



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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

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

Second Session

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2020

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2020

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 now begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 1658

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

Whereas human trafficking and sexual exploitation are devastating to victims and survivors, families, and entire communities, and we are committed to ensuring Nova Scotians have every opportunity to live safely in the place they call home; and

Whereas human trafficking crimes disproportionately affect women and girls, and we know that it will take the combined efforts of government, law enforcement, community organizations, and citizens working together to create meaningful and lasting change; and

Whereas earlier today government announced an additional investment of \$1.4 million each year over the next five years to support new and current initiatives to fight human trafficking crimes, with an added focus on Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities, and to ensure that survivors have access to the services and programs they need to heal and move forward;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the many community organizations and our partners in law enforcement and the Public Prosecution Service dedicated to fighting this devastating crime and stand together in recognition of Human Trafficking Awareness Day this Saturday, February 22nd.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

RESOLUTION NO. 1659

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall:

(1) read and table the message from His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, transmitting the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the Province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, for the consideration of this House;

(2) table the Estimate Books;

(3) table the Government Business Plan;

(4) table the Crown Corporation Business Plans;

(5) table the Estimate and Crown Corporation Business Plans resolutions;

(6) deliver my Budget Speech; and

(7) move that the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the Province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, being Supply to be granted to Her Majesty, and the Crown Corporation Business Plans be referred to the Committee of the Whole on Supply.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

[1:15 p.m.]

RANDY DELOREY: I draw the attention of the members to the East Gallery. I would like to introduce a couple of special guests, and I would ask that they rise when I recognize them: Natalie Baglolle, a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist and the president of the Nova Scotia Therapeutic Recreation Association; and Heather Baker, who is a recreational therapist with the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

I would ask the members of the House to join me in welcoming our guests today and thank them for the important work they do in supporting Nova Scotians. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1660

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

Whereas therapeutic recreation services help people with physical, cognitive, social, and emotional limitations by supporting their recovery, health, and well-being; and

Whereas recreation professionals are dedicated to developing and ensuring that leisure is an important element to help improve the quality of life of many Nova Scotians; and

Whereas February is National Therapeutic Recreation Month, an opportunity to recognize and support the work of recreational therapists in many settings throughout our province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join in recognizing National Therapeutic Recreation Month and the contributions of therapeutic recreation professionals as they support Nova Scotians through their recovery.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

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

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 220 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Labour Standards Code, Respecting Leave. (Hon. Labi Kousoulis)

Bill No. 221 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Labour Standards Code. (Hon. Labi Kousoulis)

NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 1661

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

Whereas the Boat Harbour Act prohibits the use of Boat Harbour as an effluent treatment facility for the reception of effluent from Northern Pulp on or after January 31,

2020, and Northern Pulp does not have an approved plan to treat effluent from the mill; and

Whereas members of the government's Forestry Transition Team admit publicly that they are still coming to grips with the impact of the closure of Northern Pulp and the impact it will have on families and concede that they do not know the number of people who may lose their jobs; and

Whereas Nova Scotians who are facing an uncertain future deserve to be heard by members of the House of Assembly who passed that law and should be the ones who listen to the affected families and search for answers;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly shall:

(a) select a committee that is constituted of nine members of the House of Assembly, five chosen by and representing the government caucus, two chosen by and representing the Official Opposition, and two chosen by and representing the Third Party,

(b) that the committee shall select its Chair,

(c) notwithstanding Rule 61(1) of the Rules and Forms of Procedure, the Chair of the committee only has a vote in the event of a tie,

(d) pursuant to Subsection 36(1) of the House of Assembly Act, the committee is not dissolved by the prorogation of the House and shall continue its inquiries after the House is prorogued,

(e) the committee shall consult as many interested and impacted persons as it reasonably can, including persons from the forestry industry, displaced mill workers, and persons from associated businesses, and

(f) within six months, the committee shall report its findings and recommendations to the House of Assembly.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

REHBURG, NEIL: MDR TECH. - RECOG.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a special person in my community. Everyone knows Neil Rehburt as a fourth-degree member of the Eastern Lodge 8686 Buffalo Club. Neil was recently recognized in *the Chronicle Herald* for his work as an MDR technician at the Dartmouth General Hospital in the new state-of-the-art sterilization facility.

Neil also represented the Dartmouth General staff when he competed nationally in the Halyard Wrap Race, winning first place and then competing in San Antonio, Texas, in 2016 and Nashville in 2017, where he won first place in the North American competition both years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking Neil Rehburt for his dedication to his work and his commitment to protecting the health of all Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

PROTECTED AREAS VOLUNTS.: OWLS HEAD PROTEST - RECOG.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the remarkable citizens from across the province, including the ones who are outside the Legislature today, who have mobilized to protest this government's hidden decision to remove Owls Head Provincial Park from the list of pending protected areas.

I would also like to recognize many volunteers across the province who act as stewards and caretakers and who serve in associations and citizen groups with the aim of preserving and protecting special pieces of Crown land. Many of them are now feeling like their labour of years could be jeopardized by deals brokered in secret.

The province held meetings in 20 communities and conducted nearly 1,500 interviews with park users and non-users to gather input that shaped the Our Parks and Protected Areas plan. Owls Head is identified as Site #694. It is not just about hitting an arbitrary 13 per cent of protection.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

YARMOUTH ATHLS.: STICK CURLING ACHIEVEMENTS - CONGRATS.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, Dave MacDougal and Paul Doucet won the open division of the 2020 Nova Scotia stick curling championships, held in Yarmouth during the weekend of February 14th to February 16th. This was their fourth title in the last five years.

Earlier this month, Dave MacDougal and John Cameron won the Nova Scotia Competitive Stick Curling league championship in New Glasgow. This is on top of an impressive curling career that has seen many championships and titles.

I would like to ask this House to join me in congratulating Yarmouth's Dave MacDougal, Paul Doucet, and John Cameron on their impressive careers and on winning these recent championships. We wish them continued success in the sport of stick curling. They've made all of us proud, and they've been great ambassadors for their communities.

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

HARVEY REALTIES: 50 YRS. COM. SERV. - RECOG.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in my place today to recognize and congratulate Harvey Realities Ltd. of Baddeck as they begin to celebrate a half century in business.

Before 1970, Catherine E. Harvey, owner and founder, who passed away just last year, recognized the need for a licensed real estate broker in Victoria County.

Through the years, Harvey Realities Ltd. - with Catherine's daughter Cathy now as broker/owner, and her sister Betty Menzies, along with Terri Brewer, Robert Wambolt, Roy MacRae, and others before them - have provided and still continue to provide well-informed, reliable service to a network of local, American, and European clients.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating Cathy Harvey and staff at Harvey Realities Ltd. and wish them a very happy 50th anniversary and all the best in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

DARTMOUTH REG. HOSP.: CARDIAC HEALTH PROG. - CONGRATS.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the launch of the African Nova Scotian Heart Health Outreach Program at the Dartmouth General Hospital. The Dartmouth General is the third-busiest hospital in the province, and in its catchment

are several of Nova Scotia's historic Black communities, including East Preston, North Preston, Cherry Brook, and Lake Loon.

We know that African Nova Scotians do not access health care at the same rate as other residents. One outcome of this is negative and worrying cardiac health outcomes. This program is intended to study the underlying reasons for this discrepancy and improve cardiac health diagnosis and treatment for African Nova Scotian communities at the Dartmouth General.

As we continue to celebrate African Heritage Month, I am pleased to see informed research into the health of African Nova Scotians become a priority in Dartmouth and to celebrate the leadership of Dartmouth General Hospital, in particular Sharon Davis-Murdoch, in this regard.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

ALFORD, EMILY: BEDFORD LEGION BRANCH 95 - THANKS

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Emily Alford for her extensive volunteer contributions to the Bedford Legion Branch 95. Emily is a regular volunteer at weekly bingo and other fund-raising events. She willingly does whatever task is asked of her, and she does it with a smile. She often mentors other students who volunteer there. Emily has received certificates of appreciation for volunteerism from the Legion, and these are awards that have never before been issued to a minor at our Legion.

Emily is a very busy young woman. She is in Grade 10 French immersion at Lockview High. She also just happens to be Canada's junior girls national champion in darts and, together with her partner, she is the junior mixed doubles champion as well. Just this past weekend Emily won the Nova Scotia junior girls provincial title for the fifth time in a row, and I should mention that at the national championships in Saskatoon last May, Emily also won the sportsmanship award.

Emily is passionate about fair play, good sportsmanship, and helping others, so this award was no surprise to her friends at the Bedford Legion. She has a bright future ahead.

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

COMER, JOHN SAMUEL: BIRTH OF SON - GRATITUDE

BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, on January 21st at 8:50 in the morning, the Comer family got a little bit bigger. John Samuel Comer was born at a whopping nine pounds and eight ounces. His big sister Maria, mother Jennifer, and I were overjoyed.

We are all blessed with the opportunity to raise our children in this great province. As this session begins, I think it is important to keep in mind the sacrifices that all of our families make to allow us the opportunity to sit in this Legislature. I am thankful for my newborn son, my daughter, my wife, and my family. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**OUT OF THE COLD SHELTER:
LONG-TERM SOLUTION NEEDED - RECOG.**

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, tonight, like last night, shelter beds will be full in Halifax. The Out of the Cold shelter will pop up at 8:00 p.m. at the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre on Gottingen Street. Thanks to that organization's incredible generosity and 350 volunteers, plus a small core of staff, some 30 people will have a place to sleep, but they will not have a home.

