increase food security through initiatives such as the Poverty Reduction Blueprint and the Building Vibrant Communities Grants; and

Whereas these grants have already had a positive impact on communities throughout the province, with projects like the Mobile Food Market, which brings healthy food to Nova Scotians living on lower incomes, as well as other projects that increase access to transportation or youth transitions, for example;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize that everyone has a role to play in reducing poverty in Nova Scotia and commit to working within their respective communities to alleviate food insecurity.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Business.

RESOLUTION NO. 1339

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

Whereas on October 16th, communities around the world will celebrate World Food Day to increase awareness of world hunger and poverty and to inspire solutions for world change; and

Whereas here in Nova Scotia, we are very blessed to have Hope Blooms, the nationally renowned social enterprise that empowers and teaches leadership skills to at-risk youth in the north end of Halifax; and

Whereas Invest Nova Scotia's independent board has recently provided Hope Blooms with a \$1.2 million loan to build a new kitchen by its organic garden and greenhouse;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature recognize the community-building and entrepreneurship that are baked into Hope Blooms and join me in congratulating them on this next step in their journey to empower their community through leadership, shared responsibility, and locally produced food.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1340

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

Whereas Nourish Nova Scotia supports the School Healthy Eating Program, which is available in 94 per cent of our schools, and provides students with breakfast and snack programs to support their health and nutritional well-being; and

Whereas the government's partnership with Nourish Nova Scotia helps ensure students are well nourished, have more energy, are less distracted by hunger, and are ready to learn; and

Whereas October 16th is World Food Day, an opportunity to recognize Nourish Nova Scotia as it continues to cultivate nutrition knowledge, food skills, and healthy eating practices in Nova Scotia students;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly show their support for World Food Day and acknowledge the importance of well-nourished Nova Scotians.

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

[1:15 p.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 Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1341

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

Whereas the economies of our rural communities depend on the success of our agricultural industry, and more young people are encouraged to see this industry as a viable career choice; and

Whereas the Agriculture On-Farm Student Bursary program allows Nova Scotia's post-secondary students to receive financial support to work on one of our many farms and to learn that many career opportunities are available in the agriculture industry; and

Whereas \$125,000 is available through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, and students earn a bursary of \$500 for 250 hours or \$1,000 for 500 hours;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize that connecting young people to farms gives them a hands-on experience and helps the agricultural industry reach its potential.

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 Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1342

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

Whereas the Lieutenant Governor's Award for Excellence in Nova Scotia Wines was established by the former Lieutenant Governor, J.J. Grant, in 2014, to recognize the exceptional quality of locally sourced and produced wines; and

Whereas members of the Winery Association of Nova Scotia and Taste of Nova Scotia are invited to submit up to three commercially available wines with 100 per cent Nova Scotia grape content; and

Whereas experts have chosen the following wines as best: 2011 Blanc de Noir Extra Brut Reserve from Avondale Sky Winery; 2011 Brut Réserve from Blomidon Estate Winery; 2018 Tidal Bay from Jost Vineyards; and 2018 Tidal Bay from Planters Ridge Winery;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the honour that's been bestowed upon these fine products, and the dedication and craft of those in Nova Scotia's wine industry as they help us grow our rural economy.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 201 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 18 of the Acts of 1998. The Municipal Government Act, and Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008. The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Respecting On-site Sewage Disposal Equipment. (Hon. Chuck Porter)

Bill No. 202 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 401 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Residential Tenancies Act. (Lisa Roberts)

Bill No. 203 - Entitled an Act Respecting the Labour Relationship between Her Majesty in Right of the Province and the Nova Scotia Crown Attorneys' Association. (Hon. Karen Casey)

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 Bedford.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction, please.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

KELLY REGAN: I'd like to direct the members' attention to the East Gallery, and I would ask them to stand as their names are mentioned.

We are joined today by Lew and John Turner. Lew is a long-time Bedford resident, and he is actually one of my favourite residents of Bedford. Lew joined the fire department when he was 17 years old. I've seen some fantastic pictures of him over the years, and I am delighted that he and his son could join us here today.

Lew is 91- I know he doesn't look it - but he's here to join us at the House. I would ask that the House give him a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

BEDFORD VOLUN. FIREFIGHTERS: 80th ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, this year Bedford is celebrating a milestone anniversary for its volunteer firefighters. Eighty years ago, this Assembly passed, and I quote, "an Act to enable the residents of Bedford in the County of Halifax to provide

themselves with fire protection,” legislation that was followed by a few amendments over the years.

What hasn’t changed in the ensuing years is the dedication of our volunteer firefighters. They have protected us from fires at structures large and small; they have trained vigorously; they welcomed their first woman firefighter years before many other departments; and if all of this weren’t enough, they raised money for the IWK, Muscular Dystrophy Association, and Christmas Daddies.

Recently, our local historical museum, Scott Manor House, displayed some firefighting memorabilia to mark the anniversary. I loved seeing many of our former members come out to share their stories, and I love seeing photos of them when they were still wet behind their ears.

I realize that these people are a family, a family that over the years has protected our families. I hold them in the highest of esteem and I thank them for their service.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

CROWN ATTORNEYS: COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE - THANKS

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today just to give a word of appreciation for the province’s Crown attorneys and the justice system.

Our Crown attorneys are dedicated professionals who have really invested their entire lives in bringing justice to victims, often victims of heinous crimes. They are the line of protection between society as we see it and protecting our justice system.

I ask all members of the House to join me in supporting a functioning justice system and supporting those who bring justice to victims.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I would draw the members’ attention to the gallery opposite where we are joined by Jane Barbour, her son Ewan, and her grandchildren Lena and Logan. They are residents of Dartmouth South. I ask the members of the House to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

BARBOUR, JANE: COM. SERV. - THANKS

CLAUDA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jane Barbour. Jane is a Dartmouth resident who takes on the role of community builder wherever she goes.

In the past year, Jane founded a birthday club at Alderney Manor in Dartmouth, a monthly celebration with coffee, tea, cake, and sandwiches which drew building residents together to celebrate one another.

In a building with many seniors and socially isolated individuals, she also organized a health and wellness fair with nearly 30 vendors from community health resources to HRM transit to the public library.

Neighbours were able to connect with the resource they might not otherwise have had direct access to, and the event was an unqualified success. I was happy to be a part of it.

Creating opportunity for a community to grow is challenging work, but wherever she goes activities and events follow.

Please join me in thanking Jane for her dedication to the Dartmouth community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I draw the members' attention to the East Gallery where we are joined today by retired Chief Martin Bell of the Conquerall Bank community in Lunenburg County, and he is joined today by his spouse Cheryl, and his mother Edith. I would ask the members of the House to bring them a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**BELL, MARTIN - CHIEF (RETD.):
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD - CONGRATS.**

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Martin Bell from Conquerall Bank. The retired chief is the 2019 Canadian Volunteer Fire Services Lifetime Achievement Award recipient.

This national prestigious award honours an individual whose remarkable achievements in the fire service and community exemplifies outstanding performance.

Chief Bell joined the Conquerall Bank Fire Department in 1973, rising through the ranks and serving as the chief for 15 years. He was a volunteer instructor with the Nova Scotia Fire School, and his department was one of the first in the province to provide medical first responder services outside metro. He also motivated and led an inspired team of firefighters, ladies' auxiliary, and his community to build a brand-new department in 1987.

Chief Bell was also recently awarded an honorary lifetime membership for his fire department where he took on a leadership role in the department but also served in national senior positions and on national boards.

Thank you to Chief Bell for his dedication and commitment to his community, and congratulations on this remarkable achievement.

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

HOADLEY, AMIE: 40th BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, today I want to rise and wish a happy birthday to a local resident, Amie Hoadley, who's celebrating her 40th birthday today. Amie is the third generation of her family to call Sackville home and has resided there since she was born. She continues to reside there now with her beloved family and pets.

Amie is a graduate of Millwood High School. She has currently returned to school to pursue medical administration and is set to graduate in November. Most importantly, Amie is the mother of one of our office students, Kayleigh, so that's probably her number one role.

I'd like to take an opportunity to wish Amie a very happy birthday and wish her the best of luck in finishing school this year and in her future endeavours.

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

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, in our East Gallery today, we are joined by members of the Halifax Wanderers. I'd like them to rise as I call their names.

We have Stephen Hart, coach of the Wanderers - the most decorated coach who has come out of this province, by a country mile. He's a fantastic individual and definitely a players' coach, which I know all of his players can attest to.

We are joined by Vice-President of Operations Matt Fegan, and we are joined by players Jan-Michael Williams, Elton John, Andre Rampersad, Vincent Lamy, and Chrisnovich N'sa, and also by Danae Iatrou, who is the community coordinator, and Dylan Lawrence, who works in creative in the office.

I'd like to give them the warm applause of the House. (Applause)

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

WANDERERS: COMMITMENT TO HFX. - CONGRATS.

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, the Halifax Wanderers are in their first year with the Canadian Premier League. With dynamic flair, coaches and players embrace not only the competitiveness of the game but the support that comes with being our hometown team. In turn, they have been thoroughly embraced by Halifax and our surrounding communities.

Coach Stephen Hart has brought a very competitive team to the pitch and the best atmosphere out of any stadium. Wanderers fans, young and old, are recognized for their unwavering dedication, evident from the screaming fans, especially the loudest ones in the kitchen. The Wanderers have reached out into the soccer community and beyond, and they are at many events interacting with fans. They make us very proud.

I look forward to next season, Mr. Speaker. Season tickets are on sale currently. I look forward to another fantastic year.

I ask that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature join me in congratulating the Halifax Wanderers for their commitment to the sport and to the community of Halifax.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

WORLD RESTART A HEART DAY: CPR TRAINING - RECOG.

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand here today to bring awareness to World Restart a Heart Day, celebrated on October 16th since last year.

The global initiative is to increase awareness of the importance of high-quality bystander CPR and to increase bystander CPR rates around the world. Each year there are more than 40,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests in Canada, of which 80 to 85 per cent occur in a public setting, and fewer than 10 per cent survive to discharge from hospital. Bystanders play an important role in cardiac arrest survival. Immediate chest compressions can double or triple survival - that's why it's so important to get trained in CPR.

I urge all members of this House to get trained and to promote in their communities the importance of high-quality CPR. Push fast and hard, and everyone can save a life.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MARGARET MILLER: I want to draw the members' attention to the East Gallery, where we are joined by Bo Wambolt - and I'll ask her to stand. She's a very respected community member in East Hants. She's a bus driver, so she looks after the safety of our young people; she's a very busy real estate agent and the founder of an online community page.

I ask all members to award her the warm welcome of the House on this, her first visit to the Legislature. (Applause)

[1:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

WAMBOLT, BO: EAST HANTS WANTS TO KNOW - RECOG.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: There is an incredible online group in my constituency that keeps community members connected. East Hants Wants to Know is a Facebook group with 11,500 members; this is half the population of East Hants. This is a group where members can ask questions about businesses and services, community events and supports, and even find help in retrieving a lost wedding ring.

Bo Wambolt is the creator and the administrator of East Hants Wants to Know. She wanted to create a safe place where people could be informed of what's going on in our community. As a matter of fact, I once posted on East Hants Wants to Know, wanting to know what the people of East Hants had on their wish list. I got over 200 responses.

Not unlike our job, this is a thankless job for Bo. Her strict zero tolerance policy on bullying and unhelpful comments may have upset a few residents, but it has created a place of inclusion for the majority of our community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this House join me in recognizing Bo's unwavering dedication to the site, which brings together so many from our community. Thank you, Bo.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

HAMLIN, GAIL: HISTORICAL COSTUMING - RECOG.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Gail Hamlin of Liverpool, who for many years has worked to keep a lost art alive. As a retired home economics teacher, Gail's love and natural talent for sewing dates back to her childhood.

For many years since then, Gail has worked to produce hand-stitched and historically accurate colonial and Revolutionary War-era costumes for re-enactment groups throughout the province and for our local tourism interpreters in Queens County and other community projects. One such group is the King's Orange Rangers. Since their creation in 1994, Gail has outfitted the entire regiment with their distinctive red wool coats and all the accessories.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express appreciation to Gail for the countless hours she has dedicated to her craft. Her attention to every detail is truly admirable, and she is a wonderful ambassador for her community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

WALK AGAINST VIOLENCE: PEACEFUL SOLIDARITY - COMMEND

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, tonight at 6:30 p.m., members of the Dartmouth North community will gather for the 21st anniversary of a very important annual event: the Walk Against Violence. The Walk Against Violence was created by Allan MacCullough and Carolyn MacCullough in response to the murder of their son, a Dartmouth North teenager and Boys and Girls Club kid and volunteer, Jason MacCullough, in 1999. The walk began as a way to support the families of victims of violent crime and as a way to bring the community together in peaceful solidarity.

Tonight's walk will begin at the Boys and Girls Club's Dartmouth North site on Farrell Street, and organizers will be accepting donations for the Jason MacCullough Memorial Scholarship. This event is a beautiful show of community spirit and resilience, and I look forward to attending tonight with my children.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

BARK: PARK OPENING - CONGRATS.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Blockhouse and Area Ratepayers Kinship, also known as BARK, who officially opened their new park, located at the four-way stop in Blockhouse this past summer. The park is a

beautifully landscaped area that includes park benches for community members and visitors to enjoy.

In order to choose a name for the park, the Kinship hosted a contest won by five-year-old Easton Walters, who attends Bayview Community School, deeming the park the Blockhouse Community Park. BARK directors Blaine Knickle, Mary Jane Hyson, Paul Young, and Wanda Martell spearhead this group of avid volunteers focused on enhancing a sense of community for Blockhouse and the surrounding areas.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and the members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing the volunteers of BARK and congratulating them on the opening of the Blockhouse Community Park.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

SMITH, AVERY: ATHLETE AND MENTOR - CONGRATS.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate Avery Smith, an extremely talented 14-year-old baseball player from Springhill. Avery has played for Team Nova Scotia, the Springhill Fence Busters, the Peewee AAA Truro Bearcats, the Amherst Little League Cubs. She was the only female player on the Amherst Athletics 15U team, which won the provincial championship this year.

Last year, Avery played at the Atlantic Championships in St. John's, Newfoundland, where she was scouted to play for the Chicago Pioneers 15U team, which came in second in the U.S.A. Nationals in August.

Please join me in congratulating Avery Smith, who is not only an outstanding athlete with great achievements but also a great mentor to other female players in her sport, and we wish her continued success in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

MILLS, DANA - WRITER: RISING STAR AWARD - CONGRATS.

KEITH IRVING: Nova Scotia has a remarkable history of great storytellers, and I'm delighted to share with this House a developing new talent.

Dana Mills of Lumsden Dam is the recipient of the annual Writers Trust of Canada Rising Star program. This career development program recognizes talented authors in the early stages of their careers. It includes a \$5,000 grant, mentorship and a two-week writing residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity.

Mills' first collection of short stories, *Someone Somewhere*, was published by Gaspereau Press and has been shortlisted for the Journey Prize, given by the Writers Trust of Canada for the best short story in a Canadian literary magazine. Mills' work has been published in several magazines including *The New Quarterly* and *Geist*, and recently he was invited to Toronto to meet with editors and read his work aloud at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

I invite all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Dana Mills on winning the Writers Trust of Canada Rising Star program award and wish him success in his promising writing career.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I would like to welcome in the West Gallery - please stand - Angela and Steve Wilkins with 1-year-old baby Ezra. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

WILKINS, ANGELA: SUPPORTING NEW MOTHERS - THANKS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about the importance of mothers and the fact that they are never fully appreciated, for mothers bring the gift of life. It is important that supports are in place for new mothers in the form of education and in the form of access to health care.

Today I want to give thanks to a young new mother, Angela Wilkins, who through her own life experience has learned of the inadequacies of the supports for new mothers. I would like to thank Angela today for being outward focused and for seeking ways of helping others. The true heart of a mother - and a registered nurse, I might add.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

HEPBURN, JESSIKA: ELECTION CAMPAIGN - COMMEND

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, today I want to salute the courage, creativity, and heart that Jessika Hepburn has brought to her campaign to be MP of South Shore-St. Margarets for the NDP.

You may have heard the advice: start the way you intend to continue. Well, Jessika has started her political career the way that she intends to continue it: bravely and with community as her focus. She has connected with residents by, yes, attending debates and going door to door but also by inviting them to come together.

After a scandal led all Canadians to talk about blackface, she hosted a dinner to talk about race and politics in her café, the Biscuit Eater, in Mahone Bay. As the only woman of colour running in Nova Scotia in this election and as someone who has spent her entire life thinking about issues of social justice, racial justice, and environmental justice, she is uniquely qualified to convene that important conversation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

**THOMAS, CHARLENE BOUTILIER -
EXCELLENCE IN NURSING ADMIN. AWARD - CONGRATS.**

HON. KAREN CASEY: On May 23, 2019, Charlene Boutilier Thomas from North River, Colchester North, received an Excellence in Nursing Administration Award from the College of Registered Nurses for her work in mental health.

Thomas, who grew up in Dominion, Cape Breton, said she was interested in the mental health area of nursing from the moment she decided on her career. She soon realized that healing was not only physical but also emotional. Throughout her career, she has worked in the mental health area in hospitals, in provincial leadership, and with the Department of Community Services.

She helped develop a model of care for people with intellectual difficulties, with setting up palliative care services, and with Help Line. She is the past-president of the Colchester-East Hants branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association. For many years, she has operated Complete Counselling Services, her own private practice in Truro. Her greatest reward is being part of someone's life as their life becomes better.

Congratulations, Charlene, on a well-deserved award and for your numerous contributions to improve mental health.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MACKINNON, DARRELL: WCB STRUGGLE - RECOG.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, Darrell MacKinnon, a resident of Pictou County and a former power-line technician, slipped on ice at his workplace on February 13, 2012, and injured himself. Approximately a year post-accident, Mr. MacKinnon began to report bilateral hand tremors, poor balance, increasing vision deterioration, and decreased muscle strength.

WCB continued to deny Darrell his benefits, even though several neurologists claimed their findings showed his symptoms affected his ability to safely carry out his work duties.

No wonder our best neurologists are frustrated with decisions from WCB caseworkers who continue to deny workers who have been injured on the job site. The caseworkers' hardly surprising denial is typical. Meanwhile, the many injured workers find themselves in a marathon of doctor referrals, paperwork, and denials. Imagine. WCB personnel are not accountable for their decisions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

LOMAS, EMMA: ATHL. AND ACAD. ACHIEVEMENTS - CONGRATS.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Emma Lomas, a skilled Grade 12 player of the Halifax West High School girls soccer team.

Emma has been playing soccer for almost nine years, mostly in the position of defence. She has been a member of both Dunbrack and City soccer clubs. Emma was also recognized for her skills as a member of the Farias Soccer Academy showcase program and women's team. Emma has been playing for Halifax West for three years now. As a senior, Emma is a role model for the younger girls on the team, both on and off the field.

