



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

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS:	
Govt. (N.S.): Street Checks: Harmful and Unnecessary - Ban, L. Roberts.....	4284
PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES:	
Health Comm., Ann. Rpt. (2019), S. Lohnes-Croft.....	4284
TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS:	
Blueprint for Mental Health and Addictions, 2019-21 (Oct. 2019), Hon. R. Delorey	4284
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
No. 1349, Michaëlle Jean Fdn.: 3 rd Black Cdns. Summit - Congrats.,428 Hon. T. Ince	4285
Vote - Affirmative.....	4286
No. 1350, Fondation Michaëlle Jean: 3 ^e Sommet Pancanadien des Communautés noires - Félicitations, Hon. L. Metlege Diab	4286
Vote - Affirmative.....	4287

No. 1351, Wallace Lucas Com. Ctr.: 60 th Anniv. - Congrats.,	
Hon. T. Ince	4287
Vote - Affirmative.....	4288
No. 1352, Intl. Day for Eradication of Poverty - Recog.,	
Hon. K. Regan.....	4288
Vote - Affirmative.....	4289
No. 1353, Walsh, Zachary - Gold Medallist: WorldSkills Comp. - Congrats.,	
Hon. L. Kousoulis	4289
Vote - Affirmative.....	4290
No. 1354, Duke Awareness Wk.: Duke of Ed. Awards - Recog.,	
Hon. L. Kousoulis	4290
Vote - Affirmative.....	4291
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
No. 204, Workers' Compensation Act,	
Hon. L. Kousoulis	4291
No. 205, African Nova Scotian Justice Institute,	
Susan Leblanc	4291
No. 206, Education Act,	
Hon. P. Dunn.....	4292
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:	
Kennedy, Glenda: 25 Yrs. of Barbering - Congrats.,	
B. Adams.....	4292
Butler, Mark: 23 Yrs., Ecology Action Ctr. - Thanks,	
B. Maguire	4293
Robertson, Chris: Bus. Excellence Award - Congrats.,	
B. Comer	4293
Mahone Bay: Town Centenary - Congrats.,	
S. Lohnes-Croft.....	4294
Bike Racks: Sackville Installation - Thanks,	
S. Craig	4294
Murphy, Noelle: Breast Cancer Survivor - Inspiring,	
R. DiCostanzo	4295
Injured Workers: WCB Process - Difficult,	
Hon. P. Dunn.....	4295
Fuller, Jennika - Delegate: World Dairy Expo - Congrats.,	
K. Irving.....	4296
Currie, Randy: Big Swim for Brigadoon - Congrats.,	
T. Halman	4296
Casa Nova Fine Beverages: Local and Intl. Awards - Congrats.,	
Hon. G. Wilson	4297
Vanenburg, Tony: Death of - Tribute,	
B. Johns.....	4297
Whiteway-Matheson, Shirley: Lilypond Vintage - Congrats.,	
Hon. M. Miller	4298
MacDonell, Leo A.: Support for Sport - Recog.,	
A. MacMaster	4298

Intl. Day for the Eradication of Poverty: Struggles in Canada - Recog., L. Roberts.....	4299
McGrath, Heather: GIVETOLIVE for Brigadoon - Congrats., Hon. L. Metlege Diab	4299
Duffney, Jordyn: Duke of Ed., Silver Award - Congrats., K. Masland.....	4300
Sir John A. Students: H2O Fundraising - Commend, Hon. I. Rankin.....	4300
McWaid, Angie - Cst.: John Dunlop Mem. Award - Congrats., J. Lohr	4301
Nichols, Leah/Bonner, Gillian: Sangam Com. Prog. - Thanks, Hon. P. Arab	4302
Ruzycki, Autumn: Earning Her Wings - Congrats., E. Smith-McCrossin.....	4302
Intl. Credit Union Day: Com. Partners - Recog., L. Roberts.....	4302
Tuttle, Ada/Tuttle, Jane: Sisters and Umpires - Inspiring, B. Horne.....	4303
Thomas, Candace - Chair: Dal. Bd. of Governors - Congrats., B. Adams.....	4303
Woodman, Catherine/Woodman, Maura: Joan's Table - Congrats., B. Maguire	4304
MacDonald, Laurie/Bruce: Urban Rustic DIY Workshops - Congrats., S. Craig	4304
Ali, Sam: Blockhouse Mural - Thanks, S. Lohnes-Croft.....	4305
MacKenzie, Maddux: U13 Baseball Ntls. - Congrats., Hon. P. Dunn.....	4305
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:	
No. 843, Prem. - Yarmouth Ferry: New Vessel - Update, T. Houston.....	4306
No. 844, Prem. - Shelburne South End: Clean Water - Govt. Plans, G. Burrill	4308
No. 845, TIR - FOIPOP Requests: Anticipated - Comment, T. Houston.....	4309
No. 846, Justice: Corrections - Black Nova Scotians, C. Chender	4310
No. 847, TIR - FOIPOP: Consult. Rpt. - Email Info., T. Houston.....	4312
No. 848, H&W - Cont. Care Providers: Priv. Insur. - Direct Billing, B. Adams.....	4313
No. 849, H&W - Long-term Care: Wait-list - Eligibility Changes, B. Adams.....	4314
No. 850, H&W - Long-term Care: Investigations - Progress Updates, B. Adams.....	4315

No. 851, Seniors - Long-term Care: Policies - Inconsistent, B. Adams.....	4317
No. 852, Justice - Court System: Backlog - Explain, C. Chender	4318
No. 853, H&W - Long-term Care: Staffing - Increase, B. Adams.....	4319
No. 854, H&W: Long-term Care - Staffing, B. Adams.....	4320
No. 855, Environ.: Round Table on Environ. & Sustain. - Meetings, B. Johns.....	4322
No. 856, Environ.: Round Table Report - Ignored, B. Johns.....	4323
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 203, Crown Attorneys' Labour Relations Act	
Hon. K. Casey	4325
T. Houston.....	4326
G. Burrill.....	4339
M. Ryan.....	4344
C. Chender	4345
T. Martin	4351
L. Roberts.....	4357
Hon. K. Casey	4361
Vote - Affirmative.....	4362
No. 197, Companies Act, Co-operative Associations Act and Corporations Registration Act	
Hon. P. Arab	4363
A. MacMaster	4364
L. Roberts.....	4365
Hon. P. Arab	4366
Vote - Affirmative.....	4366
No. 201, Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter	
Hon. C. Porter	4366
S. Craig	4367
L. Roberts.....	4367
Hon. C. Porter	4368
Vote - Affirmative.....	4368
PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 183, Digby Town and Municipal Housing Corporation in the Town of Digby, An Act to Exempt from Taxation the Property of the, Hon. G. Wilson	
Vote - Affirmative.....	4369
No. 195, An Act Respecting the Union of Certain Churches Therein Named, G. Burrill.....	
Vote - Affirmative.....	4371

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS:

ADDRESS IN REPLY:

Colton LeBlanc	4372
HOUSE RESOLVED INTO CWH ON BILLS AT 6:51 P.M.	4385
HOUSE RECONVENED AT 7:15 P.M.	4386
CWH REPORTS.....	4386

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING:

No. 160, Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act	
Hon. K. Colwell	4386
L. Roberts.....	4386
Hon. K. Colwell	4388
Vote - Affirmative.....	4388
No. 163, Wilderness Areas Protection Act	
Hon. G. Wilson	4389
B. Johns.....	4389
G. Burrill.....	4389
Hon. G. Wilson	4391
Vote - Affirmative.....	4391
No. 166, Denturists Act	
Hon. R. Delorey	4391
B. Adams.....	4392
T. Martin	4394
Hon. R. Delorey	4395
Vote - Affirmative.....	4395
No. 170, Public Highways Act	
Hon. L. Hines.....	4396
Susan Leblanc	4396
Hon. L. Hines.....	4397
Vote - Affirmative.....	4397
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Fri., Oct. 18 th at 9:00 a.m.....	
	4397
NOTICE OF QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS:	
No. 7, Govt. (N.S.): Hurricane Expenses for Non-profits - Available Support:	
Disclose, Susan Leblanc	4398
No. 8, Bus.: Cancellation of Film Tax Credit - Econ. Impact: Disclose,	
Susan Leblanc	4398



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2019

Sixty-third General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, Brendan Maguire

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LISA ROBERTS: In the West Gallery we are joined today by Vanessa Fells, Program Coordinator with the Decade for People of African Descent Coalition; Kate Macdonald, Education Outreach Coordinator with the Halifax Sexual Health and Gender Resource Centre; Joanne Bealy and Nancy Hunter with the Halifax Coalition to Ban Street Checks, and also Bernadette Hamilton-Reid, Administrative Assistant for the Decade for People of African Descent Coalition.

I ask all members to join me in giving them a warm welcome to the House.
(Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition. It reads:

“We, the people of Nova Scotia, hereby demand the Government of Nova Scotia and the Halifax Regional Municipality receive our request.

WHEREAS street checks have been found to be racist and disproportionately targeted towards Nova Scotians of African Descent.

WHEREAS the practice of street checks causes serious and far reaching harm to Black people including psychological trauma, a decrease in access to employment and trust in the judicial system, and is a compounding factor in the historic and current culture of racism in Nova Scotia.

WHEREAS it has been shown that street checks are unnecessary and that police already have the tools needed to conduct their work.

THEREFORE, we the undersigned citizens of Nova Scotia call on the Nova Scotia Government and the Halifax Regional Municipality to ban street checks.”

Mr. Speaker, there are 6,000 signatures, and I have affixed my own.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Health, I am pleased to submit the very first annual report, from September 2018 to August 2019.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a document, as promised yesterday during QP, a Blueprint for Mental Health and Addictions: Building on Success for Improved Access, Integration, and Continuum of Care.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, may I make an introduction, please?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

TONY INCE: In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, we have with us today members of the Michaëlle Jean Foundation. I have with us today Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Mr. Jean-Daniel Lafond, Mr. Paul Cormier, Ms. Soraya Lemur, and Mr. Yaovi Hoyi. I'd like the House to welcome them. (Applause.)

[1:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 1349

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

Whereas the Michaëlle Jean Foundation invites Black community members, community organizations, and the general public to the third edition of the National Black Canadians Summit which will take place in Halifax from March 20-22, 2020; and

Whereas the National Black Canadians Summit serves as a major meeting point for people of African descent living in Canada to have a national conversation about ways to enhance social cohesion and promote an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development for all Canadians; and

Whereas the Michaëlle Jean Foundation, co-founded by the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean and Mr. Jean-Daniel Lafond, supports youth arts initiatives that transform youth lives and revitalizes underserved communities across Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly please join me in congratulating the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean and Mr. Jean-Daniel Lafond on their successful foundation and in recognizing their joint efforts to help address and eliminate the various issues facing people of African descent.

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. (Standing Ovation.)

The honourable Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

RESOLUTION NO. 1350

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

Attendu que la Fondation Michaëlle Jean invite les membres de la communauté noire et le grand public à la 3^e édition du Sommet pancanadien des communautés noires, qui se tiendra à Halifax du 20 au 22 mars 2020; et

Attendu que le Sommet pancanadien des communautés noires est un point de rencontre important permettant aux personnes d'ascendance africaine vivant au Canada de mener un dialogue national sur les moyens d'améliorer la cohésion sociale; et

Attendu que la Fondation Michaëlle Jean, cofondée par la très honorable Michaëlle Jean et M. Jean-Daniel Lafond, apporte son soutien aux initiatives des jeunes qui utilisent les arts et la culture pour transformer leur vie et revitaliser des communautés défavorisées au Canada;

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les membres de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi pour souhaiter la bienvenue à la très honorable Michaëlle Jean et M. Jean-Daniel Lafond et tous les membres de l'équipe de la fondation en Nouvelle-Écosse et de leur féliciter pour leurs efforts à éliminer les différents défis auxquels font face les personnes d'ascendance africaine.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville on an introduction.

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, through you, I'd like to thank the minister for enabling an opportunity to introduce some friends to the House today. Before I introduce the guests that are here today, I want to acknowledge Diana Oliver, Rose Carter, and a former member of this House, Stephen Gough, who were unable to attend the House today.

As I read the names of the guests who are here today, would they please stand. We have Carol Oliver, Debra Lucas, Kathleen Maxwell, Cindy Parsons, and Susan Wells. These are friends of mine from the community of Lucasville who hosted a 60th anniversary, and I think the minister is going to share a little bit more about that. So, please welcome them today. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 1351

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

Whereas the Wallace Lucas Community Centre, located in Lucasville, celebrates its 60th anniversary this year; and

Whereas the community centre, donated by Wallace Lucas, a community resident, was a former school which closed in the 1970s; and

Whereas today the community centre hosts community events including socials, dinners, meetings, and other events open to all residents;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly please join me in congratulating the Wallace Lucas Community Centre on its 60th anniversary and acknowledging the continued work by the elders, former teachers, former students, and community members to keep this centre strong.

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: I'd like to draw my colleagues' attention to the East Gallery, where I'd like to introduce special guests from the Dartmouth Family Centre and the Dartmouth North Community Food Centre.

I would ask them to please stand as I call out their names: Wendy Fraser, Executive Director; Anne-Marie McElrone, Director of Partnership Development and Fundraising; and Deborah Dickey, Manager of the Community Food Centre. They do excellent work supporting the families of Dartmouth and Dartmouth North.

I would ask the members to give them the warm welcome of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1352

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 17th the world observes the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty; and

Whereas all Nova Scotians deserve a chance to build a better life for themselves and their families; and

Whereas through grants and funding we are working hand in hand with other levels of government, communities, and non-profits to implement solutions at the community and individual levels;

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 poverty.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LABI KOUSOULIS: Today in the East Gallery I would like to introduce Zachary Walsh, a skilled refrigeration and air-conditioning mechanic apprentice, who works at Acadia Refrigeration & Air Conditioning (1997) Ltd. in Kentville.

With the support of his employer and the work of Skills Canada Nova Scotia, Zach proudly represented Canada at the 2019 WorldSkills Competition in Kazan, Russia, this past August.

Also in attendance are members of Zachary's family; Courtney Gouthro, Executive Director of Skills Canada - Nova Scotia; and Dale Crawford with the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency.

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1353

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

Whereas the WorldSkills Competition takes place every two years, and only the most qualified youth in skilled trades and technologies have the opportunity to represent Canada in their chosen fields; and

Whereas Zachary Walsh rightfully earned his spot on the Canadian WorldSkills Competition team after winning a gold medal at the Nova Scotia Skills Competition in 2016, 2017, and 2018; and

Whereas Zachary's tremendous dedication, talent, and hard work earned him a Medallion of Excellence in Kazan, Russia, an award given to those who have very strong performance scores;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in congratulating Zachary on his incredible accomplishments and wish him great success in his career.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 1354

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

Whereas the Province of Nova Scotia recognizes the third week of October as Duke Awareness Week; and

Whereas this marks the 47th anniversary of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Program, which encourages community and national development for our youth while teaching life skills that lead to personal growth and achievements; and

Whereas more than 4,000 young Nova Scotians aged 14 to 25 participate in the program each year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in recognizing Duke Awareness Week and the many contributions of young Nova Scotians who are working to make a difference in their community.

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 on an introduction.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw my colleagues' attention to the East Gallery, where we are joined today by a colleague of mine from the Northwest Territories. With us today is Glen Abernethy. Glen, if you would please stand?

Glen has been elected in the Northwest Territories for 12 years. I did want to note for the Minister of Health and Wellness that, in addition to being the Minister of Social Services, Glen is also the Minister of Health - just a small portfolio there. We've spent a fair amount of time together over the last couple of years at FPT - federal-provincial-territorial - meetings, where I found Glen to be collegial and collaborative.

He has decided to retire and help raise his son Jack, who's with us today and vocalizing a little bit, and a soon-to-be-born addition to the family. With him today in addition to Jack is his wife, Carolyn.

I would just like to say that I'm going to miss Glen. He was great to work with. I would ask the members to give him the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 204 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 10 of the Acts of 1994-95. The Workers' Compensation Act. (Hon. Labi Kousoulis)

Bill No. 205 - Entitled an Act to Create the African Nova Scotian Justice Institute. (Susan Leblanc)

Bill No. 206 - Entitled an Act to Amend Schedule A of Chapter 1 of the Acts of 2018. The Education Act. (Hon. Pat Dunn)

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

[1:30 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

KENNEDY, GLENDA: 25 YRS. OF BARBERING - CONGRATS.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate community member Glenda Kennedy for celebrating many years of barbershop services in her current location.

Glenda started her entrepreneurial endeavour in 1988, 31 years ago, on the Shearwater military base. Six years later, she opened Glenda's Barber Shop in 1994 and has been gladly providing excellent services to our community ever since. Glenda works many shifts a week and employs three other barbers at her shop. She is very happy doing what she is doing and shows no sign of slowing down.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating Glenda Kennedy on 25 years of serving our community and for starting her roots in Eastern Passage. We sincerely wish her all of the future success that she deserves for the next 25 years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South on an introduction.

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, as everyone in this House knows, the toughest job in politics is being the spouse of a politician. (Interruption) Especially to me. She rarely visits the halls of this Legislature, but she's here today. She's my biggest supporter and my toughest critic. I would like to welcome Katherine Trumper to the Legislature. (Applause)

She's also accompanied by my nephew from Kitchener, Ontario, Gregory Trumper. He has actually moved to Nova Scotia in this past year to continue to develop his fantastic photography skills and his culinary skills working here in Halifax. I would like to ask the House of Assembly to welcome Gregory. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BUTLER, MARK: 23 YRS., ECOLOGY ACTION CTR. - THANKS

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize a constituent and a friend who had made an incredible impact on the people of Nova Scotia.

After 23 years, Mark Butler has left his position as policy chair at the Ecology Action Centre. Mark has always been there to advise not just me but past and present MLAs, MPs, and councillors on environmental issues. His knowledge and passion for the environment has been on display in public during countless interviews and dozens of times in appearances at the Law Amendments Committee. Twenty-three years at the Ecology Action Centre makes for a great career.

When I asked Mark what he was going to do next, he was unsure. One thing is for sure, Mark has earned a little downtime. On behalf of all us Nova Scotians, thank you, Mark, for all you have done and will do.

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

ROBERTSON, CHRIS: BUS. EXCELLENCE AWARD - CONGRATS.

BRIAN COMER: I rise today Mr. Speaker to congratulate Mr. Chris Robertson for being a finalist in the 30th Annual Excellence in Business Award through the Cape Breton Regional Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Robertson is a finalist in the Irving Schwartz Male Business Person of the Year category. This award is presented to recognize a local male business leader who has demonstrated achievement in ownership or management of a business who has made significant contributions in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

Chris Robertson is the owner of Home Instead Senior Care in Cape Breton. This company offers several different options related to in-home care that can be individualized to one's needs such as meals, transportation, and companionship. As we know, these are basic needs for every human being and ones that - unfortunately for our seniors - are limited due to these resources being exacerbated by the ever-growing aging population on the Island.

I stand here today to thank Mr. Chris Robertson for his outstanding achievement in the CBRM with bringing the needs of our seniors to their doorstep and wish him continued success in the years to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

MAHONE BAY: TOWN CENTENARY - CONGRATS.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Town of Mahone Bay's 100th year of incorporation. On March 31, 1919, the Town of Mahone Bay was incorporated as a town and was granted its municipal government.

This year's centennial celebrations kicked off March 31st at the Mahone Bay Legion, where the town sponsored the monthly Legion brunch. Celebrations to commemorate the town's centenary have been ongoing. One of the initiatives to celebrate the town's centenary includes a large mural that is being painted on the RPS Composites, which depicts Mahone Bay's iconic waterfront. Another is the 100 Trees for 100 Years project, which is encouraging community members to plant 100 trees within the town.

During the month of September, Mahone Bay Day held a gathering of residents at the town's Jubilee Park. Recently, a call for submissions went out to the town to seek people who are willing to brighten up other local infrastructures within the town.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask you and all members of this House of Assembly to join me in recognizing the Town of Mahone Bay on its 100th year of incorporation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

BIKE RACKS: SACKVILLE INSTALLATION - THANKS

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Sackville Business Association, the Sackville Rivers Association, and Bike Nova Scotia for their collaborative efforts to have new bike racks installed along Sackville Drive in Lower Sackville.

There are numerous multi-use trails in Lower Sackville which are designed for all ages and abilities. These trails are used by residents for walking, jogging, cycling, rollerblading and skateboarding; they attract photographers, birdwatchers, and fishing folk. Also, there is an education centre for students where they can learn about the natural history of the Little Sackville and Sackville Rivers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in thanking the members of the Sackville Business Association, the Sackville Rivers Association, and Bike Nova Scotia for installing new bike racks, and applaud their efforts to provide the residents of Lower Sackville more convenient access to these trails.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

MURPHY, NOELLE: BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR - INSPIRING

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Therefore, I would like to recognize Noelle Murphy, a very strong woman in Clayton Park West.

Noelle's story is inspiring to everyone around her. Noelle had worked in Halifax as a school librarian for 36 years before retiring. She volunteers regularly at the Rockingham United Church and is a member of the Elder Learners, Halifax Probus Club, and Rockingham Stephen Lewis Grannies.

Noelle is also very active. She belongs to a hiking group of women who have been hiking together every Wednesday for 20 years. They have also had the opportunity to do three hiking trips in England.

Although Noelle leads a very healthy lifestyle, she was diagnosed with breast cancer in late 2015, two days before her 75th birthday. Her treatment routine was vigorous and began with a lumpectomy, followed by 16 radiation treatments. Noelle ensured that her appointments did not interfere with her gym schedule.

I am very happy to share that Noelle has survived this terrible disease, although she still struggles with many obstacles as a result of the cancer. She has an amazing support system in her husband, six children, and many friends. Noelle's story is so inspiring to many, including women such as myself.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Noelle for her successful battle against this terrible disease. She is truly a remarkable woman.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

INJURED WORKERS: WCB PROCESS - DIFFICULT

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Legislature today in support of injured workers of Nova Scotia. Many injured workers feel the WCB deliberately makes this process difficult so that they will eventually abandon their claims out of frustration. Therefore, you have an injured worker dealing with illness or injury and the process causes the individual a tremendous amount of anxiety. Denials, appeals, and further denials result in lost income to the employee and a prolonging of their pain and suffering.

Instead of providing timely assistance, the WCB will often disagree with independent medical professionals. What often happens next is the injured worker is ordered to have an appointment with a doctor who is paid by the WCB. I am sure if an audit was done one would find out that in these cases the injured worker received the

message that they should be able to return to work or that their injuries were not compensable.

Sometimes I wonder if the board's mandate is to assist the injured worker or to make life miserable for them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

FULLER, JENNIKA - DELEGATE: WORLD DAIRY EXPO - CONGRATS.

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, for more than 100 years 4-H Canada has developed responsible, caring and contributing young leaders. Today, Canada's largest youth development organization boasts more than 24,000 members and 7,600 volunteers.

New Minas resident Jennika Fuller is one of those young leaders who was recently selected as one of seven Canadians to attend the 2019 World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin, from October 1st to 5th on behalf of 4-H Canada.

Jennika and other 4-H members from across Canada submitted a 500-word essay on the importance of youth leaders and youth involvement in the dairy industry, and Jennika's was chosen as one of the best.

I invite all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Jennika Fuller on her selection to represent 4-H Canada at the World Dairy Expo and wish this remarkable young leader much success in her future endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

CURRIE, RANDY: BIG SWIM FOR BRIGADOON - CONGRATS.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dartmouth East resident Randy Currie. Randy, along with four others, participated in the Big Swim, a swimming race across the Northumberland Strait to raise money for Brigadoon Village.

As members of this House know, Brigadoon Village is a foundation created to host summer camps for those who are living with chronic illnesses or other life challenges. They offer an amazing camping experience filled with outdoor and aquatic recreation, visual and performing arts programs, and cooking classes. Brigadoon Village was founded on the belief that every child, no matter their life circumstances, should have the right to an extraordinary summer camp experience.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Randy and all those who participated in the Big Swim to raise money for this incredible camp, and I ask all members of the House to acknowledge Randy's outstanding efforts to assist Brigadoon Village.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

**CASA NOVA FINE BEVERAGES:
LOCAL AND INTL. AWARDS - CONGRATS.**

HON. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Casa Nova Fine Beverages of Bear River, whose wines, ciders, and cellos continue to be recognized within Atlantic Canada as well as internationally.

Last Spring, Casa Nova entered three of their ciders, as well as one of their wines and one of their cellos, in New York's prestigious Finger Lakes International Wine Competition. There was a total of 2,900 entries from companies from 16 countries. The company returned home with a medal for each of the five entries it had submitted.

Their Buddy's Original Craft Cider and Nova Cello Blueberry were awarded a silver medal in their respective categories. Their Casa Nova Cherry Cider, 1606 Good Cheer Craft Cider, and Red Carpet wine won bronze medals in their categories. The two ciders had already been awarded medals in the Atlantic Canadian Beer Awards the previous Fall.

Part of the reason for the uniqueness of the beverages from Casa Nova is that owners, Brendan and Karen Enright, are committed to using only ingredients from Nova Scotia. They believe our agricultural crops are some of the best in the country and they let local producers inspire new products.

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

VANENBURG, TONY: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, on October 3, 2019, the communities of Lucasville and Upper Hammonds Plains lost long-time resident and volunteer Tony Vanenberg. Although he was a resident of Lucasville, Upper Hammonds Plains certainly was Tony's second home.