Shelters like food banks are responses to a deeply broken society marked by severe poverty and marginalization amongst affluence. We know that secure, safe, supportive housing is the first step towards improved health and stability for individuals who have typically experienced trauma.

Housing First models work. It works here in Halifax for 50 individuals, but the program is full and is not accepting new clients. The Province, with the city and with federal partners, must recognize the foolhardiness and unsustainability of shelters that don't alleviate long-term pressures on our health and justice systems and don't allow people to thrive.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

**KIRKPATRICK, WAYNE - BISHOP:
INSTALLED, ANTIGONISH DIOCESE - CONGRATS.**

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, on Monday, February 3rd, I had the honour of attending the installation of the new bishop for the Diocese of Antigonish.

Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick was appointed as the 10th bishop of Antigonish by His Holiness Pope Francis on December 19, 2019. His installation, held at Saint Ninian Cathedral, had hundreds in attendance, which was a great welcome for someone new to our community.

Coming from Ontario, this is Bishop Kirkpatrick's first time living on the East Coast and in Nova Scotia. I ask my fellow members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Bishop Kirkpatrick on his recent appointment and welcome him to our beautiful province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

STEVE CRAIG: In the West Gallery, we have members of the Kinsmen, Kinettes, and Kin Clubs here in Nova Scotia. I would ask them to stand please and be recognized.

We have Pat Bowers, the Atlantic district governor here in Atlantic Canada; Brenda Dooley, the district coordinator, secretary, and awards and recognition chairperson; and Fabian O'Neil, who is president of the Sackville club. For Kinsmen, we have Bill McFadden, Wade Dooley, and Nick Dooley. I'd ask all people to welcome them to this House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

KIN CANADA: 100th ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate our Kinsmen, Kinette, and Kin Clubs. Kin Canada, an all-Canadian service organization, has been serving its community since it was founded in Hamilton, Ontario by Hal Rogers on February 20, 1920. Today marks their 100th anniversary. To date, Kin clubs across Canada have contributed more than \$1 billion to Canadian communities and disaster relief programs beyond our borders.

[1:30 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating the accomplishments and dedication of each member, past and present, of the Kinsmen, Kinettes, and Kin clubs over the last 100 years, and thank them for keeping Hal Rogers' wish alive of "serving the communities greatest need."

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: May I make an introduction as well?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'd like to draw the members' attention to the gallery opposite where we have a number of leaders in our labour movements today. Joining us are Nan McFadgen, President of CUPE Nova Scotia; Danny Cavanagh, head of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour; Paul Wozney, head of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union; Jason

MacLean, head of the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union, NSGEU; and Mary Otto, who is a member of the NSGEU. Please warmly welcome them all.

These folks are heartily and committedly representing thousands - tens of thousands - of workers in Nova Scotia every day. We thank you so much for all that you do for workers in Nova Scotia. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SINGLE MOTHERS: HOUSING PRESSURES - ADDRESS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Since the beginning of this year, there has been a disturbing trend among the folks we are helping in my office in Dartmouth North. A larger than normal proportion of people who come to us for help have been single mothers, all of them struggling to keep or find affordable housing.

Take, for example, one of my constituents - a single mother with five children. This woman relies on income assistance as well as the Canada Child Benefit, and she was recently evicted. Unable to find affordable housing or a place that will take her and her children or accept her Canada Child Benefit as income, this woman was, until today, living in a hotel room with all five of her children, funded by DCS. She has just been given notice by the hotel that she needs to leave it by Friday.

This woman, and many, many like her, are bearing the brunt of poverty, paltry income assistance rates, and the current housing crisis. We must, and we can, do better for these women and their children. I call on all of my colleagues in this house to work toward a real solution for people living in these situations.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

DIXON, CAROLANN: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Ms. Carolann Dixon of North Preston on operating her own business, CA Nature of Things, for eight years on Portland Street in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, selling Celtic sea salt, herbal products, and bath sea salts. She now sells the same wonderful products from her home, which affords her time to work on her next project - opening a seniors' residence in North Preston. She's an active member of the Saint Thomas Baptist Church, where she sings in the choir and conducts some sermons. She also attended the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Hammonds Plains from 2012-15 to study and become a lay pastor.

I recognize and congratulate Ms. Carolann Dixon for her contribution to the business community and the church.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HOBEEK, MARK - POLICE CHIEF: CAREER ACHIEVEMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. PAT DUNN: After 31 years with the province's largest police force, Stellarton's new police chief, Mark Hobeck, has been welcomed with open arms by residents of Stellarton. With more than three decades of police service and a wide variety of experience, Stellarton's new chief took control of the 10-member department in November 2019.

Mark's previous experience saw him working as a community response officer, school resource officer, an investigator, and a media relations officer. Eventually he transferred to Criminal Investigation Division where he supervised the integrated drug unit and sexual assault investigative team. During his last years, his police duties found him in the department's Internal Oversight and Risk Management sections. Chief Hobeck believes in maintaining a high level of professionalism with the police department and securing the quality of public safety that citizens deserve.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

ZATZMAN SPORTSPLEX: 1st ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise today to recognize the Zatzman Sportsplex. This past weekend marked the one-year anniversary of the redesign of what many still lovingly call the Dartmouth Sportsplex. The new Sportsplex is marked by its commitment to community and inclusivity. From universal change rooms to the pool pod to teen takeover nights and the community access program, the Zatzman Sportsplex is walking the talk.

The new facility is a beautifully designed space full of light and incredible artwork by celebrated Indigenous artist Jordan Bennett. The layout is sensitive to varying levels of fitness and ability, allowing space for everyone from the novice yogi to the power lifter to achieve their fitness goals. Please join me in congratulating Max Chauvin and the entire team at the Sportsplex for making this facility so welcoming and responsive to the community and to my family. It was well worth the wait.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

XMAS MOMMIES/DADDIES: \$20K FUNDRAISER - THANKS

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank the many organizers, volunteers, and community members for another extremely successful Christmas Mommies and Daddies Telethon. On November 24th, the Friendly Neighbours 25th annual telethon took place at the Aylesford Fire Hall, raising funds to support local families around

the holidays. Broadcast on Eastlink television, the telethon includes a full evening of auctions with talented entertainment.

Each year, funds raised go directly to support our neighbours from Coldbrook to Kingston with food and gift hampers. This year the community pledges amounted to a grand total of over \$20,000. After the telethon, volunteers from the Friendly Neighbours, local Lions Clubs, and community came together to assemble hundreds of holiday hampers and deliver them in time for the holidays. I wish to sincerely thank everyone who made it possible for families in our community to receive support. We look forward to another successful telethon in 2020.

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

FORESTRY INDUS.: AFFECTED CONSTITUENTS - SUPPORT

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, there are four mills in the constituency of Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley. Hundreds of hard-working men and women work at these mills. They count on the forestry industry to keep their jobs and provide for their families. The Christmas season was one filled with uncertainty, anxiety, and worry for many of my constituents.

In the coming weeks, members of this House will disagree at times, but it is my hope that we can unite around our desire to support our constituents who rely on the forest for their livelihood. I hope we keep them in our minds and hearts as we make decisions and that we can provide the stability and certainty they need to have a future here in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

OWLS HEAD ADVOCATES: CALLING FOR TRANSPARENCY - THANKS

GARY BURILL: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to recognize the many people that are presently outside this building, standing together to say that it was a wrong thing for this government to not care enough about transparency, public will, and public conversation to even let people know when they were designing behind closed doors to sell a piece of Nova Scotia's remarkable coastline - that had been understood by the people of the Eastern Shore, for many years, to have been protected - in Owls Head.

I am pleased to add my voice to this protest against the contempt for public participation in decisions about how our public lands are held, sold, discarded, or developed. I would like to thank the group of citizens who have assembled here this afternoon at the Legislature for their vocal vigilance, their commitment, and their care toward protecting not just a parcel of our beautiful province, but also in the direction of

protecting the principle of transparency and openness and accountability, which is so crucial and pivotal to democratic governance.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

SHOOTERS BAR: \$215K CCOA DONATION - THANKS

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I am particularly excited to share with you the overwhelming generosity of Shooters Bar & Grill and what they mean to our community. Brent and Beth MacDonnell have been the owners of this establishment for five and a half years. They certainly know the meaning of giving back and are committed to making a difference in our hometown.

Just last month Shooters gave a tremendous donation of \$215,000 to Corridor Community Options for Adults from Jig the Joker, a fundraiser that they co-chaired in Enfield. Shooters took no proceeds from the fundraiser, opting to give their portion to the wonderful programs of CCOA that employ those with special needs.

This is just one incredible and recurring example of how Shooters Bar & Grill positively affects those they endorse. They sponsor all kinds of events in the community and are always donating the door charges back to the organization hosting the event. From sports teams, to individuals with illnesses, to the food bank, Beth and Brent are driven to help in whatever way they can to enrich their lives. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in applauding the immense generosity of Shooters Bar & Grill and thanking the owners.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

**ACADIAN SKIES AND MI'KMAQ LANDS:
STARLIGHT AWARD - CONGRATS.**

COLTON LEBLANC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Acadian Skies and Mi'kmaq Lands, an area comprised of the Municipality of Argyle, Clare and Yarmouth, became North America's first Starlight Tourist Destination and Reserve in 2014. Last November, the Acadian Skies and Mi'kmaq Lands received the Education and Diffusion of the Astronomy award at the Starlight Foundation's First International Starlight Awards in Spain.