Aside from playing soccer, Emma works hard to maintain her high academic average in school. Emma is also involved in many extracurricular activities. She serves as an ambassador for the Nova Scotia International Student Program, an organization committed to providing educational opportunities to students from abroad in Nova Scotia. Emma also has spent her past two summers as a youth counsellor at Bayside Camp in Sambro.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Emma for all she does for our community and congratulate her and her teammates for their successes. I wish them the best of luck in the upcoming season.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TAYLOR, L.T. - MENTORING ROBOTICS STUDENTS - THANKS

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize L.T. Taylor, a dedicated volunteer in the Dartmouth community. L.T. is a retired Royal Canadian Navy engineer, who has been a mentor for high school robotics teams since 2002. He started at Auburn High School when his son got involved in RobotsEAST in Grade 11.

Since 2010, he has helped the underwater robotics team at Prince Andrew High School. Prince Andrew students have benefited greatly over the years from his knowledge, skills, and wisdom, getting a glimpse of the unique real-life hands-on engineering found on Navy vessels.

The students and staff he has worked with have expressed to me how grateful they are for his efforts. I would like to thank Mr. Taylor for his dedication to students, and I ask all members of this House to acknowledge the outstanding work of Mr. Taylor in promoting science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

NORTHWOOD DAY CTR.: GRAND OPENING - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, Northwood, the largest not-for-profit continuing care organization in Atlantic Canada, is celebrating the grand opening of its new adult day centre in Dartmouth North today.

The new space at 130 Eileen Stubbs Avenue in Burnside will be home to Northwood's Dartmouth Adult Day Program for people with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease, stroke, Parkinson's disease, or those who are physically frail. The new location offers full- and half-day programs for people who need a little extra care.

When I met with the Northwood team in advance of this new program opening, it was impossible not to feel excited about the new space and the programs that will now be available to folks in Dartmouth. Though I was not able to make the grand opening and ribbon cutting today, I am so pleased that Northwood is expanding their services in Dartmouth North. I know that this important new programming will improve the lives of many seniors and their families in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

B.M.C. SEAFOODS: EXPANSION - CONGRATS.

HON. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, in 1995, Cedric Robicheau started his company, B.M.C. Seafoods Ltd., buying lobster from one fishing boat. From this start, B.M.C. has expanded its facilities several times. Expansions precipitated as the company increased their lobster sales in our traditional markets and the new markets in Asia and Europe.

Earlier this year, BMC announced its biggest expansion to date, an expansion that will be completed in two phases. The company will first purchase new equipment for its facilities and increase its holding capacity by 50,000 pounds. Then B.M.C. will build a tank shop to hold an additional 750,000 pounds of lobster. When complete, B.M.C. will operate

year-round and raise its processing capability to 10 million pounds. It will be expected to go from its present 50 seasonal employees to 63 full-time employees.

This company, from a traditional economic sector for our area, has evolved their production methods into new markets. By doing so, they have ensured a bright future for the company and its employees, and I thank them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

SACKVILLE HIGH: CDN. LDRSHIP. CONF. - CONGRATS.

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make special mention of four students and their teacher advisor from Sackville High School in Lower Sackville.

Andrea Chisholm, Justice Snow-Thompson, Madison Gass, and Jessica Humphrey, along with their teacher advisor Louise Mullane, were chosen to travel to Abbotsford, British Columbia to attend the 35th annual Canadian Student Leadership Conference.

The conference included representatives from 200 schools across the nation, bringing together over 1,000 student leaders and teacher advisors to work together to bring positive changes to our schools and communities, which was the focus of this conference.

I would like to ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Andrea, Justice, Madison, Jessica, and Louise for representing Nova Scotia and Lower Sackville at the 35th annual Canadian Student Leadership Conference and wish them continued success in their studies and teaching this year at Sackville High School.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

LAWRIE, ALEX: UMPIRING ACHIEVEMENTS - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Alex Lawrie of Mineville, who has honed the craft of baseball umpiring at the Minor League Baseball Umpiring Training Academy in Vero Beach, Florida which resulted in a contract with a Gulf Coast League. He can, in six to ten years, work his way up to Triple-A baseball and then possibility the major league.

He started umpiring Mosquito League and Pee Wee League at the age of 13, progressing at the age of 18 to work in the Nova Scotia Senior Baseball League, the highest level of baseball in Atlantic Canada.

I recognize and congratulate Alex Lawrie for his achievement and high-level professionalism and wish him every success in the future.

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

ESAM: DEDICATION TO THE ENVIRONMENT - RECOG.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to the Environmental Services Association Maritimes (ESAM), for encouraging growth, communication, and collaboration amongst industry and government.

Networking, marketing, and social events are important to ESAM. Recently, I had the opportunity to participate, very badly, in the 4th Annual ESAM Softball Tournament; many of the Association members filled four teams. It was a great way to build teamwork and communication. ESAM is looking forward to the 2020 tournament and anticipates increases in participation.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in recognizing the ESAM's board members: Chair Tara Oak; Treasurer Terry Thibodeau; Secretary Peter Fleming; and Directors Derek AuCoin, Sean Brushett, Janetta Fraser, Midori Depante, April Boudreau, Michael Doucet, and Nora Doran for their hard work and dedication to the environment.

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

AULDS COVE FIRE DEPT.: 50th ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the 50th anniversary of service of the Aulds Cove Fire Department.

The Aulds Cove Fire Department is dedicated to providing the best service possible to the community of Aulds Cove and surrounding area. Its members put in many hours of training and volunteer time to ensure that they are able to protect and serve the community.

Aulds Cove is a wonderful community; it's full of great people like those who volunteer at the fire department. It deserves the exceptional level of fire, rescue, and emergency services and support it receives from the Aulds Cove Fire Department. But the fire department is much more, as well. They host pancake breakfasts with a team of excellent cooks, engage in fund-raising activities, and provide support to teams, community groups, and local initiatives.

I'd like to extend my sincere congratulations and commend the Aulds Cove Fire Department for their achievement of this exceptional milestone and their commitment to community safety.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

INVERNESS DEV. ASSOC.: 50th ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, the success of the Inverness Development Association has been a rewarding journey. Last summer they celebrated the accessibility of the Inverness Beach for people with physical challenges. It was positive moment and it resonated in the hearts of people around the province. They won a Human Rights Award for that.

This year the Inverness Development Association celebrated 50 years of service to their community; it has made a difference for many. Today Inverness is thriving and starting to grow again. These achievements happened because people like IDA board members took the initiative to help make things better.

People are proud of Inverness and what the Inverness Development Association has accomplished.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on an introduction.

TIM HOUSTON: Seated in the gallery behind me we have a group of Crown attorneys who are in town today for some professional development and are here taking in the proceedings. I'll read off a few of the names I have and maybe they can all stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

We have Gerald MacDonald, Darcy MacPherson, Mary Ellen Nurse, Paul Drysdale, Vicky Doucette, Christine Driscoll - I went to high school with Christine - Janice Rea, Aileen McGinty, Leigh-Ann Bryson, Stacey Gerrard, Sylvia Domaradzki, Janine Kidd, Sharon Goodwin, Gayle Karding, Jennifer Mickelson, Adam McCulley, Misty Morrison, Alex Keaveny, Sean McCarroll, Jamie Van Wart, Terry Nickerson, Eric Taylor, Melanie Perry, Scott Morrison, Roland Levesque, Perry Borden, Thomas Kayter, Sarah Kirby, Michelle MacDonald, Saara Wilson, and a bunch of other ones.

Please stand up and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

OTTER PONDS DEMO. FOREST: ACHIEVING BALANCE - RECOG.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, we have not spoken much in this Chamber during this session about forestry practices across Nova Scotia but many Nova Scotians are, in fact, continuously in conversation about the correct balance in the woods, the importance of woodlots and forest-related work for the incomes of so many families and how we must first protect the ecological integrity of our forests - be they on Crown land or private

woodlands - so we can continue to rely on them for economic and recreational values, as outlined in the Lahey report.

This Saturday there is a unique opportunity to experience ecological forestry at the Otter Ponds Demonstration Forest in Mooseland, which is partnering with Hike Nova Scotia for a Fall field day and guided hike. I encourage anyone with an interest in ecological forestry, or just a love of the woods, to consider taking advantage.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

TOKER, MICHAEL - RESTAURANTEUR: YES CHEF BISTRO - CONGRATS.

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Michael Toker, a resident of Armdale, on opening his new business. Michael is tremendously accomplished in the kitchen. He has worked as a chef at Pete's Fine Foods and, most recently, was the executive chef at the Halifax Exhibition Centre.

In early May, Michael took a big new leap by founding Yes Chef Bistro in Bedford. Michael's restaurant is styled as a Canadian bistro with a Mediterranean flare. For residents looking to eat in or take out there is no shortage of delicious options, from burgers and seafood casseroles to moussaka and kofte. With a great team and his culinary skill, Michael executes a menu that offers both great variety and consistent quality.

Michael and his wife, Lucia, recently announced they are expecting their first baby in the new year, a welcome addition to Nova Scotia's numbers. I ask all members to join me in congratulating Michael and Lucia and wish them well with their growing family and business.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

WORLD FOOD DAY: N.S. FARMERS - THANKS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize every farm business in Cumberland North and throughout all of Nova Scotia. Today is World Food Day and the United Nations' goal of achieving zero hunger is not only about addressing hunger but also nourishing people while nurturing the planet.

We have much work to do right here in Nova Scotia as we import 87 per cent of our own food and many families in our communities go hungry. Today I'd like to thank all farmers in Cumberland North, including my father who has farmed for 56 years, my 21-year-old sister Lauren, dairy farmers Charles and Cindy Smith, and Fred and Angus Cameron.

Mr. Speaker, did you eat today? Thank a farmer.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

**PASSIVE DESIGN SOLUTIONS:
NET-ZERO HOME DESIGN - CONGRATS.**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Natalie Leonard, a civil engineer and founding partner of Passive Design Solutions, located in Hubley. This innovative company that has been in operation for 10 years is designing homes that reduce energy consumption by 65 to 80 per cent and has just launched a new line of stock plans that will both reduce construction time and cost.

Passive Design Solutions has a passive or net zero house located in Hubley. Net zero means the house is able to generate as much energy as it consumes, so in the warmer months of the year when the house generates more energy than it requires the excess energy is sold back to the grid. Over the course of the year, energy consumption balances out as the need for energy is equal to the energy that is produced.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating Natalie on her business ideas and for featuring new methods to fight climate change, for helping families control their energy costs, and for her contributions to protecting the environment.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

AMIRAULT, LAUREN: NTL. MUSIC FEST. - CONGRATS.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, Liverpool's Lauren Amirault was a participant in the Queens County Music Festival every year from the age of five until she graduated, in June, from Liverpool Regional High School.

In the 2019 festival, Lauren competed in eight disciplines, and she was recommended by the adjudicator to perform at the Nova Scotia Provincial Music Festival in both piano and musical theatre. She was then chosen to join Team Nova Scotia at the National Music Festival in Saskatoon in August of this year. Performing in the musical theatre category, Lauren did Queens County proud.

Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to offer my congratulations to Lauren on her achievements. Her musical talent and love for the arts are admirable. I wish her all the best for a promising future.

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

DALE, JESSIE: MOBILE FOOD MARKET - THANKS

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I'm always eager to share news about innovative members of my community with you and the House. Jessie Dale is one such individual.

As the coordinator of Halifax's Mobile Food Market, Jessie recognized that many low-income seniors in Halifax were unable to access fresh, affordable produce due to physical and economic constraints. As a result, Jessie began accepting food orders from seniors in North End Halifax and Fairview and delivering fresh fruit and vegetables to them biweekly.

Jessie also realized that there was an opportunity to connect cultures and to provide Syrian and Middle Eastern youth with their first-time job. These youth are recruited by the YMCA and are tasked with organizing the produce into customized orders. Because of her incredible work connecting cultures and battling food insecurity, Jessie was recently honoured with a national award from the Bhayana Family Foundation.

I am so proud of Jessie and all that she has done for our community and beyond. So today, on World Food Day, I ask the members of this House of Assembly to join me in thanking Jessie for all of her incredible work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

REYNOLDS, RYAN: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ryan Reynolds, a Springhill native who goes above and beyond for his community. During the recent East Coast Athletic Five-Man Scramble tournament at the Springhill Centennial Golf Club, Ryan Reynolds was recognized and thanked for his support of the club and the young people of the community.

Ryan does so much for the community and the youth and is a dedicated mentor to them. Whether it's in the rink, at the ball field or in the gym, he is a solid mentor, always available to offer advice. Ryan grew up playing golf at the Springhill Golf Club and is now giving back to ensure that children will have a safe place to have fun and spend the day doing something they love.

I ask the House to join me in recognizing the dedication and selfless volunteer hours that Ryan Reynolds has given to his community and wish him much success in all his future endeavours.

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

ALFORD, EMILY: JR. GIRLS DART CHAMP - CONGRATS.

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased and proud to rise today to recognize Emily Alford of Beaver Bank, who is well known by many of the MLAs here today. This year's Canadian Junior Girls Darts Champion, Emily recently competed at the WDF World Cup in Romania.

Emily finished the competition with a 16th place world ranking. Emily was very proud to be part of Team Canada and makes sure everyone knows that she is from Beaver Bank, Nova Scotia. Emily is very engaged with her community, and Beaver Bank is proud to support and cheer Emily on.

Mr. Speaker, I request that all members of the Legislature congratulate Emily and send her best wishes for next month's competition at the BDO World Masters in England.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

WCB PROCESS: TIME FOR OVERHAUL - RECOG.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, in our province, when an injured worker has been declined benefits through the processes of WCB, they can appeal. Case workers, hearing officers and WCAT often become involved. The process can literally take years to complete. The injured worker in each level of appeal has 30 days to file the necessary appeal; however, WCB has no time limit on their decision-making processes.

Why do we have such an incredibly different set of rules? Injured workers can wait for several months to have their appeals dealt with. Why does WCB have such a backlog of their internal appeals process? Is anyone aware of the impact that the injured worker experiences every day awaiting a decision from WCB?

Perhaps, it is time to overhaul the Workers Compensation Board and its mandate and re-examine the WCB Act, which should be in existence to assist injured workers.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much for those Members' Statements.

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY**ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

GOVT. (N.S.): C.B. REG. HOSP. - OVERCROWDING

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, we learned this morning that 16 elective surgeries at Cape Breton Regional Hospital were cancelled in the last week alone. I will table that document. This is, of course, on the heels of reports of adult in-patients being admitted to the pediatrics ward during the same time period at the same hospital.

When we raised these issues last week with the Premier, the Premier said, “We can’t just think about today.” I would like to ask the Premier: How many todays do we have to live through until we get to tomorrow?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): I thank the honourable member for the question. He would know, as we’ve been going through this issue of transforming our physical infrastructure around health care, it actually is about the next 50 years.

At the same time, he would also know that one of the issues it has been associated with has been hospitals, when it comes to the regional hospitals, as well as those rural hospitals outside. We are in ongoing negotiations with Doctors Nova Scotia to deal with that issue.

We have had positive progress and we are hoping to be able to have some report in the not-too-distant future.

TIM HOUSTON: The issues are here today, Mr. Speaker. The Premier can reference the ongoing negotiations, but everyone in this House knows how the Premier negotiates.

Many of these people have been waiting years. They have seen specialists, they’ve been on wait-lists, and then finally, the day of the surgery is circled on the calendar. Just when it is almost here, they get a phone call that says, sorry, we have to cancel.

Imagine getting that call, but also imagine making that call, knowing what you are doing to that person’s life.

What comfort can the Premier give to those frustrated Nova Scotians who have had their elective surgeries cancelled time and time again, especially in the last week - 16?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we share the frustration of those Nova Scotians who have had surgeries cancelled. We want to tell them that we are continuing to deal with the physical infrastructure that has been part of those delays.

The honourable member would know that there have been delays when it comes to delivering surgeries in this province for quite some time. It is why we’ve made the largest single investment in health care infrastructure in our province. That is why we are going to

continue to do that, and it's why I look forward to continuing to work with Doctors Nova Scotia to respond to the needs of those physicians.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been the Premier for six years, and yet for the first two years of that, there was no effort on recruitment and retention of doctors. We are reaping the rewards of the Premier's own strategies around health care. They are here today, and the Premier doesn't want to acknowledge it. He likes to look out into the future, but they are here today.

I would just like to ask the Premier very simply: Why is it okay with him that surgeries are being cancelled today?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member's preamble is not accurate. There has been ongoing recruitment inside Nova Scotia health care facilities. The early part was done by the department and transferred over to the transformation around health care, but what he is denying is that the issue around physician resources is not unique to the last six years and it's not unique to Nova Scotia.

What we are reaping, quite frankly, is the fact that the last time the Progressive Conservative Party was in power, they built huge administrative structures and did nothing to ensure that we built a health care providing service that was going to attract and retain health care providers today.

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

GOVT. (N.S.): HOUSING - AFFORDABILITY

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier about housing - not abstract housing policy, but about people's concrete situations.

A woman named Kristina Boerder has given me permission to speak of her situation. Christina had a two-bedroom unit in a triplex in Armdale. She was paying \$1,295. She was informed by the landlord that he was going to turn the unit into an Airbnb and that she would have to move out. However, she would be able to stay if she would pay \$2,000. Mr. Speaker, that's \$705 - over a 50 per cent increase.

People say very commonly, when they are dealing with these kinds of situations, "what am I supposed to do?"

I would like to ask the Premier: What is somebody in Kristina's situation actually supposed to do?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for raising what is an important issue not only facing Kristina but many members, as we continue to see the

growth in the economy. In particular, in certain parts of our province and particularly in metro, they are putting pressure on affordable housing in units.

We continue to work with landlords to ensure that we have affordability in all parts of our city. We know there is more work to do. We look forward to working with the national government and the \$400 million that has been set aside to make sure that we have affordable housing. We continue to make sure that we have rent subsidies that are available to support those in communities. We'll continue to make those investments and work to try to, as we see this growth, make sure that people aren't being left behind.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I'll provide the details of the housing but not the identity of a second person who has also given me permission to speak of his situation. He lives in a low-rise rental building in the south end of the city, where he just lately got a notice from the landlord that the rent for his one bedroom will be going up \$275 a month on December 1st; that's about a 30 per cent increase.

Tenants in this and several other buildings, owned by the same landlord, have received similar letters. They are, no more than he is, in a position to pay this kind of increase. I want to ask the Premier: Where are these people supposed to go?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again I thank the honourable member for the question. He would know that part of the pressure is the short-term rentals that are happening, not only in this province but globally. We're seeing pressures on the housing market.