Tony served his country in both the army and the navy. He was an auto mechanic by trade and after retirement he returned to his love of fixing cars. He liked a good game of cribbage, but most of all loved going fishing with his wife, Lila. Tony was the type of man you could call on for anything. He was a big community supporter. It didn't matter what was taking place, he was there to participate and served on many community boards, including president of the Wallace Lucas Community Centre.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to extend my condolences to Tony's wife Lila, his son Anthony, and the rest of their family. Along with many of his friends,

the communities of Lucasville and Hammonds Plains certainly share in their loss. He will be missed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

WHITEWAY-MATHESON, SHIRLEY: LILYPOND VINTAGE - CONGRATS.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, my community has some very passionate business owners and to see their hard work and that passion accumulate into great success is such a wonderful thing to experience.

Shirley Whiteway-Matheson has been refinishing furniture for the past two decades. In 2015, she opened LilyPond Vintage in Elmsdale, selling her updated antique furniture and home décor with a real country chic feel. Shirley also offers regular workshops on painting techniques and furniture restoration. People from all over the province come to take part.

This year - 2019 - has been a great year of growth for Shirley. She planned the first annual Practically Everything Vintage Market, an event held recently in Enfield showcasing local artisans and vintage enthusiasts, attended by 1,500 people. She also opened a much-anticipated second location of LilyPond in Kentville, offering employment to four people in that community.

I would like to invite all members of this House to congratulate Shirley for turning her passion into a growing business and wish her continued success.

THE SPEAKER: The honorable member for Inverness.

MACDONELL, LEO A.: SUPPORT FOR SPORT - RECOG.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, this Summer the recreation facilities in Judique were named after a man who played a seminal role in their creation: Leo A. MacDonell. Leo A. was an educator, a coach, and a visionary.

While he was a very warm person, he was all business when it came to creating opportunities for young people to enjoy the experience of sport. It was that drive that led to the building of sport infrastructure and a belief in the ability for a small community to produce top athletes. From very successful tug of war teams to a 1978 provincial champion high school hockey team to hosting county and regional track and field meets on the facilities he built, Leo A. laid the foundation for success.

Success did not always mean the winner's circle for every athlete, but we know there is much more to be gained by sport, no matter if you win or lose. He once said he enjoyed coaching because it helped him to learn more about who the young people he was

coaching were as persons, so he could better understand how to connect with them in the classroom. He was a man who has seen beyond the immediate into what could become the personal growth and achievement of the many athletes he nurtured.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**INTL. DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY:
STRUGGLES IN CANADA - RECOG.**

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, years ago when I lived in Guatemala, I would frequently have the experience of witnessing people working very hard to survive and provide for their families. For example, I sometimes witnessed people carrying very heavy loads of agricultural goods, sometimes with the aid of a strap across their forehead - apparently a heavier load than even their own body weight.

Today on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, I am sad to say that I sometimes witness scenes in my own constituency that feel very similar. I see people in a struggle to survive, pulling or pushing shopping carts or trailers of recyclables, for example. I know, too, that many struggles are invisible, spent calculating how to spend the same few dollars to cover too many expenses.

There is also a poverty that is social as much as material, and that is social isolation. In a country with such wealth, there is much that we can and should do to eradicate poverty.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

MCGRATH, HEATHER: GIVETOLIVE FOR BRIGADOON - CONGRATS.

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and thank Heather McGrath of Halifax Armdale for her work ethic and community spirit.

Not only is she raising her three children and working as a senior trader and key account manager, she is also heavily involved with GIVETOLIVE, a non-profit founded with Energy Atlantica that inspires people to achieve extraordinary accomplishments to raise funds for charities serving people suffering from long-term illnesses.

In 2014, she organized the Big Swim while training for and completing her own 17-kilometre swim across the Northumberland Strait. Under her leadership, the event surpassed the \$1 million mark in cumulative funds raised for Brigadoon Village Children's Camp.

Heather also supports the Springvale Elementary PTA and is the treasurer on the committee.

I ask all members to join me in applauding and thanking Heather McGrath for all her efforts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

DUFFNEY, JORDYN: DUKE OF ED., SILVER AWARD - CONGRATS.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jordyn Duffney, a student at Liverpool Regional High School, who today will be presented with the Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award by the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia.

Jordyn is intensely dedicated to her studies and her extracurricular activities. Following her bronze award last year, and under the guidance of Troy and Crystal Smith and Cassandra Williams, she then completed 26 weeks of piano skill development, volunteer coached creative movement to pre-schoolers, and continued lessons in dance and swimming. In addition, she undertook an expedition of hiking, canoeing, and camping that required her to take on all the planning and tasks involved.

Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to recognize this accomplishment of Jordyn, and I have no doubt we will be hearing more about this impressive young woman in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

SIR JOHN A. STUDENTS: H2O FUNDRAISING - COMMEND

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dylan Carlton, Lauren Miles, Robyn Meredith, Mitchell Aguinaga, and Thomas MacLellan, students at Sir John A. Macdonald High School. This group of students has been extremely involved in community activities and have accepted every challenge that is brought to them through a leadership course at SJA.

The challenge I wish to acknowledge here today is the group's participation in the Bluenose Relay Race to raise funds and support the vital work of Help 2 Overcome, also known as H2O.

H2O is a charity organization that works with schools in developing countries to set up and maintain sustainable sanitation and hygiene facilities through three easy steps of clean toilets, clean water, and clean hands, to reduce the spread of diseases and keep kids in school.

On the International Day of the Eradication of Poverty, I'd like the members of the House to join me in recognizing Dylan, Lauren, Robyn, Mitchell, and Thomas, for their involvement to make a difference in the quality of life of students throughout the developing world.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, in the West Gallery there are three individuals: my sister from Holland, Janet, and her husband Jan, who are here for the wedding of my oldest son; and next to them is my wife, Heather, who is my number-one supporter and accomplished business woman who is very well known in the Valley. She is the current president of the Valley Regional Hospital Foundation and on the board of the Rotary Club. It is my privilege to be doing life together with her, a great adventure. I ask the House to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MCWAID, ANGIE - CST.: JOHN DUNLOP MEM. AWARD - CONGRATS.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Kentville Police Service Constable Angie McWaid. The Kentville service member was presented with the John Dunlop Memorial Award in May of this year for her dedication to the community of Kentville. The award recognizes those who go above and beyond their job description to develop community activities for youth.

Annually, the Nova Scotia Criminal Justice Association presents this award to a deserving individual. Constable McWaid was presented the award by the association president Fred Honsberger, who spoke about the hard work McWaid does on her own time for the community.

In September of this year, Constable McWaid also received her 20-year service medal at Government House in Halifax. Please join me in congratulating Constable McWaid on receiving recognition for her hard work and dedication and thanking her for many years of service.

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

NICHOLS, LEAH/BONNER, GILLIAN: SANGAM COM. PROG. - THANKS

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize two incredible ladies in my riding. Ranger Guides Leah Nichols and Gillian Bonner travelled to India and Thailand this Summer as part of the Hammonds Plains District Girl Guide group. The group participated in the Sangam Community Programme, which is a unique opportunity for self-development and a chance for young women to live abroad and gain personal and professional experience.

As part of the experience, Leah and Gillian worked at the World Centre in India, completing tasks such as leading children's activities, teaching and understanding Indian culture.

The second part of their trip included volunteering at an elephant reserve in Thailand, an incredible experience that I am sure these ladies will remember for the rest of their lives.

I ask the members of this House of Assembly to join me in thanking Leah and Gillian for their community involvement and in wishing them the best in their future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RUZYCKI, AUTUMN: EARNING HER WINGS - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Autumn Ruzycki of Amherst. Autumn is the first female member of the 154 Amherst Anson Royal Air Cadet Squadron to earn her wings. Autumn completed her seven-week intensive course in Newfoundland and Labrador this Summer, making her the first cadet in the Amherst squadron to earn her wings in seven years.

After a week of training, Autumn flew her first solo flight in a Cessna 152. This young woman put in a lot of hard work to get into the course and proudly earn her wings. Her goal is to become a pilot in the military.

Today join me in congratulating Autumn on her hard work and determination to have this great achievement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

INTL. CREDIT UNION DAY: COM. PARTNERS - RECOG.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, today happens to be International Credit Union Day. It falls on the third Thursday of October. I want to express my appreciation for the many credit unions across Nova Scotia that are partners to so many in our communities -

self-employed people and newcomers seeking mortgages, entrepreneurs starting businesses, non-profits, and citizens of all kinds who need banking and financial services.

Nova Scotia has a long and vibrant tradition of community economic development though it rarely gets spoken of or promoted by this government. I am glad to do my business at a credit union and grateful that the community I serve is, in turn, served by iNova Credit Union and Credit Union Atlantic.

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

TUTTLE, ADA/TUTTLE, JANE: SISTERS AND UMPIRES - INSPIRING

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour two sisters. Hanging out at a local baseball game isn't anything new in Nova Scotia. It does bear recognition when sisters Ada and Jane Tuttle are working at the game, umpiring together. This is the first time in the long history of local LWF baseball, and only the second time for Baseball Nova Scotia, that sisters have officiated a game. Jane and Ada both hope that girls watching them will become interested and sign up to be umpires. They want to encourage other girls to join and hope that an all-female umpire pair does not stay unusual.

I ask members of the Legislature to congratulate Ada and Jane Tuttle for their hard work.

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

THOMAS, CANDACE - CHAIR: DAL. BD. OF GOVERNORS - CONGRATS.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize Candace Thomas. She is a lawyer from Halifax, who graduated from Dalhousie University Law School in 1995, and she is the very first woman to be chosen as chair for the Dalhousie University Board of Governors. She will be serving a three-year term, which started in July 2019.

Ms. Thomas serves on the Board of Governors and is also the chair of the board's Governance and Human Resources Committee. Ms. Thomas is a member of the advisory group of Dalhousie's Strategic Initiative on Diversity and Inclusiveness. She is also a member of many societies outside of the university.

Ms. Thomas is an inspiration to many women and all Nova Scotians. I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating this admirable woman on her many accomplishments.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

**WOODMAN, CATHERINE/WOODMAN, MAURA:
JOAN'S TABLE - CONGRATS.**

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, on this International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, I rise to acknowledge Catherine and Maura Woodman for their creation of the Joan's Table program in 2017. They named the program Joan's Table in honour of their mother/grandmother Joan Mayo, who was always deeply involved in our community and helping those in need.

The program is part of Shelter Nova Scotia's Adopt-a-Meal program. Since it began in 2017, over 100 volunteers have helped prepare and deliver 290 meals to the residents of Shelter Nova Scotia's Herring Cove Road facility. This building is supported by Shelter Nova Scotia and provides safe, affordable housing for men who have suffered from chronic homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of this House to join me in congratulating Catherine and Maura for creating Joan's Table. Their dedication to this program has ensured that those residents not only have a roof over their head but also have access to a healthy homecooked meal.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

**MACDONALD, LAURIE/BRUCE:
URBAN RUSTIC DIY WORKSHOPS - CONGRATS.**

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Bruce and Laurie MacDonald, owners of Urban Rustic DIY Studio in Lower Sackville. Urban Rustic is a do-it-yourself studio that celebrated its grand opening on August 11, 2019.

The studio offers hands-on classes wherein their customers can create custom-made home décor projects using raw materials. There are instructor-led workshops as well as open workshops where you can create your very own décor item. Bruce and Laurie have over 25 years each in operating retail stores, but this is their first venture in a workshop-studio format.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Bruce and Laurie MacDonald and the staff of the Urban Rustic DIY Studio and wish them continued success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

ALI, SAM: BLOCKHOUSE MURAL - THANKS

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, a new mural located at the four-way stop in Blockhouse has recently garnered a lot of attention from spectators. When Printer's Corner, a business owned by Sam Ali, recently underwent renovations, a new garage door became a blank canvas to this sign-maker, who took the opportunity to create a mural bringing attention to global warming.

The mural shows a partly-submerged sign that says "Global Warming" with the words "Is Not a Myth" underneath. It also includes a man dressed in business attire swimming after a \$100 bill on a fishhook.

Sam says of his mural, "We are contributing to global warming, there is no question about that . . . I think it's just at what rate that we will be contributing."

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and the members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing Sam Ali for his creativity and for constructing a mural that brings attention to a very important issue.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MACKENZIE, MADDUX: U13 BASEBALL NTLs. - CONGRATS.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, Maddux MacKenzie had the opportunity to represent his hometown and county at the under-13 baseball Nationals last August. MacKenzie realizes it is a huge honour for any athlete to be named to a provincial team.

The 13-year-old wore provincial colours for Nova Scotia's team that participated in the national tournament in Quebec. MacKenzie has become a very versatile player, with the ability to play a number of positions. He was extremely excited and proud to have this wonderful experience. His intent was to do his absolute best and help his team to be competitive.

The national competition provides athletes with an opportunity to compete in a sport environment and prepare them for future competition. The community realizes that this event is a huge honour and responsibility, and we are very proud to see Maddux competing against top athletes from across the country. We are sure this is only the first of many sports accomplishments from Maddux MacKenzie.

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.

PREM. - YARMOUTH FERRY: NEW VESSEL - UPDATE

TIM HOUSTON: With the 2019 season a total write-off, the minister and Bay Ferries have said they're turning their attention towards next season. The big question that hung over everyone this year was where will the ferry dock, but the big question for next year is what ferry will run, if it runs at all?

The lease on the current vessel is set to expire before the start of next season. My question for the Premier is: Can the Premier update this House on the status of securing a vessel for the 2020 sailing season?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): The honourable member would know that boat is attached to Bay Ferries; dealing with the U.S. Navy and that vessel that is currently in partnership between Bay Ferries and the U.S. Navy will be operating next year.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, what the Premier may or may not know is that the U.S. Navy said they're going to re-tender it. That vessel will be coming up again and certainly Bay Ferries, on behalf of the province, can compete to maybe win it.

The contract between the province and Bay Ferries requires the province to cover any cash deficiencies arising from the operation of the ferry - any cash deficiencies. This means that the province will be required to backstop any amount that Bay Ferries negotiates for any vessel. It's totally unlimited, Mr. Speaker. It's essentially a blank cheque for Bay Ferries to go on a shopping trip.

My question for the Premier is: Has this government set any limit - a top dollar amount - on the lease of a vessel for next year?

THE PREMIER: I thank the honourable member for the question. I want to thank the tremendous work that has been happening with Bay Ferries. As he would know, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative party has been opposed to that international link. We've seen the challenges with tourism in Southwestern Nova Scotia when it is not operating. We've committed to that service.

We look forward to that service operating next year with the current vessel that is there. We'll continue to make sure that we continue to grow the tourism numbers of not

only southwestern Nova Scotia but indeed the entire province using all possibilities, including that international link from Yarmouth to Bar Harbor.

TIM HOUSTON: The Premier has nothing substantive to offer the House, so he's reverting back to the politics and the rhetoric, same as his mail-outs. The reality is that this is the only Party that cares about that connection with the United States. If that Party cared, they would've included something in the contract that required the service to run.

It did not require that in the contract because they only cared about one thing, Mr. Speaker, they only cared about a talking point. Not a service. Not bringing tourists to this province. The reality is there's a potential liability to the taxpayers of this province and nobody's asking how bad it can get. Sounds familiar to the crane situation, Mr. Speaker. Time and time again.

The ramp for Portland was brought in to accommodate the current vessel. Nobody knows about the next vessel. We're spending to update Bar Harbor. Can the Premier say who will bear the cost if it's a different vessel next year and they got it wrong spending all the money to get Bar Harbor to accommodate the current one that they don't even have for next year?

THE PREMIER: Since reconnecting the service that was severed by the New Democratic Party, the Progressive Conservative party under both of its Leaders - both of who are exactly the same, who oppose the issue. Their path forward, quite frankly, is to take a private sector company to court. At the same time (Interruption)

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

THE PREMIER: At the same time, those in the U.S. are recognizing that Nova Scotia has their own Trump in here, who will say anything that comes to mind because it doesn't have to be factual.

He's opposed to the ferry and he won't stand up and say it. He's been opposed to at one end, but when in Yarmouth he's in favour of it. When he's in metro, he's opposed. That's how he does it, Mr. Speaker. He's in favour one moment, and then he is against it. There's a strong wind blowing today; let's see what else he flip-flops on.

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

Order please. Let me just put it out there that we'll not tolerate any more heckling on either side, so we will now move on.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

PREM. - SHELBURNE SOUTH END: CLEAN WATER - GOVT. PLANS

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, you may have to separate them; they're too much alike to get along. (Laughter)

I would like to ask the Premier about the environment and the government's responsibility to the historically marginalized people of Nova Scotia, beginning with the South End of Shelburne. We know that the South End of Shelburne is home to one of the province's most historic African Nova Scotian communities and that the community has lived with the toxic legacy of that adjacent dump for over 50 years. Deadly, rare cancers are not that rare in the South End of Shelburne, and many wells are contaminated with E. coli and coliform. The community's request has been very simple: clean drinking water.

I want to ask the Premier if he could explain what the government's plans are to bring clean drinking water to the people of the South End of Shelburne.

THE PREMIER: I'm not sure if this is with the Municipality of the District of Argyle or whether there is a water utility there. I am not exactly sure about the file you're referring to, but I will endeavour to actually ask because you're bringing up a very important question in the House of Assembly.

Communities require our support. That's why we continue to work with municipalities, why they prioritize their water and sewer projects, and why we continue to fund them in partnership with them and the national government. I will endeavour, Mr. Speaker, to look at that particular project that he's referring to and get him back an answer.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's inquiries into this are appreciated.

In just a couple of weeks, the Nova Scotia Supreme Court is going to be hearing the Sipekne'katik First Nation's appeal about the inadequacy of the government's consultation with the band about the Alton Gas project. The band is arguing that the permit should never have been granted because they were not given an adequate chance to examine project proposals or environmental assessments and that there was never enough notice for them to effectively participate in public meetings to express the concerns that they had.

About this, Mr. Speaker, there is something that I find very hard to understand. Will the Premier explain why his government doesn't just do the consultation that's requested instead of having this fight in the court?

THE PREMIER: The very project the honourable member is talking about goes back to approximately 2007 and 2008, I believe was when the original consultation took place. When the project began to resurface, we actually put it through consultation again. There was a Mi'kmaw consultant who was part of that. It was put together by the province.

The dispute, Mr. Speaker, is obviously - there is no veto power in consultation. What happens is, there's ongoing consultation that happens. We believe we've met that test. Obviously, the community does not. The solution to solve that for them would be the court.

We're looking forward to seeing that come up. We continue to work with our Mi'kmaw community. All members in this House, I would hope, recognize that we have a responsibility, a duty, to consult.

GARY BURRILL: Finally, Mr. Speaker, for all these years, Northern Pulp has dumped those billions of litres of poison effluent into Boat Harbour, and Boat Harbour is widely regarded as the worst case of environmental racism in Nova Scotia, which has a terrible and shameful record on this subject.

I know that the Premier thinks it's unnecessary and superfluous for him to affirm and underline his government's commitment to the deadline under the Boat Harbour legislation. But I want to say that it would mean a lot to an awful lot of people if he would simply say: Not one drop of effluent into Boat Harbour after January 31, 2020. Will he say that?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, that is the date in the legislation that has been passed by this House. There's no other legislation before us to change that date. I want to remind the honourable member, we are the government that has committed to cleaning up Boat Harbour. We continue to finance that. We will clean up Boat Harbour.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIR - FOIPOP REQUESTS: ANTICIPATED - COMMENT

TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Recently the PC caucus received a response to a FOIPOP request. We had asked for some billing information around the consultant's fees for the Bar Harbor terminal upgrades.

What came back was, of course, Mr. Speaker, heavily, heavily redacted - pages of redactions, but one of the pages that wasn't redacted caught my eye. A transportation staffer sent an email to the consultants' group saying:

I wonder if the consultant could add something that shows the expected operating savings and advantages over Portland. I know it's not necessarily the consultant's expertise, but let's assume that this gets FOIPOP'ed and I'd love to have an appendix that shows some savings somewhere.

I'll table that for the benefit of the House. My question for the minister: Is it standard practice for the minister to have his department staff ask for additional reports to pad for expected FOIPOP's?

HON. LLOYD HINES: I thank the honourable member opposite for the question because it gives me an opportunity to clarify, for the edification of the member opposite, how the FOIPOP process works - and the minister is not involved at any level.

TIM HOUSTON: Oh, Mr. Speaker, we know very clearly how the FOIPOP process doesn't work with this government.

My question for the minister was whether the minister instructed staff to get additional information to pad the file so they can have something that looks good somewhere, because what we're getting back is heavily redacted. They can't find anything that looks good about a ferry that hasn't sailed for an entire year.

We don't know, from the FOIPOP that responded, how much they spent on this consultant. We know some of the other ones - \$10,000 here, \$10,000 there - we don't know in this case, but we do assume they paid something. What we know is they are paying for a report, and they are asking somebody to put something in a report that is outside their area of expertise. Trying to salt the mine, Mr. Speaker.

My question for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal: Does he endorse this type of behaviour from his staff, asking consultants for information that is clearly outside their expertise, to try and make himself look good?

LLOYD HINES: There's a consistent line of questioning that comes from the Official Opposition Party. It behooves me to point out something that was said in Hansard last Wednesday by the Leader of the Official Opposition. He confessed to an \$8.9 million subsidy in 2009 when his Party was in government for this service which was servicing Portland and Bar Harbor at that time. (Interruption)

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

LLOYD HINES: That money, that \$8.9 million, equals \$10.6 million in today's dollars - and I'd like to table that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

JUSTICE: CORRECTIONS - BLACK NOVA SCOTIANS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Through freedom of information requests, our caucus received a demographic profile of adult individuals in provincial correctional facilities. On April 1, 2019, 13 per cent of adults

in provincial facilities identified as African Nova Scotian or Black. However, Black people make up less than 3 per cent of our provincial population. Clearly something is wrong here.

Mr. Speaker, what concrete steps has the Minister taken over six years in government to address the overrepresentation of Black people in Corrections?

HON. MARK FUREY: I thank my colleague for the question. A number of steps have been taken within Corrections in our facilities' program services, Mr. Speaker, recently hiring complete graduate classes of African Nova Scotians, hiring of Aboriginal members.

There are strategies that speak specifically to these issues and Correction Services applying those, both through human resource hiring and program delivery within our facilities, Mr. Speaker.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, the strategy put forward more than any other is ending street checks. In March, a Human Rights Commission report found that African Nova Scotians are six times more likely to be street-checked by police than white people.

Report author Dr. Scot Wortley writes that a small degree of racial bias at each stage of the criminal justice funnel can result in gross racial disparities within the correctional system. Our province has been talking about the racist impact of street checks since 2003. Ending street checks is at least 16 years overdue.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister finally commit to taking decisive action to put a permanent end to the racist practice of street checks?

MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, my colleague would know that when the Wortley report was released, I immediately took steps to ban street checks. That moratorium is in place. I think that, in itself, addresses what has commonly been referred to as carding.

[2:15 p.m.]

As well, through the feedback of the Wortley report, it was identified that street checks - the data, the numbers - were being used for performance measures within law enforcement communities. I gave a directive that forbade that to happen into the future.

I have said publicly that, when used appropriately, street checks are a valuable tool for investigations and public safety in our communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIR - FOIPOP: CONSULT. RPT. - EMAIL INFO.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. If the minister would have read the Hansard a little closer - maybe he forgot to notice that when the Progressive Conservative Party was in government, hundreds of thousands of people were taking that ferry every single year. This year, for the benefit of the House, zero.

From that same FOIPOP that we received last week, I'd like to draw the minister's attention to an email exchange between Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal employee A and the consultant. Employee A sent an email to the consultant asking the consultant to send the document to a second Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal employee address - employee B, at the email address I sent you. There are email addresses on file that show that the consultant already had employee B's government address. So, despite having communicated with the government address, the consultant was being asked to send the report to a very specific second email address.

I would like to ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal: Does he know why his employee might ask a consultant to send a report to another non-government email address? I will table those.

HON. LLOYD HINES: I'd like to point out that in 2009, when the Progressive Conservative Government of the day spent \$10.6 million in today's dollars in subsidy for the service, there were actually 80,000 people who took the service, and that included Portland and Bar Harbor.

TIM HOUSTON: The minister can try to rewrite history from just last week as much as he wants, but the Progressive Conservative Party wasn't in government in 2009.

I am asking a very serious question about the FOIPOP process. I'm asking a very serious question about the minister's staff sending information to non-government email addresses - probably information that is a little bit embarrassing about this government about the ferry, because everything about this ferry should be embarrassing to this government.

We've had instances before where communication with this government has happened outside of government servers, and doing that makes it more difficult for the public to get accurate information from the FOIPOP release process.

I thought maybe they would have learned from this before, but perhaps they haven't. It's a concerning situation, and it is definitely concerning that it is a trend.

Can the minister say if he is aware of other department communications that occur outside the government servers?

LLOYD HINES: Not being involved in the FOIPOP process in the department, as I've indicated, I am aware that everything is FOIPOP-able, and it doesn't matter what the email address is.

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

H&W - CONT. CARE PROVIDERS: PRIV. INSUR. - DIRECT BILLING

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. In the province's largest population centre, HRM, I know of no major home care provider that is willing to directly bill private insurance providers. Each has their own reason, but the unfortunate side effect is that there is additional work and confusion for seniors and their families who are already trying to navigate a complicated world of continuing care services.

Leaving direct billing optional rather than mandatory is adding undue stress on the elderly population. I have raised this issue with the minister in the past.

Can the minister tell me whether he agrees that the contracts he negotiates with these continuing care providers should mandate direct billing of private insurance companies rather than leaving it optional?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for the question. As the member would know, we certainly take the care of our aging population very seriously. That is why a year ago we established an expert panel to provide advice and recommendations on steps that we can take to improve the quality of care being provided in our long-term care facilities.

Those recommendations are what we in the department have been focused on over the past number of months - nine months or so since we received the report. I recently provided an update for all Nova Scotians to be aware of exactly how we're progressing on those updates. I'm pleased to say we are making very good progress to improve that quality of care in our long-term care facilities.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, that didn't answer the question, and there are serious questions about the long-term care update report as well, but I'll get to that later.

