



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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

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

Second Session

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2019

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 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 Pictou East.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to submit a petition that has 5,571 signatures. The operative clause reads:

“We, the people of Nova Scotia, call on the government of Nova Scotia to consider harsher penalties for animal abusers. We propose the following:

- 1st offence: one year in jail, a \$25,000 fine, and a lifetime ban on owning animals.
- 2nd offence: two years in jail, a \$50,000 fine, and a lifetime ban of owning animals.
- 3rd offence: 5 years in jail, a \$75,000 fine, and a lifetime ban of owning animals.
- Probation after the 1st, 2nd and 3rd offence of no less than two years.

We also propose the offender to be placed on the animal abuse registry and to be listed with the SPCA, Half [sic] Regional Police Department, RCMP, and animal groups across the province.”

Mr. Speaker, as I’ve said, it has 5,571 signatures, and I have affixed my signature to this petition.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, may I do an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, in our East Gallery we’re joined today by John Montague and his wife Barbara. I would ask them both to stand.

Mr. Speaker, John was on HMCS *Kootenay* from 1967 to 1969 as a junior officer, and he retired as a naval captain. This morning, with many people, I was at a memorial service honouring the 50th anniversary of that disaster at *Kootenay*. I want to tell you that John gave a eulogy that I wish all members of this House could hear, and more Nova Scotians.

He laid out what happened on that day 50 years ago. We lost nine servicemen on that particular day. John eloquently expressed how four of them were buried at sea - the last Canadian soldiers to be buried at sea - and four of them are buried in England. Mr. Speaker, as you well know, and all of us know, unfortunately, we now repatriate those brave men and women who honour our country back here. That happened because of that terrible disaster on the *Kootenay*.

John and Barbara - I want to say to Barbara that I was impressed by the words “the *Kootenay* family.” I know it was not only the men and women on that ship; it was the entire families who have come together over these past 50 years. We honour not only those who perished that particular day, but those who survived. Even though we talk about PTSD today, 50 years ago we didn’t. We left it up to our families and spouses to deal with the tragedy and circumstances around that.

On behalf of this entire House, John and Barbara, please accept our gratitude that you're here and our thanks to you and to the entire *Kootenay* family. (Standing Ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1378

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

Whereas HMCS *Kootenay*, originally based in Halifax, experienced the worst peacetime accident in the history of the Royal Canadian Navy on October 23, 1969; and

Whereas the accident occurred off of England, and the resulting fire and toxic smoke caused by the explosion claimed the lives of 9 crewmen and seriously injured 53; and

Whereas a crewman who were killed in the HMCS *Kootenay* accident will be honoured in a ceremony this evening, where a brook will be named in his memory, Billy Boudreau Brook, in Pictou County;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly recognize HMCS *Kootenay* and its crew for their courage during this terrible accident, and offer our heartfelt appreciation for the sacrifice of the crewmen in protecting the freedoms that we as Canadians enjoy.

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.

RESOLUTION NO. 1379

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

Whereas Department of Community Services staff work hard to help young people get ahead in life through various programs and supports; and

Whereas this year the department worked with valued service providers from across the province to launch the youth day program pilot programming, helping young people aged 16 to 24 attain skills or vocational and recreational opportunities so that they can be independent; and

Whereas 14 service providers are piloting a diverse selection of programming options in all regions of the province;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House join me in thanking our valued staff and service providers for delivering this innovative programming to young people.

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 we are joined by a special group from Maplewave, and I will ask them to stand as I read their names. We have Sheeba Kochhar, HR generalist, SMU MBA graduate; Hadley Igoe, test engineer, NSCC diploma in information technology programming and Graduate to Opportunity's 1,000th hire; Hareesha Bugga, software developer, Dalhousie Master of Engineering; Sankalp Bhagat, software developer, SMU Master of Computing and Data Analytics; Ariane Hanlon, test engineer, Dalhousie Bachelor of Applied Computer Science; Josh Moore, software developer, Dalhousie Bachelor of Computer Science; and Leigh Anne Dingwall, Vice-President of Human Resources at Maplewave.

I ask everyone to give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

[1:15 p.m.]

RESOLUTION NO. 1380

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

Whereas employers across the province are discovering how hiring skilled young workers can benefit their businesses; and

Whereas more than 1,000 recent graduates have secured jobs in their chosen careers in Nova Scotia with help from encouraging employers and the Graduate to Opportunity program; and

Whereas these graduates are building their futures in Nova Scotia and they're bringing new energy and new possibilities to the organizations that hire them;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature congratulate these talented graduates on their success and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

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 Environment.

HON. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to do an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

GORDON WILSON: I bring the attention of the House to the East Gallery where we have a member here today who is not unfamiliar with this House, by any means. Mark Butler, I'd ask you to rise. Mark Butler, unbeknownst to a lot of us maybe, is here for a different reason but today I'd like to bring attention to the fact that he's retiring Friday.

Coincidentally, we have him here today. I would like to express thanks for the work that you've done over 23 years to raise the awareness in this province of important things and, I think, have helped us get to the position that we are today as leaders in the country in environmental opportunities. Thank you very much. (Standing Ovation.)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Environment.

RESOLUTION NO. 1381

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

Whereas Mark Butler joined the Ecology Action Centre 23 years ago and has worked tirelessly to raise Nova Scotians' awareness and understanding of the important issues facing our environment; and

Whereas during that time, the Ecology Action Centre has grown from a passionate but small group of two staff members to an influential voice in environmental policy with 40 staff and 300 volunteers; and

Whereas Mark's last day of work is Friday, as policy director of the Ecology Action Centre;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Mark Butler on 23 successful years with the Ecology Action Centre and wish him luck in the next phase of 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 Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I've discussed this with the Opposition House Leaders, as well, but just for the record we're seeking unanimous consent of the House to revert to the order of business, Tabling Reports, Regulations and Other Papers.

THE SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

[TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS, AND OTHER PAPERS]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MARK FUREY: I'd call my colleagues' attention to the East Gallery, where we're joined by staff today from the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. My apologies for not being here in a prompt and timely manner.

Joining us with the team from the Human Rights Commission is the CEO, Christine Hanson. Christine has made a significant contribution to transforming our Human Rights Commission in the province of Nova Scotia, and her team has been so supportive through some very challenging files and continues to work with the best interests of our broad community in mind.

I'd ask the members of the Legislature to bring a warm welcome to Christine and her team. (Standing Ovation.)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: In my capacity as the Attorney General for the Province of Nova Scotia, I hereby beg leave to table the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission Annual Report for 2017-18.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Environment.

HON. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction before I introduce the bill.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

GORDON WILSON: Folks, I would like to bring the attention of the members of the House to the East Gallery where we are joined today by a group of people whom I value

very much - the Minister's Round Table on Environment and Sustainable Prosperity - and I think all of our previous ministers would agree, played an integral role.

Not all of them are here today, but I would like to acknowledge all of them. I ask the ones who are here to stand, and I will read off the names of those who are not here also: Scott Skinner, Martin Janowitz, Mark Butler, John Crace, Rob Grant, Graham Gagnon, Michel Raymond, Bill Simpkins, Dayle Eshelby, Jeff Bishop, Henry Vissers, Heather Johannesen, and Sheila Cole.

These people are deeply committed to sustainable prosperity in our province. They have been instrumental in helping us reach a moment where I am about to table new legislation to ensure we have a healthy environment, a healthy economy, and a healthy, resilient people.

I want to thank them most sincerely for working with me since I have become minister. The Premier, my colleagues, and I look forward to continuing to build our relationship, and I ask all members to bring the warm welcome of the House to this group. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to do a second introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to introduce some young Nova Scotians who are here and joined by the staff of the Clean Foundation, a non-profit group that ensures we make our homes energy efficient, restores watersheds, engages youth, promotes green transportation, mitigates the effects of storm water, and partners with municipalities and First Nations on climate change - a tremendous group of young people we have here, and I'd ask them to take the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Environment.

Bill No. 213 - Entitled an Act to Achieve Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity. (Hon. Gordon Wilson)

THE SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill be read a second time on a future day.

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

HMCS KOOTENAY - CREW MEMBERS: WOUND STRIPE - HONOUR

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in commemoration of HMCS *Kootenay* and the explosion that killed 9 crewmen and injured 53 others. Today marks the 50th anniversary of the accident.

I want to draw attention to Commander (Retired) Al Kennedy and Able Seaman (Retired) Allan “Dinger” Bell. Both men were wounded in the *Kootenay* explosion and fire, and this year received the Wound Stripe.

The Wound Stripe is a medal given to members of the military in recognition of a wound or injury sustained from enemy action or while serving in a forward operational area.

I was honoured to hear the Premier’s words this morning of Able Seaman Bell and the crew there in remembrance of the HMCS *Kootenay* ceremony at Point Pleasant Park.

I ask all members of this House to join me in honouring Commander Kennedy, Able Seaman Bell, and all the victims and survivors of the HMCS *Kootenay* explosion.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

TOWNSEND, ANNA: FITNESS ROOM - CONGRATS.

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Small Business Week to congratulate local entrepreneur Anna Townsend.

Anna has had a lifelong passion for exercise. Over the last 18 years she has helped share her fitness knowledge with others as a nutrition and lifestyle coach, fitness instructor, certified trainer, and blogger. In a fitness manager position with a local chain of gyms, she has also managed and hired personal trainers, helping them grow, learn, and better help their clients.

Growing up in a family that owned a small business, Anna knew she wanted to take control of her own career. This Spring, Anna did just that when she opened her own studio, the Fitness Room, on Shoreham Lane where she offers classes in spin, barre, yoga, Pilates and more.

I want to congratulate Anna on the opening of the Fitness Room and wish her and her team great success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

FERGUSON, AMY - BOAT CPT.: ONE OF FEW - CONGRATS.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend Amy Ferguson, one of the very few female boat captains in Pictou County and probably Nova Scotia. Amy has spent many years aboard her father's boat as a hired hand during lobster season and always thoroughly enjoyed the work that goes into it.

Following her father's passing, she decided to step away from her career and become the captain of his boat. Amy has been doing amazing work as a captain and I applaud her for taking the lead in such a male-dominated industry. With so few female captains it is refreshing to see Amy take on the challenge of running a fishing boat.

I wish Amy the best of luck as she becomes the fourth generation of her family to continue the tradition of lobster fishing. She is a hard-working woman and I look forward to watching her continue to do what she loves while inspiring other females.

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

HMCS *KOOTENAY*: IMPROVING SAFETY - COMMEND

HON. TONY INCE: I rise today in commemoration of HMCS *Kootenay* Day. It is so important to Nova Scotians and the HRM that we commemorate this day in remembrance of the HMCS *Kootenay* disaster and the lives that were forever changed in its wake.

One of my constituents, Able Seaman (AB) (Retired) Allan "Dinger" Bell, a survivor of the crisis, has been a dedicated advocate in bringing the events of that fateful day 50 years ago to the forefront of provincial and national awareness. I thank him and his colleagues for the work accomplished through these efforts. There were lives lost and tremendous suffering then and ongoing, from the effects of the accident.

The crisis caused many lessons to be learned in creating significantly improved safety standards in the Royal Canadian Navy and for navies around the world. The historical relevance and element of humanity, through dedication, service and the sacrifices made, are factors for which the day is dedicated to the HMCS *Kootenay* tragedy.

On this day Nova Scotians and their fellow Canadians will have the opportunity to reflect on the human historical significance of the HMCS *Kootenay* disaster. Lest we forget.

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

ZAVALA, MIKHAEL: FIRST AID ACTION - COMMEND

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, in honour of the anniversary of the HMCS *Kootenay* tragedy I rise today to bring recognition to Sea Cadet Mikhael Zavala and a group of cadets for their fast action and courage in applying their first aid knowledge during the Pirate Days at Fisherman's Cove in Eastern Passage.

When a man at the Cove began taking a seizure, Mikhael was ready to apply his first aid training while the other cadets kept a crowd from forming, all while the family of the gentleman waited for an ambulance.

After joining the Sea Cadets five years ago, the 16-year-old learned so much from the organization; remaining calm during a situation like this was something Mikhael prides himself on. I ask that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature joined me in thanking Mikhael and the group of cadets for their quick action and the life they saved that day.

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

COMMON ROOTS: GARDENING THERAPY - CONGRATS.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, as you may remember, earlier this Spring I spoke about the uprooting of Common Roots Urban Farm from downtown Halifax to the Bicentennial Highway park in my riding.

Now, months later, Common Roots has a new home and many eager participants. Janet Niyonkuru is one of more than 50 urban farmers who is using the new space. She is also a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, a former refugee and now a proud Canadian citizen. Gardening has proven to be Janet's cure to her PTSD, and she enjoys growing and harvesting traditional African staples.

Imelde Nduwimana is another urban farmer who uses the community garden to create traditional dishes with vegetables and plants that she cannot buy in stores. As a refugee from Burundi, she states that participating in the garden project reminds her of home.

There is a high demand for garden plots at Common Roots, which goes to show how important the farm is for people in our community. I ask the members of this House to join me in congratulating Common Roots on their move and wishing Janet and Imelde a successful harvest.

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

HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION - CELEBRATE DESIRE FOR FREEDOM

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, on October 23, 1956, a nationwide revolution began in the streets of Hungary. For 12 days, armed with only a few rifles and petrol bombs, everyday Hungarians rose up against Soviet occupation of their country, and they nearly succeeded. When the Soviet forces crushed the revolution on November 10th, 2,500 Hungarians had been killed in their fight for freedom and 200,000 more had fled their homeland.

Today, as Hungarians around the world celebrate their national holiday, let us not remember their defeat, but celebrate the bravery of the Hungarian people and marvel at their remarkable desire for freedom.

[1:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

PAHLKE, ARIELLA: ARTIST RECOGNITION AWARD - CONGRATS.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Ariella Pahlke from Terence Bay and recipient of a 2019 Artist Recognition Award. Arts Nova Scotia and the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council will celebrate several artists, including Ariella, as part of the 14th Creative Nova Scotia Awards Gala to be held at the Halifax Public Library on Saturday, November 2nd.

The artistic vision for the gala is Make It Ours, which is a call to fight fear of scarcity and to celebrate our achievements together. It's a billboard that proclaims: "There Is Space for You" - a mantra that affirms that we are exactly who we should be here, now, sharing our gifts in Nova Scotia. At the awards gala, Ariella will receive the 2019 Established Artist Recognition Award. In addition, each artist will also receive \$5,000.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Ariella on her artistic achievements.

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

CAMMAERT, ANAIS: EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION AWARDS - CONGRATS.

BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Anais Cammaert of Sydney River on her recent placing in the Nova Scotia Equestrian Federation's 2nd Annual Scotia Series Provincial Championship.

This year, the event was held in Truro with several participants and tough competition. The NSEF Scotia Series is a provincial program developed to promote

specific categories within community horse clubs. The Scotia Series rewards these athletes and their horses at local, district, and provincial levels through their awards program.

Anais displayed her true passion for these activities when she placed first in the Western Performance Junior, third in English Flat Junior, and overall champion in Western Performance Junior with her horse, Be a Flashy Revolution.

I stand here once again to congratulate Anais Cammaert on her recent accomplishments with the NSEF Scotia Series and wish her continued success in whatever is next for this young woman.

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

SMALL BUS. WK.: SPREADING SOLAR INSTALLATIONS - THANKS

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, with this week being Small Business Week, I rise to recognize some of the work that is happening in the solar industry across our province. In the past weeks, I've been on Cape Breton Island to celebrate our 500th home that has installed solar as part of their energy mix.

What that has meant for the province is that we have 500 families now that have solar. Last year we had 13 solar installers and this year we have 57 solar installers. It has been a big boost for small businesses here in the province and hundreds of new clean jobs.

I rise on my feet to thank all the families who are participating in the government's solar program. Congratulations to the 57 solar installers who are working across our province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HMCS *KOOTENAY*: DISASTER, 50th ANNIV. - TRIBUTE

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to rise today in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the explosion and fire on board HMCS *Kootenay*.

While on manoeuvres off the coast of England, the starboard gearbox exploded. The resulting smoke and fire led to 9 deaths and 53 injuries among the 240 crew members on board the vessel. All crew members were based in Halifax at the time of the explosion.

The HMCS *Kootenay* stands as the biggest loss of life during peacetime for the Canadian Forces.

If you live in Nova Scotia, it is very likely that you or someone you know is related to a member of that crew. My cousin's husband, Leading Seaman Pierre (Pete) Bourret, lost his life that day.

It is a memorial that touches so many. It's a day that we honour every year, but on the 50th anniversary we take special care to give it our attention. I was honoured to attend the commemoration ceremony this morning with many of my colleagues from this House. I ask you all again today to join me in recognizing HMCS *Kootenay* Day.

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

SAMSON, DARRELL: RE-ELECTION - CONGRATS.

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to offer congratulations to Fall River's Darrell Samson on his success on being re-elected as a Member of Parliament, representing the Sackville-Preston-Chezzetcook riding. I would also like to congratulate Darrell's campaign team; Darrell credits his election success to the hard work of his community supporters, friends, and family.

Congratulations, Darrell, and I look forward to continuing our strong working relationship to help our constituents and our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

U13 BLIZZARDS: ATL. BASEBALL CHAMPS - CONGRATS.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Legislature today to recognize the U13 New Glasgow DQ Blizzards baseball team.

The Blizzards accomplished a 5-0 record, capturing the Atlantic Baseball Championship. The New Glasgow squad defeated host team Springhill 4-3 in the championship game. All players contributed to a very successful weekend of playoff baseball.

Congratulations to coaches Bill MacKenzie, Freddy MacKay, and Casey Spence; and players Landon Steele, Robert Hollis, Harley Clarke, Maddox MacKenzie, Corbin MacDonnell, Ethan MacKay, Derrick MacKay, Wyatt Spence, Ayden Brezinski, Isaac Haines, Kenon Bourque-Decoste, Marshall Brown, and Lauchie MacDonald.

Playing an organized sport is often a very positive thing for our youth. This season was an enjoyable one for the entire team, and players are looking forward to next Summer.

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

HMCS KOOTENAY: DISASTER, 50th ANNIV. - TRIBUTE

BEN JESSOME: I, too, would like to join the voices of some of my colleagues here today in recognizing October 23, 2019, as 50 years since the disaster of the HMCS *Kootenay*. This was the largest peacetime disaster in our Navy's history, and as my other colleagues have mentioned, I think it is important that we acknowledge the sacrifice that those men made who passed on that day, and certainly those who have returned to us and have to live with that.