We continue, Mr. Speaker, to work with ensuring that we're providing housing options in communities across this province. He raises a very important point. It's why we've continued to make the investments we are. The most recent investment is improving our own housing stock across the province - bringing it up to where people want to live in those facilities, working with developers to ensure that we have affordability in housing stock across the province and, at the same time, providing rent supplements that will allow families with affordability.

As I said to the honourable member - I committed to the honourable member - we'll look to find out whether or not that needs to be adjusted in the coming months.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, Sobaz Benjamin spoke downstairs this morning about his family's situation. Their apartment in the north end had been damaged in the hurricane and they have to vacate that building. He spoke about how anywhere comparable in his community in the north end of the city is hundreds and hundreds of dollars more expensive, and how his family is not sure where they are going to go.

Mr. Speaker, what is the Premier going to do about all these people in Nova Scotia who are being squeezed so harshly by exploding rents?

THE PREMIER: Again, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of factors at work here. As he would know, as I said, the short-term rental issue has been growing not only in this province and this city but quite frankly, across the country and globally. We continue to work with landlords around affordability, make sure we have affordable accommodations in parts of the city.

He would also know that HRM is actually working towards an affordability model in this city here; we've seen other municipalities working with the province to provide that same option.

We're looking at our own housing stock. The most recent budget that we introduced had another 1,500 rent supplements that were in it; those are trying to deal with the issue to support those families who require our support.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

GOVT. (N.S.): YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH - ACTION

TIM HOUSTON: When the text line for the Kids Help Phone was launched, Nova Scotians reached out to discuss suicide more than users from any other province or territory in Canada, and I can table that.

Young people in Nova Scotia are having thoughts of suicide more than young people anywhere else in the country, and yet the wait-list for youth and adolescent mental health services remains high across the province.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Knowing that young Nova Scotians are discussing suicide more than anyone else in Canada, what action is the government taking?

THE PREMIER: He would know we continue to make investments in the help line he is referring to, to reach out to those citizens who require support. He would also know that we continue to increase the SchoolsPlus Program that provides a wraparound service, not only for that youth but also to support their families.

We continue to see investments around mental health. He would also know we had an expert panel that is providing mental health options to our province that we've taken. We continue to make investments in - each one of our budgets continue to make investments in - mental health issues.

This is an issue that is facing many of our families, all of our communities. We continue as a government - as I think all members of this House - to understand the severity and recognize the importance of early intervention and support.

What our expert panel was clear to say, Mr. Speaker, is that our decisions and our investments need to be evidence-based.

TIM HOUSTON: The statistics around young Nova Scotians discussing suicide are very troubling, but it's also very troubling that we have some of the highest child poverty rates in the country as well. Maybe those two things aren't surprising to some people, but they're surprising to me. The Minister of Community Services said that she finds the poverty rates surprising, and they flew in the face of the remarks of what she thinks to be true in the province. I can table her remarks on that.

The fact of the matter is far too many children in this province are living in poverty, and there is a direct connection between poverty and poor mental health. I'm grateful that the Kids Help Phone is there for those who reach out in the face of the long wait-lists that we see.

I would like to ask the Premier: What does the Premier think that the high rate of suicide discussion indicates about the state of mental health services in this province?

THE PREMIER: The honourable member raises an important issue. It is around poverty, Mr. Speaker. How do we support those families in need? How do we make sure that we keep our province in balance and continuing to grow the right economic opportunity?

Part of that path is to ensure that we are signing affordable contracts, ones with the public sector, who are the best paid in this entire province, so that we can make investments. When we had a tax opportunity, we made the basic personal exemption so it affected the very families that the honourable member is talking about. We made investments in youth health programs, the very ones the honourable member is talking about, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to new affordability around rent supplements, supporting people, it's the very families the honourable member is talking about. The reality of this is there are choices to be made in this House. We can't to say to everybody we're going to give everybody everything. The reality of it is, those of us who have the most need to share with those of us who have the least.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

H&W - GLACE BAY HOSP.: BED CLOSURES - ACTION

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Thirteen surgeries were cancelled last week, and three more were cancelled yesterday because beds weren't available. The Cape Breton Regional Hospital is overcrowded because in-patient beds at the Glace Bay Hospital are not available for the

people of Cape Breton. Family doctors in North Sydney and Glace Bay stopped providing in-patient hospital services earlier this year because they received no stipend for time spent on call.

Mr. Speaker, what exactly has this minister done to reopen the beds in Glace Bay that are so desperately needed?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: The member and all members of this Legislature share a common objective and goal with Nova Scotians, and that's ensuring that they have access to the care that they need. Mr. Speaker, in terms of the challenges with the beds in the Cape Breton region, indeed, we understand some of the concerns have been brought forward through the negotiation process. That work is ongoing and progressing well. At the same time, we'll work with the Health Authority and those clinicians on the front lines to evaluate what we can do on an interim basis while negotiations are continuing to progress.

TAMMY MARTIN: Sadly, that's not helping the patients today. In June, the Liberal Government issued a directive requiring that patients be repatriated to their home hospitals as soon as possible in order to prevent overcrowding. How does the minister expect the staff at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital to do this when community hospitals they're supposed to send the patients to are closed? The minister can talk until he's blue in the face about the redevelopment plan, but the fact of the matter is that there will be fewer beds in this new system than there are now, and we are already pushed to the limit.

Mr. Speaker, are community hospitals closed, cancelled surgeries, and closed admissions the new norm for the Regional?

RANDY DELOREY: I appreciate the concerns that the member is bringing forward on behalf of constituents in Cape Breton. We understand the challenges of health care delivery in parts of the province like the Cape Breton region. Listening to those concerns of citizens, as well as front-line health care professionals, that's why we are investing in the redevelopment project, Mr. Speaker. That's needed. The first thing that I heard was the need to double the size of the emergency department. That work is ongoing. (Interruption)

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

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, we recognize also the need to take steps in the short- and the medium-term, too, to support and complement the work that's being done on the redevelopment. That's why we launched the community paramedicine program in the Cape Breton region, to help facilitate the discharge of patients from the hospitals so they can get back home, get the care they need, and free up beds within the system. Those works are under way, as well, and we launched that earlier last year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

[2:15 p.m.]

H&W: MENTAL HEALTH WALK-IN CLINICS - NEED

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Walk-in clinics have proven to be an effective mechanism for treating mental illness. In Newfoundland and Labrador, following an all-Party mental health report, opening walk-in clinics dramatically reduced wait times. In the last few months, walk-in clinics have opened up in Halifax and Yarmouth.

My question for the minister is: Given the proven success of mental health walk-in clinics, how many of these clinics do we have in the province, and how many should we have to adequately address the identified need?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I sincerely thank the member for the question on this very important topic. I can advise the members of the Legislature that when I became aware of the report from the Canadian Mental Health Association, I believe it was in partnership with Newfoundland and Labrador, I reached out to my counterpart to get an appreciation and understanding of his perspective of the work that was done in that pilot program; he spoke very positively.

I took that information back and engaged the department to begin investigating and looking at the opportunities there and what it might mean in a Nova Scotia context. What I can say is that it hasn't been part of all of the recommendations we've received to date around mental health - over the last couple of years that wasn't one of the recommendations we had received - so it is something relatively new in our mental health program work.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for the answer. In June, the North End Community Health Centre in Halifax opened a mental health walk-in clinic. When the announcement came out, social media erupted in positive praise for the initiative.

Before the first patient had even been seen, the organizer of the clinic announced that they needed to expand service based on the number of people who had expressed interest in utilizing it, and I'll table that. A service that needs to be expanded before it even starts is clearly a service we are in dire need of.

My question for the minister is: What are the government's next steps regarding mental health, specifically around walk-in clinics?

RANDY DELOREY: As far as our work around mental health and addictions within the province, we work with a number of our partners: the Nova Scotia Health Authority, the IWK Health Centre, and our partners in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The fact is, we have had a number of reviews and recommendations from experts like Dr. Stan Kutcher and representatives from other parts

of the province who provide mental health recommendations, and indeed, our own platform commitments. This work is all well under way.

We've been making investments the last number of years. We're continuing that work because it is a very important part of our health care system, and we think it deserves that kind of priority attention.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

H&W: MENTAL HEALTH WAIT TIMES - DETAILS

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. A conversation about mental health cannot happen without a discussion on wait times. Wait times that plague the public system in this province are a huge barrier to those in need.

In a perfect world, we'd focus on mental health care or on prevention, but with people waiting upward of a year for treatment, it's nearly impossible to prevent anything. This government has bragged about reducing wait times, but on the ground the change isn't being felt.

My question for the minister is this: Have mental health wait times reduced or increased in the last 12 months, and where specifically are wait times the longest?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: The work that's done around mental health access to care - much like the delivery of health care services for our physical health - the health care system recognizes that there are varying degrees of acuity. They work hard to identify and assess clinically and ensure that the emergency care, whether it's physical or mental health, is addressed in the most immediate way, and then urgent and less-urgent care following.

As the member looks at our website listing all the wait times that are publicly available - the only province that provides full coverage of that - he'll see the wait times listed that way. Again, emergency care being provided in real time is the top priority of the system.

JOHN LOHR: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I have seen the wait times; the new way the wait times are being reported can be confusing and at times paint an inflated picture of actual progress being made. It's difficult to grapple with what the wait time really is, the way it's being displayed.

To be frank, knowing that 90 per cent of people still aren't being seen within the targeted wait time is not comforting. I'll table that. People on the ground are shocked to hear some of the wait times NSHA reports online, based on what they've seen in real life.

My question for the minister: Is the minister happy with the length of mental health wait times in the province? What is being done to meet the targeted times more often?

RANDY DELOREY: I believe the member's question may have noted where some of his concern is stemming from. He made reference to confusion over interpreting the information when he made a statement then that followed, suggesting that 90 per cent of people were not meeting the wait time.

In fact, what is reported for the wait times is the maximum amount of time someone waits for the 90th percentile - that is, 90 per cent of people are met within that amount of time or less. That's not the indication that says that 90 per cent of people are waiting that amount of time. It means that people are waiting that amount of time or less. It uses the highest level.

I just wanted to make that clarification, that that's a worst-case scenario. It does not paint a best-case scenario for the waits needed for mental health services.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

H&W: SUICIDE STATS. - STUDY

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness again. I was disappointed to find out that the government hadn't studied suicide statistics since 2004. The study was done by a department that doesn't even exist anymore. It was done before social media was created. Now the minister says a new study is under way, but only because Dr. Stan Kutcher recommended it.

This topic is so important. It's the kind of thing that isn't complete without first voice input. My question is this: Will this be the only suicide study done by this government?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I want to clarify that the work that is ongoing is work to establish a framework that is evidence-based. That was the recommendation that came forward, to learn from the previous study that was done, as the member noted, several years ago, to establish a suicide prevention framework for the province that is really looking at the research that has evolved since that point in time that the original framework was put in place, to see how that would influence and establish the path forward for us in the province of Nova Scotia.

That work is well under way, Mr. Speaker. We have a wide variety of experts who are providing the input to us on that work.

JOHN LOHR: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the minister has previously said in this House that the recommendation for the report came in July 2017 and they heard from experts in Fall 2018.

The public didn't know that this study was going on, let alone have the opportunity to contribute to it. Mental illness is not a problem that can be solved simply by throwing money at it, but that seems to be the approach.

My question for the minister: The mental health system in this province is broken. People are not getting the help they need when they need it. Will the minister commit to taking on a full study, including public input?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, again, I do sincerely thank the member for the opportunity for us to have this discussion through the questions. This is a topic that is so important to all Nova Scotians. I believe having these conversations does help reduce the stigma, that it is okay to engage in.

We do recognize - I apologize if the member or other Nova Scotians weren't aware that we were embarking on the review and updating of a suicide prevention strategy. We made it very clear. It was quite public at the time that the recommendation came forward that we were going to be pursuing these steps.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that recommendations were made and they were made public, and a commitment was made to proceed with those recommendations. The work that is under way is exactly what was committed to publicly.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MUN. AFFS. & HOUSING: ADEQUATE HOUSING - AFFORDABILITY

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. According to the United Nations, everyone has a right to adequate housing, but across Nova Scotia, thousands of people are being denied that right every day. More than 43 per cent of renting households in Nova Scotia spend more than 30 per cent of their income on rent and utilities. That's higher than the national average and represents no improvement from six years ago when this government took office.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister think that this is an acceptable situation?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: I thank the honourable member for the question - a very important topic. We believe that every Nova Scotian deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. We will continue to work with the agreement we have just signed and with other programs that have already been in place. We'll continue to do what we can to create. We're working with our partners right across this province whether they be private partners

or whether they be not-for-profits. We're interested in having conversations with all of those to continue to grow the opportunities for people to call home here in Nova Scotia.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, at least the first three years of the bilateral agreement on housing is not going to create new housing stock in Nova Scotia. We need a plan to ensure that people have affordable places to live now. We need to set goals and establish targets to meet them.

Can the minister be honest with the House and tell us how many households . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order please. I'd like to remind the honourable member for Halifax Needham that inferring that any member of the House is not honest is unparliamentary, and I'll ask you to retract that.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: I retract that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister share with the House how many households will be spending more than 30 per cent of their income on rent by the end of this government's three-year action plan?

CHUCK PORTER: It is certainly a very important issue for this government and this province that we continue to do everything we can to create options for affordable housing.

She has mentioned the three-year action plan that is investing \$88 million of matched dollars between the national government and our government, along with an additional \$70 million by the Province of Nova Scotia that is unmatched that will help more than 5,500 Nova Scotia households, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, we have 17,000 people who call home living in public housing. We will heavily invest also, from that first three years, in making sure that each and every one of those 17,000 continue to have a place to call home.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

H&W: CUMB. REG. HEALTH CARE CTR. - PSYCH. ASSESSMENTS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

When a patient who's suffering severe mental illness requires a psychiatric assessment under the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act at the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre, they must leave our facility and go to another regional hospital somewhere in the province.

We do have psychiatrists - three of them - practising in Amherst, but due to regulations, they're actually not allowed to do the psychiatric assessment at the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Would he consider adding Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre to the list of facilities able to do a psychiatric assessment?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: The regulations around the IPTA assessment process predate me by a significant amount. I would have to look more closely to see the rationale behind it.

I suspect, and I just have to verify whether they can't do any or if it's just if a patient is there - I think my understanding is that they get assessed elsewhere, in part, because the people making the recommendation need the IPTA assessment done separately because it is that check and balance. It's about putting a separation between the referral and the actual assessment for the individuals. I believe that's where it's at, but I have to go back and double check to verify.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I thank the minister for his answer. I know it causes a lot of undue hardship on both the patient as well as the families of the patient because often they are sent to another facility and then sent home immediately after, but the proper supports - because they're assessed at Kentville or Truro - are not always set up back home.

It's also undue hardship on our emergency room physicians and nurses who often spend hours on the phone trying to find an available bed at another facility. I want to thank the minister and, again, just ask if he would be willing to take a look at that regulation and ensure that Cumberland Regional could be added to the facility list under the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act.

RANDY DELOREY: Certainly, I'm absolutely willing to take a look at that to understand the circumstances there. This particular piece of legislation is a very important part of legislation for those Nova Scotians who may not realize that they need help yet, but whose loved ones and clinical staff have come to the realization that that kind of care is needed. It is certainly my desire to ensure that process works seamlessly to ensure people get the care they need and that the supports are there for establishing that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

H&W - DARTMOUTH GENERAL: LACK OF SERVICES - ADDRESS

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

[2:30 p.m.]

Speaking of facilities that lack vital services, as we stand today the Dartmouth General Hospital continues to be the only regional hospital in the province without emergency psychiatric services. The situation is different than the one at Cumberland Regional. This problem involves crises situations where minutes, even seconds, are the difference between life and death.

No matter how many millions are invested, no matter how many times the issue is raised in this House, some people in Dartmouth have to rely on a taxi to get them to a hospital that can help them in a mental health crisis.

My question to the minister is this: When will the people of Dartmouth get the emergency mental health services they need?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Indeed, when individuals, particularly in the central area, have a mental health crisis emergency, there are other avenues to obtain support, like the crisis teams, Mr. Speaker. In some instances, they can actually respond and report directly to the individuals' home - they don't necessarily have to show up at the hospital or the emergency department to receive assessments and support in such a crisis situation.

There are a variety of options, Mr. Speaker, to receive interventions and support through our crisis line.

TIM HALMAN: While I appreciate the minister's response and the list of resources available, let's not forget that in November 2017 the Auditor General stated that Dartmouth General is the only regional hospital in the province without a crisis response service and no psychiatry support to the emergency department. I'll table that, Mr. Speaker.

In response to that report, the minister stated that 911 services are always available, but it's important to remember that if you are in Dartmouth and you call 911 you'll be taken to the Dartmouth General Hospital. So I don't think that 911 services being available is adequate for someone in a mental health crisis.

My question to the minister is: What good is it for 911 services to be available for people in crisis if they are being taken to a hospital without the services they require?

RANDY DELOREY: I appreciate the member raising the topic of services being provided at Dartmouth General Hospital. I think it's important that people recognize, and certainly the feedback from the health care providers as well as the people in the community, the investments that are being made there to expand a wide variety of services and programs there, from operating rooms to expansion of dialysis programs, making several investments at that particular facility.

With respect to emergency services and 911 ambulance discharge, their protocol should be working and engaging; and if it's known that it's a mental health emergency, Mr. Speaker, they should be responding and bringing the patients to the appropriate facility.

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

H&W - MENTAL HEALTH: CURRENT INITIATIVES - EXPLAIN

BRIAN COMER: The Office of Workplace Mental Health has a website. It has outlined responsibilities and priorities, and it has an email and mailing address. It's an important development that shows the government recognizes mental health as a priority for its employees across the province. Recognizing the importance of the urgency of positive mental health in the workplace is important, but in order for it to expand outside government employees, it needs a champion.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness: What current evidence-based initiatives are being undertaken to ensure a healthy workplace for mental health?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Again, I thank the member for his question. The fact is we've taken a number of steps to provide supports and care for Nova Scotians in our mental health space. One of those, Mr. Speaker - again following advice and recommendations from experts in the field, including First Voice opinions and feedback on the panel that was co-chaired by Starr Cunningham and Dr. Stan Kutcher - those recommendations were to focus in particular on youth mental health services.

That was the area that was most critical for us to be focused on as a province, getting that care and services earlier to Nova Scotians, and that's what we've been doing.

BRIAN COMER: I thank the minister for that answer. Mr. Speaker, mental health in the workplace is an important topic, but outside of this partnership, there is a lack of initiative from the government on strategically decreasing stigma around mental illness. A strategy focused on the public, health care providers, media, youth, and adults could make this province a leader in mental health, but as it stands, the last document created to address stigma around mental health was published by a different party almost 10 years ago. As a mental health professional, I think we can and should do better.

Will the minister tell the House if the Office of Workplace Mental Health is developing a strategy to combat stigma in the workplace?