When someone is in acute care, like those in Yarmouth who have the longest long-term care wait time at 326 days, they have to pay for that privilege of staying in a hospital bed. The Nova Scotia Health Authority sends this bill to them at the end of the month. When someone is admitted to long-term care the Nova Scotia Health Authority sends them their bill at the beginning of the month, so there is a period of time when every family receives very large bills within days of each other and they are expected to pay them quickly and fully.

I've raised this with the minister in the past; I asked the minister to look into this issue. I wonder, can he tell me if he looked into that and if he has corrected this oversight in billing?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, there's a lot of work ongoing within the health care system, both within our acute care system and in our continuing care space. Our work within the department, engaging with our service providers and our partners at the Health Authorities are ongoing. We continue to work on a large number of items to improve that quality of care and the services we deliver to Nova Scotians because we believe it is the right thing to do.

We are investing to make sure that those programs and initiatives are put in place to improve the environment and the care provided to those residents.

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

H&W - LONG-TERM CARE: WAIT-LIST - ELIGIBILITY CHANGES

BARBARA ADAMS: So that's 0 for 2, that wasn't an answer to the question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the wait time for long-term care beds has been a long issue in our province. Changes that were made four years ago to the process of who was allowed to be on the wait-list made the list go down, and this government likes to use it as a claim that they have done something concrete to change the wait-list times. But the changes included removing seniors from the list if they weren't immediately willing to take a bed rather than just skipping over them once, which used to be the policy. Additionally, the province raised the required frailty level, which reduced the lists without providing any additional access to long-term care beds. I know this because I wrote those disability reports and worked with continuing care providers to establish who could go on the wait-list.

My question to the minister is: Can the minister admit in this House that the eligibility requirements to go on the wait-list for long-term care were changed in 2015 and 2016?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as the member would know, as all Nova Scotians would know, the focus of this government since our first term has been on continuing care. A big part of our focus in that first mandate was on responding to the opportunities presented to better meet the desires of Nova Scotians, which was to focus on our home care system. We were hearing in the continuing care sector that people wanted to stay in their homes as long as they could, but they couldn't do so without supports once they reached a certain point in their life.

We invested heavily, increasing the budgets and the investments, virtually dealing with the entire wait-list, and helping to keep more people there. As the member would know, we've now moved on folks on the long-term care sector in a broader term.

BARBARA ADAMS: So, I am 0 for 3 - that is not an admission of what I know is a fact, that they changed the requirements, because I helped make sure that people were getting on that list when they needed to.

He said he was focusing on home care. According to the Nova Scotia Health Authority's website there was a drop in the number of people waiting for long-term care. This drop was likely due to the change in requirements. Unfortunately, the Nova Scotia Health Authority's own website shows us that the number of people waiting for long-term care in this province has gone up in the last two years. What caused that? That's the question I'd like the minister to answer.

Will the minister answer whether he is willing to admit that the change in who could go on the wait-list was changed and explain to us why the number of people waiting for long-term care in the province has gone up over the last two years, not down?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, what I can advise the members is that our commitment and focus on continuing care for Nova Scotians has been a priority. It has been a priority because we know this is an important area to have government support Nova Scotians when they reach an elder stage of life and require these services. That's why we've invested heavily, as I've previously mentioned, and expanded our home care programs and services and supports.

It's why we're adding over 70 new beds in Cape Breton as part of our redevelopment there. It's why we're expanding long-term care facilities in Meteghan. It's why we continue to work to improve the quality of care as well - not just adding new beds, but improving the supports and the investments we're making for the care being provided in all these facilities throughout the province.

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

H&W - LONG-TERM CARE: INVESTIGATIONS - PROGRESS UPDATES

BARBARA ADAMS: The facts are that there are over 2,000 Nova Scotians waiting for a long-term care bed, so they won't all fit into those 70 new beds that the minister just mentioned.

When a family makes a decision to put their loved one into long-term care it's heartbreaking, but they trust that staff will treat them with compassion and respect, and almost all of the time that happens. They also trust that if their loved one is mistreated, they

have the option to an open investigation and receive assurances that their loved one will be protected.

A story from May 2019 showed that this isn't the case in all circumstances. When a family opened an investigation, they received no information on that status or the status of the employee in question, and I'll table that. My question to the minister is: Does this minister agree with this Party that all families have the right to receive timely progress updates on an investigation and to receive documentation of when that situation has been resolved?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: In dealing with those unfortunate situations, where incidents arise that are required to be investigated, we take those very seriously, as all members of the public and, indeed, this Legislature would expect.

We've taken steps to even go further. We've started to post reports online so that there's more transparency and visibility into the reports of the investigations that we take. With respect to the review process and the reports that are completed, they do engage with next of kin to share that information.

BARBARA ADAMS: A family wouldn't launch an investigation unless the circumstances were serious. Providing updates like the status of the investigation and whether or not the employee in question is still in contact with the family member is not an unreasonable request. Families deserve updates. They deserve the peace of mind that comes with transparency. They have put their loved ones in the hands of other people, and if wrongdoing is suspected they should be treated with even more respect and compassion than otherwise.

One of the statements from the article said a spokesperson for the Department of Health and Wellness said a voluntary registry for continuing care assistants now exists for the purpose of workforce tracking, but following a recommendation from the expert advisory panel - and from me - on long-term care, the department is now looking at options to implement a mandatory registry.

Mr. Speaker, that's an urgent need for this province. Can the minister tell me if he will agree with us now that a mandatory registry for continuing care assistants is needed in this province?

RANDY DELOREY: As we've had numerous responses and engagement in this discussion, I already indicated that I established an expert panel about a year ago. That report came in in January and had many recommendations. This is one of the recommendations coming from the report, and it's one that we've indicated that we will be implementing. The update that was provided recently clearly shows that work is ongoing in this direction.

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

SENIORS - LONG-TERM CARE: POLICIES - INCONSISTENT

BARBARA ADAMS: One of the requirements of the long-term care report was for the expert panel to identify what appropriate staffing levels were required for this province, and that did not happen. That is the one thing that everyone who works in long-term care was asking for, so that's the number one thing, and we still haven't seen it.

The more you look at the policies involved in our aging population, the more troubling things are. There is so much inconsistency with various policies within government departments and so many ways you can almost qualify for government grants. For example, when your spouse is in long-term care, but you aren't, the minimum income you can obtain is \$20,500 per year. But to qualify for the parent apartment program, the resident living there has to have an income of less than \$20,000 per year.

My question for the Minister of Seniors is: Why are there programs that were created to make the lives easier for our elderly population formatted in a way that makes things more complicated?

[2:30 p.m.]

HON. LEO GLAVINE: In regard to our seniors' policy, we have a number of ways in which we are assisting communities in particular to look after the needs of our seniors. We've enhanced a community transportation network. Also, dealing with poverty reduction, a pilot project helps upstream to keep our seniors healthier longer, in their homes, and accessing home care when they need it.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, that didn't come close to answering what I was asking, so I'll ask again. There seem to be discrepancies everywhere we turn when it comes to policies for the elderly population and what they qualify or don't qualify for, whether it's a certain income for home repairs from Housing Nova Scotia - there's a different income requirement for home repairs from the Department of Health and Wellness - or if one department includes a caregiver benefit as income to be considered, another one deducts it.

People are finding themselves applying for and being denied from programs that they would be accepted to if it was run by a different department, and we are wasting money with those discrepancies.

Will the Minister of Seniors commit to working with me and the various government departments to update these programs for more consistency?

LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I think the honourable member knows that I am willing to work with all members in this House to discuss appropriate grants, whether it's with CCH or with our Department of Seniors, and I'll continue to do that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

JUSTICE - COURT SYSTEM: BACKLOG - EXPLAIN

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. The Supreme Court of Canada *Jordan* decision sets clear thresholds for legal cases to be heard in a reasonable period of time. Depending on the case, the thresholds vary from 18 to 30 months from the date of the charge.

If the case exceeds these thresholds it may be thrown out because of undue delay. An FOI request filed by our caucus shows that in September 2019 there were 415 cases that were over these thresholds, a more than 15 per cent increase over the 356 cases in September of the previous year.

Mr. Speaker, why, after six years in government, is this serious backlog in our court system continuing to grow?

HON. MARK FUREY: I thank my colleague for the question. The numbers she has referred to are misleading in that she refers to a specific number. There are contributing factors as to why those numbers are there. In many cases those are waivers by defence that are outside of the expectations within the process. There are cases where warrants are issued. There are cases that go to restorative justice. There are a number of reasons that that number is where it is.

What is unique in Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, is that within the criminal justice transformation group they've created a ticker - I'm looking for the word. They create a ticker within the electronic system of the court monitoring process that identifies priority cases. They are elevated. The judiciary is part of this process, along with Crown prosecutors, police and other representatives in the criminal justice system, to ensure that we are meeting the threshold and that we are mitigating all risks associated to these files.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker at least one thing that that number represents is a backlog in the court system, in addition to some of the other things that the minister mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, the 80 Crown attorneys across the province handle about 40,000 cases each year in Nova Scotia. Their job is to perform duties relating to the administration of criminal justice throughout the province and to represent the interests of the general public when cases go to trial. Each Crown attorney carries over 400 cases. Any delay could lead to dismissal of serious charges, including human trafficking and even murder.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister think the provincial justice system could continue to function for a single day without all of its Crown prosecutors on the job?

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm going to rule that question out of order. That question anticipates a discussion on the bill which is on the order paper.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I didn't know that.

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

H&W - LONG-TERM CARE: STAFFING - INCREASE

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Last year, Nova Scotians were saddened to hear media reports about those in care suffering from bedsores. Great work has been done by health care workers to prevent more of these incidents, but little has been noted publicly.

It was reassuring to hear in March that \$2.5 million was being spent on the purchase of special equipment that addresses bedsores in long-term care. Frankly I found it embarrassing, because this was long overdue, that you were expecting staff to be working without the appropriate equipment. Since the announcement of that funding there has been little else said.

My question to the minister: Does the Minister of Health and Wellness understand what those in long-term care know, that pressure sores in the province of Nova Scotia are going to continue to increase if his department doesn't identify and fund the appropriate number of staff in our long-term care facilities?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I appreciate that the member acknowledged the good work that has been done over the past year with regard to steps being taken to, again, improve the quality of care, in this case specifically related to bed sores for people living in our long-term care facilities.

I think it is unfortunate that the member thinks there is little else that she had heard. In fact, we have taken steps to, for the first time, track these conditions throughout our facilities.

What I can advise the member is that we have seen a reduction of almost 13 or 14 per cent year over year from June to June, which was publicly posted. We will continue to publicly post this data. That helps us to improve, again, the quality of care and to identify where we need to focus our efforts.

BARBARA ADAMS: Like many industries, our seniors' care industry is facing staff shortages. These shortages were highlighted this year by the Minister's Expert

Advisory Panel on Long Term Care earlier this year, that we've been talking about, where they identified staffing as one of their main concerns - I say that it is the number-one concern.

Many of these cases of bed sores can be traced back to staffing shortages. Despite the best efforts of staff, if there aren't enough people to get the job done it is going to take a lot longer to solve the problem.

These staffing shortages aren't a new problem, but they don't seem to be the focus of the investment in the way the experts have recommended.

My question to the minister: How many new staff have been hired since the long-term care report, how many net new staff have been hired by the Department of Health and Wellness since the long-term report was released?

RANDY DELOREY: We don't hire the staff in these facilities. Staff are hired by the long-term care providers. Obviously, the member and I would disagree on the member's suggestion that we are not fulfilling the recommendations from the expert panel in the manner in which they suggested. In fact, we had representatives from the panel when we presented the update to Nova Scotians earlier in September of this year, and I made it very clear that they are very pleased with the progress of the work we continue to do with those representatives and others within the industry.

As far as improving access, one of those recommendations, because the panel recognized that it would take time to build the workforce availability to fill the vacancies that exist, is the need for a temporary - a new - position. That was one of the announcements we made in September, as well, just as was recommended.

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

H&W: LONG-TERM CARE - STAFFING

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, staffing shortages in long-term care facilities lead to dangerous working environments for both the caregivers and the care receivers. That's why the expert panel on long-term care identified staffing shortages as a top priority, although they failed to establish the recommended staffing levels.

Reports have shown that CCAs working in long-term care facilities, and nurses, have the highest rate of job injury of any occupation in the province. Overworked staff are often more susceptible to injury, and short staffing often leads to being overworked. We believe that the identification of appropriate staffing levels, and funding of such levels, is critical to reducing the injury rate of staff in long-term care facilities.

I'm wondering: Does the minister believe that staffing shortages are causing the high rate of job injury in long-term care; and is his government going to mandate that the long-term care panel come back to him with what he originally asked, which was appropriate staffing levels for long-term care.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Again, I appreciate that the member sees the value of the work that was done and the steps that this government took a year ago in establishing the expert long-term panel, recognizing the qualifications and the expertise of the members of that panel and the advice and recommendations they have made.

Where we seem to disagree on is that the member seems to continue to think that we are somehow not following those recommendations. Indeed, we are following those recommendations and the advice. If she reviews back to that panel and the recommendations, what they had identified was that there's a need to identify not just a defined number but rather a change in the system in terms of identifying the needs, the number and the type of support people in long-term care based upon the needs of the individuals in a given facility. That work is a very significant change; it requires additional work, and that work is ongoing in partnership with other organizations.

BARBARA ADAMS: I would like to advise the minister that I know exactly what the expert advisory panel on long-term care update report said. I have it right here, and I'll table it in case the minister would like to have another look.

Mr. Speaker, opening up the express entry immigration stream to caregiving professions is a first step in addressing the staffing shortages, and I applaud that. Reinstating the Nova Scotia Community College bursary was also a good step, although we have since learned that it's only temporary. The problem is, those solutions only help the CCAs of tomorrow. Under the NDP Government, the CCA training with that grant program rose from 500 per year to 1,000 per year for several years. Then this government stopped it immediately upon taking over. We have been undertraining CCAs by almost 500 per year, so that's what, over six years? Do the math.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Does he think that applying a grant for 115 people for the CCA grant program is going to compensate for the thousands and thousands that were untrained over the last six years that his government has been in power?

RANDY DELOREY: I'm pleased, again, that we can agree in the Legislature on the importance of the recommendations and the fact that the recommendations coming from the panel members indeed present a road map for us to follow as government to focus our efforts, Mr. Speaker, in the areas that will provide the biggest improvements and provide what was fundamentally the mandate to the expert panel - improve the quality of care for residents in our long-term care facilities.

That is what we asked that panel to do. That is what the focus of the recommendations within that panel came out with. We can see very clearly the progress we have made in returning the bursary. We have expanded and made investments in care and training; we have increased advertising; and we have been out engaging and continuing the work in the longer-term initiatives that they have highlighted.

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

ENVIRON.: ROUND TABLE ON ENVIRON. & SUSTAIN. - MEETINGS

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, the PC caucus has recently received a copy of a letter that was dated April 12, 2019. It's a letter sent to the then-Minister of Environment from the chair of the Minister's Round Table on Environment and Sustainability - and I will table that. The chair states that the round table had met once in August 2017 and again in May 2018 but had not been convened since then. Since that letter was dated April 12, 2019 - almost a full year since their previous meeting - my question to the Minister of Environment: Has the Round Table on Environment and Sustainability met since this letter was written?

HON. GORDON WILSON: I thank the member opposite for this question. I have been sitting here for a while waiting for one. Thank you very much, I appreciate it.

I would like to inform the House that the round table has met with myself. I have also met with the chairs. It's an important part of understanding where things are with them. I'm very pleased to say that that group has provided an awful lot of important feedback. I certainly do respect the work that they have done in the past, the work they have done with the previous minister. I'm very pleased to say that they bring a voice to Nova Scotians on what environmental opportunities and challenges we have, and I look forward to engaging them more in the future.

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, in that letter the chair states that in May 2018 it was the government's intention to bring new EGSPA legislation before the House last Fall and in the Fall of 2018. Shortly after communicating that, however, the round table was advised that there would be delays and that the director would provide an update to the round table likely later this Summer and definitely before September. As of April 12, 2019, the round table still hadn't received an update. I know that the government has promised EGSPA legislation this session, but if it isn't informed by the minister's own round table, then how well is it really thought out?

My question, through you to the Minister of Environment: Why has he put his own round table on the sidelines regarding this important legislation?

[2:45 p.m.]

GORDON WILSON: I thank the member opposite for the question. Again I'd like to answer as I did in the first one that yes, I had met with the round table and certainly would like to acknowledge what they've done in previous years to bring forward what I think is a very good cross-section of opinions on how we can do things and move forward. I certainly do feel also that they play an important role as we move forward.

I'd also like to note that we just finished public consultation on what I think is foundational information that we need. Going through that consultation, we're listening to a lot of Nova Scotians. Certainly, what we hear about the environment is important, and we will be bringing forward I think what I find would be the most encouraging, positive opportunities for us in the near future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Beaver Bank, on a new question.

ENVIRON.: ROUND TABLE REPORT - IGNORED

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I want to continue and return to the letter from the chair of the Minister's Round Table on Environment and Sustainable Prosperity. The round table in its 2017 report declared a now or never urgency. They said that EGSPA needs to be immediately changed to broadly support a viable economic future for Nova Scotia.

They added in that report that incremental adjustments must be kept quickly suspended by an accelerated strategy campaign to fulfill the Act's recharged intention and goals to meet the 2025 deadline. But the government hasn't acted urgently. They took a year and then another year, all the while it seems to me like they've been ignoring the round table that gave them the report in the first place.

My question, once again, to the Minister of Environment: Has he ignored the report of his own round table?

HON. GORDON WILSON: I thank the member opposite for the question, and for the third time I will tell the House that yes, I have sat down with the round table. Certainly, I value the information they provided us. I have been back and forth with them on a number of occasions, not only through their chairs but directly sitting down with them and speaking with them myself.

I will say that yes, we will be bringing forward legislation. It is based on what we hear from Nova Scotians and the round table plays an important part in that.

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I guess where my concern really lies here is that we do expect the EGSPA bill to be coming relatively soon. Public comments were invited on

August 27th. They stopped receiving those comments literally a month later, on September 27th. I hear there is legislation due to be coming forward, perhaps even before this session here ends.

I've been told by numerous groups - I know the minister has said he has - but I've been told by numerous groups that the minister has not met with that ministers' advisory group. My question is: Will the minister please forward me when he met with that environmental group?

GORDON WILSON: I thank the member opposite for the question. Again, I will reassure the members of this House that yes, indeed, I have met with the round table. I will assure this House that consultation is something I value very much.

I will also say to this House that we should be proud that we lead the nation in our greenhouse gas reduction. We should be proud of the fact that we lead the nation in our waste diversion. We should be proud of the fact that in almost all our environmental targets we are a national leader and we should be proud of that.

That is thanks to a lot of the good work that has been done and the advice that has been given to me not only by Nova Scotians but the support I have from my Premier, my colleagues, and also from the round table.

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

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness if he could answer the question about whether the eligibility requirements for who can go into long-term care were changed a few years ago in the Province of Nova Scotia.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 203.

Bill No. 203 - Crown Attorneys' Labour Relations Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 203, the Crown Attorneys' Labour Relations Act, be now read for a second time.

Since 2014, this government has been clearly and steadily focused on protecting the sustainability of our public services. We need to ensure that we can continue to provide the quality services that Nova Scotians rely on: education, health care, and the infrastructure needs of the province. That means carefully sticking to our fiscal plan so that we can afford to make critical investments in the things that matter most to Nova Scotians.

It also means investing in the public servants who provide those most important services to Nova Scotians. We respect the right of public sector employees and their representatives to a meaningful collective bargaining process and to fair agreements, but it must be done in the greater context of what is affordable for Nova Scotia's taxpayers.

Managing fiscal planning and collective bargaining in an environment with over 300 agreements and employers and 17 unions and associations is complex. Over the last four years, we have settled more than two thirds - that's approximately 200 out of the 300 collective agreements - all within a fair, affordable wage pattern and with no disruption to services to Nova Scotians.

We have eliminated the unanticipated spikes in wages. We have put our province on a more sustainable path. We are making investments in new health care facilities, in pre-Primary and inclusive education, in affordable housing, in highway twinning, and in community colleges. We need to stay on this path.

We are in this position because of our responsible fiscal management. Labour is our largest single expense, at 52 per cent of our budget. In fact, a 1 per cent increase in public sector wages across the board costs taxpayers of Nova Scotia \$52 million. This is not a one-time cost. It's added to the base costs, and we pay for it in perpetuity.

We have been disciplined in our approach to treat all public sector employees fairly and consistently. We have worked hard to bring predictability to our labour costs so that we can establish and maintain sustainable finances. This legislation supports those objectives.

Crown attorneys in Nova Scotia are the highest paid in Atlantic Canada. Their current proposal includes a 17-per-cent wage increase over four years, with other benefits. The package totals \$5.2 million annually for approximately 100 Crown attorneys. This is far above the established wage pattern of 7 per cent over six years or the extended wage

pattern of 10 per cent over eight years in agreements recently settled with our other public sector employees.

Our position is based on the established wage pattern. It is what we can afford. In the interest of fairness to other public sector employees, how can we give one group a 17-per-cent increase while others have respected the wage pattern of the province?

We value our Crown attorneys and the critical work they do for government and for Nova Scotians. We respect their right to a meaningful collective bargaining process, and we want them to have a fair agreement. However, this is a significant fiscal matter that we believe should not be decided through arbitration.

This legislation - the Crown Attorneys' Labour Relations Act - amends and overrides the current Crown attorneys' framework agreement, replacing arbitration with the right to strike to resolve interest disputes. It is in line with other lawyers who work in government. We would prefer an agreement that we could reach through negotiations. However, should Crown attorneys choose to strike, this legislation also protects public safety and the legal right to a timely trial by requiring that they maintain a level of essential services. This is important for those charged with an offense and also for the victims and survivors of crime.

The legislation also outlines a process and a timeline for job action and sets penalties for an illegal strike. This legislation is not a step we take lightly, but we have never backed away from the tough decisions that will bring about real change in the best interests of Nova Scotians.

This legislation does not impose a deal. We believe this legislation is necessary to maintain our fiscal plan, to ensure the sustainability of our public services, and to keep Nova Scotia on a path for economic growth and long-term success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I think it might be useful to orientate the members in the House as to what we are really talking about here because I think the further you get away from something, the less you understand the impacts.

If you don't have children in the school system, maybe you really don't appreciate the impact that a teacher has on the life of a family. If you are relatively healthy, maybe you don't understand how difficult it is to access health care in this province. If you've never been to Springville in Pictou East, maybe you don't understand the great inconvenience caused by the Springville Bridge being out of commission for over a year. And, if you've never been a victim of a crime, maybe you don't understand the importance of having a talented Crown attorney.

The members of this House, who may feel insulated from any one of those circumstances, may take comfort in a wage pattern. They may take comfort in a balanced budget. It is probably easier for the Premier to feed lines to the members about a balanced budget than it would be for the members here to really think about the numbers behind it - like the number of people on a wait-list. What does the graduation rate really mean in this province or the number of cases pending before the courts?

These are all things that we need to take a close look at and really understand what's happening when the Premier "saves money" on teachers, or when the Premier "saves money" by not having a sufficient number of doctors in this province, or when the Premier "saves money" at the expense of Crown attorneys.

Let's take a look at what really happens because, in the real world, outside the walls of this Chamber, that's called penny wise and pound foolish. Penny wise and pound foolish, Mr. Speaker. This province is being held back by a series of decisions that are made in isolation by this government, without considering the impact on the province as a whole.

We are living in a time of unprecedented economic growth. The world markets are very high. The world economy is doing very well. When that happens, all boats rise and the Nova Scotia boat has risen a little bit, for sure, as well, but nowhere near the real potential that this province has. When you hear the government talk about certain statistics and the sound bites that they pump through their members to push out into the community, it is easy to see how they are disconnected from reality.

The immigration file is one of my favourites because when you hear this government talk about immigration, you would believe that we are just leading the entire pack in immigration. The reality is much different. Yes, our population is at an all-time high. But here is the reality that's left out from the statement that they make about our population being at an all-time high.

We had somewhere in the range of 5,000 permanent residents last year in Nova Scotia, and we have a million people. Manitoba also has a million people and they have in the range of 15,000 permanent residents. Saskatchewan also has roughly a million people and they had 14,000. So when this government talks about our population being at an all-time high, yes, that's true, but the potential to do so much better is so obvious to everyone except this government.

We need to stand back and think about the ramifications of the minister's sound bites about the wage pattern. But what's really behind those numbers? What's really behind those numbers? I think when we do that we shouldn't gloss over the statements. I think what is important to do is stop and pause and think about what we're really talking about in this province.

[3:00 p.m.]

Eighty to a hundred Crown attorneys in this province handle approximately 42,000 cases per year. In a given year, that's somewhere between 400 and 500 cases per Crown. That's a very high number. That's a very high number when you look across the country. Our Crowns are being asked to do a lot.

These are cases that are, in most cases, very disturbing. Extreme violence, home invasion, robbery, sexual assault, human trafficking, child sexual abuse, and murder. When you think about some of the heinous crimes that we hear about that have happened in Nova Scotia in recent years, think about the ones that we haven't heard about.

I think about just in Halifax in 2017-18 - one year, just in Halifax - 25 homicides and 433 sexual assaults. Just in Halifax: 1,797 major assaults and 2,619 weapons offences. There's a lot of crime happening in this province, and who do you think is on the front lines? Our Crown attorneys.

Think about some of the convictions that they've had to keep our society functioning, to keep us all safer. Nicholas Butcher was found guilty of the second-degree murder of 32-year-old Kristin Johnston. We remember that. Imagine the memories of the Crown attorneys involved in that case, the images that they've seen, the testimony that they heard. Just imagine the impact that would have on a person. Myles Card, guilty of 14 charges, was charged for supplying drugs to young girls in exchange for sexual favours.