It's nice to see so many people who were part of that crew come back to Halifax and get some time to spend with their former crewmates. I'm so glad that they can call Halifax a part of their heart.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MELANSON, ANNICE: UPCOMING RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Annice Melanson, a math support teacher who will be working her 35th and final year before retiring at the end of the 2019-20 school year.

We all know the profound impact that teachers can have on students, and Annice touches the hearts of every student she works with. Annice has had the pleasure of returning to work at schools, only to discover that some of the new staff members were her past students. I know she has helped spark a love for learning that her former students will eventually pass down to their own students.

I ask that members of the House congratulate Annice on her fulfilling career as a teacher, and I wish her all the best in her final year of teaching.

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

ROYAL CDN. SEA CADET CORPS 328: AWARDS - CONGRATS.

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps 328 St. Margarets Bay, under the leadership of Commanding Officer Lieutenant Kim Boutilier, for winning two awards at their annual Ceremonial Review.

Lieutenant (Retired) Earle Corn, the current past president of the Navy League of Canada, presented the Corps with both the Silver Growth Award for the largest increase in membership during the year, and the Most Improved Corps Award in recognition of their community activities and excellent cadet programming.

The cadets were reviewed by Commander Scott Neilson, Commanding Officer of HMCS *Halifax*. He reminded them that not only does it take years of training and hard work to be successful, but that their contribution to their community is as important an objective as their own success.

Mr. Speaker, I invite the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps 328 St. Margarets Bay for their achievements.

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

NEWCOMERS GRP.: 25 YRS. OF WELCOMING OTHERS - THANKS

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, today I wish to acknowledge a special anniversary. For 25 years, the Truro and Area Newcomers group has worked together to welcome women who are new to the Truro area, providing information and arranging social gatherings.

Those activities have included potluck suppers and outings to local events such as music, horse racing, coffee mornings, book club, movie night, sewing circle, and monthly lunches. Activities during any given period are dependent on the interests of its current membership. The group has expanded membership eligibility to include women whose circumstances have changed and who want to make new friends.

I commend this group for its long-term service to newcomers in our communities and its recognition of and adaptation to changing needs.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

KETCH HBR. CITIZENS ASSOC.: COM. ENGAGEMENT - THANKS

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to recognize all members of a very special community association, the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association. The association has a highly active and hard-working board made up of Pete Rose, Kim Reinhardt, Chris Stover, Chris Flemming, Doug Wasowski, Gordon MacEwan, Anna Whalen, Joanne Farmer, Adrienne Bowers, and Kyle Ereaux.

But it is also the entire community that makes the association such a success. From summer ice cream socials, dances to Halloween and Christmas parties, they keep everyone engaged.

Recently, Hurricane Dorian destroyed their community wharf, a huge setback for the community. They immediately reached out to all levels of government and community members, and together we will find a solution. To KHARA and all of Ketch Harbour, thank you for all you do.

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

**FREEMAN, NATALIE:
FRIENDS OF SABLE ISLAND SCHOLAR - CONGRATS.**

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Natalie Freeman, a Millwood High graduate and future Mount Saint Vincent University student, who during the week of July 16th had the opportunity of a lifetime to visit Sable Island after winning the Friends of Sable Island Scholarship.

Natalie won the scholarship after sending in a video for children to teach them about Sable Island. She travelled to the beautiful island where she had many opportunities to work with researchers on the island and see the famous Sable Island horses. In addition, Natalie was also invited to the Sheldon MacLeod Show on NEWS 95.7 on July 29th to talk about her experience.

I'd like to take an opportunity to congratulate Natalie on her scholarship, which gave her this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel to Sable Island, and to wish her all the best of luck in future endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

BAD FAITH BARGAINING WITH CROWN ATTORNEYS - RECOG.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, a privilege of this role as an MLA facing this particular government is that, as they engage in bad-faith bargaining with one group of public servants after another, I get to learn about the work of those public servants.

I want to share what I learned by walking several turns around Province House with the Crown attorneys today. I asked what they would be doing today if they were not picketing this House. One would have been meeting with a sexual assault victim; another would have been meeting with one of the many witnesses in preparation for a trial that he is preparing for, where there are 30 witnesses who he must interview and prepare; and yet another would have been doing her regular day in court in a rural part of Nova Scotia, dealing with everything from bail hearings to arraignments.

I thank the government for that opportunity.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**NICK'S YOUR INDEP. GROCER:
FREE WATER REFILLS, HURRICANE RELIEF - THANKS**

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, Saturday, September 7th, Hurricane Dorian barreled through the constituency leaving members of our community without power, warm food, and clean water.

I rise today to recognize local hurricane heroes Nick Francis and Jessica Strowbridge-Francis, owners of Nick's Your Independent Grocer in Mahone Bay. They opened their store the day following the hurricane and provided free water refills for members of the community; anyone wanting free, clean water just had to bring their jug to the store. At a time when many people were in need of clean water, it is heartwarming to see that a local business opened their doors to help.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and the members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing the owners of Nick's Your Independent Grocer for their generosity in helping others in a time of need.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

BARRINGTON BARONS: DIV. 2 BASEBALL CHAMPS. - CONGRATS.

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Barrington Barons who won the Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation Division 2 Boys Baseball Championship on the weekend of October 19th.

The team was undefeated in the six-team tournament which was hosted in Amherst. During the division play the Barons defeated Millwood 3-2 and Hants North 17-0 in four innings. In the semi-final crossover, Barrington beat Eastern 17-2 in four innings to advance to the championship game and doubled Millwood 6-3 to win the banner.

I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Jordan Belliveau, Teagan Scott, Nate Wickens, Ben Nickerson, Ethan Shand, Owen Penney, Ethan Brannen, Evan Locke, Drew Goreham, Brandon Townsend, Keigan Sears, Zachery Townsend, Jacob Matthews, and Coach Tristan Reede on their recent championship win.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

ULVER, HAKAN: FUNDRAISING RESTAURATEUR - CONGRATS.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, in honour of Small Business Week, I would like to recognize a Halifax businessman who is both successful and community minded. Hakan is originally from Istanbul, Turkey, and came to Canada in 2004. Hakan Ulver is the owner of Ristorante a Mano, the Bicycle Thief, La Frasca, and Il Mercato.

[1:45 p.m.]

Each location has a unique atmosphere and offers different food selections. Hakan has been working with his group of restaurants since 2004 and took over as owner in 2014. Even with his busy schedule, he manages to make time to participate in charity fundraisers. Among his biggest events is Feed Nova Scotia's Burger Week. In the five years since he took over, he has raised over \$26,195 with this event. This past year he also raised \$4,500 for Phoenix House through raffling a trip for two to Paris in his restaurant.

Mr. Speaker, would this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Hakan on his entrepreneurial spirit and his generosity to his community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

N. QUEENS STUDENTS: FLAGPOLE REPLACEMENT - THANKS

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, when Caledonia's cenotaph flagpole fell in a windstorm last April, the Grade 9 Citizenship Education class at North Queens Community School took action. In the absence of the Legion, they sought out local people in North Queens to determine what would be needed to replace the pole and took it upon themselves to raise the necessary funds. They were successful in their endeavour and raised \$1,900 - enough for the new pole and for some landscaping and beautification around the cenotaph. If that wasn't enough, they also organized and hosted a D-Day anniversary service, complete with a performance by well-known musical artist Terry Kelly.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate and applaud these students and their teacher, Julie Ramey, for undertaking these very worthwhile projects. They set a wonderful example of community and citizenship.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

NICKERSON, GARY: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, Gary Nickerson has retired after 38 years of radio at Y95 CJLS. Gary's broadcasting career began at CJLS in 1981. He was the station's news director for many years and his voice, integrity, and leadership will be truly missed in our community.

I ask this House to join me in congratulating my friend and one of Yarmouth's greats, Gary Nickerson, on his retirement and in thanking him for serving the tri-counties for nearly 40 years and in wishing him a happy and healthy future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

SCHURMAN, BILL: COM. PARTICIPATION - BEST WISHES

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the work of Mr. Bill Schurman. He used to work for the Town of Amherst Recreation Department, and in June he retired from the position to move back to Prince Edward Island to be with his family.

Bill Schurman's goal for our community was to make it more active and healthier, and he certainly achieved this by collaborating with local community health boards and creating programs to help get people more active. He is well known by our Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage and was very involved in a lot of provincial initiatives as well.

Amherst finished in the top five for Atlantic Canada in a recent ParticipACTION challenge. Our community will certainly miss the commitment and work that Mr. Bill Schurman put into place while working in Amherst. He contributed much to the population's health and improving that of this province, and he brought our now-infamous hashtag, #SeeWhyWeLoveIt.

Please join me in thanking Mr. Bill Schurman for his service to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

JESSY'S PIZZA: RELIEF DURING HURRICANE DORIAN - THANKS

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, Jeff Landry is celebrating his 10th anniversary as the owner of Jessy's Pizza in Bridgewater. Jeff is a husband and a father of two who works long, hard hours, averaging 100 hours per week.

On September 7th, during Hurricane Dorian, Jeff kept the doors open at his pizzeria until he was forced to close due to flooding. He reopened early the next morning to serve as a relief station for those in need.

Jeff says, "I'm always prepared at home and at work." He brought in a generator to run the pizza oven, the Wi-Fi, fridge, and microwave because he had the ability to do so. He made it available.

Jeff says he's always had the sense that we have to take care of each other. He provided a safe place for people to get water, clean up, enjoy some food, charge their cellphones, and heat up baby bottles. He even provided some free food to friends and those who couldn't afford it. Up to 40 to 50 people squeezed in at a time to charge up or stock up.

Congratulations to Jeff Landry for reaching this milestone anniversary, and thanks for taking care of the people of Bridgewater and beyond.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

RUIZ, PHILIP - INDUCTEE: NL SOCCER HALL OF FAME - CONGRATS.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to extend my congratulations to Philip Ruiz, a resident of Central Caribou and a physiotherapist operating a successful clinic in Pictou. Philip was inducted into the Newfoundland and Labrador Soccer Hall of Fame on April 5th of this year.

I applaud Philip for his extreme dedication to the sport, following years of playing on school and professional soccer teams. His passion for soccer is unmatched as he continues to coach high school teams in Pictou, passing on his love for the sport to the youth of our community. The athletes of our community are lucky to have a role model as committed as Philip.

The incredible honour of this induction is well deserved, and I look forward to the positive effects he will have on young athletes in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

FED. ELECTION: CANDIDATES - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise in my place today to congratulate a couple of former members of this House who were successful in Monday night's election: Lenore Zann in Cumberland-Colchester, and Chris d'Entremont in West Nova.

Lenore and I were elected on the same day in the general election of 2009, and there are not a lot of us in this House who are still standing from that particular date.

I'd like to congratulate all the candidates who ran, including our former colleagues Alfie MacLeod and Eddie Orrell. I always got along really well with them. I am going to miss them, and I wish them well in their future endeavours.

I would also like to congratulate my MP who ran in his tenth election. He has run once provincially, and nine times federally with eight wins. He has been a mentor to many of us here in the House and he is known for his respectful interactions with other people and his 150-plus public meetings. I would like to congratulate him, his campaign manager, and, in fact, all campaign teams.

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

KEMPTON, MICHELLE: SENATE 150 AWARD - CONGRATS.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to bring recognition once again to Michelle Kempton for organizing this year's Maritime Race Weekend, an event that takes place annually in picturesque Eastern Passage. There are two 5-kilometre races - sunset on Friday and sunrise on Saturday - and the coastal 10-kilometre route held this year on September 13th and 14th. Participants are encouraged to have fun and dress in pirate gear.

The net proceeds coming from the Maritime Race Weekend are distributed among a number of not-for-profit charities in our community decided on by a board of directors comprised mostly of community members, runners, and professionals. The race weekend brings increases in tourism with participants from over 18 different countries. Last week, Senator Mike MacDonald and I had the opportunity to present Michelle with the Senate 150 Award, another highly prestigious and well-deserved national award.

I ask all members of the Legislature to join me once again in thanking Michelle Kempton of Eastern Passage for all her hard work and dedication in giving back to the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

DIGBY CO. EXHIBITION: 140th ANNIV. - THANKS

HON. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, this year, for the 140th time, our country's farmers took centre stage at the Digby County Exhibition.

At the end of August for four days, people make their way to the exhibition grounds in Bear River to watch the very popular ox horse pulls and horse shows, the 4-H competitions, and the exhibits of local produce, baking, cooking, and arts and crafts.

Saturday at the Ex was Family Day which, in addition to the daily activities and competitions, included a magic show, colouring contest, and games for the children.

As any good host, the Ex does take care of its guests, serving wonderful suppers all four nights in the dining hall, and having live music nightly.

I would like to thank the organizers for their hard work that ensures the success of the exhibition. Given its emphasis on local producers and local talent, it is a favourite Summer stop for many of our visitors and residents.

I regularly attend accompanied by my wife and grandchildren. I fully expect, at some time in the future, that two of my grandchildren will also go to the exhibition accompanied by their children and grandchildren.

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

VIC. CO. TRANSIT: SUCCESSFUL GOVT. CO-OPERATION - RECOG.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, if proof is needed that co-operation between different levels of government and the greater community works, one need look no further than Victoria County Transit.

After a need for transportation service in Victoria County was identified, a project partnership was created between the Municipality of the County of Victoria and Strait Area Transit. Funding support came from the Province of Nova Scotia through the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

I am pleased to inform members of the House that along with supplying some much-needed employment in the area, the project has not only met the expected booking for its opening month of 60 rides, it has exceeded it by providing 170 rides in its first month. It serves the entire county.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and thank the Municipality of the County of Victoria, Strait Area Transit and the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage in bringing this project to fruition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, the Crown attorneys in Sydney, Cape Breton, are also picketing but on a sidewalk too far for MLAs here to witness. Thankfully I found evidence of their protest on a video shared through Twitter, so I want to share for the benefit of the MLAs here in the House.

Picture it: a big white sign, number one reads, What do you do; the second big white sign in big black letters says, when the government; and the third sign says, breaks the law? What do you do when the government breaks the law?

I just want everyone to register what a profoundly disturbing question that is that public servant lawyers are even having to ask that question. I will note that the Canadian Bar Association in their press release says the constitutionality of the legislation is questionable.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The member's statement was okay until the last sentence, so I'm going to disallow that member's statement.

The honourable member for Antigonish.

CUZNER, RODGER: POLITICAL SERV. - THANKS

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the opportunity to recognize the two new MPs recently elected to represent the people of Antigonish in the ridings of Central Nova and Cape Breton Canso. Today I'd like to take the opportunity to recognize my former MP - the former member for Cape Breton Canso, who represented the region from the year 2000 through to 2019, when he decided not to reoffer.

I want to thank Rodger Cuzner for his service on behalf of the constituents of the riding. Indeed, I have to say that, having worked with him for the past six years as the MLA for Antigonish, I think he did an adequate job, Mr. Speaker. I think he will certainly be missed as the riding representative but also as the Poet of Parliament Hill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

KNOX UNITED CHURCH: POPULAR MUSIC VENUE - CONGRATS.

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud the volunteer board members and staff of Knox United Church in Lower Sackville. Under the direction of their board and staff, Knox United Church has become a popular music venue, bringing a wide variety of musical talent to the community. Knox decided to start hosting large and small concerts because they have a great venue for the community to share and to raise extra monies for their faith and food ministries in Sackville.

Although it took some time to develop, the concept has grown to bear much fruit. An example of this success is having the Men of the Deeps - you may have heard of them - lined up to perform in November for the second year in a row, and just last week the Sackville Community Band performed.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating the members of the Knox Events Ministry for their continued efforts to bring entertainment to the community of Lower Sackville.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

ITTY BITTY BISTRO ART SHOW: INAUGURAL EVENT - CONGRATS.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to compliment 7Arts and Pascalice's Bistro in Greenwood on hosting a successful first Itty Bitty Bistro Art Show. From July 29th to August 31st, miniature artwork was showcased at the local bistro for public viewing and purchasing, in what was truly a unique event for the area.

Many local artists participated in the art show and for some this was their time displaying their work. All of the work was incredibly well displayed and the pieces were absolutely phenomenal.

I was extremely impressed to note that while the artist's name was attached to each piece of work, you could take a moment to actually read in depth about the author and their creations, as the organizers had so carefully thought to include this opportunity for further engagement.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Pascalice's Bistro and 7Arts on the phenomenally successful first Itty Bitty Bistro Art Show.

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.: CAMERON CASE: LEGAL COSTS - JUSTIFY

TIM HOUSTON: I refer the members of the House to the Alex Cameron case. In this instance, Cameron, a former Department of Justice lawyer, sued the Province for defamation, abuse of process, constructive dismissal, and a violation of his Charter rights.

The Premier claims solicitor-client privilege as the reason that he won't release information surrounding this case. But court after court has determined that the Province has waived its solicitor-client privilege and that the documents in question should be unsealed. Yet at every turn the government has appealed the decision to a higher court and its now taken it all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada.

I'd like to ask the Premier: At what point will the Premier honour the findings of the courts, open the files, and respect Mr. Cameron's rights to defend his name?

THE SPEAKER: Order please. I'm going to disallow the question. I've been advised by the Clerk that that is a matter currently before the courts, so we'll have to change the line of questioning.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'm not asking for the Premier's legal opinion. I'm asking when the Premier will allow Alex Cameron to defend his good name. The Premier has contracted private sector lawyers from Toronto to litigate . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order please. On the matter of the first question, I've just been advised by the Clerk that it's a matter before the courts but it's not a criminal matter, so I will allow the question to stand. You may want to just quickly repeat the question, not the preamble.

TIM HOUSTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and this is the first question, not a supplemental, right?

THE SPEAKER: First question.

TIM HOUSTON: To the Premier: At what point will the Premier honour the findings of the courts and allow Mr. Cameron the ability to defend his name?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank the honourable member for the question. That matter is before the courts.

TIM HOUSTON: The province has contracted a private sector law firm from Toronto to litigate this action. As the government continues to drag it out, ignoring finding after finding of the courts, they're doing so at great expense to the taxpayer.

For every appeal, more and more taxpayer money is being spent to keep this government's secrets secret. Judge Beveridge wrote in his decision, "The only harm I see to the applicants" - to the government - "is embarrassment from Mr. Cameron putting in the public domain his allegations . . ."

I'd like to table that for the benefit of the Premier. The only harm the Justice could see is embarrassment to the government. Taxpayer money, and the only recognized harm by the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal is embarrassment.

Why does the Premier continue to feel it's okay to spend taxpayer money just to avoid embarrassment for his government?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. That matter is before the courts.