RANDY DELOREY: The work that the province has been doing has been well publicized. The recommendations that have come forward through a panel on mental health to the minister and, independent of that, the work of Dr. Stan Kutcher providing recommendations both for the Department of Health and Wellness and the Department of

Education and Early Childhood Development. We've taken those recommendations, and we've committed to moving forward with them.

We've taken much action in this regard. I would be happy to provide a document updating the member and the House tomorrow on the status of all that work, the consolidated recommendations we've had, and the progress that we've made throughout the time. Fundamentally, the core of the strategic plan, Together We Can, stands to this day. That work was very well done, and I acknowledge the work of the NDP Government of the day, which did that work for Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**MUN. AFFAIRS & HOUSING:
AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEED - ADDRESS**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. When we have asked the minister what his government is doing to address the increasing number of families who are being pushed out of housing, he references the bilateral agreement focused on repairs to public housing and rent supplements. Neither of these is enough to help the many residents of Dartmouth North who are living just one bill or family emergency away from losing their homes. One of my constituents lost her minimum wage job and is now facing eviction.

What is the minister doing to address the urgent need for adequate affordable housing today in Dartmouth North?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: We have a variety of programs and services that have been in place. We continue to have those in place, along with our investments that we will continue to make. We know that we need to grow the affordable housing sector, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to work on that process. We look forward to working with our partners.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, last week, there were four individuals facing eviction who visited my office in a single day. I have two constituents who are sleeping in their cars, one who is sleeping outside, and one who is sleeping in a tent, which her caseworker gave her the money to buy. This is the urgency of the situation.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister think it is acceptable that we have reached the point in Nova Scotia where caseworkers are helping their clients buy tents to live in because housing is so far out of reach?

CHUCK PORTER: As I said, we'll continue to work with all our partners right across this province - the HRM, CBRM, and every municipality across the province that has these kinds of challenges. We do have housing support workers out there who have

been making a difference, Mr. Speaker. Last year here in the HRM, they helped place and find homes for over 1,200 constituents.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

H&W - NEW MOTHERS: ACCESS TO RESOURCES - IMPROVE

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: New mothers bring the gift of life and should be supported, but mothers and babies currently in the province of Nova Scotia no longer have prenatal classes that they can attend, nor do all mothers have post-natal in-home visits. These prenatal classes and in-home visits provide education and support to new mothers in various areas like breastfeeding and dealing with postpartum depression.

In Canada, a quarter of all mothers report feelings of postpartum depression or anxiety. In Nova Scotia, it's even higher, and I'll table this report: 31 per cent of all new mothers report feelings of postpartum depression or anxiety. It's a scary time, as my constituent Angela Wilkins knows all too well.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Is he willing to consider reinstating prenatal classes and in-home visits for all mothers in the province of Nova Scotia?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: The member is correct on the important role of mothers and the significant and important role that they play in the lives of the next generation. The programs that the member has referenced are programs governed by our health authorities. Both the IWK Health Centre and the Nova Scotia Health Authority continue to evaluate how they deliver prenatal and postnatal care to Nova Scotia women and their newborn children. I defer to their expertise in regard to programs that they bring forward for implementation.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: The reality is that our province is not supporting new mothers like we should be. Angela Wilkins found out the hard way because there were no supports in place for her when she was struggling with postpartum depression. In fact, she went to her mental health department who sent her to a family support centre where, in turn, there were no specific supports for someone with a serious diagnosis of postpartum depression.

I believe that with 31 per cent of our new mothers reporting postpartum depression, this should be made a priority for this province. Thankfully Angela, having been a registered nurse, was resourceful and sought out her own supports.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: During his evaluation with his staff, would someone from his department be willing to meet with Angela to discuss strategies to make sure that new mothers are a part of this evaluation process?

RANDY DELOREY: I hope the member feels confident in the support and the work that I and my office provide to all members of the Legislature to support their constituents when they have challenges navigating the health care system. Indeed, certainly she is welcome to reach out. The member knows how to get a hold of me and share the information, and privacy waiver information to us, or at least the direct contact information so that we can get that information directly from her constituent.

Again, on this and many other issues, we engage with Nova Scotians. I hope my colleagues do recognize that if we ever run into challenges where the support hasn't been there for them, please let me know. But, as I understand, we each and every day endeavour to support all Nova Scotians, regardless of where they live, on issues like this.

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

H&W - CCHC: ADDITIONAL THERAPISTS - COMMIT

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, last week I was able to ask only a portion of my question to the Minister of Health and Wellness, and so I would like to continue that today.

I'd like to thank the minister for the additional two physiotherapists that are working at the Cobequid Community Health Centre as a result of the 2017 orthopaedic plan and the investments that were made then. (Applause) Mr. Speaker, the applause is too soon.

However, Cobequid has the largest wait-list for service in the province of Nova Scotia. Even the additions are only serving to keep the list from getting longer and are not providing any speedier service.

I would like to ask the minister again: Will the minister commit to adding additional therapists to Cobequid to address the wait-list for residents of Sackville, Beaver Bank, and surrounding areas, even if on a temporary basis?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I apologize to the member. I was thinking of the last time he was up and didn't get - or I didn't have the opportunity, to respond to his question. In fact, I did have a good Thanksgiving with my family, and I hope he and all the other members here did, as well.

Mr. Speaker, specifically to physio services throughout the system, our health care system has many demands and pressures on it. We continue to engage with our clinicians and our partners on the front lines of our operations to prioritize the investments that we make moving forward.

The investments we've made around the physiotherapy and the orthopaedic programs are very clearly laid out. We are continuing to run that program and the many others and that work we will continue.

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I certainly recognize and thank him once again, but I would point out that investments were not made to this particular department until the issues were raised by constituents. It seems as though, all too often, the system in place for resource management almost seems ad hoc and that can lead to a series of band-aid solutions rather than a comprehensive plan.

My question to the minister is: What system is currently in place to relocate needed health care resources and staffing throughout this province?

RANDY DELOREY: It is a very complex process that can't be articulated in a scant 45 seconds, but I do assure the member opposite that the work, operationally, that provides the assessment of the services needed on the front lines of care is the primary responsibility of our health authorities: the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK. They are the ones who are operating our facilities. They know where the demand points are for services and care. They prepare their business plans and operations to come forward. That feeds into our global budgeting process as part of the province.

[2:45 p.m.]

I advocate and support the work to get those resources dedicated to programs that we're able to approve and fund for Nova Scotians each and every year.

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

MUN. AFFS. & HOUSING - REPAIR PROGS.: THRESHOLDS - PROCESS

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, many if not all of us receive calls, as MLAs, from low-income constituents asking for assistance to help them make necessary repairs to their homes. Housing grants are available through the government, and a person's family income is taken into account to determine if a household is or isn't eligible.

This is a reasonable measure, but as the minister would know, sometimes Nova Scotians are disadvantaged by having incomes just over the line, so my question to the minister is: Could he explain to the House how the housing grant ceiling is arrived at that determines whether or not a household would be eligible for a housing grant?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: The honourable member is quite right: all of us as MLAs, or most of us I'm sure, get folks in all the time looking for grants for their homes. This is a great program; the repair and adaptation program for low-income Nova Scotians invests over \$20 million annually, and there is good uptake on this.

We know there is a need. We are very happy to be able to continue that program going forward, and I certainly appreciate the question around the income threshold that is part of the process. We'd be happy to look at any case if there's a specific one he'd like to talk about.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, the department provides the ceilings for the different areas of the province, but the ceilings can have a large variance in areas or municipalities that are only a few miles apart. For example, the family income ceiling in the CBRM is \$26,000, while in Victoria County the ceiling is \$40,500.

We know that many constituents who are seniors on OAS are over the \$26,000 ceiling and are ineligible for a housing grant but can't afford to make the necessary repairs, such as replacing a roof.

My question to the minister is: Would his department consider increasing the lowest ceilings so that these necessary repairs and alterations can occur?

CHUCK PORTER: I thank the honourable member for the question, it's a very important topic. We know there is a great need out there for this program. We're very happy that it is able to continue in part of the National Housing Strategy and the action plan. It was so important to us because this was part of that investment in allowing it to continue.

I certainly will commit to looking at how those thresholds are set. To be perfectly honest with the honourable member and all members of this House, I'm not sure why they vary from municipality to municipality or region to region, but I will endeavour to go back and look closely at that and do what we can and report back.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

H&W - EHS: FITCH & ASSOC. REPORT - PUBLICIZE

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, on September 26th, my colleague, the member for Pictou West, asked the Minister of Health and Wellness about the Fitch & Associates report on the Emergency Health Services system. It is the \$145,000 report that was due in December of last year. On September 26th, the minister said: "I had an update a couple of weeks ago that indicated that the report is essentially finished. They are going through last-minute data-validation verification in the report before it is submitted." I'll table that.

It's a couple of weeks for the last validation. I'm hoping the minister has the report. My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Has he received the taxpayer-funded report, and will he commit to making it public?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for the question, and I thank the member for Pictou West for the original question. In fact, I did receive the final copy of the report a little earlier this month. I have asked staff to go through the process of reviewing it, essentially the FOIPOP review process, to ensure that any of the material released publicly does adhere to the laws in the Province of Nova Scotia respecting public disclosure of such information.

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 76.

Bill No. 76 - Rental Fairness and Affordability Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to stand here today to address our Rental Fairness and Affordability Act that addresses a need that this government has failed to respond to, and that is the need to limit increases on rents in Nova Scotia.

The purpose of this bill is to provide meaningful action on the affordability crisis that plagues the Nova Scotia housing market and that is appearing at our constituency offices with frightening frequency and regularity.

The Rental Fairness and Affordability Act would do several very important things to protect renters in Nova Scotia. It sets the base rent as that which was in effect for the previous tenant, thereby preventing unrestrained rent increases when a new tenant moves into a unit.

It would tie the annual allowable increases in rent to the lowest of the following three measures: 2.5 per cent; the Nova Scotia Consumer Price Index rate; or a lower limit set by Cabinet. Importantly, it would allow for a 0.8 per cent rent increase in its first year

in effect. These measures would inject some desperately needed balance into the rental market.

The Rental Fairness and Affordability Act does allow for rent increases beyond those thresholds, but only in particular circumstances. Rent can be increased by up to 3 per cent above the base limit where a landlord has done, or undertakes to do, renovations or add services. Landlords can still apply to allow greater increases if there are exceptional increases in property taxes, utilities, or other expenses.

These measures would allow clarity, security, and some important peace of mind to the thousands of renters across the province who day-to-day and month-to-month are unsure whether they will be pushed out of their homes by rent increases that they can't afford. The bill puts forward important measures to protect renters in Nova Scotia where unpredictable and unsustainable rents have had an outsized impact on families and communities.

We in our constituency offices are hearing constantly from people who are either struggling to find housing or being faced with eviction or unsustainable rent increases. To share one illustrative anecdote, we've heard from the Nova Scotia Community College that several students at their waterfront campus in Dartmouth were accepted into programs at the college and were forced to decline after a long search for housing that they could afford - they did not find that housing.

We hear constantly of tenants being served with colossal rent increases that effectively serve as eviction notices. I'll note that we also, in my constituency office, now advise people who contact us to do everything possible to remain where they currently are even if the housing that they are in is inadequate, even if there is conflict or some other circumstance which would normally cause them to move. We're saying no - stay where you are because we can't undertake to help you find a new place to live. We're just simply not finding units, nor are housing support workers whom the Premier or the minister referenced earlier today during Question Period.

Often a tactic of a significant rent increase is used by landlords who want to turn the unit into a short-term rental - Airbnb. I'd say that across Halifax, but also in Baddeck, also in Lunenburg, also in other parts of Cape Breton and places that are attractive for tourists, people are doing calculations to see how they're going to do better, and that is, frankly, playing havoc with people's right to housing.

Other times it's simply used if the landlord believes that the market has changed enough that they can maybe find a tenant who is able or willing to pay more for the unit. It's not hard for the members of this House, even if they haven't had those sorts of constituents in their own offices, to imagine the impact that this kind of dynamic has on the labour market that is hungry for skilled workers.

Something that I was, until recently, unaware of and what all members of this House may not know, is that we actually have rent control legislation in Nova Scotia already. It was enforced in the province until 1993, when it was quietly removed by the then Liberal Government through an Order in Council exempting all residential premises from the Act.

Our Rental Fairness and Affordability Act brings back this important protection but also strengthens it. For the 122,645 households that rent in Nova Scotia, this legislation would make a significant and immediate difference for them. There is much evidence that it is needed.

According to 2016 data, 23,645 households in Nova Scotia spend more than 50 per cent of their income on rent and utilities; 30 per cent is considered a manageable threshold.

In the federal riding of Halifax alone there are 6,440 households that spend more than 50 per cent of their income on rent and utilities. That is a whopping 25 per cent - a full quarter of the riding - that is faced with this unsustainable, stressful reality in their day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month budgeting. On a day when many members have spoken about mental health and the importance of mental health, I can tell you that I have been approached in the grocery store by constituents who are suffering from deteriorating mental health as a result of precarious housing, housing that they are afraid they will lose due to the dynamic that is happening in the rental market.

Restrictions on unreasonable rent increases would make an important difference for people in the riding of Halifax where 40 per cent of residents are renters, and this is a higher proportion of renters compared to other cities in Canada; for instance, in Calgary, only 28 per cent of households are renters.

Nova Scotia sits above the national average for household spending, more than 30 per cent on their rent and utilities, which is the threshold that is seen as manageable for households. That means that more people here in Nova Scotia are paying too much of their income on housing than the average across the country. According to housing experts, these numbers indicate that Nova Scotians are facing an unsustainable housing situation.

We have learned from data in the 2018 Canadian Rental Housing Index that the Nova Scotia rental market is actually the fourth least healthy in Canada, and if I can find the right piece of paper, I will table that, but I might do it after I finish speaking.

Families in this province are regularly in the position where they have to choose between housing themselves or buying food and clothing. They are often in a position where they have to forego other things they might want to purchase for their families, such as vacations or extra classes for their kids.

Despite extensive construction in the last couple of years - number of years - in Halifax, which has helped the rental situation to some extent, building is not keeping up with demand and not in the section of the market that is badly needed.

Between 2014 and 2017, 5,000 new units came onto the market in Halifax and filled significant demand for largely higher rent units. I would note that in buildings that are older, it has seemed that the construction of new units has actually facilitated modest renovations of older buildings, followed by dramatic increases in rents. In fact, rents have spiked by 19 per cent during the same period, greatly outpacing the rise in incomes. Housing intended for workers - that is affordable for people with middle and lower incomes - has not increased.

All these dynamics together are resulting in renters being pushed out of their homes and, in some cases, pushed out of their communities. We hear stories from people experiencing this on a daily basis.

[3:00 p.m.]

In my constituency recently, I was contacted by a constituent who works full-time at a hospital as a porter in a unionized position. She lives in an older apartment building, in a bachelor; she doesn't have a car, she's able to walk or to take the bus to work. That building has not been significantly refurbished or improved, but it's surrounded by newer apartment buildings. She has given up all the extras, and with the rent increase that she is expecting in January, one full paycheque a month will go to her rent.

On the phone, we went through different options that are available to her to look at living somewhere that would still be in the community - which she has called home for decades - where she would not be so stressed by her rent payment. The only option that I could come up with to suggest was Northwood, where she can get on a wait-list for independent living, for an apartment.

The question that I was left pondering after that phone call was this: If a full-time unionized worker is lining up for below-market housing provided by a non-profit organization like Northwood, what hope is there for people who are working in the gig economy and don't have the protections of a union; for people on income assistance; for people on disability; for people who are retired and living on a fixed pension; and for all the other Nova Scotians who are in a yet more precarious situation than that constituent who was truly stressed by her housing situation?

We know that rent supplements, which the government often speaks of, are not working for those people who are so lucky as to be assigned one, because of the extremely low vacancy rate. In fact, we were contacted by somebody fairly recently who, with his rent supplement, was looking and not finding even a basement apartment, even in a

different community and a much longer commute away from where all of his social contacts are, all of his family are.

In this environment, where really all the power is with landlords because of the low vacancy rate, it is increasingly difficult to convince a landlord to even consider taking a rent supplement. There is a certain amount of paperwork involved. There's a certain amount of wait time where a unit might be vacant, and they have people lining up. They have people lining up.

Today I heard about an eight-page application that people were asked to provide to apply for an apartment. In that circumstance where renters are already being forced to accept high rents, being forced to make all kinds of concessions to find a place to live, there's no reason for a landlord to work with the Province to accept those rent supplements. That's quite apart from the fact that I hear concerns about whether Metropolitan Regional Housing has the necessary staff working to even assign and process rent supplements.

For all these reasons, it is abundantly clear that we need real action on rental affordability, and our Rental Fairness and Affordability Act is a meaningful step in this direction. I encourage all of my colleagues in this House to consider supporting it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I listened intently to the member for Halifax Needham's concerns. There is a real issue with housing, not just in HRM, which we are aware of as HRM members, but also right across Nova Scotia.

I'll take a moment to recognize all the hard-working individuals at Housing Nova Scotia who work day and night for solutions; they work with individuals like Jim Graham and others who have been involved in this industry or who have been involved in housing now for decades. They'll tell you that things have changed, and they have changed quite a bit.

There are people who advocate for more rent supplements. We've seen positive movement with the rent supplements. I know they are in high demand. Every time this government comes out with more rent supplements, as soon as they come out with them there is usually a waiting list of people demanding those rent supplements.

What rent supplements do is give people the ability to have a bit of freedom - like you and me, where we can choose where we want to live - people who don't necessarily want to live in the public housing stock but may want to live closer to a school or a family relative. I've spoken with hundreds of people over my six years, probably close to 1,000 people, who live in public housing or depend on rent supplements for a roof over their heads.

It's a difficult file. I look at the community of Greystone, which I represent, and the amount of investment that this government has put into the community of Greystone - replacing roofs, spending millions of dollars to replace windows, two playgrounds that were put in the community of Greystone, painting, new walls, new interior, things like that. When we did that, one of the reasons why I pushed so heavily with the former and current Ministers of Housing was because we wanted people to feel like it was their community, that their community was respected by government and was respected by the people around.

We did a lot of public consultation. I personally did a lot of public consultation with the people in Greystone. We actually had very detailed conversations on what work they wanted done in that community, along with what they wanted done there, which included playgrounds, which included trees, which included public gardens, which included a basketball court.

Let's be honest, these things were part of that community for over a decade, but over the years and previous governments these things were let go; there was no upkeep on them. The basketball court, the roofs in Greystone, the windows in Greystone, all the infrastructure was falling apart. People there were telling me that they felt like previous governments just didn't care about them.