These are the situations that our Crowns are dealing with day in and day out. William Sandeson: found guilty of the first-degree murder of 22-year-old Taylor Samson. How would you like to have a look through the pictures in that file? How would you like to sift through that testimony and talk to the families of the victim on that?

Of course, the Halifax Shopping Centre shooting plot, they were convicted of conspiracy to murder. Just imagine the situations around that, and those are the convictions. Those are the situations that we just read about on a cursory glance through the paper. Those are situations where the victims of crime saw justice and perhaps some closure because of the work of our Crown attorneys.

Now try to imagine the memories of our Crowns, the memories ingrained in them, about the situations where a case couldn't proceed. Where they had to look a victim in the eye and say: I believe this person is guilty of that, but I can't proceed. How do you think that makes a person feel?

Pick up the paper today, just today in *the Chronicle Herald*: "Police lay charges after man suffers a life-threatening stab wound in Dartmouth;" "RCMP searching for two men after [a] home invasion . . . Victim alleges masked men were carrying a knife, possibly

a firearm.” Who will do the work to bring justice to those situations? A Crown attorney is the only person that will do it.

Every day, our Crowns are doing work that you and I and the members of this Chamber couldn’t possibly imagine. I know the minister doesn’t want to think about that. They’d rather think about the wage pattern. They’d rather think about the balanced budget and not the ramifications on real people. I know that’s easier, but we should never take the easy way when we’re on the floor of this Chamber.

I would encourage any of the members here who have a friend who’s a Crown, or know anyone who’s a Crown attorney, to ask them. Ask them what their work in the justice system is like. Ask them about some of the gruesome things that they’ve seen and that they’ve heard, some of the things they know that humans are capable of, and I think you’d find it pretty shocking.

Imagine if your job involved staring at a photo of a young girl who was shot in the face. Imagine if that was your job and then you had to close that, drive home, and have supper with your family, only to work on other files that evening. This is what we’re talking about.

The actions of our Crown attorneys have a dramatic impact on the outcome of a trial. That’s what we’re talking about: the delivery of justice. That’s what our Crown attorneys do. We rely on them so that the public can have the sense that the justice system is there to protect them and that people will be held accountable. They have a unique place in the justice system. They are there to serve and protect not only our most vulnerable citizens, but all of us every single day.

This is what we’re talking about: upholding the rights and freedoms of Nova Scotians. That’s what’s for debate on this floor today. The minister can flip that to a wage pattern, but we’re really talking about something much more important than the minister’s wage pattern. They’re doing their work under the constant pressure and scrutiny of the public.

We have lost over half of our Crown attorneys in the last 10 years. There has been a turnover of over half of our Crown attorneys in the last 10 years. Yes, our criminals are put away for a long time in many situations, but guess what happens after that? They get out, and threats are made against our Crown attorneys. One Crown attorney told me about the concern every night of putting their dog out; they’re worried somebody might shoot them across the fence. Threats are made on the floor of the courtroom about Crown attorneys. This is their life.

They have heard and seen things that will stick with them forever. They’re things that most of us simply can’t even imagine, can’t comprehend. While they’re going through their lives, quietly trying to keep us safe, flipping through gruesome, heartbreaking

pictures, we don't need to think about it because that's their job - until it's time to think about it. Today, right now, through this negotiation, it is time for all of us to think about it.

Why do Crown attorneys do what they do? That's a good question. When you consider working in a system that is completely overburdened, they're understaffed, and they're facing prosecutions that are increasingly complex. Of course, they're under the direction of the Supreme Court to do it quicker, to get things through the system quicker - all adding pressure to the crippling workloads of our Crown attorneys. The *Jordan* ruling is never far from their minds. The pressure is intense.

Yet, Nova Scotia's Crown attorneys proudly serve the public. What really motivates them? My impression from the Premier's comments is that he thinks they're motivated by money. He would go to the media and say: They're asking for this - and imply - isn't that outrageous? He wants everyone to think that our Crown attorneys are motivated by money. We know different. People who look at this situation know different. I talked to one Crown attorney who, after five years in private practice, was making \$200,000 and now, after 10 years as a Crown attorney, is making somewhere around \$110,000. This Premier would have you believe that that person is greedy.

Yes, compensation is part of everyone's equation in life. There's a simple reality: to attract quality candidates and entice them into the life of public service, they want to be paid competitively; they want to be paid fairly. If people aren't respected and aren't reasonably compensated, we can end up with less experienced practitioners working in the field, and justice may suffer.

Justice may suffer because that is the risk of what this government is doing today. Crown attorneys in Nova Scotia find themselves falling behind in terms of comparable earnings to other jurisdictions. I already mentioned their caseloads are higher. They're certainly falling behind people with similar experience working in private industry.

I asked a couple of Crown attorneys: What motivates you? Why are you doing this? One Crown attorney said: Like many Crown attorneys, I feel that it's the essence of being an advocate, fighting for justice, defending the rule of the law, and maintaining public safety. That's why that person is doing it. Another person said: I simply do it for gratitude, for the gratitude of seeing a victim's family come up afterwards, thanking me for bringing justice.

One Crown attorney told me that he is driven by correcting the imbalance of what can happen in life. He spoke about a young girl who was forced into prostitution and saying, who would ever believe me if I came forward? But working with that young person developed some trust, and ultimately, she had the confidence to come forward and speak.

They are not doing it for money; they are not doing it for money. The minister can drive the conversation there at every opportunity that she chooses to do so, but that's not

the reality of the situation. These are individuals who are highly educated, probably came out of school with a lot of debt but chose to enter a life of public service for those reasons that I mentioned. They want to be treated fairly. They want good will, and that feeling of good will is quickly dissipating.

We have the same issues with doctors in this province, and doctors in this province should be on notice because they are also in negotiations with this government. It's not about the money for physicians or Crowns, it's about a government valuing them. That is why we are here today: to raise voice to this issue.

They want to be valued because after spending your time consoling families and children who have had unthinkable things done to them, anyone who insinuates that you are doing it for money is a person who does not understand human nature. This is about a passion for justice. It's about a concern for community, and our Crown attorneys are some of the most passionate public servants that we have in this province.

We need far more of them and we need them more than they need us. What's happening with this bill - there will be an impact on morale. The actions of this government will impact the morale of our Crown attorneys, just like the actions of this government have impacted the morale of most public servants.

Nova Scotians want to feel safe, and feeling safe means having faith that those who commit crimes will be held accountable. That's all dependent on a competent justice system. If we don't have law and order, we can't have prosperity. That's the reality.

The Progressive Conservative caucus sees the value in the service provided by our Crown attorneys. That's why we asked in this session for more resources; we asked for more resources dedicated to human trafficking, which is a huge need.

Our Crown attorneys need support because if our justice system is not staffed by capable, competent, motivated candidates who want to see justice done, you are going to see what is happening in health care happen in the justice system. We've all seen and heard from people who know what it's like to wait for two years on a wait-list to see a specialist.

The equivalent in the justice system is that people walk. That's the equivalent in the justice system, that criminals are not held to justice. That is the outcome of a failing justice system. Who in this Chamber is ready to risk that, because that is what's being threatened.

What is happening here is an undermining of the Prosecution Service's ability to compete for, attract, and retain diverse and qualified attorneys and ask them to do public service in very challenging and highly valuable criminal prosecution roles.

This service is vital to protecting the safety of all Nova Scotians and ensuring that justice is done and seen to be done for the victims of crime.

Mr. Speaker, when the morale drops there are ramifications - unintended, unknown, whatever the case may be, there are ramifications. If this government continues the process of under-supporting, undervaluing our Crown attorneys, the risk is that more matters will get adjourned, which will cause stress on victims and on witnesses, and will add extra expense to a system that is already stressed out.

As a very practical matter, it could take longer to run through files, and that's a very possible outcome. Maybe cases are even dropped because they don't have the resources to follow them through all the way, might be tempted to take a plea on a certain case so they can get to other case files.

[3:15 p.m.]

There are very real ramifications. Any malaise in the Prosecution Service will have an impact on the way people function. It's human nature. This is not an area where we want to see our Crown attorneys feeling under-valued and under-respected. The members opposite can turn a blind eye to the possible ramifications and stick to the speaking notes that they've been handed, but the ramifications are real.

Let's talk about this particular negotiation and then let's give it its place in history, Mr. Speaker. Imagine you are involved in intense negotiations and it's moving forward but it's tense, but you want to have confidence in the process. I was in business 20 years and have been involved in a lot of negotiations. They're hard work. Then the province says, you're asking for this amount, we only want to give this amount. You're expecting there will be an actual negotiation and some settlement somewhere in between.

The next thing you hear is that there's a piece of legislation that has been introduced at Province House to change the whole process, a complete disrespect for the process. And you hear that you've been legislated away from something you bargained for the year before. No negotiation in this province should unfold in that way when the government is involved.

This is a government that at every opportunity, in any negotiation with any public servants, deals in bad faith. Everything is bad faith about what happened here. When you have a government that agrees to a process and then doesn't like the way the process is unfolding so just throws it out the window and legislates something, that is called bad faith.

Yesterday I listened to the Premier in his scrums as he divulged details from negotiations with the Crowns. In the scrums he divulged the details of the negotiations. Now those negotiations, like any negotiations, were intended to be without prejudice,

meaning they can't be used against you. Yet the first time the Premier got a microphone in his face he does what he likes to do and that is engage in bad faith with Nova Scotians.

The negotiation style itself of this government is well known. They don't, Mr. Speaker, because they don't know how. If they don't like the terms? Fine; they'll legislate out of them.

What's the point in negotiating to begin with, when you know the fix is already in? With this government the fix is always in before the charade starts. This is a province that has very little respect for the time and resources of the groups that they are negotiating against, and they are perfectly content to waste it because they know that the fix is in from the beginning.

How on earth can any group be expected to negotiate in good faith if the person on the other side of the table has complete disregard for the fundamental principles of negotiation? They don't value the process. That's the pattern of this government and it says a lot about this government. It says much more about this government than it does about those Nova Scotians who try to act in good faith with them.

Every time this government does this it's an admission of defeat by the government. It's their acknowledgement that they don't know how to negotiate. They don't have the capacity to do it so therefore they run away and hide from it.

We can talk about the actual issues of the contract because this is a contract. We are not amending a piece of legislation here. This is a new piece of legislation to get this government out of a contract that it signed. This is a contract that was reached in good faith years ago, and I'm going to talk about that, but what it says about this government is that, as a government, they've reached the stage where they have complete disregard for contracts. We've seen that in a number of ways, where they have complete disregard for a process and, quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, in many cases have complete disregard for the Charter, because that is a reflection of this work.

The truth of the matter is - and I heard the minister talking about giving the right to strike - the Crown attorneys don't want the right to strike. The minister says that they could choose that, but that's not what they want because they know what will happen if any one of them misses one day. If any one of them misses one day, they understand the ramifications.

By the way, Crown attorneys are public servants. They're public servants who have some of the lowest sick time. These are dedicated public servants, and one day out - just one day out - for any of our Crown attorneys could cause their entire docket for the day to be adjourned - not until tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, but until it can get back on the docket, which could be a year from now.

One Crown attorney shared some of his caseload with me. On his caseload he has three dangerous offenders, three homicides, twelve sexual assaults, and a shooting. Which one of those would the members opposite like to see adjourned and pushed out for a year? That's what we're talking about.

Crown attorneys don't want to strike. In fact, four years ago, they reached a deal with this government - with this government. I believe the Premier might have signed it himself. They reached a 40-year agreement that ensured labour harmony between the province and its Crown attorneys for decades. That's what they reached four years ago, and both sides agreed to a system of binding arbitration when they couldn't agree to a contract. The idea is that contract negotiations would carry on in good faith, and when necessary, when an agreement couldn't be reached, it would go to arbitration.

That's a contract that ensured that our justice system would never be disrupted as a result of contract negotiations with the province. It's a contract that this government signed but doesn't like today, so they're moving away from it and instead almost encouraging our Crown attorneys to go on strike. It's really hard to fathom, Mr. Speaker.

Under the contract that this government signed, our Crown attorneys agreed to negotiate in good faith and only use the binding arbitration process in the event that a resolution could not be reached. This was supposed to be the exception, not the rule - only when a negotiation didn't result in an agreement.

Therefore Nova Scotians were, under the terms of the contract, guaranteed zero disruption to the criminal justice system during times of labour negotiations. The Liberal Government signed on to that deal. They signed it in writing. It was considered a win for both sides, and more importantly, it was considered a win for Nova Scotians - zero disruption to the justice system.

Now here we are, four years later, with the same government, and they're standing here in this House, attempting to pass legislation because they no longer wish to honour the contract that they made. That is the very definition of bad faith. That is exactly what's happening here. How can the people of this province have trust in a government that has been dishonest with the Crown attorneys, that has engaged in bad faith in negotiations with the Crown attorneys, the very people who we're asking to uphold the province's laws? This government is acting in bad faith against them.

How can any individual, how can any organization, have faith going forward that this government will honour the contracts it enters into with them? They simply can't, Mr. Speaker. There is no reason to trust this government to uphold any contract it signs because we know very clearly from this piece of legislation that as soon as they don't like the way negotiations are going, the contract's out the window and they are going to come to this Chamber and try to rewrite it. That's the way this government operates, time and time again.

Crown attorneys are only asking that the government honour the contract, and that doesn't seem like an unreasonable ask to me. We are fortunate to have the quality of the Crown attorneys we have in this province. We should be respecting them. The least we can do as a province to respect them is honour the contract that we signed with them.

I know it has been kind of a strategy of the Premier to negotiate, belittle, and misrepresent things when he doesn't like what somebody has said. He doesn't have any problem whatsoever misrepresenting the facts (Interruption) My colleague says anyone who has heard Question Period knows that.

You can't take somebody who is doing public service and belittle them, Mr. Speaker. This government has done that a number of times.

According to the department, the department has costed - I'll call it the opening ask of the Crown attorneys at \$2.6 million. I don't know about that number, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't seem that accurate, but that's the department's number so for purposes of this we'll say that's the way the department costed the opening ask.

Now most people would think that in a negotiation it might come down a little bit, but the Premier went to the media and said that basically agreeing with the Crown would cost the province \$500 million. That's what the Premier said, Mr. Speaker. The minister is confirming it now. But it's interesting that the Premier said \$500 million yesterday, and in the minister's opening comments she said \$52 million. I don't know, maybe there's not much difference to this government between \$52 million and \$500 million. Maybe the minister will clarify the number. The minister has asked me to do the math on the \$500 million, but if the department says \$2.6 million and the Premier spins that to \$500 million, that's a gross misrepresentation - bad faith.

This is the way that this government operates in terms of trying to suggest that paying the Crowns with something close to competitive is the same thing as being forced to give a raise to 5,000 civil servants. Mr. Speaker, that's fearmongering at its height; that's what that is.

If I pull this all together, we have a Liberal Government that is continuing a trend of trying to undermine the prosecutorial independence by legislating out of a contract that was entered into in good faith. This legislation is at the expense of justice, that's what this legislation is at the expense of.

The Premier plans to save money from this initiative - "save" - but there will be a huge social price to this type of action. When I talked about the types of cases that come before our Crown attorneys and the need to be able to attract and retain Crown attorneys - and there will also be a very significant cost by way of a court challenge because this legislation will be challenged in courts. It will be very expensive to the taxpayers of this province, and we can add that to the big, hefty bill to the taxpayers of this province for a

multitude of other court challenges that are happening against this government for the way it treats Nova Scotians.

What does the simple act of removing the right to arbitration really mean in the grand scheme of things? Quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, in this province this Act is a total affront to history. Nova Scotia is the birthplace of an independent Public Prosecution Service and that goes back to 1990 and the findings of the Royal Commission on the Donald Marshall prosecution. Nova Scotia is the holy ground when it comes to the independence of the Prosecution Service, and Nova Scotia knows sadly all too well what can happen when that independence is not protected.

With this move many will say that this government has yet again taken steps to try to undermine the independence of the judiciary. This will be familiar to those who are watching along. It's part of a systematic approach from this government to undermine the integrity of the system. They invested time and resource - and members of this House will remember this situation around the appointment of the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court - they invested time and resources in forming a committee to make a recommendation. The history of that process is that the Minister of Justice accepts the recommendation, respects the work of the committee, respects the input of the judges from across the entire province.

[3:30 p.m.]

We know what happened in the recent appointment here, where the minister just unilaterally rejected the recommendation of the committee. Why, Mr. Speaker? He didn't like it, just rejected it out of hand and said, I can do it so that's what I'm doing. He overstepped his reach into the judicial branch when he did that. This government did that for their motivations and we, on this side of the House, know what they are.

Next it was the Provincial Court judges. A process was followed, where recommendation was made on the compensation for the Provincial Court judges. Once again, this government ignored the report of an independent body. The court stepped in and told the province they had to pay. They didn't, so now they're taking that case all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada.

This is a pattern with this government, Mr. Speaker; when they don't like something, they ignore it and try to go another way. Any bets on what will happen with the PC caucus's action to have this government stop hiding the management fee around the ferry situation? What do you think will happen when the courts say they have to disclose it? They will probably take it to the Supreme Court because that's the way this government acts.

Today's legislation is just furthering a trend of overstepping. That's the trend of this government. The reason the Prosecution Service was separated to begin with was to

make sure that the wishes of elected officials never encroached on the performance of justice. They should never encroach on the performance of justice.

Yesterday the Minister of Finance said that the minister's government can't rely on an arbitrator because the province can't afford to be bound by a decision that they would have no control over - no control over. The minister is not even trying to hide the province's position. They won't work with any arbitrator that they can't control, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're talking about.

This means, perhaps, that they're willing to work with an arbitrator that they can control, Mr. Speaker, but if not, they'll take it to the Legislature and change it.

If we remember the situation with the judges, who are now forced into court themselves by this government, to protect judicial independence - just remember that situation, Mr. Speaker, as you consider that the public expects the people elected to government to uphold and protect the principles of democracy and the rule of law. That is the expectation. That is the expectation, and we are all being let down on that.

The public must have faith in the criminal justice system. That's the point, Mr. Speaker. They must have faith. The Premier can talk consistently on his talking points all he wants but I would ask him two questions. I would ask these questions if I thought the Premier would answer sincerely. I would ask: If Nova Scotians can't access a doctor, are we successful as a province? I would ask the Premier: If those who commit crimes are not held accountable, are we winning as a province? The answer to those questions is "no" and "no".

We can have a series of talking points that try to give people the impression that things are just fine, but they are not just fine. We can't remove ourselves from the reality of what is happening in this province, what's happening to Nova Scotians.

With this bill the province is demonstrating a lack of respect for public safety. They don't want to bargain with the Crown attorneys. Apparently, they want them to go on strike instead, Mr. Speaker. They are challenging the Crown attorneys to go on strike.

When Crown attorneys are not in the courtroom, it's not like ten widgets didn't get made that day, Mr. Speaker. Cases are tossed out, criminals go free - murderers, rapists, people committing sexual assaults. That's what we're talking about here. This is what happens when our Crown attorneys are not at work. The Liberals can call them names and spin it however they want, but it doesn't make the public any safer. This has to be about public safety. In fact, the opposite of what is public safety is what's happening here. Public safety is always at risk when there is an erosion of the justice system.

I do want to go back to the minister's comment that the Crown attorneys can choose to strike. By moving forward with this bill, it's as if they wish to incite disruption to the

justice system. But the Crown attorneys agreed not to strike for 40 years, that is what they agreed to. Why does this government now wish to pass legislation that reverses that? That is what Nova Scotians should ask themselves. Why does this government wish to pass legislation that reverses a contract that ensured there wouldn't be a strike for 40 years?

By removing the process of binding arbitration and substituting it with an invitation for Crown attorneys to strike, the government has shown its carelessness, its irresponsible and reckless actions. That's what we have here, and it certainly demonstrates a lack of understanding of the importance of the criminal justice system.

Crown attorneys don't want disruptions in the system, but it appears that the government is prepared to welcome it for fear that an arbitrator might decide a fair compensation. That's what they're doing; they are afraid that an arbitrator might decide a fair compensation.

At the same time, while this bill does establish the right to strike, it actually renders the ability to strike nearly non-existent. It really can't happen under the essential service wording of this bill.

So, on the one hand, this government challenges, but on the other hand it knows that it can't happen. On the one hand, this government sits down to a pretend negotiation, and on the other hand it knows that's not happening either. That's what this government is all about, and if they force an action that causes more stress on our already over-burdened system, we will all pay a price. The entirety of our society will pay a price.

Of course, the *Jordan* case lingers large over everything. If a matter is delayed in Provincial Court for more than 18 months, and not by the fault of the accused, it can be thrown out. Regardless of intentions, that is a possible ramification if a labour action happens, which is not necessary - wouldn't have happened for 40 years, but the minister and the government have set up a situation where that is an eventuality that they are seemingly willing to accept, and I don't get it.

Crown attorneys are asking only for the right to be heard. They are asking only for the right to negotiate; that's all they are asking for, but the province has said, no, we will not negotiate with you. We would rather see you strike than negotiate with you. That's a public safety risk, and it is demeaning and disrespectful to our Crown attorneys.

Our Crown attorneys, like every other Nova Scotian who provides a service for this province, are asking this government to conduct itself in the same good faith, with the same honesty and integrity that they do; that is all that we are asking about here.

Honesty and integrity mean honouring the previous contract. It means honouring the previous 40-year agreement. It means not legislating this fundamental, constitutional right away. It means honouring your word. That's what it means, Mr. Speaker.

I would ask the members of this Chamber, as they vote on this bill, to think about what we're talking here. What we're talking about is victims and their families. Think about those victims and their families as you vote on this bill. How would you like to look a victim, or the family of a victim, in the eye and say, the Premier "saved" \$2 million, but I'm sorry that we can't proceed on this case? That's not a savings, Mr. Speaker.

My final thought on this bill is in terms of murderers, rapists, robbers. It is the Crown and only the Crown that stands between the perpetrators and the public. The Crown attorneys are the people who are committed to upholding justice for victims in this province. We should never, as we sit on the floor of this Chamber, get so far away from an issue that we don't understand the ramifications.

With those few words, I hope the members understand what's at risk here today.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to remind our guests in the gallery that it's not proper, according to the Rules of this House, to show favour or displeasure to anything happening on the floor of the House.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, this is quite a fancy sounding title: An Act Respecting the Labour Relationship between Her Majesty in Right of the Province and the Nova Scotia Crown Attorneys' Association. Let us call it what in fact it is: a cynical and dirty ploy on the government's part . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party we're getting a little fancy, to use your words, with our language. We'll bring that back to parliamentary terms.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, could I ask for clarification? Is the word dirty or the word cynical what you're finding non-legislative?

THE SPEAKER: Both.

GARY BURRILL: The word cynical is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker?

THE SPEAKER: In the context in which you present it.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I find it alarming, when what is at issue before us is a matter of the trustworthiness of the government as an agent in negotiation, that to

characterize the government's failure to conduct itself in a trustworthy manner in a negotiation, one may not think of it as evincing what is normally called cynicism. I would be happy to have a proper synonym suggested. But I mean no disrespect or nothing of the order of mere insult. I mean to evoke something with precision. That is to say, that which is manipulative and absent of principle. I take that to be what cynical means.

I think it is a reasonable thing to say that what we have before us is an Act which is manipulative and devoid of principle, and therefore, at a core level, unworthy. I want to say that what we have before us is a piece of legislation that is manipulative, that is devoid of principle, and for these reasons is to be regarded in every full sense of that word, as unworthy.

It's unworthy. It's unprincipled. It is manipulative on the government's part to undercut and undermine the collective bargaining process between the government and this group of civil servants by means of this piece of legislation. It is unworthy, it is manipulative, it is lacking in principle, first, because it does something profoundly dishonourable, it does something entirely immoral, it does something that is quite unfair. It changes the rules of the game. It changes bargaining in the middle of the process of the bargaining - in the middle, so to say, of the game, in the middle of the negotiations.

[3:45 p.m.]

This bill does away with arbitration for the Crown attorneys, arbitration which had been part of a multi-decade framework agreement itself arrived at in the context of a previous negotiation, a negotiation in the process of which no doubt when considering the arbitration provision agreement, other things would have been given up. Now to simply remove arbitration not as a result of a negotiation, not as an effect of a process, but by fiat, so to say by hammer, by means of legislation - this is what I am proposing is simply dishonourable and wrong.

The phrase "good faith," Mr. Speaker, is very, very meaningful. Sometimes people think of that phrase as a phrase that has meaning only in a juridical context, when we're talking about technical matters of labour relations, but in fact the phrase good faith, as it is used in the idea of good faith bargaining, is something very important. What good faith refers to is something on which really the glue and coherence of not just governance but society in general depends. After all, what is someone with whom one can do business, with whom one can negotiate in good faith? Someone of whom we can say, this is someone whose conduct we understand is, at some deep level, fair.

We think of someone of whom we may say, that is a person who I may not necessarily agree with, with whom sometimes I have contentions, but a person of good faith, a body of good faith. We think of that as a body or as a person, as an entity for whom commitments have some substance, for whom commitments are not simply frivolous, to

be thrown out the window when inconvenient, for whom the idea of committing oneself to a principle is something that has some meaning.

We think of the idea of an entity, a body, a person of whom we would say we can negotiate with that entity in good faith. We think of that as some body, or entity, which is or who is a reliable partner because there is about them in some comprehensive way the element of that which is trustworthy.

This bill demonstrates that exactly this element of good faith is what is absent in the Liberal Government that is before us. It is a bill which is unprincipled, which is manipulative and which is unworthy on the government's part also because it substitutes government fiat, it substitutes majority government control for the much more delicate, the much more important in a democracy process of bargaining, reasoning, sharing different thoughts and coming through a process of negotiation and bargaining to an agreement through negotiation.