TIM HOUSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, time after time the courts have determined it should not be and that the Premier should just open up his files. The Premier is the one who insists that it stay before the courts, obviously for the reason that the Justice outlined - embarrassment.

Earlier in this session, our caucus raised the issue of the legal fees; the taxpayer money the Province is spending in defense. We filed a FOIPOP request, and the information we were seeking was very specific: How much is the Province of Nova Scotia paying outside legal counsel in relation to the Alex Cameron case? We received a response to the FOIPOP - every single word was redacted. Every single word.

The claim was that the costs of the legal advice was privileged information. We already know multiple courts have said nothing is privileged in this case. I'd like to ask the Premier and give him one more opportunity to talk about at least the cost. Can he tell this House the cost that he is spending on taxpayer monies for the legal matter. And that's not before the courts - that's before the Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as the honourable member would know, it's been tradition in this province when there's a matter before the court, that's where it stays. The legal fees will be released after the court has been finished, the court process. As I said in the first two answers: this matter is still before the court.

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

PREM.: LETTER TO UNIONS (2013) - CONTRADICTION

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I will table a document called *An Open Letter to Nova Scotia Union Members* which the Premier signed and published in the paper in 2013. The letter says that the Nova Scotia Liberal caucus believes in the collective bargaining process and in protecting worker's rights.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the courts of our province are in chaos. We are in the sad situation that prosecutors have been forced into picketing Province House, together with their colleagues from Nova Scotia Legal Aid, the Department of Justice, and other unions around the province - despite the fact that this is the last thing any of them want to do.

Will the Premier admit that his conduct this week toward Crown attorneys is a nullification and a contradiction of the commitment he made in this open letter to the people of Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: No, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that we continue to have open, free collective bargaining. The Crown attorneys are welcome to come back . . . (Interruption)

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

THE PREMIER: The Crown attorneys are welcome to come back to the table, to continue what I have said. Unfortunately, the honourable member doesn't want to hear the facts. She wasn't here when the New Democratic Party stripped the right away from paramedics to strike - not in advance of them taking that action but on the final day before they were about to go. It was that Party that took away the right to strike from paramedics. I was here that day when every union leader in this province marched their way over to the Red Chamber and supported that government. That was then, this is now.

We have a 7 per cent pay raise on the table, and 17 per cent is unreasonable in any stretch of the imagination. What about those Nova Scotians who are looking for us to provide supports for low-income Nova Scotians? Housing? Pre-Primary? Where is that funding coming from, Mr. Speaker?

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier refers to the history of a government elected 10 years ago. I would like to refer to the history of this government going back 5 years ago, when in 2014 this government introduced essential services legislation in Bill No. 37 on health care workers, which effectively eliminated in that situation, similarly, the right to a meaningful strike.

Does the Premier admit - since we're thinking about history - that that action, too, was a nullification and a contradiction of the commitment he made in that open letter in 2013?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, only union leaders and the New Democratic Party believe that in this province every health care worker should have the right to strike regardless, without having any essential service in place. (Interruption) That's exactly what you're promoting. They have said, when they were in power, they gave them the right (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Premier has the floor. This will be the last time . . .

THE PREMIER: They gave them the right to strike without ever once worrying about patients. The fact of the matter is, that bill puts the patients first and protects their right to strike.

GARY BURRILL: It has been a day in which a person's mind naturally runs back to the recent events of our collective bargaining history in Nova Scotia. I couldn't help thinking today, with Crown attorneys outside, not just about health care workers but thinking back to that day in 2016-17 when the collective bargaining rights of teachers were overridden by legislation.

This government created chaos precisely in the health care sector by undermining collective bargaining for health care workers. It created chaos in education by doing the very same thing for teachers. Today we're at the situation of chaos in the courts.

Let me ask the Premier: What planet would a person have to be on to think of this as a government that really believes in protecting workers' rights?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, let me remind the Leader. He may have forgotten that the government he belonged to, in their collective agreement with teachers, signed a 7.5 per cent pay raise in three years, while at the same time cutting \$65 million out of classrooms. Let me get this straight: they took \$65 million from the kids of this province

so that they could get a labour agreement with the NSTU. I will not do that on behalf of our children. You may think that's okay. I don't.

Furthermore, who in their right mind believes that health care workers should have the right to strike regardless without any essential service? I am standing with patients and students. They can stand with union leaders.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: HONOURING DEALS - COMMENT

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, when you put your signature on a piece of paper, on a contract, you bind yourself to that contract. It's something every Nova Scotian can understand. You sign a mortgage, you sign a car loan, you undertake an obligation and you have to live up to that obligation. Sometimes you wind up with something in the deal that you wish you didn't put in there to begin with, Mr. Speaker, but when you sign your word, you honour it. If you do your homework in advance, you can avoid those types of situations.

Whether the Premier wishes something was in a contract or not, it's an obligation that he should live up to. I'd like to ask the Premier: Shouldn't the Province honour any deal that it signs itself to?

THE PREMIER: We are in negotiations with Crowns, Mr. Speaker. We have what we believe is a reasonable offer on the table at 7 per cent. We've changed, reduced the number of steps - 17 per cent. No one believed that anyone would come to the bargaining table with 17 per cent and not be willing to move, quite frankly. That is just simply unaffordable for this province.

If the honourable member thinks we should be signing 17 per cent collective agreements in this province he should stand in his place and tell the people of this province that.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, there's a reason that people don't trust politicians. I present to you Exhibit A when you . . .

THE SPEAKER: I'd like to remind the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition that it is unparliamentary to indicate that any member of this House is untrustworthy, and I'll ask you to retract that.

TIM HOUSTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the Province should honour any obligation it signs. If you interpreted my comments to be something otherwise, I apologize for that.

THE SPEAKER: I will ask the honourable Leader to retract the comment.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I will retract said comments. The fact of the matter remains that Paul Cavalluzzo spoke at Law Amendments committee about the honour of the Crown and now, as strike action circles the building, we have a case where people have to ask themselves: What is the value of a deal signed by this government?

The biggest risk to negotiations is not knowing if your negotiating partner will honour the deal. Why would anyone or any company want to negotiate with this Province, faced with the precedent that this government will simply legislate itself out of any deal that it doesn't like? Who would want to do that negotiation, Mr. Speaker?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank the honourable member for the question. What we are talking about is we have 7 per cent on the table that also collapses some of the steps that allows substantial increases for those working.

I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, who wants to sign those deals are hard-working Nova Scotians who wish they were getting a 7.5 per cent pay raise, not 17 per cent. I'll tell you who else wants to honour those - the young people who are choosing to live here, seeing our youth population increase in this province. Those are the people who are going to be here. (Interruption)

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, every four-year-old in this province . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Premier has the floor. This will be the last time that I'll call order for the disrespect for this Chair.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me say every four-year-old, regardless of social and economic circumstances is born into, has access to an evidence-based, play-based pre-Primary program. Also, let me remind the honourable members of this House, the \$85 million that is in the pockets of low-income Nova Scotians is because of the decision of this government to look after all Nova Scotians, not just those who are headed by a union leader.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

JUSTICE: CROWN ATTORNEYS STRIKE - RAMIFICATIONS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I am happy to say, Mr. Speaker, that my question is for the Minister of Justice.

The 100 Crown attorneys across the province handle about 40,000 cases each year in Nova Scotia. Their job, as we've heard, is to perform duties relating to the administration of criminal justice throughout the province and represent the interests of the general public when cases go to trial. As of this morning, they are on strike.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister think that the provincial justice system can function for a single day - today, for example - without all of its Crown prosecutors?

HON. MARK FUREY: I thank my colleague for the question. I want to recognize the valuable contribution that our public prosecutors make to the criminal justice system across the province, Mr. Speaker.

We have a labour matter where we have a disagreement, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to work with those public prosecutors and their representatives in order to find a solution.

[2:15 p.m.]

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The last time I checked it was a Finance and Treasury Board matter, but I'm glad to hear it being called a labour matter.

Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the minister about the number of court cases in the province that have exceeded the thresholds for a trial within a reasonable time set out by the Supreme Court of Canada in the *Jordan* decision. In September there were more than 400 cases that were potentially over these thresholds because of the backlog in our court system. These are for various reasons as the minister has pointed out, but some of these - including serious offences - may be thrown out for exceeding the threshold. With the Crown prosecutors on strike, there are certain to be more delays.

Mr. Speaker, what steps is the minister taking to ensure that cases delayed this month do not lead to the dismissal of very serious charges?

MARK FUREY: As I responded to in a previous question from my colleague in a previous Question Period, the numbers that my colleague has used and the way she has presented them is, in fact, misleading, Mr. Speaker. (Interruption) The numbers are misleading, not my colleague.

The numbers represent multiple elements of court matters. As I indicated previously, some of those are under warrant; some of those are requests by defence counsels for adjournment.

What I want to assure my colleague is that I have asked specifically, given today's circumstances, if any matters have been compromised that are specific to *Jordan* and the answer has been no.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: COST OF CAMERON CASE - RISK ASSESSMENT

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I want to return to the Alex Cameron case. It's an affront to most Nova Scotians that this government is collecting money from them, taxpayer money, and using it to save itself from embarrassment - in the words of the Justice there.

At every turn, the government has lost in court on this case and, as the Province's legal fees go up, so do Mr. Cameron's. If the Province loses again there will be a very good chance that they will be forced to cover Mr. Cameron's costs, adding insult to injury for the taxpayers who have been footing the bill to try and prevent the embarrassment all along the way.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Has the government done a risk assessment that would say how much it will cost the government to cover Mr. Cameron's legal fees when they eventually lose in the Supreme Court, too?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. That matter is before the court.

TIM HOUSTON: I'll take that as a no, and I'll put that in the category of, "Of course we haven't done an assessment or have a plan." It reminds me of the crane situation. It reminds me of the Gabrielle Horne situation where the Province lost at every turn, and still hasn't had the decency to apologize to Dr. Horne.

As the Cameron case winds on, the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal says this government should disclose the information. The government refuses, but let me be clear, this is a government that is taking a private citizen all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada just to avoid embarrassment.

Can the Premier save everybody some time and money and just tell the House right now if anyone in his government instructed Mr. Cameron to use the "conquered peoples" argument?

THE PREMIER: Again, Mr. Speaker, that is before the court. The honourable member stands up and uses the court to his advantage. Now he is asking me to make comment on something that is before the courts. He knows that's not right.

The reality of it is, Mr. Speaker, depending on who is in the gallery - he has a position that when the gallery empties and a new group shows up he takes another position. That's what we've got here.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

JUSTICE: DESMOND INQUIRY - UNREALISTIC RESTRICTIONS

KIM MASLAND: My question is for the Minister of Justice. When it was announced that there was going to be an inquiry into the Lionel Desmond case, I know many people were relieved to finally get some answers. Unfortunately the only news that came from the inquiry this Summer were issues with the structure of it.

The lawyer representing the Desmond family has said the Justice department is trying to muzzle the inquiry by imposing unrealistic restrictions on legal fees and preparation time - I'll table that document. An inquiry as important as this one deserves to be played fairly.

My question is: The public deserves to know, why is the inquiry limiting legal prep time and only paying junior counsel rates?

HON. MARK FUREY: I thank my colleague for the question. The circumstances relevant to the Desmond inquiry as we speak, Mr. Speaker, are under the care of the presiding judge and it would be inappropriate for me to comment on those matters.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, judicial independence is important in everything the Justice department does, but it feels especially pertinent in this situation where the Province may be found as having failed to avert the tragedy that took place. The heavy-handedness with which the terms are being set raises concerns of judicial independence. The lawyer for the family has looked for assurance that the investigation is not bureaucratically or financially constrained by those who may be in conflict of interest.

Keeping all of that in mind, my question for the Minister of Justice is: Given that the Province may be found as having failed to avert the Desmond family tragedy, is there an appearance of conflict of interest in the Province setting the time and rates of counsel?

MARK FUREY: I thank my colleague for the question. My colleague opened the question suggesting judicial independence, Mr. Speaker. If my colleague is saying that in one portion of her question and then asking me, or suggesting that I should interfere with the process established and the guidance that is extended to the presiding judge in that matter, that in itself would be judicial interference and I'm not going to go there.

There is a competent Provincial Court judge hearing that matter. We have said from the outset it would be the Fall of this year before evidence was presented. That is a significant matter to address in preparing both the facilities and the participants for this unfortunate set of circumstances, but that responsibility lies with the presiding judge.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

JUSTICE: VIOLENT INMATE - MISTAKEN RELEASE

KIM MASLAND: My question is for the Minister of Justice. I have a lot of faith in our justice system and I'd like to think Nova Scotians do, as well. Every time we hear about a violent inmate being released, it's troubling. However, in June when a violent inmate was released by mistake, it was incredibly concerning. One would hope that a violent inmate on remand warrant for sexual assault charges wouldn't be able to have more than 12 hours of freedom by mistake.

Hearing about this incident raised almost as many concerns as it did questions. What I'd like to know from the minister is: How was a violent inmate released by mistake?

HON. MARK FUREY: I thank my colleague for the question. There are processes and procedures in place for the transport of prisoners and the retention of prisoners. There are times the communications between the court and Sheriff Services can be confusing at times.

In these circumstances, the individual was released, as my colleague has indicated - we certainly acknowledge that - but that individual was later taken back into custody and no harm done to the public. What I do want to assure my colleague of is that the policies and procedures have been reviewed to ensure those matters don't repeat themselves.

KIM MASLAND: Thankfully, there was no harm done to any of the public. An inmate getting released by mistake is bad. The release of a violent inmate is scary.

In this incident, a violent inmate was released by mistake from the Pictou Provincial Court, which is right in the middle of the town's centre. This incident raises immediate public safety concerns. Unfortunately for the people of Pictou, they weren't made aware of this incident until after he was back in prison.

Nova Scotians deserve to know when there is a dangerous person roaming the streets of their community and when it's happening, not after it has been dealt with. Mr. Speaker, my question is: Why was no notice given until after the inmate was back in prison?

MARK FUREY: The circumstances that my colleague has presented were reviewed by the department. I can assure my colleague that at the first opportunity when we were able to confirm all of the circumstances, they were released.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MUN. AFFS. & HOUSING: HOUSING SITUATION - CRISIS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing about the housing crisis.

On election day in Dartmouth North, there was a significant number of residents who did not vote, not because they did not want to but because they could not. The elevator in their five-storey building had been out of service for five days and will not be fixed until this Friday, for a total of nine days.

Many of the residents who are older or who rely on mobility devices have not been able to leave their apartments to get groceries, fill prescriptions, or attend appointments, let alone vote. Don't even start thinking about if there was an emergency in that building.

The current housing situation is impacting the adequacy of the housing stock, as landlords have little incentive to maintain the good working order of their buildings. Renters are disempowered to demand improvements for fear of retribution and because there's simply nowhere else for them to go.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister acknowledge this extreme consequence of the state of housing in this province?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: I thank the member for the question. As I've said previously in this House, we're very pleased to have signed a 10-year deal with the national government. This will bring many, many much-needed dollars - millions and millions of dollars - near half a billion over the next 10 years.

A lot of that money is going to be invested in the housing stock that we currently have, as well as creating new opportunities for all age groups requiring housing and shelter needs in this province.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Time and again we are hearing these talking points about this bilateral agreement, but we know that the first three years will only go to repairing housing stock, which is important, but is not going to solve the crisis of units available for people to live in, Mr. Speaker.

Some of the people in this building are on fixed incomes. Some of them will be among the more than 23,000 people in the province paying more than 50 per cent of their income on rent and utilities. They, like many, many others across the province, simply cannot afford the 35, 45, and even 50 per cent rent increases that landlords are currently serving to tenants - sometimes because they complain too much about repairs that need to get done.

Surely the members of this government can understand that a vacancy rate of less than 2 per cent, a severe lack of affordable housing, and virtually zero constraints on colossal rent hikes is an absolutely unsustainable situation.

I would like to ask the minister: Can he please recognize how his government's inaction is turning a housing crisis into a potential homelessness crisis?

CHUCK PORTER: We recognize in this government that there are challenges because of what has not been done in the past. We are moving forward with this agreement and with the dollars that are here. We also have programs that have been ongoing and, because of this agreement, they are allowing us to continue that.

We know that there are challenges. We will continue to work with our partners right across this province - here in the HRM and all over Nova Scotia - to do more for housing.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

JUSTICE - CORRECTIONS: DIRECT SUPERVISION - OBJECTIVES

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. The Province has been moving to a direct supervision model at the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility in Burnside and the Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Facility in Priestville, Pictou County. This model involved renovating the Burnside jail to remove some physical barriers between the inmates and the officers.

At various times the officers in those facilities felt that there was a lack of safety on the job as the Province sought to implement direct supervision. There have been times in the past where correctional officers have refused to work because they are worried that their workplace was not safe.

My question to the minister: Is the Province meeting its goals and objectives for its transition to direct supervision?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is yes, we are, but let me elaborate - direct supervision is seen as a best practice across North America.

Direct supervision allows for greater contact between offenders and our correctional workers who work within the facilities. It is proven to enhance safety within those facilities. It is a model that is working. It is a model that, as I indicated, is seen as a best practice. Our correctional officers have done an admirable job in a very difficult transition through renovation and construction, and quite confident and quite satisfied with the outcomes of direct supervision and its implementation.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, we have spoken in this House on many occasions about the work-related traumas that some of our first responders experience. Correctional officers experience many of the same types of trauma. They experience real danger and the fear that comes with it. They see horrible acts of violence and carnage that can result.

They are locked inside with some of the worst people in our society, and many officers say the move to direct supervision can increase the likelihood of that fear and that trauma.

We recognize the need for police, paramedics, and our first responders. The need is there for our officers, too.

I would like to ask the minister: What supports are in place to help prison guards cope with PTSD and other workplace traumas that they may encounter?

MARK FUREY: I do want to recognize and emphasize the critical job and role that our correctional officers fulfill. It is a very challenging environment for them to work in. Our correctional officers have access to all those programs and services within the provincial health care plan; they are civil servants.

We work very closely with their labour representative. These are discussions that we have on a constant basis. I want to assure my colleague that we have the best interests of our correctional officers in mind and continue to provide them the support that they need to fulfill their job role and to do the work that they do in a very difficult environment.

[2:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

JUSTICE: PETTY CRIMES - LACK OF PROSECUTION

KIM MASLAND: My question is to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Speaker, in the Spring our very own Crown attorneys, many of whom are outside this House today, from across the province began sounding the alarm on the very real impacts of the *Jordan* decision. As the minister knows, the *Jordan* decision sets some hard limits on the time it can take to bring a case to court. If these cases are not heard as quickly as required under *Jordan*, alleged offenders are set free.