Now what we see is engaged individuals who care about their community because we went up there, we spoke to them, we had conversations with them about what it is they need. I remember the first time we held a community meeting at Rockingstone with individuals from Greystone. I said to them, along with a couple of people from Housing who were there that night: What do you need? They were in utter shock because there were people who had lived there for well over a decade who had never been asked. What is it that you need? What is it that you want? What is it that will make this a community?

We stand around here and we say, well this is what they need, this is what they want. I'd like to know if the individuals, all individuals who represent - most of us have public housing in our community - if you have approached the people who live in public housing, if you have approached working class people and middle class people who are struggling day to day and ask them what it is they need, and not just assume.

One of the things I've heard from my community, and I've seen it over the years living in Halifax, is the gentrification of these communities. In HRM there is this huge movement for bigger and better and stronger and higher buildings.

We're starting to see it in Spryfield. I remember growing up, one of the schools I went to was St. Pat's. We saw in particular in Halifax Needham in the north end where it used to be affordable - a family of three could live in the North End, in the Hydrostone, and not have to pay half a million dollars for a home. You can't get a home in the North End anymore.

My question has always been, what happens to those individuals who have been there for generation after generation and have been pushed out because they can no longer afford to live in the Hydrostone? They can no longer afford to live in communities because these massive \$300,000, \$400,000, \$500,000 homes are being built around them.

It's not just about rent control; we need to look at this in a holistic approach. Everybody wants to live on the peninsula in Halifax, and what we forget is that living on the peninsula in Halifax is pushing people off the peninsula. Where do they go? What happens to them?

We're seeing developers now go into communities. In the past what they would do is they would look at it and they'd say, how can I make the most money off this piece of property. What can I do to maximize and build these massive homes?

Now what we're seeing in housing a massive amount of applications that have come in because of the provincial programs and the federal programs, where they are incentivized to build affordable housing. We have some of the biggest developments going on in my community right now, where those developers are doing 10, 15, 20 per cent affordable housing.

I attended an announcement in Fairview, which used to be extremely affordable. I myself had an apartment there when I was 17 years old. I think I paid \$325 a month for that apartment. I challenge anyone to find an apartment for \$500 now, let alone \$325. Developments are happening all around in places like Fairview, they're happening in the North End, they're happening in Spryfield, they're happening all over. I can only speak to HRM. For the rural folks here, I'm sure it's happening all over their communities, too. What's happening is we're pushing these people out and they can no longer afford it.

So the actual announcement that I attended - I think it was last year. I'm not going to say the gentleman's name, but I actually went to school with him. He had sold his business and got into development, and he had bought one of the older apartment buildings in Fairview. Instead of doing what would have happened in the past - which is: let's gut it, let's make it look as beautiful and as expensive as possible and let's maximize our rent on this - he approached Housing Nova Scotia and said, okay what's available. These are communities that I grew up in. I want to make sure that, yes, I'm making my money and, yes, I'm making my profits, but I also want to make sure that people like me and others, who struggled growing up - as he had said - have a place where they can go that's safe and that's affordable. Those programs weren't there; they weren't available even 10 years ago.

I understand the need for this discussion, I really do. Trust me. I live in a community where some people are struggling day-to-day on their rent. We deal with it every single day in my office. We have thousands of people that come in every year, and housing is a big issue.

I think what needs to be done is there needs to be a larger discussion on how we go about doing this and what is needed, because what may be needed in my community - Spryfield or Prospect or the North End - I suspect there's probably very little room in the North End to actually build affordable housing. The last time I drove through the North End, I didn't see many new buildings being built - I could be wrong. What I just heard is the existing ones are going to go up, and that has been happening for a while. That has been happening for more than six years.

I'll go back to my original point about the people I knew who grew up in the North End when I was younger; it was an affordable place to live. It became so desirable that we had an influx of people who moved in there and inflated the prices of the homes. Good luck trying to find a home in the North End. Good luck trying to find a home in the South End or in Chebucto or in any places like that for under half a million dollars. I hear it doesn't have to be.

What we need to do is have a conversation with our developers, which we are doing now, which we have been doing. We need to incentivize them for when they build homes so that they don't just build them based on what's going to be best for their bottom line; they build it with a social responsibility.

There have been all kinds of very good announcements around affordable housing and subsidized rents. I was down Chester way - forgive me for not knowing the exact spot - not too long ago on a seniors housing announcement. It was the third building that was being built by a local developer - a developer who's actually from my community. There was some national press around it because he had received federal and provincial dollars.

[3:15 p.m.]

I said to him: let's be honest, you are just building this because you got some extra money in your pocket from the feds and the Province. He said it didn't hurt, but it also made him stop and think, hey, I have a social responsibility here, too. He said that if those programs weren't there, he may not have thought of it, but because those programs are there, it made him stop and think, you know what - there is an incentive to build these homes, these spots, and I will do it.

I spoke to the seniors who were moving in and they were overwhelmed. They were going to be able to live in an area that they thought was, for them, outside their price range. They thought that they would not be able to stay in a place where their grandkids lived, their family lived, their friends lived, and that's a big part of it. Because of that incentive, because of that, they were able to stay.

I also look at the partnership that I think is happening in Dartmouth - one of the partnerships that is being discussed with Jim Graham, and I think that's in Dartmouth North - please forgive me, Dartmouth South? (Interruption) Dartmouth North, sorry. One of the

conversations that we are having with individuals like Jim Graham, who has probably more expertise in housing than all of us combined and is someone I know very well - and I'm sure I will get some feedback from him just from this conversation I'm having now. One of the things that we need to start doing is continue to look at co-ops and having partnerships with our not-for-profits - supporting our not-for-profits with our private sector.

That is something that we saw with the recent announcement around the federal housing announcement, which was close to \$400 million over 10 years. One of the caveats that was attached was that they wanted to see - and so did the Province - more not-for-profits. They want to see more wraparound services in these affordable housing areas and allow people to have a bit of ownership.

Co-ops can give you some ownership over your surroundings. It allows you to lead the direction of the home you are living in and the people you are living with. We've seen many successful co-ops. I think the ones that are most successful over the years and the ones that end up lasting - we have one of the largest co-ops in Nova Scotia right there in the Spryfield area. The ones that end up lasting are the ones where they are friends and they treat each other like family.

Not too long ago, I met with Housing Nova Scotia and the co-op in the Spryfield area - the members of the board - and they were overwhelmed by the support they were getting from Housing Nova Scotia. Some of them had been part of the original co-op - so going back 30 years, 35 years, 40 years. What they said to me outside when we had finished up that meeting is that they had never seen Housing Nova Scotia more eager to help, more willing to give funding, and this was something that fit them.

I'll go back to my original point. I do appreciate everything the member from Halifax Needham has said and I'm sure I'll hear more, but there needs to be a holistic approach. What I would rather hear in closing, instead of one-offs, I think we need to sit down and have a discussion that creates an umbrella for everyone.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

STEVE CRAIG: I thank the member from Halifax Needham as well as the member for Halifax Atlantic for their comments. I thank the member from Halifax Needham for bringing up this very important topic. Housing affordability, especially for those who are in a vulnerable position, is extremely important.

On the housing continuum, we have market housing, we have affordable housing, social housing which the member from Halifax Atlantic has alluded to, and we also have homelessness. We have people who are looking for assistance to get shelter, to get affordable housing.

In the last number of years, the economy around here in Nova Scotia - and the Premier has mentioned it a couple of times in this session - it's growing. So, we're seeing more employment; we're seeing these things happen.

In HRM - and by the way, HRM is more than the peninsula, it is more than the core of Dartmouth. In fact HRM has the largest rural land mass of any municipality in the province. So, there is more to this than just the peninsula. We are all impacted, all our citizens are impacted.

When I take a look at Sackville-Cobequid, for example - I don't know if you know this but - the largest affordable housing project was the opening up of the lands in Lower Sackville through CMHC. That was done - my parents built there. What I see now, and some of the statistics have shown that people who own their own home - about 32 per cent of their income goes towards maintaining their home.

Now the people, the seniors who bought those homes and built those homes way back when, have had an income that has not kept up with the maintenance requirements of their homes. They've got a capital investment and they're going to sell that capital investment and they're going to use that to move into another home. So a lot of seniors in this province are moving to rental accommodations.

We have a lot of people who are looking for affordable, good, safe accommodations, at all levels of income. When you take a look at the building specifically in HRM, it's a wonder to think why there would not be a housing situation now. If you take a look at somebody who has a household income of \$100,000, if they spend 30 per cent, that's \$2,500 a month on rent. If they want to save a bit more money, they go to some place else that has a little bit lower - perhaps \$1,250, I don't know. That puts pressure on those who are least able to afford rents.

We can talk about the supplements we provide, but the fact of the matter is, costs increase to provide safe, affordable housing, and it is difficult to hear that we advise people to stay where they are because we don't have a solution. That is not a good thing.

In our community of Sackville-Cobequid, we ran into a situation not too long ago - a couple of years ago, in fact - where we found out that homelessness is not unique to the peninsula of Halifax. Some of the services are provided in Halifax, and so we have residents moving there. We do need to consider not only the housing, the affordability, the transportation, the cost of food; and those people who are able to buy all those things are in a very fortunate position compared to others who are not.

We take a look at one in four who are spending more than 30 per cent on housing in the municipality of Halifax. As the member for Halifax Needham indicated, throughout the province, you have to wonder where those numbers are going. Why are the incomes of those individuals not increasing? This is not a simple solution.

What the member for Halifax Needham is proposing with this bill is that we stop right now the amounts of rent that are being charged. I think that is a little, maybe not enough. There are increases allowed; however, that does not help those who are already struggling.

How do we help those who are already struggling? What action can we take now to assist those who are already struggling? How extensive has the consultation been with stakeholders? I know that we all hear from individuals who are struggling. How many conversations have we had with others who are providing those services?

In HRM in recent years, we looked at the Housing and Homelessness Partnership and at how we can increase affordable housing stock. We looked at density. We looked at affordability relative to a new development coming on, and if there would be more affordable units provided for in that. In fact, I think there was a point not too recently where Newfield School property was looked at, and perhaps affordable housing was going to be provided there. For some reason, the government of the day did not go through with that.

What can we do? Taking a look at single dwellings - how can we increase the capacity in a single dwelling? Maybe we can provide affordable units there through auxiliary suites, so that we can improve the availability of that. Can we take a look at things like working with organizations like the Investment Property Owners of Nova Scotia and ask what is it they can do? I know a lot of developers who are saying, we want to help. They take advantage of the low interest rates that are being provided through CMHC and other organizations.

I had a conversation the other day, in the last month, with a developer who said, I am going to build an affordable housing unit, it will have market plus 10 per cent below market and also short-term rental - Airbnbs. How is that helping our citizens who are now struggling?

In Sackville-Cobequid, we had a warming shelter that was developed last year to assist those in need. What we found is that they needed other assistance. You look at street navigators - I know the NDP had a news conference this morning - and both of those gentlemen I've worked with in the past to address some of these issues.

Who are the street navigators who are out there looking at not only those who are homeless but near homelessness, one paycheque away from being in default on their rent? What opportunity do they have to work with landlords? There are a lot of good property owners and landlords out there who, as the Premier alluded to earlier, said - I paraphrase - those with much are in a position to help those with less. A lot of owners feel that way, yet there are some who don't, and I think they need to be addressed.

So, affordability in housing, and those less able. We have increased population in this area, and more coming. We have immigration happening. We have new units being built, but the demand exceeds the capacity that's being built.

I believe we need to take action now. I do not believe this bill is that action, though. We need to take action now, and I do believe that the government has the wherewithal to take action now. You have the action of the existing legislation that the member for Halifax Needham indicated earlier, and also the Order in Council that basically changed the effectiveness of that, and the original intent of that.

I do believe that government can take a look at that, looking at today's environment and saying, okay, what has changed since the late 1990s? Well, one thing is for sure: population. Our economy. The low vacancy rates. There are things that we can do now. I believe there are things now that the government already has the authority and the power to do. Already mentioned was rent subsidies and those types of things. I was looking for an answer, and the minister isn't here - there's something happening in January 2020 where monies are being increased and basically the recipients are able to do more with that. I hope that the percentage of those total monies isn't going to help in their rent. I truly hope that that's not where that money goes for affordability.

[3:30 p.m.]

I guess in closing, I just want to say this. We do have a real need for affordable housing, whether you're making \$100,000, \$30,000, \$20,000 - there ought to be some place in there that you have safe, affordable housing; that you can live in a community that you're accustomed to that you have access to services that you want - and I'm not suggesting for a minute that they all be provided without some work on behalf of our citizens.

We need to be able to take a look at what is affordable and whether I am living within my means, knowing full well that there's a great portion of our community that that doesn't even apply to. They absolutely do not have the means. How can we help them? We can help them by taking some action and addressing this specific situation right now. Again, this bill I do not believe does it. I do believe though that the government has the ability to take some action beyond what they've already indicated.

There are a lot of things happening relative to co-operatives and to affordable housing initiatives by not-for-profits, and that's wonderful. The comment made by the member for Halifax Atlantic alluding to maintenance - if we allow our housing stock to erode in such a way that it becomes uninhabitable, then we've decreased that market availability, that affordable housing.

We need to be able to take a look at that. We need to be able to take a look at and reaffirm that those homeowners out there can stay in their homes as long as they possibly

can. To do that we need to maintain the stock that's already out there and help them, and I do know there are initiatives there.

I just want to close by saying again, I thank the member for Halifax Needham for bringing this forward. It is a very real issue. I do believe that there is action required now. I do not believe that it is this bill that will accomplish what, at least, I'm looking for, which is to do something that helps people immediately and also includes those who are providing the housing stock in a positive way and recognizing the residents who do require the help of government and not just the people who are making \$100,000 or \$50,000.

THE SPEAKER: I just want to remind the honourable member that it's not proper to refer to any other member who is or is not in their seat in the Chamber.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank my colleague the member for Halifax Needham for bringing this forward today. I'd like to thank my other colleagues in the House who've spoken to the bill today. I just want to begin my remarks with a couple of responses, of course, to some things that I just heard.

My colleague for Sackville-Cobequid just asked, what can we do? My answer to that is simple, of course: we can pass a bill that controls the increases in rent that are so quickly putting people out of their homes. We can pass a bill that will control rent. It is easy. It is inexpensive and we can do it.

In this climate of crisis, not just in HRM - I don't think we've ever said that - but all across the province, we have a housing crisis and we are about to have a homelessness crisis, Mr. Speaker. We need to do something, and the government can talk about rent supplements all they want and how they continue to pay money into the Rent Supplement Program. The Rent Supplement Program is excellent for people who have them, but it's not going to help when their rents begin to increase more and more and more, which is happening.

The government is happy to put money into the Rent Supplement Program, or maybe not - they say that they're looking at the situation - but it doesn't address the actual issue of rising rents. That's one thing I wanted to say.

I do agree with my colleague the member for Halifax Atlantic, who says that there is a need for many solutions, and that is absolutely true. There is a need for a lot more affordable housing stock. By the way, the federal NDP platform includes 500,000 new units of affordable housing within the next 10 years. That is a real, ambitious target and can be achieved only if we elect an NDP government, of course.

We do need more co-op housing, and we do need more supportive housing. We need all those things. But we also need rent control. It is the number one thing that we could do today that will help somewhat in this crisis.

Mr. Speaker, when I was first campaigning to be elected in Dartmouth North, the number one thing I heard on the doorstep was rent control, rent control, rent control. The situation for renters in Dartmouth North in 2017, when I was knocking on doors, was desperate. It was unsustainable, and it's even worse now. I know, now that I have been an MLA for two and a half years, when we were helping people in our office the issues around housing and homelessness were never as bad as they were this past Summer and into now.

In Dartmouth North, where some of the last vestiges of affordable housing in the HRM are dwindling, we have a homelessness crisis that is imminent. I promised my constituents, when I was campaigning to be elected, that I would champion rent control. I am very happy that we are talking about it here today, and I will continue to talk about it. I need the support of my colleagues in this House. We need immediate action to curb the impact of steadily and rapidly increasing rent in Nova Scotia, and we need to do this to avert a homelessness crisis. The people in Dartmouth North and all over the province are being pushed to the brink.

I would just like to mention what I did mention in Question Period today, Mr. Speaker. Last week in my office, there were four individuals facing eviction who came into my office in a single day. I had two constituents who were sleeping in their cars, one who was sleeping outside, and one who was sleeping in a tent that their caseworker bought them. It's unbelievable. We're not just talking about people who are living in super-low income brackets. I also have a constituent who lives in a really nice apartment building in Dartmouth North, and yes, we do have really beautiful apartment buildings in Dartmouth North. He is a retired teacher, and he's worried about being priced out of his home. Where will he go? A retired teacher is worried about increasing rents. If that's the case, what's happening?

As I mentioned, on top of rent control, we need a significant investment in truly affordable housing. We need new units to be added to the market that are affordable. We also need a definition of what is affordable. When a developer on Quinpool Road puts up a high rise building and says 10 of those units - oh, wait a minute, that's not actually happening - are affordable, maybe they're affordable in comparison to the other units in that building, but they might not be affordable for most people who live in HRM. Affordable is a relative term, and we need to define what we're talking about when we talk about affordable housing.

The fact is that the recently signed bilateral housing agreement with the federal government will not accomplish the need for new units. We still haven't heard from this government about how many new units the agreement will add to the market, but we do know it will not be enough to fill the incredible demand for affordable units. In fact,

housing experts are skeptical that the federal program represents any real increase in funding across the country.

Renowned University of Toronto housing expert David Hulchanski has said that the amount of money being spent now by the federal Liberal Government is not significantly more than what the previous Conservative Government spent. The Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer also concluded earlier this year that the federal Liberal Government was not putting any significant new money into housing. Its basic conclusion was that the money in the recent National Housing Strategy is about the same, with slightly less for groups of people with the most needs but seemingly slightly more pomp and circumstance about how amazing this National Housing Strategy is. We are forced to wonder where this leaves Nova Scotians who are feeling the housing crunch now.

Our Rental Fairness and Affordability Act would make a substantial difference in rental costs for these households today. We could actually make this happen this week, Mr. Speaker. The vacancy rate in Nova Scotia has steadily declined in recent years, falling by 2 per cent in just the last four years - and this is old data - in Halifax just 1 per cent of available housing units are vacant, an extraordinarily low rate, approaching Vancouver's notoriously low rate of 1 per cent and Toronto's 1.1 per cent vacancy rate. But the difference is that in these cities, in Toronto and Vancouver, their provinces have legislation that sets allowable rent increases to an annual guideline. These are sensible measures that have not stymied the growth in these cities. They are still attractive cities to live in and it is possible - mostly possible - to live in them.

Indeed, reasonable limits on rental increases have allowed these cities to remain viable places for all kinds of different people to live, and the cities continue to thrive as a result. But here in Nova Scotia, in Halifax, we are quickly joining the ranks of these notoriously unaffordable cities, but without any of the comparable protections for renters.