Now the capacity, Mr. Speaker, to negotiate is not something that is to be taken lightly or taken for granted. The capacity to negotiate to a successful agreement is something that is a real skill, and like all real skills it is present in some people and absent in others. Like all real skills it is one that can be learned or one that can be ignored.

We look at the present government and think about its relationship, let us say, with teachers. What other judgment can we come to but to say here was a case of an entity, a government, which did not evince the skill in the art of negotiation in order - by means of negotiation - to come to a successful conclusion? The skill of negotiation there was not present.

We look in the case of health care workers and we think, was the skill of negotiating through contrary opinions - through the difficult back and forth by which people of different readings come to a common line - was that skill in any way present there? We can't say that it was at all. In fact, that skill in that case of health care workers was entirely absent.

In the present situation, we add Crown lawyers to the list of those with whom the government has lacked the capacity. We add Crown prosecutors to the list of those with whom the government has lacked the competence. We add Crown attorneys to the list of those with whom the government has plainly just lacked the skill, which is needed, to have different readings of a situation and come to an agreement - a shared picture by means of a negotiation.

The bill is, Mr. Speaker, unworthy. It is devoid of principle. It is manipulative because also, at its core, it contains a misrepresentation. The government presents what it is doing here as extending the right to strike to this group of civil servants when that is, in

reality, the opposite of what it's doing. What it's doing is imposing a regime of essential services so as to make the right to strike meaningless and entirely without effect.

In its presentation of this legislation to the public of our province, the government has taken X and said here, public of Nova Scotia, I want you to look at Y. The government has taken A in this legislation and has said to the people of this province, have a look here at what we're bringing forward - it's not A, it's B. This adds to the injury of depriving collective bargaining rights the insult of presenting that as the opposite of what it is.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say plainly - none of this speaks well. None of it speaks well of the authors of this legislation. This bill is manipulative. It is lacking in principle. It is unworthy in that the government's discourse here presents arbitration as though it were some kind of terrible, unmitigated evil to be avoided at all costs, while the opposite is in fact the case.

Arbitration is an honourable process by which disagreeing parties turn to a third neutral party for resolution of a dispute. The importance of such a neutral third party to resolve disputes of this sort in the labour negotiations field is something that is recognized in the present essential services regime as it applies to health care. There's a provision there for third party resolution of disputes about the designation of essential services by reference to the Labour Board. No such provision exists in this legislation for Crown attorneys.

As one listens to the Premier and the ministers of the government speak about this legislation, one is inclined to ask: What is it that we are supposed to be in such knee-shaking quivering fear of an arbitrator? Now we know that in the case of the sort of Crown attorneys that an arbitrator is going to have a look at this when they're given the opportunity, and one of the things that they would certainly consider would be national comparisons, but what in the world is wrong with that?

To listen to the government speak about this, one would think that Nova Scotia civil servants ought not to be compared with civil servants elsewhere in the country. To listen to the government speak about arbitration as some kind of terrible unbearable evil, one would think that Nova Scotia teachers ought not to expect what is expected by teachers elsewhere in the country. To listen to the government speak about arbitration, you'd think our health care personnel in Nova Scotia don't have every reasonable right to be considered on a par with their counterparts across the country - which, of course, they certainly do.

I think about my own vocation. I'm a minister. If my tradition, the United Church of Canada, were to bring in a rule by which ministers in Nova Scotia were not to be considered in the same compensation category as ministers in Manitoba or Ontario, every United Church congregation in the province would be in revolt, and justly so.

After all, this principle, which would be at the core of an arbitration, this thing that the Premier speaks of as though at all costs it must be avoided, this principle of national

comparatives by means of which to come up with a final agreement - this is the very principle on the basis of which we have determined the salary of the Premier of Nova Scotia.

The Premier of Nova Scotia has a salary that is based on a national comparative. In fact, it places him as the third-highest-paid Premier in the country and the Premier with the highest top-up of any Premier in the country. The sauce here seems to be good for the goose, but not good for any of the Nova Scotia civil service ganders.

Further, I find the Premier's continued denigration of arbitrators and arbitration, as he speaks about this case - I find it to be unseemly and out of order. We have all heard this from the Premier multiple times. I just heard it in interviews the Premier was giving in the hall. He speaks about how we are not going to have any unelected arbitrator doing X, Y, and Z, and thus and so, as though to be, oh my heavens, an unelected arbitrator. As though this were some terrible thing to be feared, an unelected arbitrator.

What an extraordinary disrespect of the many people, all of whom are unelected, who provide adjudicatory and provide advisory and provide parallel related services. Are judges not to have the capacity to judge because they're not elected? Are commissioners of electoral boundaries commissions not to be able to bring in recommendations about electoral boundaries because they're not elected?

This is silly, and it amounts on the Premier's part to what I want to call a gratuitous denigration of a whole group of people who make significant contributions to Nova Scotian society for the narrow, petty, partisan purpose of the government manipulating their position in these negotiations for political purposes of their own.

For all these reasons, this bill is unworthy. It is manipulative. It is unprincipled. It's further unworthy and manipulative and unprincipled because it's based on the government's complete mischaracterization of the situation. The Premier speaks repeatedly about the variants between the 7 per cent that the government is prepared to offer and the 17 per cent that, from the Crown Attorneys, is on the table.

But this difference of 10 per cent between the 7 per cent and the 17 per cent - as it has been presented by the Premier - is not as it has been presented. It's not in any way a set-in-concrete matter. What it is, rather, is exactly what the Premier and this minister and their government appeared never to be able to understand, namely this: a negotiating position.

This bill, in our judgment, is unworthy of any body that would stand and call itself the government of Nova Scotia. It is offensive. It is manipulative. It is to be opposed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, the rule of law is the foundation upon which our society and our country are built. Our Crown attorneys here in Nova Scotia are dedicated professionals committed to the public good and to working to keep the residents of the province safe. These highly trained professionals are the gatekeepers of our legal system and its process.

A few short years ago, the Crown attorneys signed a supposed long-term agreement that sacrificed compensation for the right to arbitration so that their compensation could be calculated without the right to strike and without threatening to paralyze our justice system.

[4:00 p.m.]

Now the government, in the midst of negotiations that obviously were not going in their favour, has introduced this legislation. The legislation effectively terminates the current arbitration process and lays out: the Crown attorneys and the province shall within 20 days come to a decision as to essential services.

The Crown attorneys cannot strike without this agreement on essential services nor can the province lock them out without the same. But at what level would services be considered essential - 25 per cent, 50 per cent of staffing levels? What metrics? Proceeding with 25 per cent of cases, winning 30 per cent of cases, what have you?

We are talking about Crown attorneys. Given their extensive workloads - and responsibilities, for that matter - I put forward that 100 per cent of their services and staff are essential. If this is the case, then giving them the right to strike is a non-starter because 100 per cent essential leaves zero per cent for striking.

For argument's sake, let's assume that 40 per cent of the Crown attorneys were to be agreed upon as essential. Well, what level of work would be considered essential? Where does essential stop and elective start? Is a preliminary trial essential? Is research and preparation time essential? What about the trial itself?

Mr. Speaker, for Crown attorneys to competently and successfully execute their duties, it is readily apparent that it is all essential but, more important, it is the law. It is the legal system. Every step of the process is essential.

Furthermore, under the Charter of Rights, Section 11(b), it provides that the accused have the right to an expedient trial: for cases that appear before Provincial Court, 18 months; for matters that end up in Supreme or Superior Court, that time frame is 30 months. As such, unlike with elective surgery, when it comes to the rights of the accused to a speedy trial, delaying their case beyond 18 months, in the case of a provincial matter, is not like delaying hip surgery. In 18 months the accused walks but the patient can still hobble.

I wonder if, say, 40 per cent cannot replace 100 per cent, at what point during a lockout or strike would the government be forced to outsource prosecutorial services to the private sector to cover this short-staff situation? Further, at what cost? Take a Crown attorney making in the \$90,000 range - that's around \$40 to \$50 an hour, which entails a lot of overtime that, of course, is not billable. But that same individual that is brought in from the private sector - well, their billable rate is \$300 to \$400 and they will be billing overtime.

I'm wondering, from a dollars-and-cents perspective, the costs this government's chosen path may lead us down. Is it going to be cheaper or is it going to be more expensive? What about these private practice lawyers? How will they be vetted for their ability and expertise? Will they have the required knowledge, sensitivity, and training to handle prosecutorial duties? Who will vet these private lawyers?

Going down this path, we see the real risk of all sorts of legal appeals and lost cases. I feel that if we go down the path that this legislation lays out, we will find ourselves in 10 years' time looking back at this point as a turning point. No longer will some of the best and brightest legal minds be inclined to take a pay cut from private practice to join an underpaid prosecutorial system. I fear this will result in a decline in the overall quality and effectiveness and integrity of the justice system, with more cases being appealed and more cases possibly being lost. When the people see their justice system becoming ineffective, what will their reaction be?

Our Crown attorneys have continually put public service over self-interest, but I see a parallel - I hope not. Earlier this year, doctors in my hometown of North Sydney and the neighbouring community of Glace Bay stopped admitting patients to their hospitals, and the reason was compensation. Doctors were being compensated in certain hospitals and not in theirs. They said that finally they'd had enough. For doctors to reach that breaking point, it was surely a difficult decision for them. I fear the day when our tireless Crown attorneys get to that same point.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, it would be a stretch to say that I am pleased to rise and speak to this bill, but I feel that it is an important thing to do. Sometimes, when we have bills like this before the Legislature, bills that are important, that are offensive to some of us at least, we take the time to say our piece. Many members will speak, and we do that to lay out the case for why the bill, in this case anyway, is so pernicious. We do it to make sure that those listening understand that we grasp the seriousness of the issue.

Sometimes, hearing members say the same thing over and over again in this Chamber can be frustrating. It can be frustrating for the people listening, and for some of us it can be frustrating. Why would we say the same thing over and over again? Sometimes it's necessary, and this is one of those times.

This is one of those times because from the moment that this bill was introduced - in fact, I would go so far as to say, based on my conversations before that, almost everything that the government has said is almost the exact opposite of what the government is doing. I think in this case it's incumbent upon all of us in the Opposition to take the time to unpack what is going on.

I'll start with the fact that this is a Finance and Treasury Board bill. When we were invited to a confidential briefing with 45 minutes' notice about a Finance and Treasury Board bill that was going to be introduced, none of us had any idea what it would be. We were of course shocked to find out that this bill would be introduced at all, but we were doubly perplexed that it was being introduced as a Finance and Treasury Board bill. I would submit that that decision is not one of good governance; it's not one of clear executive Cabinet responsibility.

It was a PR decision, frankly. It was decided that this bill, that this decision of the government, should be framed for the general public as a finance issue so that the real issues at play in this bill, namely the continued trampling of collective bargaining rights, of fair dealing, and of respect for our justice system, could somehow be occluded. There was some sense that maybe if we call it something else, everyone will believe it is something else.

When we sat down to hear about this bill, what were we told? This is a bill that gives the right to strike to Crown attorneys. When I sat with my staffer in the room when they announced that bill, she sent me a text. It had one word, and it said, "weird." Again, we thought, well that's weird, why are we being briefed on a bill that gives Crown attorneys the right to strike? But no, it's not a bill that gives Crown attorneys the right to strike, as we have now heard from several people in this Chamber.

I would submit that what the government has done the last 24 or 36 hours is essentially tried to put lipstick on a pig. They are presenting a bill that will be unpopular; they are presenting a bill that is quite possibly unconstitutional; and they are presenting a bill that flies in the face of all of the former commitments they made when they were in Opposition. Now they're saying that this bill exists to protect people's Charter rights under Section 2(d) to collective bargaining and that it gives Crown attorneys the right to strike, but we'll come back to that in a moment.

When we heard this bill introduced on the floor of this House today, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board began by speaking about everything but anything that this bill has to do with. She talked about pre-Primary; she talked about all kinds of things. But she didn't talk about the fact that the government has decided to unilaterally change a contract with an essential sector of the public service that they themselves negotiated.

The minister also spoke about fairness to other public sector employees. I think you would be hard pressed to find many public sector employees in the province who feel like they have been dealt with fairly in the last six years. (Applause.)

The government is saying almost the exact opposite of what's true. Having sat in this Chamber for two and a half years, I can say that it can almost be vertigo-inducing sometimes because you hear these words, and they're sort of meant to mean one thing, and they mean almost the exact opposite. Even with legal training - I did a stint in Legislative Counsel, although I can't do what these guys do - I struggle every day to understand the details of the legislation that is put forward because, quite frankly, I don't think it's going too far to say that it is designed to confuse.

I think the Leader of our Party spoke about the fancy title of the bill. It's not just the title; it's the whole bill. It doesn't speak to what is actually happening in this bill, respecting the rights of public sector employees. This does not respect the rights of public sector employees.

This bill takes away their right to strike, and I'll talk about why in a second. First I want to join some of the comments of my colleagues and talk about what Crown attorneys do. A lot of us would have some understanding of what Crown attorneys do from television, from American television in particular. But that doesn't go far enough. That doesn't actually talk about what they do.

In my experience, watching the work of Crown attorneys when I worked at the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society, doing a short articling rotation through the Crown office in British Columbia, and being in dialogue with Crown attorneys, the essence of their role is really to uphold the integrity of our justice system.

When there is a criminal matter in a courtroom, the accused has the right to be defended. But the Crown attorneys don't just prosecute; they are there to uphold the integrity of the Crown, and they do that. They do that on nights and weekends and at the expense of their own families. Not only do they do that, but in my experience, actually they do that with a tremendous amount of clarity and resilience and often even joy. Not joy at the darkness of the work, but joy at the service that they know they are providing.

Mr. Speaker, here's what this bill does. This bill unilaterally changes a contract between the Crown prosecutors association and the government. It is not a collective agreement because the Crowns do not have a union. It is a contract. It is a contract that was fairly negotiated between this government and this group of public servants, and it is a 30-year contract. When the contract was negotiated, this group of employees agreed to take what they saw as an inferior financial package in exchange for arbitration.

The Premier of this province was on the front page of the newspaper signing that contract. That right to a third-party determination - the one which the government cannot,

in any good conscience, allow Nova Scotia taxpayers to shoulder - is a right that was given to this group of public servants by this government, Mr. Speaker. So, it is beyond credulity that now we are told that suddenly it's an emergency; suddenly this right needs to be taken away because they want to use it. How can anyone bargain in good faith with this government when at any moment anything before them can be taken away through threat, fiat, or legislation? It is beyond bad faith.

[4:15 p.m.]

We know that this legislation is coming at this time because the Crown attorneys and the government are at the bargaining table and they are too far apart. Our understanding is that the Crown attorneys were asked if they would accept the changes contemplated in this bill, although probably laid out in a less confusing way, and the answer was, absolutely not, why would we do that?

So then what happened? Did the government try to negotiate, or did they come back with a better offer? No, Mr. Speaker. They introduced legislation that had clearly already been written. They introduced legislation the very next day. Not only did they do that, but as we were being briefed on the legislation - as media was being briefed on the legislation - the Crown didn't even know it was coming. How on earth, Mr. Speaker, can this government say that this has anything to do with good faith?

This bill takes away, as I said before, the right to send something to arbitration. What the government says the bill does is that, in its place, it gives the Crown attorneys the right to strike, but here's the kicker, Mr. Speaker. In order to strike, the government and the Crown must agree within 20 days - less than three weeks - on what essential services must be in place in order for that strike to take place.

I tried to ask about this in Question Period today. It has nothing to do with this bill; it has to do with the fundamental functioning of our justice system. It is a known fact that our system could not function without one of these Crown attorneys. Period. So, when the Crown and the government sit down to decide how many Crown attorneys we need to keep this system going, the answer will come in a heartbeat, and it is all of them.

We need all of them to keep this system going, and not only do we need all of them to keep the system going because we need to keep our courts moving, but because, as I said before, this is a profession that has ethical underpinnings.

All these lawyers take an oath when they are called to the bar and they have an ethical obligation to do their work. Even if they wanted to be on the picket line, I have a hard time believing that most, if any of them, would walk out on their cases to do that. Why? Because they are responsible to the work that they do, Mr. Speaker.

Let's say though, for the sake of argument, that the Crown attorneys decided they wanted to strike, that they couldn't agree with the government - which, given the facts that I have laid out, I think it's pretty clear that no one is going to bet on an agreement in 20 days. Then what happens? Then it goes to the Labour Board and the Labour Board gets to decide what an essential service regime would look like for the Crown in the event of a strike.

So, given the facts that I've laid out, given the fact that we had 415 cases last month alone that fell outside of the time frame of the *Jordan* decision for court delay, and given the fact that any one of these cases, as my colleague pointed out, could result in a serious breach in the upholding of justice, could result in a mistrial in a murder case or in human trafficking, which we have been talking a lot about in this Chamber. Given that, it is more than likely that the Labour Board would decide, as I have decided, that all of the Crown attorneys are an essential service, then what, Mr. Speaker? Well, then they can't strike. So how on earth does this legislation give this group of Crown Attorneys the right to strike? I'll answer that - it doesn't.

What if they decided to strike anyway, Mr. Speaker? Well they would pay \$1,000 a day, plus \$200 personally and they, as an association, I think would pay a fine of not more than \$100,000 and a further fine of \$10,000 each day. Obviously, that would prevent a strike, and if it didn't we would know that we have some pretty committed folks on our hands - but we certainly hope that it could never come to that. So, that's a little bit about what this bill is about.

I want to talk a little bit about what led to this bill. It's a pretty established fact in bargaining, and I think my colleague will speak to this - who has much more experience in the bargaining universe and the labour universe than I do - that the bargaining process is confidential. It is confidential to uphold its efficacy. You want people to come to the table. We hear the government say this all the time as they create one board and review committee after another, that is confidential, that doesn't report to us, whose recommendations they don't need to follow - they want everything to be confidential.

Sometimes there's a reason for that and generally speaking, in the cases I just laid out, I don't think there is. In this case the reason this is confidential is because we want the parties to come together, bargain in good faith - we want it all out on the table - and then when there is a tentative agreement, that's when the bargaining agent or the people involved would take it back to their membership for ratification.

Mr. Speaker, we have a situation in which on Tuesday we had the Crown and the government discussing terms of an agreement. The Crown counsel who were privy to this agreement were only a handful of people, the people at the bargaining table. None of the other Crown attorneys in the province knew what it was that was being agreed upon and that was because they respected the bargaining process.

Then Wednesday morning we had the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board laying it all out on the table - this is where the Crown is, this is where we are, we're 10 per cent apart. Now, Mr. Speaker, while I have serious questions about whether this could be called bargaining at all, I have even more serious questions about the ethics of the government unilaterally breaching the confidentiality of a bargaining conversation not only within government, not only within Executive Council, not only within this Chamber, but to the media and to the general public.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, this is a breach of contract. I want to talk for a moment about the fact that as I said before, previously this association accepted a wage pattern in exchange for this right to arbitration. The increases that were sought then and rejected and the increases that are being sought now and are again being rejected are based on comparators in similar jurisdictions. They are not based on Ontario and British Columbia, they are based on similarly sized jurisdictions and the pay that happens there.

Again, Mr. Speaker, at the risk of being repetitive, I think none of us can help but think about the situation we have in Nova Scotia with doctors. The government played hardball with the doctors because they banked on the fact that most Nova Scotians wouldn't care because doctors make a lot of money. Guess what? Doctors make a lot of money because that's how much money doctors make and because they save lives. And because the government hardballed those doctors, now we don't have enough doctors.

I cannot tell you the number of doctors I talked to in Nova Scotia who are leaving, who are wishing to leave, who are hoping to leave. It is shameful, Mr. Speaker, to use the words of my colleague. I fear that the same thing will happen in the Public Prosecution Service.

These are civil servants who uphold the integrity of our justice system. If we play hardball with them and we talk about it as a dollars and cents issue instead of an issue of fair compensation - which, I might add, as in all labour discussions, I'm sure was not the only thing on the bargaining table - that does a serious disservice to the esteem in which we place the members of our public service. I'll go further and say that Crown attorneys make less than the private bar and they make less than legal aid lawyers and they do a great deal of work.

Like many of us, I think it would be fair to say that Crown lawyers take a lot of flack. If anyone can have some empathy for that kind of flack, I think it's those of us in this Chamber, and I would think it would be particularly the members of the government. They make tough decisions, Executive Council in particular; they run the province and they get a lot of feedback for it, but they keep doing it. They keep doing it, I hope, because they feel called to do it. It is the same with our Crown attorneys.

I think it's so important, and we've said this so many times, that we give our public service, our Crown, all the members of our public service, the respect to which they are

entitled. Mr. Speaker, this is a pattern. It's not just a pattern in the public service, but unfortunately, and even more worryingly in certain ways, it's a pattern in the justice system.

The judges in Nova Scotia are currently before the Supreme Court of Canada. Why? Same issue. They were seeking an independent opinion about their compensation that took into account comparators across the country, that gave a fair description of what that was, and this government decided that they would rather say that they were saving the dollars and cents, banking on the fact that people aren't going to be sympathetic, and the judges have now taken that to the Supreme Court of Canada. I should point out that that tribunal, which will recommend a pay package to the minister, is meeting right now. So we look forward with some interest to what the minister does with that decision.

It's not just the judges, Mr. Speaker. It's the justices of the peace. Just this last Spring, we were in here having this same conversation about the fact that the justices of the peace no longer can rely on an independent party to determine their compensation. It's one thing when you say an independent party to determine their compensation, but it goes to the heart of independence in our justice system.

Our justice system is separate from our government. Our justice system upholds justice. We need to ensure that they not only do that in practice, but that there is no perception of interference in that. I think, sadly, that we have all but abandoned that perception now.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, there is no way that this move can be interpreted as bargaining in good faith. The Crown prosecutors and the government have a framework in which they bargain. It forms a contract and that contract has been unilaterally changed by this government with this legislation. There aren't many groups left to be legislated. This is a clear pattern. The government talks about this as a fiscal issue, but it is not - it is a labour issue. It is a constitutional issue and it is fundamentally an ethical issue.

If the government proceeds with this bill, then they should call it what it is: the we-changed-our-minds-and-want-to-dictate-your-contract bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

TAMMY MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to stand and talk about this legislation. To me, Mr. Speaker, it is déjà vu all over again. As a union representative and a former health care worker, this is Bill No. 148 all over again. This is the same old, same old for this Liberal Government. They say one thing and they mean another.

Bill No. 148 took away bargaining for health care workers. It imposed a collective agreement. It imposed a financial settlement on public sector workers, on 75,000 public

sector workers. I hope each and every one of you is watching now to see that it is continuing with the Crown prosecutors, because the way this government says they bargain is a disgrace. It is not bargaining, it is dictating.

I've stood in this Chamber countless times and said this government does not bargain, they dictate. They tell you the way it is going to be and if you disagree - oh well, sorry, we're a majority government.

You know I just have to pull up this - what I was just looking for while my colleague was speaking - because it's funny how things change when you're in an election year. Back in the day, in 2013, in an open letter to union members from this Liberal caucus: The Liberal caucus would like to clarify misinformation. The email indicates that the Nova Scotia Liberal caucus is against the right to strike, and this is absolutely false. It goes on to say: This Liberal caucus believes in the collective bargaining process, the right to strike and protecting workers' rights, both union and non-union. Mr. Speaker, this couldn't be further from the truth.

Then in 2013, the Premier says he will continue to respect your hard-earned rights and collective agreements. Well, I don't know one collective agreement in this province that this government has respected because they haven't. They have dictated and they have imposed contracts and wage patterns. Again, they bargain in bad faith.

This government bargains in bad faith. When I say this government, I mean the employer because at the end of the day they are the employer. If I was at a bargaining table, I would take this to the Labour Board and say this employer is bargaining in bad faith, Mr. Speaker, because that's what is happening.

I would also like to quote - because I find this kind of funny - when Bill No. 148 was being passed, I will quote the Minister of Health and Wellness:

“We do not wish to create two classes of employee; we want to be fair and consistent in our approach. I want to be clear - government respects and appreciates the hard work performed by all employees who deliver public services to Nova Scotians. Government is committed to both meaningful collective bargaining and to preserving the public services Nova Scotians need.”

Mr. Speaker, this could not be further from the truth. There is nothing that represents good collective bargaining in any of those statements that the Liberal Government has put out. Government is framing this change as an enhancement, an enhancement for the bargaining rights for the Crown attorneys, but it is anything but. It eliminates access to arbitration for Crown attorneys and it does so against their wishes. The framework agreement they were bargaining under is dismantled.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague spoke of, when you are in bargaining you do not, under any circumstances, reveal any of the terms of the proposed collective agreement or agreement in this situation because then - and as this government has alluded to several times, they can't give us the RFPs for P3s because - that would taint the waters. They can't give us a bid on this because that would taint the waters. But yet here we are in bargaining and they come out and say, before the Crown attorneys knew, you are looking for 17 per cent but we're looking to give you 7 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think we have to be rocket scientists in this House to understand that that is a breach of confidentiality, and this government should be ashamed of themselves. Any time this government goes into collective bargaining with unionized employees or Crown attorneys, Justice, any of these groups that have a contract - it is breached.

We see a pattern here. We see that in this case with taking away arbitration, this government is taking away the right of a third party to intervene and to resolve conflict. Mr. Speaker, what faith does this government have in the Labour Board and/or its arbitrators who are used every day in Nova Scotia to make decisions that are right for the employees, not to predetermine an outcome, but that are the right end results for employees. At the end of the day, that's what we should be talking about. We shouldn't be talking about - we're just going to give you this, we're going to give it to everybody, and it doesn't matter that we're bargaining because you're not actually bargaining.

This government is trying to pull a fast one, double-speak . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that's unparliamentary. I'll get you to retract that.