In many jurisdictions this has led to Crown choosing not to prosecute petty crimes, like shoplifting and fraud under \$200. This is obviously concerning but a limited number of Crowns and a limited number of courts are getting squeezed under *Jordan*.

My question for the Minister of Justice is: Are these types of petty crimes seeing a courtroom, or does Nova Scotia let some of these alleged offenders walk under the *Jordan* decision?

HON. MARK FUREY: I don't know if my colleague is referring to specific cases, but I would be troubled to think that matters of petty crime and theft under \$200 are before our court systems. We have the most viable, the most highly recognized restorative justice program, seen and recognized domestically within the country and internationally as a model of resolution.

I would be very concerned to think that those are the types of matters my colleague is focused on. We are very aware of the *Jordan* decision. We're very much aware of the pressures that that applies. We've worked diligently within the Criminal Justice Transformation Group, which has representatives from all of our stakeholders within the criminal justice system.

We have applied an electronic tracker system on these files. We are very much aware of those files that are hitting thresholds. Through the cooperation of those in the judiciary, those files are prioritized within the court process.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, there was the broken windows theory that was popular among criminologists for a while. Part of that theory was that if police focus on minor crimes or disorderly crimes, it would create an atmosphere of order and lawfulness.

The broken windows theory has its detractors and they have valid points, but I think any parent would agree that misbehaviour that goes without consequence is misbehaviour that is encouraged. Which brings me to my chief concern about the implications of the *Jordan* decision: small crimes committed without consequence only stand to embolden criminals.

My question is: Is the minister concerned that failing to prosecute and punish petty crimes is leading only to criminal escalation?

MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, what my colleague is taking about are the very principles of the restorative justice model that Nova Scotia is renowned for worldwide. I don't understand where my colleague is coming from.

These matters should not be before the court, Mr. Speaker. It has been proven by research that attention at the local level, at the community level, to engage both offender and victim - those involved in the criminal justice system - to resolve those issues actually finds greater outcomes for those individuals who were committing those petty crimes.

I want to remind this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, and I say this respectfully, it has been a Progressive Conservative government in the past that focused on being tough on crime. That's why we're experiencing the circumstances that my colleague speaks about.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

JUSTICE: HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS - PROTECTION IN SYSTEM

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Many of you know in this House that I have been meeting with victims of sexualized human trafficking and their families. Their stories are certainly heartbreaking, terrifying and, to be quite honest, unacceptable.

Often after being introduced to criminal behaviour these victims have had a hard time escaping criminal life. In one instance, I heard of a victim who has since ended up being incarcerated. Due to there being only one floor in Burnside for women, she is on the same floor as the woman who tortured her, who brainwashed her, and who brought her life down a tragic path.

My question for the Minister of Justice: What steps does the Department of Justice take to ensure victims are not incarcerated in the same facility as those who have committed crimes against them?

HON. MARK FUREY: There is a process within our correctional facilities that addresses these very circumstances, Mr. Speaker. It is about the safety of our inmates as well to ensure that any external threats or intimidations aren't brought into or perpetuated within our facilities. Those are processes that our correctional teams work through when individuals are admitted within the facility.

If my colleague is aware of individual circumstances, I would rather that I know those at the earliest opportunity so that I can work with my colleague to ensure that those matters aren't present and ongoing.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, in 2016, when a patient was shackled to her bed at Dartmouth General Hospital, the then-Minister of Justice stepped in and had her staff look into the matter. I'll table this story.

I draw a comparison between that case and this incarcerated victim of human trafficking because being imprisoned on the same floor as the person who has caused her life so much pain is equivalent to being shackled to a bed. The crimes committed against this woman were horrific. She is living with the fallout from them, but she should not have to live in close proximity to someone who abused her. Is this really what we want to see in Nova Scotia? No, I don't think so.

I kindly ask the minister to please commit to working with me to ensure that this victim of sexualized human trafficking does not have to live in fear of encountering her abuser.

MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that if these circumstances are occurring as my colleague has suggested, that to wait and bring them to the floor of the Legislature for political value (Interruptions.)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice has the floor.

MARK FUREY: If these circumstances are occurring, I would only hope that my colleague - any colleague who is aware of or believes that those circumstances are

happening - would bring them to my earliest attention so that we can mitigate and prevent those behaviours and circumstances from happening.

I'm more than prepared to work with my colleague, but this is unacceptable. To allow an alleged victim to continue to suffer under those circumstances - this is not the place for that. This member, more than anyone in Opposition, knows that she can speak to me directly at the earliest opportunity.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MUN. AFFS. & HOUSING: RURAL HOUSING - CRISIS

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The housing crisis is creeping further and further afield. Recently, the Village of Chéticamp made the news for their dire situation. A counsellor said of the housing shortage, "It is killing our economy . . . and at the same time if we don't have housing we will not grow as a community." I'll table that.

The situation is not only forcing people to leave but it is preventing people from moving to Chéticamp in the first place. It's not the only place that's facing this situation.

Will the minister acknowledge that the housing crisis is preventing our rural areas from growing and thriving?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I am aware of the article that she has tabled, and I can say that we will continue to work with the municipality and the County of Inverness and the folks in and around Chéticamp. We understand the situation that they're in, and we're certainly willing to have conversations to see if there's anything at all we can do by way of partnering with those community organizations and others, and/or that municipality, to offer more housing needs for those in that area.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, my next question is for the Minister of Business. Communities across the province are facing a similar situation as Chéticamp. The explosion of short-term rentals in Baddeck, Mabou, Wolfville, and other communities is worsening the problem of lack of affordable housing and lack of housing for people across the income spectrum.

I know that the minister's department is consulting on what will be included in short-term rental regulations, but those consultations were meant to happen from June to September. At least one active community group, Neighbours Speak Up, which formed in my constituency as a result of the explosion of short-term rentals, has been able to get no information, despite repeated attempts.

Can the minister confirm that no consultations have taken place with community groups such as Neighbours Speak Up in the development of regulations of short-term rentals?

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, officially I can't confirm what conversations have taken place. I know that we have to be ready with this legislation and the associated regs that are going to wrap around that by April 1st. That's been the commitment, as I've said.

The member's brought it to the floor of the Legislature many times. We're certainly monitoring and concerned about the impact on the housing stock when it relates to the sharing economy and the short-term accommodations. It's the reality that's out there. That's why I do support, and I'm proud of the information that we're going to pull in by way of the registration system because we need that badly.

I think that many of things that the member highlights, not only here in the peninsula and in metro, but in the rural communities that she just listed - if this is going to have an impact on the housing stock, we want to know that, and this data will give us that information.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

AGRIC.: LIVESTOCK FEED SHORTAGE - CHALLENGE

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. No doubt, the minister has been hearing for at least a few weeks about the livestock feed shortage facing Nova Scotia farmers - and I'd like to table a story from yesterday about that.

With recent storms damaging crops, a cold, wet Spring and now a wet Fall, feed will be in short supply. This could present a challenge to farmers across the province. My question for the minister simply is: What discussions has the minister had with farmers and other regional ministers of agriculture on this pressing issue?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: We have had our staff in the field talking to farmers regarding this problem. It's not widespread throughout the province. Certain areas have been really badly hit, and others have very minimum damage. We'll continue that investigation. Once that is finished, we'll see what we can do to help the farmers.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for that answer. Chris van den Heuvel, owner of Fireblade Holsteins in Port Hood, has said he's looking to have to replace 700 tons of forage. He said that would require in the vicinity of \$100,000 to buy and ship forage into the province - and it may not even be available to Nova Scotia. This issue is not just affecting Nova Scotia, but the other provinces as well.

I know the Province is already looking at mitigating the cost of recent storm damage in other areas. My question for the minister is: Will the minister consider potential assistance in the form of one-time emergency help so livestock such as the dairy cattle in Cape Breton are not left to starve this Winter?

KEITH COLWELL: As I already said in my first answer, we are investigating the situation and we'll take whatever steps are necessary when the time comes when we get all the information.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

ENVIRON. - BARRYS RUN ADVISORIES - UPDATE

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment. In late August, HRM issued a risk advisory regarding Barrys Run in Dartmouth East - and I'll table that. Samples taken from municipally owned lands found high levels of arsenic in the sediments. They are high enough to pose health risks and raise major concerns.

Montague Gold Mines has been closed; it's currently owned by the Province. The legacy of contamination in the surrounding areas is a testament of previous poor regulation and lack of environmental consideration. Barrys Run has been regularly used by the residents of Dartmouth.

My question is: Can the minister provide an update on when residents of Dartmouth East can expect to see the end of risk advisories for Barrys Run?

HON. GORDON WILSON: Thank you for the question. It's important to raise the awareness of drinking water. I certainly think it's an important one for all Nova Scotians.

Any time there is a situation where we have a gold mine or whatever would cause contamination, our department takes that very seriously. We monitor these situations on a daily basis sometimes, but certainly on a regular basis in this case. As far as what the situation is in that area, I'll endeavour to get an update for the member as soon as possible.

TIM HALMAN: The residents of Dartmouth East would certainly appreciate that update. Barrys Run feeds into Lake Charles, and many Dartmouth East constituents have shared their concerns with me regarding the safety of that lake. There are concerns with the lake due to other sediment sources, specifically from a quarry in the area that has sediment runoff going into Lake Charles.

The constituents of Dartmouth East want to know that the lakes of Dartmouth are in the best shape that they can be. Can the minister clarify as to what testing Lake Charles has undergone to date as a result of the risk advisory, and when can my constituents expect to see those results?

GORDON WILSON: Again, I thank the member for the question. I certainly do understand the situation with the Dartmouth lakes. We have a lot of very proactive people in the Dartmouth area who have been working very closely with the community. I recently met with some of my colleagues across the floor with the NDP regarding concerns that they have in the Dartmouth area, and I thank them for what they brought forward. We as a department take it very seriously.

[2:45 p.m.]

I encourage all Nova Scotians any time they see problems with drinking water anywhere, report it. We monitor these situations, and I will get an update for the member as soon as possible.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

EECD: TA-PARENT CONTACT: RCE/DEPT. POLICIES - UPDATE

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. A five-year-old in my constituency is a type 1 diabetic and requires an insulin pump with a precise dosage. Until recently, this child's teaching assistant would confirm the pump's recommended dose with the parents based on the day's activities in school. The parents would adjust the recommendation, if necessary, and the teaching assistant would administer.

Last week, the parents were advised by the school administration that there would be no more contact between the parents and the TA during the school day and no more review and adjustment of the dosage. My question is: Is it the policy of the RCEs or the department that there should be no contact between TAs and parents during the school day, even if it's a medical necessity?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: We would not have a policy in that regard. I'm not sure of the specific context or instances of this particular situation, but I'm happy to meet with the member or chat outside of the Chamber about this to see if we can get an answer for him.

MURRAY RYAN: The parents of this child feel that the arrangement with the TA worked best for the health of their child. The recommended dose of insulin was not always reliable based on whatever had happened during the day.

Until technology advances to the point where less human intervention is required, these parents feel that having the TA check in with them provides safety for their child and reduces any potential liability for other parties. The constituents' concern is that an all-or-nothing approach does not make room for common sense and that diabetic technology is

progressing at such a pace that RCE and departmental policies may not be able to keep up with this.

Will the minister commit, first of all, to meet with me - which he has, thank you very much - but also to review the existing policies to see if they can be updated?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Of course, I'm very interested in getting more details on this case. Our goal in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is to make sure every student in our system is taken care of, that their needs are taken care of, even when those needs exist beyond the education system itself.

That's why we've invested so much money in the education system. That's why we have the Nova Scotia Insulin Pump Program to make sure that these pumps, which are life-saving, are provided to all our income-eligible students within the system. That's why we've increased the investments in education to the extent that we have, which include more nurses in our education system.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MUN. AFFS. & HOUSING - AFFORD. HOUSING: SHORTAGE - CRITICAL

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. While we recognize the recent announcement of increased funding to the critical state of affordable housing in our province, Nova Scotians are still dealing with problems between now and the carrying out of improvements. More and more, we are seeing individuals who are not yet part of our senior community placed in senior housing facilities. The negative implications of these placements are making life difficult for some seniors who have been living in these residences for many years.

My question to the minister is: Is the minister aware of these types of practices being put in place in many of our constituencies across the province due to the critical shortage of affordable housing?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: As the honourable member may realize - he has been around the House for a few years now - I'm in my 14th year and I can tell you, working within my constituency, it's not uncommon practice for those under the age of 58 - which is the guideline, I think. I'm not even sure if it's a policy - but I know it's a guideline for those places and some of our senior housing residences. There are times and circumstances, which I'm sure the member is certainly aware of, when we would all have those walk into our constituency offices - whose housing needs are more urgent. Sometimes we certainly fulfill those needs by placements where there may be vacancies in certain areas.

PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: Will the minister commit to looking into these situations and try to come up with a solution that will make it unnecessary to have anyone under the proper age permitted in these senior facilities?

CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you and all members of this House that we are always looking at what is going on in housing, and we will continue to do so.

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier in Question Period the Minister of Justice suggested that I was using numbers in a misleading way. My question contained the statistic of over 400 cases in September 2019 that were beyond the threshold for unreasonable delay set out by the Supreme Court of Canada in the *Jordan* decision.

That number came from a document obtained by our caucus from the Department of Justice in response to a freedom of information request. That document has previously been tabled in this Chamber. In my question, I noted that, while there may be many reasons for this delay, at least some cases may be thrown out. This is accurate.

My understanding is that to cast aspersions on a member in this way is unparliamentary, and I ask that the minister retract his statement.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much for raising the point of order; however, I am determining it as a disagreement of facts.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 210.

Bill No. 210 - Health Protection Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to stand today and speak to Bill No. 210. The Progressive Conservative caucus and I care about the children and the families in the province across Nova Scotia.

We propose this amendment today because we believe that more illnesses and diseases can be prevented in this province - we care. Vaccines provide protection. Vaccines prevent disease, and prevent illness, and we all know it is always better to prevent a disease rather than treat it after it occurs.

Diseases that used to be common in this country and around the world included polio; measles; diphtheria; pertussis, which is whooping cough; rubella or German measles; mumps; tetanus; and Haemophilus influenzae type b, or Hib. All these diseases can now be prevented through vaccination, so why is this bill necessary now; why is our caucus presenting this amendment to the Health Protection Act? It is because we are seeing a decline in the vaccination rates of our children - of our babies and our children - in this province, and we believe it is due to what is called vaccine hesitancy.

Vaccine hesitancy, as referred to by the World Health Organization, is one of the ten greatest global threats, and it means that people are reluctant or refuse to be vaccinated or to have their own children vaccinated. It's not 100 per cent clear why, what is causing vaccine hesitancy, but many people believe it is due to anti-vaccine messaging that is found very commonly in social media.

Health-related misconceptions, misinformation, and dis-information is spread over social media, posing a threat to our public health. Much of this dis-information is questioning if vaccines are safe and, certainly, I want to assure the public that vaccines are safe.

The FDA and the Centre for Disease Control ensure that vaccines are placed on the market only after extensive research and safety protocols are followed. In fact, certain diseases are becoming very rare across the world because of vaccination. One example we see is polio, which is almost completely eradicated throughout the world.

I am very thankful to be a member of Rotary International; they are playing a very large role in helping to eradicate polio across the world. Millions and millions and millions of dollars have been spent, and we are almost there; it's only found in three countries in the world right now and in very, very low amounts.

What would happen if we stopped vaccinating, or what would happen if we ignored the fact that our vaccination rates are dropping? Well, Japan actually found that out.

In 1974, Japan had a successful pertussis (whooping cough) vaccination program, with over 80 per cent of their children being vaccinated. There were no deaths from this disease until rumours started spreading that the pertussis vaccine was no longer needed. Vaccination rates dropped, and in 1979, only five years later, Japan suffered a pertussis epidemic, with more than 13,000 cases and 41 deaths.

Can you imagine losing your child to a death from a disease that was preventable with an easy injection of a vaccine? Now I say easy - any nurse or doctor knows that trying

to actually give a vaccination to an 18-month-old, a 12-month-old, or even a 4- or 5-year-old, can sometimes be challenging - but it's a very small feat when you think of preventing a death and preventing illness.

Now, some anti-vaxxers and people against vaccination will say that it's a violation against their individual rights for us to force a vaccination program. We're not completely forcing but we are saying that, in order for a child to enter the public school system, they must be vaccinated against known and preventable illnesses.

Public health programs such as vaccination programs are designed to protect the public, protect the health of everyone. Vaccines not only protect you, but they protect the people around you. A great example, and one that is very timely, is the flu vaccine. That's why we ask all health care providers to be vaccinated against the influenza virus, to protect not only themselves but also to protect patients - many of whom are immunocompromised - and the people they are working with. It's a good reminder that vaccination is to protect you and your children, but those around you as well.

While we recognize that there is confusion in the messaging, we know that vaccines are safe and that we must do all we can to protect our children. We are presenting this bill as the Progressive Conservative caucus because we care about our children and we care about the families in this province.

The vaccination schedule starts with a baby at the age of two months; then again at four months and six months, when they are given a needle that covers them for diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, and haemophilus b; then again at twelve months they are protected and given a vaccination for mumps, measles and rubella, and varicella; then again at eighteen months; and then right before they go to school, they are vaccinated again.

Previously, when I spoke to this bill, I mentioned that we have the second lowest vaccination rates in Canada. That has led us to presenting this bill and why we believe it is a very important public health issue. We have the second lowest vaccination rates in the country; the only one lower is Nunavut. This bill is important in order to protect our children and protect the public.

Anyone who is listening and wants to know more about vaccination information should go to the website for the Centre for Disease Control. It's a very reliable source. We all know there are a lot of unreliable sources for information out there on the internet, but certainly the Centre for Disease Control is the internet site that I always recommend to patients and to the public.

In fact, whenever I knew that someone was travelling, if I was seeing a patient who was travelling, I would always recommend going to that website, typing in the country they were travelling to, and looking up what diseases are most prevalent in that country and

what vaccinations they should be making sure they receive before they travel to that country.

We've seen an outbreak of measles right here in our province and in neighbouring provinces, and that has put more of a focus on the importance of prevention and ensuring that vaccination occurs.

I want to talk about one issue that's related to lack of vaccination, and that's in relation to child poverty in this province. We all know that disease and illness cause physical, emotional, and financial pain. Child illness is a contributing factor to poverty and financial pain in families in this province.

[3:00 p.m.]