Here in Nova Scotia we are confronted with the deadly combination of climbing rents, extraordinarily low vacancy rates, and virtually zero protections for renters from unsustainable rental increases. We are approaching the edge of an affordability cliff, and this government has a responsibility to take meaningful action immediately and not just stand up and talk about rent supplements every day because, frankly, it doesn't address the issue.

We are also hearing commonly of situations where landlords are using renovations as an excuse to evict tenants from their homes with the real intention of being able to rent at a much higher price. I know this is happening in Dartmouth. Often tactics such as these, while not truly legal, serve the intended effect of intimidating renters into leaving.

These problems are not contained within Halifax or the CBRM. People all across the province are grappling with this untenable housing situation and its attendant problems. Recently I was in Truro visiting with a number of people, but I was speaking with the

director of the Homeless Outreach Society there. That shelter has 14 beds for adults who find themselves homeless. The director explained to me that she has seen a steady increase, a steady upward trend in use of emergency shelters in the last several years. She talked of the increasingly unaffordable and inadequate - and I heard that a number of times in Truro - inadequate rental stock that is available to people in Truro and, because there are not a lot of options, people are willing to live in literally unsafe conditions.

She explained that people from all over the region travel to Truro to stay at the emergency shelter until they can get back on their feet. She described her fear of an impending homelessness crisis in her community and expressed deep anxiety at the thought of the coming Winter as the situation becomes more and more untenable.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am feeling that exact same anxiety in Dartmouth North. I am already putting my head together with other people in the community to see what we will do when we find more and more people living in tents on the railroad tracks or living in their cars. When the temperature gets cold, it's going to be bad.

In addition to unsustainable rents we know that one of the key stressors on the housing market in this province is short-term rental conversion. This government has been far too slow to regulate short-term rentals, and this is having an outsized impact on rental markets across the province. This is why the NDP has also introduced legislation this session that would regulate short-term rentals right now by levying substantial fees and applying commercial taxes on units that are operated as businesses.

Our legislation is focused on short-term rentals that are not simply a family cottage or a room in a primary residence. It would require the large, lucrative platforms, such as Airbnb, to contribute revenues toward building affordable housing. It would give municipalities the ability to put further restrictions on short-term rentals should the vacancy rate be deemed unsustainably low. This legislation would return some much-needed fairness to this stressed rental landscape.

We know there are policy tools available to us to address this housing crisis in Nova Scotia. We need aggressive investment in non-market housing built by the public sector. I agree with that - we absolutely need that. This housing needs to be affordable to poor, working and middle class people. This can be publicly built housing or support for not-for-profit private housing, co-op housing, and community land trust.

When I hear from the government that we're not proposing solutions, I just want to reiterate that I've just proposed five to address this affordable housing crisis right now. I'm just going to reiterate those: rent control, public housing, support for not-for-profit housing, co-op housing, and community land trusts - five solutions, folks.

[3:45 p.m.]

For example, the federal NDP plan - and I've already said this - is for 500,000 affordable units across the country. That would add 13,000 new units to the rental market in Nova Scotia, an ambitious but totally accomplishable plan. We need stronger protections for renters and limits on unbridled rental increases. People who rent deserve to have stability, security, and control over their homes and should not face a constant threat of losing their home.

Mr. Speaker, we are confident that this is one of the most acute issues that is facing this province right now, and it is absolutely urgent that this government address it head-on with confidence and with robustness and with clarity. There is no understandable reason not to bring in rent control. It doesn't cost anything. It won't diminish growth - in fact, it will encourage growth - so it does ask the question why the government won't do it.

Our Rental Fairness and Affordability Act is a substantial, meaningful, impactful way that we can do this, and I urge the members of this House to support it.

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

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: It's my pleasure to get up and rise on this important subject. It is a passionate issue for me because when I first started to run in 2013, as I went through my riding, which is primarily apartments - a lot of high rises - what I did notice is that the housing stock was the two worst-kept buildings in my riding, and I think that's a shame on government. It's a shame that government allowed people to live in this type of unit.

I'm proud of the work that our government has done in terms of attacking the bedbug problem in the units, but that's more a story for another day. What we need to talk about now is affordability. What we're not doing is actually using facts for our arguments, and here are the facts.

This is proven by every economic theory: when you put rent caps in place, landlords stop maintaining their apartments. What's going to happen? They're all going to become bedbug infested, leaky roofs, and this has happened over and over again. These are supported by facts.

Mr. Speaker, *the Economist* has actually said that the way to deal with this is more units to be built. It's a supply and demand issue but I see the same people who are asking for, hey, let's put rent controls in, but they oppose every building and they oppose any height in this city, or they oppose any density in this city. That's what we need.

The fact that I have 30 polls in my riding and 2 polls are all of downtown Halifax - because that's how few people actually live in downtown Halifax - is shocking in a major

city like Halifax. It is absolutely shocking. We need more units built. We need them built in the centre core where people want to live and then they can walk to work as opposed to driving to work. Right now, what are we doing in HRM? We're expropriating housing to make lanes bigger, which absolutely makes no sense at all.

I will also move on too. As we talk about rent subsidies and the importance of them, they do make a difference, and that is one thing that this government is looking at. But I want to talk about the NDP using the examples of how this works in Toronto and Vancouver. It has not worked in those areas. Rent has skyrocketed in those areas in the condo market because developers have chosen not to build any more apartments. They're building condos.

What happens is the people who are in rent controlled spaces, they stay in them for decades. An example that's come out of one of those jurisdictions is a person who is living in a six-bedroom house under rent control for multiple years. As the years go by, people move out of the house; now it's one person living in that place by themselves because it's cheaper than going out and renting a one-bedroom. That actually takes supply off the market.

In London in 2005, rents only went up - until today - by 40 per cent under rent control, but housing went up 110 per cent. The same has happened in Toronto. The same has happened in Vancouver. If you look at those jurisdictions, they're not affordable. We are moving to that, but what we need to do is allow more supply on the market. The fact that a two-bedroom building that was built in the 1970s in the South End can get \$1,400 to \$1,500 a month in rent is shocking. You know what will bring that rent down is supply.

As the supply is there, that building will now start to have some vacancies and the rent prices will come down. That's what we need, and it helps people get into affordable housing. The plans of the NDP have proven over and over again that they don't work, and they actually exacerbate the problem.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 176.

Bill No. 176 - Occupational Health and Safety Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, it is sad that we have to rise in this House to talk about such a terrible situation that can happen in the workplace, and I know - well, I hope most of these members haven't had the opportunity to have workplace bullying and harassment in the workplace, but this legislation would actually protect these workers.

In Nova Scotia, sadly, we are the only jurisdiction without legislation that outlaws bullying and psychological harassment in the workplace. Addressing this shortcoming is an urgent matter. People in our province are suffering in silence when subjected to bullying and harassment in the workplace.

Across the country, occupational health physician specialists report that 50 to 60 per cent of their caseloads are related directly or indirectly to mental health concerns, and we have heard today lots of talk and discussion around mental health.

I know when my daughter was in school, bullying - and I know it still is, it's still an issue that kids deal with every day. I also believe that when people go into the workforce, this isn't something that one should have to deal with or actually do. It's very disheartening to think that even as adults we still have to deal with this.

In Nova Scotia, we don't have any data on this matter. We don't follow it because bullying and psychological injury in Nova Scotia is not covered by our legislation. This matter came to my attention when I met Annette Harpell, an Antigonish woman who had been fired from her job at Lawtons in 2018 after enduring daily debilitating harassment from a senior co-worker over a period of many months.

The situation Ms. Harpell described to me sounded truly unbearable. Her co-worker attempted to isolate Harpell in the workplace and sabotaged Harpell's work efforts, at one point even shredding paperwork that Harpell had been filling out, and she hid it in the trash. Imagine to be that jealous and childish that you have to try to bring harm to one of your co-workers.

Ms. Harpell sought assistance through OHS, Occupational Health and Safety, where she thought she might get some help and advice on how to proceed; however, her local OHS branch refused her case.

Ms. Harpell appealed to the Labour Board, and on June 19, 2019, the Labour Board denied her appeal, saying that psychological violence is expressly excluded from this Act.

I had an opportunity to chat with the minister about this issue, and even though the minister has assured me that it is in this Act, we can tell you 100 per cent that psychological violence is not covered in this Act.

You see those commercials of people being abused, women being abused, and battered relationships. Psychological violence is just as damaging to a person as physical violence, and we need to protect workers in Nova Scotia.

I am going to read a quote from the decision so that the House can understand what I mean when I say that there are no protections for workers suffering from bullying and psychological harassment under OHS in Nova Scotia, from the Labour Board decision: It

is acknowledged that the Violence in the Workplace Regulations apply only to physical violence and threats.

The wording could not be clearer. The definition of violence in both Section 2(f)(i) and (ii) indicate that it relates only to the risk of physical injury and conduct that endangers the physical health or physical safety of an employee.

Psychological safety of each and every person who goes to work in Nova Scotia should be of the utmost importance to this government, and the fact that we have to even debate this - that this isn't a bill - I would like to call a gimme.

What cost is this to the government? What downfall is this to the government? It shows only that we, together, are looking out for the psychological well-being of each and every employee in this province.

The regulations recognize violence as an occupational health and safety hazard, but they clearly do not encompass the other physical threats, behaviours, and conducts. This is significant in that it indicates that where regulators wished a particular type of conduct to be subject to regulation, they said so clearly.

Mr. Speaker, we in this House should say clearly that bullying and psychological harm to anybody in Nova Scotia should not be tolerated.

They continue, and we accept that conduct such as harassment and bullying may lead to harmful consequences that have health and safety consequences and that other provinces may have protections that do not exist in Nova Scotia. However, the decision to broaden the scope of protection to include psychological violence under OHS legislation is ultimately a legislative policy judgment which is beyond the role of a statutory tribunal such as the Labour Board.

Mr. Speaker, the Labour Board is clearly telling us that they have no jurisdiction because it does not fall within the guidelines of the OHS Act. They are telling us that this legislation has the power to put pen to paper and include this.

Ms. Harpell may have had a chance of winning her workplace bullying case in another province. If she worked in another province she would have been protected; that is a disgrace. But she didn't have a shot here in Nova Scotia because Nova Scotia provides no protection for people in her situation. Had psychological injury been covered by our OHS Act, Ms. Harpell would have access to a number of avenues for drawing attention to the hazard in her workplace and addressing the unsafe environment where she spent her working hours, not to mention how many people are continuing to be bullied and psychologically harassed in that workplace.

The bully in her workplace was known to management. Under OHS she would have had the right to know about this situation. In an effort to resolve the perceived conflict between Ms. Harpell and her bully, management at her workplace pulled her into a mediation session without any notice. Under OHS, she would have had the right to participate in the decisions about what the employer could do to make the workplace safer, rather than simply being told by management to “suck it up.” I know I say the word “disgraceful” a lot, but that is beyond disgraceful. Management has told this woman, this employee, to suck it up and get on with it when, in fact, she was being abused in the workplace.

Instead of sustaining psychological injuries because she was afraid of losing her job, under OHS she could have had the right to refuse, which is the right of every employee who feels unsafe at work; they can use their right to refuse.

But because Ms. Harpell is a single person, she was in fear of not going to work because she needed the money and she did not have the protection of OHS as a right to refuse unsafe work. She didn't have access to any of those rights because bullying and psychological injury are explicitly exempted from our OHS legislation in Nova Scotia.

Psychological injury and bullying is exempt from our legislation. We need to think about that on all sides of this House. What if it was somebody whom you represent, somebody in your family, a child, an adult? It doesn't matter. It is 2019 - nobody should be afraid to go work. People go to work not because they have nothing better to do; people go to work because they need to feed their family. They should not have to be put in danger.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that danger doesn't just come with the threat of violence or shows itself with a bruise; psychological violence is just as damaging as somebody who has a broken arm.

We are the only jurisdiction in Canada that retains this sort of provision. On this issue we are dragging our heels, and we need to realize that it is the 21st century. Nobody should feel unsafe at work. As legislators, it is our responsibility to ensure that what happened to Ms. Harpell does not happen to anyone else.

It is pretty embarrassing, actually, to think that we are the only area that doesn't have this protection. Seriously, we are the only jurisdiction in Canada that doesn't have this protection. Again, what's the problem? Why is this not a gimme? Why are we just not doing this to show the people of Nova Scotia good faith, that we have their concerns and their fears - that it's in their best interests and in our best interests to look after these people?

Adding the expanded definition of violence to our OHS Act could provide the hundreds of Nova Scotians who face psychological harassment on the job with the means to address the hazard in the workplace. Why would we not want to provide Nova Scotians

with this tool? There is no reason that this government, this House, should not pass this legislation to protect each and every worker in this province.

[4:00 p.m.]

I urge this House to consider the issue with the seriousness it deserves and act quickly to bring Nova Scotia up to speed with the rest of the country on the prevention of workplace bullying and harassment. Again, I will just end by saying, if it was your child - as mine had been, early on - nobody would stand for that, if a child was being bullied. So why should anybody face these same bullies who are injuring their psychological well-being while they are out trying to make a living in order to feed their family?

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the easiest bills, one of the easiest pieces of legislation that I think we could work together to pass. I urge this House: let's do this this session, to show Nova Scotians that we actually care about their psychological well-being.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill No. 176, an Act to Amend Chapter 7 of the Acts of 1996, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Respecting Mental Health.

Safety in the workplace is a concern we all have. I appreciate that I have the opportunity to discuss this issue. Just last week at my own office, I had a situation where I had to have a protection order placed to prevent bullying and harassing of my staff. It's very sad that in this day and age a politician has to be worried about the safety of their staff, and I was.

I was here in Halifax. My office is in another part of the province, and my staff had to sit with the doors locked and be really tentative about who was coming toward them. The only way I had to protect them was to have an order sought and delivered to help prevent some act of violence or abuse to my staff. This happens all the time. Phone calls to my office can be harassing and threatening, and our staff people are often - they're the front voice of our offices, and they get hit pretty hard sometimes.

I've even had situations where people call my office, very angry and threatening, and yet when they talk to me, they're much calmer. I think we all have, at some point in our life, been victims or subjected to types of bullying and harassment, not just in our workplace but socially, in school, in our life someplace.

So, I do take this seriously and I'm sure most members here, through their experience and talking to people, really know how this can affect people psychologically and emotionally. We can't predict the behaviours and attitudes of other people, Mr. Speaker.

Bill No. 176 proposes to alter the definition of violence under the Violence in the Workplace Act, by adding situations that do not directly involve the threat of an incident leading to physical injury or a change in physical health in the workplace; it's talking more about emotional health and mental health. As I said earlier, that is equally as important.

This is a preventive bill. It proposes that it would include behaviour harmful to the emotional well-being, self-esteem, reputation, or property; it would include bullying and cyberbullying, psychological harassment, racist behaviour, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and the assistance or encouragement of such behaviour. Sometimes you can be in a work situation where there's a tag team, and there is more than one perpetrator of the offence.

Some jurisdictions have expanded beyond physical injury and have included considering mental injury in their OHS policies, like Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. Others, like Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia, did not alter the definition of violence in the terms of actual or threatening use of physical force, similar to Nova Scotia. Rather, they added additional language with a definition to expand those areas to be considered by a workplace, in addition to the word violence.

Provinces that define both violence and harassment in their OHS legislation have clearly identified the value to distinguish between the two. Separate legislative and/or regulatory requirements have been developed to address them.

Adopting a single all-encompassing definition would be inconsistent with this approach, Mr. Speaker. In Nova Scotia, we have Violence in the Workplace Regulations in place that require specific workplaces to conduct violence assessments and implementation and a plan to address hazards identified by workers. The proposed amendments do not consider the availability of other existing legislation, and I would like to table the Human Rights Act that we have here in Nova Scotia; that addresses much of workplace safety.

Mr. Speaker, we're talking about adults in their workplace. I think we have to address attitudes and behaviours that are formed in the formative years, that's between the ages of zero and eight. We know that attitudes and stereotypes are well established from the time of birth to the age of eight, also known as the early years. That's why it's really important that provinces like Nova Scotia put in a pre-Primary program, because you have early childhood educators who are well trained to help children develop strong communication skills, which also include listening skills.

They provide opportunities in these pre-Primary programs for children to learn how to make good choices socially. They also need to learn what appropriate choices are. Not all know you have good choice and bad choice, but also what's appropriate, socially

appropriate - like bullying, like harassment. They learn these skills at a very young age, Mr. Speaker.

We all know - and I'm sure any of you who have been in the education system or are even talking to people - how many children go home from school saying so-and-so did such-and-such, and the parent says, what else did they do? They hit me. Then hit them back next time. What are we teaching children at a very young age? How many parents have cured their children's biting, a toddler's biting, by biting them back?

We have to look at the way we model behaviour at the early years and extend it through to the school years. Building resilience is so important. If you look at children today, they are not as resilient as when we grew up. I am not saying that you take harassment and bullying and absorb it and internalize it. What I am saying is teaching children how to bounce back from a bad situation or a negative situation, and how they move forward in their life and use their mistakes or the mistakes of others as learning experience. We need to build resilience in our workforce, as well, and that's all part of - should be part of - workplace policies for health and safety, Mr. Speaker.

Our public education system needs to really help children understand that there are harassment policies. There is a Human Rights Commission in their province that helps to protect them from situations like that.

Last week at Public Accounts Committee we were fortunate to have the Public Service Commissioner, and I had the opportunity to ask questions about harassment and bullying. I was really pleased to hear that they do have policy, but they are looking at tightening it up and expanding it and being a role model for workers and employers in Nova Scotia. I'd like to table some of the information they have available for their staff on their website. They do stress that psychological health is as important as physical health in the workplace.

Everybody has a role to play - the employer and the employees - to make sure the workplace is healthy and safe. We need to create respectful work spaces. I am a little concerned that this bill does not address consequences for people who harass or bully in the workplace. I often think that when there is a problem you need to be part of the solution. I would like to have heard some work on how we address this situation when it does arise in the workplace because we can't change everyone's attitudes and we can't change everyone's behaviour. We can train them, we can educate them.

We've seen how things like drinking and driving has changed, we've seen how smoking has changed, through education. It works sometimes and sometimes it doesn't work.

What are we going to do for people who are in the workplace? Are we providing enough training? Is there a requirement that if there is a complaint about your behaviour in

the workplace there is a training program that you must take, like sensitivity training? I know the Public Service has many programs that are part of their professional development and people can take part in.

There are restorative approaches, and this is where the communication skills you learned from the preschool years - listening to people, being able to articulate and verbalize your concerns and also being able to speak directly to the perpetrator, Mr. Speaker.

There is mediation and sometimes that's another positive way of dealing with harassment and bullying. Sometimes it may have to be dismissal of somebody's services in the workplace. So, we need to be aware of many ways in which harassment and bullying take place in the everyday lives of people and be open to listening. Employers have to acknowledge that it's going on.