The award is due to the work of Tim Doucette, owner of Deep Sky Eye Observatory in Quinan, the Société Touristique Bon Temps d'Argyle, and the Starlight Development Committee.

Astronomy tourism is a growing sector in southwestern Nova Scotia and welcomes visitors from around the world. Tim continually reminds others of the importance of

protecting our region's night skies against light pollution because it's a luxurious natural resource that not everyone has.

I ask that all members of this Legislature join me in congratulating the Acadian Skies and Mi'kmaq Lands on their prestigious award and wish them continued success.

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

BOUDREAU, CHAS.: DEATH - TRIBUTE

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the accomplishments of a respected member of the community of Arichat, a man who has been referred to as a community icon, a man who would have become my future father-in-law. Charles Herman Boudreau, better known to many as Herman, Papa or Charlie Brown, lost his battle to cancer on Tuesday, February 11, 2020, surrounded at home by his family.

Herman was a man of few words, but his quick wit and remarks were phenomenal. Herman was born in Arichat. He made his way to Massachusetts where he met and married Norma, the love of his life. They returned to Arichat in 1971 along with their two sons Chuck and Kevin. They entered the funeral profession in 1971 and grew C.H. Boudreau Funeral Home Ltd. into a dignified and professional funeral home respected by many.

Herman was a founding board member of 235 Arrow Sea Cadets, a lifetime member of the Knights of Columbus, a member of the Royal Canadian Legion and a 25-year board member of InRich Business Development.

I ask members of this House to join me in extending our condolences and celebrate the life of a man dearly loved and who helped so many people in the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

AFRICAN HERITAGE MO.: COMBATting RACISM - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, African Heritage Month is a time for Nova Scotians to learn about and celebrate the rich and vibrant history of Black communities in this province, and the great contributions they've made: the Maroons and the Black Loyalists; the Prestons, Africville, and the Crichton Avenue Extension; Viola Desmond; the Nova Scotia Project; the Black United Front; the South End Environmental Injustice Society; and on and on.

While we need to do this work all year round, February is also a time when we should refocus our attention to learning about the anti-Black racism that has existed for as long as people of African descent have lived here in Nova Scotia. Collectively we must do more and there is much to do. We must address the racial profiling and discrimination

Black people in this province face every day while shopping, driving, taking the bus, walking, going to school, simply living their lives.

Those of us who occupy positions of power - all of us in this House - have to do the work to make our society more equitable and just for everyone.

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

TRACADIE UNITED BAPTIST LADIES AUX.: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker I rise today in recognition of the Tracadie United Baptist Ladies Auxiliary for their hard work in support of their community and the communities in developing countries.

The ladies prepared their annual shoeboxes for boys and girls in developing countries to make sure they have a good Christmas, an activity they do every year. They also did door-to-door house collections for an annual food box that they normally have in church, getting donations for the local food bank. Finally, they completed their fifth year of their annual Christmas Tree Light Memorial Fundraiser remembering members of the communities who have been lost in the previous year.

The Ladies Auxiliary also welcomed their newest member, Cindy Williams, noted to be an asset and a blessing in keeping their organization numbers up and helping them do their important work.

I'd like to ask everyone to join me in giving the Tracadie United Baptist Ladies Auxiliary, members of one of the oldest African Nova Scotian churches in the province, a round of applause for their service to their community and communities abroad and for their dedication to service.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

KENTVILLE FOOD BANK: COM. SERV. - THANKS

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, earlier this month I had the opportunity to tour the Kentville foodbank. I was simply amazed at the level of organization and effort the volunteers put in to provide food to an average of 50 families per week.

The foodbank is at St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church on Belcher Street and has one of the largest territories of any food bank in our province. The average family will receive 70 pounds of foods which they choose from a pick-sheet list. Foodbank Chair, Harvey Gilmore, is very grateful for the number of volunteers and the support of local

farmers and stores. Even if they don't fundraise, they always have enough money to provide food, with many unsolicited cash donations.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Gilmore and the many volunteers of the Kentville foodbank for their time and generosity.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

LEBANESE COM.: LEBANESE ARABIC LANG. COURSES - RECOG.

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to share the good news that the Canadian Lebanon Society's Lebanese Heritage School of Halifax has been selected by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as an approved course provider for Lebanese Arabic 10 and 11 - two new personal development credit options for high school students.

These full-credit courses will allow our young people to learn our beautiful Lebanese Arabic language while fulfilling their standard course requirements. Our students have many great opportunities to learn, both inside our classrooms and outside, and I'm proud our province recognizes the value of those opportunities. The classes will count towards one of their five electives and will be available to students come this Fall.

I want to congratulate the Canadian Lebanon Society, the instructors of the Lebanese Heritage School, and the Honorary Consulate of Lebanon in Halifax for their collaboration on bringing this to fruition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

HANN, KELSEY: KARTING CAREER - CONGRATS.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak about Ms. Kelsey Hann, a young resident of Pictou West.

Kelsey has been making a name for herself in the professional sporting world of go-karting. Although just 17 years of age, Kelsey is an experienced racer and a 10-year veteran of the sport. She has competed in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, and Quebec. She has also ventured across the border to the United States to compete in Florida and Indiana.

A documentary produced by a Toronto-based production company, entitled *Winning Is a Close Second*, tells the story of Kelsey's go-carting career. The documentary was shown at the deCoste Entertainment Centre in Pictou, in January 2020.

Mr. Speaker, I extend my admiration to Kelsey for her determination to follow her passion in a male-dominated sport. I wish Kelsey much success in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish on an introduction.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I would like to direct the members' attention to the East Gallery, where I would like to recognize a constituent of mine. I would ask him to rise. Moses Coady is an active member of the community in Antigonish and obviously very engaged in the political process as well. He's here to observe the opening of the legislative sitting. If we could give him the warm welcome of the House, that would be appreciated. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

CROOKS, HARRIS - PHYSICIAN: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, today I recognize Dr. Harris Crooks.

Dr. Crooks graduated from Dalhousie Medical School in 1976 at the top of his class. He immediately hung up his shingle in his home community, setting up general practice in a small office in Prospect Bay. Since then, he has worked tirelessly to serve his patients with great skill and care. His dedication goes above and beyond expectations.

As an avid fisherman from a long-standing fishing family, he would rise early in the morning, fish until midday, clean up at home, and then work at the office, seeing patients until late into the night - only to get up and repeat it all over again the next day.

As an old-school physician, he would frequently make house calls to those unable to travel. It was not uncommon for patients to knock on his door at all hours of the day and night. He has been a wealth of knowledge to his colleagues at Hatchet Lake Medical Clinic and has been instrumental in mentoring all those practising at the clinic.

Dr. Crooks retired in December 2019. His dry wit and hearty laugh are missed by all. I would like to ask the members of the House to join me in thanking Dr. Crooks for his admirable work, and his outstanding service and skillful care for his patients and the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

FORESTRY INDUS.: AFFECTED CONSTITUENTS - SUPPORT

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I grew up in Queens County. The people I grew up with, the people I still count among my friends, rely on the forestry industry for their livelihoods. The people in my constituency love the forest and they take immense pride in caring for it.

It has been difficult to watch people you care about in your community be consumed with emotional and financial panic because of a government decision. As MLAs, we have a responsibility to understand that when we make decisions, we have a large impact on the lives of the people we represent. We also have a responsibility to be accountable for those decisions.

I will continue to be a positive voice for the hard-working people who work in our forests, and I urge all MLAs to do the same.

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

C.B. SPECIAL OLYMPICS: COM. VOLUNS. AND ATHLS. - CONGRATS.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Special Olympics in Cape Breton.

This year, Cape Breton is sending a record 17 athletes to Thunder Bay to compete in the national games. This speaks volumes to the programming that we have on the Island. A number of volunteer organizations and families are involved with ensuring that the Special Olympics are a success in Cape Breton. I will recognize a few: the Cape Breton Regional Police, the local Knights of Columbus, Special Olympics Cape Breton, and all their families.

It's a monumental time for that organization to be sending that many athletes to Thunder Bay. For some of those athletes, it's their first time to compete. For some others, it's their first time going on a plane. It's a very exciting time for them and their families. I ask all members of the house to congratulate all of the athletes, whether they're from Cape Breton or across the province, as they go to compete in Thunder Bay later this month.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

FORESTRY INDUS.: AFFECTED CONSTITUENTS - SUPPORT

TORY RUSHTON: Thousands of Nova Scotians who rely on our forests for their livelihood are going through a very difficult time of transition right now. The worry and anxiety they feel is not due to anything they have done. It is because of a government decision.

Mr. Speaker, those jobs matter. Those hard-working men and women - foresters, mill workers, service industry workers, fishers, fuel suppliers, and so on - expect a plan for jobs and expect a plan for our economy. That's what they deserve. They want answers, and they want confidence that their government is not going to abandon them at this time of uncertainty.

As this session of the Legislature begins, I hope we can all work for these men and women and keep them in our minds as we make positive decisions.

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

BEEKEEPING PROG.: YOUTH BUSINESS - GOOD LUCK

BILL HORNE: Recently, volunteers at the Beaver Bank Community Garden have partnered with BEEA Honey with Heart and our community market to start a new beehive program.

The BEEA youth executive committee is open to youth between the ages of 12 and 17 to learn about building a social enterprise. Beekeeping by the youth will include conducting hive checks as well as bottling and marketing the honey harvested from start to finish. The youth will learn as they assist in the garden and will build a social enterprise in the community.

I request all members of the Legislature to join me in wishing good luck to all the participants of this program. You can look for their honey at the Halifax Seaport Market.