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, how do you tell the truth when you can't use certain words? It's a serious question. How do you tell the truth in this Chamber when you're not allowed to call a spade a spade? It's a serious question. (Interruption) No, you don't tell the truth. Sorry.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member will retract that statement as well, inferring that other members of this Chamber are not telling the truth.

TAMMY MARTIN: I would appreciate, Mr. Speaker, if I could get an answer to that.

THE SPEAKER: I would suggest that the rule book that every member has here is available to you to peruse at your leisure.

TAMMY MARTIN: The imposition of . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I asked the honourable member to retract the two inferences that the members opposite were not telling the truth.

TAMMY MARTIN: What is the word that I can use then? I have read that book several times, and it doesn't give me synonyms to say what needs to be said in this House.

THE SPEAKER: Is the honourable member going to retract the statements?

TAMMY MARTIN: Am I going to get an answer to my question so I can continue? I'm just asking.

THE SPEAKER: Is the honourable member going to retract the statements?

TAMMY MARTIN: I will gladly retract if I could get another word.

THE SPEAKER: This is the last time I'm going to ask - is the honourable member going to retract the statements?

TAMMY MARTIN: Yes. Yes, I'll retract it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

TAMMY MARTIN: Sadly, though, I'm sure the teachers, nurses, doctors, home care workers, justices, judges, and justices of the peace who have been disrespected by this government wish that I wouldn't retract certain things. I will because this is important, and this I need to stay and talk about.

This legislation, Mr. Speaker, is wrapped up in a fancy package, but guess what? Nova Scotians aren't buying it anymore. Nova Scotians realize that whatever you call it, this government is doing what they want and not what's in the best interests of Nova Scotians. It's a pretty bold bet to make that yet another group of workers in this province are being stripped of their collective bargaining rights without some recourse through the courts. That's what the Labour Board is there for. That's why we have arbitrators, that's why we have conciliation - so we can be grown up and be at a table and work together. There are those words again - work together. Wow, let us try it, it might actually work.

I have said this a hundred times: how many times do you go into a bargaining room - I always called it a wish book - you go in with the Christmas wish book because as the union or as the worker, you want all the bells and whistles, knowing full well that if you get a Sobeys flier at the end of the day, you have a good contract, or you have a good agreement. You can't get to that when you bargain in bad faith. You can't get that Sobeys flier, Mr. Speaker, when you have a predetermined outcome going into bargaining. That's what this government does.

The day is going to come when this goes to be heard at a higher level, and Nova Scotians are going to be on the hook because this is unconstitutional. It is our right to free and fair collective bargaining. It is our right to sit across the table from our employer and come to an agreement. The day that this is found to be unconstitutional - and I hope it's soon - will cost taxpayers a lot more money than it would cost to give these Crown attorneys a half-decent settlement.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 148 is a disrespect to workers. This government's inability to come to a table and reach a collective agreement is disgraceful. Something I didn't realize, and I'm thankful that all of my colleagues talked about this, that if you don't get these cases heard within a time frame they fall off. I had no idea. How can we risk this? Imagine the cost of these cases falling off the docket and people going free or whatever the case may be. Imagine the human cost. How can this government put a price tag on human cost?

I would think, as my colleague from Dartmouth South said, we need more prosecutors, we need more Crown attorneys. She also spoke of the fact of the doctors. Well I've said it twice this week, we have beds empty in Glace Bay, we have beds empty in North Sydney, but we have no doctors to admit the patients. Yet we can't fit another flea in the regional hospital in Sydney because the hallways are full of admitted patients and the homes are full of patients who couldn't get their surgeries because they were cancelled.

Is that what we are doing? Are we picking another fight with Crown prosecutors like we did with the doctors, with Doctors Nova Scotia? Right now we've got beds, we've got hospitals, we've got people looking to go in them but we have no doctors to take them. Mr. Speaker, that's what's going to happen with the Crown prosecutors.

I almost think I fear for the safety of some Nova Scotians because, as others have said, where does this leave us as a province if we're letting people go free because this government refuses to pay what they are worth and bargain in good faith?

The government has tried to strong-arm doctors and I believe this is exactly what is happening with Crown attorneys. But, sadly, at the end of the day government is not losing, it's the residents of Nova Scotia. It's the patients of Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, who are losing out at the end. It's the 13 surgeries that were cancelled yesterday at the regional hospital because there was no doctor to admit them. It's the fact that - well the New Waterford hospital is now closed. Glace Bay has adopted the hours of New Waterford so now Glace Bay is open only Tuesday to Friday, from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

It's the residents who are suffering, it's the residents who are sick, it's the residents of Nova Scotia who aren't getting the treatment and care they deserve, just like the people going through the court system, and they will be the ones who suffer.

Mr. Speaker, when you talk about what happens at a bargaining table, and I said this earlier, but I would think that this employer, the government, should know that it is confidential. So, we have a predisposed position now set out for these Crown attorneys, how do we move forward from here without this government intervening and imposing another wage package, because that's what's happening.

Mr. Speaker, this government has no idea how to bargain, has no idea how to bargain in good faith, that's for sure. This government has no respect for teachers, for nurses, for all health care workers, for all public sector workers. Like my colleague said, there aren't too many more public sector workers they can try to dismantle, they can try to force an agreement upon.

I look forward to the outcry from all public sector workers after this debacle because, let me tell you, I've already started to get some of that social media and texts come my way. Mr. Speaker, I guess this is just a way for this government to say okay, anybody coming behind you, so teachers prepare, we're imposing another wage settlement. Health care workers who are coming behind you prepare because we are imposing another wage settlement.

[4:45 p.m.]

So, Mr. Speaker, I have to ask the questions: why even bother? Why does this government pretend to respect unions? Why does this government pretend to respect the collective bargaining - what should be free and fair collective bargaining rights that union members and groups are a part of? Why does this government think - well, this government thinks they are beyond reproach, but let me tell you, the day of reckoning will be coming, and I can't wait, because you know what? At the end of the day, people have the right to choose; people have the right to form a union and they have a right to free and fair collective bargaining. This will all, as my grandmother would say, come out in the wash, and I look forward - I hope that the Crown attorneys are allowed to have however much time they want at Law Amendments Committee because when it was the other public sector workers this government dictated the hours of Law Amendments, Mr. Speaker, and I would say that that is a violation of our constitutional rights, as well.

If 10,000 people want to come and present before Law Amendments Committee, it's their law - it's Nova Scotia's law, Mr. Speaker, not ours. So, if 10,000 people want to come and speak, 10,000 people should be allowed, but this government, during Bill No. 148 - no, no, we're cutting it off. We are in charge and we're cutting it off; we are only allowing this many people to speak.

It's like a bad kid - when you don't get your own way you just take your bat and ball and go home. Again, as adults, as legislators, as negotiators, why can't we work together? Nobody will tell me any different that when you go to a bargaining table you can't come away with a deal, with an agreement that everybody can be settled with.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, we've been this close to going on strike and in the 23rd hour we've gotten a deal. It may not be with all the bells and whistles, but it is something that everybody on both sides could live with. I bet if we sat down and all pretended to work together, we could get there now but, sadly, that's not the will of this government.

I hope everybody connected with public sector workers, with unions, with Crown attorneys who are outraged with this heavy-handed approach yet again, comes and speaks to Law Amendments Committee. And if they are not permitted, then I think that they should - it is tomorrow - then they should say their piece, and I won't say what I really want to say.

I think it's time that everybody pays attention and starts to stand up for our rights and freedoms because if we allow this dictatorship to continue (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order please. I'd like to remind the honourable member that the word dictatorship is an unparliamentary term in this Chamber and I will ask you to retract that.

TAMMY MARTIN: I'm sorry? What is it? Authoritarian? Okay.

This government is authoritarian, then, and do you know what - I'd love a list of these words that you are not allowed to say because how do you (Interruption) is dictatorship? Okay, thank you.

Anyway, I think I've made my point, and at the end of the day I think the residents of Nova Scotia know exactly what's going on. They are paying attention and soon they will have their voice.

THE SPEAKER: I would just like to remind the honourable member for Cape Breton Centre to table the couple of quotes that she used earlier in her debate - both the paper and the electronic quote that you used.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: I welcome the opportunity to speak to Bill No. 203, An Act Respecting the Labour Relationship between Her Majesty in Right of the Province and the Nova Scotia Crown Attorneys' Association.

It is interesting to me how much time we are spending kind of focusing on words, but words do have to have meaning. Words must have meaning and, you know, it's part of being a human and also being human and organizing ourselves with other humans to try to come to agreements that inevitably we use words to mediate our meeting. I think that is

why this bill is so egregious because - and I don't think this is on the list of unparliamentary terms - it is disingenuous, it falls short of sincere.

I'm going to talk a little bit, think a little bit about the relationship word in the title of this bill. We form relationships - even going back to our earliest relationships, mother and child, romantic relationships - we form them by making agreements: this is okay or I don't like it when you do this or I agree to this or I consent to this or I don't consent to this, or this is not alright.

I have to read one provision of this bill which - I'm not a lawyer, I'm not the best at actually understanding the bills that we debate sometimes. I have to force myself to actually read every provision and to try to understand the meaning of what we are talking about in this Chamber - but this is Clause 8(2). It says: "The amendment of the Framework Agreement" - and that's the framework agreement that was from 2012 until 2046 - "the amendment of the Framework Agreement under subsection (1) applies notwithstanding the requirement for mutual consent in section 22 of the Framework Agreement."

This is legislation which is saying we are amending something that was negotiated and agreed to for a period of 30 years, notwithstanding the requirement for mutual consent. How do you maintain a relationship, how do you continue a relationship when you disrespect agreements? When you say, this agreement that we made together, that we codified, that we negotiated and then we put into language and we said this is the framework, this is how we are going to move forward together - how does that relationship continue after that, when that is legislated? Honestly, I find it offensive that this Legislature is being asked to play a role in breaking agreements, because that's what this is, it is legislating the breaking of an agreement.

Crown attorneys are public servants. They are a special category of public servants because they are so core to the function of our justice system and yet they also form part of the public service. In that way they are analogous to so many other members in our public service who have had the relationship strained and broken with the government of Nova Scotia under this government. That goes back to 2014 and Bill No. 37, which affected the health care sector, and Bill No. 100 in 2015, where universities were allowed to ban strikes, and Bill No. 148 affecting a broad swath of the public sector, and of course Bill No. 75 with the teachers.

It has gone on and on and, frankly, when I hear details - which, honestly, I should not be privy to, I should not be privy to the details of the negotiations between the Crown attorneys and their association and the government. But when I hear that at the bargaining table the parties were so far apart, I have to question whether this government is not reaping what it has sown because, having negotiated a 30-year framework agreement, why would any group of public servants at this time not want to resort to an arbitrator of good reputation?

Entering into a negotiating process, into a collective bargaining process, with this government is already hamstrung by this government's own track record of how public servants have been treated.

I am grateful - and I think all Nova Scotians have to really reflect on this - that so many of our public servants also have such a strong relationship with Nova Scotians. Health care workers, doctors, and nurses have relationships with their patients. Teachers have relationships with their students and with those students' parents.

Crown attorneys have relationships. They have relationships with victims of crime. They have relationships with all of us as a society who, even though we may not be aware of it, depend on their work for some measure of our own security. I'd say even that Crown attorneys have relationships with defence counsel and with people who are accused and convicted. They have those relationships and, as my colleague, the member for Dartmouth South pointed out, they have a relationship with their own ethics and their own relationship to their work and their internal sense of the importance of their work - to their own integrity.

I'm grateful for that because it is the weight of those relationships and the health of those relationships that has been tested and is being tested by the continuous degradation of the relationship between the government of Nova Scotia and public servants.

That is a cost that all of us are bearing as yet another round of this government's bargaining comes unravelled and doesn't reach the conclusion that it should because it's not pursued in the way that it should be pursued.

I have not been at a bargaining table, but I imagine it a little bit like a road map, that the team that is bargaining has a vision of where they are, where they would like to go, and what the different routes are that they can get there.

Speaking to the cost of this government's repeated pattern of behaviour, I think it's fair to say that the route that involves negotiation with this government must seem like one of those dotted lines where you have to go look at the legend. How bad is that road? I don't know how many classes of roads we have in Nova Scotia; I'm one of the very few MLAs who doesn't have a bunch of provincial roads in my constituency, but is there something below a J-class road? That is what the road would be to get to that destination.

LISA ROBERTS: "L" for Liberal, my Leader says.

Then there's this road of arbitration, with someone else who also has a sense of personal and professional integrity. The fact that that road is available influences where you go over that kind of rough road that is on the map. This legislation is akin to saying to the person - or to the bargaining team, in this metaphor, on the journey - you know what? All those roads are actually dead ends.

[5:00 p.m.]

You're already on the journey. You've already put in the time. You've already packed your bags, envisioned a destination, and now all of a sudden, the road map is not a road map. It's like a GPS which is updating, and all of a sudden, you find that the journey you're on is actually not even possible. That is how - I think that this word might just be a Newfoundland-ism - discombobulating this piece of legislation is. It's like, nope, you thought you were doing something that isn't even possible.

I appreciate several of my colleagues using the word "framing" to talk about this legislation. The fact that it was tabled as a bill from the Department of Finance and Treasury Board is an attempt to frame - essentially to tell a story to Nova Scotians about what this is.

This government, and I don't know how common this is - I think maybe I didn't pay so much attention before I was actually elected to office. This government in particular, though, frames different sorts of expenditures very differently. This government frames expenditures that are related to the labour of people as an expense. It frames expenditures that are related to the acquisition of goods or the building of infrastructure as investments. They're both expenditures and as my colleague the member for Cape Breton Centre points out, frankly, when you spend on investments - when you actually have investments or assets like hospitals, or even when you plan to spend on investments like hospitals - they're no good without people. (Applause)

Not just any people; people with real skills. People who feel like they are on your team, collectively providing public service to Nova Scotians. Those people are not widgets that you can substitute out. They accumulate knowledge and experience and their own relationships with the people that they serve directly.

For the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board to stand up with a "this is very serious; I'm talking like the responsible grown-up in the room" and say that 54 or 55 or 57 per cent of the expenditures of Nova Scotia is on the public service - frankly, I'm surprised it's so little.

I'm surprised it's so little because they are doing the work of government. I've worked in non-profit organizations and, mind you, maybe we're a little bit stingier about how many paper clips you buy and a whole bunch of other things because there's literally no money to go around - but often non-profits spend 90 per cent plus of their expenditures on labour because the most important work that we do is actually only possible through the skill and the work of people.

To categorize and to frame that as an expense that is somehow egregious or irresponsible is really mistaken. It's not accurate because not only are those people

providing public service, but also the income that they make is how they take care of their families. It's how they spend money in our communities.

There are multiple ways that this has been framed, that we have told ourselves a story - or no, that this government has told a story - about this bill which is disingenuous. I reject those stories, and I hope that it is some consolation not just to the Crown attorneys who are here listening to this debate but also to all the other public servants about whom stories have been told where they are framed as irresponsible or egregious or outlandish expenses for the government of Nova Scotia.

I hope it's some consolation that we actually do understand what the real story is, because we do understand the story. I think that story will be told about this particular government and the particular pattern of behaviour of this government. This is, I would say, the sad and latest chapter.

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

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. KAREN CASEY: I have heard a lot of comments. I have heard a lot of talk. All I want to say is that we will be closing debate on second reading of Bill No. 203, the Crown Attorneys' Labour Relations Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading.

There has been a call for a recorded vote. We will ring the bells until the Whips are satisfied.

[5:06 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we conduct the recorded vote, I'd like to remind all members of the rules of conduct for a recorded vote. We require all members to stay in their seat and remain 100 per cent quiet. When your name is called please stand tall, stating a simple Yea or Nay.

The Clerks will now conduct the recorded vote on Bill No. 203, the Crown Attorneys' Labour Relations Act.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[5:12 p.m.]

YEAS

Mr. Churchill
Mr. Furey
Ms. Regan
Mr. MacLellan
Ms. Casey
Mr. Wilson
Mr. Delorey
Mr. Colwell
Mr. Glavine
Mr. Kousoulis
Ms. Miller
Mr. Porter
Mr. Hines
Ms. Metlege Diab
Mr. Ince
Mr. Rankin
Mr. Mombourquette
Ms. Arab
Mr. Horne
Mr. Jessome
Mr. Maguire
Ms. Lohnes-Croft
Ms. DiCostanzo
Mr. Irving

NAYS

Mr. Dunn
Mr. Bain
Ms. Masland
Mr. Houston
Mr. MacMaster
Ms. Chender
Mr. Burrill
Ms. Roberts
Ms. Leblanc
Ms. Martin
Ms. Adams
Mr. Lohr
Mr. Halman
Mr. Rushton
Mr. Craig
Mr. Johns
Mr. Comer
Mr. LeBlanc
Mr. Ryan
Mr. Harrison

[5:15 p.m.]

THE CLERK: For, 24. Against, 20.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 197.

**Bill No. 197 - Companies Act, Co-operative Associations Act and Corporations
Registration Act.**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 197, the Companies Act, Co-operative Associations Act and Corporations Registration Act, be read a second time.

The amendments we are making will be good news for companies and co-operatives right across the province. The steps we are taking will mean that they will no longer be hindered by historical laws and practices that can be costly and time-consuming. Instead, Mr. Speaker, they will have the choice to use the wealth of modern tools currently available to them.

Companies and co-operatives in Nova Scotia are required to maintain corporate records at their registered offices. This includes manually storing years of meeting minutes, members' registers, and director and officer details. It generates an incredible amount of paper that needs to be stored, sorted, and managed. Storing physical records is burdensome. It is burdensome not only to the businesses but also to those professional advisers, including lawyers, who may serve as a registered office for a lot of different companies and co-operatives and, therefore, have to store many minutes books. Storage space is expensive, and searching for minutes books, past and present, is incredibly time-consuming. As we know, Mr. Speaker, time is money.

Today we are responding to what we have heard from the business and legal communities. As I stated during the bill briefing, our role is to provide the conditions necessary for businesses to start and to thrive in Nova Scotia. That's why we are amending the Companies Act, the Co-operative Associations Act, and the Corporations Registration Act.

The amendments will provide for electronic storage of books and records, provide for electronic director meetings for co-operatives, and provide for unanimous director resolutions in lieu of meetings with co-operatives. With these amendments, businesses will no longer have to purchase and maintain a physical minutes book to store their information and history. Instead, they will have the opportunity to create, maintain, and store records electronically.

With electronic records, companies and co-operatives will no longer need expensive storage space, and they will be able to access their information a lot easier and faster when you compare to physical minutes books, which in addition to being cumbersome, may easily be lost or damaged. Mr. Rob Cowan, a partner with McInnes Cooper, was pleased to learn of the changes we are making. The ability to maintain a company's minutes book electronically allows for easier and faster access to the company's records, he stated.

Mr. Speaker, there are about 80,000 active and inactive companies in Nova Scotia that are required to maintain their corporate records and that will benefit from the changes we are making. I'm very pleased to tell you that the steps we are taking will save businesses more than \$2 million. These are costs primarily relating to creating, maintaining, and storing records every year.

In addition, it will be clear that directors of co-operatives are permitted to hold meetings via electronic means, including teleconferences and Skype, and that a written resolution signed by all directors in lieu of a meeting is acceptable.

I would like to thank our key stakeholders for their contributions, including the Nova Scotia Co-operative Council, and also staff for their hard work in bringing these changes to life.

Other proposed amendments that will be made to the three Acts are housekeeping items that update outdated references, such as "under the hand of." This will enable the registrar to issue electronic certificates through the new Registry of Joint Stock Companies technology, which is expected to launch in early 2020.

One of the questions I received during the bill briefing, Mr. Speaker, was about considerations we were giving to security and privacy with the move to our new registry. I can assure all members of this House that information privacy and security always are priorities and top of mind. Working with our vendors, we ensure rigorous security standards are met, and we complete comprehensive privacy impact and threat risk assessments. We always test for vulnerabilities before any new service goes live.

The team at Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services is continuously working to cut red tape for businesses and citizens, modernize legislation, and make government services more accessible and efficient for Nova Scotians. The steps we are taking today are important as we continue our work to build a stronger and more inclusive economy.

Some of the work we have done recently includes introducing the lowest incorporation fees in the country, eliminating the annual registration fee in a company's first year, and eliminating the extra provincial registration fees for corporations formed in other provinces doing business in Nova Scotia. We went from having one of the highest start-up costs to establish a new company in Canada to the lowest in the country.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks. I look forward to listening to comments from my colleagues opposite.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we're living in a time and a day and age when there is great potential, with changes in technology, to improve business practices,

to make practices easier for businesses. Here we're seeing a bill that is taking advantage of that. We will be supporting this bill.

As I say, we're living in a time where technology has changed so many things. It's good to see the government is advancing with this technology to make things easier for business. The other benefit with technological changes is that it's also helping to reduce the cost of these things. When the costs are reduced, if they're passed on to businesses, we see that as a good thing too.

There are a couple of schedules - and I won't get too far into the details, as we're speaking just generally here on second reading - but I know there's the removal of Schedule 1 and 2. Mr. Speaker, I think what I would like to say generally about those is that right now, some of that information can be helpful to companies that aren't hiring lawyers to help them with this. It could be a small business, somebody who is taking on an incorporation themselves to do some of the paperwork.

Those schedules are helpful in a practical way, to help people stay on the right side of their requirements - being registered with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies and having a business. Perhaps there are measures in place to retain the value of those schedules by way of guides that will be made available to small businesses that might not have the same resources as a larger business with a lawyer on staff to help them deal with their record keeping needs. I'd just like to raise that as a possible concern.

I think when people have the rules clearly set out in front of them and there's less mystery, that's a good thing. If government can do something in that regard to facilitate that, that helps everybody. I don't think there's any extra cost or time to government for that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure from what we're hearing that businesses out there will be supportive of this legislation. Unless there are any surprises, it looks good at this moment.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, from everything that we've been able to learn about this bill, and from the bill itself, it appears to us that these are administrative changes that update and modernize the Act. My understanding is that they respond to changes that organizations have been asking for. I look forward to hearing from any stakeholders with second thoughts at Law Amendments Committee, but otherwise we are in support of this.

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the members for Inverness and Halifax Needham for speaking so favourably about my first public bill.

With that, I move second reading of Bill No. 197, the Companies Act and Co-operative Associations Act and Corporations Registration Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 197. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 201.

Bill No. 201 - Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 201 be now read for a second time.

Mr. Speaker, we are all aware here in this House of the importance of protecting our environment. This bill is about helping Nova Scotians do just that.

Key components of the amendments were proposed under Chapter 18 of the Acts of 1998, the Municipal Government Act, and Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, about helping Nova Scotians install or replace sewage disposal systems on their property.

Many Nova Scotians cannot afford to pay the cost of installing or replacing these systems up front. The amendments outlined in this bill enable municipalities to offer a financing option to residential property owners so that owners can borrow the money they need to ensure that they have the appropriate septic systems. With these options, property owners can repay the loan through their property taxes.

Having effective on-site treatment systems in place prevents raw sewage from going into our provincial lakes, our rivers, and our streams, and it protects our properties from sewage backups and contaminated well water. These amendments will also help

ensure that property owners comply with bylaws, the provincial environmental laws that will, in turn, result in significant environmental benefits for all Nova Scotians.

These amendments are another step forward in our work to modernize the legislation governing municipalities and ensure that it is clear in keeping pace with the issues that affect residents.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, we will be in favour of this bill and we look very much forward to giving our citizens the ability to upgrade septic systems or to install new septic systems where the upfront costs have been too much. This is a financing option that is used now in our solar city programs, for example - you've got solar photovoltaic and you have solar hot water and solar hot air. We found that we are able to provide those - let's say those who have less means to pay those upfront costs with the ability to finance through the municipality and have that added on up to 20 years on their tax bill.

We are in support of this. We look forward to the information coming back from Law Amendments Committee.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the government for bringing this forward. We're glad to see the addition of on-site sewage to the list of upgrades available through municipalities by way of a PACE program. The upfront costs of home upgrades can be a serious barrier to many homeowners who need to make changes both to protect the environment and to ensure that they can enjoy their home for the long term, with appropriate sewage systems.

I would note that I think this is a good direction for the province to continue to go in when it comes to PACE, that being a Property Assessed - this is actually kind of a misnomer, because PACE stands for Property Assessed Clean Energy. In this case we're not doing clean energy, we're doing sewage, but in general I would welcome indications that the government is enabling municipalities to be as ambitious as possible when it does come to Property Assessed Clean Energy.

I hope that the fact that we are using this mechanism for sewage is an indication that the government is willing to really work with municipalities to have stretch goals. Right now there are some limitations on where clean energy systems can be - to what extent those can be financed. I think we are clearly at a point where we want to be going as hard and as fast as we can to make that transition to clean energy.

[5:30 p.m.]

Regardless, we would also encourage the government to offer programs that make loans and grants to families directly, without necessarily waiting for municipalities to sign on. A loan program can be good for many homeowners, but still may not be accessible to some low-income homeowners who will have higher property taxes as a result. This reminds us of the need to ensure that our property taxation system is fair and to, indeed, strive to make it more fair and less regressive.

We look forward to hearing from municipalities, homeowners, and other stakeholders in Law Amendments Committee, and I look forward to seeing municipalities rolling out a program enabled by this legislation. (Applause.)

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my honourable colleagues opposite and their support. I move to close debate on second reading of Bill No. 201.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 201. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Private and Local Bills for Second Reading.

PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR SECOND READING

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 183

Bill No. 183 - An Act to Amend Chapter 80 of the Acts of 1975. An Act to Exempt from Taxation the Property of the Digby Town and Municipal Housing Corporation in the Town of Digby.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

HON. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I move the second reading of An Act to Exempt from Taxation the Property of the Digby Town and Municipal Housing Corporation in the Town of Digby.