I'd like to emphasize again, Mr. Speaker, that safety in the workplace is of concern and should be of concern to everyone, and both the physical and mental well-being of workers needs to be at the forefront of all workplaces here in Nova Scotia. We know workers can be impacted mentally and physically when they are at work, and it's important to look beyond just the physical aspects of bullying and harassment. We do, however, recognize the good work that is already being taken here in Nova Scotia with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, and we want to ensure that workers are protected from all types of harm.

[4:15 p.m.]

We also want to ensure that any changes to legislation meet both the employers' and employees' needs, and that is why they engage with stakeholders on this issue. The Public Service Commission and the Human Rights Commission are also both working on stakeholder meetings to tighten up their policies and their legislation.

The Human Rights Commission has been doing jurisdictional studies around Canada, seeing what policies are being implemented in different provinces and seeing which ones would really work into Nova Scotia's; learning from what has worked and hasn't worked in other jurisdictions will help us to create our policies.

We have also engaged the ministers of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women and Labour and Advanced Education in this area. We will continue to actively seek out consultation and take steps to move forward to make all our workplaces here in Nova Scotia healthy and happy environments.

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

BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to stand up and speak to Bill No. 176, the amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

First, I'd like to say that I think every Nova Scotian, every person everywhere, deserves a workplace that is safe from violence; they should be safe from bullying, cyberbullying, intimidation, and harassment.

To speak to the intent of the specific amendment that adds bullying and psychological harassment to provide additional protections in the workplace, what I do like about this amendment is the comprehensive definition of violence: what encompasses violence in the workplace, specific examples of violence, and what is deemed as unacceptable in the workplace that could potentially impact the mental health of employees in Nova Scotia. As I have said, the definition of violence is precise and well articulated, which I think is important.

That being said, one term that really caught my eye when reviewing a lot of the literature surrounding this issue last night, is the term psychological harassment and just the lack of clarity of an operational definition of this term in the workplace, just having a background in mental health myself as a mental health professional.

Some of the current literature, which I would be happy to share with my colleagues, often shows common themes within the workplace; within psychological harassment, for example, it can be a repeated offence, it's unwanted, it can impact the dignity of the employees or the physical or psychological integrity and can create a harmful working environment.

I think an accurate definition of the terms put forth in this amendment would go a long way in effecting change in the workplace and effective reinforcement of policies surrounding this issue.

It is difficult, especially with psychological harassment, to identify what is psychological harassment; what is being rude, and what is something that should be investigated formally. There is often a grey area, I think, that takes expertise from people knowledgeable in that field to determine whether it is or is not unacceptable behaviour in the workplace.

One thing I thought might be something to think about moving forward with an amendment such as this is enabling the employer to conduct a comprehensive assessment of current risks for harassment, especially psychological harassment, in the workplace - and for bullying, for that matter. For example, when can an employee refuse to work due to harassment? When should a mediator be used? Those sorts of formal procedures.

Some jurisdictions think that a zero-tolerance policy may be something worth considering, which is difficult because there has to be an issue of discipline coupled with the work performance of the employee, which needs to be at an acceptable level as well.

I do think that as initiatives in Canada and around the world continue to decrease stigma surrounding mental illness, we're going to see more and more workplace issues relating to psychological abuse, psychological harassment, things of that nature. I do think the legislation does need to be modernized, in that respect. It's outdated. I think it's too vague, to be honest. Like I said, we need specific definitions in order to effectively change current practices.

There needs to also be clear communication of what services are available to those who have been impacted by psychological harassment: bullying, cyberbullying, those sorts of things. For example, last night I was reviewing the Respectful Workplace Policy for Nova Scotia government employees. Primarily, that emphasizes mediation for almost all disputes. That's good in certain situations, but if it's not warranted, it's not really going to be effective in effectively resolving the dispute.

Some other jurisdictions are actually implementing bystander training to teach your colleagues what to watch out for, how to advocate on your behalf, potentially how to communicate to you that that is inappropriate behaviour, that it is unacceptable and is a formal issue that has to be investigated.

One thing I find kind of confusing about the current legislation is that violence needs to include harassment, and then you can get an internal investigator for your issue. That's a lot of terminology, which would be highly open to interpretation, which wouldn't be effective, necessarily, at alleviating the problem.

Having worked with many people with various mental health issues, personally, I can say one thing for certain: mental health doesn't discriminate. It's very fluid. It's constantly changing. It can be impacted from one day to the next. I think a lot of times, especially in professional working environments where we work with the public, this can be impacted by life stressors and can change quite quickly from day to day.

Often people deal with their own mental health very quietly because they're afraid to seek help and come forth, like I said, due to stigma in the workplace, especially those individuals living with depression, anxiety, social phobias, those sorts of things. If they're already living with those sorts of issues as it is, it's going to be increasingly difficult for them to come forward and convey their concerns to their employer with the hope of resolving the issues.

Like I said, I think the Act does need some modernization. I think it needs some specification in regard to its terminology. These operational definitions should be guided by evidence-based resources so that they're concrete and quantifiable in the event that you want to actually implement meaningful change in this policy development.

Personally, the Mental Health Commission of Canada, the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews - just for a couple of examples - they're excellent resources for those looking for up-to-date, current best practices in mental health in general.

I also think it's important to have consultation with reputable stakeholders in Nova Scotia and to thoroughly understand what's currently being done in the workplace to alleviate psychological harassment, cyberbullying, bullying, and things of that nature. Until you have an accurate understanding of what is being done currently, I think it is kind of hard to implement effective and meaningful change.

I just want to reiterate that mental health impacts everyone. One of my colleagues in Cape Breton, a well-respected clinician, often says to patients that mental health doesn't discriminate, despite age, occupation, et cetera, so it's quite important.

I think people forget that people with optimal mental health actually increase productivity in the workplace, contributing to a more efficient economy and a more vibrant economy. They have less sick days at work, for example, and are less likely to schedule off work due to fear, intimidation, and things of that nature. I think what will make it a priority is a strong, sustained commitment to improving mental health and constantly reviewing the implementation of our evidence-based interventions and also becoming aware of what's being done in other jurisdictions.

There also has to be a balance between employees receiving criticism, constructive criticism, as long as it's not in the form of bullying, in order to have appropriate job performance. I think it's okay to have a vigorous debate as long as it is professional, respectful, and it's not a form of intimidation in the workplace.

As I said, there has to be a lot of consultation, I think, from workers and employers. There needs to be a lot of consultation from experts in this field who can sit down and explain what the best practices currently are to alleviate this issue. I think it's very important to all those in Nova Scotia.

I do think the intent of this is great, and I think it just needs some work in the form of definitions and clarification based on research and evidence. I think it's something we could work on moving forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I am pleased to rise and speak to this bill. I guess I'll start by saying that it is very curious to me to see in this Chamber the resistance to this bill. This is a Chamber where just the last time we were here we talked at great length, led by the Leader of the Official Opposition, about workplace bullying and harassment. Yet we here in Nova Scotia are the only jurisdiction in Canada - the only jurisdiction in Canada - that has neither introduced nor publicly announced any intention of introducing legislation to

include bullying and psychological injury as a cause of workplace harm under the occupational health and safety laws.

I sat here for the last half-hour and I've listened to my colleagues talk about bullying and about definitions of bullying, but steadfastly decline to acknowledge that this is something that should be included in our Occupational Health and Safety Act, and it is curious to me.

Our current bill does not just ignore the issue of workplace bullying, it explicitly omits that as a cause under the bill. We are not just saying we haven't thought about bullying. We are saying if you are experiencing harassment or bullying or psychological injury at work that you are out of luck. This is what we think is a very common-sense issue that we are trying to fix and, again, I will say that I am mystified by the fact that no other Party in this Chamber seems to share that view.

The Workplace Bullying Institute describes bullying as a perpetrator's need to control the targeted individuals with harmful consequences for the targeted person.

[4:30 p.m.]

I agree with my colleague that we need to be clear about definitions, so here, Madam Speaker, is what bullying and harassing behaviour is not. It is not expressing differences of opinion; it is not offering constructive feedback, guidance, or advice about work-related behaviour; and it's not reasonable management of a worker by an employer. What we're talking about here is aggression. Aggression can be obvious, and it can be subtle. There is no checklist, but I suspect if I were permitted to ask for a show of hands of people in this Chamber who have experienced some kind of aggression focused on them at work that has made their workplace difficult or intolerable, I would see many hands because it exists in workplaces across the province, and we know this.

Some examples of what we are discussing as bullying, for clarity of definitions, would be spreading malicious rumours, gossip, or innuendo; excluding or isolating someone socially, and this is over a prolonged period of time such that their workplace becomes intolerable; intimidation; deliberate undermining; physically abusing or threatening abuse; removing areas of responsibility without cause; changing work guidelines; withholding information; giving the wrong information such that someone is unable to complete their job; making jokes that are obviously offensive and that put a person at risk of psychological harm; pestering; spying; stalking; yelling; using profanity; and constant criticism.

It's what we all do every day, Madam Speaker, in this House, but we have rules; we have rules that govern it. When we fall afoul of those rules in this House, we have a system that we can avail ourselves of - imperfect as it is - so we can try and resolve disputes.

That system in the larger workforce is the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and yet workplace bullying, and harassment, is explicitly excluded from that Act.

Psychological harassment in the workplace is an occupational health and safety hazard. People experiencing workplace bullying often deal with serious consequences for both their mental and physical health. They have an increased sense of vulnerability, they often have an inability to sleep, they feel panic or anxiety, in some severe cases, post-traumatic stress, which leads to family discord, and it certainly leads to low morale and productivity.

I think that the member opposite spoke about balancing the needs of employees and employers. Madam Speaker, it is not to the advantage of any employer to have a dysfunctional workplace. We're not talking about employers per se as the perpetrators. We're talking about an overall system that people in the workplace can avail themselves of. In that workplace, that bullying, as I said, has consequences. Psychological harassment at work can and does undermine the health of an entire organization.

If you look at the large surveys of workplaces - we have seen them in our own Public Service, we have seen them in municipal public service - where those places that get a failing grade are in things like increased absenteeism, increased turnover, increased stress, increased use of employee assistance programs. Many of those things can be traced back to some kind of psychological harassment or bullying, people not being able to perform their job properly. It can lead to decreased productivity and motivation, decreased morale. Certainly, it does not reflect well on an organization to see that kind of flagging morale and challenges. It could be poor customer service in the service industry.

We know that workplace bullying is happening at an alarming rate. One of my colleagues mentioned that we need to look at the evidence. This issue came to us from people who had experienced this first-hand and also from Equity Watch, which works specifically on these issues. The Canadian Safety Council of Canada reports that in the workplace one in six people have been bullied, and one in five have witnessed a co-worker being bullied. A 2018 study from Statistics Canada found that almost one in five women had been harassed at work at some point during the year, while one in eight men reported similar experiences.

Verbal abuse was experienced most often, with 13 per cent of women and 10 per cent of men reporting it in the prior 12 months. Next most prevalent was humiliating behaviour, reported by 6 per cent of women and 5 per cent of men. I'm just going to repeat that, Madam Speaker - 13 per cent of women in the workplace and 10 per cent of men reported that they had experienced verbal abuse in the past 12 months.

The member opposite talked about how we educate our children - and I'll come back to that point - but the fact of the matter is we can't know what happens in everyone's homes and we can't know what circumstances everyone is battling with at their homes.

What we can do is protect people from abuse and harassment in the places where they work. That's what this legislation is intended to do.

Women were found to suffer physical violence at twice the rate of men and were five times as likely to report sexual harassment or unwanted sexual attention. This last point echoes prior research. For women, being young, single, or unmarried was found to add to this vulnerability.

Researchers suggest that these characteristics may be proxies for less seniority at work and poor job quality, factors that may increase the likelihood of experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace to the extent that they imply low organizational power.

Again, if I were permitted to canvass the women in this Chamber about the experiences they had, certainly starting out in their career, I don't think I'd be going so far as to say that at least some of us would agree that we experienced many of these things. We, as ambitious, professionally oriented women, we powered through, but is that what we expect young women in the workforce to do?

We know that in many professions, young women are over-represented at the bottom and they are under-represented at the top. I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that the lack of protections like these - real protections, protections with teeth - are one of the reasons why that happens. I know that in the profession I came from - law - that is absolutely true. I don't have the statistics but more than 50 per cent of the people graduating from law school are women. I suspect that that ratio holds true through the articling years, but partnerships are male - with some exceptions.

I think it's changing, but it looks nothing like the people who are graduating, and that is because there are many organizations and workplaces and professions that are still fundamentally hostile and adversarial in their makeup and there are not adequate protections for people who find themselves in those jobs.

To that point, the member opposite raised the idea of restorative approaches and being open to listening. Quite frankly, in situations where you have extreme power imbalances, where women are battling in patriarchal systems, when they are experiencing harassment and abuse - not just women, but I'm using women as an example here - it is a relatively established fact that those restorative approaches do not work.

They do not work because they work when two parties can come to the table on relatively equal footing. I'm a huge fan of restorative justice. I support the work that the province has done in restorative justice. I think it's really important, but it doesn't always work, Madam Speaker.

Back to the idea about how we teach our children, what kind of society we want to create. Of course, we want to teach our children to be sensitive and caring and

compassionate and collaborative, and education plays a role. But do you know what else does? Law. Law plays a role. It plays a role in what we expect of people all the way through and, in particular, what we expect of adults.

I am quite an idealistic, utopian person, and I hope that we find a time when we all regard each other in a different way, when our communities are strengthened, and when we can all be kind, understanding, and clear with each other - but until that time, we have rules and we have laws. Children have rules in school, grown ups have rules in their workplaces, and those are the things that help us police our behaviour. Those are exactly the kind of things that we are proposing in this piece of legislation.

Workplace bullying has been recognized as a global problem. The International Labour Organization recently passed a convention recognizing that harassment and violence on the job is incompatible with decent work.

Canada is a signatory to this convention and our country's delegation was instrumental in drafting it. All member states have a responsibility to promote a general environment of zero tolerance when it comes to workplace harassment and bullying.

I hope, although I am somewhat skeptical after hearing the remarks of my colleagues, that all members of this House will agree with me and with the International Labour Organization that bullying and harassment at work are unacceptable. If we can agree on that, we need to ensure that our laws reflect our zero tolerance attitude on this issue.

Passing this bill would protect all workers in Nova Scotia from bullying in the workplace and would give them the right to refuse work in an unsafe environment. This point, Madam Speaker, is key to the point that people can avail themselves of the Human Rights Commission and other tribunals. That may be. It is slow, it is painful, it is tedious, and it is rarely satisfying at the end. But they may not refuse work in an unsafe environment. That is because the Occupational Health and Safety Act is specifically designed to govern what happens at work.

This bill would require employers to take concrete steps to prevent harassment and bullying; it would make looking the other way when an employee is being harassed illegal. This is the standard in every other jurisdiction in Canada, and it is high time we adopted it here.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: Thank you to my colleagues for their remarks. I'm going to speak to this just briefly, based on a constituency experience.

I was approached by a group of constituents, all of them actually, were women, and all of them have had separate experiences in workplaces - that had led to them eventually leaving those workplaces - that certainly they would describe as bullying.

Those experiences were varied. They were looking for help, they were looking for remedy and also, while some of them had been through the Human Rights Commission in some fashion or other with various results, I think, really, they were looking for healing.

It strikes me that this proposal from our caucus, which is not unprecedented by any stretch, actually creates a possibility for not just healing but for prevention, because that is the fundamental basis of occupational health and safety - it is the fundamental approach in the Occupational Health and Safety Act. It is the function of occupational health and safety committees. How much better to prevent bullying and harassment and psychological injury than it is to remedy it after the fact.

[4:45 p.m.]

That is why I think, as the leaders of this province we - I beg all my fellow members, the members of the Official Opposition and the members of the government, to really consider this. We have structures that exist already. Where there is a workplace where there are more than 20 employees, an Occupational Health and Safety Committee must be in place.

I've had some limited experience in workplaces with Occupational Health and Safety Committees and, frankly, I think it varies according to the sector, but in some cases those committee meetings can be pretty dry. Like, how many times can you inspect the expiry date on the fire extinguishers and go over a workplace for tripping hazards? That is clearly not the case in construction and in many manufacturing workplaces, but given that every workplace with more than 20 employees has to have an Occupational Health and Safety Committee, why not put it to work with something that is juicy and meaningful and where we know there is an unmet need in our province?

The Occupational Health and Safety Committees are already constructed to redress some of the issues which we know are contributing to individuals' experiences of bullying and psychological injury in the workplace. For example, the committees are struck with an equal - it cannot have a majority of managers, for example. There will be a representative who is chosen by the people that individual represents, a health and safety representative.

There are a number of things - I think even by inviting the conversation into our workplaces and allowing that conversation to expand to this super-important dimension of how we treat each other, how we are ensuring that none of our colleagues is being injured by mistreatment in the workplace. Inviting that conversation is, in itself, preventive. That is dramatically different from saying, you can call the Human Rights Commission.

Frankly, by the time any one of us advises a constituent who calls, maybe you should call the Human Rights Commission, we already know that the chances of that person getting to thrive and be productive in their workplace is very unlikely. We know that if that person has that experience and that is the only remedy they have, then chances are that whoever replaces them will encounter the same dynamic. To me that seems wholly inadequate and certainly very far from the sort of ambition that we should have for Nova Scotians.

When I think about some of the experiences that we have heard coming out when there are Human Rights Commission cases that are decided and the story involves a litany of experiences of discrimination and intimidation and harassment, those are stories and cases of victimhood that make me feel - personal shame would be too great - but we should be better than that, as a province, and where we have the ability to create a mechanism that might actually prevent that and address it so that we are not hearing a story of 15 years or 10 years or even 2 years of experience of persecution in a workplace, I think we really should be considering doing just that. Because we would not be the first jurisdiction to do that, there are so many resources available online, there are processes, there are fact sheets, there is legislation, and having looked across other jurisdictions, that is what we in the NDP caucus have offered to this House today.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Madam Speaker, that concludes Opposition Members' Business for today. I will turn it over to the Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Madam Speaker, that concludes the government's business as well.

I move that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow, Thursday, October 17th, between the hours of 1 p.m. and 11:59 p.m. Following the daily routine and Question Period, business will include second reading on Bill Nos. 197, 201, and 203; third reading on Bill Nos. 152, 160, 163, 166, and 170; and Committee of the Whole House on Bills on Bill Nos. 169, 175, 177, 180, 187, 189, 191, 192, and 193. We will also have one of our new members participate in Address in Reply that does it for tomorrow, we hope.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to adjourn to meet tomorrow, Thursday, October 17th, between the hours of 1 p.m. and 11:59 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

We have now reached the moment of interruption. The topic was submitted by the Leader of the New Democratic Party:

“Therefore be it resolved that the Liberal Government has profoundly disrespected the people of Pictou Landing First Nation, mill workers, forestry workers, fishers, tourism operators, and others by its negligent handling of the situation at Northern Pulp, and its failure to affirm the January 31, 2020, deadline for Boat Harbour will be honoured.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

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

GOV'T. (N.S.) - DEADLINE FOR BOAT HARBOUR: FAILURE TO AFFIRM - PROFOUND DISRESPECT

GARY BURRILL: Madam Speaker, I want to begin by doing what has not always been done by all others on this subject and that is to just state unequivocally and clearly our position, which is that the Boat Harbour Act must be honoured and the flow of effluent into Boat Harbour must be ceased after January 31, 2020. That's one.