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

BARBARA ADAMS: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

BARBARA ADAMS: I draw attention of all members of the House to the opposite side of the gallery. Dr. Lisa Bonang is here - and I ask her to rise - as well Patricia Auchnie, who is the PC candidate of record for Eastern Shore; and her father Doug Bacon, who is a mentor of mine. Her grandfather was Premier Roger Bacon. I ask all members of Legislature to join me in welcoming them to the House. (Applause)

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

SAVE LITTLE HBR. FB GRP.: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT - THANKS

BARBARA ADAMS: I rise today to acknowledge the 3,138 members of the Facebook group Save Little Harbour/Owls Head from Corrupt Backroom Deal. These are

members of the community who decided that they were going to make sure the government heard their voices.

I also want to quote the Cole Harbour Parks and Trails Association, which wrote recently that the apparent process and lack of public consultation upfront has the Cole Harbour Parks and Trails Association concerned that similar actions could be taken with the areas that we manage for the people of Nova Scotia through the Department of Lands and Forests.

After that deliberation, the Cole Harbour board unanimously passed the following motion: That the board endorse and distribute the following position statement on the Owls Head protected area, that the provincial decision to remove the Owls Head area of Eastern Shore from the list of potential protected areas and parks should be reversed until a more thorough public consultation is carried out.

I recognize all of these constituents for speaking out publicly.

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

**UPPER HAMMONDS PLAINS COM. DEV. ASSOC.:
WASHINGTON TRIP - BEST WISHES**

BEN JESSOME: I would like to take the opportunity to recognize members of the Upper Hammonds Plains Community Development Association and a group of youths who, in partnership with the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Upper Hammonds Plains, are in the process of organizing a trip to Washington, D.C.

The Upper Hammonds Plains Community Development Association has been established for over five decades and has continually enabled opportunities for young people and community members to recognize local history, African Nova Scotian history, and African history more globally. This Summer, they'll be partaking in a trip to Washington, D.C., where they'll visit sites such as the Museum of African American History and the Martin Luther King Jr. monument.

I ask all members of the House to join me in wishing them well.

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

**INGONISH SNOWMOBILE ASSOC.:
NEW TRAIL GROOMER - CONGRATS.**

KEITH BAIN: The Ingonish Snowmobile Society has been given funding for the Mary Ross Barker Trust Fund to purchase a new trail groomer. Local riders will be able to leave from Ingonish and connect with the other trails across the Island.

This trail, along with the multi-use overpass in Baddeck, ties in with the overall plan to start promoting Cape Breton as a four-season tourism destination. The formation of the ISS wouldn't have been possible without the cooperation of the new owners of Ski Cape Smokey, since the snowmobile trail comes out at the top of the mountain and they'll be using the new access road built by the ski hill.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating and thanking Stan and Jenny Symes and the Ingonish Snowmobile Society for bringing their ideas to fruition. It is indeed a promising future for Ingonish, North of Smokey, and all of Cape Breton Island.

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

CHURCH MEM. PARK: ARENA, 50th ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HUGH MACKAY: I rise to congratulate the trustees of Church Memorial Park in Chester, who held a celebration this past Heritage Day, February 17th, for community members to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Eleanor Pew Morris Memorial Arena. I was honoured to be part of these celebrations.

Church Memorial Park is home to not only the skating arena and the Chester Curling Club but also the Chester Tennis Club, the Chester Brass Band, and the Chester and Area Family Resource Centre. The volunteer trustees of the park have projects planned to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the arena, all aligned to goals to promote healthy living, wellness, and quality of life for residents of the municipality and surrounding communities.

Mr. Speaker, I invite the members of this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the trustees of the Church Memorial Park.

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

K-KIDS CLUB: NEWBORNS IN NEED FUNDRAISER - THANKS

BRIAN COMER: I rise today to congratulate the K-Kids club from Riverside Elementary School in Albert Bridge and their donation to our constituency's first annual Newborns in Need fundraiser.

The K-Kids consist of Grade 4 and Grade 5 students who expressed an interest in extending their leadership in the community and helping others. They commit to three projects a year to help their community or school under the guidance of their school advisors. In December, the group initiated Ugly Christmas Sweater Day, where the students were invited to wear an ugly sweater and bring a donation to Newborns in Need. Their donations totalled \$350, as well as newborns' clothing.

It is a pleasure to recognize and congratulate this amazing group of children on their hard work and commitment to making their community and school a better place.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

KINCH, TARA: COM. ADVOCATE - THANKS

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize the outstanding work of Tara Kinch of Chebucto Connections. Tara is a community support worker and she helps members of the community connect to services they need.

Tara often deals with people that are overwhelmed by their circumstances and do not know where to turn. When they reach out to Tara, they know that they will be welcomed and not judged. She works extremely hard to connect them to resources available in the community. Tara's built a network of connections that help her assist people in need. She's always willing to advocate on behalf of her clients and she has successfully helped many of those members of the community improve their lives.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank Tara for all her hard work and dedication to improving the lives of members in our community. She has a very difficult and demanding job, but she does it with compassion and commitment.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

SACKVILLE SANDWICH WEEK: COM. ORGANIZERS - THANKS

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the members of the organizing team of this year's Sackville Sandwich Week.

Sackville Sandwich Week takes place from March 7th to 14th. Anyone interested can participate in this fundraising celebration by visiting participating Sackville restaurants and testing out their featured sandwiches. There will also be an opportunity for participants to enter to win some very exciting prizes.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members of this House of Assembly to join me in thanking the organizing team of the Sackville Sandwich Week for hosting this event and for supporting the Sackville Public Library's community cooking program by donating a monetary portion of every sandwich sold during this week.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much for those Member 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: ALTON GAS INSTRUCTIONS - CLARIFY

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Bernie Miller is a close confidant of the Premier as he is a senior advisor to the Premier. In fact, his job description says that Mr. Miller has been a key advisor in the establishment of the Province's key priorities. It goes on to list a number of responsibilities of Mr. Miller under his purview and his compensation comes to \$15,000 a month. Certainly from the contract and the wording, it seems like this is somebody that the Premier trusted and relied on.

Would the Premier agree that Mr. Miller is someone that he respects and trusts as an advisor?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would tell the honourable member that Mr. Miller is highly regarded and respected, not only by me but by many Nova Scotians for the continuing work he has done as a professional in this province, building a law firm as the lead partner for a very long time and someone who now wants to get back to this province. We're grateful that many men and women like Mr. Miller have chosen, after a long career, to come back and provide good counsel and, quite frankly, good support to the people of this province.

TIM HOUSTON: Indeed, in a scrum in November 2015 the Premier said that everyone knows when either the Premier's chief of staff or anyone close to him speaks, that they speak on his behalf. I think that's important to acknowledge.

In some email correspondence in respect to the Alex Cameron case, the Deputy Minister of Justice sent an email to Alex Cameron dated November 13, 2016. The deputy referred for Alex Cameron to reach out to either the deputy or Mr. Miller, to review instructions for the Alton Gas case before going to court that week.

In that email the deputy suggested that Mr. Cameron not advance a certain particular argument. However, in a subsequent email that evening, Mr. Miller reached out to Mr. Cameron and indicated that he did not agree with the deputy's instructions.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Is it true that Mr. Miller was the Premier's liaison on the Alton Gas file in respect to Alex Cameron's argument?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the matter the honourable member is referring to is before the courts but let me be clear, I did not give Mr. Cameron or Mr. Miller instructions. Let me be clear, there will be a defence filed in the court.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the court proceedings were decided this morning when the Supreme Court of Canada said there's nothing to hear. There's nothing before the courts at the moment that would preclude the Premier - as much as he might hope - from answering some questions on the matter.

I'd like to ask the Premier: If Mr. Miller wasn't his liaison on this file, wouldn't it be fair to assume that either the chief of staff or his direct deputy were the liaisons? In an email dated November 13th from Mr. Miller to Mr. Cameron, Mr. Miller indicated that he would be speaking with the Premier's senior staff to discuss instructions. I can table that email for the House.

Mr. Miller later confirmed that this discussion had taken place - he included that in Mr. Miller's affidavit - and he was told that when Mr. Cameron was seeking instructions, he should speak directly to Mr. Miller.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Can the Premier confirm if he spoke to Mr. Miller on November 14th regarding instructions that were to be given to Alex Cameron in the case of the Alton Gas file?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I say it from the very beginning, the Province has the responsibility and duty to consult. I said we've met our obligations when it came to the issue of Alton Gas. That was the defence and there will be a defence filed in the court.

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

PREM.: RENT CONTROL IN N.S. - REASONING

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, in our constituency offices we are experiencing a steady escalation of people whose lives are really being turned upside down by sudden and often very dramatic increases in their rent, amounting to hundreds of dollars. We know that in many cases these are increases that people can't afford to pay. This is a reflection of a vacancy rate that in this city has shrunk now to a microscopic 1 per cent.

We also know that when this same situation was being faced by other provinces - in B.C., Ontario, Quebec, and P.E.I. - they brought in rent control.

I want to ask the Premier: Will he share his reasoning about why, in his view, the people of Nova Scotia don't deserve the same rent control protections as people in B.C., Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and P.E.I.?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for raising this all-important issue. He is very passionate - I want to give him his due - continuing to make sure that this issue hits the floor of the Legislature and that we continue to debate and discuss it.

As he knows, we've made some investments in rent supplements supporting affordable housing. We'll have more to say about that in the coming weeks. I want to assure the honourable member that it is a concern to all members of this House that this growing economy - particularly here in HRM, but not specifically just HRM - has put pressure on families when it comes to affordability around housing.