What made me think of this - I just recently received a message from a child psychiatrist I know. She sent me an article, and I can table it. It's called "Foundation of wisdom: 'I don't know.'" It talks about the importance of the issues, the complex problem of child poverty. The essence of the article, the bottom line, is we all don't know what the ultimate solutions are, how to reduce and completely eradicate child poverty. The article goes on to say that we need to learn to say I don't know, and then we're admitting that we need to seek more understanding to the problems that exist.

I agree with this article, but I want to emphasize that we do know what prevents certain diseases like polio, like pertussis, like measles. When we know better, we must do better, and we must ensure that we do what we can. We know we can prevent these diseases, so let's ensure that the children of this province get the protection that they deserve and that they need.

One issue that we do need to address, if we're going to work on ensuring that more children are vaccinated in this province, is to make sure that they do have access to getting these vaccinations. We all know, we've debated in this Chamber so many times about the challenge with lack of access to primary care, but - and I know our Minister of Health and Wellness brought this up the other day - we do have public nurses who provide excellent service in this province and access to our vaccination programs. But the public is not always well aware of the services that they provide.

I know in my area, in Cumberland North, sometimes there are babies born and there's no family physician or nurse practitioner for them, and they're sent home without a primary care provider. Unless a public health nurse is linked directly with that family, there's a chance that that family, that baby, is going to go home and not have proper vaccination at two, four, and six months of age.

I do think that part of our solution in addressing the lower vaccination rates in this province must include a plan working toward solutions to ensure that everyone does have access to the vaccinations and to primary care.

One deficit in our system right now, between public health and our primary care providers, is an effective electronic medical system or recall system. I know in one of the clinics I used to work in, we used our electronic medical record to recall any children, any infants, who did not have their vaccinations and immunizations up to date. Then we would get the staff to call the parents and remind them to bring their children in so that they did not get too far behind on their vaccination systems.

I know we say parents shouldn't have to be reminded, we need to all be responsible. But life can get busy, and many things can distract us. I think we need to do everything we can to help and support families, to ensure that the simple act of vaccination - which can prevent serious and significant disease - is done and done properly.

I would love to see an improvement in our database and electronic medical records system and some sort of connection between our family physicians and primary care providers and our public health offices throughout Nova Scotia. Even if our public health offices were all connected and had a strong system, that alone would be very significant as well.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to again emphasize that our Progressive Conservative caucus, our team, strongly hopes that our colleagues in the House will support this amendment to the Health Protection Act and ensure that children, babies - our babies, our children - will get the protection that they need and deserve. We can do all that we can to prevent illness and possible death in our communities, to protect them, and to protect their fellow students throughout the school system.

We want to see an improvement. We want to see an increase in the vaccination rates in this province. We want to make sure that we're not just on par with the rest of Canada. I would love to see that we are actually leading the country and start setting our goals high - in the area of health and improving areas in population health, in areas such as vaccination programs. We should be striving for more. We should be setting our bar higher and trying to do all we can to protect our children, to protect the lives of our families here in this province.

On that note, I will close and move on to one of my colleagues.

THE SPEAKER: Just a quick reminder to all members, when speaking please refer your comments to the Chair and not to the public or the viewing public. Thank you.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

TAMMY MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise and speak to this bill. I'll start by saying that our caucus agrees with this bill in principle. Immunization is a crucial way to protect our kids and our communities, and we need to ensure that all families have access

to the medical care they need to be healthy and happy. However, many people face barriers to getting their kids vaccinated.

If we want to increase the proportion of children in our schools who have all their vaccinations, we need to be looking at the root causes. Scheduling immunizations without a family doctor can be frustrating for many parents. Many families are delayed in getting their kids vaccinated because they don't have a primary care provider and they aren't sure where else to go. Some walk-in clinics offer infant vaccinations, but families don't know which clinics these are and have to call around to find out.

People who live in rural areas who don't have a family doctor also face barriers. Without a nearby clinic it can take weeks or even months to get an appointment. If we want to improve our immunization rates for young children, we need to make sure that parents have access to supports, like public health nurses.

In some communities there is a stigma against immunization in general. That stigma needs to be addressed thoughtfully in order to raise the immunization rate.

On top of addressing the existing barriers to access, Nova Scotia also needs to develop a better system of monitoring immunizations. Earlier this year Dr. Robert Strang, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, told journalists that we need a better system for tracking immunizations. He said that if Nova Scotia wanted to implement a similar policy to New Brunswick and Ontario that we'd need to update how we monitor who has what vaccines.

Mr. Speaker, currently most of the information about which vaccines children have received is blurry. Many families don't know their vaccination status and haven't kept records. Some family doctors don't even have great records of vaccines either. Public health officials have been relying on parents' recall and those memories can be cloudy, especially because they are from a time in life when things are very hectic for young families.

An added bonus of an updated immunization record system would be better data to determine which areas of the province are more vulnerable to outbreaks because of low vaccination levels. This can only be a good thing.

On a personal note, Mr. Speaker, when kids are getting ready to go off to university, it is a bit of a crazy time and one thing that is required is your vaccination record. If parents don't keep that and live in a different community, it really can prove difficult. So just a note to people with small children, it's good to be able to put your hand right on that vaccination record because it can delay the process.

While we're talking about vaccinations for kids who are covered by our health care system, it is hard to ignore the fact that there are many important vaccinations that remain

out of reach for Nova Scotians because of their costs, like the improved shingles vaccine which could help prevent this debilitating disease in people who have had the chicken pox.

There are also other solutions we could be considering, Mr. Speaker, just beyond requiring vaccinations to be mandatory for school children. We could have more public health nurses administering vaccines; home visits; more clinics, especially for low-income communities so that these clinics can get to them rather than these low-income communities trying to get to the clinic.

I'm sure there's plenty of other ideas. I hope we can all take some time to think about and work together to expand access to ensure that everyone in our province is prevented from infectious disease.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity to speak for a few minutes on the bill before us both as a citizen and representative of the people of Antigonish and in my other role as the Minister of Health and Wellness. This topic covered by this piece of legislation is about the important role vaccinations and vaccines play in maintaining our health both as individuals and as a population.

I appreciate the comments that have already been shared by the members of the PC and NDP caucuses thus far because I think one of the most important things that's taking place as a result of debate on this piece of legislation is a public discussion. As others have already commented on one of the challenges taking place that we're seeing in recent years around vaccinations are challenges with some people questioning the efficacy or the safety of vaccines.

That has resulted in two camps of population. Some are being classified and the first identified with the terminology of "anti-vaxxers" - individuals who are actually opposed to vaccination. Their individual motivations and reasons for the concerns may be varied, but the principal characteristic there is that they actively work to campaign against the use of vaccinations in the population.

What has materialized from those efforts is that there's a growing question, and perhaps distrust, in other parts of the population by many other people who may generally believe in the efficacy and the value. They trust the advice that comes from health departments and public health officials that make it very clear that vaccines are safe; that they do provide an important medical treatment for the individuals who receive them to prevent, or at least increase the resistance within the individual, for the condition for which the vaccine is intended.

In addition to protecting the individuals, these vaccines, as more and more people in the population receive them, help protect others who are more vulnerable within the

broader population. As we as individuals have a greater resistance to the conditions, the opportunities for these viruses to proliferate throughout our society are reduced.

There's a significant amount of research around this. This notion of vaccine hesitancy, where people may believe the advice - there's research I've read where upwards of 60 per cent to 80 per cent of parents do believe in vaccinations and yet there's a significant portion of that same population who also are willing to indicate that, you know what - while I believe it, I still have some questions. Sometimes they may not pursue the vaccination for themselves or their children.

That is the second category of the population and perhaps one that some public health officials are now actually more concerned about - that is the growing population being recognized as vaccine hesitant. Those are the people who aren't out with a strong position opposing vaccinations. But they're exposed to information - often information online through social media - that may often link back to information debunked by peer-reviewed, scientific studies - but information that manifests itself and continues to proliferate through the internet. You see it in social media. As you continue to get bombarded people start to question the information that's being provided by governments and by public health officials.

[3:15 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, I'm not a clinician. I stand here answering questions from my colleagues day in, day out - today being the exception, thank you very much. (Interruption) Mr. Speaker, they only want to listen to me for so long, I understand that. They knew I'd be getting up to speak to this bill.

In seriousness, as that information is out there, parents are busy. Nova Scotians, Canadians, and citizens throughout the world are very busy. They get exposed to information and they don't necessarily have the time to dig into the information, to look up the peer-reviewed clinical academic research that's been rigorously reviewed and assessed. Within that is where that hesitancy comes from.

I think one of the greatest things about this bill, this opportunity we've had - we've had media coverage, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Official Opposition spoke to the media after tabling the bill, and as the Minister of Health and Wellness, the media looked to me for some commentary on the day the bill was tabled outside of this Chamber. That resulted in a number of media stories being covered, including this one, that make reference to it.

One of the challenges noted even by the individual who tabled this bill, Mr. Speaker - noted in the article - is that the bill itself is not sufficient. There's a lot of work. It's absolutely fine to say the principle of the bill, that we want to pursue mandatory vaccinations because, really, it's what's underpinning that principle - we want to protect

our children. We want to protect our vulnerable citizens of the population, and we do that in part by vaccinating them as individuals, but also for the collective.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of work beyond this piece of proposed legislation that we are discussing here today, and that is how to operationalize that. Some of the recommendations to get doctors' notes - well we've had discussions here in Question Period about the challenges of programs that I believe were designed with good intentions. That would be things like sick notes from employers. We understand now what the unintended consequences of programs like that have in terms of the pressures on front-line health care workers who proceed with these activities. Pulling together the records for individuals to fulfill the operational requirements of the bill becomes challenging. So as the Leader of the Official Opposition and his media comments rightly highlighted, there is much more work to do beyond just the bill as it's tabled.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, there's much question. I know there's research out of Europe that looked at a comparator of mandatory and recommended vaccination in the European Union. In this particular research, published May 31, 2012, it looked at many different jurisdictions and whether they recommend or mandate the vaccinations. The overall conclusion is that, really, having strong communication, public awareness, tracking, and so on - things that members often have discussed as important features - those more so than mandatory seem to be the outcome of that particular research.

While it's not a unanimous consensus among public health officials about the role of mandatory versus continuing a very positive, proactive, tracking, reporting, education about vaccines and the importance of keeping your vaccines up-to-date, that seems to be the side that many public health officials continue to suggest as the optimal approach to increase vaccination rates. That's not just throughout our country, Mr. Speaker. This is research that's being conducted in Europe, as well. These are concerns throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, as we know, when we look at why there's a reduced amount of vaccination participation in our population, I think part of it is that apathy that I mentioned and that vaccine hesitancy. I've noted the concerns around proliferation of perhaps misleading and active campaigns to undermine the accepted science of our clinical experts and public health officials, which is having an impact through the power of, again, often social media.

Another contributing factor seems to be apathy within the populace. Perhaps I'll date myself here a little bit, but I suspect there are many members here who when they roll up their sleeves later this week to receive their flu shots here in the Legislature - I believe we will be having a clinic on Friday for the members who are not aware - will have a little indent on their arm where they received their polio vaccine. I'll date myself and say, I do not.

I do remember seeing that and learning about it as a child with parents and aunts and uncles during the Summer. When arms would be exposed, you would see it. As a child, it would draw attention, and then they would talk about it.

I remember having a book as a child that looked at the development of a rabies vaccine - it was not a children's book - the identification and the discovery of that particular treatment. Certainly during my time growing up in the 1980s, there seemed to be a public awareness of the importance.

I remember a bit younger when there was a meningitis outbreak, and the large public response, the very concerning nature of it and coming to an awareness that this vaccine that we hadn't necessarily been treated with could have prevented. There were deaths of youth within the province and in other jurisdictions. So, it was very much part of the social conscience, the public conscience, the importance and the valuable role and the protection that vaccines provided.

I believe perhaps apathy has been occurring. As members previously noted, some of these vaccines and the strength of the public programs to promote and the public participation in these programs in the 1960s and 1970s and through the 1980s actually eliminated or virtually eliminated in many parts of the world many conditions. And so we forget; it leaves the public conscience in many, many people who don't realize the negative impacts on the health and, indeed, in some cases, even leading to the death of our loved ones. I think that is where some of that apathy comes from.

Again, research published in April of 2018 in *CMAJ*, "Vaccinating in the age of apathy: measles vaccination in Canada, 1963-1998" - the conclusion is very clear: "Experts have pinpointed apathy as a key factor in the ongoing battle to eliminate measles transmission through universal vaccinations," and as I mentioned previously, ". . . could be related to what is now labelled as vaccine hesitancy."

The conclusion goes on to indicate: "The situation was further complicated by the general erosion of social trust in experts and lack of education about and promotion of vaccines."

Mr. Speaker, I think it's well noted in this conversation - the importance of building participation in our vaccine programs. We want to encourage, and I think all members encourage. If you put out news pamphlets, feel free to reach out to the public health office and we can provide you with information to distribute to your constituents to help inform about vaccines for our family. The recommended vaccine schedule is available online, and there are apps that can actually help you track the vaccine schedule and give you reminders for your youth.

I want to remind people, too, that we talked a lot about youth here and the youth vaccination rates, but don't forget that for some conditions we are supposed to get vaccine

boosters as well. So, as adults, don't forget to get your updated shots. This is a great opportunity for that. As I mentioned briefly earlier, the flu season is upon us.

Members opposite have cited the vaccine coverage of Canadian children, immunization coverage. The 2013 survey that got published in 2017 nationally noted that for some vaccines, we have low rates in Nova Scotia. It also recognizes that we actually, as a province, have some of the best influenza vaccination rates in the country. Let's keep that up this year; let's continue to improve because we still only reach about 40 per cent of our population. Let's make it better this year - get out, get your vaccination. I think all members here on Friday will be having a flu vaccination clinic, and I encourage all my members to wear a T-shirt and get your shot.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the honourable member for Antigonish for that very informative speech.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, first off I want to thank my colleague for Cumberland North, my colleague for Cape Breton Centre and the Minister of Health and Wellness for their opening remarks. While the minister may defend the status quo as it pertains to vaccinations, we on the other side in this House believe that mandatory vaccination in public schools is imperative. It's critical.

Many years ago, Mr. Speaker, when I was getting my daughter ready for school - she was in a program called Grandir en français, which was more or less at the time the pre-Primary program with the CSAP - it was a very busy morning. I was getting my kids ready and making some toast. I almost put that peanut butter on the toast, but I stopped because of course we know the policies on peanut butter that we have in our public systems. I got the WOWBUTTER out, slopped the WOWBUTTER onto the toast. She had breakfast, and away we went to school.

I get to my high school; I start to teach my class and then I get a call from the office saying that I have to call my daughter's school. I'm thinking, oh my gosh, what's going on. I called the school and they say you have to get over here right now, we need to have a talk. Like holy moly, what's going on here? I get to the school and the ECE tells me that there's peanut butter on the side of her mouth. I said that's not peanut butter, that's WOWBUTTER; and she says, well we don't know that so we had to contain her and isolate her. I found my daughter in the other classroom, isolated. I explained to her: you know what, this is on me, it's not on you, and while you didn't have peanut butter, they don't know that.

Here's the thing, Mr. Speaker, what I'm trying to say is we don't let kids go to school with a scent that could hurt others, that could bother others. We don't let them go

to school with peanut butter. But we can allow them to go to school with diphtheria. Let's stop and think about that for a moment.

We have made enormous gains in the last 10 or 15 years in making sure people are mindful that it's not just about you, it's about community. I think we've made a lot of gains, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the notion that we have to always ask ourselves, how does my behaviour impact my fellow citizen.

Bill No. 210, an Act to Amend the Health Protection Act, is a very simple bill. The themes of the bill are preventive health care - which for at least 30 or 40 years has been the driving force in trying to get new health care policy - and it's about community. It's about all of us recognizing how our behaviour impacts others.

[3:30 p.m.]

Let's not forget that this bill is about making children safe, and it's about keeping our children safe. One of the things my former students used to be really shocked with when I taught Canadian history was that - we often talk about the diseases that used to kill people, and whether it was influenza, whether it was dysentery - the things that we survive today is because of vaccines. A hundred years ago that wasn't the case. The reason that in the 20th century more and more people were able to survive because of vaccines.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that Nova Scotia has one of the lowest measles vaccination rates in the country - it's 71.7 per cent. It's behind the national average of 85.7 per cent - so we know there's a lot of work to be done. Now human nature being what it is, nobody likes anything that's mandatory, I think we can all understand that. But this is an issue that's not about the individual. This is an issue that's about the community.

Let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, there are Nova Scotians who at certain points in their lives, for whatever reason, for legitimate medical reasons, can't receive inoculations. We certainly trust their doctors to make that judgment.

I think of my late wife, when she was going through cancer treatments - going through chemotherapy - and how her immune system was compromised. It's in a case like that, Mr. Speaker, that their health relies on everyone else doing their part to keep them safe. I want you to know from the bottom of my heart how much I appreciate that. This bill isn't about the individual. It's not about the individual; it's about the community. I think we would all agree, there are times where you have to put the needs of the community ahead of the needs of the individual.

This is the key to the bill, let's not forget that. The key to the bill is about preventive health care. The key to the bill is about community. Failure to immunize - I'm just going to say it - is negligence. It's negligence. Vaccines have pretty much wiped out many of the known diseases until recent years.

Now they're back on the upswing and that is because there is a lot of pseudoscience out there that has a new medium to allow itself to grow. There's a lot of internet propaganda, and it is putting those with legitimate health concerns at risk. I believe it is our job as legislators to mitigate those risks. So, we want to stop that. That is critical.

If you look at international organizations, the United Nations has declared vaccine hesitancy as one of its top risks for world health. Think about that for a moment. That can be addressed through education. By putting regulations and policies in place that make it mandatory that if you participate in a public system, you have to have certain behaviours, you have to do certain actions.

Let's be clear. The vaccine hesitancy isn't based on science. I know every MLA in this Chamber knows the importance of evidence-based policy developments. We know that the best public policy often comes out of that evidence base, and here is a prime example of that. The jurisdiction beside us, New Brunswick, has passed a bill similar to this and in that case, it was reactive. Here we are in this great confederation, trying to learn from the issues and problems other jurisdictions have gone through. This bill isn't reactive. This bill is attempting to be preventive.

The intent of the bill is to codify the inoculation schedule produced by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and I'll table the inoculation schedule. There are no new vaccines being proposed here, no altered vaccines. What the bill is proposing is just the ones we already know, that if your child is to be enrolled in the public system, they have to prove up front that they have received these vaccinations related to diphtheria, measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, whooping cough, and polio.

We know polio is a disease that we thought was wiped out until the rise of vaccine hesitancy and we're seeing an increase of that. With respect to polio, certainly the students of history in this Chamber would often think of FDR, of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Maybe some people in this Chamber have had family members, grandparents who had that. It was a common disease up until the vaccinations in the early 20th century.