Two is that the government's negligent and irresponsible handling of the entire question of Northern Pulp has placed thousands of people in Nova Scotia today, particularly on the northern mainland - particularly in Pictou County - in the grip of a terrible vise of anxiety. The hundreds of employees at the mill, and those who do contract work there, are in the vise of a highly uncertain future. So are those whose living is dependent on other mills across the province, where the business model is deeply tied into the market for residuals at Northern Pulp.

So are all the contractors, many of whom have worked now for an extended period with worn-out gear, spending more time at welding than harvesting because the situation has been too uncertain to justify the longer-term investment in new harvesting equipment. So are all the truckers, whose situation is not greatly different.

So are all the communities from Pictou to Greenfield, Elmsdale and Enfield to Middle Musquodoboit, and many others, where the spectre of their mills going down is of a scale like that of “Black Friday” in 1967 in Cape Breton. So are all the communities that continue to live with division about this issue.

So is the community of Pictou Landing, where the government's refusal to reaffirm unequivocally that pulp effluent will not flow into Boat Harbour after January 31st, has fuelled fears that the covenant made with the government in 2015 on this subject is a covenant that, like so many others, will not be honoured.

Why? How could this anxious, dark vise into which so many have been pressured - how could this have happened? It has happened, first, because of the malevolence of

Northern Pulp, who - after years of having been chisel-ly business partners with suppliers, mills, and contractors - have capped off a half-century of undermining public confidence by not even submitting a completed plan for an effluent treatment alternative to Boat Harbour until four months before the deadline of the Boat Harbour Act itself.

But more than this, this situation has developed because of the incompetent negligence of the Liberal Government of Nova Scotia. It was always simply incompetent to require only a Class 1 environmental assessment of the effluent project at Northern Pulp, both because the volume of scientific, engineering, and technical information the project entails is beyond the scope of such assessments and also because the curtailed scope of a Class 1 assessment, unlike a Class 2 or a federal assessment, never had the capacity to begin with to supply the public confidence, which is, after all, the purpose of such assessments.

Even beyond this, it was incompetent to the point of negligence to have allowed the company to squander all the time that was available to bring forward a proposal from the Boat Harbour Act 2015 passage and not to exercise the leadership that people reasonably expect of their government to insist that the company bring forward a proposal in a way that would be timely enough that could have allowed for both a comprehensive public scrutiny and for faithfulness to the deadline in the Act.

Over and over we have said to the government that time is passing, what are you doing to make sure that the five-year time frame of the Act is being used effectively towards a viable solution? Time and time again, what we have received in response has been a shrug, a passing off of responsibility, a no, not us, we just wait to receive what we receive, et cetera, and so on. The result is the vise we are in today with a focus report in the process of receiving public comment, three and a half months from the Boat Harbour deadline which calls for a project in that focus report requiring 21 months construction.

Naturally, the people of our province look to their government to square this circle. Journalists ask, demonstrators ask, and we in the NDP here ask: Will the Premier reaffirm his commitment that no effluent will go into Boat Harbour after the deadline? The answers that have been received are all of the character of a shrug, a what's your problem, and evasion.

The Premier speaks about the commitment to Boat Harbour but avoids mentioning a date; that is an evasion. Or he says that these are questions that belong not with the government but with the regulator; that's a shrug. Or he says, what's the issue, there's an Act on the books, no other Act is coming before the House, as though we were in some place other than a few minutes before 12:00 midnight on this matter, as though there were nothing in the situation that should reasonably cause anyone alarm or worry; that's a brush-off.

It is also profoundly disrespectful in its failure to even acknowledge the reality of the vise that thousands of people in Nova Scotia are in today about this question, as though to say oh, come on now people, never mind that the company has a 21-month project in a three-and-a-half-month window and most of those three and a half months are going to be taken up with a hyper-intensified, last-minute assessment process - never mind that, what's your problem?

Our problem is people's living and its extraordinary importance and the fact that everything regarding it deserves the best a government can bring forward - not a shrug, not an evasion, not a brush-off. Our problem is that we share the deep concern of the 300 people who marched in the walk of concern and hope in Pictou Landing less than two weeks ago, who are deeply worried that the government is failing to demonstrate the kind of character that provides confident assurance that the covenant of the Boat Harbour Act is going to be honoured.

If there is one thing that is certain in this vise-filled Northern Pulp debacle, it is that none of the corporate/government negligence and corporate/government incompetence that permeates this whole story going back a long time is the fault of anyone in Pictou Landing.

I was moved a couple of weeks ago at the FIN Atlantic International Film Festival screening of a documentary on environmental racism in Nova Scotia called *There's Something in the Water* by the testimony of Michelle Francis-Denny about the sorrow Boat Harbour has meant in her family and her community over the last five decades. She said this: Everybody's got to believe in something; I believe in January 31, 2020. I'll say, absolutely. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[5:00 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I thank the member for his speech. I want to start out by talking about respect, because I'm a little confused. I want to talk about fearmongering and bills. I don't see any bill before this Legislature that is contrary to the bill that was put forward five years ago.

If we want to talk about facts, we can talk about how, under the NDP, they bought land at \$300 an acre, and then they turned around and sold it to Northern Pulp at \$172.63 an acre - a gift of \$7 million. I wonder where the member opposite was and what he stood for when his government that he was a huge part of gave this gift to Northern Pulp. No government has given more to Northern Pulp - and it's factual, it's on the record - no government has ever given more to Northern Pulp than the former NDP Government.

We talk about profound disrespect. Let's just take a few years here, 2000 to 2013. Where was the respect when the members and individuals of the Pictou Landing First

Nation begged former governments - PC and NDP - to do something, do anything. Throw us a lifeline, prove to us that we matter. Crickets.

We have three members opposite who represent the community of Pictou. We'll hear from one of them tonight. Yet, it's ironic to me that we're having this debate and it's the member for Halifax Chebucto who is bringing this topic up. Where's the passion? Where's the fight?

We want to talk about respect? Let's talk about the dozens and dozens and dozens of times that members and the Premier and Cabinet Ministers have met with Chief Andrea Paul, have had discussions with Pictou Landing First Nation. The former Environment Minister went down and stood in Pictou with one of the members from Pictou and the current MP and had discussions with the fishers. Can we say anyone else in this room has done that?

It was an open forum where they took questions and concerns. I can count probably hundreds of times we have had discussions - individuals, as a caucus, and I'm sure all of you have - with the forest industry, with foresters, with members from our community and members from your community. That's real consultation. That's respect.

This is the first government in the history with Northern Pulp - and you can't deny it - that has ever put anything in legislation. The day that happened, the community of Pictou and Pictou Landing First Nation were given hope that they were finally being heard. What we're hearing today is, wait a second, we don't know, but maybe, it could be - it might not happen. That, to me, is disrespectful. It's disrespectful to pretend, to insinuate, to act like you know something is going to happen with no evidence at all. I'm going to give you evidence on how we have reacted.

I'm passionate about this because I have stood in this Legislature, and I have been taunted by members across the floor about an environmental issue in my community that they said will never happen, nothing's going to happen, no cleanup: Harrietsfield and the C&D site in Harrietsfield. Members opposite have taunted me when I stood up and gave passionate speeches about that community and the individuals there.

Well, Madam Speaker, August 2020 - clean. Done. Remediated. They're on-site right now cleaning it up. They're on site right now, after decades of the NDP and the Progressive Conservative governments turning a blind eye to that community. The only time their eyes opened up was during an election when they thought, you know what, we got 'em. We'll use it as a wedge.

I want to thank them for using it as a wedge. I want to encourage them to continue, it's great. It inspires us. It inspired me. It made me go to Ottawa and fight harder. It made me go across the street. It made me talk to the ministers. It made me fight harder. Not a single peep from the two former governments.

Let's talk about the *MV Miner*. Let's talk about the cost of the *MV Miner*. Let's talk about the impact the *MV Miner* had. I'm trying to remember the year that that happened. (Interruptions.) It was 2011 is when the *MV Miner* hit the shores in Sydney, Cape Breton. Crickets - nobody came to their rescue. We had a Progressive Conservative federal government in a majority position. We had a majority NDP government. Crickets. Nothing.

With 38,200 kilograms of asbestos, 26,675 litres of petroleum product, and 35,000 kilograms of floatables - I don't even want to know what that is - sitting on a designated wilderness site, you'd think they would've come to the rescue. They would've come crawling, they would've come screaming, they would've pulled their MPs, they would have fought with the current government of the day to ensure that that got cleaned up. Nothing.

So, for the member opposite to insinuate that we are going to break our promise to the Pictou Landing First Nation, to Chief Andrea Paul (Interruption) If the member for Cape Breton Centre wants to stand up and talk about this, maybe she should. Maybe she should. The *MV Miner* wasn't in my backyard. It was in yours. Didn't hear a peep. (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order. The member for Halifax Atlantic has the floor.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: If we want to talk about our record on the environment, it's pretty clear. In fact, I recall recently reading a book on the mill, aptly called *The Mill*. It's a sad history of pretend promises, of wool over your eyes - elect me, look what I will do.

We put it in legislation. We talked to Pictou Landing First Nation. We talked to Chief Andrea Paul. I was going to come up here with news articles - you've all got Google. Take a moment and Google. We have to respect our forest industry, one of the biggest industries we have, that for me is impactful but for most of you sitting around there from rural Nova Scotia has a huge impact on all of you. We have to respect our fishers - as someone who comes from a fishing community - we have to make sure our water is clean. But all I hear now is that it's not going to happen, it's fearmongering.

Well, look back at the *MV Miner*. Look back at Harrietsfield. The NDP had their chance and they failed. The PCs are sitting on the fence. We committed to Boat Harbour, and it's going to get clean. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: Madam Speaker, this is obviously a file that's very stressful for a lot of people. There are a lot of sleepless nights across this province right now over this file, and that includes people who work in the fishing industry, people who are foresters,

work for mills, community members - people are very, very stressed out about where this file is going to go.

They come at it from their own perspectives but, nonetheless, we need to respect the fact that this is creating a lot of stress. And so, for that reason, I am happy my colleague brought this to the debate floor tonight. It's interesting that those who lecture upon the subject of respect often don't possess it and I think we have just seen a good exhibit for that tonight.

The motion reads that the way that the Liberal government has handled this, ". . . has profoundly disrespected the people of Pictou Landing First Nation, mill workers, foresters, fishers, tourism operators, and others . . ." The way that this file has been handled has been disrespectful to most Nova Scotians. From the very onset, there was just a culture of disrespect from this government towards the people impacted by this bill, and the way that the file has been handled at every step along the way, it is negligence. So I do agree with the member's assessments on that.

If we are interested in a little history lesson, I think the members who were in this Chamber at the time that the Boat Harbour Act was tabled and ultimately passed unanimously by this House - there were some observations made, some constructive feedback, some amendments were put forward to that bill at the time. The most significant amendment that was proposed to this Legislature, that was ignored and dismissed out of hand, is an amendment that would have avoided much of this stress.

It was an amendment to amend the Boat Harbour Act to include a timeline that would have included a timeline at every opportunity so that Nova Scotians could assess the progress towards the goal - the admirable goal - of the closure of Boat Harbour. Most Nova Scotians support that goal. I certainly support that goal and I know that most of the people of my community support that goal.

By the way, I would be the member in this Chamber - you could probably go back 30 or 40 years of members in this Chamber, you could go back to the beginning of Boat Harbour and you would be hard pressed to find a member that sat in this Legislature who has been closer to Boat Harbour than myself. I live minutes from Boat Harbour and I intimately understand Boat Harbour and its impacts on the community.

The bill could have included a timeline, but at the time the minister who introduced the bill made a comment. On April 21, 2015, the minister said:

"With regard to this legislation, we could talk about adding more to the bill . . . and putting in a time frame and deliverables. My fear if we do that is that if we start putting goals . . . if any of those are not met, then we don't get to the ultimate goal which we all want . . ."

Well, Madam Speaker, that prediction came true. By not putting in timelines, by not allowing the people to assess progress, by not even being concerned enough to assess progress as a government - which they weren't - then we are where we are.

I am the member who said a long time ago - I don't know, maybe two years ago - that a Class 1 was not enough. I wrote to the minister - I think there have been three Ministers of the Environment on this file - and I wrote to the minister of the day saying a Class 1 is not enough.

The job of government is simple. The job of government is to receive an application, to scrutinize that application, to give the public comfort and confidence that the proposed project, whatever it may be, meets the standards of the province. A Class 1 assessment was never going to give the public confidence that the job has been done by government to properly scrutinize. It's not going to happen.

[5:15 p.m.]

We can talk about the conflicts that this government is in. Now as we sit here today, the current Minister of Environment - a newly promoted minister, after disassembling the Public Accounts Committee - got a promotion. He did the bidding of the Premier on that and got rid of the Public Accounts Committee. He is now seated two seats away from the Premier. That is the person who is the independent regulator of the process that's before the government. That's a little bit hard for most Nova Scotians to swallow because this government was negligent at every step of the way, starting with the timeline, starting by not putting the appropriate level of scrutiny into the process.

Nobody trusts this government. You might find 27 Nova Scotians who trust this government. They're all sitting there patting themselves on the back. This is a file that has been negligently handled from the beginning. What Nova Scotian should believe that the handling of the process going forward will be any different? Sometimes history is an indication of the future. Nobody should take confidence in the way that this file has been handled. Nobody should feel respected by this government on the handling of this file. Everyone is a loser in this file.

The minister - that's the opposite of a Freudian slip. Sometimes Freudian slips come true. This one won't. The member made a comment that there is no bill before the House, and that is true as we sit here today. The member and many people impacted by this, those of us who sincerely care about the outcome here, we read with interest the Premier's editorial where the Premier talked about this situation and talked about the admirable goal of closing Boat Harbour. He did neglect one fact that was noticed by every reader of that editorial, and that is that he didn't put the date in there.

I think it's fair for people to be concerned. When you have something as stressful as this situation, it is very, very fair for Nova Scotians to read every word that's written

very carefully and to make note of those words that are not written. That was a very significant omission and that is something that is amping up the stress level. In terms of the deadline, the question of extend or not extend, that's a simple question that gets asked, but it's a complex question.

For two years, I heard Northern Pulp say, trust the science. When they finally submitted their application, the feedback was that the science wasn't there. That is something that gives me concern around the focus report. It's up to Northern Pulp to earn the right to operate in this province. That is on Northern Pulp. I do agree with the Premier's words around that. I feel that extensions are to be earned, not given.

The member can talk about the *MV Miner* and Harrietsfield and various issues, but you can't sprinkle the word respect in the same speech. We're here to talk about a certain issue that he doesn't want to talk about. He doesn't know where his Premier is going to go with this situation either because he probably read the editorial that we read where the Premier left out those words.

The public consultation period is open, and I do encourage all Nova Scotians to put their feedback on record on the submission to the focus report because the issue is much bigger than the members in this Chamber. The issue is the one that is keeping foresters, fishers, millworkers, and community members - that is keeping all those Nova Scotians awake. Those are the people who need to be respected by this process. I wish this government would put down a process.

THE SPEAKER: I wish to thank all members who participated in the adjournment debate this evening.

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

[The House rose at 5:20 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1343**

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the first ever Eventide Art at Night festival took place in Liverpool between 7:00 p.m. and 12:00 midnight on September 14, 2019; and

Whereas and the organizers and participants worked together to provide an enjoyable evening to explore the work of many talented artists from Queens County in such a unique and interesting way; and

Whereas residents and visitors were treated to an amazing display of art with the downtown and waterfront lit up with displays featuring art and culture in all different media;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Stacy Smart Chandler and the other organizers, participants, sponsors, and volunteers who put together an impressive display of art in the Eventide Art at Night festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1344

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the Liverpool Curling Club has had a busy summer renovating and undertaking urgent repairs to their building; and

Whereas a beautiful new metal roof was installed, and also the ceiling was replaced in the Club House; and

Whereas it is so refreshing to see the energy and enthusiasm this group has to main its assets and grow the love of the sport of curling;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Liverpool Curling Club and everyone who has contributed to their fundraising and ongoing efforts to preserve and grow curling for the enjoyment and health benefits it provides.

RESOLUTION NO. 1345

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas this summer the Medway Head Lighthouse Society from Port Medway have again opened their lighthouse to visitors, far exceeding last year's total number; and

Whereas this year the lighthouse was open for an extra 18 days and received around 450 more visitors, with a total of 1,035; and

Whereas the dedicated volunteers get a lot of pleasure from interacting with visitors from all over the world, seeing faces light up as they are able to actually go inside and climb to the top;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Medway Head Lighthouse Society on their hard work with fundraising, renovation work, and time devoted to the lighthouse visitors.

RESOLUTION NO. 1346

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the Liverpool Privateers Junior B hockey team submitted a bid to host the Don Johnson Memorial Cup during the last week of April 2021; and

Whereas the competition features four championship teams - from Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick - plus the host club, competing in three games per day until the semi-finals and final on Sunday, May 2; and

Whereas their bid was successful;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate everyone involved in putting together the bid to host this prestigious event, providing the opportunity for many Junior B hockey players in Atlantic Canada to fulfill their dreams of playing in the Don Johnson Memorial Cup.

RESOLUTION NO. 1347

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the CanadaMan Xtreme Triathlon is a gruelling event consisting of a 3.8-kilometre lake swim at 4.30 a.m., followed by a 180-kilometre hilly bike ride, and a 42-kilometre run through hilly terrain with roots and rocks; and

Whereas this year's event was held in Lac-Megantic, Quebec, in July on a very hot day; and

Whereas completion of this triathlon is a huge accomplishment;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Richard Lane from Caledonia, Queens County, for enduring what is billed as the ultimate long-distance triathlon all in one day and finishing before nightfall.

RESOLUTION NO. 1348

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the South Shore Flying Club is working hard to rejuvenate the South Shore Regional Airport near Greenfield in Queens County; and

Whereas this club goes from strength to strength and has been renovating the Terminal Building and holding events like two fly-in breakfasts with an evening fundraiser planned in the Fall; and

Whereas throughout the Summer, they have welcomed many visiting pilots, providing local information services so they can fully enjoy the area;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the South Shore Flying Club for devoting their passion and energy to this small but vital transportation link on the South Shore.