We will continue to work with him, but at no point have we seen that the public policy position that the honourable member has taken drives the results that we would hope they would.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, there is zero evidence that rent supplements are an effective and affordable housing mechanism in a situation of a vacancy rate like we have here at the moment, which is lower than Toronto or Vancouver. This has made looking for an apartment in this city practically the same thing as having another job.

Night after night, people spend hours and hours searching for vacancies, applying to vacancies, and lining up with great groups of people who are making applications and hoping that they might be the one person selected for the unit that's come up. This is the definition of an imbalanced market. When markets get imbalanced in this kind of way, it's the government's responsibility to restore that balance.

I want to ask the Premier: Can he explain his reluctance to bring balance to the rental market in Nova Scotia through regulation?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the premise of that question. We continue to make investments in affordable housing. The honourable member would know that there are a myriad of options when it comes to housing. We have people who require support overnight. How do we do that with our shelters across the province? How do we ensure that new homeowners get a chance to come into the rental marketplace - first-time homebuyers, investments that we've made?

He is very right that rents in the region have increased substantially. That is why we brought in the rent supplements. He disagrees with that public policy, and I appreciate his position and where he stands. We need to continue to make sure that we provide more housing options for Nova Scotia families and individuals here in HRM and across the province.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I contend that the Premier is not facing the severity of the basic numbers. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Nova Scotia went

up 3.5 per cent last year. The average rent for a three-bedroom apartment went up 4.7 per cent, and for a one-bedroom, 4 per cent. In the same period the Consumer Price Index in Nova Scotia went up by only 1 per cent.

I want to ask the Premier: Does his government have any intention of doing anything whatsoever to protect the people of the province from rent increases that are triple, quadruple, and practically quintuple the increase we are seeing in the CPI?

THE PREMIER: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - ALTON GAS: CONVERSATIONS - CONFIRM

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, on November 14, 2016, the Premier had a conversation with Mr. Miller and told him that it was okay to instruct Mr. Cameron to advance a particular argument. In fact, Mr. Miller wrote an email to Mr. Cameron - I can table his affidavit - where it clearly says that the position raised in the brief may be advanced.

Aside from the email, Mr. Miller also called Mr. Cameron at the same time to confirm the instructions, and Mr. Miller confirmed to Mr. Cameron that he should not abandon the argument. Mr. Cameron was told by Mr. Miller that these instructions to not abandon the argument came from a very tall gentleman.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Can the Premier confirm that he is in fact the very tall gentleman who had been speaking with Mr. Miller that morning?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. This is before the court. I want to assure the honourable member that we will file, that Mr. Miller will file, a defence.

He has one side of this story, and it works for him politically, but the reality is that in the justice system they will hear both sides.

TIM HOUSTON: Actually, Mr. Speaker, both sides of this story are available to every Nova Scotian. The documents were released just a few hours ago when the Supreme Court of Canada ruled for the third time in favour of Mr. Cameron. We will find out, I'm sure, at which cost the Premier has tried to cover up his instructions in the fullness of time.

At Paragraph 39 of Mr. Miller's affidavit, he actually confirms that the Premier is "the very tall gentleman" from whom he obtained the instructions. The Premier's most senior staff had set up a call between Mr. Miller and the Premier, and Mr. Miller confirmed that he spoke to the Premier when he was telling Mr. Cameron not to abandon the argument.

Yet, on November 17th, the Premier told the media he had no idea it was being put forward. That's just three days later.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Can he confirm what happened between November 14th in giving the instructions and November 17th when he tried to cover up the instructions?

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The term "cover up" is an unparliamentary term. I just want to put that on the record.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, if the honourable member actually knew what he was referring to, that brief was filed in the court in June. He's quoting to November. The former member of the New Democratic Party asked me a question in the House of Assembly about the very issue. At that moment in time, I had no idea what she was referring to; that was exactly what I said.

I've been very clear from the very beginning, we have a duty to consult with Mi'kmaq in this province and we believe we met that obligation when it came to this particular thing. That's what I said, that's what I will continue to say.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on a new question.

PREM.: CAMERON CASE - KNOWLEDGE OF ARGUMENT

TIM HOUSTON: Yet, on November 14th the Premier instructed his agent, Mr. Miller, to tell Mr. Cameron to proceed with the argument that was laid out in the brief that had been sitting in his department for three months and was well known to everyone in the department.

On November 14th, when the Premier spoke to Mr. Miller, he would have been aware of the arguments being put forward by Mr. Cameron. This was confirmed in a sworn statement by Mr. Miller. In fact, when Mr. Cameron went to court on November 14th and 15th and advanced these arguments, it was without a doubt, in the eyes of three courts, with the knowledge of the Premier.

Following the backlash, the Premier made comments to the media that he knew nothing about this situation. On the same afternoon, Mr. Miller and Mr. Cameron spoke on the phone and Mr. Miller advised Mr. Cameron that the Premier was having a bad week and he would come around to acknowledging what had obviously happened.

I would like to ask the Premier, was it a bad week and has he come around and is willing to acknowledge what actually happened?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I often wonder where the honourable member draws the line from dot-to-dot and jumps all over the place. It works for him politically, but the fact of the matter is, I'll stand on my integrity. My word matters to me, there's no way I'm going to go out and mislead the press or anyone in this House or quite frankly anyone on this file or any other file.

The reality of it is, one of the members from the New Democratic Party raised the question in November, I think it was November 10th, I believe. (Interruption) Okay, the 9th, the day before my birthday. They raised the question, I had no idea, and I wanted to know what they were referring to.

The fact of the matter is, I've continued to say on this entire case that we have a duty to consult and we met that obligation when it came to Alton Gas. That was our defence, that continues to be our defence, and the courts will determine it.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, it was November 9th when the member of the NDP raised the issue in the House. On November 10th the Premier did say he was unaware of it. However, what we're talking about is November 14th, the day this went to court and a conversation that he had on November 13th with his agent, which no doubt, is after November 9th, and the Premier certainly knew the argument that was going to be raised at that time.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Once he was made aware on November 9th of the substance of the argument that was on his desk for three months already, why did he instruct Mr. Miller on November 14th to tell Mr. Cameron to proceed with the case as filed in the brief, when he knew exactly what was happening for at least three days at that point?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I did not tell Mr. Miller or Mr. Cameron. What I continued to say is we have a duty to consult. Our government believes in that process, but we also believe when we've met that obligation, we have a responsibility to the entire province to move forward on important projects. We've met that duty to consult. In our view, the courts will determine whether they agree.

[2:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: ALTON GAS - ARGUMENT

TIM HOUSTON: After the argument that the Premier agreed to was indeed advanced on November 14th and 15th, on November 17th the Premier told the media that he was furious that the argument was being advanced. But on November 14th, he was quite accepting of it and blessed the argument to proceed. I would like to ask the Premier: Which statement is more accurate? Was he furious on November 17th as a result of the media's

backlash, or was he happy with the argument on November 14th, when he told his agent to proceed as directed?

THE PREMIER: Again, I can't confirm with the honourable member whether his statements are accurate. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, you've ruled at times that they're not.

The reality of it is, I stand behind the positions that I have taken and that our government has taken. I have said from the very beginning that we have a duty to consult, and we have met that obligation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

PREM.: SHORT-TERM RENTALS - OUT OF CONTROL

LISA ROBERTS: My question is for the Premier. The short-term rental market in this province is officially out of control. Short-term rentals have removed 740 housing units from Halifax's long-term housing market. Adding to this, Halifax's short-term rental market is dominated by entire home listings, 61 per cent of which are suitable for families, with two or more bedrooms. It is unacceptable that in the midst of a housing crisis, this government has waited so long to act.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit that this situation has been left to spiral out of control?

THE PREMIER: We have continued to provide rent supplements across the province, across this region. We have supported young families through the first-time homebuyers program. We're pleased to see a number have purchased that. We continue to invest in our shelters across the province to provide support. We'll continue to make sure that we provide affordable housing not only in the capital region but in and around the area. We'll work with our external partners to ensure that we continue to grow the housing stock to meet the needs of our citizens.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, rent supplements do not replace units that have disappeared from the market. We have finally received a glimpse into the Liberals' plan for regulating the short-term rental market, and the results are profoundly disappointing. There is no plan to require that all units are registered and no ability for municipalities to halt the proliferation of short-term rentals. A full-time commercial short-term rental with over five bedrooms will only have to pay \$150 a year, and lucrative platforms like Airbnb \$500 a year. The plan is weak, and it won't contribute nearly enough revenue that could be invested to build affordable housing in the midst of a housing crisis.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier have any interest in curbing the significant impact of lucrative commercial short-term rentals on this province's housing market?

THE PREMIER: I'll ask the Minister of Business to respond.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: We're certainly aware of the impact of the sharing economy, the short-term rental market, and how it has impacted not only the province but specifically here in Halifax and the HRM region. There were no supports. There were no recordings. There was no control whatsoever of the short-term housing market, how it was impacting the housing market here for all Nova Scotians. Our registration system will do that.

I fundamentally disagree with the NDP's position on this. It's not \$150 for their participation; it's \$150 for their registration. They still have to pay taxes. They still have to do all the other things now that traditional tourist accommodation operators have to do. Without question, we have levelled the playing field. This system will give us the data so that we can address the very issue that the member is bringing up.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: AFFIDAVIT CLAIMS - RESPOND

TIM HOUSTON: I'm going to table a sworn affidavit before the courts that was accepted by the courts and relied upon by the judges in their three decisions, where they found in favour of Mr. Cameron. In Paragraph 51 of the affidavit, it says on Saturday, November 19th, a week after this blew up on the Premier after he gave the instruction and then tried to back away from it:

On November 19th, I spoke to Mr. Miller by telephone. Mr. Miller suggested to me that the government needed a scapegoat, but that he didn't think it would be me.