This amendment is more of a housekeeping amendment. It's basically to amend the Act of 1975, which recognized the fact that the residential care facility that was built at that time is now in the Municipality of the District of Digby. It's a new facility, so the amendment just provides some upgraded language and some clarity around that to bring the actual what's on the ground up to date.

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

The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I do now move to close second reading of Bill No. 183.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading on Bill No. 183. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee on Private and Local Bills.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 195.

Bill No. 195 - An Act to Amend Respecting the Union of Certain Churches Therein Named

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act Respecting the Union of Certain Churches Therein Named.

This bill goes back a long way to the establishment of the United Church of Canada in 1925 from its three constituent denominations: the Methodists, the Presbyterians, and the Congregationalists, who were a minor part of the project in Nova Scotia at that time because, in the previous century, many of the Congregationalists had become part of the Baptist tradition in Nova Scotia.

It's hard for us to understand from the point of view of 2019 what a tremendous convulsion and contention that debate around that church union was at that time. Different

churches took different approaches to it. The Methodist Church voted itself out of existence in Canada and went entirely into the new United Church, the Presbyterian Church was split and a part of it continued as what were called the Continuing Presbyterians, and the majority became a part of the new United Church.

Memories of this great contention continue still in Nova Scotia. I'm sure that the member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley will have had many discussions with some of the older people and congregations he has served over the years who would remember how strong and deep these discussions were amongst their parents at that time. In my own family, my grandfather Burrill came from the Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian Church adopted the brilliant tactic that the part of the church that was fighting against union of the United Church, by which people in order to vote for going into the United Church, had to physically sign a ballot.

The slogan of the Continuing Presbyterians was, Don't Sign Your Church Away. I well remember my grandfather, who was much in favour of the formation of the United Church, remembering when the moment came for him to actually sign the ballot how difficult it was for him, thinking of the slogan Don't Sign Your Church Away. He signed the paper voting for going into church union.

Out of this great contention to make a new denomination, you can imagine that there were many organizational problems because of the different traditions of governance. The Congregational Church, as its name suggested, had all of its democratic power in the local congregation. The Presbyterian Church, as its name suggests, has the majority - a significant part - of its democratic power in a regional authority, which is called a presbytery. The Methodist Church had the majority of their democratic power in a larger regional body which was called a conference. So, there had to be some new body for the general overall governance of this new United Church of Canada. This was to be done in a national organization called the general council.

The result of these negotiations 90-some years ago was that there would be this new church with a four-level system of democracy, in which all the decision-making structures of the constituent denominations were to be a part. There was the national general council. There would be, in our case in eastern Canada, a Maritimes-wide conference. There would be a series of local regional presbyteries, and there would be the body of the local congregation.

You can imagine that this would work during a period of the ascendancy of the church but it's only logical that during a period when the church didn't have that kind of demographic - and in a period when numbers were declining it would become increasingly more cumbersome for smaller numbers of people to be holding up an organizational edifice with these four different layers of governance.

For about the last 20 years in the denomination that the member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley and I serve, there has been a debate about how to pare down the structure, the democratic decision-making system, of our denomination from four decision-making bodies to a more efficient system with just three.

Because the church's union in 1925 was so contentious - the United Church of Canada was in fact established by legislation in the Parliament of Canada and by mirror legislation in all the provincial Legislatures of the country. Therefore, at this time the United Church of Canada has made the decision about a year and a half ago to move to a new structure. Instead of presbyteries and congregations and general councils and conferences, there will be a system of general counsel of regions and congregations - much, much simpler.

In order to do that, this decision must not only be taken, as it has been taken, within the democratic structures of the denomination itself, it also has to be reflected in the legislation that was passed in the provinces and federally in 1925. So, the amendments that are before us in this act are consequent on these changes which have already come into effect in the United Church.

Mr. Speaker, I am unfamiliar with the process. Is it appropriate for me at this stage, or do we wait for a moment to see if there are other speakers and then to move the second reading on this bill? In a moment?

THE SPEAKER: We will see if there are other speakers first.

GARY BURRILL: Okay. Thank you very much then, Mr. Speaker.

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

The member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I thereby do move closing of second reading on this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading on Bill No. 195. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee on Private and Locals Bills.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that the adjourned debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be resumed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington. (Applause)

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I've been told I've got an hour, so I'll try to keep my remarks within that timeframe. I'm usually not long-winded, but it's truly an honour (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order. The member for Argyle-Barrington has the floor.

COLTON LEBLANC: It is truly an honour to stand here - I guess it's still afternoon - to speak to the address in reply. Even on a mid-October's afternoon, it's quite warm in here. (Interruption) I believe that the member from Cape Breton would like to be sitting closer to the window.

Let me begin by expressing how honoured I am to be here in the Legislature, representing the people of Argyle-Barrington. In a period of a few short months, I went from serving Nova Scotians as a paramedic to serving Nova Scotians in another capacity - as an elected official here in this House of Assembly.

I'd like to sincerely thank the electorate of Argyle-Barrington. To the thousands who voted in Argyle-Barrington in the by-election, regardless of the political Party, each and every one of them played a fundamental part in our democracy - a democracy that's envied around this world, where people continue to fight to this day for the right to vote, and many before us have fought for this right in our country. I look forward to working hard and proving to the people of Argyle-Barrington that their faith in me will not be taken for granted.

I refer to this experience as a journey, and it has been quite a road since contemplating to enter the political world earlier this year, to announcing my candidacy mid-June, to the nomination - I guess it was towards the end of July on a very, very hot Summer night in Tusket where we had an unbelievable crowd of nearly 600 delegates. Then a week later, after the nomination, we had the election call for the by-election campaign, then election day on September 3rd, and then a few short weeks later, walking into this Legislature for the very first time.

Time has flown by very fast and I can imagine how much quicker it is going to go as the years go by, hopefully with my political career, I'll be able to represent my constituents.

[5:45 p.m.]

All this experience would not be possible without the support of many, and I believe that members in this Chamber can agree with me on that.

Family, a circle of strength, people who love you regardless, maybe sometimes when they don't agree with you. I am the son of a very hard-working single mother who has worked very hard to make sure that I had the best upbringing I could have. (Applause) I imagine that being a single mom was probably not easy and at times I know that my mom was struggling to make ends meet. I know that everything she has done for me and provided to me was with the best intent. I know she wanted to provide me with the best opportunity to be successful in life, so I cannot thank my mom, Odette, enough for her endless love, her support, and her encouragement over the years.

My mom Odette is a continuing care assistant, she works in health care as well, at the Yarmouth Regional Hospital. I am beyond proud of her. My mom was working in a jewellery store and in her thirties, I believe, was forced to make a decision on what to do with her career path because that jewellery store closed in Yarmouth. In her thirties, she decided to go back to school. She decided to go to Université Sainte-Anne and enrolled in French in the Continuing Care Assistant Program. She has become an exceptional health care professional.

I cannot express how beyond proud I am because people will come up to me and make the connection - they often say we resemble each other. I hear over and over again that she provides exceptional and extraordinary care to her patients and goes beyond the call that is asked of her. I am very humbled each and every time I hear those words.

I've also been blessed to have grandparents in my life. My mother's parents, affectionately known to me as Mère and Père, have been a huge part of my life. My grandmother, Donna, is truly like a second mother. She is a very special person, a sweet person with a huge heart, a caring heart, she has a beautiful soul. Although my grandfather, Tommy, passed away many years ago, too young, I carry him in my heart day to day and I thank him for sparking my interest in politics.

I'll share a story that I shared election night because people often ask me, Colton, when did you become interested in politics? Most often people make the connection that I joined the Party when I was 14 and started helping the former member for, at the time, Argyle in the political world. But I think it stems from way before then. I remember watching the news with my grandfather and watching Steve Murphy and the member for Argyle at the time, Neil LeBlanc, in scrums and learning about politics in our province and

how decisions are made in our province and how members of this House, as leaders in our communities, take part in the democratic process, yell and heckle each other, but hopefully come to decisions that are in the best interest of our province. I thank him for taking me under his wing and introducing me to the political world.

Mr. Speaker, I have a very large extended family. Although my close family is relatively small, I have a very large extended family. On my grandfather's side, I think there were 13 brothers and sisters; on my grandmother's side there were 11 brothers and sisters; many great-uncles and great-aunts; and an abundance of cousins. Family reunions are usually quite entertaining, with lots of food, which is great. I have a particular great-uncle who has become like a father figure to me, my uncle Wayne. My uncle Wayne is a very wise gentleman, who has a wealth of knowledge of life experience, who's shared with me different perspectives on life. It has helped me, throughout my high school years and my university years and during my career, to make different decisions and think differently and have a different perspective on life sometimes. I'd like to thank him for sharing his wisdom with me and always being there for me at any time of the day.

As members in this House would know, we are not here without the support of many. I have already alluded to the support of the electorate in Argyle-Barrington, but we've got, thankfully, a group of individuals who support us, whether it be our EDAs, and when it comes campaign time, these EDAs grow to become campaign teams.

I'm very fortunate to have had a very dedicated group of people surrounding me and supporting me with this endeavour. There are way too many people to list, so I'd rather not list off anybody and miss anybody. I'm so honoured and proud to have had their support with this endeavour, and this journey would not have been accomplished without their tireless effort, their countless hours put into my election campaign. It's a lot of hard work. It takes a talented group of individuals, whether it be campaign managers, drivers, office staff, sign teams, canvassers, or people who make phone calls. We all know in this House that it takes a lot of work. I want to express to my team that I could not be prouder of them, and I thank each and every one of them for their assistance in my election.

I realize that this role takes a lot of time out of our constituency at times, away from our families, from our friends, but I'm so happy that when we're here at the Legislature, we're here as a family - I'm getting to that. I am being embraced by my PC caucus family, and at times other members of this House. I'd like to thank the members of my caucus and the members of the Parties opposite for their support and for the warm welcome to the Legislature after this by-election. As well, to my friends and to my paramedic family, I thank them for their support and their words of wisdom throughout this journey. I want them to know that I am just a phone call away and always have a listening ear ready for them.

I have to be honest that being an elected official is a little bit different than being a paramedic, but both require similar characteristics: a listening ear, empathy, compassion,

leadership, communication skills. I couldn't be prouder to be part of such a respected group of health care professionals.

I want to emphasize that gone are the days of ambulance drivers. There are no ambulance drivers in Nova Scotia. It is time for paramedics to be recognized for what they actually do beyond driving an ambulance. Paramedics do so much more. There are more than 1,100 paramedics in this province. We're fortunate in Nova Scotia to have a provincial system that, technically, from one end of the province to the other - if you're in Cape Breton, in HRM, or in southwestern Nova Scotia - that you get the same level of care.

Paramedics do a lot more than they did 20 years ago. I wasn't there 20 years ago, believe it or not, but there's a member in this House who was there. Paramedics do advanced airway control. They do cardiac care. They do respiratory care. They do pain control. They do seizure control. We assist in labour and deliveries on the side of a highway or in somebody's home. We deliver exceptional resuscitation care for cardiac arrest, and try our best to deliver care to Nova Scotians.

Essentially, paramedics are bringing emergency room care either to the doorsteps or to the side of the road or wherever it may be. Sometimes it's the living room. Often, it's the tiniest of bathrooms up two flights of stairs, down the hall. It makes for tight quarters, and it makes it a little bit difficult to provide care sometimes.

When you think that paramedics can administer a clot-buster medication for heart attacks - which, if memory serves me right, is a \$2,000 medication - and have the opportunity to make that clinical decision in consult with an emergency room physician to deliver that care and save lives in Nova Scotia - I'm amazed that we're able to do that. Fortunately, we have the technology that exists, and we have the support out there to allow us to do that.

We have one of the leading scopes of practice in North America. Nova Scotia is leading the way. We partake in palliative care. Some of my most memorable calls as a paramedic are partaking in a palliative care call, where what you're taught in paramedic school is completely different. In paramedic school, you're taught that it's going in - you have a systematic approach to doing things sometimes - you do it, and you bring somebody to the hospital, whereas now we can stay on scene, and we're not obligated to bring a patient to the hospital. We respect their wishes, and we develop a care plan. We're providing care and comfort to patients who may be in their final months or their final days with us.

Our ambulance system is part of the health care crisis here in Nova Scotia. We are in a health care crisis. I have experienced first-hand the realities of this crisis. I can assure you that front-line health care workers in Nova Scotia - whether it be doctors, nursing staff, or diagnostic imaging staff - are doing their absolute best with what they have.

As our province's demographics change, so do the demands of our health care system. I spoke about the ambulance system in this province. In 20 years it has evolved by leaps and bounds. But there are also things beyond the scope of practice that have changed. Some days, we're experiencing exponential call volumes, days where you see 600 calls provincially. There's a greater number of 911 calls, a greater number of transfers, increased off-load times - an increased number of ambulances and off-load times.

When you have 20 ambulances parked at a hospital in a system that has - I don't remember the number off the top of my head - say 160 ambulances, and those 20 ambulances are tied up at a hospital, that negatively impacts our system. There's a human resources challenge. All of this results in less ambulance availability in our province. I'm not saying anything that hasn't been said either in this House or by media or by the paramedic union before.

I've brought up before the paramedic union's campaign of #CodeCritical. I know it's not a term that the minister or the government use; however, its purpose is well publicized. It's to bring awareness to Nova Scotians of the realities facing our ambulance system here in Nova Scotia. It's frightening at times, and it shouldn't be frightening. It's just to share the reality that when you hear that you have one ambulance covering a certain geographical area, whether it be Yarmouth to Liverpool, that means that there's one ambulance providing coverage for that geographical area, and that's frightening.

[6:00 p.m.]

I don't want to sound the alarm more than it has to be, but it's frightening to paramedics because if you are the only ambulance available to respond to a call and they say there is more than one ambulance required, it makes you think where the next ambulance is. I'm speaking of the geographical area of western Nova Scotia because that's where I've worked my career, but these instances happen in Cape Breton, they happen in HRM. This is part of the crisis, it's the reality.

Mr. Speaker, the solution is beyond just offload guidelines. The fact of the matter is that offload guidelines can be blamed for only so much.

I asked about the Fitch report yesterday in the House, the Fitch & Associates report. I'm glad the minister has it. The last one was published in 2001, if my memory serves me right. It's online, it's actually public, not redacted. I truly hope that this recent report will be the same, will be presented to the public because the public paid \$145,000 for this report, Nova Scotians paid \$145,000 for this report. I can only imagine that there is very valuable information in that report to help guide, to steer the improvements of the ambulance system here in Nova Scotia. The only benefit of disclosing that report is to Nova Scotians, and Nova Scotians deserve to have that report in their hands because it is their taxpayer dollars that paid for it.

Paramedics' morale is at an all-time low, Mr. Speaker. We've heard of burnout, of fatigue. I've asked in this House about paramedic burnout and fatigue as related to the new offload guidelines. The system is busier, the demands of the job are greater. You hear on a daily basis of paramedics not getting a meal break, that is doing a 12-hour shift and not being able to eat, not getting off work on time, and that means missing milestones, missing their child's birthday, missing their child's sporting event, missing a Christmas concert.

Paramedics are parked at mobile posts sometimes. I alluded to having only one ambulance in one geographical area - there is no paramedic base on the side of Highway No. 101 that I've seen before.

The union reports that paramedics are feeling devalued and not appreciated, and this is happening with other health care professionals as well. This government has a responsibility and a role to play here to ensure that work conditions improve, and that goes along with improving safety for health care professionals.

Yesterday we spoke about mental health in this House. Paramedics and other first responders often see things that they don't necessarily want to see, and go home and face some struggles sometimes to deal with that. Fortunately, there are systems supports out there that are supporting them. You've got the campaign of #IVEGOTYOURBACK911 and other organizations such as the Tema Foundation, but I think that if the government can commit to improving work conditions and looking at ways to mitigate the paramedic burnout and morale, we'll be on a better track to be supporting our front-line workers and their mental health.

I'd like to speak a little bit about where I'm from. I'm proud to be the first MLA elected from my community of Quinan. (Applause) As the member for Yarmouth would know, Quinan is a very small community, maybe about 300 people, about 20 minutes or so inland from Yarmouth, north. We are tucked away in the woods, Mr. Speaker, and some argue almost so far that we have to come out to hunt. (Interruption) Yes, they breed mosquitoes there, as well. It's like a drive through the zoo sometimes on my way to my constituency office, with all the wildlife.

There is one road in and one road out, and part of the community was isolated in years past due to extensive flooding. In 2003 and back in 2010 we had a rain event of, I think, greater than 300 millimetres of rain in a short amount of time that caused the community to be divided by water.

Quinan is quite quiet nowadays, except in the Summer months, as many people have their Summer cottages, and during the Fall when there is hunting season. It is quite remarkable that Babe Ruth visited Quinan back in 1935 for a hunting trip. I believe that some of my colleagues might have been there, as well. Quinan is truly a special place, and it will always have a special place in my heart.

I would be remiss if I did not speak of a significant local landmark for the people of Quinan, and it is Meat Rock. In French it's la Roche de viande. It's a historical location and very symbolic for others. It's essentially just a large boulder a couple of metres in size, located further in the sticks than residential Quinan, many kilometres beyond the end of any paved roads off of the Shubenacadie Road, an area off the Spar Ridge.

It is arguable where the name originates, but there are a couple of stories. The one about which I'm torn is whether the Acadians and First Nations would meet there to cut their hunted meat, or if they would rather meet there and exchange goods. Regardless, it is a local landmark for some.

I am proud to be sporting today the unofficial Quinan tartan - the Quinan tartan tie. It is non-registered. The red and black checkered design dates back many years ago to when hunters didn't have to wear hunter's orange or blaze orange and would rather wear the doeskin jackets. Enough of the community members from Quinan would wear these doeskin jackets that they were labelled with wearing the Quinan tartan. So, it is a tie I am very proud to be wearing.

Although Quinan doesn't have much of a city life or town life, it has what many around the world would envy. It has tranquility, peacefulness, and it's country living at its best. Although the roads need some work - quite a bit of work - and again, the member for Yarmouth would know that when he makes his adventures to the wild game evening that I will speak about after - we have something very particular to our area. It is our dark skies, our night dark skies. I am truly amazed by our dark skies. It really puts it into perspective when I am here in Halifax, and now that it gets darker quite earlier, walking back to our caucus office you can essentially not see any stars at night.

Quinan has been put on the map by a local resident and one of my friends; his name is Tim Doucette. Tim is legally blind. He has, I believe, 10 per cent of his vision but he can see beyond the light spectrum - what each and every one of us here could see - because he had a medical condition when he was younger. In short, he can see beyond the light spectrum that we can see, if my memory serves me right. He compares our vision as like a 10-megapixel camera and his is like a one-megapixel camera, but give him a telescope and he can see much more.

He has developed a true passion for the night skies and for astronomy, and he decided in 2015 to share his passion for astronomy with others. He opened an observatory called the Deep Sky Eye Observatory and, believe it or not, he has welcomed 2,500 people from around the world. The member for Yarmouth is signalling that he was one of them. It's truly a remarkable spot, where you can see things that you cannot see in a lot of places here in Nova Scotia.

Through his innovation and his drive to foster this celestial ecotourism, he's worked with many others in the area to have a special designation. In 2014, UNESCO's Starlight

Foundation declared part of my constituency and the neighbouring constituencies as North America's first Starlight Reserve, which is quite remarkable. I extend the invite to my colleagues in the House, the next time they visit Argyle-Barrington, to take a visit to Deep Sky Eye.

As I alluded to earlier, I cannot speak about my community without mentioning the annual Quinan Wild Game Evening and Auction dinner, which welcomes people from across the province, and even internationally. It's a sold-out event where people gather to enjoy a social evening and enjoy some delicious meals - different meals - cooked with wild game, whether it be porcupine, venison, moose, goose, I think there was squirrel one year, muskrat, beaver - you name it, it's there. Again, it's a great event, and I believe that the member for Queens-Shelburne will be there with me next year.

Also, there's a special festival in my community that dates back 137 years. It's the Annual Labour Day Picnic, which has now become a fundraiser for the local fire department and church and the community centre. Now it's home to the world's best turkey dinner, and some of my colleagues who were down during the by-election attended the dinner with me. The member for Yarmouth was there, as well. It's truly a delicious dinner. Years ago, it could have been moose and rappie pies and things like that, but today we're focused on delivering the best turkey dinner in the world.

So, that's just one part of my constituency, Madam Speaker. There's a lot of territory to cover in Argyle-Barrington. From Comeaus Hill to East Kemptville to the Hawk to Baccaro, Argyle-Barrington has a lot to offer. One thing that unifies the vast region is the fishing industry and it's something I value, the importance of the industry and the jobs that go with it.

From the forest industry providing lumber to boat shops to build ships - and there's a five-year wait to have a boat built in some of the boat building shops in my constituency - to the fishing supply stores to the fish processing plants to the fish buyers to the trucking industry to export our products. I could go on.

In the community of Wedgeport, there's the annual Wedgeport Tuna Tournament & Festival, which has grown the last number of years, where fishers gather to go on a fishing derby to catch tuna. That community there is very proud of that accomplishment and the work that goes into that festival.

From Wedgeport going to the Tusket Islands, there's Tusket Island Tours. It's a company that brings visitors and tourists and gives them the opportunity to visit the Tusket Islands. The Tusket Islands are a chain of 365 islands off of my constituency where, years ago, people would build shanties - pretty much little shacks - and the fishers, instead of coming all the way back to shore, from what I gather, would stop in there and fish from there at times.

[6:15 p.m.]

Barrington has many beautiful beaches. It's the lobster capital of the world. There are so many things offered from that community. In neighbouring Shag Harbour, there's the museum of the UFO incident, which I spoke about earlier this month. That happened in 1957. In Pubnico, there's the wind turbine farm. There's the musée acadien, le Village historique acadien de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

This year I had the opportunity to partake - not as a participant, rather as a supporter - at a dinner of the Bay of Fundy Sea Kayak Symposium. That's an event that welcomes kayakers from around the world. I believe there were near a hundred kayakers. They're able to enjoy some of our challenging waters - the varying currents, the rugged coastlines. It offers them a unique experience that they cannot necessarily get elsewhere. I thank the committee for choosing southwestern Nova Scotia to come back to year after year and establishing this symposium for people from all around the world.

In Cape Sable, you have the Cape Sable lighthouse, which is the tallest lighthouse in Nova Scotia. I believe it's 101 metres.

At the end of the day, Argyle-Barrington is a special place where people come together in times of need. They're community-minded residents. They support each other. They're caring. I'm proud to be their representative here in this House of Assembly.

The recent by-election in Argyle-Barrington was an opportunity to connect with constituents, to listen to their concerns, and to think about what we need in our region to make it prosper. There are real concerns in rural Nova Scotia. Without a doubt, health care is number one. I have spoken with my colleagues who were recently elected as well in the by-election, and the sentiment is echoed across this province that health care is a true concern for Nova Scotians. I'm proud to be able to bring their concerns forward to this Legislature when it comes to health care.

People are concerned about access to primary care, not having a family doctor. We have discussed this in this House, there are thousands of people still in this province without a family doctor, struggling to get prescriptions renewed. It's a simple thing. They're forced to go to an emergency room - when they're open. You have Roseway - I believe it's closed today and tomorrow. These people are forced to go to a neighbouring hospital, whether it be Queens or Yarmouth. This affects wait times in emergency rooms. It affects the ambulance system. Instead of taking an hour to do a call in the Town of Shelburne, now you're forced to go an hour beyond to a neighbouring hospital.

I have spoken about the ambulance concerns from first-hand knowledge and what's being shared on media and by the paramedic union. In my constituency, I have three paramedic stations. I have Pubnico, I have Woods Harbour, and I have Barrington. It's well

known that these bases sometimes do not have any paramedics posted here. That's because of the system demands. Like I said, demands are high. Paramedics are always moving.

This issue was brought forward by the ex-member for Argyle-Barrington, increased response times noted in areas. When you have an ambulance base in a community, and you're used to having a response time of, let's say less than 10 minutes, and now you're waiting 20, 30, or 40 minutes for an ambulance, I'm hard pressed to say that we're not in a crisis and that that's not a problem.

I know this is not a regional issue. I know it's a provincial issue; I recognize that our province's ambulance system is provincial. I spoke about the benefits of this provincial system, but it's time to take action; again, it's beyond off-load guidelines.

People have been speaking about the distances to travel for care and for services in this province. I've spoken about the access for dialysis patients in Barrington and one of my constituents, Artie Smith, having to travel 120 kilometres return, three times a week, every month, to go for dialysis in Yarmouth. That is something I will continue to bring forward in this House and advocate for patients like Artie because I believe that rural Nova Scotia deserves the same treatment, when it comes to health care, as we have in other parts of this province.

Roads will always be a problem in our province, I think, unless there's a strong and concrete plan of how we can address them. It's something I've heard throughout Argyle-Barrington on the doorsteps, whether it be the paving needs, people are busting their tie rods and doing other damage to their vehicles. There is missing signage in parts of my constituency. You look at safety concerns, brush-cutting, people can't see when coming out of their driveways.

It has been brought forward before in this House about Exit 32, which is around the Argyle-Glenwood area in my constituency. That's a very dangerous spot. One weekend on my way home, I believe it was the first week here in this House when I was passing through that area they were cleaning up from an accident. It's a high-traffic area. It has an exit going to a P-12 school, and in the morning you have lots of school buses turning in and trying to get back on the highway, and the same thing in the afternoon.

On the opposite side of the road you have a street going to a nursing home, and it's a dangerous spot - the proper term is "suicide lanes."

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. There's too much chatter in the Chamber. Could you quiet down, please.

The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington has the floor.

COLTON LEBLANC: It's a dangerous spot. I'm not sure if the proper transportation terms refer to it as suicide lanes but it is becoming a very dangerous situation. It's something that I hope to be able to speak with the minister about, to solve this issue for my constituents.