We saw a measles outbreak in New Brunswick last year. Action is required. In that jurisdiction, their bill was reactive to the situation. We have an opportunity here in Nova Scotia to take prevention. We're hearing in Alberta that there's a whooping cough outbreak. Again, let's not live in isolation. Let's always be cognizant and aware of what's happening within our country and within North America and take the steps necessary to prevent these things from happening in Nova Scotia. All of this is preventable. We have an opportunity to do something about it.

The Minister of Health and Wellness indicated that the bill would require a lot of work; the bill would require the department to operationalize. Okay, well, let's operationalize. Let's get to work. I know members of this Chamber aren't afraid of hard work.

The bill presents an opportunity to the government to take these preventive steps. I believe we need to listen to our doctors; I believe we need to listen to Dr. Strang and his colleagues.

When people refuse to vaccinate their children, I believe they're not thinking about the importance of the community. We have to remember that we live in this place called society where our actions, whether we like it or not, have an enormous impact on others. We have to take steps to ensure our kids are as safe as they possibly can be in school. We know, under the Education Act, that our children and the staff in our schools have that fundamental right to a safe environment. This bill takes that preventive step.

Vaccines are safe - they're safe for the general population - they're good and proper. I believe that if you are opposed to vaccinations, you are opposing reason; you're opposing facts; you're opposing science. Let's not forget the development and prosperity, to a very large extent, of the western world is due to unleashing science and reason to create a logical order. I believe this bill adds to that.

We know the importance of preventive health care. We can check that off. This bill satisfies that. We know that community is critical - recognizing community, being aware of how our behaviours impact others. We can check that off. This bill checks off so many important things that I know we in this Chamber are in agreement with.

Now, certainly the remarks from the minister - I could tell that it was very much a defence of the status quo. On this side, we don't feel that way. On this side, we feel that another step is required.

At minimum, if the government's not going to accept this bill, I hope it begins a conversation in the Department of Health and Wellness to look at making vaccinations mandatory. I know all of us want our communities to be as healthy and prosperous as they possibly can be.

Many of us know that your first wealth is your health. Why would we ever compromise that? Why would we even back down from that notion? From experience, and I know for some people in this Chamber, it is true, your first wealth is your health. We want our students, all of our young people, set up for success in every single way - intellectually, emotionally, their health - and this bill sets out to do that.

We have become, in our schools, very strict when it comes to scents, when it comes to allergies, and rightly so because it has a huge impact on the learning of others. Why would we then even possibly entertain allowing a student to go to school if they don't have the proper vaccines?

I encourage this government to consider this bill. If they fail to do that, which I get the sense from the remarks of the minister is probably the path they're going down, at least I hope they speak to government civil servants in the Department of Health and Wellness

to begin a conversation. It's an important conversation that needs to occur at minimum within the civil service, within the Department of Health and Wellness. With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

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

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, it is my sincere honour to rise and speak on an extremely important piece of legislation before our Legislature: Bill No. 173 - An Act to Amend the Education Act and the Education (CSAP) Act. This is with respect to our public school policy for Grades 7 to 9, dealing with the content of outcomes in our healthy living courses in junior high school, specifically, instruction on the dangers of sexualized human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

I was once told a dream doesn't have to have an expiry date, to take a deep breath and try again. So today, with the support of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I stand to debate Bill No. 173 again in Second Reading.

On Wednesday, October 9th, my colleagues the members for Dartmouth North and Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage stood in this House and so eloquently spoke on this bill. They made me so very proud, and the whole PC caucus makes me very proud, as they all support Bill No. 173 without hesitation. I was also very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to have the members for Halifax Atlantic and Dartmouth South speak to this worthy bill. They too spoke with sincerity and concern, but they did not indicate they supported the bill, which honestly perplexes me.

What I learned from all their speeches, though, is that we do have a common denominator. That common denominator is that they all stated there should be more conversation, more awareness and education with our youth around sexualized human trafficking. That common denominator gives me hope, hope that this bill may be considered, hope that perhaps the Liberal Government will endorse my bill because they know it is the right thing to do.

Or maybe the Liberals will take my bill and change a word or two and introduce it as their own bill. It wouldn't be the first time and, to be perfectly honest, I would think that would be fabulous because it's never, ever supposed to be about who gets the credit; it's always supposed to be about doing the right thing.

I don't suffer from hubris, so I encourage the Liberal Government to amend my bill, or introduce their own bill this session, because they know we can't wait a minute longer to start educating our youth on sexualized human trafficking because it is an epidemic, Mr. Speaker. It is happening right here in Nova Scotia, right now.

It is all over the news. I know most in this Chamber know that Nova Scotia is the province in Canada that ranks second in human trafficking. Let that sink in for a moment, everyone. We are second-highest-ranking after London, Ontario. Right in front of our very own eyes, our children are being groomed, lured, abused, kidnapped, exploited, sexually violated, and murdered. And we have not properly taken the steps to protect them.

In my opinion, to date, we have failed them. We have failed them greatly. Bill No. 173 is set out to prevent our youth from being lured into human trafficking. This bill will focus on the red flags of manipulation, the red flags of someone you know getting manipulated. It would teach about the dangers of sexual exploitation.

This bill would teach students what a healthy relationship looks like. In schools, we teach students how to have sex. We talk about it with them. We teach them the mechanics of the act. But we don't teach them about being manipulated by someone they think they love, and that has to change, Mr. Speaker.

Through investigating and learning more about sexualized human trafficking, I have come to know some incredible people. One of those individuals has been working decades as a registered counselling therapist, and it was with deep gratitude that I received an endorsement on my three bills from Pam Rubin. She indicated through an email the following statement. I can table this as well.

[3:45 p.m.]

She states: As a trauma therapist working with survivors of human trafficking and their families, I was pleased and grateful for the introduction of these bills. Three key areas are addressed that meet survivors' needs, very simply and directly, and transcend any partisan considerations. I hope that all MLAs can support these changes for the sake of Nova Scotian youth and families who are trying to heal from trafficking. I know from my work that these changes would have an immediate and positive impact for this group of trauma survivors.

That is Pamela Rubin, Canadian Certified Counsellor, registered counselling therapist, Nova Scotia College of Counselling Therapists.

Children as young as 12 years old are being trafficked in Nova Scotia. Currently there is nothing mandated in the school curriculum that teaches about the dangers of sexualized human trafficking and nothing that is consistent across all the schools. Incorporating age-appropriate information on sexualized human trafficking and sexual exploitation into the healthy living curriculum across the province, so it will be consistent

in each school from Grades 7 to 9, will help young people in so many ways, including understanding their vulnerability and seeing the warning signs, adding to their personal resiliency and helping to prevent victimization.

It came to my attention last week that Women's Centres Connect!, which is the provincial association of women's centres across our province - and there are nine centres in total from Yarmouth to Sydney - it humbles me greatly to know these nine centres have come together to understand what this bill will positively do for our youth. Georgia Barnwell sent me a letter on behalf of the nine centres and also cc'd many of my colleagues, including the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. She sent it to the deputy ministers of these departments and also to the member for Dartmouth South, who spoke on behalf of the NDP on this bill last week.

It was indicated in the letter that sexualized human trafficking is a significant problem in rural communities across Nova Scotia. These centres work daily to help prevent trafficking and to provide services to survivors. The letter goes on to indicate why they support this piece of legislation. I am pleased to table a copy of this letter for the benefit of the members of the House of Assembly - I will table that right now.

I stated a couple of weeks ago at the press conference we held downstairs here at the Legislature that, over a year ago, I really did not know a whole lot about human trafficking, but after speaking to a few courageous survivors and their families, I found myself inseparable from the topic. I actually became obsessed with wanting to know what drives people, what drives someone to want to sell another human being. Think about that. It was overwhelming and it was exhausting because I found myself so steeped in an environment that I could not comprehend. For a couple of weeks, all I did was talk to survivors, family members, law enforcement, lawyers, counsellors, anyone who knew anything about sexualized human trafficking.

I was so grateful to be connected to so many people. I read numerous books, attended conferences. At one point I remember leaving a conference and, once I got in my car, I began crying uncontrollably because I felt that my heart and head are just not big enough to comprehend all of this and to do justice for these victims and survivors. I thought I am never going to be able to help these people. I have failed them; I just don't have the ability to make the changes within our system to help them.

How can I convince the Liberal Government - even with all the support from my colleagues, women's centres, victims, lawyers, and survivors - collectively to have the political will to move forward in making legislative changes? I felt defeated. Then, someone pulled me out of my little hole of self-doubt and pity; that person I spoke to was Jennifer Holleman.

Some of you may know Jennifer; she was one of our stakeholders here for our press conference. Jennifer shared the horrific story of her daughter Maddison. What happened to

Maddison should never happen to any young woman, ever; she was beaten, she was raped, she was gang-raped, she had her jaw broken, she was tortured, and she had her hair burned.

These individuals who are the perpetrators of these crimes definitely need to be punished, not just given a slap on the wrist and put on probation.

Even if Maddison had managed to make her way back home and free herself from this horrific lifestyle, she would never have been the same. They took her soul. I repeat, they took her soul. They stole everything she had that made her who she was.

Maddison's mother, Jennifer, has stated that she wholeheartedly endorses the introduction of sexualized human trafficking into our education system. We all know that awareness is key.

Jennifer stated that if we are teaching our children in Grades 6 or 7 about safe sex, then they should be taught about the dangers of sexualized human trafficking and to be aware of the predators who surround them. These pimps, these johns, are very clever, and they are highly manipulative; it's organized crime at its best. Make no mistake about it, it's all at the expense of our youth because we in this Chamber are not educating them. We are not taking responsibility as legislators to guide and inform them of the dangers.

I want us all for a moment to think about what it feels like to hug our children, to hug our children or a loved one that we deeply care about. Think about the feeling you get when you are hugging them because they need the hug - perhaps they are sad or perhaps they are scared, hurt, or depressed - through all their adversity, and knowing there is sometimes not much more you can do than comfort them with a hug.

It was brought to my attention just recently as I was going through some of the articles that made the headlines just in the last couple of weeks. As I stand here in my place, I'm recalling some of them: "They don't know they're victims": She was trafficked at 17, but didn't recognize the signs"; "Halifax man reaches plea deal on sex charges" - 25 pimping-related charges. Another headline in the last couple of weeks: "N.S. man sentenced on sex charges involving teenage victim"; human trafficker gets bail; "Human trafficking survivor says thought of family had helped her endure abuse, being kept in freezer"; "'I wanted to die,' human trafficking victim tells Halifax judge"; and the last article I read: "Human trafficking rates in Halifax above national average."

Now, I ask, think about how we can collectively, in this Chamber, unite to do what is right for our children by passing Bill No. 173. If we do it together, we don't ever have to hug them because they didn't know the dangers of sexualized human trafficking.

I implore all members to think twice about this bill and seek endorsement from the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development because we all know that together, through educating our youth, we can help end the demand of sexualized human trafficking.

I want to take an opportunity to give a shout-out to all those individuals who educated me on sexualized human trafficking in the last couple of months, really the last year. There have been so many of them, from victims and their families and their loved ones to organized groups, lawyers and judges. I really appreciate all the information that they have given me.

I indicated earlier, too, that Bernadette MacDonald, whom I've referenced before and who is a member with the Nova Scotia END Demand, supports this bill in its entirety. She has stated that it is nothing short of miraculous the strength that victims have. I ask that everyone in this Chamber think about the victims; think about how we as legislators have the responsibility to help them.

I know this has been a delicate issue. I know that everyone in this Chamber wants to see proper legislation put in place to do what's right to serve our youth. I know the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development wants that too. I know he will work hard to help us make sure we protect our youth.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the Progressive Conservative caucus, and specifically the member for Pictou West, for bringing this legislation and the other pieces of legislation that she referenced in her remarks to the Chamber. I will just speak to Bill No. 173 quite specifically, which is related to changes to the Education Act.

The member mentioned that this had been debated previously at second reading and that she didn't hear us say that we support the bill. I think we support the bill in principle. I'm not the spokesperson on education, but my colleague the member for Dartmouth South already spoke when this was previously called for second reading. I think as a caucus, and just as MLAs, we're not convinced that changes to curriculum happen best through legislation, but we certainly recognize that human trafficking needs to be spoken about in our classrooms; there's no question about it.

We recognize the very real danger posed by human trafficking and sexual exploitation. We know there were 63 incidents reported in Nova Scotia between 2009 and 2016, with 58 of them happening in Halifax. I know at my constituency level that this is real, and we do need to speak about it.

We need to equip teachers, who are the professionals working in our schools, with the information and the resources they need in order to feel comfortable speaking about this, with the best information possible, with the best approach possible, and at very young ages. That's what is particularly concerning - well, it would be concerning no matter what age, but it is concerning to realize how young children are being lured into relationships with people who do not have their best interests in their hearts at all.

It is very disturbing to realize how a very human need - that is maybe particularly acute in adolescents, who need to feel special, they need to feel noticed - is exactly what is exploited by predators who are seeking victims for human trafficking.

As a government, we have a responsibility to address the factors that make individuals vulnerable to human trafficking. We know that traffickers specifically target poor and marginalized communities.

What makes people vulnerable? Well, to some extent, or to a significant extent, it is economic marginalization. It is lack of strong relationships around that individual young person who are making that child in that very emotion-filled, very confusing stage of life feel special, feel seen, experience that attention because that is the tool that is used to recruit people into human trafficking - it is attention. Attention that comes in the form of fancy presents and the form of special dates and the form of compliments.

By the time a victim realizes that that was a hook, it can be very difficult to extract oneself from that situation, especially as in so many cases we are talking about people who are vulnerable. They don't have as many people in their corner to try to help them get out of that. There are threats of violence. People are taken out of their home communities and sometimes moved across the country where they have fewer social connections that can help them to exit.

[4:00 p.m.]

Again, back to that vulnerability - addressing low wages, adequate levels of income assistance, and a lack of affordable housing are all ways that government can reduce vulnerability to human trafficking and sexual exploitation. In our present situation in Nova Scotia where we have high numbers of children living in poverty, high rates of food insecurity, and large numbers of households in core housing needs, people are more vulnerable and more likely to take risks to try to provide for themselves and even for their families.

Racism and colonialism contribute to the marginalization of people, particularly Indigenous people. Nova Scotians who experience racism face systemic barriers such as limited access to education, employment, housing, and credit. Ongoing discrimination puts these communities at a higher risk of being trafficked.

I'd say that particularly manifests where we see youth in care. So often when a youth ends up in the care of the Minister of Community Services that is not the beginning of a story; it is like chapter seven and it goes back three generations and it is wrapped up in our history of long-standing historic and systemic racism and marginalization of communities and also multi-generational impacts of trauma.

I think that the announcement by the Minister of Justice on Friday is relevant; addressing racist practices like police street checks and even having the conversation about

what has been the root cause of the racist practice of street checks. Having those conversations is actually also part of the way of opening up the conversation about the root cause of some youth's vulnerability and some community's vulnerability to human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Persistent gender inequality also increases vulnerability to human trafficking. There continues to be disparity between opportunities to those who identify as men and women. Women are paid less for equal work, continue to be disproportionately responsible for unpaid work, and that makes women more vulnerable to traffickers, but also in the cases where those women are mothers, all of those pressures on caregivers - on the most significant adults for young Nova Scotians - makes those young Nova Scotians more vulnerable.

I think increasingly we see in this age and stage of capitalism people cobbling together so many different gigs - not regular work hours, shifts that end and begin at strange times of the night, not a lot of control over when those schedules happen, and a low minimum wage. All of those factors can make parents and caregivers, who love their children and want to provide for them, less available than those children need - again, at that very precious time when children are really needing and craving and wanting attention.

In short, human trafficking and sexual exploitation thrive in communities where large numbers of individuals are socially and economically marginalized and do not have access to the services and support that they need. Progressive, adequately funded health and social services and a well-rounded public education system that supports social justice and actively challenges colonialism, racism, sexism, and all systems of oppression are excellent ways to address the growing risk of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

I do applaud my colleague for going on a learning journey. I fully appreciate the emotional cost of opening one's eyes and one's heart to the pain that people are experiencing in our communities and in our province. I think we all need to be open to going on those sorts of learning journeys because that is what ultimately can inform us in our work.

While some people are more vulnerable, no one and no family is immune to human trafficking. Having those conversations, including among parents and with friends, recognizing that young Nova Scotians are vulnerable and are looking for somewhere to feel that validation - we have to be sure that we are actually stepping up to provide that.

One conversation that I've had as a parent of children who are approaching the preteen years is that, across the board, a lot of programs exist for children up until age 12. Then at age 12, all of a sudden Summer camps, Summer recreation programs, and affordable activities dry up. Unless you've really found the one thing that you love, and you have parents who are financially able to support you in that, that period of life from 13 until 17 is pretty spacious. There's a lot of empty time and a lot of drift that can happen.

I think about that time in my own life, and gosh, I was wishing it away. I was just like, please get me out of this now. I spent my entire teen years - thank goodness I was a big reader; I read a lot - kind of wishing myself into my 18-plus life that I could just barely imagine where I would be - somewhere else. I think at that point I would even have said someone else.

That is precisely the time where now, given the internet, given social media channels, people with very nefarious motives can swoop in and identify that vacuum.

I think Bill No. 173 lands on something important, which is that we need to be having these conversations. Everyone who has relationships with young people absolutely needs to be having these conversations. I think the public school system is one place where it makes sense to happen. It also makes sense to happen in many other spaces, with anyone who has a relationship with young people.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

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

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Pictou West for her words and for bringing this piece of legislation forward. I'd like to thank the member for Halifax Needham for her heartfelt comments.

The content of this debate is gut-wrenching, to say the least. We are talking about the most abhorrent behaviour among our fellow humans, those who engage in human trafficking and human slavery and exploitation.

Of course, as Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and as the government and as any member of this House would say, the health and safety of our kids, who are entrusted to our care in the education system, paramount in every single decision that we make. We do that not just by having the proper laws and processes in place to protect them physically while they're at school and entrusted in our care. We do that by having additional supports in place for them, whether it's mental health, links to the justice system, so that there are avenues for our students to take if they are in need of immediate help or have concerns about their well-being.

A key effort to empower them and protect them is to give them information, to help prepare them mentally to recognize different signs of luring, of grooming, and any other activity that should raise alarm bells. We take this conversation and this responsibility that we have very seriously.