I would like to ask the Premier: What might Mr. Miller have been insinuating when he suggested the government needed a scapegoat on this one?

THE PREMIER: Again, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Miller will respond to the accusations that are against Mr. Miller. The reality of it is, the fact of the matter is, the defence was that we have a duty to consult. We believe we have met that obligation.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, that didn't take long. Twenty minutes, and the Premier's backing away from Mr. Miller in a hurry.

I'd like to ask the Premier: When Mr. Miller referred to the government needing a scapegoat, was the Premier the one who gave Mr. Miller the instruction to make Mr. Cameron the scapegoat for the government on this file?

THE PREMIER: He's drawing a long bow, Mr. Speaker. The reality of it is that we continued to provide defence. We have a duty to consult. We believe we've met that obligation. The courts will determine whether we have.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

PREM.: CAMERON BRIEF INSTRUCTIONS - EXPLAIN

TIM HOUSTON: The line's not that long, Mr. Speaker. Three courts have now made the same finding. The Premier might not respect the judgments of the three courts, but the reality is the reality.

Mr. Cameron's brief was submitted to the Office of Aboriginal Affairs - a department over which the Premier presides - on July 20, 2017. The brief included the argument at issue. A meeting of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Justice was held with Mr. Cameron on July 25th to discuss instructions, and a final brief was submitted to the court on August 2nd that included the arguments that had been agreed on and the instructions that Mr. Cameron had been given.

The instructions Mr. Cameron acted upon came from the Premier's department and were provided to Mr. Cameron, and then the brief was produced and included in this argument and filed with the court.

I'd like to ask the Premier: As the Minister of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, which gave the instructions, was the Premier actively involved in providing those instructions to Mr. Cameron?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, his statement is inaccurate. The reality is that this process is before the court and we will file a defence.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, we've consulted with the legal experts involved in this case. The Supreme Court ruled this morning. It's dismissed; the Premier's final appeal was dismissed. There is nothing before the courts. Unless the Premier can produce otherwise, he's going to have to answer the questions on the floor of this House.

If the Premier didn't provide the instructions, given that he is the minister of the department that did - if it's not the minister who provides instructions on such a significant, important case, who is it?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs wasn't the client. He should find out who the client was before he starts making accusations.

The reality of it is he should do a little bit more homework.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

PREM.: CAMERON DEFENCE - COST TO TAXPAYERS

TIM HOUSTON: Here's the reality, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has been in the media as a defender of privilege, and now three times he has gone to court to try to silence Mr. Cameron - the Nova Scotia Supreme Court, the Nova Scotia Court of Appeals, all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada - and three times courts have determined that it's the Premier who broke the privilege. The defender of privilege has now been isolated and exposed by three courts as the breaker of privilege.

Ontario lawyers have been working on this case - I think four of them on this file - for a number of years. I'd like to ask the Premier: How much taxpayer money did he spend trying to keep accurate information from Nova Scotians on what the Premier actually knew was in the files? He knew what he instructed Mr. Cameron to do, and he used taxpayer money to try to hide it from them. I want to know how much.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the matter is before the court. We will continue to provide defence. We will ensure that all the facts will be heard by all Nova Scotians in due time.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the Premier has initiated some legal action in the last few minutes, but there is no action before the courts. These are the documents from the courts: affidavits from Mr. Cameron; affidavits from Deputy Miller, the Premier's close confidante; affidavits from deputy ministers; and findings of judges. These are the facts, and I'd be happy to walk the Premier through the legal course he's been on for three years with taxpayer money, if he is interested in it.

The reality is that the courts have decided. Despite the Premier's assertions here today and in the media - despite his assertions that he was unaware - the affidavits of two officers of the court, Mr. Cameron and Mr. Miller, confirm that he was well aware of these arguments, that he was in agreement with these arguments, and that he knew the instructions were very clear to his client.

I would like to ask the Premier today if he is being, if he can be more truthful on the instructions that he actually . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order please. I would like to remind the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition to insinuate that any member of this House is not being truthful in this Chamber is unparliamentary. I will get you to retract that statement please.

TIM HOUSTON: I will retract the word truthful. I am optimistic that the Premier can be more accurate on the events that actually played out leading up to November 14th,

and I would like to ask the Premier again if he is willing to tell Nova Scotians - tell members of this House - how much taxpayer money is invested in this little charade he's had.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as this matter is continued before the court, we will continue to follow the process as provided to all Nova Scotians. We will make sure that both sides of this story are communicated to the court, they will make a decision, and we will follow the court.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

PREM.: CASE BEFORE COURTS - CLARIFY

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, at 10:45 this morning the Supreme Court of Canada dismissed the Premier's actions. That's the third time that a court has ruled in favour of Mr. Cameron and said Mr. Cameron has the ability to defend his reputation in the face of somebody who was willing to break privilege and try and smear his reputation - three times. At 10:45 this morning, the Supreme Court dismissed the final appeal.

The Premier has indicated that this is before the courts. I'd like the Premier to inform this House which action is before the House.

THE PREMIER: As Mr. Cameron has the right to defend his reputation, so does Mr. Miller.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

PREM. - HOUSING PLANS: POSITIVE IMPACT - EXPLAIN

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. People in my constituency, including seniors and single mothers, are being evicted either to make way for renovations or because they simply cannot pay the rent hikes that are becoming commonplace. Some people are being placed in hotels paid for by the Department of Community Services; some head to emergency shelters; some, I am sure, resort to unsafe situations. Frankly, there are some who I just don't know what happens to because there is simply no place for them to go.

Can the Premier please provide evidence to the House that this government's housing plans are having a positive impact in Dartmouth North?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I would tell her that we continue to provide rent subsidies not only in Dartmouth North, but across the region. We continue to invest in housing both our own stock and ensuring that there is

affordable housing in the private market. I want to tell the honourable member that we know there is more work to do.

We are feeling, as I've said many times, the growth of this economy. It has taken a lot of people with it, but it has left some people behind, and that is the reality. We are going to work towards providing public policy that actually drives the results that we are hoping for and that leaves more money in the pockets of low-income Nova Scotians. We want to ensure that we can provide them support when it comes to housing, and the myriad of options when it comes to providing those supports for living with. At the same time, working - as the honourable member known earlier talked about - with the child poverty rate in this province, which is far too high.

We need to continue to work to ensure that as we as a province continue to grow - have record growth in this economy - we being to make sure that we share it with those who need it the most.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, public policy is like rent supplements we know are not working in an environment where there is no place to live. Public policies like the Standard Household Rate change at the Department of Community Services also doesn't work because it is not enough money.

We also know that the waiting list for public housing has not budged in years. When people facing eviction come into my office it is heartbreaking for them to be told to get in line behind thousands of others waiting for housing. In November of last year, the wait-list was at the highest number in four years at 5,316 households, that's including 1,639 families and 2,546 seniors.

Can the Premier please explain why the number of Nova Scotians on the wait-list for housing has barely budged during his time in office?

THE PREMIER: Last year 2,500 people came off that list. The reality of it is, we know there is more work to do; but there is one thing for certain that we have seen across the region: rent control doesn't work. That's the reality. The solution they are providing doesn't fix the problem; it's a good slogan. It actually fits on a pamphlet well. It misleads and misrepresents what's actually the reality of what's going to happen for those families.

The reality of it is that we need to continue to work with the private sector to provide opportunities. We as a government, need to continue to invest in our own housing stock, and we need to make sure that Nova Scotia has the ability to move into their own properties. That's why we continue to make those investments.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

[2:30 p.m.]

PREM.: N. PULP CLOSURE - ECONOMIC DEFICIT

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, it has been two months today since the Premier decided there would be no extension to Boat Harbour, two months since the Premier forced the closure of Northern Pulp.

let's be accurate - May 5th will be the five-year mark since legislation was passed and to anticipate the failed forestry industry - what is going on now - to mitigate the situation we find ourselves in in forestry today.

My question to the Premier: Does the upcoming budget reflect the \$2 billion deficit that the Nova Scotia economy could see because of the Northern Pulp closure?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. We will continue to work with the forestry sector as we transition to a new future. The Lahey report has laid out a 10-year plan. The closure of Northern Pulp, the closure of Boat Harbour, has created a situation where we need to deal with the issue of chips and low-value fibre. We're looking for opportunities for how to best use that.

The transition team is working very hard, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we provide new opportunities and new markets.

As the honourable member would know, a trust was just set up that has \$50 million in it. That is on top of the money that is already committed to silviculture and road building. We will continue to work to ensure that we see a brighter future. I believe there is a future in this province for the forestry sector.

The reality of it, Mr. Speaker, is that all members in this House supported the closing of Boat Harbour on January 30, 2020. Nobody stood up in this House and said to leave it open.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, livelihoods of hard-working forestry families and related services are being affected on an hourly basis right now - not daily, not weekly, not monthly.

In a letter sent to our PC Leader on February 13th, the Premier promised to provide clarity in the House on questions we receive from the forestry sector, passed on through the transition team to the Premier. At that time the Premier said he would provide clarity on the floor of the Legislature but refused to carry on any further conversations on questions, whether they be answered or not.