Cellphone and high-speed internet has been brought forward in this House. It impacts my constituents, day after day. The people I have visited in Quinin have noted there is zero cell signal there. In other parts such as Woods Harbour there is very little. There's none in East Kemptville, and that was a safety concern when we spoke about Hurricane Dorian. In parts of my constituency, the phone lines went down and when you have areas that have zero or little access to cellphones, I ask myself, how are they going to be able to access emergency services that are supposed to be provided by this province?

Seniors, a population I highly respect, is a group of people that I've had the opportunity to work with and help a lot in my career as a paramedic. On the doorsteps and even in the constituency office they are concerned about affordable living, concerned about the increased cost of living. Whether it be the cost of food or the cost of heat or affording their medications or home repairs, at the end of the day they are trying to make ends meet.

I believe our seniors are citizens who have worked hard, they have raised families, they've contributed to our society, and they deserve to be treated with dignity and deserve to be treated better than this.

When it comes to education, I spoke in this House about École Wedgeport and the importance of this project for the community. They have worked tirelessly and so hard since 2017 to push forward for this project. I hope the project is still slated to open in 2021.

What I found very interesting about the group of parents is that they want to go beyond what is normally involved in the construction of a school. They have climate change in mind, and I've talked with them about green initiatives. They want to be the pilot project, the leading star, when it comes to schools not only in Nova Scotia but possibly even in Canada. They want to incorporate renewable energy. They want to include solar panels. That is something I hope that I can continue to work on, and maybe make that a reality for them and lead the way for not only our province but the rest of Canada, that when we talk about infrastructure in our province, we can be a role model.

Another very important concern that has been raised on the doorsteps and is very near and dear to my heart as part of our economy is the tourism sector. In southwestern Nova Scotia, there was grave concern for the tourism season this Summer. I sympathize with the tourism operators who struggled in hopes of a prosperous tourism season but were negatively impacted by the lack of a ferry operating this year. I am committed - and for the record, we are committed, my caucus and I - to having a reliable, sustainable, transparent, and accountable connection in service with the United States.

My constituency, southwestern Nova Scotia, and the rest of the province know the realities of not having a running ferry service. This dates back many years. The hardships felt in southwestern Nova Scotia left a void. There was lots of damage done and it took lots of work to get back in the right step, but there is still lots of work to be done.

I have concern for the upcoming season because I don't want my constituents in southwestern Nova Scotia and the rest of this province to be given false hope. I want them to know that there is going to be a port; I want them to know that there is going to be a boat; and I want them to know that if there is any deviation of that and there are timelines that are not going to be met, the government will be transparent and upfront with them. At the end of the day, it's their dollars being spent in this investment and they deserve to know where it is going.

Wharves across this province are industrial parks - like Burnside, for example. It takes lots of investment and infrastructure, such as wharves, to allow for the fishing industry to grow and prosper. Boats are getting bigger and bigger each year. Wharves are getting older and maybe not maintained to the level that they need to be. Some are coming to the point where they are unable to handle the quantity of the boats and the loads of the boats.

I have heard from constituents that at one wharf, in weather probably like today, they can actually feel the wharf shaking when they are standing on it. They are concerned if the wharves are going to take off on them. I've made the commitment to working with federal counterparts and all levels of government to ensure that my constituents are able to have the infrastructure they need to continue to have a prosperous fishing industry.

LFA 34 - lobster fishing area 34 - lobster fishing season starts at the end of next month. It is a very dangerous and laborious job, and one that I don't really envy. I am glad to be here on land. There is a lot of lobster landed in southwestern Nova Scotia. In 2018, there were 41.7 million pounds of lobster. That's a lot of lobster. That would be a lot of fish chowder, seafood chowder, a lot of creamed lobster. That brought in nearly \$3 billion to this province. That amount of money coming back or being generated by southwestern Nova Scotia is particularly important because southwestern Nova Scotia wants this part of the economy to grow, this industry to grow, but at the same time they want back in return what they deserve, I guess their fair share of the pie. I've heard that over and over.

[6:30 p.m.]

At the end of the day - it has come up on the doorsteps - people want answers to questions and when something doesn't go right, when it goes wrong, people want to know who is responsible and why. That's why it has come up on the doorsteps and we're pushing for transparency and accountability on different files.

I'm here to be an effective and strong and passionate voice for my community, to make Argyle-Barrington an even better place to live, to make rural Nova Scotia an even better place to live, a stronger place to live - to make Nova Scotia a better place to live. I am sure it has been said before but I'm sure that you can agree that a strong rural Nova Scotia will ensure that Nova Scotia grows and prospers. (Applause)

I'll do a little blurb in French but if you're not - I'll translate it after.

Une partie de ma circonscription d'Argyle-Barrington est composée de plusieurs communautés acadiennes vibrantes qui possèdent une forte fierté de leur culture, de leur patrimoine, et de leur langue. Je suis reconnaissant à ma famille de m'avoir guidé dès un jeune âge à être fier de ma culture acadienne et de ma langue française.

Après avoir complété mes études secondaires en français à l'École secondaire de Par-en-Bas et avant de devenir ambulancier, j'ai choisi de poursuivre mes études post-secondaires en français. Alors, la seule institution post-secondaire de langue français ici en Nouvelle-Écosse à la Baie Sainte-Marie est l'Université Sainte-Anne. L'Université Sainte-Anne est un des universités les plus vertes au Canada. Elle a environ 118 panneaux solaires, deux fourneaux de gazéification de la biomasse, et deux éoliennes sur son campus - tout ce qui permet de réduire leurs émissions de gaz à effet de serre ainsi que contribuer à l'économie rurale du membre de Clare-Digby. L'Université Sainte-Anne est un leader écologique et économique, et je suis fier de leur contribution à notre province.

Je suis plus fier de pouvoir m'adresser à cette Assemblée dans une de mes langues maternelles.

Madam Speaker, part of my constituency is comprised of many vibrant Acadian communities that are very proud of their Acadian culture, their heritage and their language. I am very thankful to my family who have guided me from a young age to be happy and proud of my heritage and my culture.

After completing my high school studies at l'École secondaire de Par-en-Bas and even before becoming a paramedic, I chose to continue my post-secondary studies in French at Nova Scotia's only francophone university, Université Sainte-Anne. Sainte-Anne's is one of, if not the greenest university in Canada. It has 118 solar panels on its campus, two biomass furnaces, and they get their wood chips from a mill in Bangor, I believe. Their carbon footprint bringing over these chips has a much less negative impact when it comes to their carbon footprint. They also have two windmills on their campus. All this allows them to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

I am very proud of my alma mater. They are a true leader when it comes to the economy and the ecology. Again, I'm very proud of them and I'm even more proud to be able to address this Assembly in one of my languages.

Before I end my remarks, I want to sincerely thank my Progressive Conservative caucus again for embracing me in the PC caucus family since day one. I would also like to thank the other members of this Legislature for their welcome to the House, as well. (Interruptions) The members of the Liberal and New Democratic Party caucuses - there we go. I thought I was going to be pressed for time, so I was trying to keep it condensed.

As I have been reminded since being elected, few Nova Scotians have had the opportunity to take a seat here in this House of Assembly. I believe it was 799, if the number is right, who had the opportunity to represent their constituents. Since we've had democracy here in Nova Scotia, since there has been this House of Assembly, there have been millions of people in Nova Scotia, yet less than 800 have had the opportunity to be an elected official, to be the voice and hopefully the reason for their constituents. It is a true honour for each and every one of us to be here. We are here to represent our constituents, to be their voice. I look forward to advocating for my constituents and working with members on both sides of the aisle to ensure that Nova Scotia prospers, that this beautiful province prospers.

Again, I am humbled and grateful for this opportunity to be Argyle-Barrington's voice. In closing, I would like to thank the members of this House for their indulgence this afternoon and this evening. With that, I take my seat. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: On behalf of the government side and, of course, the New Democratic Party as well, I would like to congratulate the member on a great opening speech, the member for Argyle-Barrington. My maiden speech was 10 minutes long and that included naming every single person who volunteered for me in the election (Interruptions) It was only five people, but you know what I mean. Articulation was great, and to stand here comfortably and use the hour, congratulations. We look forward to the three members in your Party, as well, who are going to take the stage here. Congratulations, very well done, and we look forward to working with you, as well. (Applause)

With that, Madam Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

THE SPEAKER: The House will now resolve into the Committee of the Whole House on Bills. We will have a short recess while the committee sets up.

[6:38 p.m. The House recessed.]

[6:51 p.m. The House resolved into a CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft in the Chair.]

[7:15 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened. The Speaker, Hon. Kevin Murphy, resumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: 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. 187 - House of Assembly Act.

and the chair has been instructed to recommend these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, each without amendment.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 160.

Bill No. 160 - Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move third reading of the Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: I'm sorry, I expected the minister to say something to the bill. Am I the only one speaking to the bill? Okay, here I go.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad to rise and speak to these amendments to the Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act, especially to convey a message that we hope that the government will fully and collaboratively consult with workers, fishers, fishing communities, and stakeholders - which is a much larger group than just the processing sector - on any further changes to the framework for fish buying and processing.

We all know in this Chamber how crucial the fishery is for our province's culture and economy, and we need to ensure that it is regulated effectively in a way that supports the many small communities from which it takes place. The fishery is especially important because we are at a moment in Nova Scotia where a lot of economic activity is concentrating in Halifax and maybe, I think, even concentrating in Hants. The fishery is organized differently from that. The economic activity is spread out and the interest in it is also spread out.

We know that the fish processing industry has trouble finding workers and that often those workers have trouble finding housing, and that likely has something to do with the working conditions and wages. As a result, it's an industry that relies heavily on temporary foreign workers.

Any changes to the framework of the processing in the fishery - any changes to how that's happening - need to be understood in relation to their impact on the labour dynamic in the fish processing sector. We also need to think broadly about how we protect this crucial industry for rural Nova Scotia.

The most immediate threat to the fishing industry is supply of the actual resource which, in turn, is threatened by climate change. Protecting the fishery means a real, substantial, concerted effort on climate change, as we know that warming oceans and acidifying oceans are a major risk. In addition to that, there is plastics pollution, cruise ship waste, and the threat of oil spills.

We've already spoken in this Chamber and from the NDP caucus about the need for emissions targets that are in line with global ambitions to reduce emissions so that we restrict our planet's warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, and that means 50 per cent below 1990 levels. We know that we have a limited time to achieve that target, which means we have very little time to set that target and to set ourselves on that ambition.

We know, too, that fishing communities are already experiencing rising sea levels, which threaten the infrastructure related to the fish processing sector and the communities that rely on those processing activities. In my view, protecting the fishery also means supporting an inquiry into the offshore oil industry to make sure that we have a fulsome understanding of how the offshore oil industry may impact the industry, given that there are no hard borders - no walls - in the ocean.

We need to understand how a spill in the offshore would impact the fishing industry. That's why we have called for a rigorous federal environmental assessment of any plan to release effluent into the Northumberland Strait. It's also why we have introduced the Environmental Bill of Rights to ensure that communities, including coastal and fishing communities, have a voice in decisions that may have environmental impacts.

The ocean is central to this province's social, cultural, and economic present and future.

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

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member of the Third Party. This is a very important bill for the industry. It's an industry we've widely consulted on already, at their request, for making these changes. Indeed, we will take her comments into consideration. Under the authority I have, a lot of the things that she talked about are beyond my authority to do, but we take this very seriously.

The fishing industry is the number one employer outside of government in the province and, indeed, is the biggest export in the province. We intend to keep it that way and grow it even further through value added and a lot of other things we can do with the industry in co-operation with the industry.

I move third reading of Bill No. 160.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 160. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 163.

Bill No. 163 - Wilderness Areas Protection Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Environment.

HON. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 163 be now read a third time. I just want to share a few words about the amendments to the Wilderness Protection Act.

We generally restrict vehicle use in wilderness areas and for a good reason. We want to ensure wildlife and biodiversity in these areas are protected. That said, there are some instances where vehicles can be allowed without harming what we are protecting.

Through management agreements with the ATV Association of Nova Scotia and the Snowmobilers Association of Nova Scotia, we already manage 120 kilometres of trails in these areas. We are not opening up our wilderness areas for widespread vehicle use. We are just making it possible to develop management agreements for two trails.

We also want to make sure that people can get a licence to access their private land if it is partly surrounded by a wilderness area, and we are making it possible to put parking lots within the boundaries of wilderness areas so that people can have a safe place to park.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to promoting biodiversity and protecting ecologically important areas of the province. These amendments will allow more people to use these safe areas responsibly, preserving them for generations.

I would also like to thank the staff and especially Peter Labor for doing a great job in the bill briefing that we had heard earlier.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and I look forward to the comments from the members opposite.

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

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, we as a caucus don't have any objection to this. We see most of this as housekeeping items and support everything that's here.

I have reached out and talked to major stakeholders, some of which the minister has suggested - ATVANS as well as the Ski-Doos - and we certainly agree with the ability for people who have land-locked properties to be able to access those.

In regard to parking areas in wilderness areas, and after discussions with some of those stakeholders such as ATVANS, we certainly understand the need to be able to do this and we have no objections to this.

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

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to speak again to these amendments to the very important Wilderness Areas Protection Act.

The changes before us here are in the vein of making wilderness areas safer to enjoy and clarifying some aspects of their use, as the minister and my previous colleague have pointed out and, of course, these are things that we in the New Democratic Party also support.

Wilderness areas for sure are important from the point of view of their usefulness, utility for people, but that is not their paramount importance. Their paramount importance is from the point of view of protecting the habitat of the countless other species with whom we share the world.

There are few subjects more important than this. The United Nations Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the IPBES, has reported alarmingly on this subject not very long ago. This is a report that has been somewhat overshadowed by the landmark 2018 UN Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, for obvious reasons, but it's not a report that should be overlooked in any way. It is a report by the intergovernmental panel on biodiversity, which has been called sometimes the IPCC of biodiversity.

That report found that of the manifold multiplicity of species species on the earth, some 8.7 million, the survival of approximately one million, including our own, is at risk from the rate at which we are destroying the natural world.

[7:30 p.m.]

Here in Nova Scotia we know about this and species that are familiar in our conversations from the point of view of their threatenedness, such remarkable creatures as the piping plover and chimney swift, the Blanding's turtle and the Canada lynx. This UN report describes how human beings have significantly altered three-quarters of all the land on the planet, two-thirds of all the ocean, notable one-third of coral species, shark, and marine animals set to go extinct soon if drastic action isn't taken.

The reason for this is really pretty simple - it's that human activities have expanded in a fashion which is incompatible with the sustainability of animal and plant life on our planet. Pollution and invasive species are wreaking havoc, climate change is having an outside impact, as we know, and this is set only to increase.

However, this seminal UN report also says that there is a path towards stemming the impending tide of extinctions that is headed to our waters and our woods. It gives this path that is available to us a name - and these are the UN's words - "the path of transformative change." Central to that transformative change the report outlines that, in addition to arresting global warming at 1.5 degrees, is the subject of this Act: strengthening our commitment to wilderness protection.

Here I want to submit, as we come to the conclusion of thinking about the bill having been opened for the purposes that have been mentioned, here lies the responsibility of this government to move with what the UN is calling transformative boldness on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, on renewable energy generation, on energy efficiency and on wilderness protection.

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

The honourable Minister of Environment.

HON. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much to the members for Sackville-Beaver Bank and Halifax Chebucto for their comments. Certainly I think I do agree that wilderness areas are extremely important, This is a bill to allow access and to make things safer, but I'd also like to note that it was a very huge undertaking recently where we announced an additional 17 wilderness sites to be protected with 10 more to come in the future, which moves the bar significantly towards 13 per cent, to 12.7 per cent.

I really again want to thank the staff for the work they have done to get us there and all of our folks who raised the awareness to the importance of wilderness areas in the province. With that, I'll move third reading of Bill No. 163, amendments to the Wilderness Areas Protection Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 163. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 166.

Bill No. 166 - Denturists Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 166 be now read a third time and do pass.

Mr. Speaker, as referenced during second reading, these changes will enable denturists to place removable dentures over implants while working as part of an implant team. This service is something they have been trained to do and the changes really just

provide them the opportunity to work and put this training into practice. With that, I look forward to any comments my colleagues may have.

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

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the Denturists Act. The changes being brought about are something that have been needed for quite a while because as the number of seniors increases, the amount of people needed to provide care for them goes up.

I am hoping that in his closing remarks the Minister of Health and Wellness will help answer a couple of questions that I have that weren't mentioned.

Years ago, this government established an oral health advisory group - in 2014, I believe - and in 2015 they presented their report which I was reading, and it was considered a Phase I Report with recommendations. That was five years ago almost, and then it dropped off the radar and there has been nothing reported since. So I'm wondering what happened to the oral health advisory committee that this government had created. With all of my calls to various people, I have not been able to discover whether this advisory committee is still in place and, if so, is the government still following their recommendations and, if so, is there a report that we could refer to?

If you go to the Nova Scotia Dental Association's website, when you look at oral health, they have short reports on various topics over the past five years that you can refer to - 2019 was about stress, which we've talked about many times in this Legislature and how that impacts oral health.

In 2018, though, the report was about the oral health needs of those with special needs because as your frailty level goes up, your need for dental care also goes up. We don't talk about that very often in this Legislature, and in my efforts to find out exactly how much funding there was in long-term care for the provision of dental care, I couldn't get any numbers.

Although this bill is addressing one minor issue that may help improve the dental care of people in this province, I'm not sure that it goes anywhere far enough to what those in long-term care are telling me is a perceived lack of care for oral health for those in long-term care.

One of the recommendations from the Dental Association's annual report from 2018 is that the issues that long-term care staff, who are already strained because there's insufficient staffing, are unable to address is the dental needs of the elderly. As all of us have had elderly parents and grandparents - if you have trouble with basic things like bathing and dressing and simply walking down the hall, one of the last things that you're able to do is to look after your own oral health care.

I did work with someone for 10 years on a committee - the Serving Seniors Alliance - who provided private in-home dental care. She had her own chair and everything - and she would be hired by families to go in and do oral dental care in long-term care facilities. The stories she would tell us would make you sick.

One of the things that I also could not find out in my research was whether people who are admitted to long-term care facilities actually have a dental assessment by someone other than the nurse who simply says they've got dentures, or they've got whatever. So, I'm hoping the minister can advise us of that because this bill is meant to improve the dental care in this province, particularly for seniors, and we haven't really talked about what that care looks like in long-term care.

Certainly, that would also apply to those in home care. We talked about home care and health care in the home and supportive care in the home, including cooking and cleaning, but we almost never talk about the allied health care services that are needed in the home - physiotherapists to go in after a fall, occupational therapists to go in and help fit somebody for an electric wheelchair, and I certainly am almost 100 per cent sure we never talk about dental care in the home.

One of the other things that we know in this report from 2018 put out by the Dental Association is that the oral health status of Nova Scotians with disabilities is relatively unknown. We don't even know how big the problem is, so I'm wondering if the minister at some point can comment on how big a problem we have in oral health for those with disabilities and those who are seniors because it's often not anything that family members are thinking about. They're worried about getting somebody on and off a toilet, getting enough food into them, and making sure that they're not falling down the stairs when they try to go down and do a load of laundry past the time when they have the physical ability to do so.

In 2017, the Dental Association produced a report on children's oral health. That subject is coming up at a future Health Committee meeting, so I'll save my comments about that for then.

In 2016 it was about sugar-sweetened beverages, and I want to reference that here today because everything has a domino effect. When you make a change in funding or programs, you impact all sorts of things. One of the things I heard immediately several years ago when this government cut funding to long-term care, was that one of the first changes they made was that they went from fresh-squeezed orange juice to the sugar-crystal orange juice.

Well, that has an impact on oral health. It also has an impact on the rate of diabetes and one's blood sugar. As we all know, we have an epidemic of diabetes in this province. It's going to escalate exponentially. It's supposedly going to double by 2038. Of course,

with diabetes comes vision impairment, which leads to balance issues, and of course, the coronary artery disease that comes with it.

When you make a change in the funding of a long-term care facility, you also change the oral hygiene practices when you change their diet. Frankly, nobody's worried in a long-term care facility about whether Mrs. Smith is getting her teeth brushed, although they should. They're worried about whether she has a bedsore or whether she's getting her pain medication on time or whether she's ever getting out of bed in order to retain her mobility.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to ask the member to confine her comments specifically to the content of the bill. Third reading is not intended to be a general platform to talk about broad subject areas. It's supposed to be specific on the contents of the bill.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

BARBARA ADAMS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last comment I want to make is that the Dental Association's report for 2015 was about seniors. Denturists are part of the solution in managing those who are seniors who have oral health issues.

I think that this bill is obviously a good step, but I think it's only one small step in a very long walk that we need to take to go towards improving the health of seniors in this province, in particular those in home care and long-term care.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, we're happy to see that with these changes to the legislation, the scope of practice of denturists will be expanded in Nova Scotia. Access to dentures needs to be increased, and this sounds like a step in the right direction.

I've said this before, but I'd like to reiterate, while we're looking forward to seeing the impacts of these changes, we can't forget about the wider problem of access to oral health. One in three working people in Canada have no dental insurance. When they need to see a dentist, they have to pay out of pocket. If they don't have the money, as in many cases, they simply go without the care they need. As a result of people not getting the care they need, people live with severe pain. They miss work, they suffer in silence, and they can't live up to their potential.

Access to oral health is an issue for children, for adults, and for seniors. We need to ensure that our health care system does not stop at the neck. It should cover us from tip to toe.

In Nova Scotia, we could start to ensure that everyone gets good oral health by implementing a public health dental hygiene program in our public schools and passing

Bill No. 141 this session. Our health care system is focused on below-the-neck care. Nova Scotians' investments in public health dentistry are among the lowest in the country.

Sadly, we only have a total of 14.2 full-time equivalent dental hygienists employed by the public school system, and no other professionals. Nova Scotia once hired a dentist to work part-time as the province's dental public health consultant, but the position has been vacant for many years. A universal, school-based oral health program could change the lives of . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to offer the honourable member for Cape Breton Centre the same comment as the previous member. Third reading is intended to speak specifically to the contents of the bill. It's not a platform for general comment on the broader subject.

[7:45 p.m.]

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

TAMMY MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Just one quick thing - the member for Cape Breton Centre made reference to a dental consultant position. Earlier in the week or last week in Question Period, I made it very clear that that position is currently filled, and the dental consultant has been working for a number of months with the department.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to close third reading debate on Bill No. 166.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 166. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 170.

Bill No. 170 - Public Highways Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 170, the Public Highways Act, be now read a third time and do pass.

I want to thank the members opposite for their comments on second reading. With that, Mr. Speaker, I complete my remarks.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to speak to this bill. I am glad to see that we will be cleaning up this Act to reduce the burden on both government and individuals when dealing with the ownership of what are ancient highways and roads by now, along with other housekeeping changes that are proposed, including amending the language in the Act to make it gender neutral.

Before I go on, I will say that we are in support of this legislation.

This bill, though, does remind me that, when it comes to secondary roads in our province, our process for dealing with upgrades and repairs is also stuck in the last century, like the ghost highways that this bill deals with. To respectfully borrow a phrase from the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about the five-year highway plan that the NDP Government brought in to take the politics out of road building. The approach has been continued by the Liberal Government because it is a good and fair way of dealing with things that gives people clarity on our provincial priorities and certainty about when projects will be completed.

Also I am so happy to hear that my colleagues across the floor support this idea because we have also proposed applying the same planning model to the construction and maintenance of secondary roads. Unfortunately, despite the success of the five-year highway plan, the Liberal Government has chosen not to extend that same planning attention to our secondary roads.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to see this government adopt a five-year plan for secondary roads to ensure that Nova Scotians don't have to fight to ensure that their way home is safe to travel. There's no reason why we couldn't have a better system in place.

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

The honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise to close debate on Bill No. 170.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 170. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that the bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

KEITH IRVING: That concludes government business for today. I move that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow, Friday, October 18th, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Following the daily routine and Question Period, business will include second reading of Bill No. 204; third reading of Bill Nos. 152, 169, 175, 177, and 187; and with time permitting, Address in Reply.

I can also advise the public and members of the House that the Law Amendments Committee will be meeting tomorrow, Friday, October 18th, starting at 1:00 p.m., to deal with Bill Nos. 189, 192, 193, 197, 201, and 203.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to rise to meet again tomorrow between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., Friday, October 18th.

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

The motion is carried.

The House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9:00 a.m.

[The House rose at 7:50 p.m.]

NOTICE OF QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS**Given on October 17, 2019****(Pursuant to Rule 30)****QUESTION NO. 7**

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

To: Hon. Stephen McNeil (The Premier)

Many people were impacted by the fallout from Hurricane Dorian, and not people with deep pockets to pay for the impacts. Low income people lost food in their fridges and freezers, many people whose homes were damaged are still looking for housing, and small businesses on South Park Street remain closed from the collapsed crane. In addition, several small non-profit and arts organizations and artists across the province have been displaced. Atlantic Filmmakers Cooperative is one organization that has to move unexpectedly after the roof was damaged at 5663 Cornwallis Street. These events are set to become more intense and more frequent.

(1) What support is available to non-profit organizations who have significant expenses related to Hurricane Dorian?

QUESTION NO. 8

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

To: Hon. Geoff MacLellan (Minister of Business)

In 2015, this government cancelled the important film tax credit. This decision has been disastrous for the film industry in Nova Scotia and we have not been able to take advantage of the Netflix boom that other provinces are benefitting from. Many skilled film workers have left the province. As a result of this decision, it is now estimated that Nova Scotia is near the bottom on the list for productions choosing where in Canada to shoot. In response to a recent question, the minister said that his department has done extensive analysis on the economic impact of this decision.

(1) Can the minister please provide the analysis that has been done by his department on the economic impact of the decision to cancel the film tax credit?