I'll remind the House of Bill No. 112, which we all supported, to enhance criminal record checking in our system and enhance our ability to screen and track any potential risks in the education system. That was directly in response to police investigations and

charges associated with luring, grooming, sexual misconduct, and physical assault. I want to thank the members of the House for helping us to pass that bill unanimously. That was very important, and that is helping us create a safer environment for our students at school.

I do want to also inform the House that this is very much a part of our mandated curriculum in Grades 7 to 9. In our healthy curriculum, the issues around human trafficking, around healthy and unhealthy boundaries, who is a safe adult, how to recognize luring and grooming activity, and how to find help in dangerous situations is mandated in our Grades 7 to 9 curriculum currently, and of course that's very important.

We also enhanced that curriculum with a really important partnership that has been longstanding in Nova Scotia, with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. That is a 15-year-long partnership to enhance our efforts to teach our kids about these risks, teach their families about these risks and what signs to look for, and also educate our teachers and staff about these risks and what to look for.

I do want to table a couple of documents for the members opposite to take a look at. We have Kids in the Know. This is also for our Grades Primary to 12 programs. This is available to every single teacher and every single school in our system from Grades Primary to 12, the materials we have from the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. This is Kids in the Know, an interactive safety education program to empower children and reduce their risk of victimization. This is distributed all across our province in every single school, and is there for teachers, students, and families to utilize. I'll table this for the members to take a look at.

We always want to enhance our efforts in this regard. First, it is important for the House to recognize that this is very much mandated in our health curriculum. It's a part of our curriculum. That's not to say we don't want to continue to enhance that curriculum.

I do want to inform the House today that we will actually be enhancing our partnership with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and investing in additional training and resources and lessons for students and teachers from Grades Primary to 12. I want the member for Pictou West in particular to realize that this is happening. This has been in progress for a while, but we are expediting this process precisely and in response to this conversation that has been initiated in the Legislature, one that I think touches the hearts and minds of everybody here.

This does come with an investment of \$70,000, and we'll be bringing in the third edition of Kids in the Know, a personal safety program which has recently been released by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. This resource has been hailed nationally as an extremely exceptional resource for our kids, for our parents, and for our students. We will be expediting the process to get this out to our schools in the coming weeks, very quickly, and get this in the hands of our teachers and staff and students and families. There will be additional training provided to our educators and staff to accompany this. I do want

to table the updated overview of that program for the members' attention, as well, because this is really important.

I want to thank the member for pushing this issue. It is resulting in us acting more quickly on enhancing not just our curriculum, but the resources that we provide to every single student, every single school in the province.

I do want to thank Bernadette MacDonald and her network of allies, along with Jennifer Holleman. They have been incredibly passionate and dedicated advocates for this cause on a whole number of fronts, not just on the education front. Jennifer and Bernadette are both constituents of mine.

Jennifer's story is a gut-wrenching story, for her to have lived through that experience with her daughter. I know she is comfortable with us talking about this because she has actually presented her story in some of our schools and what happened to her daughter Maddison. I know she has spoken at the high school in Yarmouth, and we're trying to link her up with other schools as well - to share her story, which is very raw, which is uncensored and really presents an upfront look at the human cost of this sort of activity. For her to take that terrible tragedy that she experienced and turn it into positive motivation for her to be an advocate for this cause, to actually get out and talk to people about this story, to help empower other young people to protect themselves, I think is quite inspiring. I do want to take this opportunity to thank her for her courage.

We've also invited Jennifer and Bernadette, and anybody else they want to bring into the department, to take a look at our current mandated curriculum and provide us with feedback on it. We do have a process in place outside of the Legislature for curriculum enhancement; it is driven by teachers. We have brought in, I think, an additional 40 to help us with that process.

That process does happen outside this Legislature; it's an important one. We continually want to enhance that curriculum and update it and make sure that the most relevant information and resources are available. We'll make sure that we bring those folks and those advocates in to take a look at the current curriculum, look at the enhancements we're going to be making over the coming weeks with our partnership with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, and get their advice on whether additional efforts need to be made to provide this enhancement.

I know I speak on behalf of every single person in the Chamber when I say how critical this issue is, how important it is, how we all recognize that we have to continually do better to combat this great evil that unfortunately exists in our communities and to empower our kids to protect themselves as well. With those few words I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for their comments on this topic. As the minister . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. It has been brought to my attention that the honourable member for Dartmouth East has already spoken to this particular bill. Only one chance per bill.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to have a few moments here to speak to Bill No. 173. I thank the minister for his words, his information on what is being done in our education system already, and his commitment to keep on this file and to keep improving what we are doing to educate our youth about human trafficking. I'm glad the member for Pictou West is here today because when this was brought up before she was not here, and I know these are her bills - sorry, I apologize for that, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased that this was brought forth by the member. I would like to remark on the remarks of the member for Halifax Needham. I think we all feel passionate about this and concerned about human trafficking. I don't know if you've had people come to you, as I have. Living in rural Nova Scotia, I didn't think this was going to be something on my plate, I really didn't. I thought this was something that happened more in urban areas, places with higher population, but I've had families come to me who are in desperate need of getting their children out of trafficking situations, and it is heartbreaking.

These aren't compromised people in any way. These are affluent, well-educated people. Their children are in secure jobs; they're adults, they're not even school-age children. These are adults who are being trafficked. They have jobs and they meet someone who lures them into this lifestyle. They start isolating themselves from their friends and their families. They are given wonderful gifts and promises; they are moved away from their families and their friends; and they're living in places where they don't have communication with their families.

Families are very distraught. For those who have found their children and have been able to bring them home, there's another devastation of therapy and having their child feel safe again. It's a horrible situation for any family to endure. There are programs going on in the schools from Grades 7 to 9; they start talking about human trafficking. These courageous conversations have to start not only in school, they have to be in our homes, and they have to be right from the early years.

I think our member for Halifax Atlantic spoke about this a few weeks ago, what he's doing already to set up boundaries with his children and to know what's appropriate and not appropriate, to get comfortable using the language; and that's really important. The language we use about our bodies and about sexual relationships - we need to be using the

appropriate language and not have children embarrassed, or adults embarrassed, about how we talk about human trafficking and sexual abuse.

We really need to empower ourselves and empower our children to be able to communicate and to know what safe boundaries are and what are not safe boundaries. I think it goes a lot further than just certain communities. It can happen to anyone. No one, no family, no amount of money can protect your child from a situation like this. The only thing that may help is to educate the child and families about exploitation of young people and even young adults.

Even one case of this is one too many. We need to address this and prevent it from happening. I think if we continue to do it in our schools, there can be healthy conversations going on with our children long before Grades 7 to 9, but we know not everyone is prepared to have these conversations. I know teachers who, because they know that they just can't communicate the way the topic needs to be communicated, they switch off with another teacher, and they trade a class with another class. It's really important that we have the right people talking to students in the schools, people who are comfortable.

Also, parents need to be comfortable having these courageous conversations, and it can happen in the home where children are comfortable and feeling secure. We need to have those conversations. We need to have these conversations among ourselves. We need to educate ourselves, all of us here in the Legislature. We are hearing a lot about it when it comes up on the floor. We really need to know; as we heard, it's happening from one end of the province to the other.

Another thing: a lot of our youth are being taken from our province to another province, so it's really important that our provinces have communication with one another - the justice systems - so that they are on the alert. Teachers need to be educated, parents need to be educated, not just our children, about human trafficking.

I would like to affirm that just one case of human trafficking is one too many. We need to make sure that children feel safe in their communities, that they feel safe in their homes, and that they can reach out to the wider world and feel safe. It's not a situation that any young person, any family, should ever have to find themselves in. So, with that, I will sit down and take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queen-Shelburne.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise and speak to Bill No. 173 put forth by my colleague, the member for Pictou West.

What is human trafficking? Sadly, if you were to ask many students in Grades 7 to 9, most would not know. Human trafficking is a criminal offence that involves controlling, forcing, intimidating, or deceiving a person of any age in order to exploit them through

various forms of sexual exploitation or forced labour. We know that both pimps and sex workers can be anyone.

Where is human trafficking happening? Sadly, if you were to ask many students in Grades 7 to 9, most would not know; it's happening everywhere. It is not just an international issue, a city issue, it is more than that. It is happening in our communities, rural communities, regardless of geographic location and socio-economic status. You simply do not know when it could be happening to someone you love or befriend.

I know I'm not alone in this House when I say there is a real concern about the prevalence of human trafficking in our province, where rates are among the highest in the country. Let me say that again, Mr. Speaker: Nova Scotia's rates of human trafficking are among the highest in the country. According to Statistics Canada, which compiled police report incidents of human trafficking between 2009 and 2016, Halifax and Ottawa had the highest number of incidents in the country per 100,000 people. In 2016, Halifax had 4.7 incidents per 100,000 people.

That is alarming, it is terrifying, and it's chilling to think your own children, our friends' children, and children in our communities could encounter this exploitation and luring at any time.

Conversations with local police tell us there are serious gaps in education around human trafficking. Children as young as 12 and 13 are being lured. Actually, that is the average age of recruitment in our province. The RCMP have reported children as young as 12 years old working in the sex trade industry in Halifax.

We have heard from parents with children who were manipulated and taken out of the province at 14 years of age to work in the sex trade, 12-year-olds being beaten beyond recognition, tortured, burned, forced to have sex 15 to 20 times a day, and so much more.

As an MLA, and more importantly as a mother and grandmother, I cannot even begin to understand why this is happening in our communities, but it is. We need to educate our youth in school and give them the tools to identify the signs and how to protect themselves from these traffickers. Let's be clear, anyone can be a trafficker: family members, friends, neighbours, male or female.

I am very happy to hear the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development rise today and talk about the things that are going to be happening in our school system. That is refreshing to hear, but we need to know - what is the accountability that all teachers are teaching this? I've heard from many in my community that it is being taught in our schools, but only by voluntarily concerned teachers and administration who are already cognizant of the problem.

[4:30 p.m.]

We need to ensure we are protecting our youth. Very simply put, if we are going to teach our students about puberty in Grade 4 and sex education in Grade 5 - safe sex and issues to watch out for - why are we not teaching in every classroom from Grades 5 to 7 about the dangers of sexual exploitation and the manipulation of these pimps? We owe it to our children. Awareness and education are key to beating human trafficking, and if we do our job and provide the education tools necessary to understand, this could be the generation that says, that's enough.

My colleague the member for Pictou West has stood in this House time and time again asking questions of the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. She has spoken with families, survivors, law enforcement, women's centres, counsellors, you name it. This member has become a passionate advocate in attempting to send the strong message that our children's bodies are not for sale and we will not tolerate it any longer.

A couple of weeks ago we heard from a mother, Jennifer Holleman, in the foyer of this House. This very courageous mother shared a horrific story of her daughter Maddison. It was heart-wrenching to sit there and listen to Ms. Holleman as she bravely stood in front of cameras and people she had never met before. Her words shook me to my very core.

I will never forget this mother's words she shared: What happened to my daughter Maddison should never happen to any young woman, ever. She was beaten, she was raped, she was tortured - they stole her soul; they stole everything she had that made her who she was.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to repeat that again and I want all members of this House to think about the words of this mother: They stole her soul; they stole everything that she had that made her who she was.

As a mother, a grandmother, and an aunt, I cannot imagine the day that I could not hug my daughters, my grandson, my nieces and nephew, my friends' children who all refer to me as their auntie. These arms are the most precious jewels you will ever have around your neck - the arms of our children.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will ensure that we are educating our most precious jewels so that they fully understand the dangers and the signs of sexualized human trafficking.

In closing I would like to thank my colleague the member for Pictou West for her fight, her passion as a mother, and a member of this Legislative Assembly. I know in my heart that every member in this House is equally compassionate, and caring, people who fight for what is right, what is just, and what is for the greater good.

I thank all the people who have come forward, who have shared their stories, their expertise, and their guidance to make things safer and better for our youth in this province.

With those few comments, I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 172.

Bill No. 172 - Public Prosecutions Act.

THE SPEAKER: A reminder to all members that it is 10 minutes on this bill.

The honourable member for Pictou West.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, may I first make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

KARLA MACFARLANE: I would like the members' attention to the West Gallery where I have a friend here; a bright, young woman, Clancy McDaniel, who is a local advocate for sexual assault survivors and who has actually spoken to me personally with regard to her experience, her own experience with human trafficking. I'm very honoured to have you here today and I would like the House to give her a warm welcome. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I rise and stand in my place to speak to Bill No. 172, an Act to Amend Chapter 21 of the Acts of 1990, the Public Prosecutions Act, Respecting a Human Trafficking Prosecution Team.

Mr. Speaker, a few days ago I purchased the October 2019 edition of Canada's national magazine, probably better known in this Chamber as *Maclean's* magazine. The top headline on the front cover read, Anne Kingston on Canada's Domestic Violence Crisis.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, in Nova Scotia we have a health care crisis but nationally we are witnessing a domestic violence crisis. What was most interesting reading this information, and very informative article, was the connection made between domestic violence and sexualized human trafficking. The article begins on Page 24 with the heading, "We are the dead." This is a story which reveals how systems, people and politicians failed women and girls in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to be one of those politicians, and I don't think any of the members in this House want to be one of those politicians. I will exhaust myself to show Nova Scotians that I will not stop fighting to end the demand, while trying to

implement legislation that will protect our children and seek justice for victims. This Bill No. 172 is just one tiny step, one way I can show effort and my sincerity in helping victims of sexualized human trafficking.

Mr. Speaker, Crown prosecutors in this province have said they need additional resources to be able to give these complex cases the attention they deserve. The RCMP have backed up this claim saying that sexualized human trafficking investigations are among the most complex they often experience during their whole, entire career.

Human trafficking cases are on the rise in Nova Scotia. Statistics show that Halifax is one of the areas in Canada with the highest number of reported trafficking cases, along with London, Ontario. This should concern everyone in this Chamber greatly. Nova Scotians want to know why and how this is happening because it bears repeating - purchasing sex is a crime - it is a crime to purchase sex in Canada.

This bill mirrors a similar bill in Ontario involving specialized Crown prosecutors who are responsible for prosecuting sexualized human trafficking cases and providing legal advice to police and prosecutors, while at the same time delivering enhanced education and training within the justice system.

Mr. Speaker, in a course hosted by the Government of Ontario and designed for service providers, the number one priority when helping a victim of sexualized human trafficking is to take your time; take your time and listen to them. They are such complex cases.

The level of danger is extremely high and the only way for prosecution to happen is for the victim to take the stand and face the person who trafficked them. That person may not only have been their pimp, they may have been someone who raped them repeatedly, beat them, locked them in a room, starved them. Imagine the mental toll that process can have on a victim.

Currently Crown prosecutors are not able to take the time with sexualized trafficking cases because they simply do not have the resources. We have heard from human trafficking victims receiving as little as 15 minutes with their Crown prosecutor before they go into a trial. Does everyone in this Chamber think 15 minutes is enough time? I don't think so. These are complex cases that involve brainwashed victims who have been through massive amounts of trauma. There's a responsibility on our part to ensure that they are given every chance possible to see success in their court cases.

I received a letter yesterday - as you all have - from the Crown Attorneys' Association, advising they would be withdrawing Crown attorney services this morning. They followed through. The NSCAA is comprised of close to a hundred Crown attorneys employed by the Nova Scotia Public Prosecution Service, who serve in Crown attorney offices throughout Nova Scotia that prosecute criminal cases, including those of violent crimes, sexual assault, and child pornography. They're not there today to do that, though,

are they? No, they're not. It's beyond frightening to think that they are not there to serve today because this Liberal Government refuses to negotiate in good faith.

At the press conference we held a couple of weeks ago, I was honoured to have Bernadette MacDonald, who has decades of experience with women's centres and is currently a member of the NS End Demand group. Bernadette spoke of the importance of specialized teams within the criminal justice system. This is exactly what this bill does; it creates a specialized team to handle sexualized human trafficking cases. She indicated that it has proven very effective in ensuring criminals are held accountable for their actions.

Bernadette stated how pleased the organization was with the introduction of a specialized team of Crowns within Prosecution Services to handle, specifically, these horrific crimes. Sadly, she also recognized there is resistance from the Crowns to take many of these cases of sexualized human trafficking to trial because they are such delicate cases. A specialized team of Crowns would strengthen the chances of pimps and johns - who are sexually exploiting, primarily, our young females - to be criminally charged and convicted.

This bill would encourage Prosecution Services to work closely with the policing services to carry out stings and be proactive in catching these people, primarily men, who prey on vulnerable women and children. There is no question this bill would send a strong message: sexualized exploitation and sexualized human trafficking will not be tolerated in Nova Scotia, women and children's bodies are not for sale, and we as a society are working to end the demand.

I was very pleased to receive a statement, as well, from Linda MacDonald and Jean Sarson, representing the organization Persons Against Non-State Torture. They strongly support the need for educating the Crown with specialized skills related to the victimization involved in human trafficking. This education will promote sting operations and the End Demand approach.

There is a global sexualized human trafficking epidemic happening. We know Nova Scotia rates second in Canada for the highest reported incidence of human trafficking. If we do not take the proper steps now to protect our youth and all victims of sexualized human trafficking, then all will be lost and there will be blood on our hands. We, in this Chamber, have to have the political will to let our egos go and pass this non-partisan bill.

What better way to show victims who come forward that they will have a skilled, compassionate team dedicated to helping them. Too often, policy and procedures have trumped common sense; however, this is a common-sense bill. Not moving this bill forward will be a fundamental mistake and an inaction of this government that will be truly disheartening not only for me, but more importantly for the victims that I stand here today and support with every fibre in my body because my body is mine and it's not for sale.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues in the Chamber, I want to applaud the member for Pictou West for bringing this here in such a forceful way and for being so clear and supportive of the victims of human trafficking in this province. The member has spoken eloquently to the ways in which our system has not caught up to the sometimes terrifying realities that Nova Scotians, especially marginalized Nova Scotians, face. Human trafficking is one of those awful and often quite hidden realities.

[4:45 p.m.]

I've stood to speak on the member's legislation on this before. I'll say again that I applaud the work of the YWCA and other organizations that are working in this space and creating ways to directly support victims. Of course, the need to support victims is a sad symptom of the reality that human trafficking is continuing, despite the awareness and despite the support of victims.

Stopping this must be a multifaceted effort. Education is one of the things we've been speaking about today, and certainly education is important. As I said, I think based on the information I have and the people I have spoken to, the hidden nature of human trafficking is often how it is enabled to be so pernicious - and not just for children but for all Nova Scotians, for the general public.

That includes law enforcement. That includes Corrections. The member asked a question today about issues in Corrections with perpetrators and offenders being held together. I think that's a real concern. It's also an issue for social services or for workers on the front line who might encounter this kind of situation.