Again, I'll ask my question: Does the budget have any reference on the \$2 billion hole that we may see in the economy, due to the Northern Pulp closure?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, at the end of his question he said "we may." It's another big leap. We know there are challenges in this sector; it's why we continue to invest in innovation rebate, to have the private sector continue to invest with government support to add value to those chips that are across this province. That's why we continue to look at how we find value in the low-value fibre that's in the forest sector. That has been part of the private sector woodlot owners' business plan when it came to ensuring the sawlogs that were going into the mill.

All of those, Mr. Speaker, are connected to the investments that we have continued to make, providing supports when it comes to training. That's why we continue to provide a line of credit for those who want to look for a transition or reposition their equipment to deal with the new realities in the forestry sector. All those are an important part of how we continue to have a forestry sector in our province.

I want to tell the honourable member that I understand the challenges people are facing and the anxiety they are feeling. I want to thank his colleague, the member for Cumberland North, who has been constructive on how we go out to talk, to provide supports back into transition. That's the important stuff that's required to allow the transition team, who represents the sector, Mr. Speaker, to continue to make the strategic investments, and we will.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

PREM. - N. PULP CLOSURE: TRANSITION TEAM - RESPONSE

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Premier for leading into the question in the comments about my colleague. My colleague and I both sit on that transition team locally in Cumberland County and are coming up with ideas and sending correspondence on a regular basis to the transition team.

My question would be to the Premier, as he is responsible for the minister who chairs that transition team: When can that community expect a response back and a visit from the chairperson, as requested?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not exactly sure of the schedule of the transition team. The reality of it is that some of the recommendations that have been brought in have been part of the discussion and part of the implementation that has gone out. They'll continue to work with that. The transition team will continue to set their own agenda when it comes to ensuring that the sector, which is represented on that transition team, will continue to respond to the needs of how we can best position this sector for a new future.

TORY RUSHTON: One of the terms of reference for that transition team was to have an immediate response for action for the forestry sector. Some of those have been announced from the transition team's accomplishments. One of the things the sector heard last week, and that we're very worried about, was when the transition funds were going to be put into trust.

One of the terms of reference was immediate action. The sector believes that the transition team and the government may believe that the immediate actions are already taken care of. Again, is there any money in the funds for the budget? Does the government currently believe that the immediate actions are done for this transition team and they're now looking at long-range forecasts?

THE PREMIER: Not at all, Mr. Speaker. The reality of it is that that trust was set up to protect that fund for the forest sector, which will go to the transition team. It was there to be set up to ensure that at the end of the fiscal year, that money would still be there, to access the issues and the challenges that are being faced by communities across this province.

It's not just in the community of Pictou. We had issues where the mill was. We're seeing it in Queens County - one of the largest employers. We see it in different parts of the province. In your particular part of the province, it's people working in the woods, woodlot owners.

We see that. We know the value has been reduced for the private woodlot owners. What we need to continue to do is move ourselves to a new transition. How do we add value to the low-end product that we have in some cases as we continue to protect our softwood lumber exclusion to make sure that we continue to have private woodlot owners who are getting top value for the sawlogs that are coming off their woodlots as we provide new markets for that low-value product? We know that transition has been difficult. We're working to make that happen. We believe that the equity that has been lost will be regained as we move ourselves to a brighter future.

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

H&W - MED. ADVICE/TREATMENT: FAMILY PHYSICIAN - ACCESS

ALANA PAON: According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, Mr. Speaker, up to 80 per cent of premature heart disease and stroke can be prevented, saving lives and millions of dollars in health care spending. The NSHA document *Finding a Primary Care Provider in Nova Scotia*, January 2020, reports nearly 47,000 Nova Scotians are still without a family doctor. This includes just shy of 4,600 people in the Eastern Zone and 418 people in Port Hawkesbury, L'Ardoise, and Île Madame. This means these constituents do not have access to preventive medicine such as an annual physical exam

and diagnostic test that a family doctor would perform and order. They're at risk, Mr. Speaker.

Is the minister comfortable knowing that thousands of Nova Scotians continue to be without access to medical advice and treatment from a family physician?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: We have spoken frequently on the floor of the Legislature and publicly about the importance of strengthening primary care access for all Nova Scotians. What the member didn't acknowledge in her comments is that number she cited of about 47,000 Nova Scotians who are still registered to find a family practice - that's about 20 per cent fewer people in Nova Scotia who are registered looking to find a family practice from just over a year earlier.

Mr. Speaker, the initiatives and the investments we have been making have been having a positive impact. We continue to work with our partners in the Health Authority and Doctors Nova Scotia to find more health care providers to meet those very needs that the member has raised on behalf of her constituents.

ALANA PAON: This province is still in a crisis, and we have a severity here that we need to deal with. Eight in ten cardiac arrests occur at home or in public places. We know the survival rate doubles with immediate action and access to ERs. Every second medical attention is delayed is the difference between being the one person in ten who survives cardiac arrest or the one in nine who doesn't. The Annual Accountability Report on Emergency Departments 2019 states that the St. Anne Centre ER was closed for the equivalent of 31 days. The Strait Richmond Hospital ER was closed for the equivalent of nearly 38 days.

Can the minister advise if the Province is opening itself up to liability by not providing consistent emergency room access?

RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for raising the important topic of heart health, particularly as the month of February winds down, a month to recognize and be aware of heart health and heart conditions. The member referenced emergency departments. Again, I have had many conversations on the floor of this Legislature. That remains a key area that we are focused on for increasing availability of health care providers - not just physicians. In some communities, it's nursing coverage that results in the emergency department closures.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest. We're investing in expanding training opportunities for nurses and nurse practitioners. We have expanded training opportunities for physicians. We have increased our investment in compensation for those physicians as well so that in our new master agreement with Doctors Nova Scotia, they will be the highest paid in Atlantic Canada.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - ALTON GAS CASE: BRIEF - AWARENESS

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Alton Gas case was originally scheduled to be heard in mid-August. That's why Mr. Cameron received instructions in late July, meeting with the departments, with the deputies. It was scheduled to be heard in mid-August, but on August 15th it was rescheduled. The brief was still prepared and sat in the department, in the deputy's - probably in a number of deputies' - hands, and many people in the department knew what was in the brief.

I'd like to ask the Premier, as the minister of that department: If the brief sat in the department from August 2nd, is it really his position that he was completely unaware of this brief until November 17th?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think it was November 9th that I was made aware of it by the member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the brief was prepared after some discussion back and forth. It was a pretty contentious situation within the department. We can tell that from the affidavits. In fact, this file was described within the department as a "bomb."

I'd like to ask the Premier: Is it the Premier's practice to be completely unaware of briefs and files that are described as bombs in his department? Completely unaware until a member of the Opposition raised it on the floor of the Legislature three months later?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, you can tell by the very description that the department would have given him. The reality of it is that in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs understands that we have a duty to consult. We believe we met that obligation.

PREM. - ALTON GAS CASE: LITIGATION - COST

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's Office had copies of all of the disclosures. Despite knowing exactly who said what and that this would likely be released in the fullness of time, I guess ultimately he was hoping that the Supreme Court would find differently.

The Premier had full knowledge of what was in the affidavit, what was in the disclosure, what was in the arguments. He had that knowledge for quite some time, and still, in an effort to keep that information out of the hands of the public, the Premier pursued frivolous litigation in an attempt to hide harmful information.

One judge, describing the information in these files, said the only reason that it should be kept quiet is that it would be embarrassing to the government. Now that the

documents have been made public, it is indeed embarrassing for the government. Despite all this, the Premier hired expensive lawyers from Bay Street to represent him.

I would like to ask the Premier: Can the Premier confirm what the total cost of his frivolous litigation was to taxpayers?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it's still ongoing. When this matter has been settled, we will tell all Nova Scotians.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to try one more time to ask the Premier - the Premier is indicating that he can't answer questions because it's a matter before the courts. I think that would be of interest to Nova Scotians.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Exactly what matter is before the courts that he's using as a reason to not answer questions on the floor of the Legislature?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member has laid out one side of this case. He has laid out one aspect of this case. Mr. Miller will actually lay out his case.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

H&W - NSHA: HEALTH CARE WORKERS - COMMUNICATION

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, we have emergency doctors limiting their time and leaving the Valley Regional ER due to administration that is not listening to health care providers when making decisions. Dr. Robert Miller, Dr. Rebecca Brewer, and Dr. Keith MacCormick have a combined 41-plus years of experience and expertise at the Valley Regional Hospital. These three are at the tip of the iceberg when it comes to frustrations among physicians in this province and with our health care sector.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: How did the NSHA fail to engage and listen to health care workers?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Indeed, the Nova Scotia Health Authority, the department - we frequently engage and listen to front-line health care workers. You see evidence of this each and every day on major projects like our IT and capital investments of historic proportion to revitalize both the infrastructure and the IT systems that support the work of our front-line health care workers.

These initiatives have been prioritized and significant financial commitments made as a result of just that feedback. I will continue to listen to those front-line health care workers. It helps inform both policy and investments that we make moving forward.

[2:45 p.m.]

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, Valley Regional has lost six or seven emergency doctors in the last year. Communication is key and it's lacking. We know that.

Seventy-two per cent of physicians surveyed indicated that there is a lack of communication and that NSHA lacks the ability to implement meaningful changes and dialogues. That was a survey: 72 per cent of physicians.

My question is: If we have doctors, like the three I have just mentioned, who are leaving because of a lack of dialogue, what mechanisms actually exist in the NSHA to listen to our front-line workers?

RANDY DELOREY: As I noted, there are numerous avenues that the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and indeed the department where appropriate, where our responsibilities exist in defining and setting the stage and the path forward for both operational and policy decisions. That includes things like major investments in infrastructure. It includes working with our partners, with Doctors Nova Scotia, establishing compensation models and incentives. These are things that we do each and every day to help inform the direction that we take and the investment priorities that we take.

It's also important for the member to recognize there have been significant changes within the Nova Scotia Health Authority executive ranks, including a new CEO that just joined the organization in December.

THE SPEAKER: On a new question, the honourable member for Pictou West.

H&W - ER CLOSURES: INCREASE - REASONS

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, in 2014, Nova Scotia's ERs closed 444 times. By 2017, that number jumped to 836. Recent data now shows that Nova Scotia ERs closed 1,500 times. I will actually table that document with those figures.

Rural areas in Nova Scotia are suffering the most, and we all know this. We know the primary reason that ER closures are happening is lack of coverage by doctors. We're not recruiting and retaining our doctors. We all know that.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Why are there actually so many ER closures? What is the reason?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: The reason for the closure of an emergency department varies from community to community. In some communities it is the availability of a physician to provide the services needed at the emergency department for a particular shift. In some cases, it's other health care providers like nurses.

At the end of the day, we recognize the important need to recruit and retain health care providers and professionals. I'd like to note for the member that despite the challenges of physician availability across the country and most of the Western world, Nova Scotia has the highest number of physicians per capita in the country.

We've seen increased investments that will see physicians in Nova Scotia the highest paid in Atlantic Canada. Over the past 18 months or so, we've had 873 days that have been covered through incentive programs targeted towards emergency departments to address the very issue the member raised.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Great, but you still have not fulfilled your promise of 2013: a doctor for every Nova Scotian. This continues on and on, and it's becoming chronic. It's so frustrating. Steps are being made. I agree. Wonderful. Pat yourselves on the back, but there's still . . .

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: That concludes the government's business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, Friday, February 21, 2020, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Following the daily routine and Question Period, business will include second reading on Bill Nos. 220 and 221.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier in Question Period, when I questioned the Premier about the affordable housing crisis, the Premier characterized my comments, or questions, as misrepresenting the reality of the housing issue to Nova Scotians. I believe that "misrepresenting" is unparliamentary language, and I would ask that the Premier retract his statement.

THE SPEAKER: I will review Hansard and come back to the House.

We are back to the motion for adjournment. The motion is for the House to rise to meet again tomorrow, Friday, February 21st, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 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 9:00 a.m.

[The House adjourned at 2:51 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1662**

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 Employees of the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal work year-round to keep our vast network of provincial roads and buildings safe and functioning; and

Whereas on September 7, 2019, Nova Scotia experienced the effects of hurricane Dorian, resulting in downed trees, powerlines, flooding and storm surges across the province; and

Whereas Lawrence Webb of the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal worked tirelessly during and after hurricane Dorian to ensure that our roads and highways were clear and safe for emergency service providers and the general public;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Lawrence Webb for aiding the in the hurricane clean up and helping to ensure the safety of the people of the Eastern Shore and all Nova Scotians.

RESOLUTION NO. 1663

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 Employees of the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal work year-round to keep our vast network of provincial roads and buildings safe and functioning; and

Whereas on September 7, 2019, Nova Scotia experienced the effects of hurricane Dorian, resulting in downed trees, powerlines, flooding and storm surges across the province; and

Whereas Ross Blakeney of the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal worked tirelessly during and after hurricane Dorian to ensure that

our roads and highways were clear and safe for emergency service providers and the general public;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Ross Blakeney for aiding the in the hurricane clean up and helping to ensure the safety of the people of the Eastern Shore and all Nova Scotians.

RESOLUTION NO. 1664

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 hurricane Dorian landed on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia on September 7, 2019, severely damaging the dugouts at the Lawrencetown Community Center, 10 days prior to the Gold Diggers Girls Softball team hosting the city U12 softball playoffs ; and

Whereas the Gold Diggers Girls U12 team took it upon themselves to raise the funds to purchase the materials needed to repair the damaged dugouts and subsequently carry out the work before the tournament started

Whereas this example of leadership and initiative by our local youth shows great promise for the future of our community

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Abby Trudel for stepping up and assisting the community in a time of need and showing other young people the importance of taking pride in our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1665

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 hurricane Dorian landed on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia on September 7, 2019, severely damaging the dugouts at the Lawrencetown Community Center, 10 days prior to the Gold Diggers Girls Softball team hosting the city U12 softball playoffs; and

Whereas the Gold Diggers Girls U12 team took it upon themselves to raise the funds to purchase the materials needed to repair the damaged dugouts and subsequently carry out the work before the tournament started

Whereas this example of leadership and initiative by our local youth shows great promise for the future of our community

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Lily Leroux for stepping up and assisting the community in a time of need and showing other young people the importance of taking pride in our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1666

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 hurricane Dorian landed on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia on September 7, 2019, severely damaging the dugouts at the Lawrencetown Community Center, 10 days prior to the Gold Diggers Girls Softball team hosting the city U12 softball playoffs; and

Whereas the Gold Diggers Girls U12 team took it upon themselves to raise the funds to purchase the materials needed to repair the damaged dugouts and subsequently carry out the work before the tournament started

Whereas this example of leadership and initiative by our local youth shows great promise for the future of our community

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chloe Mason for stepping up and assisting the community in a time of need and showing other young people the importance of taking pride in our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1667

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 hurricane Dorian landed on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia on September 7, 2019, severely damaging the dugouts at the Lawrencetown Community

Center, 10 days prior to the Gold Diggers Girls Softball team hosting the city U12 softball playoffs; and

Whereas the Gold Diggers Girls U12 team took it upon themselves to raise the funds to purchase the materials needed to repair the damaged dugouts and subsequently carry out the work before the tournament started

Whereas this example of leadership and initiative by our local youth shows great promise for the future of our community

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Tobie McNaughton for stepping up and assisting the community in a time of need and showing other young people the importance of taking pride in our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1668

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 hurricane Dorian landed on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia on September 7, 2019, severely damaging the dugouts at the Lawrencetown Community Center, 10 days prior to the Gold Diggers Girls Softball team hosting the city U12 softball playoffs; and

Whereas the Gold Diggers Girls U12 team took it upon themselves to raise the funds to purchase the materials needed to repair the damaged dugouts and subsequently carry out the work before the tournament started

Whereas this example of leadership and initiative by our local youth shows great promise for the future of our community

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Olivia Alspach for stepping up and assisting the community in a time of need and showing other young people the importance of taking pride in our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1669

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 hurricane Dorian landed on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia on September 7, 2019, severely damaging the dugouts at the Lawrencetown Community Center, 10 days prior to the Gold Diggers Girls Softball team hosting the city U12 softball playoffs; and

Whereas the Gold Diggers Girls U12 team took it upon themselves to raise the funds to purchase the materials needed to repair the damaged dugouts and subsequently carry out the work before the tournament started; and

Whereas this example of leadership and initiative by our local youth shows great promise for the future of our community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Rachel McAfee for stepping up and assisting the community in a time of need and showing other young people the importance of taking pride in our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1670

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 hurricane Dorian landed on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia on September 7, 2019, severely damaging the dugouts at the Lawrencetown Community Center, 10 days prior to the Gold Diggers Girls Softball team hosting the city U12 softball playoffs; and

Whereas the Gold Diggers Girls U12 team took it upon themselves to raise the funds to purchase the materials needed to repair the damaged dugouts and subsequently carry out the work before the tournament started; and

Whereas this example of leadership and initiative by our local youth shows great promise for the future of our community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Sophia Barnaby for stepping up and assisting the community in a time of need and showing other young people the importance of taking pride in our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1671

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 hurricane Dorian landed on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia on September 7, 2019, severely damaging the dugouts at the Lawrencetown Community Center, 10 days prior to the Gold Diggers Girls Softball team hosting the city U12 softball playoffs; and

Whereas the Gold Diggers Girls U12 team took it upon themselves to raise the funds to purchase the materials needed to repair the damaged dugouts and subsequently carry out the work before the tournament started; and

Whereas this example of leadership and initiative by our local youth shows great promise for the future of our community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Taryn Munro for stepping up and assisting the community in a time of need and showing other young people the importance of taking pride in our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1672

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 hurricane Dorian landed on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia on September 7, 2019, severely damaging the dugouts at the Lawrencetown Community Center, 10 days prior to the Gold Diggers Girls Softball team hosting the city U12 softball playoffs; and

Whereas the Gold Diggers Girls U12 team took it upon themselves to raise the funds to purchase the materials needed to repair the damaged dugouts and subsequently carry out the work before the tournament started; and

Whereas this example of leadership and initiative by our local youth shows great promise for the future of our community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Avery Anderson for stepping up and assisting the community in a time of need and showing other young people the importance of taking pride in our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1673

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 hurricane Dorian landed on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia on September 7, 2019, severely damaging the dugouts at the Lawrencetown Community Center, 10 days prior to the Gold Diggers Girls Softball team hosting the city U12 softball playoffs; and

Whereas the Gold Diggers Girls U12 team took it upon themselves to raise the funds to purchase the materials needed to repair the damaged dugouts and subsequently carry out the work before the tournament started; and

Whereas this example of leadership and initiative by our local youth shows great promise for the future of our community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Jenna Swift for stepping up and assisting the community in a time of need and showing other young people the importance of taking pride in our community.