But there is another place I would submit that this needs to be addressed. It's one that we in the NDP caucus spend a great deal of time talking about in this Chamber. That is the alleviation of poverty. It is not an exaggeration to say that the vast majority of people involved in human trafficking are economically, politically, and/or socially marginalized and disadvantaged.

In addition to considering this bill strongly, a few things the government could do to combat this issue would be to continue to work to address systemic racism in a serious way, to raise income assistance by a real margin, and to address the burgeoning housing crisis in Nova Scotia. All of the ways in which so many people in this province find themselves in such precarious situations lead to extreme vulnerability and terrible outcomes, like the issue of human trafficking that we are talking about today.

The work of the Public Prosecution Service here in the area of human trafficking and in so many other places, as we've been discussing this week, is extremely important. Without a doubt, their work prosecuting human trafficking offences is vital. I have no doubt that they would agree. In fact, we've had those conversations this week. Dedicated teams,

as we just heard from the member for Pictou West, have certainly allowed members to gain additional expertise, which undoubtedly leads to superior outcomes.

I would point to the part of the Act under consideration that specifically contemplates that additional education. I think we really support that because the reality, as the member spoke to, is that when prosecuting a case like this you are dealing with people who have undergone extremely traumatic situations. I have heard in the last few years - in education, in law enforcement, in the justice system generally - that we have a long way to go in terms of developing a genuinely trauma-informed approach. I think there is without a doubt not far enough that we could go to create the educational opportunities to ensure that that trauma-informed approach is taken.

That said, I am curious - and I will engage the member on this after we rise from this Chamber - about whether the member has consulted with the Public Prosecution Service. I know this bill is in the service of victims, but I also think it's important that those on the front lines have input into this. Some of the Crown attorneys I have spoken to have suggested, as the member herself suggested, that a joint task force might best include professionals other than just Crown attorneys.

As we have been talking about, Crown attorneys are stretched. They are prosecutors, but they are upholding the integrity of the Crown. They are not prosecuting on behalf of the client. While I think it is vital that victims of crime be given clear, compassionate, trauma-informed sense of how their case is progressing, I would submit I'm not sure beyond that, that Crown attorneys are the ones best positioned to continue to support those victims through the process.

I think they do need support, but I just wonder about something like the SAIT task force, which includes RCMP and other professionals, or a joint task force that includes Victim Services - something that is sure to actually support those folks moving through the system. As I said, I'm happy to engage the member on this after. I think we definitely are aligned in terms of the importance of the issue and the spirit of the legislation.

I think, at the risk of repeating myself, we all know that we have a long way to go in terms of ensuring that our justice system can adequately address issues - particularly gendered issues of sexual exploitation, of human trafficking, of domestic abuse. We've seen a willingness from the leadership in the justice system to address these issues. I'm hoping that continues to go further. I look forward to hearing more from the member on this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the members from Pictou West and Dartmouth South for the comments, and the member from Pictou West for bringing this bill forward, and the other bills she has brought forward around human trafficking and

safety when it comes to our daughters, our sisters, our mothers, and our aunts, and our friends.

There are some disturbing trends and disturbing statistics in Nova Scotia. One of them being, as the member from Pictou West said, that we rank second in all of Canada. For such a small province, under a million people, those kinds of statistics are hard to wrap our minds around when you think of how large some of the municipalities and cities are. Somebody told me that statistic years ago, but I would've thought something like Toronto or Calgary or some of the bigger areas would've had a higher rate of human trafficking.

I think we need to understand why this is happening. We have to have the supports in place. Our Crown plays a vital role in this whole process. We need to make sure that we have the resources available to hire more Crown attorneys to be able to support organizations that are on the front line - organizations like the YWCA, which I'm intimately involved with because of Miia and her staff and all the good work they do, and they're located in Spryfield.

One of the programs that they have out there is the WISH Program - and for those who don't know about the WISH Program - I think 32 or 36 young women are part of the WISH Program. It's quite an incredible program that provides safe, secure, supportive housing and wraparound resources for those women. When I say wraparound resources, it provides a fully furnished apartment and eviction prevention, which is something - the whole thought of eviction prevention for an individual, whether it's a man or a woman who's in crisis, is probably one of the best things you can ever do. There are a lot of things we can help to provide for individuals in need, but to have a safe, secure roof over their head and to know that when they come home that they are safe and they won't be evicted is a pretty incredible thing.

The YWCA and the Wish Program provides an eviction program and individual support. Part of that individual support - during my time at the YW, they told us they are providing in-home help, including financial help, and services that the women need. They also have 24-hour emergency on-call support, which is pretty incredible.

We've had these discussions here many times over my six years about people in crisis and people who are dealing with issues, whether they are health issues, mental health issues - people who are in crisis because of actions that were outside of their power or outside of their ability. They go into crisis, they need assistance, but it's not like every night at 4:00 or every day at 11:00. Crisis with your mental health, your mental well-being, can happen at any time during the day.

So, to hear that there are programs like the Wish Program that provides 24-hour, around the clock, on-call support is something that I think we should be looking at and modelling right around just about everything we do when it comes to mental health. It provides a pretty invaluable and incredible service for those who need it.

The member from Dartmouth South touched on a few things with which I wholeheartedly agree. She talked about poverty and how poverty plays into that; the lack of affordable housing plays into all of this. It's absolutely true. We need to continue to work on more programs to give access to affordable education so that people see that there is a future out there.

I spoke to one young lady in one of the communities that I represent who wanted to go to NSCAD, but she wasn't going to go to NSCAD because it was expensive. When I spoke to her, I said, you know, the best investment you will ever make in your life is an investment in yourself and if you invest in education, you'll get that back a hundred times over the course of your life. I received a letter from one of her parents who was pretty angry that I had told her daughter to go spend tens of thousands of dollars on education. I met with the family and we had a long discussion. It is an understanding of how valuable education is, and access to education, and how education can help break cycles.

When people are put in these positions, we need to make sure that we have all the best resources available to them: that they have a safe place to lay their head down at night; that they have the trauma experts there, the mental health experts there; that they have access to front line resources - whether it's a social worker or a doctor or a nurse practitioner; that our front-line workers - whether it's the RCMP or the Halifax Regional Police and our Crown - are trained properly to know how to deal with some of this stuff, to be sensitive to the needs of individuals who come into their office, who they are supposed to be representing in a court of law.

A lot of times what happens, from what I've heard from individuals whom I have dealt with over the years, is that a lot of times they are retraumatized when they go through the process of an investigation or when they are going through the court system. Stuff is brought up again and again, and we have to be aware of that. We have to know that the people who are dealing with these young men and women - boys and girls - have the proper training, and they know how to deal with these cases properly.

When I talk about these issues, I keep going back to being a father and my responsibility in this whole role and my responsibility not just as a father but as a human being to treat people with dignity and respect, no matter their gender, race, or religion.

[5:00 p.m.]

I would say I have about 12 moms, but I grew up with some pretty powerful women in my corner. One of them, and I've mentioned their names here lots of times, Linda Wilson, Ainslie MacNeil-Campbell, and a few others. They taught me from a young age what was right and what was wrong. A lot of people don't have those powerful, strong individuals in their life. When they are at their lowest, when they've had horrific and disgusting actions happen to them, a lot of people don't have people they can fall back on.

I've spoken to a lot of experts in this field, people who have decades and decades of experience. A lot of times what happens, especially with young women, is these predators and these disgusting human beings are searching out group homes. They are searching out children in care and they are searching out people who they feel are vulnerable and to whom they can, if possible, show them some love, maybe treat them with some dignity and respect that they've never had in their life, and then take advantage of them.

We need to do better as a society, we need to do better as a government, and we need to do better as human beings. I thank the member for Pictou West for continuing to bring these bills forward because it's extremely important, so thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, the question we have to ask ourselves is: Are the survivors and victims of human trafficking worth it? Well, the obvious answer for us all is yes. I am sure of that. That is why government must give this bill serious consideration.

What could they do? They could call it as part of their business on any day we are in here, other than Opposition Day, because we know that in Opposition, we can't pass bills. We don't have the numbers, but we also don't have the ability to call this bill to a vote. That is one way the government could pass this bill.

The other way they could accomplish these changes is by making them, budgeting for them. The Fall is the time of year that all the ministers are submitting their budgets to the Department of Finance and Treasury Board. Cabinet is meeting and discussing these things. Government could say yes to this bill by budgeting funds and creating what this bill is asking to create, which is a human trafficking prosecution team.

What does that consist of? In this case, what we've decided would be a good start is two Crown attorneys who specialize in human trafficking prosecution.

The alternative, as my colleague the member for Pictou West has indicated in her remarks, is to have somebody landing at the court to speak with the Crown attorney who is going to prosecute that day, to discuss this situation for about 15 minutes - and that was an actual case. That may not be the average time of the consultation between a survivor of human trafficking and the Crown prosecution, but it was an actual situation, and we're told that it is common. So the alternative is that. I think we can do better.

I think about a similar situation. I want to bring this up because there are parallels. I went out to Winnipeg. Survivors of Fenwick MacIntosh received a media award for being the face of survivors of sexual abuse and assault. When they received that award in Winnipeg, there was a conference going on and they were talking about human trafficking. Of course, it was an eye-opener. We've heard the comments, we know what it's all about

and how awful it is. I guess it reminded me of what happened in that case. MacIntosh got off on a lot of the charges that were put against him because the Crown was unable to deal with extraditing him and getting him to court.

Yes, he did serve some time, but there were charges that were dismissed because he had not been given his Charter right of being taken to court within a reasonable time frame. Can you imagine how those people who came forward felt when that happened? I say there are parallels because in that case - and we'll go back to the report to the Attorney General of Nova Scotia and the prosecution of MacIntosh - it was recognized that the delay was unacceptable. The delay was about 10 years.

The Public Prosecution Service committed to take steps. There were two key steps. One was a more hands-on role for the Chief Crown Attorney, and the other key was that the Crown would be resourced adequately. That's what this bill is about. We are not talking maybe today about survivors - well, actually we are because a lot of these survivors are children who are being trafficked. In both cases it is children who have experienced sexual assault and abuse. What we are saying with this bill is that the resources must be there to support the Crown in its efforts to prosecute people who are doing these things, people who are trafficking other human beings. This is real, we need justice, and this bill is about helping to get justice.

When I think of human trafficking, it makes me angry. I have to watch what I say in here because it can really get my blood boiling. I think we're all in some agreement here today, and I often think if we were like the Northwest Territories. I know on the other side of the Chamber here there's a picture of the Northwest Territories Legislature. Their members sit in a circle, and there are no political Parties. If we were discussing this in the Northwest Territories today, I think we'd all be in agreement in passing this bill. I guess my only hope, because we can't pass it, is the government will take the action that I just mentioned.

We need to be tough on human trafficking. I know people maybe brand this guy here as a conservative and he wants to be tough on people and send people to jail. But when you really think about this issue and you think about somebody who would do that to somebody else, when we see the repeat offenders in this instance, in my mind there is only one place for them, and not just as a measure of punishment but even more so to protect the next person who could be trafficked.

The member for Pictou West has worked hard, she's brought in good legislation. It is one of three bills on human trafficking, as you know, that have been brought here to the floor of the House: education, Victim Services, and this bill to have a special team to prosecute people who are trafficking other human beings.

How do you appeal to people's decency? I think about the traffickers and I think about the people out there who are spending their money to roll into a hotel room for an

hour to purchase sex off somebody who is likely held in there against their will. In these specific cases, they are certainly held against their will.

In terms of decency, those people have no decency. In my mind there is a place for them. Now before we highlight all the reasons why someone could find themselves in jail, let us remember they're there because of what they've done but also to protect society. Some people are psychopaths; in my mind, if you were going to traffic somebody, you are a psychopath. You have zero empathy and there is one place for them: to be locked up.

Maybe they can get help there, but I really don't believe in being soft on this issue. We need to protect people. I realize that some people may be created as psychopaths by the environment they are brought up in and I have sympathy for that, but poverty is not an excuse for someone who traffics other human beings. I will also say that it is not always people in poverty who are targeted by these human traffickers. So, again, let's take action here.

We could say that in some cases maybe these human traffickers shouldn't be held - it's not their fault because there's all these reasons why they found themselves - I don't buy that, they must still be held responsible for their actions. I say remove them from society and protect the next person who they would otherwise target.

We can help to do that in here by empowering the Public Prosecution Service with a team of Crown attorneys who spend all of their time focusing and specializing in this area.

When we go back to Fenwick MacIntosh, the report laid blame at the hands of the Crown. But take that a step further: Who empowers the Crown? It's this Legislature, it's all of us, so let's take action on this bill.

I encourage the government to call this bill on a future day this Fall sitting, when they can call business and bring this bill to a vote; if not, I call upon them to enact this legislation by creating the team when they're preparing their budgets to pass for the budget next Spring.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that concludes government business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, Thursday, October 24th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m.

Following the daily routine and Question Period, business will include Committee of the Whole House on Bills, Bill Nos. 180, 189, 192, 193, 197, 201, and 203. Also, we will have second reading for Bill No. 213, as well as Address in Reply.

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

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to rise, to meet again tomorrow, Thursday, October 24th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

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

[The House rose at 5:13 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1382**

By: Hon. Karen Casey (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Charlene Boutilier Thomas from North River, Colchester North, received an Excellence in Nursing Administration Award from the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia for her work in mental health; and

Whereas throughout her career, Charlene has worked in the mental health area in hospitals, in provincial leadership, and with the Department of Community Services, helping to develop a model of care for people with intellectual difficulties, setting up palliative care services, and with Help Line; and

Whereas Charlene is a past president of the Colchester-East Hants branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association and operated her own private practice, Complete Counselling Services;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Charlene for a well-deserved award and for her numerous contributions to improve mental health.

RESOLUTION NO. 1383

By: Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas Judy Smith of Pictou County was honoured by the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association for her long-standing service; and

Whereas Judy joined the CCAA in 1978 and has held numerous volunteer positions; and

Whereas the CCAA recently renamed the Women's Basketball Exemplary Leadership Award to honour Judy, and the award is now named the Judy Smith Exemplary Leadership Award and was first presented in March 2019;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing Judy for her achievement and wish her the best in her retirement from the CCAA.

RESOLUTION NO. 1384

By: Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas Logan MacDonald, a third-year civil engineering student from Pictou West, travelled around Nova Scotia and visited 20 camping parks and 21 Parks Department offices to conduct an audit on accessibility; and

Whereas Logan presented the data collected to the Province of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Logan has played a key role in assisting Nova Scotia on providing access for persons with disabilities to provincial parks, campgrounds, and sportfishing sites by 2021;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Logan MacDonald for contributing to this worthy project and wishing him all the best in his continued studies

RESOLUTION NO. 1385

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas a group of talented artists came together this spring to form the Art Co-op Gallery in Shelburne; and

Whereas the town had been without a public art space where local artists could exhibit their work for the past year and a half; and

Whereas when it opened on June 1, 2019, it was the only artist-run gallery in the county, with a core group of 12 artists working in a variety of media including painting, wood, fibre, jewellery, sculpture, and metal;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate everyone involved in making the Art Co-op Gallery a reality - a creative space for artistic collaboration and learning opportunities, and another attraction for Shelburne.

RESOLUTION NO. 1386

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas paramedics do such valuable work serving our communities, saving lives, and attending the scene of accidents, while spending long hours away from their families; and

Whereas a Long-Service Award was presented to David Toogood from Liverpool for 25 years of service at a ceremony at Mount Saint Vincent University in May 2019;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate David for his long and dedicated career as a paramedic, providing a vital service to Nova Scotians.

RESOLUTION NO. 1387

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas paramedics do such valuable work serving our communities, saving lives, and attending the scene of accidents, while spending long hours away from their families; and

Whereas a Long-Service Award was presented to James Holmes from Shelburne for 25 years of service at a ceremony at Mount Saint Vincent University in May 2019;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate James for his long and dedicated career as a paramedic, providing a vital service to Nova Scotians.

RESOLUTION NO. 1388

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas a grandmother and granddaughter studied side by side at the Queens Adult High School in Liverpool; and

Whereas they had both decided it was time to go back to school after life events had prevented them for completing their education along with everyone else; and

Whereas studying together with the support and encouragement of their school and fellow students was vital to their success;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Darlene Roy and her granddaughter, Ataya Keans, on the tremendous achievement of both being presented with their Grade 12 diplomas in June 2019 and wish them every success for the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1389

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (Eastern Shore)

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

Whereas the arrival of a hurricane can create a great deal of stress for residents, and dealing with damage caused by downed trees, power outages, and lack of water can be overwhelming; and

Whereas it can also be a time where we see the best features of our community shine through in that people come together to support each other in a time of need; and

Whereas many organizations like Memory Lake Heritage Village opened their doors as comfort centres, providing a safe space for hot meals and washroom facilities, and for people to come together;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking the Memory Lake Heritage Village for all the support they gave to our community during Hurricane Dorian.

RESOLUTION NO. 1390

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (Eastern Shore)

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

Whereas the arrival of a hurricane can create a great deal of stress for residents, and dealing with damage caused by downed trees, power outages, and lack of water can be overwhelming; and

Whereas it can also be a time where we see the best features of our community shine through in that people come together to support each other in a time of need; and

Whereas many service organizations like the Musquodoboit Harbour & District Lions Club opened their doors as comfort centres, providing a safe space for hot meals and washroom facilities, and for people to come together;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking the Musquodoboit Harbour & District Lions Club for all the support they gave to our community during Hurricane Dorian.

RESOLUTION NO. 1391

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (Eastern Shore)

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

Whereas the arrival of a hurricane can create a great deal of stress for residents, and dealing with damage caused by downed trees, power outages, and lack of water can be overwhelming; and

Whereas it can also be a time where we see the best features of our community shine through in that people come together to support each other in a time of need; and

Whereas many local businesses like Ralph's Downeast Diner opened their doors as comfort centres, providing a safe space for hot meals and washroom facilities, and for people to come together;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Ralph's Downeast Diner for all the support they gave to our community during Hurricane Dorian.

RESOLUTION NO. 1392

By: Hon. Kevin Murphy (Eastern Shore)

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

Whereas the arrival of a hurricane can create a great deal of stress for residents, and dealing with damage caused by downed trees, power outages, and lack of water can be overwhelming; and

Whereas it can also be a time where we see the best features of our community shine through in that people come together to support each other in a time of need; and

Whereas local businesses like Webber's Store opened their doors as comfort centres, providing a safe space for hot meals and washroom facilities, and for people to come together;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Webber's Store for all the support they gave to our community during Hurricane Dorian.